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Rooting empowering reactivating. Rehabilitation of traditional heritage and local development

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17 November 2026



# rooting empowering reactivating

Rehabilitation of traditional heritage and local development

Martina Bocci and Andrea Bocco (eds.)

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# empowering
# reactivating

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Politecnico di Torino

2024
Politecnico di Torino



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"Past and future ties in Edalia's alpaca threads"

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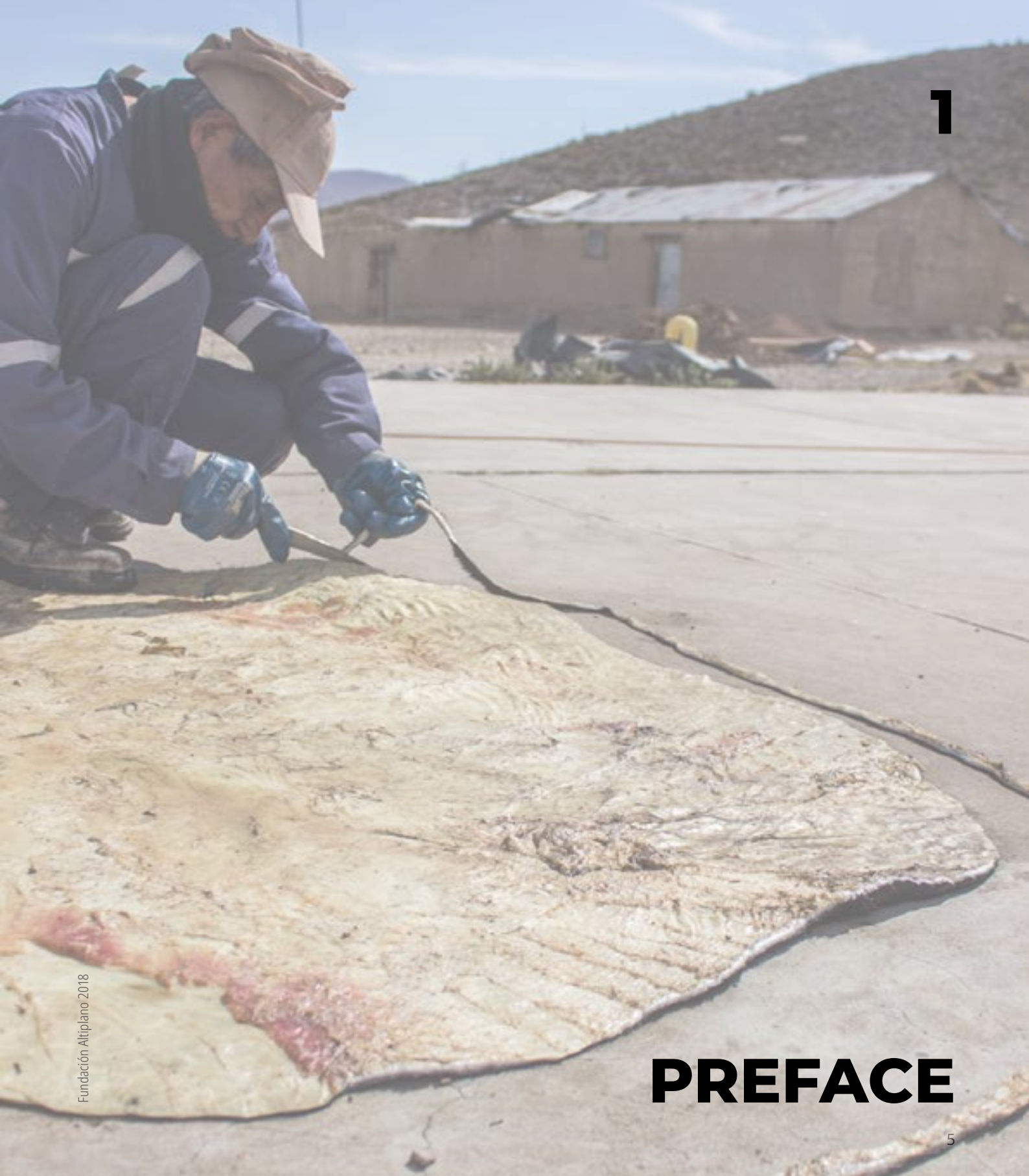
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to nonna Elena and Edalia



1

# PREFACE

Fundación Altiplano 2018


Rehabilitation of traditional heritage and local development
3.10.19
9:30am-1pm
Sala della Cavalla
SEMINAR
3pm-6pm
Sala Vigliano
ROUND TABLE
Rehabilitation of traditional heritage and local development
18.6.20
2:30pm-5:30pm
19.6.20
3pm-6pm
Rehabilitation of traditional heritage and local development
07.05.2021
SEMINARS
ROUND TABLE
REHABILITATION OF TRADITIONAL HERITAGE AND LOCAL DEVELOPMENT 4.0
PROGRAM
29 September 2022
14:30 - 17:30
30 September 2022
14:30 - 17:30

# Rehabilitation of Traditional Heritage and Local Development (RTHLD) seminars

Since 2019, the Interuniversity Department of Regional and Urban Studies and Planning (DIST) of the Politecnico di Torino and the University of Turin, in cooperation with the Post-graduate school of Architectural and Landscape Heritage has undertaken a series of seminars on the Rehabilitation of traditional heritage and local development (RTHLD). Focusing on lesser built heritage[1] – a niche in the world of heritage conservation – and its interaction with local development, subjects capable of incorporating excellence in traditional building techniques recovery with actions for the survival of local communities were brought together. They discussed unconventional practices of community-rooted rehabilitation, leading to the preservation of living landscapes and initiatives of inclusive local development.

These seminars aimed to establish an international network of collaborations and generate debate and exchange on fundamental issues such as tourism, empowerment of local communities, multidisciplinarity, innovation, generative potential, to name but a few.

In each seminar, representatives from two or three NGOs were invited to share their experience in **lectures**. These were followed by **round tables**, to which participants from the previous editions were also invited. Participation in the round tables by lecturers, experts and activists provided the opportunity to go in depth on some crucial issues through semi-structured debates. NGOs offered knowledge based on practical experience, and academics methodological insights and theoretical references. NGOs representatives were prompted to address theoretical as well as ethical issues, and to make their motivations and medium- to long-term goals explicit.

In the first seminar (3 October **2019**), lectures were offered by Edvin Lamçe (Fondacioni Gjirokastra – **FG**), Sanada Junko (The Dry Stone Walling school of Japan – **DSW**) and Beatriz Yuste (Fundación Altiplano – **FA**). The round table was led by **Andrea Bocco** (DIST) and was attended also by the representatives of two Italian NGOs, Fondazione Canova (**AC**) and Banca del Fare (**BdF**), as well as Chiara Devoti (director of the Post-graduate School of Architectural and Landscape Heritage – **SBAP**).

The second seminar (18-19 June **2020**) was focussed on the lectures by Carmen Moreno (Terrachidia – **Tr**) and Ángel Guillén (Medesus – **Md**). Two round tables involved Hagino Kiichirō (Maruyama Gumi – **MG**), in addition to the first seminar participants (FA, FG, DSW, SBAP). **Emiliano Cruz Michelena Valcárcel** (director of Patrimonio, Museos y Casco Histórico of Buenos Aires), **Taki Yosuke** (writer, and organiser of an itinerant school), **Redina Mazelli** (DIST), and **Martina Bocci** (DIST) moderated the panels.

[1] In this book, we extensively used the phrase "lesser heritage," moulded on the Italian concepts of "patrimonio minore" and "architettura minore," which have been in use since the 1920s (Astorri 1926, 1927). This phrase describes a kind of heritage that cannot be defined with a single English word. It encompasses a rather broad semantic range accumulated over time, for which no exact equivalent in the English language exists – not even in the phrase "vernacular heritage". However, it might somewhat find a closer counterpart in the Spanish phrase "arquitectura popular".
Speaking of "lesser heritage" encourages reflection on how value recognition is shaped by socio-cultural factors and local understanding. It contrasts with official and monumental architecture, and focuses on buildings and other entities whose value does not lie in their exceptionality, but rather in their seriality, interrelation, and ability to form cohesive systems (Devoti, Naretto 2007). It represents communities and their way of life, and reflects shared – often communal – interests.

The third seminar (7 May **2021**) involved Pimpim de Azevedo and Yutaka Hirako (Tibet Heritage Fund – **THF**), Elena Vasić Petrović (Architect Aleksandar Radović Foundation – **ARF**) and Américo Guedes (Palombar – **Pl**). Participants from previous years Md, FA, AC, MG, Tr, SBAP joined the panel that was moderated by **Andrea Longhi** (professor of History of architecture, DIST), **Andrea Bocco**, and **Martina Bocci**.

In the fourth seminar (29-30 September **2022**), Ionas Sklavounos, the co-founder of Boulouki (**Bl**), and Eltjana Shkreli of **GO2Albania** presented the work of their NGOs. The lectures were followed by Martina Bocci's presentation of the provisional results of her research. **Umberto Bonomo** (director of the heritage centre of the Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile), **Paolo Vitti** (University of Notre Dame) and **Francesca Governa** (professor of economic and political geography, DIST) took part in the discussion that followed. Of the NGOs invited in the previous three editions, only **MG** took an active part in the seminar.

While the seminars in 2019 and 2022 were held in Torino, in 2020 and 2021 they were held online, due to the covid pandemic.
Seminars were prepared by meetings with each NGO to explain the scope of the initiative, get to know the most relevant aspects of each other's work, and envisage future collaborations. This initial contact proved very fruitful, stimulating the NGOs' representatives to share personal opinions and points of view.

NGOs were asked to provide the text of their lecture in advance (Tr 4.4, Md 4.5, Pl 4.6, ARF 4.7). When not possible, the lecture was transcribed by the editors and reviewed by their authors (FG 4.1, DSW 4.2, FA 4.3, THF 4.8, Bl 4.9, GO2 4.10, MG 4.11). Especially in the case of Md, the paper was enriched with contributions that emerged during the lecture, and in the case of THF with details extracted from their rich website, to provide useful information. MG's text collected here merges Hagino's lectures at the Politecnico di Torino in 2019 and at the University of Hawaii in 2021. AC and BdF are present as contributors to the round tables only.
Round tables discussions were transcribed, then reviewed by the participants. In some cases, participants made themselves available to answer questions from the previous roundtables in written form or via structured online interviews (Pl, MG, Tr). Chapter 5 is an edited synthesis of what emerged from the discussions, where questions and answers were organised according to the same three macro-themes that guide the analysis of NGOs in Chapter 3: the relationship with local communities and NGOs' rooting (5.1), the empowring of communities in heritage rehabilitation and transmission (5.2), and the wide-ranging and long-term actions aimed at a self-sustainable development and reactivation of the marginal areas where the NGOs operate (5.3).

The aim of this book is to widen the debate on these topics by providing concrete examples of practices of high human and social quality, and to reinforce the role and consciousness of NGOs, showing how their work can have an impact on the preservation and adaptation of heritage and traditions, on community empowerment, as well as on the overall future of marginal places. It also tries to provide, with Chapter 3, a multidisciplinary reading scheme that can support residents, NGOs and institutions involved in

| NGOs' acronyms and names | | People involved in the RTHLD series of seminars | 2019 | | 2020 | | 2021 | | 2022 | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | lecture | round table | lecture | round table | lecture | round table | lecture | round table |
| THF | Tibet Heritage Fund | Pimpim de Azevedo and Yutaka Hirako | | | | | 4.8 | • | | |
| Md | Medesus | Ángel Guillén | | | 4.5 | • | | • | | |
| FA | Fundación Altiplano | Beatriz Yuste and Cristian Heinsen | 4.3 | • | | • | | • | | |
| PI | Palombar | Américo Guedes | | (•) | | (•) | 4.6 | • | | |
| AC | Fondazione Canova | Maurizio Cesprini | | • | | | | • | | |
| FG | Fondacioni Gjirokastra | Edvin Lamçe | 4.1 | • | | • | | | | |
| MG | まるやま組<br>Maruyama Gumi | Kiichiro Hagino | (4.11) | (•) | | • | | • | | • |
| Tr | Terrachidia | Carmen Moreno and Marta Colmenares | | (•) | 4.4 | • | | • | | |
| DSW | 石積み学校<br>The Dry-Stone Walling School of Japan | Sanada Junko | 4.2 | • | | • | | | | |
| ARF | Фондација Архитекта Александар Радовић - Architect Aleksandar Radović Foundation | Elena Vasić Petrović | | | | | 4.7 | • | | |
| BAP | Scuola di Specializzazione in Beni Architettonici e del Paesaggio | Chiara Devoti | | • | | • | | • | | |
| BdF | Banca del Fare | Lorenzo Serra and Nadia Battaglio | | • | | | | | | |
| BI | Μπουλουκι<br>Boulouki | Ionas Sklavounos | | | | | | | 4.9 | • |
| GO2 | GO2Albania | Eltjana Shkreli | | | | | | | 4.10 | • |

Table 1: Attendance during RTHLD series of seminars. When a dot in brackets is present, the participants contributed to the panel discussion or lecture through interviews or emails in a later stage.

community promotion and reactivation processes through actions on their habitat – whether at a practical, academic or institutional level.

Another aim of this publication is to strengthen the network of NGOs that took part in the RTHLD seminars.

British social anthropologist Tim Ingold wrote: "In the academic pantheon, reason is predestined to trump intuition, expertise to trump common sense, and conclusions based on the facts to trump what people know from ordinary experience or from the wisdom of their forbears" (Ingold 2013, 2). The intent behind this research is to try to bring together these forms of knowledge. The series of seminars and the research stemming from them, seeks to establish a **connection between practitioners and academia**, bringing together different forms of knowledge and stimulating a dialogue between two contexts that are too often far apart. Chapter 3 researches aspects often overlooked by NGOs and practitioners, offering a contribution that would be difficult for NGOs to achieve autonomously. Alongside this, through the RTHLD seminars, we have tried to propose academia as a place for meeting and reflection.

Just as the lectures in the RTHLD seminars were largely based on images, chapter 4 is extensively illustrated to allow a deeper understanding of what is narrated.

For practical reasons, **acronyms** are used throughout the book (table 1). External web links and **cross-references** between sections allow the reader to navigate the text and to delve into specific themes, initiatives, NGOs, projects, etc.

# Organisation and research group

## Interuniversity Department of Regional and Urban Studies and Planning

The Interuniversity Department of Regional and Urban Studies and Planning (DIST) is a joint structure of the Politecnico di Torino and the University of Turin working in the cultural area of territorial transformation and management of territorial processes analysed in their physical, economic, social, political, cultural aspects and their inter-relationships, in a perspective of sustainability, from global to local scale.
DIST promotes, coordinates and manages basic and applied research, training, and technology transfer and services to the territory, focusing on urban and regional policies and sciences and on territorial, urban and environmental planning.
DIST research areas include: analysis, planning and management of territories; urban planning and policies for sustainable development of the urban and rural areas; analysis and management of cultural, architectural and landscape heritage; human, economic and political geography; urban and environmental sociology and media; methods and techniques of survey and representation at the urban and territorial scales; history and conservation of the architecture of the city and its territory; planning of transport and logistics; technical and economic feasibility of urban plans and projects.
DIST encourages interdisciplinary activities focused on the enhancement of interactions among researchers from different cultural areas. DIST supports research activities linked to its scientific subjects and promotes relations with other sectors. DIST strongly promotes the participation to local, national, European and international research programmes.



**Martina Bocci**, MA in Architecture for Sustainability and Ph.D. in Urban and Regional Development (Politecnico di Torino). Specialised in traditional technology and low-tech architecture, her research focusses on some interrelated topics: rehabilitation of vernacular heritage, transmission of traditional construction knowledge, and the importance of practice in learning process; assessment of natural materials environmental impact; community participation; multidisciplinary and context-specific approach to reactivate sustainable local development possibilities of marginal places; and the role of NGOs in these processes.
Her approach combines academic research and engagement in hands-on experience: she collaborated with some NGOs, between them Fundación Altiplano (Chile) and Fondazione Canova (Italy), and she was the co-founders of the Accademia nel Cantiere Association and of La Termitière student team, both aimed at offered practical learning opportunities for students on real buildings in collaboration with Politecnico di Torino.



**Andrea Bocco** Ph.D., Professor of Architectural Technology at DIST. He teaches Low Impact Technology and Environmental Design.
He has been working on participatory urban regeneration, local development and community hubs. He founded (1999) and directed (until 2009) the San Salvario Local Development Agency (Torino).
His publications deal with, among other topics, the analysis of the built environment; construction with natural, low-impact materials and technologies; and the assessment of the environmental impact of buildings and human behaviour.
His books include:

- *Bernard Rudofsky. A Humane Designer*, 2003
- *Werner Schmidt, Architekt. Ökologie, Handwerk, Erfindung*, 2013
- *The Environmental Impact of Sieben Linden Ecovillage*, 2019 (with M. Gerace, S. Pollini)
- *Vegetarian Architecture. Case studies on building and nature*, 2020
- *Yona Friedman, Roofs. Local materials, simple technology, sophisticated ideas*, (editor) 2020



**Redina Mazelli** is a research assistant and PhD candidate in Urban and Regional Development at Politecnico di Torino. She holds an MSc in Architecture from the same institution, with a thesis on renovating small stone buildings in Alta Langa, Piedmont. As a co-founder of the student team FoRTI, she has been coordinating summer schools since 2021, focusing on the renovation and retrofit of stone structures in the Ossola Valley. Her current research investigates the opportunities and challenges of up-scaling regenerative bio-based and geo-based materials in construction.

## Postgraduate School of "Beni Architettonici e del Paesaggio" / "Architectural and Landscape Heritage" (Politecnico di Torino)

Politecnico di Torino
II LIVELLO
Scuola di Specializzazione in
Beni Architettonici e del Paesaggio

The School of Specialisation was established in 1989. It has been performing research with an eminently interdisciplinary approach and aims at training graduate students to become high-profile professionals who will be engaged in the protection, restoration, management and enhancement of architectural and landscape heritage, also cooperating with Conservation Bureaus.



**Chiara Devoti**. MA in Architecture, Specialist in "Storia, Analisi e Valutazione dei Beni Architettonici e Ambientali/History, Analysis and Evaluation of Architectural and Environmental Heritage", Ph.D. in "Storia e critica dei Beni Architettonici e Ambientali/History and Criticism of Architectural and Environmental Heritage" from the Politecnico di Torino. She is Associate Professor of History of Architecture at DIST.
She is the Head of the Postgraduate School of "Beni Architettonici e del Paesaggio".
She researches in cooperation with scientific institutes of international relevance and within the framework of CNR and PRIN Ministerial projects. She is a member of scientific and editorial boards of journals and associations, as well as the Rector's delegate to the City Toponymy Commission, Turin.

# Participants



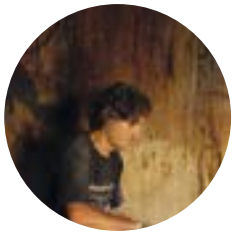
**Nadia Battaglio** graduated from the Politecnico di Torino, worked on the CAPAcities project for the development of Alpine areas. She founded the "Studio Ellisse Architetti" together with architect Lorenzo Serra, specialised in renovations through environmentally friendly materials and traditional rural architecture. She collaborated with the association Parco Culturale Alta Langa, with which she renovated a small stone building, learning from local craftsmen. She supervised the design of the interventions carried out during the **Banca del fare** workshops. She is a member of the Falegnameria Nuova association for the creation of a quality brand for solid wood furniture with a local and controlled supply chain.

BANCA DEL FARE



**Umberto Bonomo**, architect, graduated at Venezia's IUAV. Doctor in Architecture and Urban Studies, Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile, 2009. He works on Heritage, urbanism and Social Housing looking for points of contact between theory and practice. His work was exhibited at the Biennials of Chile, Shenzhen, São Paulo and Venezia. He is an active member of Docomomo Chile, has done consultancies and studies for the Ministry of Culture, Arts and Heritage in Chile, for ECLAC (CEPAL), the Inter-American Development Bank (BID), among others. He is currently an Associate Professor at the School of Architecture of the Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile and is part of the Board of Our World Heritage Foundation.

Centro UC
Patrimonio Cultural



**Maurizio Cesprini** graduated in 2006 in Cultural and Environmental Heritage. From 2006 he has acted as Lead Coordinator and instructor of the **Association Canova**'s international field school program in collaboration with Italian and foreign universities. He is one of the promoters of the Ghesc Village Laboratory and dedicates the majority of his time to the study and transmission of traditional construction techniques through direct empirical learning on site. In early 2024 the association turned into the **Fondazione Canova** of which Maurizio is the president.

FONDAZIONE CANOVA

**Marta Colmenares Fernández**. Architect and cofounder of **Terrachidia** NGO. Specialist in Planning and Landscape Management and Urban Studies and Specialist in the Development of Precarious Human Settlements from the Universidad Politécnica de Madrid. Currently working on her doctoral thesis, whose objective is to analyse "Urbanisation processes of rural areas and re-scaling of the Oasis in the Draa Valley territory". She has been a guest lecturer at various conferences and teaches the UNESCO Chair Master's for Basic Habitability of the Universidad Politécnica de Madrid. She has worked in projects of development and basic habitability with the NGO Habitáfrica.



**Pimpim de Azevedo** is an artist and conservator of Tibetan architecture. She received her Master's degree in Heritage Sciences from University College London. In 1996, together with the late André Alexander, she founded **Tibet Heritage Fund**, serving as the current director. She studied Tibetan architecture with master craftspeople.



**Francesca Governa**, PhD, is an urban geographer and professor of economic and political geography at DIST. She is involved in research activities at national and international level on four main issues: local development processes and policies; urban margins and spatial justice; urban development and the rescaling of the urban realm; urban China and urbanization processes in the Global South. She has carried on fieldwork in European, North African and Chinese cities.



**Américo Guedes**, biologist, Master's in agronomic engineering. Works at **Palombar** since 2015. In addition to nature conservation work, he is engaged in the conservation of the rural heritage, namely through the organisation of work camps and the operational management of the recovery works carried out on traditional lofts and dry-stone walls.



**Ángel Guillén**, Architect, MSc. in Sustainable Development, with professional practice approved in the republics of Peru (INC and AECID) and Chile (Fundación Altiplano). He is the Executive Director of TERRITORIUM (Laboratory for Planetary Sustainability), a component of **Medesus**.





**Hagino Kiichiro**. Born in Tokyo, architect, BA University of Tokyo, MA University of Pennsylvania, Ph.D. University of Tokyo, he teaches at the University of Toyama. In 1996 he founded the Hagino Atelier, specialized in architectural design, renovation, and traditional craftsmanship. After settling in the Noto Peninsula in 2004, he restored the traditional 'dozo' and 'minka' following the Noto Earthquake in 2007. In 2010, he co-founded Team Maruyama, engaging in activities related to the local 'satoyama' lifestyle.



**Cristián Heinsen Planella** holds a bachelor's in literature from Universidad Católica de Chile, a Master's in creative documentary from Universidad Autónoma de Barcelona, Spain, and a Master's in Business Administration from Universidad Adolfo Ibáñez, Chile. He is the founder, former president and current director of development of the **Fundación Altiplano**. Author of publications and of the "Sustainable Conservation in Community" model.



**Hirako Yutaka** is an architect specialised in conservation and is the programme director of **Tibet Heritage Fund** (THF) and Leh Old Town Initiative (LOTI). Since 1998 he has worked with THF on conservation projects in Lhasa and other Tibetan regions, in Beijing, Mongolia, and since 2012 in the Himalayan regions of Sikkim and Ladakh. His projects have won UNESCO awards.



**Edvin Lamçe**, archaeologist (University of Tirana), works as a project coordinator and researcher in various heritage preservation and development projects with a particular interest in cultural events, tourist attractions, museums, and UNESCO sites. He works with the **Gjirokastra Foundation** since 2011 and was project manager of the EU-funded project REVATO (Revitalization of historic towns of Gjirokastra and Berat).



**Andrea Longhi**. Professor of History of architecture at DIST, he teaches History and criticism of regional cultural heritage. He is a member of the Politecnico di Torino's Responsible Risk Resilience Centre (R3C) and ICOMOS Italia. His research activities mainly focus on history of architecture and settlements, historical analysis of landscape, history of heritagization processes.

**Emiliano Cruz Michelena** is an architect (University of Buenos Aires), PhD in non-conventional and sustainable technology (Politecnico di Torino), and Master's in cultural management and social innovation (Universidad Complutense de Madrid). He has participated in large projects of architecture, monument conservation and social infrastructure. Since 2018 he worked for the Ministry of Culture of Buenos Aires. He is currently the General Director of the Coordinación de Eventos y Transformación Territorial of Buenos Aires Municipality.



**Carmen Moreno** is an architect, Master's in Conservation and Restoration of Architectural Heritage and PhD student at the Universidad Politécnica de Madrid. She is Associate Professor at the Alfonso X el Sabio University, Madrid. Co-founder of **Terrachidia** NGO



**Sanada Junko** is Professor at the School of Environment and Society (Tokyo Institute of Technology). She is a specialist in rural landscape architecture, drywall construction and historical and regional planning. On these issues, Junko wrote *Zukai daredemo dekiru ishitsumi nyūmon* (2018). She is the founder of the **Dry Stone Walling School** of Japan.



**Lorenzo Serra** is an architect (Politecnico di Torino). He attended training courses at the Casaclima Agency in Bolzano and in 2011/12 the Master's "Wood program" at the Aalto University of Helsinki in Finland. He combines theory with practice gaining some years of experience on construction sites both abroad and in Italy as an assistant carpenter. He founded the "Studio Ellisse Architetti" architecture studio in Turin together with the architect Nadia Battaglio. He is co-founder, designer and didactic tutor for the **Banca del Fare** project.



**Eltjana Shkreli** is an urban planner, with twenty years' experience in community-based regional development and planning. She is pursuing doctoral studies at the University of Genova, within CLOE Program - Training to complexity: multidisciplinary approaches to rural and mountain sustainable development and conservation, under the H2020-MSCA-COFUND. She is the co-founder of **GO2**.





**Ionas Sklavounos**. Architect, MA University of Patras, MS in Epistemology of Architecture at the National Technical University of Athens, where he also worked as Teaching Assistant. He has just finished is Ph.D. at the University of Antwerp, within the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Innovative Training Network "TACK – Communities of Tacit Knowledge: Architecture and its ways of Knowing". He is a co-founder of **Boulouki**.



**Taki Yosuke** was born in Tokyo and has been living and working in Italy since 1988. After years of theatrical and artistic experiences, he now writes essays, curates and sets up exhibitions on cultural themes and organises an 'itinerant school' to promote the essence of Italian design.



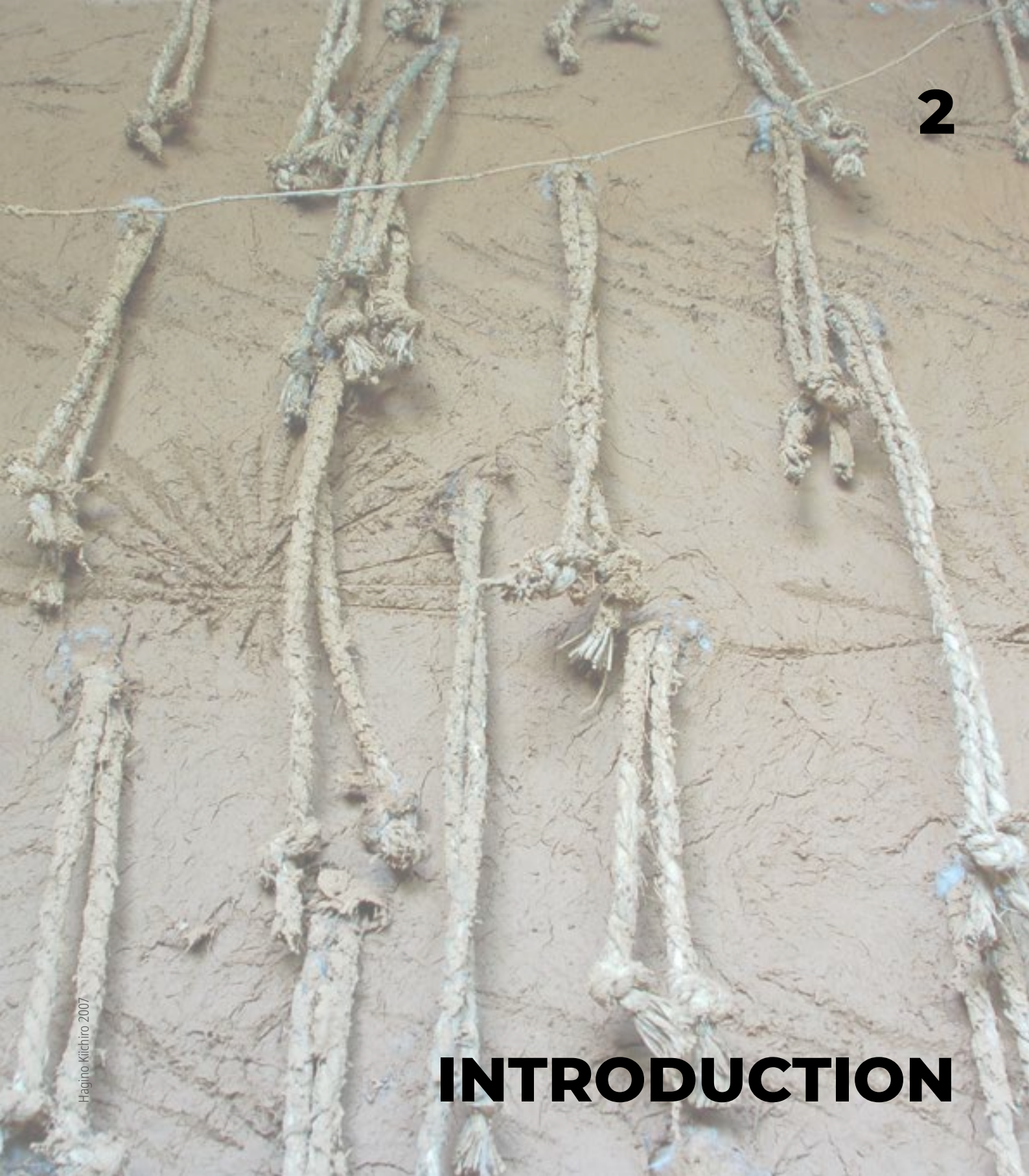
**Elena Vasić Petrović**, MA of Architecture. Works at the Institute for Cultural Heritage Preservation of Niš, Serbia. Founder of DE arkitektura and the **Architect Aleksandar Radović Foundation**. She was the recipient of a European Heritage Stories Award of the Council of Europe, an EU Grand-Prix, an Europa Nostra Award, as well as the Honor of the City of Pirot for Special Contribution to Culture.



**Paolo Vitti** has designed restoration projects and carried out research on many archaeological sites in Italy, Greece, Turkey, Tunisia, Cyprus, Palestine and Morocco. His design activity is focused on tile-brick vaulting, experimenting with the recovery of traditional workmanship in construction. Actively promoting heritage as a driver for climate action, he is one of the promoters of the Master's in Historic Preservation and Sustainable architecture at the University of Notre Dame where he is Associate Professor.



**Beatriz Yuste** Architect, BA Universitat Politècnica de Valencia, MA Universitat Politècnica de Catalunya, PhD student in Architecture, Heritage and City at the Polytechnic University of Valencia. She works as a freelance professional between Chile and Spain on projects that combine heritage conservation, quality of life and sustainable development. In recent years she worked in the conservation of the Andean temples of Arica and Parinacota, as project manager of the **Fundación Altiplano** (2011-2022).



2

# INTRODUCTION

Hagino Kichiro 2007



# At the intersection of heritage and local development



Andrea Bocco

In my view, territories in mature industrial societies are living two opposite trends: on one side, extreme urbanisation of certain areas, usually along coastlines and in low- and flatlands; on the other, abandonment of marginal areas, usually rugged landscapes and highlands, where population is shrinking and ageing. The two phenomena are actually two sides of the same coin. The main problems at stake are environmental regeneration in the first set of areas, and survival of human societies in the latter.

Sustainability can be smart, and profitable. This is the hope of many people in the west. Sustainability is just another way of making profit, just 'green' profit. It is fashionable for us rich, urban people in the west to switch to glass bottles instead of plastic bottles and to biking instead of driving a car – these things make us think we 'save the planet'. This attitude is found both at the individual level and at the government level – the current policy changes are in fact very comfortable moves which won't reduce much our footprint.

At the same time, we in the west have a problem with where the population is (this is happening all over the world, but let us speak about ourselves). In countries such as Japan or Italy, people have almost completed the process of moving out of the marginal areas and flowing into the large cities. Population in those marginal areas has dramatically decreased, and it's dramatically ageing. With current trends, some marginal areas will be completely devoid of population in a few decades. True, there exist national policies to counteract such trends both in Japan and in Italy. I believe that in marginal areas traditional knowledge – in agriculture, building, craftsmanship or even the way you are part of a community – can be a human development asset, together with other assets such as the less-polluted environment and a 'niche' character which allows biodiversity and even human diversity to strive. Even within the same region one finds different cultural traditions which translate into different building technologies, different crops, different songs, different food and so forth. This is going to disappear very soon everywhere because of the tremendous impact of standardisation, of globalisation, of cultural homogenisation.

How can we as experts – in architecture, building, restoration, planning, but also in economic, social and cultural development – contribute to preserving diversity, preserving landscapes as living landscapes, as well as helping communities to earn real money, not subsidies? What should be the destiny of the so-called lesser heritage – think of dry-stone walls, supporting hundreds or even thousands of kilometres of terraces which literally make up an agricultural landscape. What should they become? Eco-museums? Come on, let

1. Terraced landscape. Torredaniele, Settimo Vittone (TO). Andrea Bocco, 2023.

us be serious. Who is going to spend the money to make this happen? Who is going to spend the money to maintain such a heritage? And why should they do that? In the world there are hundreds of thousands of kilometres of terraces, which generations of peasants have built busting their ass to obtain cultivable land – and this is why the walls exist. Not for taking pictures. Not to allow landscape architects or tourists to admire them, centuries later.

Admittedly, the outcome of the work of generations is often an outcome of harmony: it can be interesting to discuss how it can be that all that effort has produced beauty. Sometimes such achievements are acknowledged (as UNESCO landscapes, FAO's GIAHS...), and some entity finances some intervention, necessarily very localised. A tourism or culture body subsidises the restoration of a small piece, chosen for some reason, which is maintained. And tourists will go there and take photos. But this happens on a little piece of terrace, maybe one km long, not one thousand km. When, on the other hand, thousands of kilometres are kept standing, it is not to please the tourists or UNESCO, but to eat or sell what grows on top of the terraces.

What we will try to discuss here is whether and how the rehabilitation of heritage – the technically and culturally appropriate rehabilitation, the wise and community-rooted rehabilitation – can contribute to the benefit of local communities. This asks for a holistic point of view, not just the technical point of view which is, of course, essential but not sufficient. You need to respect, you need to understand a certain material culture, how constructions are built; you need to master the techniques. But at the same time, you need to understand how the local community works, what makes it alive or might make it alive in the future.

This seminar deals with a niche in the work of conservation and revitalisation, as we are not going to talk about monumental heritage, but about lesser heritage, often located in marginal areas.

Moreover, we are particularly interested in finding those initiatives that make competence with respect to certain traditional techniques a point of qualification. Therefore, not restoration or recovery in general, but a kind of restoration or recovery that is particularly competent in the revitalisation of traditional techniques.

Therefore, we tighten up on a specific field within the world of heritage conservation. Nevertheless, this niche is not negligible, since despite the building boom, urbanisation and all the rest, the traditional built heritage is still, if not majority, a very large slice of the myriad buildings that exist in the world.

But this is not enough: we look for the intersection of this niche, with the theme of local development.

As we understand intervention in these marginal places, local development is an ethical imperative. I mean that parachuting into e.g. an Andean community, because there is a small church there dating back to the time of the Conquistadors, and putting it back to the honour of the world according to the international restoration charts, and perhaps taking care of traditional building techniques, and then leaving is not particularly significant. Yes, the object as such will remain standing while otherwise it would have risked collapsing; it is certainly laudable that someone managed to restore it. Yet we are looking for those cases where those who intervene are concerned about the survival of human communities that are so peripheral that they are threatened with extinction from a cultural

and demographic point of view. Ageing, lack of job opportunities, lack of services, a whole series of problems that, as I said before, are evident even in industrialised and developed countries. And can be even more acute in less industrialised countries.

So, we went and we are still in search, both of subjects who, although external, have grown strong roots in an area that they have been taking care of for a long period, and of local subjects, who carry out initiatives from bottom up, and grow in competence and ambition. Or again, are itinerant in their operations, but have the ability to put a little yeast in local processes that need some extra expertise, or some stimulus, so that traditional techniques can pass on to the new generations. This includes not only continuing to know how to build in a certain way, but also having cultural and economic motivations to keep doing it.

Each of the two themes – recovery of heritage using traditional techniques, and local development – represents a niche field of activity, and the intersection of the two niches is probably very small. Yet, they are two sides of the same argument: if you cannot maintain livelihood in a place, the cultural landscape and the constructions have no more reason to be; at most, they turn into an archaeological park, or a theme park for tourists.

Tourism can be at the same time a solution and a threat, because tourism may bring money in, but tourism can also destroy a community's social pattern and lifestyle, and of course physically destroy the built environment, as it is just obvious if you observe villages which are being 'developed' because of tourism. Tourism may constitute a part of a local society's livelihood, but the economy should not rely too much on it. Diversification ought to be pursued, and the revitalisation of traditional know-how (which implies its constant adaptation to current needs and ideals) is one of the assets a community can make use of in its struggle for survival.
It is dangerous for a local system to be economically dependent on tourism. If your economic livelihood depends on the outside world, you are in a treacherous condition of dependence. If tourism adds something to your wealth, good for you; but if you depend entirely or in large part on tourism, you are a weak position.
Entire regions of the world would collapse economically if international flights, capital inflow from foreign countries, and even the existence in rich countries of people who can fly cheaply and go there to spend their extra money, were discontinued.
Therefore, it is crucial that revitalisation programmes of territorial systems of traditional lesser heritage include a vision of how such heritage can contribute to the good of the locally settled communities.

In the title of this book, 'local' seems to refer mainly to the spatial/territorial dimension, 'heritage' to the historical/cultural one. Of course this is a simplification, but the two terms certainly possess these semantic connotations. The phrase 'local heritage' could therefore refer to the time (past and future) of/in a certain place and of/in a certain society, which is spatially localised.
This point does not seem irrelevant to me because it highlights the ethical and/or political scope of the commitment of those who work in this field. They collaborate in giving, or at least allowing, a future to 'aree interne', 'diagonales du

vide', 'rugged territories', or whatever you want to call them. A popular future, i.e. not gentrified, exclusive, or elitist, but one that allows hope to those who inhabit these places, counteracting the populist, nationalist, identitarian drifts that are finding fertile ground there, and which build a nostalgic rhetoric around instrumental, and often invented, narrations.
In other terms, we have been looking for systemic actions aimed at territorial development, and for progressive interpretations of the work on, and of the meaning of, heritage.

Let me add that beyond their technical competence, and their ability to recover a certain heritage and make it an opportunity for development, the lecturers of this series of seminars deserve respect because of their human qualities, and their obstinacy in working in often difficult contexts. I am certain that they were able to achieve admirable results because they believed in what they were doing.

I hope that the 'Rehabilitation of Traditional Heritage and Local Development' seminar series will open research opportunities in the years to come, and to enrich and consolidate the relationships with fellows we are meeting along this path.



3

# COMPARISON

Fundación Altiplano 2018


1

# An international overview of community-rooted rehabilitations



Martina Bocci

The chapter provides some theoretical basis and offers a framework, but also tries to stimulate a curiosity to delve deeper into what was presented in the lectures and panels. It represents a sort of synthesis of what emerged from the author's doctoral research (Bocci 2023).

Starting from what emerged during the seminars, the intersection between heritage rehabilitation and local development was analysed by adopting a multidisciplinary and multicriterial analysis of the work of the NGOs that contributed to the RTHLD seminars with their unconventional practices of community-rooted rehabilitation (Bartlett and Vavrus 2017; Veer 2016).
Indeed, it is not a proper comparison, but a parallel reading in which each case suggests directions to analyse the others (Robinson 2011, 2017).
The data collected through the seminars are heterogeneous in quality, quantity, depth and topics covered, primarily because most NGOs did not take part in all the editions and because the answers in the round table discussions were more or less exhaustive. This is not, nor does it aim to be, a complete and exhaustive representation. Moreover, one of the NGOs was explored in deep through fieldwork during the PhD research, and thus recurs most frequently in the chapter.
In order to complete some missing data, information gathered from the documents written or made available by NGOs have been consulted: scientific articles, books, and book chapters, but also grey literature such as handbooks, dissemination publications, annual reports (THF, FA, Tr), guidebooks (FA, Tr), documentary films (Tr), and even workshop and summer school posters.
To open up an external opinion, additional documentation not produced by the NGOs was included (where available), e.g., masters' theses or doctoral dissertations, articles in both journals and newspapers, descriptions at awards. I also looked for information – especially on transmission methods at construction sites and workshops – from partner NGOs in specific projects (FG with Cultural Heritage without Borders, MG with the Spanish Cooperation, Pl with Rempart, etc.) and from social channels and websites. Finally, I attended seminars, conferences, and meetings that NGOs organised or which they were invited to.

The choice of NGOs to be invited to the seminars was meant to focus on subjects able to carry out actions extensive in time and in size to have a significant impact on a context.
In selecting the case studies, preference was given to initiatives that had been active for at least a decade (ARF and Bl are exceptions) and were still active (Md is the exception). This choice is motivated primarily by the need to read the interventions and their effects on the local context after a sufficient

1. *Cover images of the RTHLD seminar series.*

settling time, during which the population may have had the opportunity to feel involved and participate in the initiatives.
Furthermore, it is quite common to see the launching of admirable associations which fail to have an extended duration. Once the initial enthusiasm – in some cases generated by having obtained some funding – wanes, initiatives may fade and disperse, failing to reach an adequate degree of maturity necessary to take root, professionalise and gain recognition.
These discriminating factors therefore limited the inclusion of people working without an organisation. In fact, while very often the initiatives originated from the interest and action of private individuals, their persistence over the years is partly related to their formal establishment, opening greater possibilities to access funding.

State top-down programmes were also not included: the approach adopted in these programmes has revealed to be too distant and detached from local communities and the sustainability of the development of the territories in which they were implemented, often mainly benefiting tourism (López Levi et al. 2015-2020).

It was decided to focus on the current situation, adopting 2019 as the reference year, for a pre-pandemic perspective. However, where possible, the subsequent evolution over time was also considered.

This chapter is structured on the work, characteristics and information drawn from the NGOs and uses words and examples brought by them to analyse different aspects.
In creating the comparative narrative, the experiences and anecdotes gathered from the NGOs participate in a heterogeneous form: alongside a general overview of how all NGOs relate to a specific topic, consistent examples were selected to deepen it.
Summary tables complement the chapter and allow a first overview of the differences between the NGOs, a qualitative assessment of the relevance of the issues for each of them, and provide a navigator of the topics explored.

The NGOs involved in this series of seminars operate mainly in the restoration of lesser, diffuse, and non-monumental heritage, that is functional and aimed at satisfying basic needs (Oliver 2006; Rudofsky 1964). It is an indigenous, contextual heritage, that belongs to a place, and that is communal and/or shared in a community or region. Is often privately owned but has a strong collective value (**§3.2.1**).

The rehabilitated heritage is often located in marginal places, that have experienced strong migratory phenomena in recent decades. In some cases, communities and inhabitants themselves are no longer there and the owners are sometimes physically distant from their built heritage. In other cases, tourists have taken the place of the inhabitants, who have moved to less attractive parts of the city.
Depopulation was often coupled with a radical change in lifestyles, which have altered the rhythms of living, the bonds, and the reciprocity links between villagers that used to allow survival in such contexts (**§3.3.1**).
Local society has dissolved, and consequently the collective care and maintenance of heritage and places has faded. Next to this, inhabitants often show a lack of interest in taking care of a heritage, both because it is linked to imaginaries of poverty and

backwardness, and as a consequence of a decrease in manual skills and traditional knowledge.
Communities are often no longer considered autonomous regarding the technical management of their own heritage and in many instances the intervention by outsiders has been instrumental, if not necessary, to conserve, protect, rehabilitate, and transmit a heritage that would otherwise probably no longer exist today.

NGOs however have set themselves the objective of not only preventing the loss of artefacts and the local building knowledge associated with them, but also of traditions, social ties, and ways of living, by channelling the impulse of those few people who still believe in such possibility. In this sense, heritage restoration and recovery of traditional practices can represent a strategy to promoting living again in marginal places, as well as reactivating the local community. This requires a holistic approach, an in-depth knowledge of local needs and aspirations, and also a broad and transversal view.

This chapter tries to understand if and how the rehabilitation of traditional heritage through the conservation, transmission, and adaptation of traditional construction techniques, represents an opportunity for the local development of marginal places.
At the intersection between these two themes, it delves into the interactions between NGOs, communities, heritage recovery and possibilities for development and reactivation.
The first essential element in the success of the initiatives proposed by the NGOs is the 'becoming local' and **ROOTING** of the NGOs themselves, by living in or by frequent and repeated contacts. Next to this, is the involvement and empowerment of the local communities (§3.1).

§3.2 addresses the strategies and challenges in (tangible and intangible) heritage rehabilitation through the transmission, evolution and adaptation of traditional construction knowledge and techniques to meet today's and tomorrow's needs, **EMPOWERING** inhabitants and communities thanks to their active participation in processes.

§3.3 looks at the holistic approach adopted by the NGOs in **REACTIVATING** marginal places and the role that heritage (extending the definition to the set of traditional ecological knowledge embedded in the territory) can play in strengthening local and circular economies and stimulating autonomous initiatives by inhabitants.

# 3.1

# ROOTING



# NGOs' approach to the local community

### 3.1.1 The NGOs involved in the RTHLD seminars

**THF**'s André Alexander first visited Tibet in 1987. In 1993, he and Andrew Brannan initiated the Lhasa Archive Project, to document and catalogue vernacular architecture that was increasingly disappearing. The success of this project (which received support from UNESCO) led to the founding of THF in 1996, an international non-profit organisation engaged in the field of international cooperation. In 2000 THF was forced to leave Lhasa following extradition and started working in Amdo, Kham (Qinghai and Sichuan), Beijing in China, in Mongolia, as well as in India (Sikkim and Ladakh). The Leh Old Town Conservation Program was initiated in 2003, and is now THF's main focus of intervention. André Alexander passed away prematurely and unexpectedly in 2012. Pimpim de Azevedo and Yutaka Hirako have since taken THF's management.

**Md**, a non-profit civil association, is based in the city of Arequipa (Peru), and was established in 1997 to complement the work of the Spanish cooperation agency AECID, active in the south of Peru. It evolved together with it, as happened in 2005 (**Md 4.5**). In 2007 this led to the creation of the Oficina de Gestión Patrimonial y Cultural del Colca (OGPC), to the broadening of its actions and to the installation of micro territorial management units. Angel Guillén comes from the regional capital, Arequipa. Md did not start out as an open-ended initiative.

**FA** started with a trip to the Andean highlands of Arica and Parinacota (Chile) of Cristian Heinsen and two friends in 1991. On that occasion they met the missionary father who oversaw heritage and local communities, who invited the young students back in 1996. Some would be part of the founding group that started FA in 1999, which was formally established in 2001, and obtained legal status in 2002. Since its foundation, FA experimented a transition from a voluntary phase to professionalisation (2009-2019). Today FA describes itself as being in its third phase of development, pursuing a major change of direction, seeking to consolidate as a school of sustainable conservation, passing part of its work to community representatives, and moving its activity to other regions of Chile.

**PI**, a non-profit environmental NGO, was founded in 2000 in the region of Trás-os-Montes (Portugal) under the name of "Palombar – Associação de Proprietários de Pombais Tradicionais do Nordeste" at the encouragement of the Douro International Natural Park (PNDI), which had carried out a rehabilitation programme of some 60 dovecotes between 1997 and 2000. Over the years the NGO has increasingly adopted an integrated approach, working to recover the traditional ecological function of dovecotes (Martins 2010). Due to this shift, in 2013, the name was changed to "Palombar – Conservação da Natureza e do Património Rural" and the statute was updated, focusing more on environmental conservation. Currently, most of the team is made up of biologists and agronomists.

**AC**'s beginnings date back to 1989, when Ken and Kali Marquardt (from US), arrived in Canova, a medieval village in Ossola (Italy) almost devoid of inhabitants. Here Ken (later naturalised as Italian citizen) decided to buy and recover a house for his family to settle in. This first restoration was followed by the rehabilitation of two other buildings commissioned by a Swiss man. The Canova Association was formally founded in 2001 in Canova, Crevoladossola. Since 2011 AC focuses its rehabilitation efforts on Ghesc village. In 2024 it was transformed into a foundation.

The Gjirokastra Conservation Office (GCO) was founded in 2001 by the Packard Humanities Institute (PHI, US) at the solicitation of the City's mayor and of the Albanian Republic's President under the auspices of the Butrint Foundation (Lamprakos 2010, 6). In 2005, upon the inscription of the historic centre of Gjirokastra as a UNESCO World Heritage site, the leadership passed to the Albanian Sadi Petrela, and the name changed to Gjirokastra Conservation and Development Organisation (GCDO, later simplified to Fondacioni Gjirokastra - **FG**). From the initial focus on saving key buildings, FG shifted to a vision aimed at the future of the city (Lamprakos 2010, 9). Since 2010 FG also works in the town of Berat, where it opened an office to manage the REVATO project.

Originally from Tokyo, Hagino Yuki and Kiichiro moved to the Noto peninsula (Japan) in 2004, after a four-year residence in Philadelphia. From 2004 to 2009, they self-built their house (the future location of the MG project). In 2009, after having being trained in the Noto Satoyama/Satoumi Meister Program (2007) of Kanazawa University, Yuki took part in the "Citizen science programme," within the Ministry of the Environment's "Monitoring 1000 site project" entrusted to the Wajima City Biotope Research Group. Taking over the monitoring activities, the couple founded **MG** in 2010.

**Tr** started its work in the M'Hamid Oasis (Morocco) in 2012, after an initial period of educational activities in Spain, made up of a group of architects specialised both in Cultural Heritage Preservation and Cooperation for Development. Since 2018 it has started to focus also on Mauritania, and carried out projects in Egypt, Niger and Spain. Tr's "Plan estratégico (2020-2025)" aims at a leap in scale in the M'Hamid Oasis projects, and includes rural development projects in Spain (Terrachidia 2020a).

Inspired by an encounter with the rural environment and local lifestyle in 2007, Sanada Junko organised the first drystone restoration course in 2009. Years of annual courses followed, while **DSW** was formalised in 2013, to inherit the techniques of Japanese dry stone walling. To this end, they organize practical workshops to learn how to build and repair dry stone walls, deliver lectures and classes to raise awareness about the value of dry stone wall construction techniques, and engage in various other activities.

Elena Vasić Petrović was born in Pivot (Serbia), in the same district as Gostuša, but 'discovered' that village only in 2010. In 2012-13 the Ministry of Culture financed a research project on the village, which evolved into a conservation project in 2015. **ARF** was founded in 2016 by the Institute for Cultural Heritage Preservation Niš, which she served as the director of. ARF is dedicated to Architect Aleksandar Radović from Niš who worked as director of the Institute from 1976 to 2004.

Boulouki (**Bl**) is interdisciplinary research-and-practice collective, whose work is focused on the study of tradi-tional building techniques and materials and dedicated to the study of traditional craftsmanship. Based upon these thematic axes, the group's course of action includes conducting research, organizing workshops, con-ferences and cultural events; promoting projects in collaboration with local communities and their stakeholders. It was founded in 2018, based in Athens and active in various locations in Greece.

| Case Study | Tibet Heritage Fund | Medesus | Fundación Altiplano | Palombar | Fondazione Canova | Fondacioni Gjirokastra | まるやま組 Maruyama Gumi | Terrachidia | 石積み学校 The Dry-Stone Walling School of Japan | Фондација Архитекта Александар Радовић Architect Aleksandar Radović Foundation | Μπουλουκι Boulouki |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Acronym** | THF | Md | FA | Pl | AC | FG | MG | Tr | DSW | ARF | Bl |
| **Foundation year and place** | 1996 Lhasa, Tibet, CN | 1997 Arequipa, PE | 2000 Arica, CL | 2000 Santo Adrião, PT | 2001 Crevolados-sola, IT | 2001 Gjirokastra, AL | 2010 Wajima, JP | 2012 Madrid, ES | 2013 Tokushima, JP | 2016 Niš, RS | 2018 Athens, GR |
| **Initiator/ present chairperson** | André Alexander and Pimpim de Azevedo / Pimpim de Azevedo | Ángel Guillén | Cristian Heinsen / Álvaro Merino | Nuno Alexandre Raposo Martins / Américo Guedes | Ken Marquardt / Maurizio Cesprini | Packard Humanities Institute / Sadi Petrela | Yuki and Kiichiro Hagino | Carmen Moreno | Sanada Junko | Elena Vasić Petrović | Panos Kostoulas, Grigoris Koutropoulos, Christoforos Theocharis, Ionas Sklavounos, Mina Kouvara |
| **Origin of the initiator(s)** | outsiders (another continent) who live there | insider (same region) | outsiders (other regions) who live there | insiders (same region) | outsiders (another continent) | outsiders (another continent) | outsiders (another region) who live there | outsiders (another continent) | outsiders (another region) | insider (another village) | outsiders (another region) |
| **Type** | NGO, NPO | Association, NPO | NPO | NGO, NPO | Association, NPO | NGO, NPO | NPO | NGO, NPO | NGO | NGO, NPO | NGO, NPO |
| **Place(s) of intervention** | Tibet (until 2000): Lhasa, Amdo, Kham; Beijing (CN), Nomgon sum (MN), Sikkim, Ladakh (IN – from 2002) | Valle del Colca (PE) | Arica and Parinacota and other regions of CL | Trás-os-Montes (PT) | Val d'Ossola (IT) | Gjirokastra and Berat (AL) | Mii-machi and Wajima, Ishikawa prefecture (JP) | M'Hamid Oasis (MA); Chinguetti, (MR – from 2017) | Itinerant in all JP | Gostuša and Justiniana Prima, RS; Trebinje, BA | Epirus, GR |

Table 1: Description of the main characteristics of NGOs.




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2. *Pawa* before the excavations in the Chiu Chiu church (Chile). Martina Bocci 2022.
3. Geographical location of the NGOs. Martina Bocci 2024.

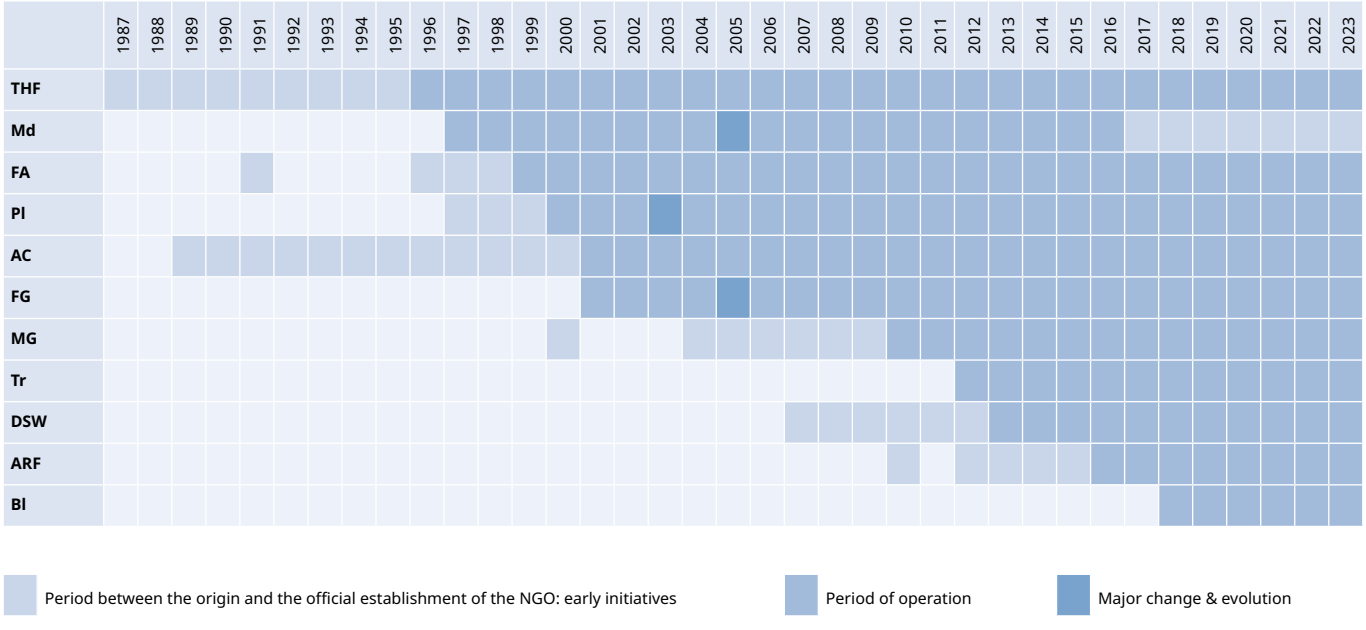
**International guidelines** recognise a fundamental role for NGOs in carrying out restoration that actively involves the inhabitants; at the same time, NGOs are taking an increasing space and importance on the social scene (both in terms of their number and the investments they are able to move). Faro Convention asks to "encourage non-governmental organisations concerned with heritage conservation to act in the public interest" and "recognise the role of voluntary organisations both as partners in activities and as constructive critics of cultural heritage policies" (Council of Europe 2005a, 11,12).

The NGOs invited in the seminars are non-profit organisations (DSW excepted), mostly non-governmental (THF, FG, DSW, ARF, Pl, Tr, Bl), while FA works as a sub-executing entity of the Chilean government. Some case studies are foundations (THF, FA, FG, ARF) or associations (Md and AC). MG defines itself as a Community-Based Learning Place (Hagino 2018, 52). Bl describes itself as a craft-research collective.

The NGOs have managed to remain active thanks to the commitment of the individuals who have carried them forward over the years, strengthening themselves and in some cases exceeding twenty years of activity (THF, Md, FA, Pl, AC, FG).

They were initiated in the most diverse ways: in some case the initiators' interest in exotic local cultures and traditions (for André Alexander of THF and Cristina Heinsen of FA at a very young age); in others, NGOs were created upon the request of larger projects and plans (Md and FG).
In several cases, years of voluntary and informal activities were carried out before the foundation or association was established and professionalised (table 2).
Many of the NGOs have **evolved significantly** over the years. Changes may concern the focus of interventions (Pl), the approach and strategy (Md, FA, FG, Pl), the areas where they operate, even extended to other regions or countries (THF, Tr, FA), and/or their leader(s) (THF).

Table 2: NGOs' origin and evolution.



| NGOs' teams | THF | Md | FA | PI | AC | FG | MG | Tr | DSW | ARF | BI |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Multidisciplinary teams | •• | • | ••• | •• | • | •• | • | • | • | • | •• |
| Majority of architect & restorers | • | •• | • | | • | •• | • | ••• | | ••• | ••• |

Table 3: NGOs' multidisciplinary teams.

| Collaborations | THF | Md | FA | PI | AC | FG | MG | Tr | DSW | ARF | BI |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Int. cooperation | ••• | ••• | | | | | | •• | | | |
| local governments & municipalities | •• | ••• | ••• | | • | ••• | • | •• | | •• | ••• |
| institutions | • | • | • | •• | | •• | | | | •• | •• |
| Church and missions | | | •• | | | | | | | | |
| universities | ••• | | ••• | • | ••• | | ••• | ••• | ••• | • | ••• |
| NGOs | •• | ••• | • | •• | • | ••• | | •• | • | ••• | • |
| SMEs | | •• | •• | | | ••• | | • | | | •• |

Table 4: NGOs' collaborations.

The NGOs differ considerably in terms of **permanent staff**, which in many cases has evolved over the years. Generally, the core and permanent team is quite limited, rarely reaching a dozen people (as is the case of FA, PI). On the other hand, craftspeople working for the NGOs are often numerous, albeit on project contracts. Significant is the case of FA, whose staff tremendously increased (from 10 people in 2008 to 90 in 2019 – only a minority have permanent contracts), while in turn THF's team decreased considerably after moving away from Lhasa.
Not all NGOs offer full-time or paid jobs, and many people involved in them have got other jobs: they may be university lecturers and researchers (Tr, DSW, MG, AC, Bl), architects and restorers (Tr, MG, Md, ARF, Bl). Being part of an NGO and working in the third sector can be challenging in terms of time and effort required, sometimes with little financial return and lack of job stability.
In many cases NGOs rely on the support of volunteers participating in courses (PI, AC, FG, MG, Tr, DSW, ARF, Bl) or on the owners of dwellings and artefacts (FA, THF as co-funding, DSW, PI, ARF) to carry out the rehabilitation initiatives.

Alongside members, various international consultants collaborate – both academic and from institutions and other NGOs.

Almost all NGOs also co-operate with **scholars** and **universities**, even from different countries and continents. The most typical forms of collaboration are technical consultancy, calls for tenders and the execution of projects. Academics are invited to lecture at events, festivals and seminars organised by NGOs (FA, PI, FG, Bl). University students are in many cases involved in practical courses, as well as in the realisation of useful documentation for NGOs, such as photogrammetric surveys and tests both on site and in university laboratories. In turn, NGO members are sometimes called to share their experience in seminars and lectures at universities.

Local public and private **institutions** are frequently partners in NGOs' projects and initiatives: for instance, FG works in close cooperation with the local branch of the Institute of Cultural Monuments; PI cooperates with the Douro International Natural Park; ARF

works in cooperation with the regional museum of Trebinje in Bosnia and Herzegovina. FA's work started from collaborating with a mission linked to the Catholic Church, that is the owner of most of the churches in need of rehabilitation. Bl works in cooperation with the Greek Ministry of Culture.
NGOs often create partnerships with other key local bodies such as associations, NGOs, and foundations, possibly taking advantage of their facilitation in contacting inhabitants, as expressed by Américo Guedes (**Pl 5.1.1**) referring to the AEPGA (Associação para o Estudo e Protecção do Gado Asinino). Sometimes NGOs even support the creation of local associations and local branches (THF, FA, Md, Tr).

Over the years, some influence and collaborations also occurred between the NGOs themselves, such as FA and Md (who inspired each other); the courses offered by AC for DSW students (Kaneko 2019, 2020); the invitation of Tr and Bl members to AC's annual meeting; but also Tr-FG, GO2-FG, FA-MG, and Tr-FA.

On top of that, FG, Md and FA collaborate with local **SMEs**.

Financing is quite tricky for almost all the NGOs analysed (table 5). It often implies a mix of solutions, and instability over time. Funds are generally obtained from donations and through the participation in calls or competitions. Only THF, FA, FG afford to rely on relatively continuous funders; Tr and DSW rely on income from training courses. Pl, AC, ARF, Bl instead receive funding for given periods or projects. This affects the salary of a permanent staff and the chances of growth of the NGOs, as well as the number and size of interventions. Américo Guedes of Pl reported that applications and bookkeeping require capacities that are not always available to an NGO.

**Co-financing** by building owners does not seem to be common, even though the rehabilitated buildings are often privately owned. On this regard, Maeno Masaru's position is: "when the residents are not able to preserve something using only individual or community resources they should be helped by local, state, or national government. Preservation cannot be people's responsibility alone" (Anzorena 2000).

| Sources of funding | THF | Md | FA | PI | AC | FG | MG | Tr | DSW | ARF | BI |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| international grants | • | | | ••• | ••• | •• | | | | ••• | • |
| national, regional, local public grants | •• | •• | ••• | •• | • | •• | •• | • | | •• | ••• |
| other NPOs | ••• | •• | • | • | •• | ••• | • | | | ••• | • |
| donations from particulars | ••• | | • | | • | • | | • | | | |
| sale of courses and services | | | •• | •• | •• | | •• | ••• | ••• | • | •• |
| membership dues | • | | | • | •• | | •• | | | • | |
| local population | •• | | | •• | | | | | | | |

Table 5: NGOs' source of fundings.

### 3.1.2 Insiders, outsiders, and 'new locals'

As Andrea Bocco Guarneri has emphasised in the introduction to a round table, it is quite common that the first person to 'notice' and recognise the value of heritage is not the local inhabitant, but an outsider, or a person who has had the opportunity to get a training and to travel abroad (**ABG 5.1**). It is often such immigrants who pursue practices of conservation and valorisation, reinterpreting and re-appropriating knowledge and landscapes. The 'soul' of marginal places is often cultivated by guests and foreigners, while locals remain idle, aiming at exogenous imaginaries and aesthetic-social models of modernisation (Magnaghi 2010, 103,135).

Most of the initiators of the analysed NGOs are not native to the regions where they act. They come from other continents or countries (THF, AC, FG, Tr), other regions (FA, MG, DSW, Bl) or other cities, usually the regional capital (Md, ARF, GO2). Quite often behind moving to a rural area lies an attempt to get away from the hectic city life and its formalisms (FA), to start a more balanced life rhythm, in contact with nature (AC, MG). Only Pl's initiators can be considered local.

Especially in the early years of NGOs' development, many **staff members** were also outsiders; particularly in the higher level roles (THF, Md, FA, Tr). This is typical in initiatives in 'emerging' contexts where the level of training in specific fields, such as restoration, was not considered adequate to the needs of the NGOs.
To some extent, NGOs can therefore be considered **outsiders** to the local communities.

A community in fact can be considered as a group of individuals who identify themselves around one or more common characteristics and build their relationship around it. In our case we are referring to heritage and cultural communities, but also communities related to a specific place (Kröll and Cortéz 2008). Community is self-defining and based on a voluntary sense of belonging and common goals.
Another important aspect is related to the internalised reflection that people make of their social group, and the mutual recognition between a community's members: an 'insider' is recognised by the community as part of itself, and refers him- or herself as a member of such group (Council of Europe 2005a). Consequently, an 'outsider' is a person who is not identified by the members of a community as part of it, either because of their different origin or because they lack some common characteristic (religion, tradition and/or interests).
There are no easily identifiable boundaries, neither permanent nor fixed – they are rather dynamic and subjective. The final perspective as to where **'identity boundaries'** are perceived, and who is outside or inside them, is actually in the hands of the community itself, or, better still, of each of the individuals deemed to belong to it (Remotti 1996). This broad and **slippery** definition allows for **multiple interpretations** of who the community is, depending on the circumstances of observation that stimulate it.

Andrea Bocco Guarneri also reflected on how the community may include, for instance, the **historical**, ancestral, and indigenous inhabitants of a place, but also **newcomers** who bring different cultural models and sensitivities (**ABG 5.1**). At the same time, people who

do not live in the place – but who have **kept property** and come back from time to time – and **U-turn** immigrants – people who were raised in a community and come back after formal training (as Maurizio Cesprini describes himself – AC 5.1.1).
In this sense, places should not only belong to the historical inhabitants by birth right, but to those who perceive a connection and sense of belonging to that place, i.e. 'place attachment', driven by affective, logic and symbolic meanings, both past and present. This sense of rootedness can flow into social interactions, collective interest, reciprocity and care of the common good (Watson and Davis 2019, 15).

It is possible to change the **gradient of outsideness-insideness** – defined on the basis of identity issues, common traditions and history, 'invasions' and claims, similarities and differences, common interests and actions, coexistence and sharing – over time, getting the NGOs closer to the local communities.

In their answers to this question (§5.1.1), the NGOs reflected precisely on the dynamic between outsiders and insiders and its positive developments, showing that blurring internal-external 'boundaries' is a slow process which requires time, a strong commitment, constancy and persistence, integrity, transparency, sharing, and communication in the long term and through wide-ranging actions.
The possibility for outsiders to take root is primarily dependent on the community's interest in this contact and dialogue, its willingness to let in and to share the care of 'its own' traditions and heritage.
In some cases, the first approach was facilitated by the introduction by a locally-known and respected person (FA, FG).
The initial contact with communities is typically to present the NGOs, and to inform about what they do, sharing motivations, results, and strategies, and identifying the most appropriate **ways of dissemination**. Being aware of what an NGO is doing can improve the trust and mutual esteem between the NGO and the community.
The NGOs engage in the dissemination of their work in various forms – the outcomes of which represent the data source of this chapter together with the information collected in RTHLD seminars – that range from grey literature (reports, manuals, through websites, blogs and social media, local newspapers...), academic and popular articles and books, participation in seminars, conferences and lectures, and dissemination through radio and television broadcasts, as well as documentaries.

Despite coming from faraway, many founders have been living in these places for long periods of time – in some cases for more than twenty years – working in close contact with local communities, sharing, creating ties, and integrating themselves into local social processes (this is not the case of FG, Tr, DSW, ARF, Bl though). **'Becoming local'** appears a key element in the rooting of these initiatives: for THF, FA, AC and MG, working and living in these locations has become a long-term life project. However, being accepted by locals is not always easy or possible, especially in small, strongly traditional communities (MG 5.1.1).
Particularly in cases where founders and members live elsewhere, maintaining **constant and repeated contact**

(Tr and DSW) has been crucial to take root and give continuity to local projects. Sanada Junko believes that working in one context for a limited period, moving elsewhere and ignoring the follow-up of the project generates a sense of mistrust in local people (DSW 4.2).

A sign of the good response from communities and of the willingness of NGOs to take root is the fact that a number of people from the region (and even the communities themselves) have been gradually integrated into the teams. From the outset, some NGOs have assembled **teams of local builders** (THF, FA, Tr, Bl), and have been training and collaborating with native professionals (THF, Md, FA, AC, FG, Bl). As the initiatives strengthen over time, there is a general trend towards hiring locals even in top roles. Over the years the **leadership** may have passed to people originally from the region (AC, FG).
Some NGOs have set up local branches: in 2007, **THF** created, together with local people, the Leh Old Town Initiative (LOTI), registered as a local NGO under the Indian Society Act.

In acting locally, NGOs implement a more or less conscious **interference**, influencing the development trajectories undertaken by communities, and in some cases by local institutions and governments. **Being aware** of this is necessary, especially considering that often the 'power' to act of the NGOs – given their greater economic resources, their position as intermediaries, their contacts, and specific skills – is unequal to the communities'.
In some cases, NGOs import exogenous thought schemes and socio-economic models, linked to their own origin and education, which are considered functional (Escobar 2018). In other cases, they can modify local development patterns they deem unsuitable and/or unsustainable, based on their own knowledge.

In 'becoming local', the position of some NGOs on certain issues is openly non-neutral, taking sides in causes felt by the locals. These issues are often related to socio-environmental topics, as in the case of FA's support for the communities' struggle against new mines on the Arica and Parinacota plateau.
Interference can in some cases lead to imbalances and **unintended results or negative impacts**. These may concern uncontrolled and unsustainable increase in the number of tourists, as happened in Gjirokastra (FG 5.3.3) as it happened with many sites following their recognition as UNESCO World Heritage Sites. Other unexpected outcomes may involve changes in heritage and local customs as a result of improvements in infrastructure and services (ARF 4.7, Tr 4.4).

Sometimes there are **no communities** which NGOs can collaborate with, or they are very weak, either because of a lack of people or because of the increasing loss of bonds, relationships, and reciprocity typical of traditional societies. The case of FA is particularly emblematic: some communities show strong ties to villages despite having moved to the city.

Most of the communities which the NGOs collaborate with are largely composed by **natives** (FA, Md, THF) and are considered as **minority cultures**, i.e. "sub-national cultures of numerically weak populations within nation-states, usually located within specific geographical regions, and frequently retaining their own language" (Eliot 1948), to which ethnic and racial labels are often assigned. In some countries,

processes for the recognition of indigenous rights, the creation of protected areas, and the support for the maintenance of local cultures and traditions are being implemented. In some cases this results in closure and crystallisation eventually freezing the development of these communities and places (Clifford 2010) and leading to distrust of the exogenous.

Despite there is no delineated boundary between outsiders and insiders, the **different roles** often set in fact a clear demarcation. The locals' opinions can be contradictory and NGOs sometimes 'confuse the roles', crossing the line between insiders and outsiders (FA). If the mutual positions and boundaries are not clarified and mutually accepted, problems can often arise.
Very often, relations between NGOs and communities present **conflicts**, contradictions, and complexities, in some cases resulting from previous internal and external problems (which NGOs cannot and are not expected to take responsibility for) but also from who or what the outsiders **represent** (e.g., the centralised or oppressor state, because it financed the project; a colonising power, due to geographical origin of the NGO's members; economically privileged people). Aversion in these cases is often related to refusing to feel subsidised.
In other cases, NGOs represent a countercultural movement that is not always understood by the local population, who instead aspire to live in urban areas (**MG 5.1.1**). FA, despite the ever-increasing number of 'community people' within its staff, and despite being known and recognised in the highlands, is still seen as an external institution, run by 'white' people from the central part of the country or even Europeans, and is perceived as a representative of the Chilean state.
At the time of the first approaches AC, Pl, Tr and ARF noticed **suspicion** and **distrust** due to a lack of mutual acquaintance. The outsider was often seen as an 'intruder', resulting in reluctance to cooperate (**MG 5.1.1**).
Among the main problems in approaching communities, NGOs mentioned communication problems and mutual misunderstandings (Tr), confusion, especially in the case of complex projects (FG), and lack of recognition and respect (AC). The members of the NGOs who are in some sense **part of the communities**, described this initial perception by the population as difficult, a sort of small clash in local common sense between the 'how it has always been done' and the different point of view regarding the management of heritage brought in by the NGOs (AC, Pl).
Md also reported that residents often show a **subsistence** mentality, rarely taking active positions (**Md 4.5**).

Conflicts sometimes jeopardize NGOs' effort, in some cases interfering with their work. NGOs in some cases limit interactions with communities when **conflicts** arise, preferring not to openly discuss possible delicate matters in their relationship with inhabitants.
Many NGOs bring forward reflections about a **conscious** inclusion in the local context (also regarding the respect of hierarchies, social roles, and local associations – FA), stimulating coexistence, **balance** between the different **viewpoints**, and mutual understanding. MG, beside settling at the outskirts of the village, asks the participants in its activities to wear a pendant, so that they can be identified by the Mii-machi community as its guests (Masami 2019, 287).

Another element to be considered, as mentioned by Carmen Moreno, is to posture in a **genuine** and **transparent** manner, showing that NGOs do not have speculative intentions and preventing complaints.
NGOs **gain trust and local recognition** by sharing and including, adopting an (as much as possible) internal point of view and carrying out long-term processes, offering support and advice, fostering exchanges in convivial moments and **showing openness**, and **commitment**.

Relationship-building with communities also occurs through respecting, valuing, participating in, as well as organising, local **ceremonies** and **practices**, such as the ceremonies performed in the occasion of some specific moments of the rehabilitation works to request for permission and protection and to thank for the achievement to local deities and beliefs (THF and FA, who team with the *yatiri*, the Aymara spiritual authority), and the Aenokoto ritual (since 2009 designed as UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage) revisited by MG, performed to "encourage people to think about how to commit themselves to food, agriculture, and the environment in their daily lives" (Hagino 2018; Hagino Atelier 2012).
Similar attention is paid to local dialects and languages (FA uses the Aymara language and promotes it through training courses), traditional music (THF, FG, FA), and other aspects of indigenous culture. Since these activities are carried out by an external party, in some cases they may risk being seen as **cultural appropriation** (Clifford 1988; Rogers 2006; Shugart 1997).

A marked difference – in part based on the socio-cultural peculiarities of each context – was observed in **how NGOs talk** about their relationship with the local communities. Only THF, Tr and FA mention the inhabitants in their website or printed publications. One can know the names of the owners of the recovered buildings (THF and FA), as well as names and roles of some of the craftspeople (FA, Tr, Bl). Community people are the spokespersons of their own stories and are shown as concrete examples of the possibility to live again in marginal places and set up autonomous initiatives – to the attention of inhabitants, investors, institutions, and governments (FA). This is increasingly done through images and video clips.
Presenting a community is not enough to strengthen it, but shows a positive attitude towards the individual person and their life, creating a local narrative. However, such narrations do **not** always **match** with the actual relationships between the NGOs and the local communities – sometimes they amount to exercises in rhetoric.

### 3.1.3 Local community participation and capacity building

In dealing with vernacular heritage, it would be appropriate not to forget its inseparable relation with a community and its survival.
Scholars and international guidelines recommend – with different degrees of involvement – **community participation** in heritage management and rehabilitation processes (Council of Europe 2005b; Hodges and Watson 2000; ICCROM 2015; ICOMOS 1987; Newman and McLean 1998; UN 1996; UNESCO 1972, 1989, 2003): traditions are passed on by communities not (only) to maintain them and avoid their loss, but because they are part of their life, roots to places, and identity.
Without the active involvement of cultural communities, conservation loses its importance: "there is nothing to safeguard without the enactment of cultural practitioners" (Blake 2008, 67, 2019). People and owners can be understood as active and conscious agents in a process of regeneration and transformation of know-how and practices.

Former president of ICOMOS Japan (2008-2009) and honorary member of ICOMOS (since 2011) Maeno Masaru's pioneering three community-based "principles for the preservation of historical buildings" (from mid-1960s, to preserve Tokyo's historic wooden buildings) emphasise the liveability of houses and cities focusing on the needs of residents and the importance of people being proud of the architecture of their houses (Anzorena 2000).

UNESCO (1972) considers community participation and economic development as related to conservation and promotes the involvement of local and indigenous communities in the management of properties inscribed in the World Heritage List (UNESCO 1989), recognising that community participation can represent an important strategy in heritage management (UNESCO 2011).

ICOMOS (1987) focuses on the participation of residents and their correct information, and encourages social and economic measures so that they remain alive (Larkham 1996, 289-92).

The **"integrated urban conservation"** strategies connect conservation and housing considerations, and recognise a pivotal role to planning and implementation processes for the local resident community (UN 1996).

ICCROM programmes (2003) (ICCROM 2015) are aimed at community empowerment, strengthening people's "capacity to meaningfully engage in making conservation and management decisions for themselves and their heritage" also through a support network. Moreover, they acknowledge the potential of heritage to "play an active role in communities and benefit people" (ICCROM 2015).

The **Faro Convention** (2004) identifies human development and quality of life of everyone as the primary goal of conservation (Council of Europe 2005b, 2005a, 6). It recognises the value of heritage as source and resource, thus also declaring its economic profile (Council of Europe 2005a, 3), and makes values and beliefs (subjective elements) prevail over knowledge and traditions (objective ones) (Zagato 2015, 145). It acknowledges the right to cultural heritage; "promotes principles for sustainable management, and to encourage maintenance"; "develops the legal, financial and professional frameworks

which make possible joint action by public authorities, experts, owners, investors, businesses, non-governmental organisations and civil society"; and "respects and encourages voluntary initiatives which complement the roles of public authorities" (Council of Europe 2005b).
The Faro Convention also "encourages reflection and respect for **diversity of interpretations**" (Council of Europe 2005b). Heritage in fact acquires (or does not acquire) meanings depending on the place. Unlike in Western societies, in many countries such as Morocco, India or Chile local and indigenous people have a cyclical vision and identify architecture mainly in functional terms, and are not particularly keen on restoring the buildings themselves and their materiality (Laureano 1995). The heritage's function within the society would be maintained even in the event of a reconstruction, and thus for example many of the Chilean highland churches are the result of a succession of rebuilding (Pérez de Arce 2019, 200).

In §5.2.1, NGOs reported that in some cases inhabitants show disinterest in heritage, which is linked to imaginaries of poverty and backwardness, and is seen as a **burden** that is difficult and expensive to maintain – materials are hard to source and costly, workmanship is unaffordable. The rehabilitation of heritage is therefore turning into an elite process (Bronner 2006; Laureano 1995). Lay people often aim at demolishing and **replacing** heritage buildings with conventional materials, which are not always adapted to the local climate (**ARF 4.7**, **FA 4.3**, and **FG 5.1.1**).

The rehabilitation of traditional heritage also brings **"ethical"** issues with it. In realising that the communities to which it belongs, or which have an attachment to it, have no interest in its maintenance and restoration – for example preferring brick houses to the earth ones because they are considered more "modern" – NGOs often carry out "consciousness-raising" actions, leading people to reconsider the value of heritage.
However, to define the lack of consensus on heritage value as "backwardness" is incorrect and arrogant, as well as the presumption of teaching "values". The Faro Convention recognised that "The fact that an item is regarded as the cultural heritage of one or more communities or interest groups does not negate private proprietorial status" and suggests to apply a proportionality principle and "set bounds to the public interest, recognising that it may conflict with private interests (…) because everything cannot be protected"(Council of Europe 2005a, 7). "However, limitations in the exercise of private rights may be justified in the public interest" (Council of Europe 2005a, 6–7).

NGOs report that negative perception is sometimes **generational**: generally, it is older people that are biased against heritage buildings (**DSW 5.2.1**).
In addition, it decreases in contexts where heritage has remained sufficiently lived-in to **evolve**, responding to the needs of inhabitants, and local traditions have been adapted to both the influences of other cultures and modernity. Usually, it is the unused and abandoned heritage that appears as immobile and static (Davis 1999; Vellinga 2006).

Many of the NGOs are mindful of the fundamental relationship between heritage and inhabitants, and therefore promote awareness, training in construction techniques, and rehabilitation, succeeding in many cases in

Table 6: Involvement of the local community.

| Involvement of the local community | THF | Md | FA | PI | AC | FG | MG | Tr | DSW | ARF | BI |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Survey participants | •• | | • | | | | | | | •• | ••• |
| Owners | ••• | ••• | ••• | •• | | •• | •• | | ••• | ••• | |
| Requesters of rehabilitations | ••• | • | ••• | ••• | | | | | ••• | • | • |
| (Co)financers | ••• | | • | •• | | | • | | | | |
| Meetings | •• | •• | ••• | | | • | | • | | • | •• |
| Decision-makers | •• | • | ••• | | | • | | •• | •• | | •• |
| Workshop attendees | • | •• | ••• | • | • | • | • | •• | •• | • | ••• |
| Trainers | •• | •• | ••• | •• | • | | | ••• | • | •• | ••• |
| Employees | ••• | ••• | ••• | • | •• | • | | ••• | | | •• |
| Permanent staff | •• | • | ••• | • | •• | • | • | | | | |
| Autonomous rehabilitation | •• | | •• | • | •• | | | | •• | • | • |
| Maintenance | •• | • | •• | • | • | •• | • | • | •• | • | •• |
| Leadership | | | •• | | | | | | | | |

modifying the people's attitudes and reactivating their interest in heritage.
Within the international guidelines, involvement actions range from appropriate information and encouragement (ICOMOS 1987) to assigning a central role in planning and implementation processes to local communities (UN 1996).

**Participatory processes** do not consist in packaged solutions but require a continuous search for context-based responses, reciprocal sharing, and feedback, involving different approaches and degrees of engagement: sporadic or long-term, remunerated or voluntary, in cooperation with NGOs or autonomous.
Depending on the context and stimulus, communities are offered **various roles** – either within the outsiders' rehabilitation activity programme or aimed at autonomous care (table 6). These are not roles that the community must assume, but possible actions that its members may undertake. They require personal investment, interest and motivation, support, and stimulus. In some cases, however, the community or some of its members do not feel a responsibility to take part in any rehabilitation process.

**Not all NGOs focus** on establishing links, contacts, and collaborations with locals. Some **limit** their exchange to specific occasions and activities (like construction workshops) or collaborate only with people entrusted with a specific role.
The **community** is frequently involved in its **extended form** only at specific moments for surveys to collect needs, expectations, and perceptions, and is rarely called upon to play an active, decision-making role. NGOs often dialogue just with **representatives** and spokespersons of the broader community (local stakeholders, figures of local relevance, associations and institutions).
People are often involved by NGOs because they are the **owners** of the heritage to be recovered, or because they are linked to it by "ancestral ties" (THF,

Md, FA, Pl, DSW, ARF - seldom AC, FG, MG, Tr).

A first active role on the part of the population is to show an interest for, and to **request heritage rehabilitation**. On the websites of FA, AC, DSW and Pl are forms for requesting support, whether for technical advice, help in obtaining funding, or for rehabilitation works. According to NGOs, requests from inhabitants (THF, FA, Pl, AC, DSW, ARF) or local authorities (THF, Md, FA, Pl, FG, Tr) have become more and more frequent.

THF and Pl call upon the community to **co-finance** the rehabilitation of their own dwellings and dovecotes, either economically or providing materials or labour. This strategy gives the inhabitants a "sense of ownership", turning them into the "driving force" of the rehabilitation process and increasing their interest in maintaining their property, which stimulates a subsequent sense of responsibility for maintenance and care (Alexander 2007, 62; Maeno in: Anzorena 2000).
NGOs admit however that communities are not always interested in investing in their heritage and show a tendency towards welfarism. Recurring motivations include not seeing the heritage's value and not having interests and perspectives on it, also linked to the difficulty of living in these places.

Involving **young people** is strategic for the future of the processes carried out and for their commitment to heritage, and offers alternative job opportunities to them. Some NGOs prioritise the inclusion of the most vulnerable populations: young people, women, elderly, unemployed or unschooled people (THF, Md, FA, Tr).

The call for the inclusion of the community stems primarily from the inhabitants' demand to see their views and opinions more strongly represented (Smith 2006, 35), on which to base choices concerning the liveability of houses and cities and connecting conservation and housing considerations (Maeno in: Anzorena 2000; UN 1996).
Often NGOs give communities voice though dialogues, interviews, ethnographic, socio-cultural, and economic research addressed to all inhabitants or local leaders. The main issues studied include community relations, local traditions and values, aspirations and perspectives, difficulties and needs. NGOs pay attention to the different **perception and attitude toward heritage** between themselves and the inhabitants, as well as to the communities' willingness to collaborate in the proposed projects, trying to prevent possible problems. Thanks to the information collected in the dialogue with inhabitants, FA has been able to reconstruct the history, customs and traditions of the villages of the Andean region where it operates.
Interviews can create a contact with residents and initiate a dialogue (FG), but some knowledge can only be obtained through a longer-term engagement and a dialogue stripped of the respective roles.

Almost all NGOs organise **meetings** to call upon owners, communities and local representatives to **actively participate** and take strategic decisions, having a voice in the processes and in some cases taking on more and more responsibility (THF, Md, FA, FG, Tr, Bl). Encounters are organized mainly in the preliminary stages of projects, but sometimes go together with the progress of rehabilitation work (FA, THF).

Strategic decisions may concern planning, priorities, criteria, selection of the buildings to be rehabilitated, functions, technical solutions, and the choice of people to involve in the works.
NGOs stimulate reflection, exchange of views and opinions, and the (re)activation of **community dialogue** to solve problems, discuss on the importance of community relations, and decide to undertake joint projects.
In some cases, communities themselves request moments of exchange, entrusting NGOs with the role of facilitator.
Some NGOs facilitate such exchange by offering community **gathering** spaces, sometimes through adaptive reuse or in new "vernacular" buildings.
In addition to the study of the local population, some NGOs are concerned with the analysis of current and traditional **human/environment relations**.
The methodologies of FA and THF to study communities and their possible inclusion in projects – analysing their supportive or conflictive relationships – are particularly well-detailed and structured. THF carried out socio-economic surveys of the residents of the old city of Leh (in 2003, 2004 and 2006) in the form of house-to-house visits to 178 historic buildings, as well as interviews with local opinion leaders and officials (Alexander 2005a, 6, 2007, 7,11).

Social fieldwork is very seldom carried out by **sociologists and anthropologists**: only PI reported a psychologist in the team. Sometimes some locals act as **intermediaries** between NGOs and other community members, stimulating networking and conflict resolution, and helping to reactivate social ties (THF). FA limits possible nuisance to communities and stimulates an open dialogue, by entrusting a few designated persons (who must be "known" by the community) with recording the inhabitants with photographs, audio, video, and even conducting interviews.
On the other hand, Edvin Lamçe pointed out that the involvement and consultation of the local population by decision makers can be sometimes abused and only theoretical, leading to failure (FG 5.1.1).

Based on a deep understanding of people's aspirations and socio-cultural stances, outsiders can over time transform themselves into new inhabitants who are highly aware of the place where they have settled.
NGOs interpret communities and propose initiatives to address current issues and needs adapted to the local context guided by the narratives of inhabitants: "the success of any intervention or management plan [for Leh] will depend on the planner's knowledge of the people living there" (Alexander 2007, 36). Analysing the opinions of the local community makes it possible to **improve the methodologies** over time (as was particularly evident with the turnaround of the Spanish Cooperation in Peru – Md).
To this locally rooted knowledge, the external agent contributes with its global vision: NGOs relate local peculiarities, needs, and ambitions to broad themes and problems.

Informing and involving, **sharing knowledge and raising awareness** of the value of traditional heritage and traditions is aimed at creating a **relationship of cooperation, trust, and mutual esteem** with the local communities, that may start to see the organisation as a benefit to the region (PI 5.3.1).
The promotion and conservation actions carried out by the NGOs, especially if repeated and continuous, offer

different points of view the local population was not aware of (ARF 5.3.1).
An increased awareness of who and how built the heritage (often one's own ancestors), which is "not just a panorama, but the result of work" (DSW 5.3.1), encourages the strengthening of **identity ties** and **connections**, and promotes **change in the perception of heritage**, making the inhabitants proud of their dwellings and reconnect with traditions (Maeno in: Anzorena 2000). Sometimes heritage is no longer seen as "non-modern", but as a pivotal element of the inhabitants' own history, culture, and family, stimulating **interest** in rehabilitation. Becoming aware of their status as main representatives of a given tradition empowers the inhabitants and stimulates them to take the role of local agents, reactivating their willingness to take care of their heritage. The sense of backwardness and poverty, and the initial distrust, may be thus replaced by interest, care, and collaboration.

The diffusion of such awareness-raising initiatives helps developing frameworks for joint action, support networks and active community groups (ICCROM 2015).
In some cases, increased community participation has promoted the strengthening of the relations between the inhabitants and a return of **reciprocity** and collaboration, as it "reinforces social cohesion by fostering a sense of shared responsibility towards the places in which people live" (Council of Europe 2005b). THF recounts how, thanks to its interventions, "the community spirit (...) was revitalised, prompting people to meet and discuss problems, as well as work together, even overcoming sectarian tensions between different communities" (Alexander 2005a, 31). Moreover, it should be recalled that identity perceptions and the sense of belonging are always evolving (Remotti 1996).
Through this involvement, the actions carried out by the NGOs are shared with the insiders, which assume an increasingly active role within the processes and gradually become spokespersons of the ongoing initiatives, stimulating a gradual devolution aimed at a future self-sustainability, and rooting the processes initiated.

# 3.2

# EMPOWERING



# Rehabilitation of heritage through the transmission of traditional knowledge

## 3.2.1 Vernacular and traditional heritage

As Francesca Governa suggested, heritage can assume various roles (§5.3). It can be seen as a cultural practice, a dynamic, interactive, collaborative, and dialogical process (Harrison 2015). The roles entrusted to it include catalysing identity values (Remotti 1996); enabling the maintenance of connections to places and reciprocity between inhabitants through shared values (Appadurai 2008; Byrne 2008); creating collective memories, producing and transforming a society and/or a culture, and promoting social change (Harrison 2009, 38; Samuel 1994).

Traditional and vernacular buildings "belong" to a given **place** and its history and can be understood as the "unself-conscious translation into physical form of a culture"(Rapoport 1969, 2, 2006, 181).
All forms of vernacular architecture are built to meet specific **basic needs**, accommodating the values, economic structure and ways of living of the cultures that produce them (Oliver 1997, 2006b). Vital needs, taking up Yona Friedman's *Architecture of Survival*, are "embedded in the problem of housing, in the form of a roof for climate protection, and food" (Friedman 1978). In his view, these include the supply of water, the safeguarding of private and collective goods, the organisation of social relations and the aesthetic satisfaction of everyone.
"Traditions often represent an absence of choice" (AlSayyad 2006, xvii), since their expressions derive in part from geographical and economic **limitations**, showing "how humans have adapted to extreme conditions of ecosystems over long periods of time" (Lawrence 2006, 110–11).
To adapt to difficult climates and constraints, local techniques may involve thick walls (at Leh 60-90 cm) and the use of materials such as earth and stone that are capable of storing and releasing heat, and of balancing moisture levels inside the buildings. Next to this, the design of homes answers the necessity to let in or shield from the sun, winds, and rainfall. In the extremely hot climate of Morocco for example, the traditional earth houses are naturally ventilated by a central empty space and kept cool by shaded areas and small openings; these traditional solutions work without mechanical ventilation and cooling systems, which are necessary in contemporary houses. Therefore, traditional houses often prove to be **healthier** and **more comfortable**, and – if properly maintained – **more durable** than modern ones.

Vernacular architecture tends to **minimise the transformation** of the environment in order to render it human-friendly, allowing a peaceful

4. Haydee and Omar hotel in the Codpa Valley (Arica and Parinacota, Chile). Martina Bocci 2022.

coexistence between communities and the environment (Friedman 1978).
It is low-tech – i.e. simple, unsophisticated, uncomplicated, and based on **appropriate technologies** (Özkan 2006, 100; Watson and Davis 2019, 20) – and "built using natural and ecologically sustainable resources and technologies" (Steen, Steen, and Komatsu 2003). Traditional techniques have thus a low **environmental impact**, as they use locally available raw materials, which have not undergone energy-intensive processing often involving harmful emissions.

Bernard Rudofsky had described traditional architecture as **'anonymous'** due to the lack of determinable authorship and to having been produced without involving schooled architects (Rudofsky 1964). Such heritage reflects the "conscious and/or unconscious know-how of local craftspeople and the inhabitants" (Lawrence 2006, 114) that emerges from the community, from the accumulation of concrete and personal experiences that have allowed people to settle in a given local environment (Lévi-Strauss 1962).

The builder is often from within the community or the inhabitant him- or herself – e.g., dry-stone retaining walls and lesser heritage used to be built by peasants, not by masons or other professionals (Asquith 2006, 129). Often, construction and maintenance are the result of joint action between community members (Oliver 1997, xxiii).

### 3.2.2 Learning by doing: keeping tradition alive through transmission

Architecture, vernacular culture, indigenous knowledge about the ecosystem, values and ways of living are all part of cultural processes, not only material products (Asquith and Vellinga 2006, 19; Harrison 2009, 36).
In rehabilitating the built heritage, NGOs deal with the **intangible heritage** associated with it (UNESCO 2003). Traditions are part of **living heritage**: a set of practices, expressions, knowledge and cultural traditions integral to the identity of communities, charged with human, identity, and cultural values (Akagawa and Smith 2019; Smith and Akagawa 2008; UNESCO 2003). Vernacular building techniques are part of the set of traditional ecological knowledge (TEK) embedded in living a territory, and "embrace what is known and what is inherited about dwelling, building, or settlement. It includes the collective wisdom and experience of a society, and the norms accepted by the group as appropriate to the built environment" (Oliver 1986, 113). Such knowledge includes places and ways of sourcing materials, their transformation and assembly, climate-related notions, and a whole set of cultural practices, rituals, and symbols.

Construction traditions represent the major theme of vernacular architecture (Abu-Lughod 1992; Bourdier and AlSayyad 1989). In describing **vernacular know-how**, Paul Oliver stated that "There is not such things as vernacular buildings, but rather buildings that embody certain vernacular traditions" (Oliver, 1988 in 1st IASTE conference). Traditions are invisible practices and meanings of tangible

heritage, 'inherent' qualities 'wrapped' around it (Harrison 2009, 2015); they are the culturally-based, generative grammars of building passed down through generations.

Vernacular traditions are increasingly at **risk of disappearing** also due to 'modern' problems like the breakdown of production and extraction chains for the materials needed to carry maintenance work out, the advent of modern techniques and materials in the building industry, and the high cost of materials and specialised labour. Planning regulations, resource depletion, building performance standards, mortgage restrictions and insurance criteria also work against the conservation of vernacular heritage (Vellinga 2006, 83, 93–94). Moreover, traditional constructions are no longer part of the main cultural and architectural discourse.
The autonomous transmission and evolution of traditional knowledge and techniques from generation to generation, as well as experiential interaction with materials and the diffusion of manual skills, have all been decreasing over the last few decades (Davis 2006; Illich 1973; Laureano 1995; Ploeg 1992; Sertorio 2005). Inhabitants and local builders still skilled in traditional technology have declined considerably in recent decades and have not been successful in training the new generations.

Recovery is urgent: in some places, just a few (old) people remember and are still able to practice traditional ways of building. There is a strong need to re-appropriate traditional knowledge to develop local skills into feasible solutions which can meet today's needs.

Techniques can be tools for the re-appropriation of places through capacity-building processes: people from a community, as active agents, may interpret past knowledge and experiences to meet the challenges and demands of the present (Asquith and Vellinga 2006, 7), creating and actively using heritage to maintain connections to other places and things (Harrison 2009, 38).
In order to guarantee a future for the vernacular, it is necessary not only to preserve particular artefacts and buildings, but above all to safeguard and promote the skills needed to reproduce them (AlSayyad 2006, xviii; Bourdieu 1977).

## Transmission of know-how as a process

All the NGOs presented in this book are active in the **transmission** of traditional building techniques and know-how: besides decision-making, they involve communities in heritage restoration. However, not all pursue learning by doing as their principal focus. The most active in this respect are FA, THF, Tr, DSW, AC, Bl, while Pl, FG, MG, Md, and ARF include it among other activities.

The transfer of knowledge is **not** generally **based on language**. It is rather a practical, dynamic, and active transmission through on-site apprenticeship (Lewcock 2006; Marchand 2006, 47): a traditional teaching based on the observation of ways of doing and the practice of skills (Marchand 2006, 47). Part of such know-how is related to physical and objective aspects that can be summarised in more general best practices partially codified in writing, but another part is intangible, untellable and highly context-specific. This "performance-based knowledge collapses the classic dichotomies between mind and body, theory and practice, tradition and modernity" (Marchand 2006,

Table 7. Source and documentation of the NGOs' knowledge.

| Sources and documentation | THF | Md | FA | PI | AC | FG | MG | Tr | DSW | ARF | BI |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| catalogues and manuals | | | • | • | | | ••• | | | | |
| know-how of residents and builders | ••• | | ••• | ••• | •• | •• | • | ••• | ••• | | ••• |
| study and a careful observation of buildings and artefacts | •• | | | | ••• | | ••• | | | •• | •• |
| external experts | ••• | | | | | ••• | •• | | | | ••• |
| scientific knowledge | •• | | •• | | | | | | | | •• |

60). The transfer of tacit knowledge can be achieved by observation and subsequent practice under the guidance of more experienced people, physically embedding it through cognitive and sensory inputs – such as tactile and auditory perceptions (Ferrari 2023).

In their answers to §5.2.2 question, NGOs reflected on the different sources and forms of documentation on local heritage and techniques (table 7).
Only rarely local vernacular techniques have been **described in catalogues and manuals**. Archival research was however carried out by FA, and PI referred to previous anthropological and ethnographic research.
Next to this, all NGOs carry out meticulous **study**, **careful observation** and surveying of buildings and artefacts (THF 4.8, AC 5.2.2, DSW, and GO2 4.10). MG acquired a lot of knowledge and technical information during the demolition of *dozō* warehouses after 2007 earthquake (MG 4.11).
**Oral sources** are the main way to learn about traditional techniques. Depending on the time elapsed since the rupture of generational transmission, traces of this memory may still be found among older inhabitants or have been lost and cannot be used as a link to a collective past anymore (Bourdieu 1977; Harrison 2009, 38). Where knowledge is still active, NGOs may mobilise it involving local master craftspeople and traditional builders still able to build with traditional techniques in the role of **trainers in workshops and construction sites** to pass on their know-how and tacit skills regarding materials and their processing, tools, techniques, forms, and functions (Marchand 2006; Oliver 1997, 2006). In some cases, NGOs decided to form local teams and to train local people after some unsatisfactory experience with construction companies (THF 4.8 and FG 4.1: in the latter case, working with "licensed restoration contractors" was a requirement of Albanian government and UNESCO).
In the case of Pl, some members are the repositories of these knowledge, handed down by their ancestors or learned through practice in traditional restoration work.
NGOs gradually devolve their role to the craftspeople over time, making them increasingly autonomous and pivotal (Tr 5.1.1, FA, and Bl 4.9).
Where local skills are lacking or insufficient, external specialists may be called upon to provide support. NGOs involve craftspeople from regions where such techniques are still alive, as occurred with the Peruvian builders initially involved by FA, the Tibetan experts and Arga master invited by THF (4.8) in Leh and Kham, the famous master plasterer Kuzumi Akira who helped in MG's rehabilitations (4.11), and the experts from other regions of Albania and Kosovo who worked for FG (4.8 – after the fall of communism, many of Gjirokastra

qualified masters moved to Italy or Greece).
In some case this can lead to a "revival of [ancient cultural links,] traditional skills and local wisdom": THF stimulated the reopening of exchange channels between Ladakh and Tibet (the border closure in the 1950s led to a decline in Ladakh's traditional culture and society) (Alexander 2005a, 17).
Academics, sometimes from other countries or continents, may be involved to provide support on some specific aspects, like the restoration of wall paintings, structural performance of buildings, or heritage management (**THF 4.8**, **FA 4.3**, **FG 4.1**, and **Bl 4.9**).

The three main modes of transmission of traditional construction techniques adopted by NGOs are: training in **conventional construction sites** (THF, FA and Md), **apprenticeship** (FA, Tr, Bl), and running **workshops and courses** (Pl, AC, FG, MG, Tr, DSW and ARF). These often complement each other, either by involving specialised labour or master craftspeople to complete certain difficult parts (AC, Tr, FG). Some of THF's rehabilitations were carried out with considerable support from the local community (**THF 4.8**).

NGOs involve locals (students, residents, and builders – either sporadically, or within formal training courses) along with outsiders, mainly students and enthusiasts. THF and FA give priority to inhabitants.

The first mode mainly involves local builders and even the inhabitants themselves, under the supervision of master craftspeople and experts.
In this case NGOs carry out permanent heritage rehabilitation activities mainly on **entire buildings**: participants have the opportunity to couple learning about a particular procedure with increasing their awareness of how the artefact works as a whole.
At the end of the training process, the builder is often granted master status. In some cases (THF, FA, Tr), training allows the reactivation of the relay knowledge transfer typical of tradition, sometimes through the creation of a **hierarchical system**, achieving a continuous, self-sustaining, and self-training process (Marchand 2006, 49). A long-term participation in the construction site may allow the builder to become a mentor, capable of guiding the training of the next generation of participants (Marchand 2006, 46–50). Trainees can later play the role of trainers, thus involving people who are not professionals but "are schooled in principles of design throughout their **long apprenticeship**". The system of senior masters (at least one for each construction technique involved in the restoration), monitors, training officers and training assistants arranged by FA is particularly well structured.
These figures are hired from the local population and often have regular contracts. This can allow to return part of the investments to the local communities, with a positive socio-economic impact as well as the creation of local skilled labour in contexts where trained restorers are scarce (Bocci 2022). Traditional construction techniques, being labour-intensive and using generally low-cost, locally available materials and minimal production infrastructure, move investment towards people, rather than towards large manufacturers or transport companies. The largest costs of the NGOs in fact concern building materials and – in case of paid workers (FA, Tr, THF, Pl, DSW) – salaries. Several NGOs state that most of the money obtained is

invested locally (about 60% for FA, 70% for Tr in labour alone, THF, Md, FG).

Transmission can take place also through **courses**, whose duration may range from a few days (DSW, Pl, Bl) to some weeks (Tr, AC, Pl, ARF, MG, FG, Bl). The frequency of these courses is usually at least once a year during holiday periods (Pl, AC, FG, Tr, ARF, Bl): DSW offers courses much more often, AC and Bl during most of the summer. ARF, on the other hand, ties courses to particular projects, not on a regular basis. Some NGOs have come to organise a high number of courses in recent years, Pl and AC exceed fifty, DSW over one hundred.

The task may consist in experimenting with some technique, or (re)building a portion or an entire artefact. The construction techniques transmitted are often quite **simple** and straightforward to learn in a short time (**DSW 4.2**); yet, knowing how to build with these techniques requires experience that can only be acquired through repeated contact and experimentation.

The interventions of Pl, AC, FG, MG, Tr, DSW can be defined as more sporadic and usually concern **portions of buildings** or **experiments** with certain techniques. In some cases, several workshops and interventions, even if deferred over various years, add up to the total rehabilitation of buildings. Maurizio Cesprini emphasised the importance of focusing AC's action on transmission rather than on completing rehabilitation rapidly, with Ghesc serving as a laboratory village.

The training may be managed by the NGOs (AC, DSW, Bl), supported by locals (Tr, MG, Bl), or brought about in cooperation with other specialised NGOs or institutions[2], which can take care of some organisational aspects as well as providing substantial funding.

For the most part, the courses are aimed at **students** (both same-university and mixed groups), but also at professionals, whether local or international (Pl, AC, FG, MG, Tr, DSW, ARF, Bl). Despite its initial clear division between trainers (internal and external), trainees (external) and owners (internal), DSW began to involve the latter in the workshops as trainees due to the communities' desire to include people capable of carrying out restoration work (**DSW 4.2**).

NGOs explain that courses are targeted at students to offer them practical training that is lacking in most university programmes. Accounts in this regard, in addition to the author's personal one, were given by Carmen Moreno of Tr and Maurizio Cesprini of AC, referring to their own backgrounds (**AC 5.1.1** and **5.2.4**, **Tr 5.2.4**, **MG 4.11**). Training young people allows to pass knowledge to the new generations and offer job opportunities and expertise (the Spanish Cooperation in Peru set quite low age limits, around 25). Often because of the experience gained in the workshops, participants develop a particular disposition towards natural materials and vernacular construction techniques; some continue experimenting with them and adopt them in their academic and professional careers.

Sometimes, participants from previous courses help as trainers (AC, FG, Bl) or establish an association (as the Wajima Dozō renovation project group founded in 2007 by Hagino Kiichiro – it dissolved as a non-profit organisation in 2014, remaining active as a voluntary organisation). DSW considers it significant that its courses are attended by young people who are expected to work in the planning and implementation of environmental and territorial policies (**DSW**

[2] AECID for Md, French Union Rempart and Croatian NGO Dragodid for Pl, CHwB and CHwB-Albania for FG, Istituto Tecnico per Geometri and student group Forti of the Politecnico di Torino for AC, and European Heritage Volunteers for ARF.

5.2.4). FA and Pl organise volunteering periods and open days of training for local communities.
Course attendees are usually **volunteers** – sometimes in civil service (Pl) – who may even be asked to pay a registration fee to contribute to expenses such as insurance, board, and accommodation (Pl, AC). Training aimed at young people is often subsidised for local participants and/or NGOs' members, as in the cases of FG and ARF. DSW created a 'school' system and does not rely on voluntary work since it deems it does not guarantee a satisfactory level of competence and quality (**DSW 4.2**).

Halfway between these two modes comes **apprenticeship** aimed at a new generation of professional craftspeople (FA, **Tr 4.4**, AC, **Bl 4.9**), in some case to compensate the absence of professional schools on traditional construction. On the one hand, this mode allows to extend the transmission of knowledge beyond the short duration of workshops, and on the other it may also involve enthusiasts who are not necessarily interested in making crafts their job (**Bl 4.9**).

In addition to hands-on learning, NGOs offer training on ethical, theoretical, and practical aspects related to the rehabilitation and reactivation of heritage and communities. In some cases, training is also provided through exchange programmes and learning journeys abroad, to acquire specific skills which may later grow locally and avoid calling in outsider specialists – and saving the costs associated with this (**THF 4.8**, FA).

NGOs that involve external participants (students and non-students) in the rehabilitation processes, perceived an increased **sense of pride** among the residents. This can be due to the collaboration of locals and outsiders, and to the presence of external people who show interest in the local heritage and commitment to its rehabilitation (**Pl 5.1.1**, **Tr 5.1.1**, **DSW 5.1.1**).
Participation in workshops may encourage cultural exchange, overcome prejudices and promote mutual understanding: students work with each other and with master craftspeople, exchanging knowledge, experience, views, and discovering different cultures and ways of life (Tr, AC).

The participation in the rehabilitation works, especially if it involves locals – both in the role of participants (THF, Md, FA, and to a lesser degree AC, DSW and Bl), and trainers (THF, Md, FA, Tr, DSW, Bl) – positively influenced the **preservation and re-circulation of traditions** related to building, restarting their evolutionary course interrupted by abandonment, as well as fostering their gradual evolution and adaptation to current needs.
The involvement of local communities can enhance a recovery of social values (Laureano 1995, 214), counteracting the tendency of our modern economic and social systems to prevent builder and inhabitant from being the same person: people re-appropriate skills more or less voluntarily delegated to others (Friedman 1978; Illich 1973).

Once recovered, traditional and vernacular heritage needs constant maintenance, according to the location and the materials that constitute it. In the absence of maintenance, materials deteriorate quickly, particularly in harsh climates. Especially in the case of lesser and private heritage, the responsibility of care is in the hands of the **inhabitants** and **owners** themselves.
Communities, through involvement in know-how transmission processes

can achieve tools and skills and thus autonomy and responsibility in terms of conscious care of heritage, subsequent maintenance operations, **autonomous bottom-up rehabilitation**, and adoption of traditional techniques in **new constructions** (Davis in Asquith, Vellinga 2006:232, Illich 1973) also thanks to the reactivation of reciprocity (Davis 1999, 2006).
Recovered buildings can in turn be a source of inspiration, in some cases encouraging residents to emulate the renovation, or even attracting visitors to exemplar interventions (de Azevedo 2018, FA, AC, FG). During my field research on FA, I had the opportunity to discuss with various inhabitants of the plateau who, inspired by FA's work, decided to rehabilitate their family dwellings and start small tourism-oriented businesses. FG reported that when they started working in Gjirokastra they were alone, but now there are numerous and capable operators who work independently from them (**FG 5.3.4**).

Changes in the perception of heritage limit **inappropriate** heritage rehabilitation and may influence the destiny of some artefacts, such as the church of Socoroma, which the inhabitants wanted to demolish and rebuild following an earthquake. Thanks to FA, the residents re-evaluated the cultural and patrimonial value of the church and reconsidered their choice, becoming actively engaged in the restoration work (**FA 4.3**). PI noted how local people stopped employing concrete mortars in stone masonry (**PI 5.3.1**).

Some NGOs instruct the inhabitants on maintenance through customised **handbooks** (THF, FA, FG, **DSW 4.2**, and **GO2 4.10**) and offer free or paid consultancy services (THF, FA, MG, AC, PI, **ARF 4.7**) as well as support (co-financing or partnership in applications) to help and stimulate private individuals in recovering their heritage and improve the living conditions of their homes.
In some cases, they offer to evaluate the need for intervention, create technical documentation, contribute a project or the work of their master artisans. By providing services and opening physical and virtual **consultancy** desks, NGOs assume a **reference position**, to which the inhabitants can turn in case of need. On more than one occasion FA has provided consultancy services to other companies, supporting them technically and methodologically.

Training activities can also stimulate some participants to start **collaborations** and **networks**. It is worth mentioning a recent initiative supported by AC concerning a form of mutual-aid time bank, both for the rehabilitation of stone houses and for small jobs related to subsistence farming, among some thirty locals and newcomers in the municipality of Montecrestese.

| Activities carried out | THF | Md | FA | PI | AC | FG | MG | Tr | DSW | ARF | BI |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| handbooks | • | | •• | | | •• | | | ••• | | |
| consultancy | ••• | • | ••• | ••• | ••• | | ••• | • | • | •• | • |
| follow-up and maintenance | •• | • | ••• | • | • | • | • | • | • | • | • |
| creation of local independent teams | • | •• | •• | | •• | • | •• | • | •• | | |
| heritage management and fund raising | | | •• | | | | | | | | |

Table 8. Activities carried out by NGOs to support the triggering of local autonomous rehabiltations.

The involvement as masons or as trainers in heritage rehabilitation may strengthen people's "professional identity, practice and sense of responsibility", self-appreciation, ambition and **self-esteem**, leading masons to perceive their work as living heritage (Marchand 2006, 61–62). The experience acquired through the participation in the NGOs' restoration works is sometimes **formalised** and **certified**, helping the builders to improve their curricula (FA, Md).

By economically and formally enhancing the work of masons and craftspeople, NGOs also support the creation of local **teams** of builders and small enterprises skilled in traditional construction techniques, who spend the knowledge acquired and continue their own work path in the sector, opening job opportunities (**THF 4.8**, **Md 4.5**, FA, MG, DSW[3]). In some cases, NGOs support such new businesses by involving them in their rehabilitation sites (**MG 4.11**). FA engages them in minor tasks, such as procurement of materials and production of adobes. Despite this, the people I interviewed in the Chilean highlands reported difficulties in finding work related to traditional local techniques: most of the residents still want contemporary houses (Bocci 2023).

Marchand recommends "empowering masons not by paternalistically protecting them from the fragility of their economy or the changing tastes and demands of their public, but by granting them greater autonomy and centrality even in the design and study phases, involving them in an interdisciplinary dialogue that addresses knowledge in relation to building traditions" (Marchand 2006, 61–62).

Community involvement may extend to self-planning, understood not only as designing one's own house, village or environment, but as distinguishing and defending one's own interests, and understanding the language and grammar of the dialogue between inhabitant and house (Friedman 1978). Moreover, FA also supports building autonomous local capacity in **heritage management** and **fund raising**.

On another scale is the strategy used by INTBAU, the Instituto del Patrimonio Cultural de España and Tr, to strengthen and promote the work of craftsmen: they created the Red Española de Maestros de la Construcción Tradicional, which brings together hundreds of craftspeople and traditional builders active in Spain, categorised according to their techniques or location (Terrachidia 2020b:9).

Several NGOs pursue the inclusion and growth of locals within their teams of **professionals**, training and upskilling them up to leadership roles – this training is especially offered to young people. Their work aims at making communities self-sufficient, preparing them to continue autonomously the engagement with heritage and to make the interventions self-sustainable over time, in anticipation of a 'withdrawal' of the NGO itself (**Md 4.5**).

[3] Minami Alps Masonry Girl, Yamanashi Prefecture; Hinohara Village Masonry Training Camp Executive Committee was launched to restore masonry in Hinohara Village, Tokyo; "Tabisuru Masonry" opened a business repairing stone walls and private houses in various parts of Japan (source visited in november 2022).

### 3.2.3 NGOs' strategies in heritage rehabilitation

To carry out constant maintenance and care, inhabitants need to be **motivated** to do so. This is facilitated in **lived** heritage, that has or regains a **function** and/or generates **income**. Maeno Masaru refers to a conservation responsibility: "to preserve a building or a town effectively it is important to have good reasons for its selection and to determine its use after the preservation" (Anzorena 2000).

Most of the constructions rehabilitated by NGOs is not part of monumental heritage, but can be described – like "most of what has been built" – as **lesser heritage**: "dwellings and all other buildings of the people" (Oliver 1997, xxiii) "much more closely related to the culture of the majority and to life as it is really lived" (Rapoport 1969, 2, 2006, 181). Vernacular built heritage represents a "local style of architecture concerned with **domestic** and **functional** rather than monumental buildings" (Davis 1999; Rudofsky 1964).

According to many NGOs, priority in restoration of **private heritage** should be accorded to still **inhabited** buildings and/or to constructions locals want to make use of (houses in villages or historic neighbourhoods, or structures linked to farming – such as warehouses, dovecotes and terrace retaining walls). However, in many cases the places where NGOs work are places of strong **emigration**: as an example, 60% of the houses in the Arica and Parinacota highland, as well as 10% of the houses in Leh are empty (Alexander 2007, 37). Where communities are no longer able to take charge of care, the choice is open whether to intervene, and for whom.

A common problem – especially in the case of larger buildings or fractioned land – is the difficulty in **tracing the owners** and then persuading them to rehabilitate. FG spent a long time to retrace the seventy owners of the Babameto House due to the destruction of the documents of the communist expropriation. A similar situation, albeit for different causes, affects the

Table 9. Categories of building and infrastructure involved in heritage rehabilitation by NGOs.

| Categories of heritage | | | THF | Md | FA | PI | AC | FG | MG | Tr | DSW | ARF | BI |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| private | dwellings | in villages | | ●●● | ●● | | ●●● | | ● | | | ●● | ● |
| | | in the historic quarter of towns | ●●● | | | | | ●● | | | | | |
| | structures connected to rural and production activities | dry stone walls | | | | ●● | ●● | | | | ●●● | | |
| | | warehouses | | | | | | | ●●● | | | | |
| | | dovecotes | | | | ●●● | | | | | | | |
| public / communal | public monuments | castles, markets, theatres, libraries... | ● | | ● | | ● | ●●● | | ●● | | | |
| | religious heritage | temples, mosques, churches, chapels, monasteries | ●●● | ● | ●●● | | ● | | | ● | | ●● | |
| | structures connected to rural and production activities | mills, bread ovens, forges, fountains, washhouses, sawmills | | | | ●● | ● | | | | | | ●● |
| | infrastructure | gathering spaces | ●● | | ● | | ●● | | | ●●● | ● | | |
| | | roads and paths | ●● | | | | | ●● | | | | ●● | ●●● |
| | | bridges | | | | | ● | | | | | | ●● |

| Scale of the interventions | THF | Md | FA | PI | AC | FG | MG | Tr | DSW | ARF | BI |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| village systems spread over large areas | •• | ••• | ••• | ••• | | | •• | ••• | | | |
| historic quarters of town | ••• | | | | | ••• | | | | | |
| single villages | | | | | ••• | | | | | ••• | |
| itinerant | • | | | | | | | | ••• | | •• |

Table 10. NGOs' rehabilitations and scale of the areas of internvention.

stone heritage in the Ossola valley that AC deals with.
Pl, AC and Bl have also worked on buildings owned by NGO members or the NGO itself.
NGOs working on private heritage also face conflicts that the **selection** of artefacts to rehabilitate can generate. Among the strategies adopted to limit discontent is the establishment of priority lists and selection criteria including materiality, state of conservation, interest of the owners and their inability to carry out the work independently, present and future use, technical appropriateness, and employment of local labour (THF, FA, **FG 4.1**, and **ARF 4.7**). THF and Pl give priority to owners willing to **co-finance**, take part in the restoration work, or provide materials.

Only rarely NGOs have restored public and **communal buildings** to make them museums of themselves, in memory of a remote past; rather, they may be rehabilitated because of their value for the community.
Communities identify and structure themselves around such heritage: "shared traditions allow people to maintain connections to a common past, and therefore to each other" (Davis 1999, 17; Shils 1981). It is often cared for by a plurality of actors, and can represent a socially meaningful place even though the inhabitants have moved away (as is the case in the highland villages whose churches were recovered by FA). In addition, the restoration of such heritage may boost the local economy, as well as attract tourists.
**Religious heritage** includes village churches, Buddhist temples, mosques and *stupas* (**THF 4.8**, **FA 4.3**, **Tr 4.4**, and to a lesser extent AC, ARD, and Md).
More seldom the NGOs deal with **non-religious public monuments**, chosen for their visibility, relevance and interest from a tourist point of view (**FG 4.1**, FA, Tr, and THF).
In some cases rehabilitation is carried out on community-owned artefacts linked to **production activities**, such as the water mill, the bread oven, and the forge restored by Pl (**4.6**), the washhouses and the water sawmill by AC (Fondazione Canova 2019), as well as the dry stone walls supporting terraces (DSW, AC, and Pl). In others, small community-owned and private buildings were re-purposed as social spaces, such as the Socoroma Museum of FA (**4.3**), the Frasta School by Bl, and Gostuša community centre by ARF (**4.7**).
On several occasions, the NGOs landscaped **open spaces** around rehabilitated buildings. One common work is the repaving of streets, paths, squares, small bridges, and external stairs (**THF 4.8**, **FA 4.3**, AC, **FG 4.1**, **Tr 4.4**, and **Bl 4.9**) sometimes adding rainwater drainage systems.

The **size of the built heritage** and the **scale of the areas of intervention** range widely. Buildings may be as small as simple dwellings of a few square metres for FA, or as large as castles

(FG), monastic complexes (THF) and mosques (Tr). AC concentrates current work on a **single small village**; FG and THF on the **historic quarter of a town**, with sporadic operations in neighbouring areas. FA, Md, Pl, MG, Tr, ARF deal with larger areas, in some cases involving **village systems**.
Moreover, some NGOs associate one main operation area with interventions in different regions of the same country (FA, FG) or even abroad (THF, Tr).

Quantifying the cost and number of interventions is not straightforward: the main difficulties are the extremely different contexts, scale and type of interventions, and system boundaries. For example, when NGOs speak of "realised projects", they generally count not only the restoration of buildings or artefacts, but also dissemination activities, courses, and other initiatives. However, the number of rehabilitated buildings range from under a dozen (Md, AC, MG, Tr, ARF, and Bl) to tens (FA and FG) and hundreds (THF and Pl). DSW recovered 1,973 $m^2$ of stone walls; FA 3,900 $m^2$ of façades in six villages; GO2 has not started any site yet.

Vernacular buildings are social representations of what is "**common** and **shared** in a community or region" (Bronner 2006, 23–24). These aggregations of lesser heritage – sometimes characterised by "rigorous seriality" and generally spread over larger areas – create a multiple and interrelated system of collective value, which can be described as a whole as a territorial cultural system (Devoti and Naretto 2017, 145–46). Highland churches, dovecotes, dry stone walls, Buddhist temples, gates can be considered as **parts of wholes**.

Many NGOs strategically chose to operate on lesser heritage ensembles on the one hand because of their inherently limited capabilities and funding possibilities, on the other because focussing on it they can generate a **discourse** and a local narrative.
To elaborate these, NGOs count, record, document with photographs and drawings, georeference, **inventorise**, **catalogue** and research buildings and techniques; they base their subsequent interventions on such documentation, and they use it as a tool to promote protection status recognition and to obtain support from institutions, associations, and private individuals.[4]
The classification of heritage and the very labelling of it as such, elevate it from being just seen as 'old' or 'outdated', and represent an important evidence of a fragile heritage at risk of disappearance. Indeed, surveys are often performed only when there is a risk of losing a certain heritage (Harrison 2009, 13).

Protection is often achieved by **obtaining monument/heritage status** (THF, FA), also included in national and international lists – ARF obtained Gostuša's inclusion in the cultural heritage list of the Republic of Serbia; FG contributed to the inscription of Gjirokastra in the UNESCO world heritage sites list; Leh Old Town and its palace (2008) and the Arica and Parinacota churches (2010) were included in the annual World Monuments Fund's Watch List, allowing to apply for international funds such as the Wilson Challenge (Alexander, De Azevedo, and Hirako 2015).

Another strategy adopted by some NGOs is to focus their actions on **model areas**, villages or neighbourhoods.

[4] In the late 1980s and early 1990s, **THF** created the open access Lhasa Archive project including more than 100 historic residential government-owned buildings in order to support official protection. Although the city government approved the list in 1998, only a few dozen buildings currently retain their original features, as documented in the Old Buildings Demolition map. An inventory of buildings in the old city of Leh was carried out in 2003-2004 (Alexander 2007, 7).
As its main strategic project, **FA** catalogued (1999) and brought together in the "Plan de Conservación Sostenible de Iglesias/Templos Andinos de Arica y Parinacota" the set of Andean churches from the colonial period scattered across the northern Chilean plateau, of which 32 were recognised as National Monuments.
**Pl** created a georeferenced database including the 3450 dovecotes of the Northeast of Portugal (2001-2004).
Together with the Ossola Museums Association, since 2012 **AC** carried out a census (available online and as freely downloaded catalogue books) of the historic buildings in eight out of 37 Ossola municipalities.
**Tr** carried out research on each ksar, drawing plans of the twelve villages in the M'Hamid oasis and documenting their buildings.
**DSW** carried out research on the conservation status of 252 terraced fields in Tokushima in 2012-2013 (Okamoto and Sanada 2016).
In preparing the proposal for the Research Project "The Revival of the Stone Village", **ARF** created a georeferenced catalogue of 256 houses and drew up a priority list for interventions.

Scattered action limits the possibility of forging dense relations with the population, returning frequently to the places, and reaching that degree of complexity and maturity that allows to show the opportunities offered by the actions undertaken.
By focussing their commitment, NGOs demonstrate the feasibility of the proposed programme, increasingly ensure that the inhabitants know, respect, and consider their work as relevant, gain greater visibility – therefore attracting the attention of governments, donors, and tourists; increasing the chances to successfully reactivate the local society; and even triggering other initiatives. The concentration of efforts may also create an example for both bottom-up and top-down approaches in other areas (Alexander 2005a, 9–10, 2007, 80).

Model areas may be chosen because of their relevance, their state of repair, the willingness of their residents, but also because of their easily accessible position for visitors and residents alike: a central area of Leh Old Town for **THF 4.8**; the so-called 'laboratory village' of Ghesc for AC; the village of Belén and the Codpa Valley for FA. The latter was chosen because of the affection bond that many FA members had developed for the area.
In model areas, NGOs implement pilot initiatives in heritage rehabilitation, monument preservation, infrastructure improvement, capacity building and empowerment, and organise festivals and events.

Since their inception or over the years, some NGOs have been part of local, regional or national **public strategies** related to heritage preservation (FA, FG, THF, Md, Tr, ARF), and were able to create collaborative and supportive relationships with local governments, obtaining visibility, support and funding.
In some cases, municipalities requested the intervention of NGOs (Pl, FA, DSW, Bl; FG was even established at the request of the mayor), and Tr and THF signed memorandums of understanding and agreements with the respective local government (Alexander 2007, 76).

The object of such co-operation with local governments may be projects of **public interest** (FG, Md, Tr), designations as **Heritage Zones** (**THF 4.8** in Leh Old Town and Lhasa), the drafting of regulations and guidelines, as well as the establishment of a decision-making authority such as the Heritage Conservation Committee in Leh (**THF 4.8**) or the Board of Gjirokastra created by FG and the Albanian Ministry of Economy (Lamprakos 2010).

In other cases, NGOs and municipalities worked together in the elaboration of **management** and **development plans** for villages, portions of cities (usually historic centres) and/or territories – THF

| Activities carried out | THF | Md | FA | PI | AC | FG | MG | Tr | DSW | ARF | BI |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| social/ethnographic surveys | ••• | • | •• | • | | • | •• | •• | | • | ••• |
| inventorisation and drafting of building catalogues | ••• | • | ••• | ••• | ••• | • | •• | •• | ••• | ••• | • |
| legal protection | ••• | • | ••• | • | | •• | | • | | •• | |
| rehabilitation of a model area/village | ••• | ••• | ••• | | ••• | | • | • | | | |
| management planning and co-operation with governments | ••• | • | • | | | ••• | | | | •• | •• |

Table 11. Activities carried out by NGOs to identify population and heritage needs, protect and plan for the future.

[5] Officially known as the Rajiv Awas Yojana, or RAY, scheme, wanted by the Ministry of Housing and Urban Poverty Alleviation for a "Slum-free India". Indian urban planning regulations stipulate that concrete structures are permanent, while those made of stone, adobe and wood are considered as non-permanent pending replacement (Alexander, De Azevedo, and Hirako 2015).

wrote a proposal for the Management Plan of the Old Town of Leh to avoid the uncontrolled development of the city (Alexander 2007, 9–10); Md worked on the Plan de Acondicionamiento Territorial Valle del Colca (2012); FG authored the Conservation and Development Plan of Gjirokastra (Kasi 2002).

In some cases, NGOs encourage and catalyse wider actions, significantly influencing regional public policy (FA), and even changing the government's viewpoint regarding the importance of heritage (**ARF 4.7**). The case of THF in Leh Old Town is particularly significant: in 2012, it had been officially designated as a slum[5] and seventy-three historic buildings (40 per cent) were to be replaced with standardised individual 25-square-metre concrete buildings (Alexander, De Azevedo, and Hirako 2015). THF contributed to halt such 'slum development plan' stimulating dialogue among stakeholders and creating awareness about the value of local heritage, as well as the need for conservation and regulation (De Azevedo 2018).

A recurring strategy to obtain visibility and funding is the participation of NGOs in national and international awards related to heritage restoration, tradition preservation or community engagement: THF won three UNESCO awards; FA two national prizes that led to the inclusion of its project within the country's heritage funding programmes; FG, ARF, and Bl won a European Heritage Award. AC, MG, and Tr were also nationally awarded.

### 3.2.4 Tradition and innovation: material and immaterial heritage as a 'living heritage'

Traditional buildings were shaped by adaptive innovation, hybridisation, and evolution processes to respond to environmental challenges and circumstances, socio-cultural needs, and external influences (Oliver 2006, 265). Vernacular architecture "perfected itself" (Oliver 1969) and took significance through long and frequent use. It was being transmitted, and tested, through time – and often renegotiated in every generation and in every community (Bronner 2006, 26). Vernacular traditions are "generated through a continuous and dialectic interplay of stasis and change and remain rooted and meaningful in contemporary times" (Asquith and Vellinga 2006; Skounti 2008; Wijesuriya 2018).

**Living heritage** can thus be understood as the set of practices, expressions, knowledge and cultural traditions transmitted from generation to generation, an integral part of the identity of a community or group (Akagawa and Smith 2019; Smith and Akagawa 2008; UNESCO 2003). Built heritage, building techniques, and vernacular know-how represent a dynamic, interactive, collaborative and dialogical process (Harrison 2015; Lawrence 2006, 111; Remotti 1996, 111; Winter 2013).

However, the discourse on the vernacular does not always acknowledge this processual, heterogeneous and adaptive character of cultural traditions: "the processes of cultural interrelation, merging, change and indigenization that have been increasingly acknowledged in disciplines such as anthropology, cultural geography and history

(in architecture) are largely ignored" (Vellinga 2006, 86).
The very word 'vernacular' has become appealing as an adjective in architecture, as it allows for distancing the inhabitants from their own artefact, identifying cultures through building styles rather than through human mediation and the ways of life that involve them (Bronner 2006, 28).

The evolution and transmission of techniques to reproduce and maintain the built heritage have been interrupted in many places, immobilising its appearance and hindering its adaptation to current needs. Traditions are seen as "frozen in time, incomplete and romanticized" and "inappropriate to today's society" (Davis 1999, 17; Vellinga 2006, 83). The vernacular becomes a "stereotype", "the culture of *true* communities"; it is seen "stable, passive and instinctive rather than as changing, active and conscious" (Upton 1993, 10–11).
Any change brought to the vernacular heritage in the encounter with modernity is often understood as cultural decline, contamination, and loss of authenticity and integrity (Vellinga 2006, 86,88). This is linked to the evolution of the meaning of **'authenticity'** with respect to heritage.
While until the 18th century, heritage was approached with ease and transformation and reuse were quite unrestrained, during the Enlightenment, the concept of 'history' idealised the past as something distinct from present. Neoclassicism led to a crystallisation of cultural heritage, which ought to be preserved in its 'authentic' form; buildings were restored with the aim of recovering their original form but at the same time increasingly distancing them from everyday life and functionality.

More recent definitions of authenticity range from indicating the heritage's physical and material integrity (ICOMOS 1964), to embracing material, aesthetic, historical and social values (UNESCO 1972). In 1987, ICOMOS adopted the International Charter for the Protection of Historic Towns, which identifies historic towns as living entities that must inevitably change, just as they always did in the past (ICOMOS 1987).
In the 1990s, the *Nara document on authenticity* considered it as a continuous and dynamic historical, cultural, and social process, connected to "a great variety of sources of information" (ICOMOS 1994). It is based on the concept of heritage diversity and its non-universality, thus paving the way for regional and local interpretations of authenticity to complement UNESCO World Heritage List's universal vision. It also emphasised the importance of an integral and differentiated approach to conservation and heritage management systems and recommended a balance between satisfying the needs and aspirations of residents and the preservation of cultural and architectural values (ICOMOS 1994; Larkham 1996, 289–92).

The Faro Convention's key concept is that the creations of today, together with their environment, "form the cultural heritage of tomorrow" (Council of Europe 2005a, 10). It advocated to "promote respect for the integrity of the cultural heritage by ensuring that decisions about change include an understanding of the cultural values involved", ensuring continuity "not by the systematic reproduction" but "linking contemporary creativity to existing heritage" or at least "ensuring that there is no damaging dichotomy between the two".

In contrast with "a notion of authenticity conceived as rootedness, faithfulness or fixedness", intangible cultural heritage is "fluid and never performed identically" in a constant 're-creation' through "its differentiated application within a group or society, its diversity of meaning for all and everyone" (Skounti 2008, 78). The acquisition of heritage status may entail a loss of connection to the locality, and facilitate a process of tradition "invention" (Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983).

Caring for a living heritage and its community implies sensibility for the past but also a creative **reinterpretation of heritage in response to present and future demands**. The physical decay of a built structure should be approached in a dynamic, not fetishist way, developing and allowing it to evolve and endure, actively and creatively using traditions ensuring sensible, appropriate, and sustainable change, while remaining distinctive to a specific place (Cain, Afshar, and Norton 1975; Harrison 2009). Adopting an approach of "[continuous], **active re-use**, **re-interpretation** or **adaptation**" allows the vernacular to change and adopt technology innovation to maintain its functionality over time (Asquith and Vellinga 2006, 5).
It is this "tradition as process" which should be conserved (Davis 1999; Marchand 2006, 47). Conservation emerges as a process that starts new cycles of development (Samuel 1994).
This is possible only blurring the imposed boundary between 'traditional' and 'modern' and seeing traditional knowledge as part of an ongoing process, "more explicitly recogniz[ing] the ways in which old and new building traditions merge, adapt, combine and, in the process, become vernacularized" (Oliver 2006, 89).
In this creative process, people are seen as active agents who learn to negotiate the boundaries of tradition.

In addition to **increasing the value** of artefacts, heritage rehabilitation has primarily a **functional** purpose, coupling usability with preservation. Heritage rehabilitation could thus take the strategic function to sustain human settlement, and overcome stigmas of backwardness, poverty and underdevelopment. It can be linked to the preservation of the community itself and to the improvement of its living conditions. Safeguarding heritage requires a non-separation of spiritual, cognitive, and material heritage, as each is an indissoluble element of the system (Laureano 1995, 71).

In the round tables, NGOs' representatives were asked to reflect on the evolution of traditions and on authenticity (§5.2.1 and §5.2.3).
Respect for assumed 'integrity' and 'authenticity' is mainly felt relevant in UNESCO heritage sites and monumental heritage (FG and Tr in Chinguetti). But working on **lesser heritage**, NGOs assume a certain **freedom** in their rehabilitations, adopting evolutions of traditional building traditions within the constraints of regulations, funding schemes, and attitudes towards the heritage. They also propose **alternative approaches** to modify the policies of owners and local governments (THF 4.8).

As discussed in §5.1 by Andrea Bocco, standards and prescriptions, building regulations, directives on heritage (if any[6]) – especially if under protection (FG, Lamprakos 2010, 11) – as well as public investments often constrain

[6] Most countries do not cover traditional materials and techniques in their **building regulations**. Where they exist, public policies on traditional heritage are sometimes relatively recent, and they do not necessarily match with building regulations in force.

rehabilitation. Such regulations seem to be mainly concerned about preserving the exterior appearance of buildings ("rescatar los pueblos originarios a través de su imagen", as the governmental program that finances FA's rehabilitations states) or imposing the use of some materials and techniques (the Japanese government pushes the use of concrete for terrace repair).
The formal habitability of traditional houses is sometimes hindered by their inability to comply with modern **hygiene requirements** and **building standards**, which often clash with the characteristics of traditional houses such as lower floor heights and smaller surface area of windows (AC). While the regulations on heritage buildings direct towards solutions that respect the values of such heritage, they often inhibit the possibility of making use of it, in some cases compromising the affordability of any rehabilitation, or implicitly transforming it into lifeless showpieces. NGOs try to overcome this situation in various ways.
Of course, the value of the built heritage is not always acknowledged officially. Regulations and policies can concur in the **devaluation** of certain categories of traditional buildings (FA, DSW 4.2) or even encourage (MG 4.11) or impose (THF 5.2.3) the demolition and substitution of artefacts.

The first step taken by many NGOs was the identification of living-related issues through social surveys to identify inadequate conditions in dwellings and propose solutions to improve **living conditions**. Innovations were proposed in techniques and materials, as well as in functions and meanings. Heritage upgrades may imply both traditional materials and techniques and modern materials and products, also including what Peter Harper described as "industrial vitamins" (Harper in: Bocco Guarneri 2020, 22, 201).
'Hybrid' forms where modern and traditional ways of building coexist are of course possible. Industrial materials must be **compatible** with traditional ones, both in terms of structural – for example, dry stone walls should not be associated with cement-mortared constructions – and moisture behaviour.
In some cases, NGOs introduce **exogenous techniques**, sometimes through the involvement of masters from different contexts. This is, for example, the case of *quincha*, introduced from Peru by FA. Traditional wisdom is complemented by **scientific knowledge**.

The upgrades may affect the external appearance of traditional buildings: however, the **aesthetic aspect** has an important role in the valorisation of lesser heritage.

To adapt buildings to current lifestyles and needs, some NGOs modified the **internal distribution** to improve the use of space (THF), enlarged or created new openings to increase natural lighting (THF) and introduced measures to

| Activies carried out | THF | Md | FA | PI | AC | FG | MG | Tr | DSW | ARF | BI |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| performance upgrading | ••• | • | •• | • | ••• | • | • | • | • | | • |
| improvement of basic services and infrastructure | •• | • | • | | • | •• | • | ••• | | •• | •• |
| adaptive reuse | ••• | | ••• | ••• | ••• | ••• | • | | | • | •• |
| adoption of traditional techniques in new buildings | •• | ••• | •• | | | | •• | | • | | ••• |

Table 12. Types of heritage approaches adopted by NGOs.

improve the thermo-hygrometric performance (AC is experimenting with hemp-lime insulation in dry stone buildings (Consoli, Bocco, and Raimondo 2020), Tr, FA).
In some instances, taking part in rehabilitation activities has led the local population to recall techniques practised by their ancestors: for example, the *caruna* – a traditional way of building the ceilings – was re-introduced by FA on the suggestion of one of the masons, who remembered it being practiced by his family.

To upgrade the **services**, some NGOs installed **bathrooms** and drainage systems and equipped dwellings with systems to generate **electricity** and hot water, "to show that building rehabilitation and infrastructure (and services) improvement must go together" (**THF 4.8**). THF and FG carried out actions on the reactivation of traditional methods of water storage. Some interventions involved **large areas of villages and towns**, as the creation of drainage, water collection systems, and sewers (**Tr 4.4**), and the repaving of roads and public spaces. THF runs the Small housing repair and sanitation project.

If they are properly constructed, the **performance** of traditional buildings against earthquakes is often better than those built with concrete and other 'stiff' materials. However, over time the features that made them resistant may have been dismissed: for instance, the thickness of walls of the Andean plateau houses has been decreasing (FA).
The NGOs' representatives have discussed different ways adopted to improve the **structural performance** of buildings (**THF 4.8**, **FA 4.3**, **DSW 4.2**, **MG 4.11**). Some NGOs implement solutions developed by university research – FA uses synthetic ropes and horizontal wooden elements (reticular beams, tie rods and *escalerillas de madera*) incorporated in or placed on top of the walls – or based on local traditional solutions, such as the use of a horizontal ring beam at every level of the building (**THF 4.8**) or the addition of buttresses to the Andean churches (FA). In doing so, they try to avoid steel and concrete, that are "materials unrelated to the vernacular architecture".

Where communities are no longer able to take charge of heritage care, NGOs increase the **durability and consequently reduce maintenance** requirements of artefacts (even with **exogenous and non-traditional solutions**). Following the preference of communities and widespread practice, FA adopts sheet metal roofing painted with oxides (coupled with an insulation layer to improve the thermal performance) as an **economical** and **durable** solution, instead of reintroducing the traditional thatched or earth and straw roofs.

Heritage rehabilitation is often associated with changes of use and adaptive reuse of pilot buildings, **giving heritage a function (back)**, be it residential, commercial, or linked to production (such as THF's AAA House, a work space for artisans), tourism, or cultural projects.
This transformative capacity of heritage strategically stimulates care and maintenance (**Pl 4.6**), helps to attract local youth and new residents (THF), makes interventions economically viable (FG), gives the possibility to implement functions needed by the inhabitants, and stimulates alternative projects for the cultural dynamisation of the rural world. FG calls 'restoring

and revitalising' (**"2Rs"**) its strategy in this regard (**4.1**).
NGOs repurpose buildings as **gathering spaces** to host activities and community initiatives. This is the case of THF's Kushu House and Lala's Café web, FA's *prototipos*, Pl's *curralada* – an enclosure for agricultural use that has been converted to host the NGO's activities –, AC's houses in Ghesc, FG's headquarters in a former school (**4.1**), a *dozō* rehabilitated by MG (Bocco Guarneri 2020, 209; Hagino and Koji 2014; JCIE 2016), as well as Bl's Frasta School. Pilot buildings are also used to test re-functionalisation approaches, to strategically activate places, and to provide an example (THF, FA).

Similarly, **new buildings** are erected which employ natural materials and traditional techniques, to give them visibility, attract interest, show their feasibility, ennoble their adoption, provide examples of their possible compatibility with today's needs, and "give the vernacular a chance for the future" (Oliver 2003:17; Vellinga in Asquith, Vellinga 2006:93).
Construction traditions represent a culturally based generative grammar of building solutions – well adapted to local climatic and cultural contexts – of which the indigenous and local populations are the repositories (Bronner 2006; Watson and Davis 2019, 399). Local knowledge "may offer many valuable lessons and precedents"; once "re-extracted from the pre-modern past" they can be "applied creatively and innovatively even to sustainable contemporary buildings" .
Some NGOs propose an adaptation and evolution of local solutions to meet the habitability requirements of communities. THF called this approach "New vernacular" and adopted it in the Central Asian Museum (CALM) and the reconstruction of portions that have collapsed or are to be demolished, such as in the rebuilding part of the Kushu House with a "new design in line with the historic building" (**THF 4.8**). FA decided to build the first floor of its new office in the city of Arica in *quincha*, and adopted traditional solutions in the design of some houses for tourists in the Codpa Valley; Hagino Kiichiro was inspired by the local architecture for his house and MG's headquarter (**MG 4.11**) and uses rammed earth in his projects. Bl implements local knowledge in the construction of a new oven and a tree house (**Bl 4.9**).

# 3.3

# REACTIVATING



# The role of traditional ecological knowledge in local development

### 3.3.1 Marginal places

Although the choice of the case studies was not prompted by the geographical location of the NGOs, it fell on initiatives operating in similar territories in terms of the **fragility** and **marginality**. This common characteristic is probably not random.

Several NGOs operate in **border territories** sometimes subject to conflict (Ladakh is disputed and has been subject to clashes between India, Pakistan, and China since 1947 – THF), in some cases **recently acquired** (Arica and Parinacota was only annexed to Chile in 1929 – FA).

They are mainly **rural** and inland areas, often **mountainous** regions and **rugged landscapes**, which can reach **high altitudes** (THF now works mainly in Leh at 3350 m; FA operates from sea level to 5000 m; the Colca valley lies at 3600 m but can only be reached from Arequipa through a road going over 5000 m). The **local climate** can be extreme: for example, Leh is completely isolated in winter and its typical temperature is -20°C; 50°C are usually reached in M'Hamid oasis.

Some of the countries where the NGOs operate have been subject to **European colonisation** (THF, Md, FA, Tr). This generates a number of issues from the identity perspective, in the relations with central governments, and also in the relationship with the former colonising country.

| Local context | THF | Md | FA | PI | AC | FG | MG | Tr | DSW | ARF | BI |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| border territories | ●●● | ● | ●●● | ●● | ● | | (●) | ● | - | ● | |
| recently acquired territories | ●●● | | ●●● | | | | | | - | | |
| high-altitude areas | ●●● | ●●● | ●●● | ● | ● | ● | | | (●) | ● | ●● |
| difficult climate | ●●● | ●●● | ●●● | | | | ● | ●●● | - | ● | |
| rugged landscapes | ●●● | ●●● | ●●● | ● | ● | | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● |
| distance from large centres | | ●● | ●● | ●● | ●● | | ●● | | (●) | | ●● |
| lack of basic services and infrastructure | ●● | ●●● | ●●● | ● | ● | | ● | ●● | (●) | ●● | ●● |
| lack of job opportunities | ●● | ●●● | ●●● | ●●● | ●● | | ●● | ●●● | (●) | ●● | |
| population is shrinking and ageing | ●●● | ●●● | ●●● | ●●● | ●● | ●● | ●●● | ●●● | (●●) | ●●● | |
| drastic change in socio-cultural context | ●●● | ●●● | ●●● | ●●● | ●●● | ●●● | ●● | ●●● | (●●) | ●● | |
| former colonies | ●●● | ●●● | ●●● | | | | | ●●● | | | |
| indigenous areas | ●●● | ●●● | ●●● | (●) | (●) | (●) | (●) | ●●● | (●) | (●) | |

5. Adelaida in her oregano fields in Socoroma (Arica and Parinacota, Chile). Martina Bocci 2022.

Table 13. Characteristics of NGOs' local context.
Key to dots in brackets:
- MG is located on a peninsula, thus not literally a border region, but still a marginal area for research purposes.
- In the case of DSW, the analysis considered characteristics typically found in the various intervention areas.
- Regarding indigenous areas, dots in brackets indicate areas where indigenous populations are present but not legally recognised as such.

As mentioned by Andrea Bocco in his introduction, a common feature of some of these marginal areas is **demographic contraction**.

Since the ’50s (the Andean plateau of FA, Trás-os-Montes region of Pl, the rural area of Ladakh of THF), ’70s (the Peruvian South Andean plateau of Md, the Oku Noto peninsula of MG) and ’90s (Gjirokastra of FG, the villages of the M’Hamid oasis of Tr, the Pivot district in Serbia of ARF) people move away from the rural areas to the cities in search of job opportunities, better education and services, sometimes facilitated by the improvement of roads.

This migration often occurs due to changes in production, such as agrarian reform (Md, FA), the mechanisation of agriculture (Pl) or industrial development (the mountain villages in Ossola of AC, MG, ARF), and the predatory use of resources, first and foremost water. Another factor is the urban development of near cities (FA, Tr, THF). Since opportunities for survival in rural areas have reduced, if not disappeared, the city may seem the only possibility. But once communities reached the saturated, polluted, and chaotic cities, in some countries they clashed with perhaps even harsher situations than those they left. In other places, the historical quarters of traditional towns are experiencing gentrification processes.

**Strong changes in lifestyles** have affected most of these places in recent decades. Migrations, changes in production and land management have converged in the gradual dismantling of the traditional subsistence economy. The long-standing collective wisdom that ensured the habitability of these marginal places was replaced by new techniques with short-term effectiveness, leading to an “interruption of the millennial chain of transmission of knowledge appropriate to the environment through the generations” (Laureano 1995:18-19,286). The standardisation of bodies of practices and customs in favour of the integral development of countries detached communities from the territory, producing a decontextualization and a feeling of alienation from the places and reducing the importance of locality (Magnaghi 2010, 41–42; Ploeg 1992). Professional specialisation has dispossessed individuals of many skills regarding their daily activities and well-being (Davis 1999; Illich 1973).

Ancestral ways of life are deemed ‘non-modern’ and not prestigious. The general abandonment of local traditions is jeopardising the preservation of cultures and social identity. Local cultural value systems, customs, habits, and ways of life are depreciated (Davis 2006; Illich 1973; Laureano 1995; Ploeg 1992; Schumacher 1973; Sertorio 2005; Vellinga 2006). Modern societies seem to have forgotten their shared responsibility to keep the ecosystems in balance, and to have lost the ability to inhabit these territories harmoniously, i.e. to base their actions on the renewal of resources so to ensure long-term subsistence.

The places where NGOs work show a general **lack of job opportunity**, even in jobs related to traditions. Traditional ways of production are often limited to a subsistence activity due to the low return, the introduction of commercial cultivars, and a lack of promotion and specific measures at the regional level (FA). In the Arica and Parinacota highland, the demography creates further difficulties, as there are very few young workers who can manage fields and animals.

The inhabitants have often felt they had no choice other than migrating to big cities in search of work. Those remaining are mainly engaged in the extraction industry, road transport, or the tertiary sector. In some cases, tourism is the only form of livelihood for those who have decided to stay (Colmenares Fernández et al. 2015a, 42).

Further troubles in living in these areas are related to the distance from large centres and the lack of basic services and infrastructure. Geographical marginality is often coupled with a lack of investment from central (and regional) governments. The few development actions put in place are often erratic and not part of larger, multidisciplinary, more structured, and lasting programmes.

While on one hand, dynamics of abandonment, emigration, and 'development backwardness' are acute in marginal areas, on the other these areas have managed to maintain their distinctive characteristics, both in certain social structures and from a cultural point of view (Clifford 2008; Remotti 1996). This is more evident in really remote areas, where some inhabitants have maintained a lifestyle linked to traditions. Which is not to say that these are homogenous: they may be the result of stratification and exchange, producing a notable cultural density.
The ability to live in marginal places is linked to a skilful provisioning, use and transformation of the – sometimes scarce – locally available resources. Thanks to a highly contextualised knowledge it has been possible to inhabit markedly rural, sometimes isolated and/or mountainous territories. For example, FA and Md explained the importance of the complementarity between the 'ecological storeys' in northern Chile and southern Peru (**FA 4.3**, **Md 4.5**). Similar extraordinary adaptation to extreme living conditions can be seen in the oases of Morocco (Tr), and in the Ladakh plateau at the foot of the Himalaya (THF).
However, as Francesca Governa pointed out (**§5.3**), it must be emphasised that the idyllic image sometimes projected from the outside does not correspond to the real living conditions in these places – the present ones as well as of their pre-industrial history. Rural life often implies hardship and deprivation, to an extent that would not probably be accepted today (Arminio 2012; Massey 1994).

### 3.3.2 Reactivating marginal places

In highly indigenous and traditional, but also marginalised places, attention should be paid not only to safeguarding heritage, but also to **care for the dwellers** in the first place.
Actions that could overturn lifestyles and evict communities from their heritage should be avoided. NGOs perform both sporadic and long-term heritage-specific actions to enhance the living conditions and stimulate the inhabitants to find new (especially economic) motivations to living in these places (Appadurai 2008; Jullien 2018; Ploeg 1992; Ray 1998).
While almost all NGOs place equitable and sustainable development of local communities among their objectives, this is the main focus of none. Some, however, make the holistic care of people and places an integral part of their work.

NGOs often act as social innovators rooted in the context, bringing technical and cultural competence: knowing

and taking into consideration is a key element to propose **place-consistent interventions**. In many instances they were active in recollecting – both from oral tradition and historical studies – past ways to inhabit places, and were able to re-interpret such knowledge in the light of the aspirations, needs, projects, and choices that emerged from the dialogue with the communities.
To carry out these initiatives, RTHLD seminars participants emphasised the importance of broad and horizontal competences in **multidisciplinary teams** and collaborations (THF, Md, FA). However, architects and restorers predominate in all NGOs except Pl and DSW.

In some cases, NGOs showed through a holistic approach how the reactivation of these places can start with a reconsideration of the set of knowledge, customs and traditions that have allowed people to survive there in the past. NGOs try to channel the locals' impulse to find local alternatives without necessarily losing their cultural traits but rather drawing on their peculiarities. They help community in creating job opportunities from local resources through the activation of circular economies and bottom-up initiatives, as well as earn real money, not subsidies (**ABG**). Inhabiting and investing in these marginal places are upstream decisions that need support, but also strategies capable of connecting traditions to current needs and ways of life.

Traditional ecological knowledge (Berkes 2018) represents a human development asset in that it fosters balance between humans and nature.

Many NGOs care not only for the heritage and the local population, but also for the protection and preservation of the environment. Through actions of recovery and re-transmission of the knowledge of how to live in places, NGOs stimulate the reactivation the bottom-up mechanisms that took care of it. Md, Pl, MG, Tr, and DSW show appreciable achievements in the preservation of biodiversity and the creation of symbiotic **relationships between humans and nature** (Friedman 1978; Watson and Davis 2019, 399).
Pl associated the recovery of the dovecotes with the recovery of their traditional ecological function – the surrounding fields were cultivated again to guarantee pigeons the access to food, and their excrement was again used as fertiliser (**Pl 4.6**). MG focuses on learning and preserving the traditional Satoyama lifestyle. These initiatives have contributed to changing the habits of local farmers, who are now more attentive to preserving rare species, and to supporting young organic farmers. MG wisely couples the preservation and revitalisation of local traditions with the introduction of scientific knowledge to preserve the balance between humans and nature and promote life in a rural area.

Among the proposed initiatives, many concern the enhancement of local economies based on traditional production: NGOs support initiatives related to the promotion of local **culinary heritage** (FA, FG, MG), **handicrafts** (THF, FA, FG, MG) and **agricultural production** (FA, Pl, Md, FA, Pl, MG, DSW), helping to keep the craft traditions alive.
As with traditional building techniques, the evolutionary cycles of tangible and intangible heritage related to the use of local resources were interrupted, 'frozen', or slowed down.
Through **courses and training**, some NGOs support the communities in the

rethinking of local strategies for production and **on-site processing**. Primary and complementary processing linked to craft and agricultural traditions are suggested, to ensure greater diversification and counter standardisation and cultural homogenisation (Md, MG). Action was directed towards the valorisation and **adaptation** of products to current markets (also in terms of standards compliance), making both use of ancestral and modern knowledge. Interesting examples are THF's AAA House (**4.8**); FA's two editions of the school for winegrowers of the Codpa valley to improve quality and profitability and its help in the designation of origin for local oregano; and FG's Artisan Centre/Incubator (**4.1**).

In some cases, transmission is structured in 'schools' linked to the dissemination of traditional values and practices. FA established the Escuela de Conservación Sostenible Sarañani, that aims to become a reference in the region as a centre for the conservation and updating of ancestral knowledge.

Next to this, NGOs implement **training and capacity-building activities** – especially related to entrepreneurship and professionalisation – to support local artisans and farmers in creating their own businesses, encouraging the establishment and the operation of groups, cooperatives, SMEs, associations, as well as in opening and running workshops and shops. In some cases, such buildings were included in pilot rehabilitation projects (THF, FA, FG, Tr).
In 2015, Tr supported the creation of the Coopérative Agricole Femmes Ksar in M'Hamid El Ghezlane, currently consisting of forty women artisans (Colmenares Fernández et al. 2021, 71 – **4.4**). FG supported the formation of "GjiroArt. Shoqata e Grave Atizane", an association of women artisans (**4.1**). Through the recovery of *dozō* warehouses, Hagino Kiichiro contributed to the continuation of the traditional *urushi* lacquerware industry (**MG 4.11**).
NGOs often support new and existing businesses by accommodating their teams in locally owned hotels and restaurants (FA, FG), purchasing

Table 14. Activities carried out by NGOs in addition to the rehabilitation of traditional built heritage and the transmission of construction know-how.

| **Multidisciplinarity** | | **THF** | **Md** | **FA** | **PI** | **AC** | **FG** | **MG** | **Tr** | **DSW** | **ARF** | **BI** |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| environmental protection and conservation, landscape design | | ●●● | ● | ●●● | ●● | ● | | (●) | ● | - | ● | |
| local production & tradition enhancement | agriculture | ●●● | | ●●● | | | | | | - | | |
| | breeding | ●●● | ●●● | ●●● | ● | ● | ● | | | (●) | ● | ●● |
| | handicrafts | ●●● | ●●● | ●●● | | | | ● | ●●● | - | ● | |
| | culinary heritage | ●●● | ●●● | ●●● | ● | ● | | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● |
| | music | | ●● | ●● | ●● | ●● | | ●● | | (●) | | ●● |
| | ceremonies | ●● | ●●● | ●●● | ● | ● | | ● | ●● | (●) | ●● | ●● |
| | indigenous languages | ●● | ●●● | ●●● | ●●● | ●● | | ●● | ●●● | (●) | ●● | |
| creation and support of SMEs and cooperatives | | ●●● | ●●● | ●●● | ●●● | ●● | ●● | ●●● | ●●● | (●●) | ●●● | |
| festivals, events, fairs, and cultural activities | | ●●● | ●●● | ●●● | ●●● | ●●● | ●●● | ●● | ●●● | (●●) | ●● | |
| education | | ●●● | ●●● | ●●● | | | | | ●●● | | | |
| sustainable tourism | | ●●● | ●●● | ●●● | (●) | (●) | (●) | (●) | ●●● | (●) | (●) | |

furniture and craft objects (THF, Tr), and hiring master artisans for courses, both related to restoration work and offered to tourists (THF, Tr).
Financial support (FG) and collaboration in applications for state and regional funding (FA) are other examples of activities implemented to strengthen businesses.
Traditional handicrafts and foodstuffs are often targeted at **tourists**, rarely at the local market. NGOs support artisans and farmers in promoting and selling products through fairs (FA's annual fair of local artisans within the Arica Barroca Festival, FG's National Artisan and Cultural Heritage Fair), local markets (FA supports the Poblado Artesanal of Arica), cultural events, and international networks and platforms (THF, FA's Feria Sarañani!). FG organised the Gjirokastra Food Tours: a network of local families prepare and serve typical dishes to groups of tourists directly in their homes.

The NGOs have initiated numerous festivals, events, fairs, and cultural activities, in many cases involving the extended community and attracting visitors from outside (**Bl 4.9**): THF's monthly series of talks "Early Memories of Leh Old Town" (**THF 4.8**), FA's three festivals (**FA 4.3**), Pl's Incontro de Arquitetura Tradicional e Sustentabilidade as well as its cooperation in various ecological festivals (Pl), AC's International Architecture Meeting, and MG's Aenokoto ritual (**MG 4.11**).

Several NGOs carry out formal and non-formal educational activities about the value of heritage with **children and teenagers** (**§5.2.4**), trying to overcome the negative perception of traditional techniques (FA's "Talleres Wawa después de clases"; MG's "Satoyama Local Education programme", aimed at opposing the 'inferiority complex' experienced by young people once they move to large cities (Hagino, Ito, and Hagino 2016); Tr's workshops in Spanish kindergartens and primary schools to introduce pupils to the lifestyle of southern Morocco (Colmenares Fernández et al. 2015b, 84–91); Pl's environmental courses; DSW's dry stone walling courses).
The transmission of heritage is sometimes entrusted to the **elder** inhabitants, who NGOs put in contact with the local youth, to encourage exchange and sharing. This is expected to create a **bridge between generations** (THF, FA, MG, DSW, Tr).

NGOs were asked to discuss the possible negative impacts of increasing **tourism** (**§5.3.3**). The case studies show substantial differences: Leh, the Colca Valley, Gjirokastra and the M'Hamid area in Morocco are experiencing a substantial increase in tourists to the disadvantage of the local population. The other territories where the NGOs operate experience lower tourism impacts.
In marginal contexts, tourism activation may seem one of the most immediate and reliable ways of boosting the local economy. However, NGOs argued that this may generate vulnerability – since tourist destinations are subject to trends and fashions –, and that tourism is often controlled by external agents, which results in unequal distribution of income and little profit for the locals. In some cases, such as the Moroccan oases and Leh, towns are used as accommodation and service facilities, and as departure bases for excursions. An excess of tourists can overexploit the limited local resources, like in Leh (Alexander 2007, 47,64), or stimulate an improper occupation of productive areas, creating territorial segmentations and unequal distribution of revenues,

as Md explained about the Colca Valley (**Md 4.5**).

Historic centres, hamlets and terraced fields are increasingly turning into subjects for postcards, that are 'cleaned up' of stratifications and inhabitants, to create a nice image for tourists. Sometimes they are repurposed for accommodation coupled with 'performances' and traditions 'invented' to meet the tourists' tastes and expectations (**FG 5.3.3**).

To foster a local economy based on a wide range of options which offers a variety of job opportunities, NGOs help residents to promote a healthy, sustainable, locally-managed, community-based, and aware tourism, capable of bringing economic benefits to the inhabitants and respectful of the local cultural and natural heritage. Great attention is given to involving residents in the definition of an appropriate tourism model.

Through training and awareness-raising, NGOs strengthen the ability of the local economy to cope with the challenges posed by tourism, in some cases completing the local offer, and supporting the adaptive reuse of existing premises as well as the construction of new ones (THF, FA, FG, ARF).

Through tours – such as THF's Heritage Walks in Leh old Town –, information centres (FG, THF), tourist guidebooks and websites (FA, Tr), as well as collaboration with local guides and authorities, NGOs promote visits to local heritage, often linking them to their rehabilitation projects.

Other strategies are more wide-ranging, such as the implementation of community tourism models, as in the village of Sibayo (Md) and the development of long-term strategic plans such as FA's "Ruta de las Misiones" to support local networks of entrepreneurs, which in the Codpa Valley was coupled with the creation of a sustainable tourism committee.

THF has proposed to introduce a tax to regulate the development of tourism in Leh, and to use the money to transform it into ecotourism (Alexander 2007, 64–66). So far, this measure has not been adopted by the local government.

### 3.3.3 Long-term initiatives to catalyse interest and support

In the attempt to support the local population, NGOs operate as **social activators** in multiple directions, creating and maintaining networks which involve both internal and external actors, and collaborating with institutions, governments, stakeholders, associations, and universities.

NGOs often assume the strategic role of **intermediaries** who are able to deal with the inhabitants – giving voice to the needs of the communities and triggering bottom-up actions – and at the same time can act as **catalysts** of top-down attention and investments, and even of the support of international funders. Some of them were successful in bringing strongly marginalised communities to the centre of the discourse, raising public and institutional awareness about the importance of building on local knowledge when taking decisions about the future of places.

The support of local governments and funders can help NGOs to carry out complex, long-lasting, multifaceted actions (Tr).

In acting locally, NGOs incorporate themselves in local processes, and propose alternative development models which might enable living again in neglected villages and historic centres, placing the "people factor" at the centre (THF).

The strategies adopted by the NGOs include local and regional projects; initiatives of national and international institutions and organisations (such as Slow Food and FAO with its GIAHS programme – FG); inscription among UNESCO's Cultural Landscapes (FA, Md). Md supported the candidature of the Colca Valley as Biosphere Reserve within the MaB (Man and the Biosphere) programme, and formulated strategies for a reconversion of Andean territories in the *Plan de acondicionamiento territorial del Valle del Colca*, based on the Vertical Complementarity Model which would enable the reconnection of the valley to urban areas.
Tarapacá's Regional Government entrusted FA to collect local needs and aspirations and propose wide-ranging initiatives in a 'catalogue' of solutions based on the population's views and the local development possibilities linked to agriculture.
Sanada Junko (**DSW 4.2**) reported that she is trying to change agricultural and cultural policies in Japan to support the inhabitants of terraced areas to sell their produce with more added local value.

The success of such efforts is certainly linked to the **constant and long-term care and vision**, as well as to the local embedding of NGOs, which would allow settling practices over time and achieving a self-sustainability of the initiatives, eventually handed over to the local population (Dematteis 1994:13). FA endeavoured to structure a local Committee for the management of heritage and the support of community, which is in place but does not seem to be yet ready to take on such a task.
In **§5.3.4** Andrea Bocco asked "What after?", i.e. at which point of the process of competence transfer and community empowerment NGOs felt to be. Despite a possibly long presence in a certain area, NGOs may change their fields of action or their goals over time, leaving the communities with the task of maintaining, and maybe advancing, the processes they had started.
Community members – by acquiring awareness of the value of their own assets, strengthening their community ties, taking actively part in initiatives, participating in the development of projects, contributing to strategic decisions, and being recruited as NGOs' employees – may gradually develop useful tools and skills that are essential for the local rooting of initiatives. Over time, such skills may enable communities to gradually take charge of the projects.

### 3.3.4 (Re)inhabiting marginal places

The population of marginal places is gradually ageing and human-made landscapes are in danger of culturally disappearing.
By creating alternative possibilities for local sustainable development, improving living conditions, and showing that the quality of life can be higher than in urban areas, NGOs contribute to re-establishing the possibility of remaining, returning or moving in marginal places as "conscious inhabitants" (Ferrari 2023) (THF, PI, AC, ARF). Resettlements may not be significant numerically, yet they may reverse the demographic trends.
The demographic profiles of people returning or moving in marginal territories differ from country to country. Initially, the people who move are in generally outsiders, attracted by the beauty and pristine qualities of the places.
In some cases, NGOs went so far as to stimulate local inhabitants to stay or

return their place of origin. THF, AC, DSW and MG reported to have been successful in convincing young people to move in, in some cases autonomously recovering small clusters of houses in rural areas (AC). These people are often motivated by emotional issues and ties to the area, but also by the prospect of raising their children in healthier environments, in search of a less hectic and more sustainable lifestyle. While in some cases this rapprochement to marginal places and the re-inhabitation of inland areas is associated to teleworking, in others it involves the integration into the local labour market and a deep investment in the territory. The situation is different in Arica and Parinacota, where the population currently returns to the Andean highlands after retirement.
Especially in Europe, re-inhabitation of marginal areas is a trend that increasingly generates a sort of extension of the urban lifestyle, reproducing in some particularly attractive inland areas its unbalanced dynamics and its predatory use of space, a sort of shifted extractivism that starkly contrasts with the supposed aspiration to move towards an 'uncontaminated nature'.

## Is there a future for marginal places?

Despite years of field work and awareness-raising, NGOs' experience shows how difficult it is for traditional techniques to enter the repertoire of current practice, just as it is hard to re-evaluate heritage as something truly related to the life of today and tomorrow.
In many cases the vision of NGOs is more advanced – and 'enlightened', one may argue – than the results achieved so far in terms of generating lasting effects that have a 'life of their own', capable of taking root and leading to substantial change. On one hand this may be a sign that the 'ideal' values brought by outsiders have not yet always managed to translate into actions that locals feel as feasible or desirable. On the other, the limited response of the population is probably partly related to the socio-economic marginalisation of the target areas, which makes it less able to take autonomous, bottom-up initiatives.
As fragile as these contexts are, so too is the rooting of initiatives if effort and care are not adequately supported and maintained. Where NGOs continue to exist and operate (5.3.5), and where there is a handover to a new – perhaps more local – generation, the response may however evolve over time.

Quoting a reflection by Franco Arminio, to reactivate inland and marginal areas "You need two gazes (...) an internal and an external one. Intimacy and distance. To discuss about a village, one needs to be inside it, one needs to have the inflammation of the residence, but one also needs to feel like an outsider (...) One needs to weave local expertise and external contributions into every important choice. Interweave politics and poetry, economy and culture, scruple and utopia" (Arminio 2012:21-22).
From my research, NGOs have shown that in some cases they can and intend to assume this position.



4

# LECTURES

Gaëlle Carvalho/Palombar

# FONDACIONI GJIROKASTRA



# Revitalisation and local development in Albania's city of stone



Edvin Lamçe

Albania lies in southeastern Europe, facing Italy to the west, but despite this proximity we sometimes feel to be very far from Europe. Albania is not yet a member of the European Union; it was a communist country from 1944 to 1991, which has affected a lot the society and even the field we work in – **cultural heritage and restoration**. The communist time and the post-communist Albania are two different worlds altogether, which is something to take into consideration when talking about restoration.

I will illustrate examples and experiences of building restoration but also of our attempt to bring life again in the buildings and to revitalise the communities living in historic areas.

Situated in the south of Albania, Gjirokastra is a **UNESCO World Heritage Site** since 2005 and, on a national level, a Museum City since 1961. It is known as **'the city of stone'** due to the use of stone as construction material in walls, roofs, fountains, streets. It is one of the richest areas in built heritage sites in the country. The Institute of Monuments of Albania lists almost 600 cultural monuments in Gjirokastra. One of the main features of the town is the Castle, which was mainly built during Byzantine times and heavily reconstructed in the Ottoman period. The Balkan countries were part of the Ottoman Empire from the 15th century, so there is a lot of **Ottoman architecture** in town and generally in Albania. An important part of the historic centre is the bazaar area, built in the 17th century, which had around 400 shops in the late Ottoman period. Typical features of Gjirokastra are the big stone houses. In the late Ottoman period, Gjirokastra was a prosperous city, which led the locals to build grand houses, reflecting their wealth and power. The interiors were painted, as an expression of wealth. Gjirokastra is also famous for wood carving: most of the interiors are either painted or lined with carved wood planks, especially the ceilings. The preservation of the frescoes is one of the many challenges of restoration in the city. Unfortunately, in Albania we lack expertise in fresco restoration: there are maybe two or three experts, who are not able to meet all requests and needs. In the Gjirokastra UNESCO city, there is a lot of communist heritage, too.

There are a lot of challenges: it's a huge site. Even though we are there – and even if the government has some programs in place –, it is still very difficult to manage all the territory and all the monuments. Furthermore, not all restauration projects work. For instance, in 2008 the government started a project to restore the Angonate House, the biggest one in town, but, apart from a small guest house, most of it is now empty. The restoration mainly involved the exterior, while inside much

1. The Art Camp organised in Gjirokastra together with the Rete delle Case del Quartiere of Torino. Edvin Lamçe 2018.

- Activities in Gjirokastra and in Berat (UNESCO cities) since 2001
- More than 20 donors have contributed through Gjirokastra Foundation (EU, UN, US Embassy, USAID, Packard Humanities, GIZ, SWISS, REC, Vodafone, etc.)
- More than 50 projects completed to encourage the community development and the preservation of cultural heritage

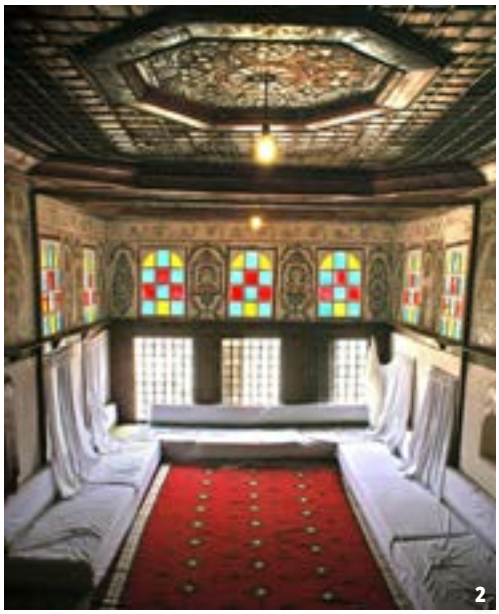
was left in the previous ruined state. There was not a real project regarding the reuse of the building.
After the fall of communism, we faced the **abandonment** of the old houses, and, in general, the historic quarters. People tended to move to the modern area of the town or to emigrate, for example to the capital city, Tirana, or abroad – Italy or elsewhere in Europe.
Another challenge is **illegal construction**: during the transition years of post-communist Albania, people started not to respect the laws, including the Cultural heritage law.
Apart from the abandonment and decay of the historic sites, we also face the **lack of expertise** in stone traditional techniques. There are people working with stone but not as many as before: before the 1990s, there were sixty qualified masters and workers working at the maintenance of the historic centre but, after the fall of communism, a lot of them moved away. They are well paid in Italy or in Greece, or they were rather employed in the construction industry. So, having people who can work with stone is a challenge in this city. Even though we try to do our best in training locals in traditional skills, to carry our restoration projects out we often have to call experts from other areas of Albania or from Kosovo.

Gjirokastra Foundation was established **in 2001**. At first it was called Gjirokastra Conservation and Development Organisation (GjCDO); but, as we saw that a lot of aged people couldn't remember this long name, we asked the court to add the name of Gjirokastra Foundation. Both names are registered in the legal chart and can be used; but the first one describes what we do.
The state of abandonment of Gjirokastra urged the Foundation to formulate projects to preserve the historic centre. Our mission is the **preservation and revitalisation of cultural heritage as a source for social and economic development**.

Since 2001, we have involved more than twenty donors in more than fifty projects, and we have tried to actively involve the local community of Gjirokastra.

Our first project was the restoration of the building which had hosted the first **Albanian language school in Gjirokastra**, built in 1908 and formerly called 'Iliria'. During the Ottoman period, all the teaching in the country was in Turkish. The first schools teaching in Albanian were opened in 1908; the country claimed its independence shortly after, in 1912. The building is a symbolic place for the town, overlooking the castle and the historic centre. There is also an obelisk, which was erected during the communist times.
The restoration took place in 2001-02 with the collaboration of the Municipality of Gjirokastra and involved local architects and craftspeople using traditional techniques and locally sourced materials, supervised by the local section of the Institute of Cultural Monuments (Instituti i Monumenteve të Kulturës 'Gani Strazimiri', IMK). As a symbol of reuse, a part of the building was used as a hostel and as the headquarters of the Foundation, that moved in in November 2002.

Right after the school, we restored the **Zekate House** (fig. 2-3). This is one of the most emblematic houses of Gjirokastra, built in 1811. It is a characteristic example of the so called 'tower house model' in Gjirokastra, built at the height of the region's strength during the 18$^{th}$–19$^{th}$ centuries. These are typical





2-3. Zekate House after the restauration. Fondacioni Gjirokastra 2005.

fortress houses built in stone, similar to small castles. For defence purposes, the ground level doesn't have any windows (in some cases there are small ones), and there are big windows in the higher levels. The tower houses belonged to wealthy people. After the fall of communism, the building was abandoned.
We designed a restoration project, collaborating with architects Emin Riza and Richard Andrews and under the supervision of the Institute of Cultural Monuments and the Gjirokastra Directorate of Monuments (now Regional Directorate of National Culture).
The restoration of the building's structural and decorative features started in 2003. It included the re-slating of the leaking part of the roof (238 $m^2$); removing debris from the foundations and the cistern (one of the typical features of Gjirokastra's houses is an underground stone cistern for rainwater collection); restoration of the entrance gates and the surrounding area; repair of the flooring during the 2007 camp in collaboration with Cultural Heritage without Borders (CHwB); restoration of the wooden interior panelling; and the general refurbishment of the house. The four-year project led to the creation of a museum, which is now open to visitors. We helped with its promotion as well: for instance, by editing a brochure for visitors. The Zekate House is now one of the main attractions in the city.

Another project was the **restoration of the hammam**, a public bath of the Ottoman period, and the historic Seven Fountains complex. We restored the square – which had been used as an unofficial town rubbish dump – as a public amenity. We also restored the fountains and the water channels, as well as the roof of the hammam. The complex is now an attraction in the tourist map of Gjirokastra.

We worked a lot with infrastructure maintenance and **restoring the cobbled streets**, which are a defining feature of the old town. After the fall of communism, in the '90s, there was a period of transition, during which the



4. Stone roof restauration using traditional techniques in the frame of REVATO Project. Edvin Lamçe 2013.

local authorities were not able to maintain the infrastructure. Consequently, the cobbled streets network, extended during the communist years, had fallen into disrepair. Therefore, we supported the Municipality in the restoration and maintenance of 300 $m^2$ of cobbled streets in the bazaar, along the road to the Castle, and in the area of the town's largest high school.

Another big project, funded by the European Union, was **REVATO (Revitalization of historic towns of Gjirokastra and Berat)** of which I was the project manager (2011–13). This was a massive project that involved the restoration and revitalisation of eleven houses in one year, as well as designing their future use (fig. 4). Nowadays they are guest houses, shops, offices and so on. During the project, we engaged a lot with the community: for instance, the criteria for the selection of the buildings to be restored were decided by the local community and the future use of the houses was discussed during public consultations.

In 2005 and later in 2012, we carried out several projects in the **Castle of Gjirokastra**, that is located in the historic centre where we had been working since the inception of the Foundation. Albania is becoming a tourist destination: it's the last country in Europe to be

discovered. The Castle is nowadays receiving the highest number of visitors: more than 100,000 per year, compared to less than 10,000 when we started.
We restored the interiors and some of the galleries, we did a proper 3D survey, we installed solar panels to supply electricity; the largest project was the opening of the Gjirokastra Museum in 2012. In Albania, it is not easy if you are a foundation, or a non-for-profit organization, to open a museum because of the bureaucracy. The project benefited from a lot of expertise, from within the country and abroad, for restoring the galleries to accommodate the museum; and also from public consultations, interviews and, of course, from the collection of objects to be shown. Some of these were in a very bad state and needed restoration. We engaged experts from the British Museum: they came as volunteers to help with the conservation of the objects we brought into the museum. Apart from the monumental buildings mentioned before, the Gjirokastra Foundation will be remembered for its contribution in rehabilitating and revitalising the Castle of Gjirokastra.

In 2008 we identified a secret site: the so called **Cold War tunnel** of Gjirokastra (fig. 5). During the '60s and the '70s, the communist government built several antinuclear shelters. Some were dug under the castle. We had the courage to make a research, and to open this tunnel to visitors. **Accessibility** was chosen as the best way to rehabilitate the space. The place generates income through the collection of an entrance fee. It was the first example of rehabilitation of **communist heritage** in Albania, in spite of the taboo existing at that time regarding the past regime and its 'uncomfortable heritage'. Only years later, the topic became acceptable and the government undertook different rehabilitation actions on other communist heritage sites.

After these projects, we were more and more persuaded that restoration is not just restoration. We started to talk about the **"2Rs": restoring and revitalising**. Restoration must be sustainable from an economic point of view – this is often set as a requirement by our donors.

In 2007, we started to work in the bazaar area where several buildings were neglected. The project was called **"Rehabilitation and Requalification of the Bazaar Area"**.
Dating from the 17th century, the bazaar is the heart of the old town and the centre of its craft traditions. Communist expropriations and later destruction and abandonment had made the bazaar an unpleasant and grim area. During the post-communist years, around 75% of the bazaar was abandoned. Nowadays it is nearly 90% used. We wanted the entire bazaar to function again.


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5. The museum in the Cold War tunnel galleries. Gjirokastra Foundation 2010.

6. Helping an artisan woman during the crafts development. Sadi Petrela 2013.
7. A woman from north Albania in her typical costume. She is one of the one hundred artisans who, for a week during the Fair, display their products in the bazaar. Edvin Lamçe 2016.
8. A local woman preparing traditional Turkish coffee in a stone in the Babameto House. Edvin Lamçe 2017.
9. Gjirokastra festival. Edvin Lamce 2014.


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The first phase of the bazaar project involved identifying building owners (2004–06). This phase developed while streets were being re-cobbled (2004) and façades were being cleaned and whitewashed with the collaboration of the Municipality (2006). After the restoration of some of the bazaar buildings (roof and façade restoration supported by IMK; traditional plaster work trainings supported by CHwB), we started to think of ways to reuse these spaces.

As we had identified a lot of locals who were skilled in crafts, we tried to **rehabilitate the crafts in the city**: the bazaar was a place where handmade items used to be produced. We started to help the opening of crafts shops and to train young people. Thus, new businesses that are now **financially sustainable and independent** started in the Bazaar area. For instance, after the training activities, the Foundation helped establishing GjiroArt, the Association of Artisan Women (Shoqata e grave artizane, Gjirokaster). The group did benefit of some initial help in getting materials and workspaces, but is now able to work without support (fig. 6-7).
The first Artisan Centre and Tourism Information Centre opened in Gjirokastra's bazaar in 2007, contributing to its revitalisation.
A wood shops opened immediately after the restoration and the training in 2007–08. Now this shop is famous for wood carving and one of the most important places in the bazaar.

In that time, we started to take a wider approach: an artisan program which

included activities, training, product development, creativity; every year since 2007, we have been holding the **National Heritage and Craft Fair**, an event that every September brings together more than one hundred artisans from Albania, Kosovo, and Macedonia for a week in the bazaar of Gjirokastra. One of the streets that we rehabilitated in the bazaar is now called the Artisan Street (fig. 9).

After we organised this fair in Gjirokastra, we wanted to make it more important on a national level. Gjirokastra Foundation organised a national auction in Tirana for the best artisan products in the country. We invited one hundred donors to come and see the products of the artisans. We wanted to promote the traditional way of making, but we also wanted such products to be on the market. Therefore, we helped a lot of women to produce more creative objects with traditional techniques, that can be bought and used nowadays.

The **Babameto House** is a typical 19th century house, originally owned by one of the wealthiest families in Gjirokastra. In 2008, when we started the project, the house was totally ruined (fig. 10). The project lasted five years because it was a real challenge, as this house had more than seventy owners (during communist times most of the big houses were confiscated by the government; consequently, in the post-communist period, properties like this one had many owners).
We had to make an agreement with each of them before being able to start the project. We also faced a lot of problems with the approval of the project, due to bureaucracy, often overwhelming in those years. Even the design was a very difficult process because the building was listed as a first category monument, which means you cannot alter it very much. We decided to make this house a hostel and a centre for different activities. A hostel is more technically friendly to an old building than a hotel, as it requires less interventions. The house was opened after the restoration in 2015 (fig. 11). The Babameto House is now used for accommodation, activities, and events, as well as a tourist attraction – tourists can visit it and sometimes they give small donations. The contract with the owners allowed the Foundation to manage the building for five years in exchange for covering all the restoration costs. We have to give the property back to the owners in autumn 2019, and again we are facing a lot of bureaucratic problems because of the many owners. However, they are obligated


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10-11. Restauration and revitalisation of Babameto House. On the left the situation in 2008; on the right the house in 2013 after the Gjirokastra Conservation and Development Organization (GCDO) and CHwB Albania joint restoration and revitalisation project. Gjirokastra Foundation GCDO and CHwB Albania. 2008, 2013.



12. Visitors enjoying a meal at a local family. Edvin Lamçe 2019.

to maintain a similar function for the building and respect the conservation methods in future interventions.

We also promote **traditional singing and dancing** events in the town, and we organise student camps. We attract a lot of study tours: for instance, we host tourism students from the Netherlands.

After opening the museum, restoring buildings, opening new places, we realised that increasing tourism is exerting a big pressure on Gjirokastra. We started to think again on what to do next.
The next thing was **rehabilitating the traditional cuisine**. Gjirokastra is very distinguished for its food. From 2017, we started bringing back the traditional dishes of Gjirokastra and promoting the experience of Gjirokastra through food. We helped local people to work with traditional food and offer tours. One example is the *qifqi* (a typical vegetarian patty): it was a forgotten dish but now, after the great promotion activity we did, it is served in every restaurant in Gjirokastra. We now bring tourists to the historic houses not only to enjoy the built heritage, but also to experience the cooking of Gjirokastra's families. It is now common for foreign groups to go to local families and eat with them, instead of going to a restaurant. This a good way to revitalise both the built heritage and the traditional cooking (fig. 12).
Since then we started to think wiser; people now organise **food festivals** in the historic centre as a way of revitalising their places. In 2017 we also helped to establish the **Slow Food Movement** in Gjirokastra, which is now partner of Slow Food International.

Another feature of Gjirokastra is the **iso-polyphony**: a sophisticated form of a cappella group singing (without instruments). Many visitors are surprised when in the middle of the bazaar they encounter this ancient way of singing, which is part of the UNESCO Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity list. In 2010 we initiated the training of a group of children to sing iso–polyphony under the direction of the master Roland Cenko.

Gjirokastra Foundation was partner with Torino's Rete delle Case di Quartiere in a project funded by Tandem Europe. We worked on the concept of **place-making and revitalisation**. In September 2018, we organized a camp called **Bashkë Art Camp** (Together Art Camp), bringing eleven artists and architects from Italy and the Balkans to Gjirokastra for a week and giving them the possibility to get acquainted with the historic centre and to work on site-specific art projects and to identify more spaces for revitalisation (fig. 13). We offered them a tour, which is a typical way of how we work with students and artists. We organise a lot of residencies but this one was very special because it brought an innovative

approach to the town. We asked them to work with different aspects and we instructed them to work with different materials like stone, textile and wood. The artists worked closely with the local community and artisans, and experienced traditional cooking with the locals. Several proposals came up.
For example, Valerio and Isabella, two Italian architects, suggested upgrading a gate that takes you to the obelisk, which is a great viewpoint of Gjirokastra that nobody knew about. Their idea was to make people aware of the place. They painted the frame yellow, so people pay attention and stop before going through this gate. This was an innovation because we never applied this kind of approach.
A German artist, Daliah Ziper, with her *Stonescapes* series created a mould with all the typologies of stones of Gjirokastra and made designs with them.
Marco Terranova created a small project called *Odada*: you can carry this wooden seat with you in the historic centre and use it to sit on the stone pavement.
Olger Rakipllari, an Albanian artist, did an intervention in one of the tunnels used to access from one neighbourhood to the next. He painted in it the traditional motives of Gjirokastra carpets, and called his project *ArtTunnel*.
So, in this project we worked on the **rehabilitation of public spaces** in Gjirokastra.

Through the years, we also did a lot of **research** and produced several **manuals** on how to preserve and manage cultural heritage sites. Moreover, Gjirokastra Foundation created the first website for visitors, as well as maps, guidebooks, DVDs and other **informational and promotional materials**.

13. The Bashkë Art Camp participants. Giulia Cerrato 2018.



# DRY STONE WALLING SCHOOL OF JAPAN



# Dry stone walling and local development

I want to tell you how I got to know **dry stone walls**, what I thought and did, and what is currently happening.

Japan has a lot of **terraced fields** and in the last few years they have become acknowledged as **resources for rural development**. In fact, there are a lot of challenges. Firstly, the cultivation on limited-surface terraces has a **low productivity**. This is the main reason for the **abandonment** of these agricultural lands. Secondly, because of the **lack of transmission** of the dry-stone walling technique to younger generations, the collapsed parts of the walls are repaired with concrete, creating inconsistent landscapes.

In 2007 I moved from Tokyo to work at the Tokushima University and I came across an online announcement for an event dedicated to buckwheat seeding. I participated and I was amazed by the beauty of the landscape. I knew already that the terraced rice fields are narrow, which makes them unsuitable for working with machinery and therefore very tiresome to cultivate: this is the reason for the increasing abandonment of these agricultural lands. But thanks to this experience I realised it is much more tiring than I imagined: the field is sloped which makes moving the machinery very hard; the next day my whole body was sore. On top of that, the path to the field was so steep. I was already very tired before beginning!

Later, I started to regularly visit this place and I realised it is impossible to protect the landscape without **understanding the local lifestyle**. Usually, landscape researchers plan the conservation of these places from a mere aesthetical point of view, without knowing how exhausting and hard is the local life: this seems to me a very irresponsible approach. Instead, I thought the first thing we must understand is how life in those places functions.

In 2009 I organised the **first Field School**; ten landscape engineering students joined from all over Japan. I had chosen to work with students because I wanted those who would work with



Sanada Junko

1. Cultivated terrace in Yoshinogawa, Misato city, Saitama prefecture. Sanada Junko 2009.
2. Buckwheat seeding in a cultivated terrace in the Tokushima Prefecture. Sanada Junko 2007.







3. Terraced rice field in Kagawa Prefecture, Shodoshima Island. Sanada Junko 2006.
4. First edition of the field school. Sanada Junko 2009.

future landscape projects to know the life behind rural landscapes: landscapes are nothing else than the result of the life led by the peasants. In our Field School, in addition to the construction of dry-stone walls (*ishizumi*), we practiced *Tsuchi-age* and mowed plants (*kusa-kari*) to prepare green manure. *Tsuchi-age* literally means 'to bring soil up'. Since the field is sloped, each time it rains a little soil slides down, and once a year you need to bring it up. I had heard that this work was very hard, and I wanted to try: it was very tough indeed. *Kusa-kari* means to mow very tall grasses (human height) on the very steep slopes where terraces cannot be built.
These are very tiring works, but we also learned there are many wise tricks to save some effort.

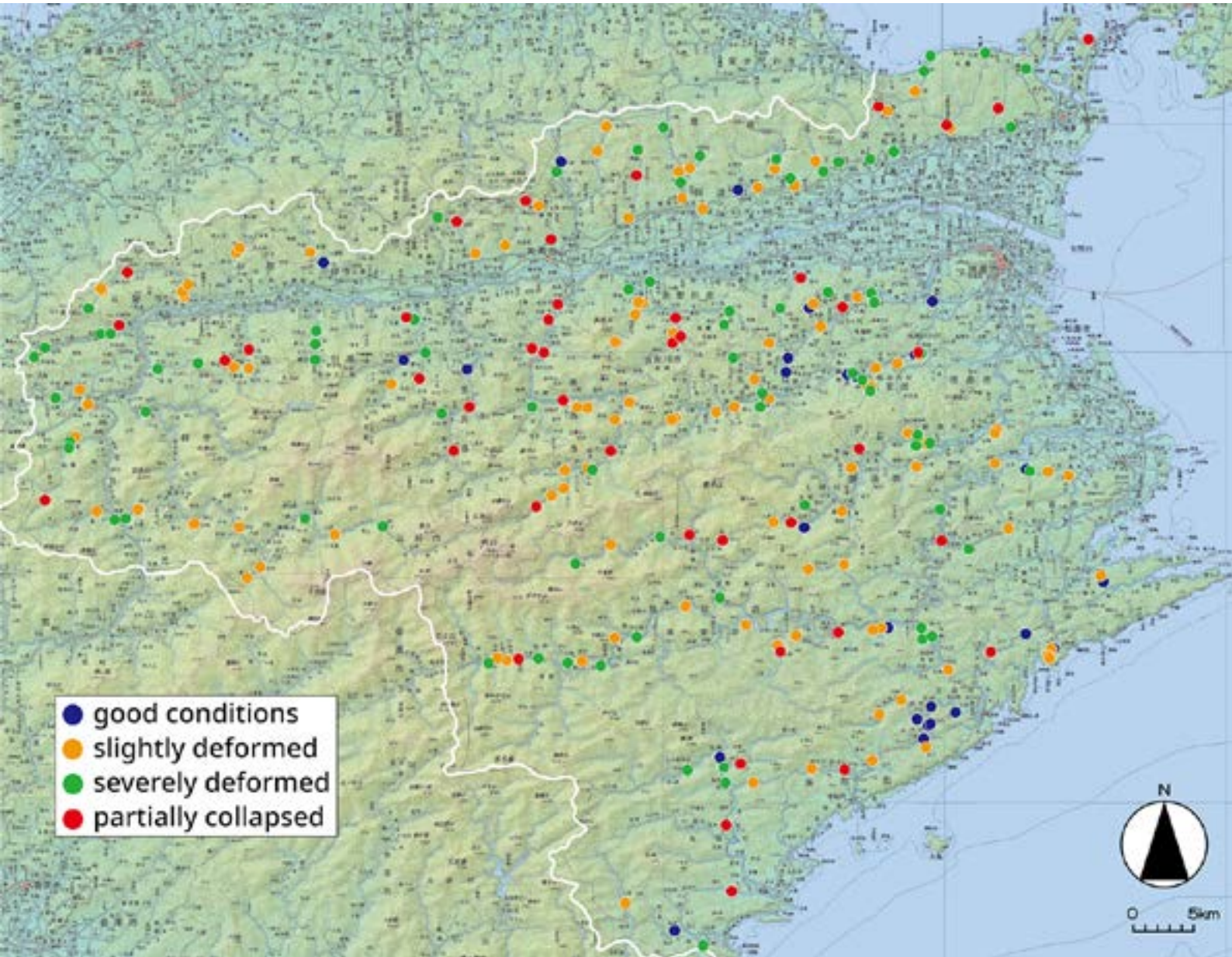
The first edition of our Field School was a wonderful experience, but it ended before we could even learn well the dry-walling construction technique. Therefore, I decided to organise it regularly, once a year, starting on the very following year.
After several editions, I learned how to evaluate the conditions of the walls. I also started to notice that in many places dry walls existed that were left without care although not yet collapsed, which were in need of restoration.

In 2012-13, we conducted research (Okamoto and Sanada 2016): one of our students travelled all the state and provincial roads of Tokushima prefecture by motorbike, spotting 252 terraced fields and investigating the current state of conservation of the featured dry-stone walls. In these constructions, stone is used almost exclusively (of course when walls had not been restored with concrete), but in fact many of them are abandoned and lie in a state of disrepair.

We also conducted research on the state of conservation. From the map in figure 5 we can see that in a few places the walls are in good conditions, in red the ones that partially collapsed. Many walls, although not yet collapsed, are in poor conditions. According to dry-walling masters, it is better to restore a wall before it collapses: once collapsed, exterior stones which take a structural role and interior stones used for drainage

are often mixed, and it becomes much more complicated to rebuild the wall. The extent of collapsed and heavily damaged walls shows a general lack of maintenance of dry-stone walls. We understood that dry-walling techniques have not been satisfactorily passed on to new generations, also due to very severe **depopulation and ageing phenomena**.

Other causes affect the dry walls maintenance, namely **agricultural policy** and **cultural heritage policy**. The Ministry of Agriculture's fundamental purpose is the increase of productivity; therefore, architecture, landscape and environment are considered secondary aspects. It is emblematic that public administrations bestow grants for walls once stability has been ensured through calculations. Therefore, farmers are forced to repair them using concrete: you cannot get subsidies if you make dry-stone walls, since it is not possible to perform calculations of their structural performance.




5. Map of the degree of deterioration of dry-stone walls in Tokushima Prefecture. Sanada Junko 2013.



6. Moments from practical courses of the Dry-Stone Walling School of Japan. Sanada Junko 2018.

In areas declared **Cultural landscape heritage sites**, farmers can choose whether to restore the walls through an **agricultural project** or a cultural project (the two procedures refer to two different ministries). The share that farmers must pay is different: with an agricultural project the farmer pays only between 3 and 5% of the total cost, but by choosing the **cultural project**, the share borne by the farmer is 30%. Therefore, farmers often choose the agricultural project, which however implicitly requires the use of concrete. The protection of the landscapes is entrusted, in a certain sense, to the farmers' will and to their economic conditions. The **use of concrete** for wall restoration is de facto encouraged.
For instance, the terraced landscape of Hirado, an island in Nagasaki prefecture, has been declared National Cultural Heritage Site, but the use of mortar and non-local stones is allowed in the restoration if you pick the agricultural project procedure.

A further problem concerns the fact that the construction of dry-stone walls is considered difficult and therefore implying the intervention of skilled workers. In fact, when the Japanese think of stone walls, they usually have castles in mind (like the beautiful Kumamoto castle), concluding that these are complex structures, not feasible by ordinary people. In addition, there is an idea that hiring expert workers costs a lot, therefore there is a tendency to call in an ordinary construction company which is of course capable of working with concrete, if asked to rebuild a damaged wall.

At that point, I decided to undertake two missions: to **pass on the techniques** and to **renew the image of the dry-stone wall**.
To these ends, in 2013 I started organising dry walling courses open to lay people, not just to students.
Before starting, I thought that our responsibility to the locals was to keep the project **sustainable** and **durable**.
Often we researchers work in a given context only for a limited period, then move elsewhere and ignore the follow-up of the project. This generates a sense of distrust towards us. People think our field work was just a pastime. In order to ensure continuity, I thought it was necessary to organise courses without depending on grants. In Japan local administrations are not very reliable: they easily change their mind and stop granting aid. For me it is very important that course management is independent of public subsidies. However, we needed to find a way to ensure the continuity of the project economically. So, we decided to collect a participation fee from all participants of our courses in order to be able to professionally pay for the School's management and the teachers' work. It is true that salaried researchers have a lot of spare time they could devote to the management of these courses, free of charge, but if those researchers move

to another university (which happens), continuity suddenly fails. Therefore, we had to create, in addition to the course activities, a professional management system.

This is how I founded the **Dry-Stone Walling School of Japan** (in Japanese, *Ishizumi-gakkō* 石積み学校), addressed not only to students, but to everyone, with an **independent management**.
For the first edition of the Dry-Stone Walling School, I chose a different place from where we previously carried out activities with students. By changing the place, I wanted to emphasise that this school is not linked to a particular place, and that its mission is to transmit the dry-walling construction technique, not to deal with the local development of a particular place. I want this point to be clear. I was right not to tie myself to a single place, because today I receive requests to organise courses from all parts of Japan.
I wanted to bring together the three pillars of our School and make a coherent system out of their interaction: those who are able to teach the dry-walling construction technique (teachers), those who want to learn that technique (students), and the walls to be restored, which are offered by their owners (field classrooms).

In this way, the locals are also involved from a psychological point of view, which is a very important point. Usually, similar restoration activities are offered by volunteers. But volunteering is a one-way activity, where external volunteers bring aid to locals who remain very passive; while in our system the locals, by actively offering their walls to our School to be used as 'classrooms', contribute to the transmission of this important traditional technique, which brings a **subtle but consistent revolution** in their mentality.

Furthermore, the school system has another advantage. If volunteers carry out some restoration work, one cannot expect a wholly satisfactory level of competence and the result is seldom perfect; but since they are unpaid, locals do not dare to criticise their work. Sometimes the locals will even need to eventually redo the restoration. Instead, being inscribed in a 'school' system, our teachers carefully observe the mistakes of our students and correct them, so restorations and construction of new walls always attain a **reliable quality**.

So far, we have organised our courses in four main ways:
1. At the beginning, we thought of receiving requests separately from those who want to learn the technique and those who need to repair their walls, and looked for possible combinations between them.

But once our school was established there were, in fact, other kinds of requests:
2. **Local groups** contact us because they want members of their community to learn the dry-walling construction technique.
3. **Municipalities** want to organise a course and ask us to do the job for them.
4. **University laboratories** that deal with rural development are aware of the indispensable value of the dry-walling construction technique and ask us to organise practical courses or cultural lectures on dry-stone walls.

Since 2013, we have organised around one hundred courses, all over Japan. If we have managed to do this, it is because we have a 'school' system where

we ask each participant a **participation fee** in exchange for being taught a technique. Usually, the course lasts two days. Techniques are very simple and straightforward to learn. The participation fee is 5000 yen (40 €). If we worked as volunteers linked to one place, people from other parts of Japan would have a hard time calling us. I believe that offering courses that have a set cost aids those who call for our intervention.
By not being tied to a fixed place and by having a **sustainable and autonomous management**, we are always able, upon request, to return several times to work in the same place. In this way, we can give continuity to local projects.

We now have one permanent staff: Kaneko Reo, 30, who works both as an administrator and as a teacher of the Dry-Stone Walling School. He attended the first edition of my Field school in 2009 when he was a university student in Tokyo. After graduating with a masters' thesis on a terraced town in Tokushima Prefecture, he was employed by a construction company, but from 2016 he wanted to be an integral part of our School. He wants to make a living out of passing on the dry-walling construction techniques. Since few experienced workers are available to teach in our School, now the two of us (Kaneko and I) are working as teachers.

In 2014 I published a booklet titled ***Terraced rice paddies, construction of dry-stone walls and the basis of dry walls restoration*** (Sanada 2014), to document what I learned about the dry-walling construction techniques, and also other knowledge that my master has transmitted to me – for example, how to move your body to save effort (fig. 7). From the beginning I wanted to make a booklet that not only spoke of construction techniques but which recorded the entire culture contained in the construction of dry walls.
The booklet was printed thanks to funding from the University of Tokushima where I was employed at the time and I decided to distribute it to interested people: I asked them to send me stamps and an envelope with their address written on it. Many wrote me saying they had long been looking for a booklet on these techniques and had finally found it. From these I knew that there was a lot of unspoken interest about all the issue. I distributed 5,000 copies of this booklet, and newspapers, magazines as well as other media reported it, allowing many people to get to know dry-stone walls.

In 2018 I published a book, entitled ***Anyone can build dry walls*** (Sanada 2018) I chose this title because I want to renew the image of dry walls. 5,000 copies of this book have also been sold so far.



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7. Publications on the dry-stone walling technique in Japan. Sanada Junko 2014.



In 2018 in Akehama, in Ehime Prefecture (an area famous for the cultivation of mandarin and other citrus fruits and for the presence of a geological park) many landslides occurred due to heavy rains. The municipality asked us to hold practical restoration courses as well as lectures for farmers on the importance of dry walls, from an **environmental**, **biodiversity conservation**, and **climate change** perspective, to raise awareness about their value for the future (fig. 8).

I wouldn't be able to tell you from what it can be deduced that the situation has changed, but I have a feeling that people's **awareness of the importance of the dry-walling construction technique** has changed compared to when I started. This makes me feel the need to continue working on changing agricultural and cultural policies.

8. Terraced landscape of Akehama, Ehime Prefecture (Shikoku Island). Sanada Junko 2015.

9. Drystone wall built during the 2017 workshop in Ghesc village laboratory, in collaborarion with AC. It combines portions in Japanese and Piedmontese techniques. Author: Reo Kaneko

## Discussion

**Edvin**
How do dry-stone walls withstand earthquakes?

**Junko**
Some walls collapse, others resist. This is because the dry-stone retaining walls, in general, were made by farmers (sometimes well, sometimes not), not by specialised masons. They were not built according to standards.
I believe that dry walls are better than concrete walls: a concrete wall is stiff, so if a crack were to occur it would almost completely lose its strength, while a dry-stone wall would not lose its stability.

**ABG**
I think this point is very relevant. We usually assume – and this is a very biased assumption – that stiffness is a good property in terms of quake resistance. While actually the behaviour of dry-stone walls or even mortared masonry walls – provided that the mortar is weak – is very good in case of earthquakes.
I would also like to stress another point. In the event of an earthquake, what matters is that the construction is strong enough to ensure that people survive. Localised collapses are not very worrying – provided that the involved persons possess the capability to fix the damage, and of course the financial resources (if any are implied) in case they need to rebuild. As Junko clearly states, if the construction is kept simple and the local people are skilled enough, they will be able to repair it; if the system becomes so complex that you can't help yourself, you need to rely on professionals and therefore on subsidies, and this means that in the future only the lower altitude, higher productivity terraces will be farmed, and rest will be abandoned.

**Junko**
Moreover, if farmers learn how to make a dry-stone wall, they also become able to understand if a wall is in good or in critical condition, so they will be able to prevent it from collapsing.

**Public**
The way stones are laid is considerably different compared to traditional Italian techniques: the bond pattern of Japanese walls seems much messier. What is the reason for this?

**Junko**
The dry-stone walls that retain the terraces were built by peasants. The construction technique was born in poverty, out of the need to obtain – sometimes minimal – arable land patches in mountainous areas. Walls served to ensure a livelihood, not to obtain an aesthetic result of excellence. Laying the stones in regular patterns would have been exclusively aimed at the beauty of the wall.
In addition, they used the stones available on site, and Japanese stones are different from Italian ones. Many Piedmont stones come in pseudo-parallelepiped forms, there is no need to hew them, while most Japanese stones come naturally in the form of potatoes and squaring them would require enormous effort. Since in vernacular construction it is important to save effort, they came up with a way of building walls that is adapted to the available stone shapes: i.e., to lay stones diagonally.

**Chiara**
Isn't it possible that experience taught Japanese peasants that wider and more irregular joints would allow displacements to happen along the joints, instead of bursting the stones, in the case of an earthquake? In masonry, the binder should always be weaker than the bricks or ashlars. Apart from not wasting time on unnecessary beautification, I wonder whether the empirical knowledge of these peasants suggested them that walls built this way were structurally safer and would displace or crack in a more controlled way.



# 4.3

# FUNDACIÓN ALTIPLANO




1

# Sustainable conservation in Chilean Andes rural communities



Beatriz Yuste

I would like to present the work of **Fundación Altiplano**, a non-for-profit organization working in the north of Chile.
We are an interdisciplinary team, working in the restoration of the Andean temples.
The organisation has been working for seventeen years and at the beginning we worked on the restoration of Andean temples made of adobe, rammed earth and stone.

The **Church of Parinacota** is one of the oldest churches in Chile. Its walls are built with adobe bricks, its roof is made of straw and its interior is exquisitely decorated with mural paintings (Corti, Guzmán, and Pereira C. 2013). This is one of the Andean temples that Fundación Altiplano is working on.
These temples are set in an extraordinary landscape. The natural landscape is made up of three ecological levels, the bottom level composed of fertile valleys, the foothills level with desert areas crossed by fertile ravines and the highland level with volcanoes and lakes in the middle of the pampa. In this landscape the Andean people have developed for many centuries their own culture, based on living in relation with nature, and on the concepts of respect and reciprocity.

The first question that arises is: **What is the need to conserve?**
"Así como se habla de desarrollo, algún día pueden llegar de visita turistas extranjeros y nacionales... ya se sabe que Tacora va a ser otra cosa más adelante. Tenemos en el sector varios Monumentos Nacionales... y eso yo creo que es importante para la gente joven de acá."
"Just as we talk about development, someday foreign and national tourists may come to visit... it is already known that Tacora is going to be something else in the future. We have several National Monuments in the area... and I think this is important for the young people here."

Wenceslao Chura, cattleman from Tacora (Pereira and Yuste 2019, 91).

Wenceslao is one of the last people living in a small village we worked on. The name of the village is Tacora, and is located 4,200 meters above the sea

1. Audience of the fifth version of the Arica Barroca Festival in the village of Pachama. Fundación Altiplano Archive 2018.
2. Agustina Chura and Elba Chura, women from Tacora village. Fundación Altiplano archive 2018.





3. Temple of the Nativity Virgin of Parinacota. Fundación Altiplano archive 2010.

level next to the border with Peru and Bolivia. Only four people are usually living here. They are mainly engaged in camelid farming and the processing of animal meat and wool. There are no more young people in this village because they moved to the city.

The testimony of Wenceslao brings some hope after the project of restoration imagining a new future, based on heritage and sustainable development.

Thus, another question emerges: **whom is conservation meant for?** The villagers, as restoration is a way to preserve their roots and identity for the next generations, but also the rest of the world, as conservation offers a way to learn new models of development and face present challenges.

We have new goals – global goals about climate change, recycling, responsible tourism, education, healthy eating, biotechnology, creative industry...

Maybe, it is time not to innovate that much, but to look what is happening in these small villages and learn that the relation with nature is more sustainable there than in our cities.

We need to conserve, that is why we need to observe the behaviour of these communities.

As we know, we are consuming one and a half more resources than we have on

our Planet. The richer countries are extracting and consuming the wealth of the poorer countries.

**Arica** is a region in the northeast part of Chile, at the border with Bolivia and Peru.
Arica is a **cultural landscape of America** with a very interesting history. In the past there were no borders, there was just one culture: the Andean culture. Peoples across the present borders share the traditions, the Aymara language and the crafts. Borders are something quite new for them, a way of dividing the territory introduced by Westerners. The borders are political, economic, but they are not real for the people who live there.
Before the arrival of the Spaniards, Arica was conquered by many civilisations: the Tiwanaku empire at first, then the Inca empire, then the Spaniards arrived and they made it part of Peru; finally, after the Pacific War, it became part of Chile. The territory has passed from hand to hand many times while it has retained its Andean identity, but it is in crisis because it is not fully taken care of by the central government of Chile.
The area possesses cultural treasures: these are the legacy of the different civilisations that left their mark on the territory – the Tiwanaku, the Incas and the Spaniards.
The region is large and geographically very interesting, as it stretches from sea level up to an altitude of 5,000 metres. There are four ecosystems arranged according to the altitude: the coast, where the Chinchorro mummies were found (the oldest in the world, more than those in Egypt); the fields, which are very fertile; the desert – the driest desert in the world, it never rains, but a few rivers flow through it that are full of life, and this is where human settlements are; and high in the mountains is the Altiplano, the Andean plateau where the volcanoes lakes and camelids live. Life is very harsh there. The plateau is shared with Peru and Bolivia.

The density of the population is decreasing; young people are leaving the villages and are moving to the big cities[7]. Once a year they come back for the celebration of the *fiestas patronales*. In the cities, people from the villages are victims of racism (Pereira 2018). Meanwhile villagers face the loss of identity and struggle to find a sense of belonging.
Historically trade linked the four ecosystem levels: in the coast they had fish and vegetables, the desert and valleys produced cheese and mutton, and highlands camelid meat and wool. There was a continuous interaction between the coast and the plateau.
The **Inca trails** were created to connect the territories they had conquered, from Cusco across Ecuador to Chile; trails helped cultural diffusion in the region. Qhapaq Ñan is part of an Inca trail; petroglyphs carved in stone were a way of communication.

The Spanish conquistadors were crazy about silver and gold. They looked for these precious minerals in all the conquered lands to send them to Europe. When they arrived to the Andes, they found the empire's main silver mine in Cerro Potosí, located in what is currently the south-eastern corner of Bolivia. Silver was mined and carried by llama and mule trains to the Pacific coast, and eventually shipped from the harbour of Arica. From there, silver was transported to Lima and from Lima to Spain. The routes the Spaniards used to transport silver from the mine to the port were the same used by the Incas and the

16,000 km$^2$, 50% of which protected; population 220,000, 36% of which indigenous (Aymara, Quechua, Afro), 77 Andean communities plus 1 urban nucleus (Arica) where 98% of the population lives; 0.4% of Chilean GDP.

[7] The information comes from direct knowledge and from censuses. More information in Pereira (2018).



4. Pallachatas volcanoes in the Altiplano. Fundación Altiplano archive 2010.

same which had already been used centuries before by Andean peoples for trading. Along these routes people concentrated and created villages made of rammed earth, adobe and stone. Also churches were built, as the Spaniards converted the Indians into the catholic religion. In this historical context the **temples of the Silver Route** were built (Moreno Jeria, Pereira, and Maino 2011).

Since **2002**, Fundación Altiplano has realised the enormous value of these **Andean temples** along the Silver Route (Fundación Altiplano 2012), that for a long time had been maintained by the communities in a shared effort. They used to paint the temples in the occasion of festivities and to fix the damages after the rainy season. But due to emigration this community work has been disappearing and the preservation actions have been lost along with traditional techniques. This caused a high deterioration level and even a state of emergency in the temples of the Silver Route.

The Fundación was established to respond to the need of the communities for technical support in restoration. We worked hand by hand with the communities, we helped raise the money from the government and began to restore these temples. Now we are working thanks to the government's investment.

In this context, Fundación Altiplano launched a plan, called **Ruta de las misiones** ('The missions' route'), centred on the restoration of the silver route temples and the implementation of management models for their conservation. Whenever a community said "We need to restore our temple", our technical team went to visit it. We made a survey, studied the damages, employed people from the community and taught them the traditional techniques. They were involved in the church restoration works; therefore they were able to maintain the temple after we left.

Communities get excited when they see their temple restored: the temple is the heart of the community, is where they take decisions, where they celebrate their rites. Not necessarily catholic rites; usually they are rather mixed with indigenous spirituality – including the Pachamama, the earth, the mountains, and all this. Sometimes we go there with the parson: before work on the temple, a celebration is held that is

often a mix of indigenous and catholic elements. For instance, animals may be sacrificed.

We work with and for the community, and every year we receive many requests of help, not only for temples, but also other projects.

Fundación Altiplano has invested 9,000 million Chilean pesos in restoration projects from 2002 to 2019 (Fundación Altiplano 2002-2019). These projects have employed and taught one hundred people from 34 communities of the region. In total, 140 initiatives have been developed, among which initiatives related to sustainable tourism through the master plan called Ruta de la Plata ('Route of the Silver"), which works on skills development and implementation of services around sustainable tourism for local entrepreneurs.

One example of temple restoration is **San Francisco de Asís de Socoroma**. This community was very upset because an earthquake badly damaged the temple, and asked us to help them to build a new church. As you can read in the publication about the restoration process, they said "this church must be demolished, it doesn't stand anymore, we need a strong and modern church built with concrete, corrugated sheet and metal, and very well reinforced." And we said "no, we can't do that" (Pereira 2013, 28). We discussed a lot, for a long time and finally we convinced them to restore the temple because of its value: not only the architectural value, but the heritage value passed on from their grandfathers and grandmothers. The community took conscience of this and finally they restored their temple.
We worked with them; people from the community were employed in masonry work and in the restoration of sculptures. Engineering techniques were used to reinforce the walls against earthquakes.

All temple restorations imply some archaeological work; in Chile archaeological finds belong to the government by law, and must be kept in museums. The community of Socoroma said "this is our past, these are our archaeological finds, we don't want to give them to the government". So the community women built a museum to keep the archaeological items. This is an attraction for tourists, but it is also an achievement for the empowerment of the community: they own their heritage, not just the government.

**Pachama church** (San Andrés de Pachama, in the municipality of Putre) is also in the middle of the desert and



5. San Antonio of Padua Temple (Aico) Fundación Altiplano archive. 2010.

it has murals painted at the top of the walls. During the restoration (2016) people from the community were employed and trained, and the locals also provided food and accommodation.

In a village called Belén in the municipality of Putre, there are two churches. One is used by the community, while the other has been abandoned for a long time.
The latter is called **Virgen de la Candelaria**, and was restored by Fundación Altiplano in 2011. When the restoration was completed the community was excited and decided to promote a landscape project in 2012, to connect the two churches creating a square as a welcoming site for tourists, and also as a scenery for the Arica Nativa International Film Festival.
When the project of the square was finished they said "Ok, now maybe the tourists will come, but our village is dilapidated, we need to recover the façades, the houses, we need local services for tourists, and we need to restore also the know-how: how to build with adobe, with rammed earth, with stone... We also have dry-stone terrace walls and we need to recover the knowledge connected with such heritage too". Then they proposed to draw a project, to recover the image of the town.
The result was more than fifty earth-painted façades restored with traditional techniques. During the restoration process (2016-17) we discovered that every house was of a different colour, because all around there is earth of different colours: there are yellow, orange, and green hues. The project allowed to recover the image of the village as it was before.

Moreover, the community created services for the workers employed in the project and for sustainable tourism.

Little by little these examples have been known in the region and people from other communities came to us asking for help to restore their temples or other sustainable conservation projects. In total, at the moment, we have restored nine temples integrally, twenty-four more temples have been preserved (not yet restored), 240 family houses have been recovered, and the façades of six villages have been renovated.

An example of a sustainable project dedicated to tourism is led by a woman entrepreneur in the middle of the desert. In 2017, she asked Fundación Altiplano for help to design huts built with adobe traditional techniques. Now this woman's business is at the top of Booking ranking in Chile, above many 5-stars hotels. Not much thanks to the quality of the buildings or the technique employed, rather because of the love she puts in hosting: it is the quality of the experience that tourists most appreciate.

Another design we made in 2017 was a prototype of a compost toilet in the middle of the desert. Using the same building techniques that we implemented for temples and houses, we were able to provide a solution for the needs of that valley community.

Chile is an earthquake-prone country. People think that adobe constructions are not earthquake-proof, but we worked for a long time with **Julio Vargas** from the Pontificia Universidad Católica de Peru (PUCP), in Lima. He is an engineer who has been working for a long time on how to make heritage buildings earthquake-resistant, with

the double aim of preserving the heritage, and saving lives.
With Julio, we worked on two techniques for reinforcing adobe masonry (FAMSV 2012). At the PUCP they built a life-size, small house and tested it on an earthquake simulator table. The results showed that damage such as cracks may appear, but collapse is avoided and therefore the loss of human lives. So, we hired them as consultants for a long time. They envisaged a solution, based on a mesh used in civil engineering, which wraps the wall and holds it in place: in the event of an earthquake walls will fracture but not collapse; cracks and faults will form but deaths will be prevented.
In our projects, we have used such **seismic reinforcement techniques**. They may not be perfectly adapted to stone buildings as well, but sometimes we favoured the safety to the beauty of the buildings.
The version two of the mesh technique – an evolution of it – was used in San Pedro de Atacama: we made a mesh with rope, because later research showed it is cheaper and villagers can easily make it at home (it is made of nylon; a manual tells them how to make it using different ropes depending on the thickness of the wall). Such rope can be used everywhere and even poor people can make it. In San Pedro de Atacama it was used in life-size scale for the first time.

Our model is based on *work with communities*. This means embracing Small scale – Emotion – Common interests – Cultural Units – Real relationships based on affections and culture – Egalitarian, Democratic – Conservation – Dynamics – Chaotic – Entertaining. This model is explicitly alternative to Big scale – Reason – Miscellaneous interests – Formal relationships based on contracts – Classist, Stratified – Progress – Static – Linear – Boring.
Locals are employed and trained. We welcome volunteers and offer classrooms about traditional techniques, sustainable development and heritage conservation.

In the project of **façade restoration in Tacora** (Pereira and Yuste 2019) that lasted 12 months, eleven local people were employed and trained; six local entrepreneurs offered food and accommodation services; fifty-two façades were restored; and four houses were integrally restored as tourism accommodations (fig. 6-7). A construction company specialised in traditional building techniques was established which associates some locals who worked in the project. Therefore, the project was not just about building restoration but also sustainable development.
The project was linked with bringing a mountain bike competition to the







6-7. Facades of the houses of Tacora before and after the restoration. Fundación Altiplano archive 2017-18.

village. One of the local workers won, and he is now developing a career as a high mountain athlete.

One of the principles of our work is that heritage does not belong to academics or specialist technicians. Heritage belongs to the communities who keep them alive. And this is why we consider so important to involve them in all the processes of restoration as well as in the recovery of traditional techniques. That is what we call **Patrimonial decolonisation** (Pereira C. 2016).

At first sight you may see these small temples and think that they have no value, compared with European monuments, but that's not true because in their context these are great treasures for the communities. They have not only a tangible value, but also an immaterial value expressed in the ceremonies, dances, and everything is celebrated in them. The same goes with damage assessment: there are many kinds of damage beyond the physical, for example those related to the loss of customs or traditions.

The core feature of our approach is placing communities at the centre. There is a need for affection. This need is met by a **Sustainable Conservation model**. The theoretical bases of our approach can be traced back to:

- global vision: we want to work with the communities in nominating the site for the UNESCO World Heritage list, given it respects UNESCO's criteria for Cultural Landscapes (Pereira 2017). The land is understood as a sacred landscape by the natives, although they are currently affected by the scarcity of resources;
- Ronald A. Heifetz says that every change is very difficult, because we humans don't like change, so we propose conservation as an adaptive process (Heifetz, Grashow, and Linsky 2009);
- restoration design model: to describe the design of a restoration project in a community, the formula we use is **Value + Damage Repair = Sustainable (Conservation) Action**. That means that we, as architects, survey the problem and look for a solution; but first of all we look for the value of building techniques, as well as the value for the community;
- Max Neef, a Chilean economist, says that conservation is a deep human need which contributes to survival; preservation of identity and cultural roots is part of survival needs (Max-Neef, Elizalde, and Hopenhayn 1994).

The Fundación does not only work in the restoration and design of sustainable buildings. Other kinds of projects are appearing, related to **education, healthy nutrition and local gastronomy, handicrafts, recycling, and cultural industry**, for example the festivals. Working in sustainable conservation is a complex and comprehensive process that has to involve communities in the rescue of their heritage and to promote the local economic development around it, in a respectful and sustainable way over the years. This is what the Fundación has tried to do since its inception seventeen years ago.

With the community women we have created in 2015 a **school of gastronomy**, to revive local recipes and the local wine. In addition to the cooking workshops, these powerful women have been trained in crafts, and they have created their own business, revitalising trades which had been overlooked for a lot of time, and began producing small items to sell to the tourists and to be used during the celebration of local parties (fig. 8).



8. Indigenous women trained at the workshop on wood carving craft (Arica). Fundación Altiplano archive 2016.

Another example is the **wine school in Codpa valley**. They have a heritage wine which was only meant for self-production. A guy from Santiago de Chile arrived in the valley and said "This wine is not only very good; it's great because it has a great history, it came from Spain through Peru after the explosion of a volcano and everything, and we need to re-establish the value of this wine. And this can also be an engine of economic development of the community". So, with him we created the wine school. At present all villagers have a vineyard and have been working to improve their wine.

All the temples have sculptures and paintings. Local women are employed to restore these cultural assets. Traditionally, during the *fiesta patronal* of each village they used to re-paint the images on their own, put hair on the heads, dress them – with the best intention, but sometimes this was not well done: sometimes they used incompatible products to paint or clean the sculptures.

The restored church of San Andrés de Pachama became the stage for one of the two Festivals we established in the territory. **Arica Nativa** is a yearly film

festival about indigenous nature and culture conservation: people from all around the world show movies and documentaries in the city but also in the villages. People come back once a year to their village to take part in this film festival which shows the treasures of the rural world and promotes the sustainable conservation of the Planet.
After the restoration, Pachama became a stage for the other festival, called **Arica Barroca**, about arts and crafts in the Andes. People from Ecuador, Peru, and Bolivia play baroque music in the cathedral of Arica and in this small village; arts and crafts are demonstrated; and there are also conferences and dissemination activities about the Andean culture.
Every year, we have more than 200 volunteers, 1000 travellers visit the villages, 600 people are trained and 9000 people attend the festivals.

The next step of Fundación Altiplano is to create a **sustainable conservation school** ***(Escuela de Conservación Sostenible Saraña)*** releasing a diploma to the villagers – both the leaders and lay people who are interested in conservation. In the future, they will take upon themselves the task to maintain their towns and treasures of this wonderful and unique cultural landscape of Latin America.


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9. Team of the Saraña sustainable conservation School in Sahuara. Fundación Altiplano archive 2019.

One of the most emblematic churches in Chile is the church of **San Pedro de Atacama**, which is not located in the region of Arica and Parinacota where we normally work, but in the region of Antofagasta, not far to the south. They called us to work there, and we decided to move out of our comfort zone. They were very interested in the model which we had developed for years, training and employing the community, and this was actually a successful example of the local community empowerment.
I oversaw this project (2014-15), during which the community took part in all the decisions, and our team took part in all the celebrations during the restoration process, including killing the llama.
During the dictatorship this church was whitewashed with lime, which is a good thing to protect the earth walls, but the local community did not want to restore this colour. They associated this to political and social hardship. So, they decided to re-establish it in its pristine state, with the earth colour exposed.

All the work we make is published in books. There are books dedicated to the restoration of the temples, to the restoration of the houses, and to the inestimable patrimonial value of the region's cultural landscape (fig. 9, 10). One of these books is the basis for the ongoing work with the community, to be awarded the status of UNESCO World Heritage.

The work of Fundación Altiplano is similar to other initiatives in Latin America. In Bolivia we find **Chiquitania**, a plan for the restoration of 17th-century Jesuit churches; in Peru we have **Colca Canyon**, which works with a similar model of restoration and local development. The Fundación is networking with both, and we learn from the mutual exchange of experience.

We also exported our model. In Tehuantepec, state of Oaxaca (Mexico), there is a temple called San Pedro de Huamelula. After the 2018 earthquake, the INA (Instituto Nacional de Arqueologia e Historia) called us to implement our model. They are technically perfect, much better than us, but they needed support to work with the community.

Another example is Oruro, Bolivia: there lie very neglected, small churches, and the area is affected by the same problems that hit our region. They are also located along the silver route. We are working to connect our stretch of the route with Oruro, in a joint development plan.

10. *El último Mallku, Paisaje cultural de Tacora* 2019.



# TERRACHIDIA



# Work in Morocco and Mauritania

## Terrachidia NGO / Morocco

Terrachidia is a non-for-profit NGO created in 2012 by a group of architects who specialised in Heritage Preservation and in Development Cooperation. They found in vernacular architecture, and especially in traditional crafts and building techniques, an area to work jointly, with the following aims: restoring and promoting architectural and cultural heritage as a driver for local development; educating and raising awareness in traditional architecture and construction practice as a model for contemporary practice; and promoting intercultural dialogue and the richness of cultural diversity. Terrachidia first developed educational activities in Spain, that are still in operation today, but very soon found the perfect field to address all of its aims in a single work: the Preservation of the Cultural Heritage of the M'Hamid Oasis, in Morocco.

The first and main branch of such project is the Cultural Heritage Preservation Workshops. In this original formula, local masters and young people work along with foreign students in restoring architectural heritage while keeping local building tradition alive.
Vernacular architecture and traditional construction techniques – earth building in particular – are taught by local masters, who become the faculty of these initiatives, getting this way the recognition they deserve. Young locals are also hired, so these works contribute to pass this threatened knowledge on.
The key public buildings and spaces of each ksar are restored in this process – mainly mosques and gathering spaces such as the ancient, fortified gates of each town.
Besides, the association's activity has been focused on education and awareness-raising, targeted both to the communities where these workshops take place, emphasising the values of local traditions and architecture, and to the international participants who travel to this oasis not only to learn by doing, but also to discover a different culture and way of living.

This approach is now enriched by four more key lines of work which were



Carmen Moreno

1. Restoration work in the Marabout. Carmen Moreno 2019.
2. Walley of River Drâa. Eduardo Menéndez 2015.





3. M'Hamid Oasis. Carmen Moreno Adán 201.2

implemented after the earlier workshops, emerging from the very needs of the place and from advice from both people's associations and local authorities:

- Improving the living conditions in the houses located in the historic areas of the oasis, contributing to keep the population there: The first step was to provide all the houses of the largest ksar in the oasis, M'Hamid El Ghizlane (امحاميد الغزلان), with a sewage system. The same is going to be implemented for the rest of the historic settlements.
- Researching, documenting, and spreading local cultural heritage, in order to increase its value and promote it internationally. Each *ksar* has been surveyed, along with its main buildings, and most of this work has been published and spread both locally, through awareness-raising activities with primary schools, through seminars and exhibitions, and internationally, through books, university talks, workshops and conferences.
- Promoting a more sustainable, place-conscious, and informed tourism, which would help sustaining local economy. Currently, tourists who reach the area mainly head to the desert dunes, hardly ever noticing the rich heritage and local culture of the oasis. To revert this situation, a tourist guide has been published, as well as a website on local heritage, and diverse activities addressed to raise awareness have been organised along with the local tourist guides association and the tourism authorities of the Zagora region.
- Supporting local women in developing and getting profit from their own traditional crafts. Through the establishment of cooperatives, women were able to create a local crafts network and to open a shop in the M'Hamid El Ghizlane *ksar*, that generates some income. They also participate in Terrachidia's international workshops as master artisans, which provides them with some revenue and deserved recognition.

To establish the basis for a socially, economically, and environmentally sustainable development, with architecture and local traditional knowledge as a fundamental pillar, is one of the purposes of Terrachidia's work which transcends local impact. We aim at presenting a local model as a reference for addressing global problems.

## Project description

Our project aims to contribute to the preservation of the cultural heritage of the M'Hamid Oasis, especially vulnerable as a result of irreversible physical, socio-economic and cultural changes. The project involves not only to study, restore, and promote the built heritage, but also to keep alive the traditional knowledge which shaped it, while transmitting such knowledge to both local and foreign people.

The specific goals of Terrachidia work in M'Hamid Oasis were:

- Raising awareness and working for the preservation of intangible heritage.
- Restoring and promoting the architectural and cultural heritage as an asset for local development.
- Training and raising awareness in traditional architecture and construction as an effective strategy for taking care and preserving both the local heritage and landscape and the environment in general. Therefore moving towards a place- and culture-based sustainability.
- Upgrading basic habitability as a contribution to both the continuity of local culture and the sustainability of local economy.
- Valuing cultural diversity and promoting intercultural dialogue.

To achieve these goals, Terrachidia implemented several actions.

Most traditional knowledge on how to rationally use the locally available resources has gone lost globally. Fortunately, there are places where such treasure still exists, waiting to be discovered and to teach us lessons. This is the case of this southern Moroccan oasis.

In rural areas, promoting the recovery of building traditions – which imply the use of local materials and workforce, and whose main cost usually consists therefore in paying for skilled labour – can contribute to alleviate the lack of opportunities which pushes rural populations to join the exodus towards cities, both within the country and abroad.

The singular methodology developed by Terrachidia associates in a single workshop preservation of intangible heritage, restoration of architectural heritage, contribution to local development, and training in each of these fields. Our formula is based on the fact that if associated, these aspects multiply the results obtained from each of them. Such integration has become the hallmark of Terrachidia's activity, which promotes values such as technical knowledge exchange and cultural exchange in general, among others.

The intervention model starts with the involvement of the local community, also in deciding which works to undertake, which solutions to implement and which local masters and young apprentices to select. Before starting physical work, Terrachidia carries out a study of the community where the construction to restore is located. Representatives of the community and the main local associations are interviewed and a consensus on the aspects mentioned above is reached in advance. In addition, a preliminary work of documentation, survey, analysis and inventory of the existing heritage is always undertaken.

The architectural heritage restoration works involve local masters with deep experience in traditional construction; young local apprentices, who learn from them; and participants coming from all

4. Rammed earth works. Eduardo Menéndez 2015.



over the world. The project favours intercultural dialogue. Working together reinforces and valorises the cultural identity of both local and international participants. Participants live together, work together, share their knowledge, experience, views... Collaborating and sharing experience with people from other backgrounds and cultures is the best setting to reduce prejudice and promote a culture of peace and mutual understanding – a precious aspiration at a time when it is so necessary to create new channels of cooperation and exchange between cultures.

Our model makes local populations sensitive to the relevance of protecting their traditional knowledge as well as their architectural and landscape heritage, and highlights some development opportunities that the preservation of such richness entails.
While only the continuity of this project will be able to demonstrate its capacity to generate a kind of development which preserves the patrimonial and historical values of this place as well as its traditions, it is already a fact that the project is contributing to the promotion of a more sustainable model of exploitation of the limited resources of the oasis, to the maintenance of its own culture, and to the enhancement and preservation of the traditional landscape. The value of such resources is ever increasing, since more and more specimens are lost every day.

After years of activity, the objective of establishing a firm and continuous basis of work has been fulfilled, and a close collaboration has been established with both local authorities and communities.

## Materials, construction and technology

In the field of architecture, the lack of awareness on the importance of local culture, including traditional construction, leads to a number of misconceptions. Vernacular architecture is regarded as too humble and belonging to a period that has been brought to a close and overpowered. As a consequence, these topics are hardly taught in architectural schools, and this omission affects architectural practice. Moreover, at present hardly any building regulation supports (or even permits) the implementation of traditional technologies. Hence the need to offer similar training programmes to university students.

We use and promote local materials and construction techniques. The main materials are earth (used in rammed earth walls, adobe bricks and finishings), wood (for horizontal structures), palm leaves and reeds (also in horizontal structures, right over the beams), and lime (mainly for some special finishings).
Employing local materials and construction techniques allows to spend little money on the purchase of materials and to allocate a larger share of the budget to qualified labour. This not only favours local development, but also contributes to preserving local crafts. Moreover, working with natural materials provides an autonomous, satisfactory, creative and enriching experience to field workshop participants.

In addition, we aimed at raising awareness of the benefits of earth as building material, while contributing to the restoration of the built heritage of the oasis. This could not be achieved without improving its performance,



5. Restoration of the Ancient Marabout of Sidi Abdullah Khalifa. Ouled Youssef. Carmen Moreno Adán 2019.

especially when mud is used for finishings, which is a key factor for increasing the buildings' durability and reducing maintenance.

Along with the Universitat de Girona, Terrachidia conducted a research on site and at the university laboratories to investigate the characteristics of local earth, and its performance when mixed with local and natural stabilisers and additives[8]. The most appropriate mixtures and application techniques for finishings were incorporated in Terrachidia's work from then on.

The involvement of the different agents during the whole process was one of the guidelines – research results were transmitted through theory and practice, so that participants in the workshops as well as local masters could test and improve them.

[8] This activity was financed by the Universitat de Girona within the 'Sustainable earth construction' course. It was not published but it is the topic of a masters' thesis (Osés Lana and Villasevil Pau 2014). A photography exhibition was shown at the University of Girona and later in Madrid, where a seminar was held in Casa Árabe, in 2017.



## Project's significance and impact

The methodology of Terrachidia, which is replicable in other places, has produced the following outcomes in M'Hamid from 2012 to 2020:

- seventeen historic buildings have been restored within the framework of the aforementioned programs, mostly the fortified gates of walled towns and their surrounding gathering spaces, as well as some of the mosques and main public spaces.
- More than 450 people from over 25 different countries have participated in the traditional architecture and construction workshops.
- More than 50 construction masters have been hired as trainers for our workshops, participating in the restoration works. They trained a similar number of young apprentices, also hired for this purpose.
- More than 450 local families have benefited from the project. Around 70% of Terrachidia's resources have been invested in them. Of these, over 100 families have seen some of their members hired by the project.
- Two women's cooperatives dedicated to local crafts have been created in the Oasis, one of which has opened a shop to sell their products after undergoing a training program with international participants in the context of Terrachidia's workshops.
- A guidebook has been published on the region's heritage; exhibitions on it have been held in Spain, Morocco and the United Kingdom; and a website has been developed to promote a more responsible and culturally aware kind of tourism.
- The sewage system of an entire *ksar* has been built, benefiting the living conditions and health of 95 families (fig. 6).

## Terrachidia NGO / Mauritania

In the year 2000, the Commune of Chinguetti (طيڤنش) and other national and international institutions agreed to build a new space to collect all the city's ancient manuscripts and ensure their preservation for future generations. In response to increasing international interest in the manuscripts and in the traditional architecture and local urban structure, the building was envisioned as a museum open to tourists. The building project involved restoring an old house in the ksar (the oldest part of the settlement) and adding new spaces around a courtyard, respecting the shape, volumes, and materials of the traditional Chinguetti houses. Unfortunately, local families were never involved in the project, so no manuscripts were ever held or exhibited there. Despite the impressive building, they decided not to give up their heirlooms and instead keep their manuscripts at home, as they always did. Form without function is useless in architecture, and the UNESCO Building, as it is known by residents, is now in very bad conditions and would need a thorough renovation to be used.
The Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation (AECID) has been working in Mauritania for several years, and decided to take on the problem of preserving this heritage in conjunction with the Commune of Chinguetti and the association of manuscript-owning families, for a total of twelve libraries. The best option would be to restore every room or space in the houses where manuscripts are kept. Most of the families were involved in the project, which required less funding than other, larger projects.

Terrachidia NGO was invited to join the project because of its experience in Saharan vernacular architecture and its know-how in traditional building techniques and materials. Remote rural settlements in Africa are fragile places with very few local resources, and obsolete infrastructure makes any delivery of construction materials difficult. Terrachidia is committed to using local labour whenever possible to promote local economic development.

### History of the city

According to oral tradition, the settlement of Abweir was founded in 777 A.D. near what is currently Chinguetti. A second town was founded in the 13th century, the ruins of which are still located under the dunes southwest of the city. It was part of the Almoravid Empire and was prosperous from the 13th century well into the 18th century.
Chinguetti is located along one of the most important trade routes in West Africa, known as Trig allamtùni, which linked southern Morocco to Sudan, giving access to gold and other products from Sudan. The salt mines of Idjil were the other source of Chinguetti's prosperity, as salt was used as currency in trade exchanges. As Sudanese commerce ebbed, trade with Europe, especially Portugal, grew. However, the prosperity of transatlantic commerce became an economical setback for Mauritania.

In the great drought of the 1970s, the city was almost completely depopulated – only around 400 residents remained. In the last decade of the 20th century, as the drought began to decrease, residents started to return, though never recovering the past splendour.

6. Sanitation system project. M'hamid Oasis. Raquel Peña López 2018.

Nowadays Chinguetti is a small city of 4,800 residents and a rural economy. Trading opportunities are restrained by the difficulty and cost of travelling by road, and a lack of resources for agricultural improvement has reduced its economy to subsistence levels.
In recent years, tourism has become an important economic driver for the city, as people have come to know more about 'the Sorbonne of the desert'.
The close relationship with both sides of the desert and with Europe left a significant mark on this area, and the most relevant testimony of this are its ancient manuscripts.

**Trade caravans**

The last caravan of dromedaries left Chinguetti by the middle of last century. It came from Guinea and headed towards Drâa Valley oases such as M'Hamid El Ghizlane and Tagounit. Trans-Saharan trade routes had been connecting far-off cities like Cairo, Mecca and Marrakech for centuries.
Caravans usually started in wintertime and could include thousands of dromedaries carrying goods such as ivory, salt, spices, ostrich feathers, sugar, grains, purple dye, gold, and slaves. Some desert cities along the routes became hubs of knowledge and cultural exchange, and homes to *mahadir*, desert schools for studying religion and spiritual arts. Manuscripts were an important part of this Saharan traffic, and contained information about botany, medicine, astrology, and religion, including the Koran.
Manuscripts were produced and reproduced by hand in Arabic; some also included decorative handwritings and drawings.



7. Ancient mosque of Chinguetti. Mauritania. Carmen Moreno Adán 2017.

## Chinguetti's cultural heritage

### The city and its architecture

Chinguetti was named a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1996, one of four heritage cities in Mauritania along with Ouadane, Tichit and Walatah. The four cities have been built in a logical manner, using local natural resources to adapt the desert landscape to people's needs and transform it into a habitable place.

Oases determined the urban structure of the region's human settlements. Before cities, most of the population was nomadic. Oases gave shelter to a great many people, who set off to build villages and houses in them, in the middle of the desert. Oases make life possible, despite the extreme climate conditions – temperatures rise to over 50ºC in summer and drop to 0ºC in winter nights. Moreover, rain is rare and sandstorms are recurrent. The water table of the seasonal Batha river, which irrigates Chinguetti's fields, is progressively sinking, causing a loss of farmland and encroaching dunes on houses at the southern edge of the old city.

Chinguetti was not only important because of trade but of religion as well, being one of the sacred cities of Islam. The city fans out around the mosque, with the rest of the buildings arranged concentrically.

People's settlement in villages and towns did not mean the end of nomadism. Most houses are used by seasonal farmworkers, and remain empty for most of the year. One of their main functions, though, is to house family assets, including manuscripts.

The local architecture reveals the people's nomadic character. The *haima*, a traditional nomad's tent, is typical of the city. These tents are used throughout the region in places which, like Chinguetti, enjoyed long periods of peace, as opposed to places where defensive structures are found, as in the neighbouring city of Ouadane.

The present city is made up of three areas, developed in different periods:

- The *ksar* is the ancient town with narrow streets and traditional buildings. The houses are built from local dry stone and mud mortar and are arranged around a courtyard which the rooms open onto. The ksar is made up of two areas, one founded by the Laghlal tribe and the other by the Idaouli tribe. The ancient mosque and most of the ancient libraries are located here.
- The South-East Neighbourhood is the area where people started to settle outside the *ksar*, with larger streets and wider lots. There is a large gap between the *ksar* and this sprawl, a sort of break in the urban structure that is used as a public square where residents as well as tourists meet. The Italian Agency for Development Cooperation (AICS) built a public building there that serves as a cultural centre and a laboratory for manuscripts.
- The North Settlement is the new city developed in recent decades on the opposite side of the Batha river, where many residents relocated after leaving the traditional neighbourhoods. This is the city's business centre and home to the main government agencies. There are also several small shops and hotels for tourists. The urban structure is chaotic and most buildings are made from concrete using Western construction techniques and materials.

The city has been progressively depopulating as residents left for bigger cities like Nouakchott or Atar. Most of the houses in the *ksar* are now abandoned.



8. Manuscript. Carmen Moreno Adán 2017.

The ancient mosque is the most important building in Chinguetti, with its elegant square tower built from local dry stone; it is over ten metres high. An elegant arcade connects its courtyard with a covered prayer space. The interior of the mosque has thick pillars, a wooden roof and sand flooring.

Traditional buildings are also built in dry stone; they are composed of cubic volumes and one or two storeys. As defensive buildings, they have staggered entrances raised two or three steps off ground level to prevent the ingress of sand and to block direct views from the outside. Façades have very small windows; houses open towards an interior courtyard called *tgoidira*, which also serves as a reception area. This intelligent layout protects residents from attacks by other tribes and from solar radiation. The courtyard is the heart of the house, and the rooms and spaces around it can have different uses depending on the season and the family's needs. One of these rooms is often used as a library to house ancient manuscripts.

**Traditional building techniques**

Traditional crafts and building techniques are linked to the nomadic and desert way of life. Each tribe would have its own craftspeople, *m'aalem*, who were skilled in different techniques.

Local stone, called *legré*, has been used as the main construction material all around Chinguetti, even in new buildings built with contemporary techniques. Massive stone structures are quite homogenous and provide thermal inertia and acoustic damping. Walls are about 50 cm wide and are made up of two leaves with mud mortar in between. Walls are usually plastered on the inside and seldom rendered on the outside.

Roof beams are palm wood (half or quarter trunk, depending on its thickness) carpeted over with palm leaves. The maximum span between walls is limited to 2.50 m, due to the maximum height of a palm tree. Acacia timber has traditionally been used as well, and nowadays some *bois rouge* (African mahogany) is imported from Senegal. Walls are topped with corbels, which project towards the inside of the building to better support beams and reduce the span between walls.

Between the beams and the palm leaf carpet, palm leaf stalks are positioned, which also serve to strengthen the structure. Over the carpet is an insulating layer of *sbat*, a kind of local straw, and on top of that, a 10 cm layer of compressed wet mud. The final 20 cm layer is a drier clay mixture that creates the correct slope to direct water towards the draining scuppers and gargoyles made from palm wood. Roof edges do not have eaves and are instead lined with clay-rich mortar.

Carpentry elements are made from palm or acacia timber, and small wooden sticks are hammered into the interior walls to be used as hangers for tools and clothes. At present, the carpentry of all façades and patios is painted in blue and green hues.

Floors are made of a rammed clay and gravel mixture, sometimes with a sand

layer on top. In some houses there is a sort of elevated floor that makes it possible to heat a room by placing burning embers underneath. In the Ahel Loudaa Library this traditional heating system can be found.

The best-known decorative details are the niches and triangular openings built into façades that open into courtyards or rooms. These simple geometric forms are made from stone and sometimes rendered with mud. The Hamoni Library has some good examples of these details.

Clay has always been used in the traditional architecture of Chinguetti, however its extraction from quarries is hard work. Men must descend more than seven metres to extract it by hand. The clay rocks are broken with picks and lifted out with pulleys.

Clay is used for roofing but also for renders and plasters; lime mortar was traditionally used as well.

The lack of maintenance is the main threat to heritage structures. In recent decades, social and economic changes have caused them to fall into disuse. However, in recent times awareness has been raised about this heritage, its fragility, and the importance of its preservation.

One of the most alarming threats to Chinguetti heritage is xylophages, or termites, which climb up from the ground into floors and roofs and seriously damage wooden structures.

**The ancient libraries**

The establishment of libraries in Chinguetti is strictly linked to the Trans-Saharan routes: they were meant for trade and pilgrimage, but were also vehicles of knowledge exchange. Ancient libraries have accommodated manuscripts for generations, and families have kept this heirloom in their houses to guarantee its security and preservation. They are kept in large chests that used to be moved outside during the hot season to dry out the moisture accumulated during the wet season. Leather covers were made by hand. The Habott, Hamoni and Wanane Libraries contain the largest wealth of manuscripts. Some families, like the Mahmud family, have a long tradition of manuscript preservation but have not participated in this restoration project.

Large Arabic families preserve their heirloom as a way to reinforce their family identity and their link with the history of Chinguetti. Similar libraries can be found in other cities of Mauritania, like Ouadane, and also in other countries like Mali.

9. Tfeil Library. Chinguetti. Raquel Peña López 2018.



## Planning and intervention

### The restoration project

The aim of the project was to preserve the original conditions of each UNESCO heritage space (the family libraries) by repairing damaged elements and replacing ruined ones. Terrachidia defined a four-phase schedule:

- Phase 1: Visit of every library participating in the project, surveying their state of repair and testing materials (wood beams, mud renderings, etc.).
- Phase 2: Hands-on workshop with local craftspeople to encourage them to use local materials and techniques again. Testing of several render mixtures with different proportions of sand, clay, lime and cement. Limewash, building elements with palm tree leaves.
- Phase 3: Restoration works performed a local team of craftspeople, including stone walling, roof waterproofing, and rendering.
- Phase 4: Supervision of finished works to ensure they are correctly executed.




10. Training local labourers. Ana Sánchez Salcedo 2018.

During phase 1, significant damage was observed at the top of walls, with open cracks allowing water to leak in and wash out the mud infilling the space between the stone masonry leaves. Water weakens the interlocking of the wall elements, causing inner cracking and detachment at the top, followed by the buckling of the detached parts and eventual collapse. Similarly, we found corners that were poorly teethed, causing vertical cracks. Other common problems we met include:

- Cement-based renders and plasters.
- Weathering of mud renders, due to lack of maintenance.
- Damaged mud plasters.
- Cracked waterproof layer in roofs.
- Damaged joints between gargoyles and clay waterproofing layer.
- Damaged palm wood beams (termites).
- Ruined roof and floor slabs.

Incorporating cement into traditional buildings has become more and more commonplace all over the world. However, its physical and chemical behaviour does not suit vernacular architecture, as traditional materials are elastic and sensitive to moisture and temperature fluctuations. Cement renders hamper the capillary transport of water through the stone walls, leading to the formation of cracks and the detachment of plasterwork.

Terrachidia suggested to increase the proportion of clay in render mixtures. Builders used a high percentage of cement (up to 30%) and just 5% of clay, to colour the mixture. Adding more clay and a small proportion of lime to the mixture achieves the natural colour and eases rendering. The optimum proportion we found was sand 75%, clay 20%, lime 5%.



11. Works at Almanar Library. Chinguetti. Raquel Peña López 2019.

Roof waterproofing was improved adding car oil to the first layer of mud and covering this with a polyethylene sheet. This was followed by a second layer of mud, and then a finishing layer was added with a high sand content, to protect the clay from erosion and thermal stress. Mortar stabilised with cement was recommended at the junction with the top of the wall.

## Conclusions

The UNESCO Heritage Chinguetti site is an example of good professional practice and a mirror which other anonymous heritage sites could learn from.
Interventions on heritage must always be carried out in partnership with the people who use it, local governments, and cultural institutions that may contribute to the project's success. Traditional materials should be used and improved to preserve the character of such heritage, which is strongly tied to people's identity. New materials should only be incorporated if they leave the essence of the architecture untouched.
Preserving people's houses and improving their living conditions means preserving heritage.

## Other projects

Terrachidia has provided consulting and technical assistance work in different projects in other North African countries, such as Niger and Egypt. Research work on vernacular architecture in different places that share geographical and cultural features gives us a broader vision of the richness and diversity of traditional architecture.
Terrachidia uses cultural heritage as an architectural learning model. Cultural heritage is an essential resource for the future, given its unquestionable educational, social and environmental value, its potential for local development and its important role in international cooperation.



12. Karsheef in Siwa Oasis, Egypt. Carmen Moreno Adán 2018.

## Discussion

**Student**
Why do countries like Morocco, which have a very arid climate, tend to abandon earthen construction in favour of concrete? Perhaps because it exudes a sense of modernity?

**Carmen**
I think that the abandonment of traditional architecture and construction techniques in favour of techniques and materials that are considered more modern happens almost everywhere: it is very common even in Spain.
Part of the responsibility here belongs to public authorities, because it is actually more expensive to build with earth than with other materials. Traditional earthen houses are considered shacks, informal constructions: according to Moroccan law and regulations, the use of a reinforced concrete structure is compulsory, while earth can only be used as infill.
This is quite astonishing, since anyone can experience the obvious difference in comfort between living in a house made of earth and one made of concrete. I am confident that local people will gradually overcome prejudice.
Young men are trained in traditional building techniques but they not always have the opportunity to put into practice what they learnt, because of the very limited demand. Local residents still aspire to a concrete block house and usually only foreigners look for someone to build or restore a raw earth house. Probably this process needs time and, in some years, Moroccans will preserve their own heritage.

**Kiichiro**
I imagine that organising workshops and supporting your efforts requires a large investment – how do you get funding?

**Carmen**
The fees paid by the participants cover most of the expenses related with workshops: construction materials, workers' salaries, the logistics of the Terrachidia team going to the site, accommodation and meals. Obviously, one must consider that this is a rural area of Morocco, so prices are much cheaper than in Europe. Terrachidia also makes a contribution, as in general these workshops do not provide a salary for us as professionals: we participate pro bono, for the pleasure of doing it.
We have also received external funding, for instance from the Polytechnic University of Madrid, Liverpool University, and other institutions, such as the Spanish Cooperation Agency. In those cases, we could afford to be a little more ambitious: we undertook larger works, and organised exhibitions and other activities.

**Student**
What is the approach of local institutions to heritage valorisation?
Is desertification also due to an absence of care towards the land, to a lack of targeted local policies?

**Carmen**
Desertification is a big problem there, together with lack of job opportunities; the two force the population to emigrate. The only options are tourism, agriculture and maybe a few small businesses. Public authorities are not engaged in creating more opportunities.
In Ouarzazate there is an institution called CERKAS, which is committed to heritage

protection, but as the Oasis is a rather remote, rural area, they do not feel very involved nor have many connections with it.
I would like to add that we have to be very careful about the impact that certain interventions can have on places, especially small places. Necessary, basic interventions such as sanitation in a village can have a huge, unforeseen impact. In M'Hamid, for example, the arrival of tap water and toilets in the houses changed the women's habit of going out every day to collect water from the spring, an essential social moment of aggregation and sharing. Fortunately, this need for socialisation has been redirected towards craft cooperatives, and they now meet to weave and make objects.

**Chiara**
Some of the sites where you have worked are partly under UNESCO protection. Are there prescriptions regarding the use of traditional materials and restrictions on the use of incompatible ones, or were you allowed to decide autonomously?

**Carmen**
We were very scrupulous with the materials, trying to replicate those used until then.
Chinguetti is a UNESCO heritage site. Curiously, the UNESCO-funded building where all the libraries would have been gathered was built using prefabricated concrete beams. We could have adopted this option in the renovation of the libraries too, but we wanted to be more faithful and used only the original materials. The only exceptions to lime, sand, clay and palm were polyethylene sheeting to counteract leaks from the roof, and the addition of exhausted car oil in the first layer of earth, in contact with the palm mats, to prevent termites from attacking the wood of the flat roofs.
However, lime and clay are no longer used nowadays; the master builders reported that they had just heard their grandparents speak about using lime, and since the extraction of clay from pits is expensive, over the years it has been replaced by cement, that is used in wrong proportions (30% cement and about 70% sand). Clay is still used to give the plaster an earthier colour, but without benefiting from its binding properties.

**Junko**
Is the use of traditional techniques allowed because it is a question of heritage restoration or could these techniques potentially be used on ordinary buildings as well? I am asking this because in my experience with dry-stone walls, modern laws and access to funding make it difficult to use traditional techniques, even for repair work. Maintenance is unrestricted as long as it is done autonomously, by peasants.

**Carmen**
In the recovery of Chinguetti, we worked with dry stone. We did not have to comply with regulations because the interventions were relatively limited: we replicated the existing models and construction systems. We respected the width of a codo which is about 45 cm and reproduced the arrangement of the stones in the original wall, forming two leaves with earth mortar in between.
I am not aware of how one should proceed with current, new buildings and whether there are regulations to comply with.

**Alexandre Mascarenhas**[9]
I would like to know which material you use to stabilise the earth and lime plasters. Do you use cactus or palm milk?

**Carmen**
When plastering new surfaces or the wall is fine, we do not use any additive – a first coat is followed by two more layers with increasingly finer aggregate. If we are restoring a very deteriorated wall, we do use that fibrous mesh you find in palm trunks or short sticks inserted in the rammed earth, as an anchor for the new coat. Cactus is not used as it is not a local plant. On the other hand, we add straw in the plaster mixtures.

[9] Architect-restorer and lecturer at the Higher Course in Conservation and Restoration Technology, Instituto Federal Minas Gerais, Ouro Preto, Brazil.

# MEDESUS



# Reinvention and resilience of cultural landscapes in the Peruvian South Andes



Ángel Guillén

Understanding the importance and the meaning of cultural landscapes leads to a deeper and better perception of the global environment.
The current paradigm is sectorial and exhibits harmful attitudes such as arrogance and a centralist management of development. It denies citizenship and facilitates the irresponsible production of merchandise and consumption of resources. This obviously translates into environmental unsustainability.
The construction of a new paradigm requires an inner reading of the environment, a recognition of the heritage value of cultural landscapes and a bold reinterpretation of territories: in short, a holistic, integrated and transversal vision that reaffirms traditional knowledge, reappraises community principles, supports shared memory, embraces long-term comprehensive processes, and promotes conscious production and consumption as an act of humanistic reciprocity with the planet. The new paradigm would become an effective driver of material and spiritual progress, backed by the achievement of an active and dynamic interaction which would allow a sustainable development of landscapes and territories.

## The Colca Valley

The setting is an abrupt and elongated ravine more than 150 km long, that is born in the Andean foothills of the province of Caylloma, Arequipa region, Peru (fig. 2-3). Massive geological events have shaped a scenery still inhabited by communities with a remote origin: the ethnic groups of the Collaguas, of Aymara ancestry, who were influenced by the Tiahuanaco culture, and the Cabanas, influenced by Inca culture, have developed autonomous but interdependent societies.
Both Collaguas and Cabanas extended their territory penetrating the valleys of Arequipa and establishing strong relations with the city. The influence of their labour and worldview is evident in the organic use of stone, in the land management, and in syncretistic forms. In Arequipa, the façades of the churches and other important buildings are built in the Barroco Mestizo style, which emerged between the 17th and 18th

1. Wititi dance in Chivay: integration of the sacred and the pagan in the festivity of the Immaculate Conception (Intangible Heritage of Humanity). Hermann Bouroncle archive 2016.
2. The Canocota Creek in the upper-middle part of the Colca Valley. Ángel Guillén Archive 2010.





3. Mount Quewisha, the most remote source of the Amazon River. Ángel Guillén Archive 2011.
4. Construction of altars in the village of Pinchollo. PAT Colca Archive 2010.
5. Procession of the Virgin of the Immaculate Conception in Chivay. Jimy Tapia Archive 2016.
6. Collaguas women and artisans in Sibayo. PAT Colca Archive 2010.

centuries from the fusion of local art and European conservationism. The details show how the indigenous workforce attempted to preserve its own religiousness.

The peoples of Colca Valley are a product of the site and its circumstances. The local society maintains ancestral forms of organisation, where social and cultural regions define patterns of interaction between Hanansaya (those above) and Hurinsaya (those below).
Diversity confers pride and dignity on the inhabitants. The syncretism of their religious festivals does not detract from the formality of rituals, moreover, its showiness enriches the use of ceremonial spaces. Reasons to hold parties are never lacking and are an opportunity for reunion and ostentation of power, through the exaltation of ephemeral architecture such as altars and arches (fig. 4-5). The syncretism of the original religiosity and that brought by the Europeans provided models of territorial heritage management.

Identity and cultural diversity are expressed in the continuity of intangible heritage (fig. 6). Ancestral culture is palpable in lore. Relationships of belonging prevail: an attitude that gives the Colca communities cohesion and allows to glimpse their values, rights and obligations. Faced with globalisation, they show a stark perception of themselves, and a response of authenticity arises.
Cohabitation with a huge heritage is an asset which could reverse the dramatic

material poverty that affects a large part of the population. The actions of the institutions that worked or work in the valley serve as a reference and are visible signs of the efforts deployed to ameliorate the local living conditions. The persistence of local governments, the actions of public bodies and the participation of private institutions are commendable and significant, although not sufficient.

## The construction of the colqueño cultural landscape: vertical and horizontal complementarity

The territorial structure implicitly carries an essence of duality. The Hanansaya and Hurinsaya went beyond the metaphorical meaning and developed a differentiated environmental order marked by Apus, springs, rivers, communication systems, villages and cultivation terraces (fig. 7). The concretion of the *colqueño* landscape is a merit shared by Collaguas and Cabanas. It is a whole exercise of binding aggregation that expresses a generous aesthetic sense and prodigious wisdom. The planning of activities led to ecological complementarity, enjoyable scenery, environmental balance, cultural integrity, food security and community solidarity, generating a vast interdependent economy.

The Colca, with approximately 15,000 housing units which translated into some 70,000 people at its demographic peak, was an intermediate community in the spectrum of Andean lordships and regions. The main use of the *colqueño* space has been and still is agriculture, a vocation developed from economic and social imperatives urged by a large population.


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7. Artificial lagoon of Ran Ran in the Colqueño highlands: it brings water to the cultivated land, while at the same time creates pasture areas around it for animal breeding. Ángel Guillén 2006.
8. Walkways drawings engraved on a stone near Madrigal. Ángel Guillén Archive 2010.

In pre-Hispanic times, Collaguas and Cabanas progressively increased their annual agricultural yield and even established cooperation with other lordships: indications of cultural mobility reveal the constant cross-border interactions that occurred with other regions. At the macro-territorial level, the Andean civilisation stood out as an autarchic system, while on the local scale, the groups occupying micro-territorial spaces were dependent from each other. The fundamental and decisive strategy consisted in the control of various ecological floors. The management of a single ecological floor could not fully ensure the livelihood of the Andean populations. There was, then, a vertical and horizontal ecological complementarity, within a system of 'vertical archipelagos' spanning from the coast to the highlands. In other complex environments it would have been difficult to subsist with an absolutely local production, while societies living on these mountains opted for a convergent economy that contributed to the overall sustenance with marine and land resources. The Andean model was impressive for the flexibility of its productive scale. The three staple crops were potatoes, corn and quinoa.

The domestication of the land has given rise to an anthropised landscape: already before the Inca occupation, humans modified the mountains, deficient in productive systems, by adapting animal and plant species (fig. 8-9), and building a spectacular hydraulic system backed by terraces, ditches, channels and reservoirs. The terraces, in addition to imparting an aesthetic note to the landscape, are, were and will be the basis of the local and regional productive system. The retaining walls act as vital environmental agents, at the same time promoting the expansion of the cultivated land, the circulation of water in the plots, the protection of soils slowing down their erosion. The last phase of growth and environmental balance in the Colca Valley occurred during the Inca Empire, that occupied the region for just a century. In this short interval, the agricultural economy was strategically redefined and the previous urban hegemony was rethought with the establishment of compensatory lower-rank centres. The territorial articulation was formalised with the annexation of the local road subsystem to the Qhapaq Ñan network.

## Destructuration of the Andean model

The arrival of the Europeans brought about a substantial change and put the local culture on the verge of collapse. The geometric models that the Spaniards imposed on the Indians implicitly carried a forceful and irrefutable message: Order and police. The Catholic Church, entrenched in the Tridentine precepts, strongly supported colonial ideology. The religious-political dominance was able to impose Western religious thought, and any other form of spirituality was repressed.

The Hispanic urban grid became the ideal physical-spatial model on which to establish inclusion-exclusion measures. The promoters of the regulatory provisions sought to empty the territory and to concentrate the population in towns; this assured the immediate availability of workforce for mining. In 1626 the Argentinian exploitation of the neighbouring Caylloma mines started the forced relocation of Collagua and Cabana farmers, who were required as workforce. The population of 8,000 tax-payers (40,000 people) in 1572 fell to 1,400 (7,000 people) in the mid-18th century (fig. 10-12).

A pragmatic act of symbolic nature with urban implications was the maintenance of the indigenous duality



9. Domestication of mountains in Ichupampa. Ángel Guillén Archive 2009.




10. Ancient indigenous village of Uskallaqta. Ángel Guillén Archive 2010.

Hanansaya/Hurinsaya. Despite the destructuring imprint of the colonial models, the biases effectively contributed to the re-meaning of the spaces, promoting indigenous territorial sacralisation.
The food security favoured by an endogenous solidarity economy confronted an emerging, antonymic paradigm: colonial commodification. The territory was fragmented in plots. The agricultural horizon became systematically narrower and technological backwardness was evident: agriculture palpably contracted, and the communities were every day poorer and more marginal.

The Republic of Peru has always been radically biased against the fate of the Andeans. In the 1970s, the Majes Siguas Project was implemented, which brought water from the mountains to coastal deserts. The continuity of the agricultural and hydraulic paradigm of Collaguas and Cabanas was put at risk. Almost 200 hectares of arable land were lost. In addition, the cost of living increased dramatically, massive heritage resources were lost, and the flow of the tributaries was minimised.

Human and environmental vulnerability
The Colca region has experienced innumerable destructive phenomena that shaped its people as well as the landscape. Recurrent anthropic and natural disasters caused demographic decline and continuing abandonment of the terraces (more than 60% have been abandoned so far, i.e. about 5,000 hectares). This has caused weaker control and absorption of water, increase of erosion and landslide risk, unpredictable effects of frost-drought, and appearance of colonising species in former fields.
Currently, the exchange of goods in the Colca Valley forms a microsystem adapted to a restricted, sub-basin environment, whose altitudinal floors reach an average of 3,000 metres above sea level. The apparent regional homogeneity is actually the sum total of the peculiar ecological character of each district. Currently, it is the landscape that appears particularly vulnerable in the Collaguas-Cabanas territory. The management of the sub-basin responds to outdated criteria. It lacks medium- and long-term plans and a short-term-only perspective facilitates systemic alterations of the ecosystem and the landscape.

An increasing tourism has reactivated the economy of the Colca Valley. Until February 2020, some 300,000 tourists a year were arriving in the region, with an economic input of $3.5 million. Therefore, many people in the community began to believe that the paradigm of development was tourism. Their bet has become evident in recent years; environmental factors such as depopulation, earthquakes, forgetfulness of the state, added to the Coronavirus have shown that the reliance on tourism has probably been excessive. Furthermore,

many are excluded from the increase of wealth brought by tourism; lack of opportunities, community segregation and poverty are widespread.
The growth of tourism in an unplanned territory has resulted in an improper occupation of productive areas such as terraces, channels and springs near the Colca River. Hotel investors have created 'segmented territories', taking up minimal environmental and social responsibility. A disproportionate commitment to tourism is unsustainable for the physical and human environment. Also for this reason, the implementation of visionary public policies is urgent to encourage a harmonious, fair and equitable development.

The Peruvian state has recurrently overlooked a comprehensive approach of the territory, and this position has been replicated at each of the levels of the state's organisation. Peru is a unitary republic subdivided into departments (currently regions), provinces, districts, and smaller centres. The vast majority of political-administrative units has not yet implemented the Environmental Management Instruments that would allow them to address policies, plans and projects, in a coherent framework.

## The urban-rural challenge

The Colca Valley is essentially a rural area, which requires specific policies to meet local development expectations.
It would be counterproductive and anachronistic to plan for relocating the people, that is, to promote their urbanisation. The forgetfulness of rurality has been and still is an indicator of the prevailing territorial asymmetry in Peru. Such dichotomy between rural and urban territories denotes, in addition to government insolvency, an unacceptable structural and infrastructural backwardness that slows down the development of communities like those of the Colca Valley. The territorial model does not change, nor does the distribution of wealth. The quality of life has not improved. Poverty prevails and expectations of gaining full citizenship are denied in the short term.
Even the prioritisation of the archaeological and architectural heritage of a territory is not enough if policies do not also consider the human groups that live there. Policies are needed to ensure inclusive, solidarity-based and friendly development, offering alternatives to the pervasive migratory phenomena, while preserving the territorial heritage. We work on this issue, by vocation or by compromise, even if not all of us are natives of the region.


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11-12. Uyu Uyu village in Yanque; Inca dwelling in Lari. Ángel Guillén Archive 2009; 2010.

13-14. Temple of Ichupampa, before and after restoration. Ángel Guillén Archive 2009-2016.







## A renewed interest in Colca heritage: the AECID

In 1997, an agreement was signed between Peru and Spain. The Spanish Cooperation Agency (AECID) arrived in the Colca Valley to engage in a process strategically focused on the restoration of the temples, but also on the improvement of the wellbeing of the communities.
One of the first interventions was, in 1999, the restoration of the Church of Santa Ana de Maca, which had been damaged in 1991 by an earthquake, which also destroyed part of the village (fig. 13-14). This process began shaping the Colca Valley project, including interventions on architectural and art heritage. The aim of recovery actions was to generate a change in the way of seeing heritage, creating a paradigmatic outpost.

In 2005, the global strategy of the Spanish Cooperation took a turn, forcing us to rethink. There was a greater concern for the urban-rural problems, especially those related to quality of life, basic habitability and territorial management.
In cooperation with local institutions and associations, in 2007 we created the Oficina de Gestión Patrimonial y Cultural del Colca (OGPC), and began to consider this territory in terms of improvement of the quality of life, which included actions for the recovery of cultural knowledge, strategic proposals on a territorial scale, training, community participation, and the installation of micro-territorial management units. One of the main aims of AECID is to obtain the designation of the Colca Valley as a UNESCO World Heritage Site: "Cultural Landscape" and "Biosphere Reserve" of the Man and the Biosphere programme.

The Colca Valley is very receptive, and the inhabitants are ready to collaborate with people and institutions who bring help, support or proposals. The relations with the population have been frank and dense: their expectations were very high, and they could not wait any longer. They were never mere spectators. The welfarist policy of the 1990s gave way to the resumption of indigenous behavioural patterns and the re-appropriation of their own forms of being and doing. Since the arrival of AECID, gender equality made a leap forward – in a strongly *machista* area, women were integrated in architectural works. On the other hand, the residents' mind-set is a subsistence one – not only in terms of food, but also culturally and socially austere. This means that they very seldom take an active position on the political stage, and we had

to face also a serious lack of management from the local governments' side.

We have analysed the Colca territory according to a number of models – territorial, urban, built heritage, social, cultural: alternatives for change have been proposed for each critical situation, focusing on community responses, linked to local traditions and identity.
We wanted to transfer knowledge to the local communities so that, once the project was over, our 'withdrawal' would strengthen the population, who could show how they had been enriched by having been co-participants. Indeed, we knew from the beginning that our time was determined, with an initial four-year time horizon.

Among the projects carried out in partnership with the French NGO Bolivia Inti Sud Soleil, one of a softer nature, but significant for the depth of the proposal, was the solar cookers, in 2007 which benefited 180 inhabitants of the valley. Farmers have little time to feed themselves during their work and these cookers can be brought into the fields to cook meat and potatoes (fig. 15).

As far as the built religious heritage is concerned, work has been carried out in virtually all the villages in the valley. While the *Programa de Vivienda Rural y Desarrollo Social del Valle del Colca* (2006-2014) has been replicated in the villages of Lari, Yanque, Sibayo, Callalli, Chivay, Coporaque, Pinchollo, Tapay (fig. 16).

Yanque is one of the most important villages in the Colca, both in terms of size and material and immaterial value; the meaning of cultural landscape is still evident there. It is the only village spread on both sides of the river, allowing a strong symbolic connection between the sacred and the productive, perceptible over the centuries both in the colonial architecture and the indigenous works. The loss of heritage was, however, very strong.

Sibayo is located in the altiplano part of the region, more than 4,000 metres a.m.s.l. This village was characterised by an inappropriate use of contemporary building systems. After our work on the dwellings, a model of community tourism was implemented there – an example of how to welcome visitors while respecting local characters and customs.

15. Manufacture of solar cookers in Yanque. MEDESUS Archive 2007.
16. Rehabilitation of housing in Sol de Sacsayhuamán. AECID Archive 2007-2009.


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16



17. Connections between the banks of the Colca River in Yanque. Ángel Guillén Archive 2009.

## Strategic planning: from sectorial to transversal

After the consultancy phase, AECID began to ask us to develop broader objectives, to ensure that heritage was valued in its proper dimension, and envisage how development actions could contribute to people's lives.
With the *Plan de acondicionamiento territorial del Valle del Colca* (2017-2026) we are proposing a model where the Colca valley would redefine its position within the Arequipa region. Its recognisable cultural and natural potential, which is internationally recognised, would be consolidated with the acknowledgement of its productive capacity, as an essential element to provide better living conditions for the inhabitants, thus fostering environmental sustainability at the provincial level. The Vertical Complementarity Model starts by identifying the needs and translating the aspirations of communities, while not forgetting that over the centuries, much of the development of Peru's South Andean communities has been based on vertical complementarity, a model of interrelationships that, above all, ensured decent nutrition.

A renewed territorial culture would not only increase productivity, but also

higher levels of awareness and inter-regional complementarity. The concept of *comunidad relacional* requires a renewed understanding of the territory, which transcends the present moment and aspires to be actively involved in economic, institutional and social changes. To do this, the interrelation of the entire southern Andean space is essential: no territory can be seen as an island, the Colca must reconnect with the urban areas through concrete projects.

Having opted for cultural and natural heritage as the only strategic option has ratified conservatism, which has halted a bold take-off of other territorial skills. Starting from local internalised models, we propose a renewed territorial culture capable not only of advancing productive development, but also of offering a greater awareness of interregional competitiveness and complementarity. It is necessary to rethink the 'mechanised' operation of public management, reversing it through an open, dynamic, holistic set of actions: retraining of professional and technical staff and investment in the qualitative aspects of the public sector are needed to achieve a transition towards innovative methodologies in territorial engineering.

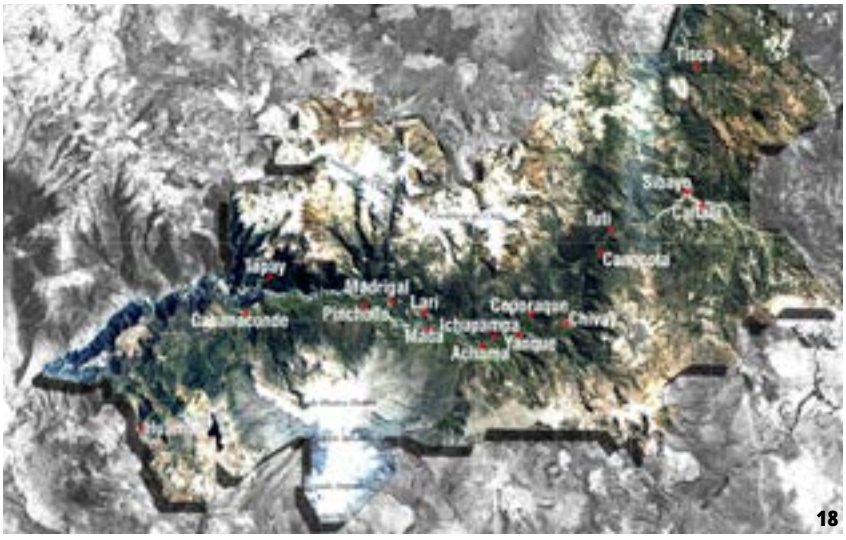
The inhabitants must be the authors of their own landscape/territory and be acknowledged as political actors, within an identifiable and measurable process.

## Territorial reinvention

The theme is a search for development alternatives. We asked ourselves whether to point at a productive reconversion and whether this would involve giving up something or (re)valuing some other things (Guillén 2021). We wanted to project the ancestral knowledge onto the future of the territory – a knowledge that has allowed, until now, a harmonious interaction with the environment, and the construction of the cultural landscape of the Colca Valley.

There are several conditions which would enable the reinvention of the ruralside, but everything could bear fruit if we appealed to ethical and aesthetic enrichment. Ethics – to overcome the temptations of facilism and opportunism, to maintain unity, to banish ignorance, to persist in commitment and solidarity. Aesthetics – to admire beauty, to foster creation and innovation, to share dreams, to feed identity again. In short, ethics and aesthetics for sustainable development: harmonious and balanced.

Agriculture might contribute to local development if connected to national and international demands, and consistent with the ecological vocation of the Peruvian territory. The land engineering we need is not the Western one – it should rather be in accordance with the vision, demands and feelings of the Andean communities. In the Colca Valley, agriculture appears as a viable




18. Plan of land usages in the Colca Valley. PAT Colca Archive 2011.

option that could reverse current and future depopulation. The important thing is to ensure added value to local agricultural production, in such a way that the native populations would benefit from higher incomes.

Multi-scalar territorial management is a strategic alternative to reverse short-termism and opt for a medium- and long-term holistic view. The morphological circumstances of the Andean space are propitious to embrace a basin approach, which would pursue the harmonious use of resources, and a comprehensive spatial development. We must also make changes at a local scale, overcome the 'author project' in favour of projects where the community shares the status of 'author', and represent the vernacular as a validated and solid way of doing things.

## Andean food security

In the Andes more than seventy plant species were domesticated, all of which are still part of the current diet of their populations. However, very few varieties have been prioritised as strategic.

What future would peasant communities have in the current global trends? Does local agriculture respond to societal expectations? The contribution of Andean communities to the Peruvian GDP is significant, while the level of return on productive investment towards the rural communities is asymmetric and irrelevant. The reconversion of agriculture requires institutional conviction because the ancestral means of environmental interaction and survival have been stigmatised, to the point that the number of employed in this sector is minimal – for many locals, it is even difficult to imagine working as a farmer. Real opportunities must be created to foster sub-regional agricultural development. This might be accomplished, first, recognising the historical potential of the relationship between the local population and the territory; second, taking up the inherent persistence that allowed the modelling of the terraces; third, highlighting the value of its biodiversity; and, fourth, radically changing the current socioeconomic paradigm. Food security is not an accumulation of local produce such as potatoes, corn, beans and peas – rather, it is the result of the 'qualification of diversity'. The competitive advantage of the sub-basin of the Colca River lies in its geographical location, which allows establishing physical and functional interrelationships with the coast and the highlands. A comparative advantage would materialise from rethinking and optimising the uses of the sub-regional ecological levels.

## Interpretive education

Failure to properly identify the different scales that made up the habitat of Collaguas and Cabanas has resulted in an incomplete interpretation of the factors that give it a unique value. The flexible use of the symbolic and productive components survives, and both of them are irreplaceable in the continuity of the cultural and natural landscape. The diverse scenery that mark the historical stages of environmental adaptation of the colqueño people is a clear competitive advantage compared to other Andean territories.

There is an enormous educational and interpretive potential that, properly used, would affirm the identity of native populations. We propose a reaffirmation of the ancestral heritage through the revitalisation of forgotten settings, where the pretext of the festive would implicitly bring forth the sense of the interpretive and pedagogical.

## Epilogue

Landscape and territorial planning must meet community demands, interpreted on the basis of the right to sustainable development, which implies a strategic use of the environment consistent with identity pre-eminence, biodiversity conservation and socioeconomic potentialities.

This productive reconversion, at least in the case of Colca, is urgent heritage work. I am not saying that work should not be done on churches, architecture and housing, but we have to dedicate ourselves to satisfying the specific needs and demands of the people and, above all, to fulfilling their potential. Andean rural sustainability has to do with looking inwards, to how each village – and ultimately the whole region – could sustain an employed population. We advocate to create jobs for a greater number of people in the trades they are most proficient in, such as agriculture and agro-industry, to design and produce equipment which would help production and processing activities, to provide them with health insurance, and to allow them to regenerate their own community economy.

The management of cultural landscapes includes the sum of actions, policies, provisions and declarations, which aim to achieve the consensual organisation of regional spaces, understanding that it can methodologically and operationally facilitate sustainable territorial development. An increase in the attractiveness of cultural landscapes will stimulate investment in the farming, tourism, cultural, and industrial sectors.

An innovation of thought is urgent, that is open and receptive, is able to travel at different speeds, and promotes cohesion and integration at different scales, as marked by today's society and without misplacing community values. An interactive synergy between the territorial actors is essential to commune towards a less uncertain future.

## Discussion

**Public**

How do village communities participate in conservation and restoration work such as reintegration of supports, consolidation of elements such as plaster, stucco or polychromous ornamentation: do you do hands-on workshops with them?

**Ángel**

We have trained most artisans through physical work on site; they were able to learn relatively quickly how to work with stone, how to use mortars. More delicate and finer skills, such as those you mention, have been the product of special awareness-raising and training, as it is happening in Arica and Parinacota. It is a permanent process which requires open minds, sensitive hands, and perceptive eyes.

Some of the people whom we trained are still in the Colca Valley and are part of the teams working at the maintenance of the temples and other constructions. They attained mastery and they prove it in works such as the Church of Arica, and the Church of Maca itself, where every year funds are allocated to carry out works to prevent deterioration.

# 4.6

Palombar

# PALOMBAR



# The conservation of nature and rural heritage in Trás-os-Montes (Portugal)



Américo Guedes

Palombar (Association for Nature and Rural Heritage Conservation) is an environmental non-governmental organisation founded in 2000, whose mission is to conserve biodiversity and agro-forestry ecosystems, and to protect and preserve the built heritage in rural areas, as well as their traditional construction techniques.

By using a pedagogical and cooperative approach, the association also promotes environmental education activities, community development actions, in addition to scientific research on ecology, conservation biology ecosystem management and popular architecture. Palombar operates primarily in Northeastern Portugal, Trás-os-Montes region, but has been expanding its intervention range to other regions of the country over the last years.

## Boosting Portuguese Northeastern rural territory – the Role of Vernacular Architecture Conservation

Vernacular architecture has been receiving more and more attention, not only from architects and urban planners, social scientists and tourist agents, but also ordinary citizens. The importance of vernacular architecture has been raised by several factors, such as the increasingly demanded sustainability of the construction sector, the touristic potential of 'typical' villages (as well as the problems related with this type of representation are also increasing), and the acknowledgment of the value of traditional heritage.

Despite the numerous studies published on the subject, and some works developed by architects who tried to integrate traditional techniques or building elements, initiatives that not only intend to continue traditional architecture in its form, but also, and above all, aim to respect the knowledge built along the past centuries, are lacking. Furthermore, this type of architecture should not be fossilised, but rather revitalised, through the attribution of new meanings and functions.

Why not try a holistic approach? Why not aim to preserve the vernacular architecture, to revitalise it, and even more, to use it to boost a territory? This is the challenge that Palombar has sought to address for over twenty years.

1. Beginning of reconstruction works of a traditional pigeon house during a international work camp. Gaëlle Carvalho/Palombar 2018.
2. Former primary school in the village of Uva, now the headquarters of Palombar. Uliana de Castro/Palombar 2018.



3. Cereal field in the region. Palombar.
4. Cork oak forest in the region. Palombar.





## Northeast of Trás-os-Montes

The northeast of the Trás-os-Montes region roughly overlaps with the district of Bragança. The landscape is heterogeneous, including mountains, valleys, and even plateau areas that were traditionally used for agriculture. Currently, despite the decline of this activity, the region remains eminently rural, with few urban centres. The population is quite small and aged, which contributes to the perception of a depressed territory.

Undeniably, the current scenario presents many challenges. However, in order to find viable and sustainable solutions, it is essential to understand the profound changes that the rural areas have undergone in the last sixty years.

Oliveira Baptista (1996) proposes to speak of the "decline of a long time", as the way of life that revolved around agriculture remained practically unchanged for centuries. This was finally discontinued in the 1950s with the mechanisation of agriculture, which – greatly altering the modes of production – left hundreds of people unemployed. Most of them ended up emigrating to the big cities. Thus, in a relatively short time, the Northeast of Trás-os-Montes not only lost a large part of its population but also underwent a dramatic shift; as a result, the physical and social landscapes have changed significantly.

Although today there are still those who tend some parcels – usually cereals (oats, wheat, and rye) fields, olive groves, vineyards, and vegetable gardens – for small-scale subsistence farming, most of the land is uncultivated. In addition to representing an underutilisation of natural resources, abandonment has ecological implications, since the decreased diversity of crops has an immense impact on the fauna biodiversity in the region.

The vernacular architecture was also affected, mainly in two ways. In the first place, a large part of its manifestations served the agricultural activity or the way of living associated to it – and both fell into oblivion. At the same time, those who had emigrated returned not only with more money but also with new references to a modern architecture that they tried to replicate in their original villages.

## Palombar: From traditional pigeon houses to the dynamisation of a territory

Traditional pigeon houses or dovecotes dot the landscape of the Northeast in white, often in remote places where, otherwise, human intervention would not be guessed. They are testimonies

of the aforementioned "long time" (Oliveira Baptista, 1996), when all the arable land was virtually cultivated.
These buildings of a peculiar aspect were usually located next to cereal fields, which provided food for the wild Rock Pigeon (*Columba livia*) that inhabited them. Pigeons were not only a great source of animal protein, which was particularly valuable in a period of scarcity – since the young pigeons were considered a gastronomic delicacy – they also produced manure to fertilize the field crops. Moreover, they had an important role in the maintenance of ecosystems, namely because they are the preferred prey of endangered species such as the Bonelli's eagle (*Aquila fasciata*), the Northern goshawk (*Accipiter gentilis*) and the Peregrine falcon (*Falco peregrinus*), among other specialised predators.

Taking into account what was mentioned regarding the transformations of the rural space, it is not surprising that these buildings had been abandoned and that, consequently, biodiversity declined in the region. It was precisely in order to try to reverse this trend that, in 2000, the Palombar Association of Owners of Traditional Pigeon Houses in the Northeast was created.
Douro International Natural Park (PNDI), having a large concentration of traditional pigeon houses in its territory, carried out a program for its recovery and restocking, between 1997 and 2000.



5. Pigeons leaving a traditional pigeon house Cláudia Costa.



6. Traditional pigeon house after restoration works. Palombar 2014.

In order to continue it, PNDI encouraged some dovecote owners to create an association that would be responsible for the management of approximately sixty rehabilitated traditional pigeon houses. This is how Palombar was born. The association still has the objective of valuing these constructions, raising awareness about their patrimonial value and encouraging their recovery, and also working with owners to support them in keeping the dovecotes in working order.

In order to fulfil these goals, between 2001 and 2004, we tried to fill the lack of information related to these constructions, through an inventory of all the pigeon houses existing in the Northeast of the country, including the north of Guarda district. The survey resulted in the identification and description of 3,450 buildings, which allowed the creation of a database, essential to outline conservation aims and to structure Palombar's actions in a manageable manner.

In the following years, several traditional pigeon houses were recovered and maintained by the association. Its action has expanded since, ending up in overflowing the original aims. This process even led to the change of the full name of Palombar, Association for Nature and Rural Heritage Conservation. The association is now paying more attention to this integrated approach.

## Again, the pigeon houses...

If, at the beginning, Palombar's intervention obeyed the general objectives of valuing, conserving and revitalising an architectural heritage that seemed to be forgotten, over the years more concrete goals were defined as far as the recovery of traditional dovecotes was concerned. Based on the first experiments carried out, the preservation strategies were improved, and the way was opened to establish some of the action principles that are now applied by the association in different domains. It became clear that – to guarantee both the interest of new agents and the continuity and sustainability of the traditional pigeon houses that had already been recovered – it was necessary to couple functionality with with the purpose of preserving these constructions. Otherwise, there was a risk of transforming the traditional pigeon houses into museums: beautiful but meaningless constructions which, even more seriously, might quickly degrade again due to lack of use and maintenance. The investment made – not only in the restoration of the building, but also in its symbolic appreciation – would therefore go wasted.

For this reason, Palombar decided to invest in the recovery of the dovecotes' traditional ecological function, which requires a more comprehensive intervention in terms of maintaining ecosystems. The first issue to take in account is the location of the pigeon houses. Priority was given to those within the territory of birds of prey whose presence in Portugal is threatened, such as the aforementioned Bonelli's eagle, of which rock pigeons are prey.
To guarantee, in turn, the access of pigeons to food, the association not only supplies cereal – generally wheat – but, whenever possible, cultivates the fields close to the dovecotes. In this way, even through a process of reinvention, the role of these constructions is restored to the benefit of both the wild and the agricultural ecosystems of the region, thus strengthening the relevance of preserving them.
The way the recovery is executed has become significant. While, at first, the

7. Volunteers during final works of reconstruction of a traditional pigeon house. Gaëlle Carvalho/Palombar 2020.
8. Interior of a traditional pigeon house after repopulation with rock pigeons.Paulo Calejo/Palombar 2020.


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traditional pigeon houses were rebuilt without too much care for the materials and the construction techniques, in recent years these aspects have been pivotal. In fact, it became clear that not only the traditional pigeon houses were in ruins, but also the knowledge related to their construction – in addition to the built heritage, the intangible heritage associated with it was also at risk.

Then, exclusively traditional construction materials and techniques were used, to recover and pass over this set of knowledge that is particularly vulnerable because of its specificity. It also weighed the fact that this approach is more sustainable than the previous one, since almost all materials are local and natural.

This option – which, at first glance, may seem quite obvious – is actually more demanding, since only rarely it is possible to let others do the job: Palombar hires those few builders who are already familiar with traditional techniques, and takes an active role in all recoveries, from training to monitoring.

9. Construction of a dry stone wall during a workshop dedicated to the topic. Gaëlle Carvalho/Palombar 2019.




Thus, it also assumes an important role in the transmission of this knowledge not only to professionals but also to young people interested in learning.

## Rural heritage: techniques and constructions

If the focus shifted, as we have just seen, to revitalising traditional building techniques, why not intervene in other vernacular buildings? Palombar thus began to focus on other constructions as well, always seeking not only to recover them but also to attribute them a function – be it reinterpreted or thoroughly new.

A water mill, a bread oven and a forge count on the list of buildings recovered by the association to date. Although the rehabilitation of all of them was aimed at recovering their traditional use, the latter case was furthermore associated with the creation of a training space to teach how to work with wrought iron.

Another type of structure that has been (re)built on several occasions is the typical dry-stone wall, which even today contributes to making the landscape of the Northeast a veritable patchwork of fields. They were used to separate properties, mark paths and support terraces. Just a few people are nowadays able to mend them, not to mention build them from scratch. In addition to their main function, they also serve as shelter for different species of insects, reptiles and amphibians, contributing to the richness of biodiversity, and proving once again the usefulness of coupling the conservation of vernacular architecture with nature preservation.

Among the traditional techniques used, however, are not only stone masonry and earth and lime plastering, which

are necessary for the recovery of the structures mentioned above. We tackled also the production of adobe bricks, wrought iron and bulkhead (*tabique* in Portuguese), mainly in a training context in short courses, as a way of disseminating them.
Before we move on to explore the issue of knowledge transmission in greater depth, it seems relevant to underline that, although the starting point was the traditional pigeon houses, over time the object of Palombar's action extended to the entire rural heritage of the region. We include in such heritage not only tangible entities such as vernacular buildings, but also the set of techniques and knowledge which is associated with building them. Furthermore, it is in passing on this knowledge that we believe the key lies, to guarantee its continuity for the future.

## Transfer of knowledge: continuing the heritage

As mentioned, Palombar has been organising workshops and short courses to introduce attendees to various techniques. Although participants, over the course of a weekend, acquire just the basic knowledge, this training is effective in increasing the visibility of this set of techniques and, as a consequence, the appreciation of their richness and complexity.
However, it is in international voluntary work camps (CTVIs) that techniques are taught in more depth. During a period of eight to fifteen days, a group of ten to twenty mostly foreign volunteers, get together to rebuild a certain vernacular construction. Given the solid partnership that Palombar has established for about a decade with the French association Rempart – Réseau d'Associations au Sérvice du Patrimoine, the volunteers are mainly French, with a particular interest in architecture and heritage.
To date, 58 CTVIs have been organised, and around 500 volunteers have participated. All of them brought home a part of this intangible heritage that Palombar has been striving to preserve, and thus contributed to giving it continuity.


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10. Construction of a dry stone wall. Gaëlle Carvalho/Palombar.
11. Construction of a dry stone wall. Gaëlle Carvalho/Palombar.





12. Tool for stone work. Palombar.
13. Reconstruction of roof, using traditional tile. Palombar.

Equally positive is the impact of these young people on the villages: in addition to sharing a multicultural experience with the inhabitants, and breaking their isolation, they show interest in aspects that are often devalued by the local community. It is not uncommon that hearing the description of the works being carried out provokes a laugh or some manifestation of astonishment; however, the value of the young strangers' effort is recognised later, especially when its voluntary character is made evident.

In sum, Palombar also assumes the responsibility of transmitting the immaterial dimension that gives shape to vernacular architecture, making this pedagogical concern one factor of appreciation.

## Final remarks

In this contribution, we gave an account of the work developed by Palombar, to demonstrate that vernacular architecture is not irreversibly destined to decay, but, on the contrary, can play a central role in boosting a territory considered as depressed.

Along this path, those that seem the two main reasons of interest of contemporary society in traditional architecture were also called into question: its potential as a model of sustainable construction and its heritage character, which, in turn, opens space for tourist valorisation.

Bypassing the limitations of both, Palombar proposes that continuity be given to vernacular architecture in its original context, with particular emphasis on the use of traditional construction techniques, but also on their transmission. Equally important, and to add to this pedagogical purpose, is the attribution of meaning and functionality to

the newly built or restored structures, in order to prevent them from becoming mere museum pieces.
Having already mentioned the political character that vernacular architecture can acquire, we would be doing an incomplete reading if we did not admit that Palombar also makes use of it: we believe that this heritage has a transformative capacity, and that it can be put at the service of an alternative project for the cultural dynamisation of the rural world.

## Discussion

**Kiichiro**
I'm very surprised: you are originally a biologist, but you know a lot about architecture and also historic technology. How could you get round so fast?

**Américo**
I was born in a small village made of popular, traditional buildings. My father used to build dry-stone walls, and since I was a little boy, I would help him during the weekends. I'm also a farmer, and I own some land; I produce wine in another region where many dry-stone walls are. Coming here to Palombar you have to be a fast learner. When I arrived, the boss said I had to help rebuild the roof of some dovecotes together with another biologist or a psychologist. Sometimes all of us went to work at the sites. We live in an isolated area and it's difficult to find someone who wants to move here. Most of the time you don't have a network connection on your mobile phone, and there are no theatres or concerts to go to.

# ARCHITECT ALEKSANDAR RADOVIĆ FOUNDATION



# Preserving heritage in Eastern Serbia



Elena Vasić Petrović

Architect Aleksandar Radović Foundation (Фондација Архитекта Александар Радовић) is a non-for-profit organization based in Niš, Serbia.
It has been established in 2016 by the governmental institution in charge of cultural heritage conservation in seven regions of Southern and Eastern Serbia.

**Radović** was a respected architect and conservator. From 1976 to 2004 he was the director of the Institute for Cultural Heritage Preservation Niš. His career was remarkable in many aspects: besides the work in heritage conservation, he also proved himself as a designer of contemporary buildings and as a connoisseur of architecture. He received a number of awards.
His work puts him between the most important and influential architects and conservators in Serbia. He was an inexhaustible source of information and extremely dedicated to the education and progress of young professionals.

The Foundation's **aims** are:
- to provide permanent memory about the life and work of architect Aleksandar Radović
- to contribute to the importance of, and awareness-raising about, cultural heritage preservation in Serbia
- to support young professionals in such field
- to promote and popularise issues related to the conservation of cultural heritage
- to inform the professional and general public about the latest developments in this field
- to contribute bringing together local and international experts.

Our activities mainly concern programs to **support young people**. Each year we offer at least one workshop, summer school or volunteer camp, coupled with promotional activities, exhibitions and publications. Also, we have organised a significant number of conferences, panel discussions, presentations and lectures, on our own or in collaboration with other institutions and organisations.
We also hold a yearly **International Competition** for architects and urban and space planners under the age of 40, dealing with cultural heritage conservation. It is called Architect Aleksandar Radović Award.
So far, we have presented the prize to four winners. Usually the awards ceremony is in February, but, due to the current situation, last year [2020] we moved it to June. This year [2021] we are also planning it for June. The call is open from September to January.

For every project we have done so far, **publications** and **exhibitions** were produced that followed the in situ activities and contributed to the promotion of our work. All digital publications are freely downloadable and are written in both Serbian and English. They are also published as hard copies. We mainly

1. World Heritage Volunteers, Justiniana Prima archaeological site, Serbia. Aleksandar Ćirić 2017.




2. World Heritage Volunteers, Justiniana Prima archaeological site, Serbia. Aleksandar Ćirić 2017.

release guidelines, manuals and handbooks, but also research and conservation papers. The most important is a complete Research and Conservation Project Study (Vasić Petrović 2016).
Our exhibitions are designed to attract a wide audience and are usually associated to presentations like video materials and interactive contents. We put up a travelling exhibition about the Village of Gostuša which was shown in seven cities in five countries over the last five years[10], and presented our project in events we organised as well as at conferences all over Europe.
**Lectures** are organised for all ages and interest groups. They are tailored for each specific group of listeners so to get them involved in cultural heritage topics and activities. Our conferences are professionally oriented but again complemented with various activities that involve the wider public and local communities.
We have designed and realised award-winning projects that result from or complement the work of the Institute for Cultural Heritage Preservation Niš. Our main strength is an international independent network of colleagues and associates, all engaged on a voluntary basis.

[10] 2016: Sofia and Stara Zagora (Bulgaria); 2018: Bitola (North Macedonia); 2020: Kotor (Monte Negro), Banja Luka (Bosnia and Herzegovina), Novi Sad and Belgrade (Serbia).

In 2016 our Research Study on the vernacular architecture of the Village of Gostuša won the Europa Nostra Award and the European Union Grand prix. In 2019 we won the European Stories Award for the extension of this project based on conservation, volunteering and support for the local communities. I will come again to this project, because it fits perfectly the main objectives of this seminar.
We also raised awareness on the importance of the Village of Gostuša through a constant presence in the media and social media, and by providing information for the implementation of our results in local and national development plans.
One focus of our work is the **conservation of stone heritage**. We organised our first volunteer camp in 2017 at the archaeological site of Justiniana Prima, enlisted at the UNESCO world heritage tentative list, within the "Heritage in our hands" program (fig. 1-2). In 2019 we held our first Summer School focussed on stone conservation theory and practice. It was held in the museum of the town of Pivot (Eastern Serbia). The call for participants is currently open for the second edition, which will hopefully take part at the beginning of August in the beautiful town of Trebinje in Bosnia and Herzegovina. We are organising it in cooperation with the local regional museum.

## The village of Gostuša

Gostuša is situated in Eastern Serbia, within the Nature Park Stara Planina (the name literally translates 'Old mountain'). The mountain massif of the same name is part of the Balkan Mountains range, which extends to the East throughout Bulgaria. There are many mountain villages with an



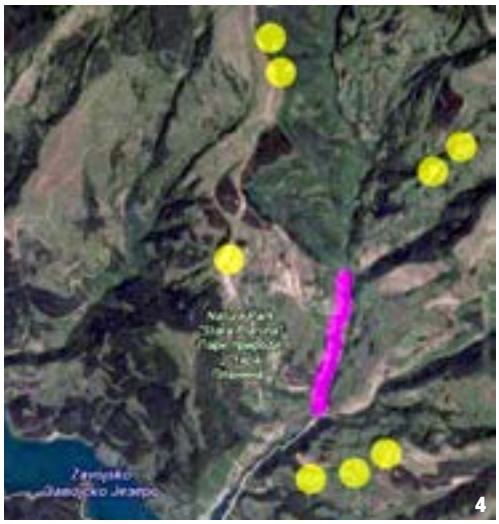
3. The Village of Gostuša. Aleksandar Ćirić 2012.

extraordinary vernacular architecture in this region, and Gostuša is certainly one of the largest and best preserved.
The main objective of our work was to develop a new, sustainable concept that can possibly be adopted in other rural areas of Serbia for settlements that have both a natural and a cultural heritage value.
The village is surrounded by beautiful landscapes with plateaus, fields where wild berries grow, and thick forest. And also steep slopes, wondrous waterfalls, clean mountain streams, and fish-rich lakes. In the Nature Park Stara Planina specific flora and fauna live, and it is the habitat of rare and endangered species.

The village of Gostuša, also known as the 'stone settlement', is situated in a canyon, at the spot where three mountain streams join. It consists of more than three hundred buildings of different use, dating from the second half of the 19th century to the 1970s (fig. 3). During that time the form of the constructions changed very little, and also the building materials stayed the same.
The physical isolation of this area contributed to a development of specific construction methods making use of natural materials only.

Besides the exceptional natural surroundings and the use of natural materials in construction, Gostuša itself is unique for several reasons:

4. The spatial organisation of the Village of Gostuša. Elena Vasić Petrović 2013.
5. A typical street of Gostuša Village. Elena Vasić Petrović 2018.
6. A typical House in Gostuša Village. Aleksandar Ćirić 2018.




- it has a great environmental value, that associates nature's and human creations, and illustrates the formation and evolution of a specific society and its ways of settling over time
- in terms of spatial organisation, it shows a unique pattern, called 'core and satellites', where the core is represented by the permanent settlement made up of housing, while the satellites accommodate livestock breeding activities and temporary housing, as well as small facilities of different function (Fig. 4)
- the village and its buildings did not suffer any relevant contemporary intervention, which makes it a unique example of completely preserved site.

Although the building materials include **earth** and **timber** (for example, the stone-slab roofing was laid onto a mud mortar bed), the dominant one is **stone**, which was used dry for the construction of all buildings and their parts (fig. 5-6).
We have several types of houses perfectly adjusted to the configuration of the terrain, but also public facilities like bridges and fountains, a church, a school and a local administration office, as well as buildings for rural production such as barns, storages, water mills, sawmills, buildings for wool processing, and even small hydroelectric power mechanisms.
There are two graveyards in the village and several isolated crosses in the surroundings associated with very strong folk traditions and customs.
The village has around seventy permanent residents, mainly engaged in cattle breeding and dairy production. Only recently several of them started being engaged with rural tourism.



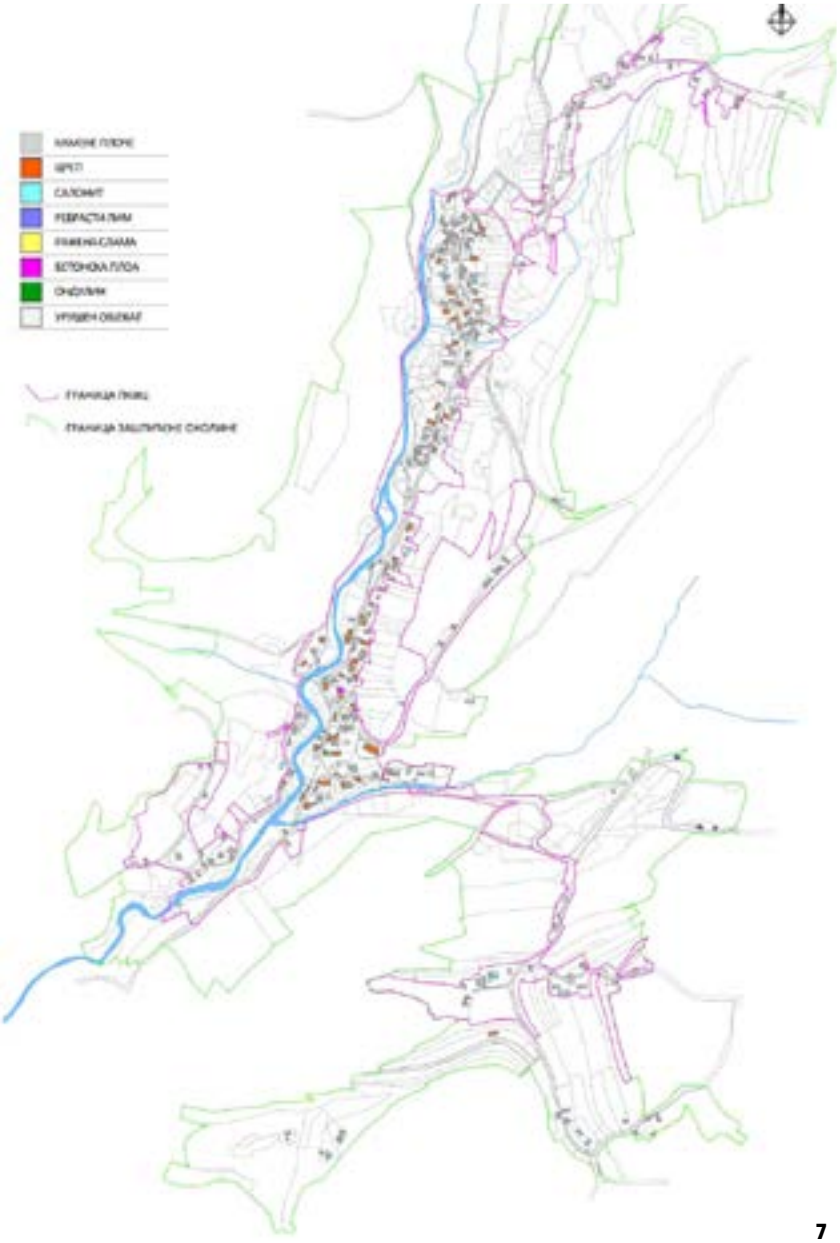



## The traditional heritage conservation project

We discovered the site by chance in 2010, while exploring the area of the Lake Zavoj, a well-known tourist attraction. After that, we prepared a proposal for a **Research Project**, which was financially supported by the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Serbia in the years 2012 and 2013.
The research project included several activities among which survey, documental research, mapping, recording, geopositioning, systematisation and digitalisation of recorded documents, preparation of the designation proposal, publication, promotion, and action planning (fig. 7). During two campaigns, more than twenty experts and students spent around two months working in the field; then a team of three architects for one additional year completed the work in the office. We made several hundred field drawings. We filled 256 forms, one for each building at the site. We have digitalised our field drawings and records. We produced over 2000 photos and dozens of video materials, for instance showing villagers who perform the traditional techniques. All the documentation is made available for people living there and those who want to restore their house.

With our **Gostuša conservation project Serbia** we want to cover both the rehabilitation of traditional heritage and local development. We have created a vision and a strategic framework for the sustainable development of this extraordinary place, harmonising development plans with international principles and conventions.
Our urban planning proposal introduces some changes in the village, so to create a square and some meeting places, and to restore the public buildings. For example, when the doctor comes to the village once a month, there is no medical centre where he can visit his patients. There are no operating public facilities, even shops are missing. The **infrastructure** is poor: the village still doesn't have any kind of mobile telephone network, and a part of the access road is

7. Analysis of roofing types from the Research Study. Aleksandar Nikšić 2016.







8. "Adopt a Household in Gostuša" Camp. Elena Vasić Petrović 2018.
9. Volunteers repairing a stone-slab roof (The revival of the Stone Village Camp), Gostuša. Elena Vasić Petrović 2019.

missing. The village should be more accessible for everyone and especially for those who live there and need to go to the town. We wanted to solve this kind of basic problems of the residents and to upgrade the village in some other respect like tourism. We also wanted to bring more people there. In some areas we succeeded in some we didn't, but this was the general idea.

Villages are not treated in the right way by both the Republic of Serbia's and the district of Pivot's plans. We wanted to influence the government and the decision makers to take a better care of this part of Eastern Serbia, and to protect the whole site and have it enlisted as a cultural property. Therefore, we prepared the designation proposal for the cultural heritage list of the Republic of Serbia. The site was listed in 2017.

In 2018 we organised a **Volunteer Restoration Camp** titled "Adopt a Household in Gostuša" as part of the European Heritage Days within the framework of the "European Year of Cultural Heritage", in Cooperation with the European Heritage Volunteers Organisation and with the support of the local government of Pivot (fig. 8). Volunteers worked together with the local community on the rehabilitation of the twenty most endangered **private houses** in the village following a Priority List, providing direct assistance to the most vulnerable permanent residents of Gostuša.
With this camp, we started our *in situ* conservation in holistic and socially responsible terms. Our constant presence in the village also encourages others to help the local community and decide to invest in their own properties. A huge change has happened, but we need to bring this to the next level by stating that people are the most important part of this village, and they need to get all the help that we can give them. This will for sure substantiate the sustainability concept included in the Conservation project since the beginning. We want to attract as many funding organisations as possible to support this project and give a chance to this extremely valuable environment.

In 2019 our project **"The Revival of the Stone Village"** was one of the ten projects awarded by the Council of Europe in the framework of the European Heritage Stories program. It consisted in a volunteer conservation camp and lot of promotion activities.

**Volunteer camps** are designed mainly for students and young professionals from the field of architecture and civil engineering, but also art historians, archaeologists and many others attend. We have lectures and workshops, guided tours and site-seeing, and hands-on activities. On the last day we organise a conference where participants present their work and a certificate handing-out ceremony which is attended by locals and guests. We had around thirty volunteers from all around the word and more than fifteen lecturers, trainers and other people involved. In this part of the project, we also benefit from grants from the European Union.
During these two camps we managed to almost completely restore the **local church**, dedicated to St. John, where we have been working since 2013 to help the local population avoid its collapse (fig. 9). Later we proceeded with the conservation of one of the public buildings, the **local community centre**.
We also helped in the adaptation of five houses for rural tourism. We find it really useful for the village: those who don't want to go back to agriculture or other traditional jobs can have a chance with rural tourism. We offered our technical documentation to them, to restore their house and start their small business in the village. Lots of people come there for hiking or other reasons, and they need a place to stay and something to eat and everything visitors may require. As a special addition to our conservation camps, we established a one-day workshop program on **intangible heritage**. In this mountain area of Serbia, and especially in the village of Gostuša, there is a tradition of bread baking and making of mud pots. It is peculiar because the pots are not fired before the bread is baked in them. They are only dried in sun and the first time you bake bread in them, the pot is also fired. It can be said that people in this region are preparing their meal in a way that is more than seven thousand years old (fig. 10-11).


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10. Preparing the mud material for the bread-baking pot in Gostuša Village. Ivan Veselinović 2018.

We formed a **Research, Conservation and Education Centre** to provide help in technical and practical issues in conservation work, but also in education of students and young professionals through restauration camps, summer schools and workshops. The first restauration camp and interpretation workshop are planned for August 2021.

In the future we are planning to involve local stakeholders in different ways, together with the relevant institutions in order to ensure mutual support and synergy in operational issues, and to



11. Traditional making of a bread-baking pot in Gostuša Village. Ivan Veselinović 2018.

promote tangible actions for the good management of rural landscape, at a political, administrative and/or participative level. This would be the development of a seminar we organised in 2016, whose main goals were to create a model for a more efficient protection of cultural and natural assets in general and to make Gostuša culture landscape an example of good practice.

At present, in Serbian law doesn't acknowledge cultural heritage. In our pilot project we tried to work on natural and cultural heritage together with all institutions who work in this realm, each one in their individual field.

We also plan to establish a **Support Centre** within the Pirot District government, which would provide advice on management and promotion, use of available resources, and allocation of financial support for the tourism and economic development of the rural areas in the region, starting from Gostuša as a model.

We aspire to continue with our work and further our activities, to keep all this beauty and exquisite surrounding alive for a long time.

## Discussion

**Yutaka**

You mention that you restored also some private properties in the village. How does your project support the private people: technically, financially? Or do you give some instruction?

**Elena**

We did all the work. The support was done within the volunteer camps, so we only made agreements with the owners to ensure they allowed us to restore their houses. We provided all the materials, and all the labour. For people who wanted to work on their home on their own, we provided technical documentation and support.

**Américo**

So, you do all the work with volunteers, and you provide the materials. What do you ask to the landlords? Was there a counterpart from the owners for what you do? Do you have a protocol?

**Elena**

We signed a kind of agreement where they agreed on how we work on their houses.

We created a priority list to rehabilitate houses of older people and cannot do these works on their own. The essential requirement is that they live there permanently. We are not restoring houses for people who only come for holiday or during the weekend. Also, if the houses are in danger, the habitants are in danger too, so we start from those houses.

**Pimpim**

How many people live in this area?

**Elena**

Now only seventy. Gostuša is only 25 km from the nearest town. When we started the project there was no road to the village. It was hard to live there, because they had no stores, no doctor's surgery. They survived because they didn't want to move from this beautiful place. Since 2012, when we started our work, a lot of things changed there. Some people came back who wanted to restore their houses, maybe to start a business in rural tourism or some other activity.

**Pimpim**
I believe that in Serbia it rains a lot, do the houses have leakage problems?

**Elena**
Only if owners do not maintain them. Most buildings start leaking only after fifty years of no maintenance. Leakage in not a huge problem in this part of Serbia, because the stone slabs are typically very large – five to six centimetres thick; each can be as heavy as three hundred kilograms – and can cover a large portion of the roof. In western Serbia there is a similar technique, but with smaller and thinner slabs, like two centimetres.
The structure is made of a very large ridge beam, over it some smaller rafters, then a layer of mud mortar; the stone slabs are positioned onto the mud mortar.

**ABG**
I understood that Gostuša is within a natural park. Would you please comment a bit on the linkage (if any) between the built heritage conservation activities and the nature heritage conservation activities? I wonder if there are synergies between the two.

**Elena**
Unfortunately, in Serbia one institution works with the natural heritage, another with the cultural heritage. The connection occurs only in cases when we need some kind of help or instruction for a specific problem. We don't plan together, there is no joint action between institutions, including local government and the Republic's government.
This was a huge problem for this site because it is located within the nature park.
Through the seminar we organised, we tried to connect all those people together, and presented our work to all of them. We tried to understand how nature preservation works, how cultural preservation works, but also what are the ramifications for the people who live there, because there are many restrictions due to such double protections. It is hard to find the right way to do all the things properly, but I think that the conversations we started between experts, stakeholders and decision makers made something change.
When we started, we faced a huge problem: after our research, people started removing the stone slabs from the houses. Thanks to our new road to the village, it was also easier to brings ceramic roof tiles for people that didn't want to keep the slabs. We did a lot of good things, but in a way we also ruined the site because people missed that stone slabs are an integral part to this architecture and make this village unique.

# TIBET HERITAGE FUND



# 25 Years of Cultural Heritage Conservation Practice in the Himalayan region




Pimpim de Azevedo



Hirako Yutaka


On our 25th anniversary, we are looking at our achievements, what we have accomplished in the past, what we are involved in today, and what we are looking forward to in the future. We want to share with you a bit of our journey and some stories about what we have learned.

Tibet Heritage Fund (THF) started in Tibet, in Lhasa, in the 1990s. In those years, Lhasa still retained many traditional houses, but they were fast disappearing.

Until 1948 the city of Lhasa consisted of around 700 buildings around the Jokhang temple, with a population of thirty thousand. After 1959, houses were nationalised. In the late 1980s and early 1990s seeing the demolition of the traditional buildings, my colleague, the late Dr. André Alexander, created the Lhasa Archive project with the aim to document the disappearing architecture and the culture associated with it.

Since 1993, an average of 40 historic buildings were demolished every year. If that pace of redevelopment were to continue, the remaining historic buildings would have all disappeared within three more years. We realised that documenting the disappearing architecture was not enough to preserve the historic buildings.

Trapchishar House (17th century, restored in 1996 and 2000) was our first pilot project. We worked with the Government Office department, the Cultural Relics Departments, the City Mayor, the Neighbourhood Office, the Planning Office and the Lhasa City Construction Office.

A construction company implemented this first project, but we were not very satisfied with the results. Since the end of the 1950s the traditional way of building gradually stopped, leading to the loss of the traditional skills of the local artisans.

After the Trapchishar house restoration, we realised that in order to obtain the quality we were looking for, we needed to assemble our own team of artisans. We found artisans trained before the 1950s when the traditional skills were still in use. They knew how to repair these historic buildings (fig. 2). However, gathering the team of artisans was not enough. Everybody's involvement was needed (different government departments, community and artisans) for the project to be successful, and for us to be able to work. Dealing with a city where every house was nationalised, meant that everyone



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1. Rehabilitation work in Leh old Town. Courtesy of Tibet Heritage Fund
2. Master Carpenter Shimo Jampa Kelsang, in charge of the repair work in the Potala palace; Ama Trasé, a well know arga master; Master mason Shimo Migmar la. Courtesy of Tibet Heritage Fund, André Alexander 1999.

had to be closely involved: neighbourhood committees, the residents, and the overall community; the experts, the artisans, and the craftspeople with their know-how; the institutions, the associations, and the NGOs, to give their support; the government, to issue permits and support the work.

We developed a community-based conservation approach that we replicated in all of the projects we implemented according to each specific context. The human factor has always been very important in our projects – buildings have been constructed for people to live in. Some buildings are conserved as monuments because they represent an exception, but the majority are conserved because they are meaningful to people. We want to create space for people.

Our aim was always to bring these buildings back to life, back to their initial function, by providing living conditions to the residents who would be happy to continue living there.
The prime objectives of the THF's project were: to halt the current trend, to instigate an official re-evaluation of the current situation, and to jointly develop a viable alternative program that would include official protected status for the remaining historic buildings.

To do this, we listed 93 historic residential buildings to be officially protected (fig. 3). This list contained almost all the remaining old houses that were government-owned, plus some privately-owned houses that were located in planned conservation areas. The Lhasa city government approved the list in

3. Map by Ken Okuma and André Alexander showing historic residential buildings (brown) and religious buildings (red), 2000. Courtesy of Tibet Heritage Fund.
4. Repair of the Pembe frieze. Courtesy of Tibet Heritage Fund, André Alexander, Summer 1999.



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early June 1998. After that the replacement of traditional buildings halted, but years later it continued; today only a few dozens remain that still preserve some of the original characteristics.

The 17th century Merunyingpa Monastery is located in Odepug, an area encircled by Barkor street, the circumambulation path around the Jokhang temple. We concentrated most of our projects in the Odepug area, finding it more significant to preserve a cluster than scattered individual buildings.
During the 1960s, the Merunyingpa Monastery was nationalised and closed. Many rooms were converted into forage rooms and stables, and the monks' quarters into public housing. The monastery consists of three shrines. In 1985 they were given to monks of three different monasteries, together with some rooms as accommodation.
The main building is managed by Drepung monastery, the older chapel on the western side is managed by Meru Sarba monastery, and a third chapel is maintained by the Gongkar Choede Sakya-pas. Without maintenance, buildings decayed: the roof was leaking, and the walls were eroded. The remaining rooms were still used as public housing.

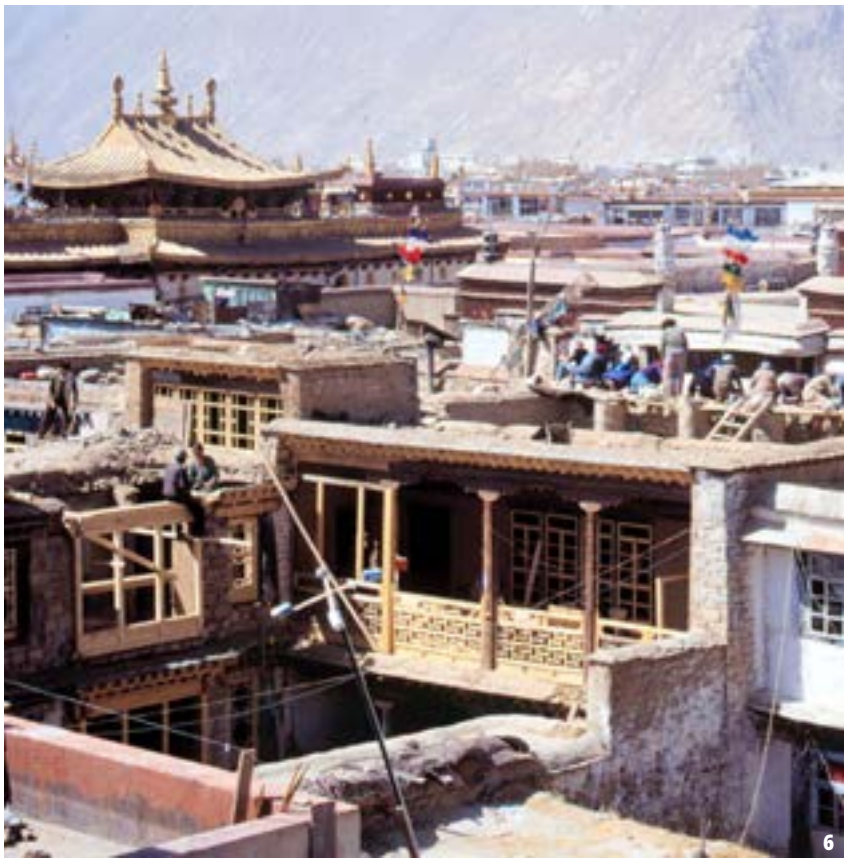
As THF's conservation work progressed, several monastic communities requested assistance leading THF to reconsider the decision to repair residential buildings only. THF obtained the necessary permission from the Religious Affairs Department and other relevant departments for the restoration of Merunyingpa in 1998. This work required the revival of many skills that already had faded away, so we had to find artisans who still knew how to execute these techniques.



5. During the consecration of the Merunyingpa Monastery in 2000, the monks held a Fire Puja to purify the site again and pacify the earth's spirits. We used the big stove in the middle of the courtyard (covered with a white blanket) to make the tea for our 300 people team. Courtesy of Tibet Heritage Fund, André Alexander 1999.

One technique was the making of the traditional red frieze (fig. 4), which marks a monastery, shrine or palace. It is called Pembe and is made of penma twigs made into small bundles and then nailed together. Master Migmar La and master Olo Chungjung revived this technique and taught the local team and us how to execute it. Following this experience, we spread the knowledge to other projects.

The 17th century Gamposhar House is situated just opposite the Merunyingpa Monastery. The wooden structure had weakened so much that it was declared at risk of collapse. The municipality scheduled the house for demolition and the residents had to be evacuated in the Summer of 1999. We proposed to our partners, the Lhasa City Cultural Relics Department and the Neighbourhood office, to raise the money and do the restoration ourselves. The resident families came to weekly or bi-weekly house meetings, during which we discussed the rehabilitation works. Thanks to this cooperation, it was a very successful project: in mid-2000, the residents moved back and could continue to live there.





6. Restoration work of Rongdra House. Courtesy of Tibet Heritage Fund, André Alexander 1999.
7. Rehabilitation work of Rongdra House in progress. The replacement of the central wooden pillar on the ground floor. Courtesy of Tibet Heritage Fund, André Alexander 1998.
8. Juenpa House. Behind, Merunyingpa Monastery; on the right, the Rongdra House, then Jokhang Temple and Juenpa temple. Courtesy of Tibet Heritage Fund, Yutaka Hirako 2000.
9. Lhasa team in 2000 on Juenpa House rooftop. Courtesy of Tibet Heritage Fund, André Alexander.

The 20th century Rongdra House (fig. 6) is a beautiful house also located in the Barkor neighbourhood. After 1960, Rongdra House was subdivided into seventeen apartments. The living conditions in the former ground floor stables were inadequate, and overcrowding caused tenants to encroach on the communal courtyard and build rooftop extensions. When THF started work in 1998, the timber structure required extensive replacement and realignment to counteract settlement and decay. We had to replace the worn wooden pillar in the centre of the ground floor: locals said we would have to remove the whole structure above it in order to replace it, but thanks to our skilled artisans and masters we hydraulically jacked up the two floors (fig. 7).

The 20th century Juenpa House (fig. 8) was our last project in Lhasa. The fourteen resident families were involved in the planning work, and throughout the entire work period they came for regular consultation meetings at the worksite. Work began in late 1999. At that time, three hundred people worked in our team (fig. 9), these included master carpenters, masons, Arga singers, who made the beautiful waterproof roof, iron and silver smiths, tea makers, logisticians, painters, wall painting conservators, etc. Without them, we would not have been able to do what we did. After that time, things had changed; the government decided to implement its own conservation projects, and we had to leave.

After Lhasa, we expanded to Amdo, Kham (Qinghai and Sichuan), Beijing in China; Mongolia; and Sikkim and Ladakh in India.





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One of the projects in Kham was the 17th century Beri Monastery (fig. 10).
During the Cultural Revolution, it was spared from destruction, however it did suffer from a complete lack of maintenance for two decades: the roof and the structure of the walls were damaged.
THF was invited to visit Beri in 2000 to look at the condition of the main building. The main problem was the roof leakage. Whenever there were leaks inside, the villagers and the monks added more soil on the top of the building. When we studied the wood structure supporting the roof, we measured more than 90 cm of soil: this was too heavy and had deformed the structure, causing extensive settlement of the timber frame and cracks in the walls. Subsequently, the local authorities, the monastic community, and THF agreed on a cooperation project to restore the building.
Due to the lack of locally available traditional building skills, THF trained ninety villagers who performed the rehabilitation work (fig. 11).

In this project, I want to emphasise the Arga roof, a technique from Lhasa used to waterproof the roofs.
We decided to introduce the technique and the material, which was locally available. We did an expedition to find the Arga; when we found some, we checked which one had the necessary qualities. We invited our Arga masters from Lhasa to teach the local people how to apply the Arga to the roof.
The application of the Arga is a very intensive and physically hard process (fig. 12): you need several days and a large team. Specific songs, called Arga songs, are sung continuously during the process.



The 18th century Ragya Monastery Tantric College (fig. 13) is located in Amdo. It's a big monastery with over five hundred monks and five colleges.
In all our projects, we have been invited by the local people or different departments of the local government. Here, the monks invited us to repair two temples. Since people in this area are nomads, our team was small in number: we worked only with carpenters, masons and logisticians. To implement the project, we had to rely on the monks to do all the work (fig. 14) which is untypical for a Tibetan monastery. Traditionally, the construction of temples in Tibet, and also the paintings, were done by highly qualified artisans organized in guilds. Under the supervision of the Arga master, the monks put Arga on the roof, a work usually done by women. This was possible only because the community really wanted this to happen and therefore they became fully involved, and did their best, everything being for their benefit.

10. Beri Monastery. Courtesy of Tibet Heritage Fund, André Alexander 2002.
11. Beri Monastery. To adjust and straighten up the three-floor high pillars, we had to build a scaffolding. Courtesy of Tibet Heritage Fund, Pimpim de Azevedo 2003.
12. The application of the Arga. One of the aims of this project was to strengthen women's roles by especially training them so to run and organise crucial aspects. Courtesy of Tibet Heritage Fund, Nyima Tsering 2004.
13. The Ragya Monastery complex. Courtesy of Tibet Heritage Fund, Hirako Yutaka 2004.

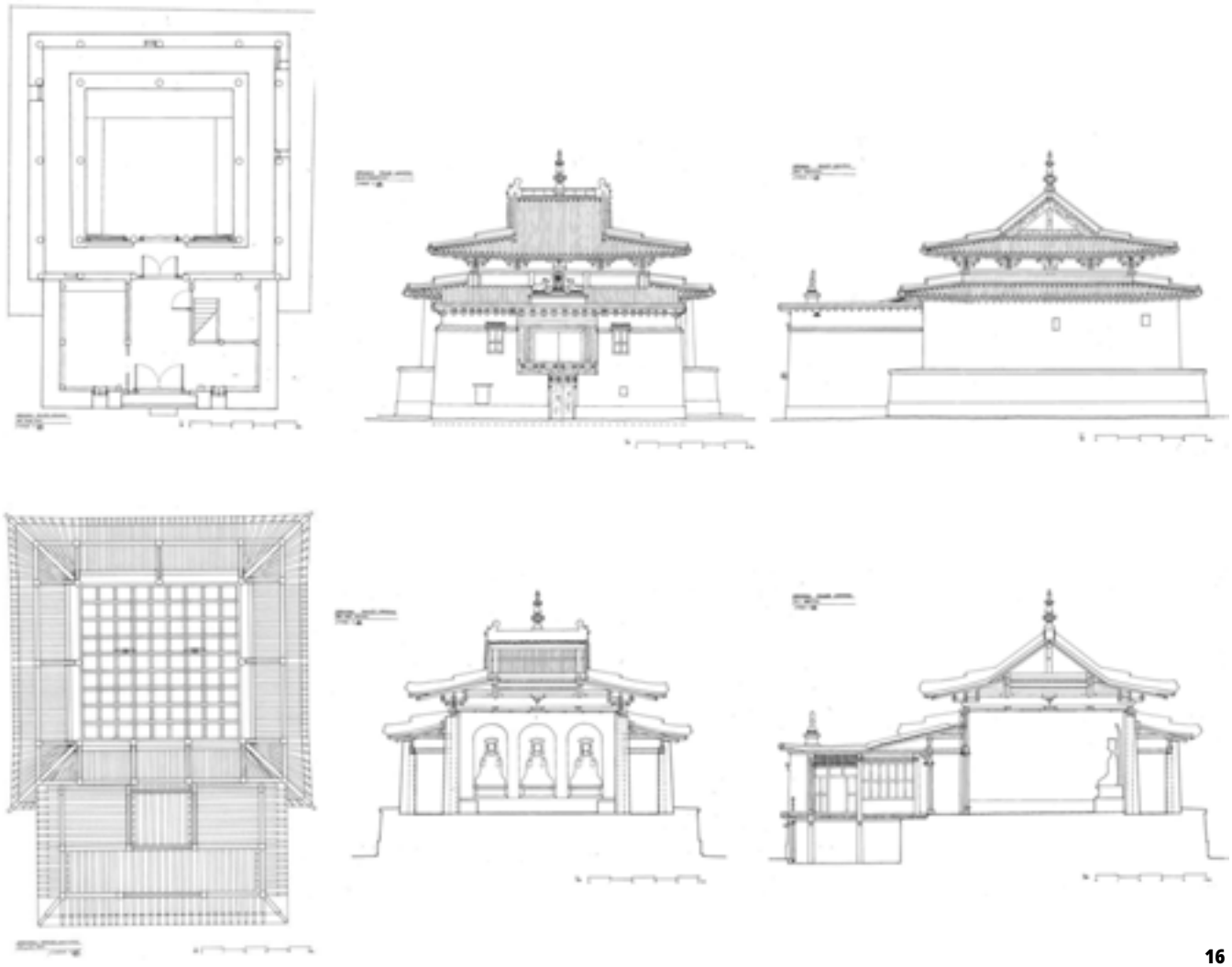




14. The monks disassembled the roof and carried the soil away so we could repair the structure. Courtesy of Tibet Heritage Fund, Lhundrup Dorje 2003. 15. After drying, people gilded the tsatsa statues and painted the eyes and mouth of the main statue's face on each one. Courtesy of Tibet Heritage Fund, Hirako Yutaka 2007.

The Ragen World Peace Stupa was commissioned by the community of Ragen in Amdo, who wanted to build a stupa where once an old stupa was located.
We decided to use only traditional techniques and local materials: stone, mortar, and wood. The community agreed and fully participated in the process, carrying all the stones needed to build the 15 m high stupa. They collected the books and the statues to be housed in the monument and made one hundred thousand *tsatsa* – small votive clay statues, mixing the clay, stamping it into moulds, and painting them one by one (fig. 15). Each family produced their statues at home, then collected them all together on the day they were to be installed.
Our carpenters' team built the thirteen rings that go above this stupa. They represent the thirteen steps of Buddhist teaching on the path to enlightenment. When we completed the stupa, all the residents of the village and the surroundings came for a big celebration; we put the one hundred thousand votive tsatsa, the books and the votive statues inside the stupa, then the monks and the lay community consecrated the building.

The Serkhang Monastery is a monastic complex constructed from the 14th to 19th century. During five hundred years, it developed gradually in a fusion of Tibetan and Chinese architecture due to the closeness of the two regions but still preserves some of the local Amdo style in some buildings.
In this complex, one of the oldest buildings is Sangye Lhakhang House from the 14th century.
In this project, I would like to emphasise a relevant part of the conservation project: the architectural survey and documentation. To deal with any historic building, you needed to do quite an intensive study. We exhaustively drew all the parts of the roof structure, consisting of a unique wooden framework influenced by the Chinese tradition (fig. 16), with wooden brackets with specific shapes, and a particular style of assembling.



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16. Architectural survey and documentation on Serkhang Monastery. Courtesy of Tibet Heritage Fund, Hirako Yutaka 2006.

The architectural survey also helped to identify the history of the structure and of the building itself. After documenting all details, we collaborated with a local brick factory to recreate the missing tiles, and the decorative elements for the roof.
Thanks to the hard work of everybody, we completely restored five structures from different periods, rehabilitating the entire complex. For the Serkhang Monastery project, THF won a UNESCO award in cultural heritage conservation in 2011.

We work principally with Tibetan Himalayan architecture, but our approach is applicable in different areas. In China, for example, we carried out the Hutong Project, a pilot project in Beijing old city.

The historic inner city of Beijing, known as Yuan-Dadu and dating back to the 13th century, is one of the largest historic city centres. Its layout is a grid pattern, and it is surrounded by walls. In the 1950s, most of the courtyard houses were transformed into public

housing. They became overcrowded and dilapidated, and there was a lack of infrastructure. As a result of Beijing's rapid urban re-development on a massive scale, many of the historic structures were demolished.
Since 2002, in co-operation with Tsinghua University's School of Architecture and some City management departments, we spent two years carrying out a detailed study of three neighbourhoods in Beijing, looking at both architecture and social conditions. We also performed social surveys about the inhabitants of the historic inner city (fig. 17). We published the results in 2004 in the "Beijing Hutong Conservation Study" (Hirako et al. 2004). Based on those studies, we chose three Hutongs, each representing one of the three main functions in the Hutong lanes: public housing, private property, and work unit.
We interviewed the residents of those three historic houses about the living conditions, the problems, and the things they would have liked to improve. Based on this information, we planned the three pilot rehabilitation projects.

In 2006-08 we implemented the three pilot projects, collaborating with local artisans who mastered the different techniques. In the Fang Zhuang Chang Hutong No.6 courtyard Pilot project, the masonry walls were weak. We removed the supporting structure and reconstructed the damaged parts in a traditional way. Carpenters restored and substituted the damaged parts of the windows, painting them with traditional techniques. The project aimed not only at preserving the old Hutong historic buildings, but also at keeping the residents and improve their living conditions. This pilot project can be an important model for other parts of China.


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17. Hutong Social Survey: co-operation research between Tsinghua University School of Architecture and THF. Courtesy of Tibet Heritage Fund, André Alexander 2002.

Our last project was the Sangiin Dalai Monastery (18th century, fig. 18), located in South Gobi in the Republic of Mongolia, a very remote area. The monastery had five colleges that taught different Buddhist subjects to five hundred monks, but in the 18th and 19th centuries the monks also used it as a kind of trading port and a stop for the caravans.
During the Russian invasion in the 1930s and subsequent rule, eight hundred monasteries in Mongolia were destroyed. Sangiin Dalai Monastery survived in quite a good condition because the Russian army needed an army camp near the Chinese border. Mongolians are nomads so they do not have a tradition of building fixed structures: Besides the 'Ger' (Mongolian traditional tent) that can be moved and some religious buildings, most of the architecture and building techniques came from outside. When we studied the Sangiin Dalai buildings, we found Chinese writing on some timber frame elements. It is common practice among Chinese and Tibetan craftspeople to write the position on the completed timber elements. From the languages, we can conclude that many of the builders of Sangiin Dalai were Chinese artisans, who were also versed in Tibetan-style construction.



The temple was built with blue bricks, and blue tiles for the roof. In some buildings they used decorative roof tiles. We researched where to find these bricks and tiles in Mongolia: the only company that used to make them for restoration had been dismantled. We had two solutions: to bring them from Beijing or somewhere else in China, or to follow the footsteps of the artisans that built this monastery. Searching for remains of kilns, we found one, and we thought that this was the way to produce the missing materials for the restoration of the temple.

Apart from restoring a historic monastery complex, we aimed to revive traditional architectural skills. We looked for artisans in China capable of building kilns, selecting the appropriate soil, making the tiles, firing them, and lying the tiles on the roof. With the help of Chinese and Tibetan experts, we conducted vocational training and built up a small workforce, training members of the local community to carry out the work.

We set up a local manufacture of bricks and tiles (fig. 19). We identified four families, and each family sent two members as participants.

The first stage was to build the kiln (2.8 m diameter and 4 m high), plastering the inner face of the wall with mud mixed with grass. The second stage was manufacturing. We identified the appropriate soil to make bricks. In this desert area, soil is dry and rich in minerals and salts. We prepared the wooden mould for the decorative bricks and mixed the soil. With the experts from China and Tibet, we made the rounded roof tiles; the local teams made the dragon and the flower tiles. The third stage was firing. It was a difficult task because of the remoteness of the area. We relied on the wisdom and knowledge of the artisans to control the temperature. We had water shortages, but we could successfully fire our bricks and tiles for eight days and seven nights. Once fired, their sound was perfect. It became an

18. View of Sangiin Dalai Monastery. Courtesy of Tibet Heritage Fund, Hirako Yutaka 2002.

19. The blue bricks. We made 94 dragon and phoenix tiles, 56 handmade flower tiles, 76 flower tiles cast in moulds, 15,332 roof tiles of four different kinds, and 11,500 bricks. Courtesy of Tibet Heritage Fund, Nyima Tsering 2005.



attraction for Mongolian people just to visit and touch the tiles. After we produced the materials, we fixed the tiles and the dragons on the roof.
The restoration took four years. In 2009, THF received an award from UNESCO for the heroic restoration, in a very isolated site, where everything needed to be done from scratch.

Another important program in our conservation work is the wall painting conservation training. We invited experts from Germany and other countries to jointly teach the basics conservation techniques to local people. During the years the trainees improved their skills. Together with our team of wall painting conservators they have restored many wall paintings.

The Sangye Lhakhang Temple, located in the centre of Serkhang Monastery, has an interior circumambulation passage entirely painted with murals depicting compositions of deities and lamas. During the 1960s, the murals were plastered over.
A complete iconographic survey was one of the aims of the project. With two German restorers, in 2006 we trained the local trainees in how to document the work. They created some frames and took photographs within the frames part by part. Accurately combining the photos, we were able to get the whole picture of the painting (fig. 20). Based on it, we analysed the damage and planned how to undertake the restoration process. In the Tibetan context, the original iconography of an image must be complete, particularly the face and the hands, therefore, to satisfy the requirements of the local community, some degree of re-touching was operated.
Because of the lack of trained local restorers, THF has always placed priority on training local teams. A young woman from Ladakh has been a conservation trainee for fifteen years, gradually developing her skills through working with experts from Europe. She is now one of Ladakh's local key conservators. We need a lot of new people like her.
We also organised a kind of exchange program: two of the Ladakhi students spent three months at the Erfurt University (TFH) in 2007 to undertake an

20. Painting in the circumambulation of Sangye Lhakhang Temple. Courtesy of Tibet Heritage Fund, Patrick Jürgens. 2006.
21. Bamboo sticks supporting the work. Courtesy of Tibet Heritage Fund, Melodie Bonnat 2013.
22. View of Leh palace, La-chen Pel-Khar. Courtesy of Tibet Heritage Fund, Hirako Yutaka 2012.

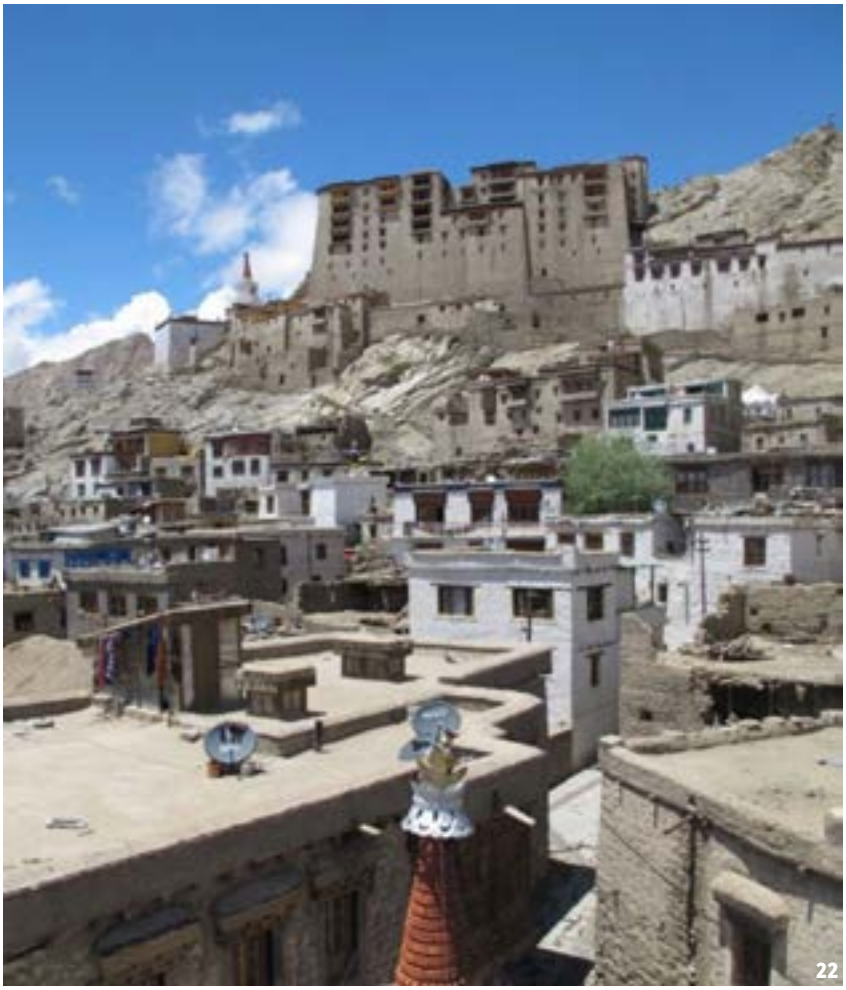


extended program with experts, learning how to work with tools and technologies in the conservation laboratories.

In Sikkim, we assembled an emergency team to save the 19th century Lachen Manikhang Temple after a great earthquake. The tremors made the wall paintings fall off.
Our team of wall painting conservators consolidated the cracks using the original materials locally available, principally sand and mud mortar. They stabilised the wall by injecting mud mortar in the deep cavities. To support the work until the process ended, we used sticks made of bamboo because of the elasticity of this material (fig. 21). After the renovation of the structure and the restoration of the mural paintings, we returned the temple to the local community: lay women use it for their daily prayers.

We are currently working in Leh Old Town (fig. 22), the capital of Ladakh which is located in the western Himalayas.
Dating back to the 17th-19th centuries, Leh is one of the last well-preserved 'living heritage' towns in the Himalayan region, a rare example of a Tibeto-Himalayan urban settlement where the local community has been living in ancestral houses for centuries. Every house in Leh Old Town is an example of Himalayan vernacular architecture, and the maze of narrow alleys is a unique feature of its urban fabric.
When we started the project, the historic city consisted of about one hundred-eighty residential buildings, several Buddhist temples, and some mosques. When the borders with the neighbouring countries closed, Ladakhi people needed to find a replacement for trading. With the opening of Ladakh to tourism in 1974 many people moved


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into the tourism industry. In Leh, those with land and financial means invested in the tourism industry leaving behind their ancestral homes, and these fell into decay; some even collapsed due to the lack of maintenance. Only the structures of the houses of the people who stayed behind, remained in good condition.

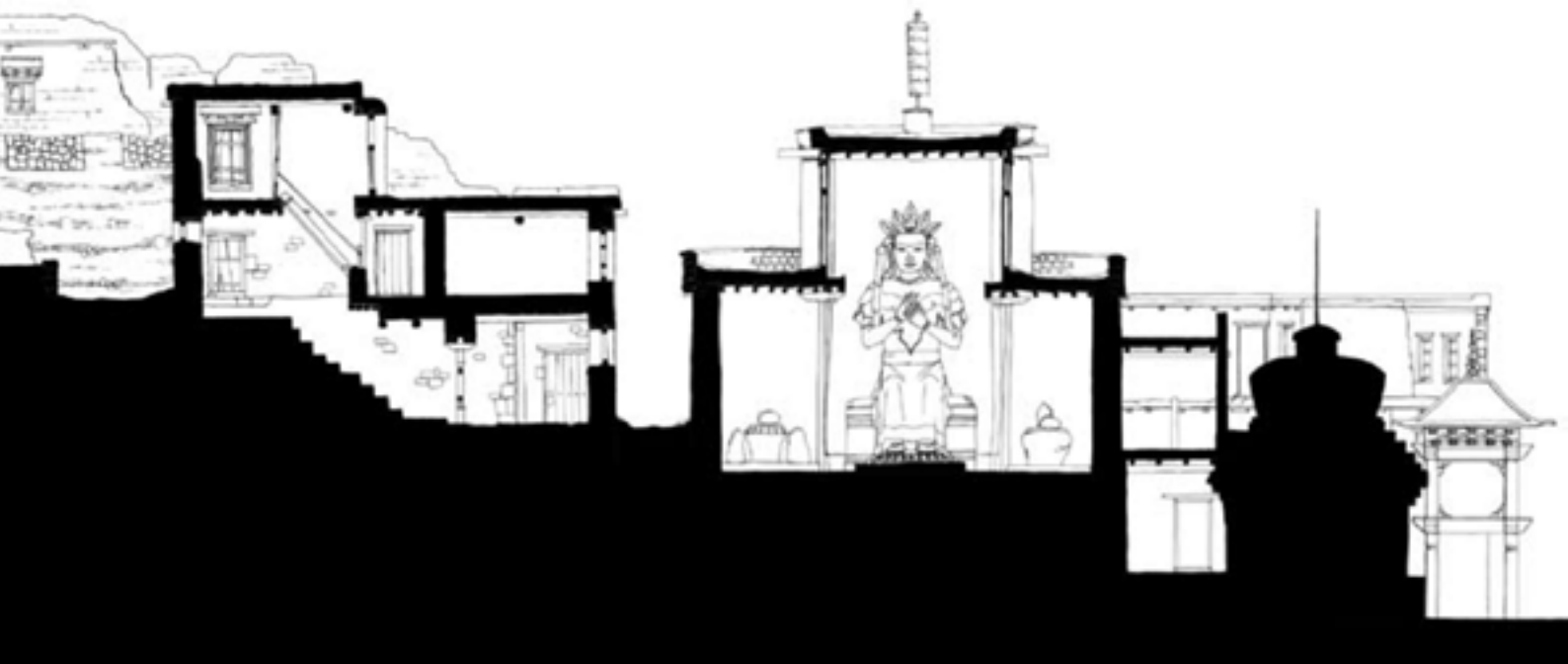
We work with a living heritage, and we encourage the local communities. The preservation of the town is an important task to prevent the waves of unplanned modernisation and 'development'. For example, a few years ago, the Leh Old Town faced a big challenge with the RAY scheme – a government slum development project to replace the traditional houses with concrete framed buildings. The Ministry of Housing and Urban Poverty Alleviation created this scheme to make "Indian cities slum-free by 2022". It has been implemented in various cities of India.

With the support of the Prince Claus Fund, THF and the local partner – our sister organization LOTI (Leh Old Town Initiative) – are restoring and upgrading the historic houses and creating an alternative approach. We aim at influencing the owners and the government to use a strategy other than replacement of the traditional building with concrete framed buildings.

Since 2003 we have rehabilitated, restored, designed and built over 60 projects including the Central Asian Museum, residential buildings, Buddhist temples, monuments, public spaces, and water sanitations. Our team includes carpenters, masons, metal workers, general workers, architecture conservators, wall painting conservators, as well as the office manager and the logistics and office staff of the heritage project.

To implement this conservation project, we need to work in parallel on several aspects.
We start by doing an architectural survey and collecting documentation (fig. 23). This is an important step to understand the place and the historic constructions. We then make a plan based on this deep comprehension of the building.

23. White Maitreya, section drawing. Courtesy of Tibet Heritage Fund, Tobias Jaekle 2005.



As the wall paintings are part of the building, mural restoration training is also important. We collaborate with external people, at the same time involving the locals in the project. In this way, they also gradually get trained and become our future experts.

To deal with historic building conservation it is essential to work together with artisans skilled in traditional crafts. We always combine the knowledge of the experienced craftspeople and young trainees. The training of artisans in traditional building techniques is also an important aspect of our conservation project. Likewise, we apply the qualified skills and knowledge of these artisans to new buildings, promoting vernacular architectural style and natural construction materials in a kind of neo-vernacular architecture: we use traditional skills and local materials, but with a new design to create a new structure for the local community.

Other issues in the old town are water supply, water drainage and waste management, as well as the impact on these from the influx of tourists. To improve the living conditions up to basic standards, we promote infrastructure improvement: creating basic water infrastructure and improving water supply and runoff systems, so that people can live more comfortably in a cleaner environment.
We chose an alley with important historic buildings and inadequate infrastructure (no paving, no drainage) to show that building rehabilitation and infrastructure improvement must go together. We introduced a drain channel covered by a removable metal grid that was very easy to maintain. We paved the street with local stones, which integrated the alley into the historic landscape of the old town.



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24. Scheme of THF community-based conservation approach. Courtesy of Tibet Heritage Fund, Hirako Yutaka 2015.

We also made some urban district planning and landscaping proposals to create public places. For example, we designed the reuse one of the water reserves that had fallen into disuse – in the past it was used to collect the water to irrigate the town's fields. We proposed that it be used as a public space by the community.

The basis of our projects is always an attempt to understand the needs and demands of the local population, which are investigated through social surveys. The social data we obtained through our surveys strongly suggested intervention to improve the people's living conditions and to reverse the old town's decline.
For all these reasons we implement a community-based conservation approach. The diagram in fig. 24 represents the perspective and the strategy we apply to our projects.

Our projects are usually located in the historic quarters of cities – in Lhasa, Beijing, or Leh.
We also live in historic buildings together with the community and face the same challenges. The community is always the most relevant partner, they



have a clear understanding of the actual situation and conditions: they know what their needs and demands are; they provide us with input and ideas about what needs to be improved and how we can design and implement the project. The community also sustains the space of the old town, using it, and being responsible for its maintenance.

We implement the community's ideas with our master craftspeople, and community builders. They are the ones that move their hands, and the benefit to the community depends on their work. For them, we organise vocational training in building skills and workshops that provide technical advice.

The THF team tries to find solutions, give advice, negotiate and organise. We plan according to the conservation approach. We have the role of project coordinator and supervisor, emphasising the façade control and the materials to be used. The houses are built with sun-dried mud bricks around a timber frame on stone foundations. Traditionally local clays are used ingeniously to create waterproof roof layers and dust-free plasters.

One of our projects in Leh, is the 17th century Kushu House in the old town. It is a three-story house with a dozen rooms consisting of stores, stables, living rooms, and kitchens. As it had been abandoned, the house decayed and was uninhabitable for a long time. The west part of the building had collapsed.

In 2014 the current owner requested THF/LOTI to help with repairing the house. The restoration work began in 2015.
Before starting the project, following the local tradition, we invited a Buddhist monk who performed a religious

ceremony called *Alshok*, consisting in some prayers to obtain the permission from the land god and the safety of the construction work. It is a relevant intangible part of the cultural heritage related to traditional architecture.
In the renovation process, we reused all the materials we could. At first, we repaired and stabilised the weak walls on the ground floor.
We did not know the original design of the west part of the façade previously collapsed and temporarily reconstructed. We made a new design in line with the adjacent historic buildings: we rearranged the space and re-created the rooms, enlarging the windows to improve natural lighting (fig. 25) of the collapsed area.
The building contains the idea of the lifestyle of the local community. A kind of gender division regulates the use of the rooms: some are intended for the ladies to carry out the domestic works. This kind of element also needs to be respected.
The main room, called *changsa*, was finished with a blue carpet. Here people use to make tea and cook. One of the challenges was determining how to save the original clay stove present in this room during the structural repair work, around which people used to sit. We carefully lifted the clay stove and moved it to one side by rolling it over wooden trunks; after repairing the floor, we placed the stove undamaged in its original position.
To stay in tune with current lifestyle, we adapted some parts of the building to the modern facilities and spaces. We created a glass room to passively capture the solar energy in the cold winter. The storage room was converted into the home library. The space is very narrow and I made the ceiling higher to obtain a large bookshelf.
In this house, THF and LOTI organise community activities, cultural activities, workshops, talk events, and meetings for the local community (fig. 26). We invite senior Ladakhis who share stories of their life to young Ladakhi students. Through this interaction, we are trying to pass the memory of the past to the young generation. Conservation work represents the transmission of the past memories to the present, and of the present ones to the future.
Local artisans use Kushu House to perform and teach traditional weaving techniques, sharing their knowledge with visitors and the local community. This house became a showcase for other restoration projects in the Leh old town and in Ladakh.

The Central Asian Museum in Leh (CAML) is a new building completed in 2015. We applied the traditional techniques in a kind of neo-vernacular architecture that perfectly integrates the museum in the local context.

25. Rearrangement of the western part of Kushu House. Courtesy of Tibet Heritage Fund. Hirako Yutaka 2015
26. Leh old town residents attending an event at Kushu house: The Memories of Leh Old town. Courtesy of Tibet Heritage Fund, Hirako Yutaka 2017.






27. The four level of the Central Asian Museum Leh. Courtesy of Tibet Heritage Fund, Hirako Yutaka 2015.

The Tsas-soma garden complex is a green area with a garden in the centre. It was used as a caravanserai. Taking advantage of this location as the dynamic connection between the neighbouring communities, our design idea for the museum was to inform the public about the Central Asian trade, of which Ladakh has been an important crossroads and trade centre, and which has had a long and lasting influence on the development of Ladakh's unique culture. Different Himalayan communities with different cultures and backgrounds surround Ladakh. To the east is Tibet, to the north is Baltistan, to the west are Turkistan communities, and Kashmir. The influence of these neighbouring groups brought economic benefits and cultural development.

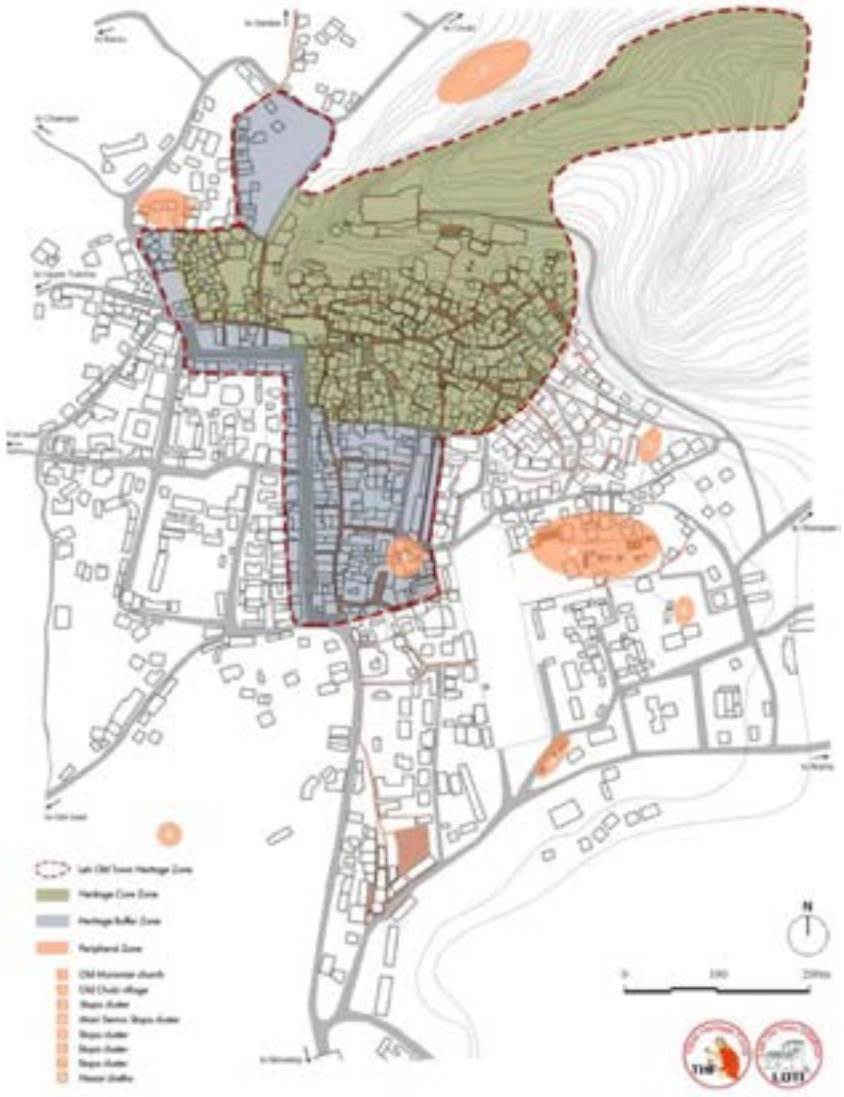
The museum tower is the main building of the CAML. The design is such that each of the four storeys sports architectural elements drawn from a different Himalayan region (fig. 27), so to reflect all the cultural influences combined, enabling the visitors to travel through the different regions. Inside the CAML complex, we also designed the Ladakhi Kitchen Museum to offer the experience

of one of the most significant and elaborate spaces in the Ladakhi houses. Many social activities and gatherings take place in the kitchen. In this room, kitchen utensils from different regions are collected. In the Trans-Himalayan Research Library, we have been collecting books related to all the regions of Central Asia. People come to this room to study the connections between Ladakh and the neighbouring regions.
Another building is a bakery where tandoori bread is made. We kept the bakery and renovated another part of the building as a conference venue, as well as administration offices and other functions related to the operation of the museum. We slightly raised the original ceiling, equipping it with a skylight to improve the natural lighting.

The 19th century Sankhar House is a very tiny building we restored in the middle of Leh old town. Formerly it was used by the Sankhar monks as a residence but for several decades it stood abandoned. In mid-2000, the Sankar monastery developed a plan to demolish this house and construct a modern, concrete-frame shop building. Because of persistent lobbying from THF/LOTI, the monastery agreed to allow restoration of the house and the use of the building for several years as a showcase of the Old town conservation project.
As an example of adaptive reuse in the Old town, we renovated it in 2006 as a heritage house, café, and art gallery; it is now called Lala's Café. It serves as an entry point to the Old town for visitors, where they can get an explanation of Leh old town's heritage. From here also start heritage walks with local guides.
Our continuous efforts were recognised, when in 2006 we won the UNESCO heritage award for our conservation project in Leh Old Town.

For us, it is fundamental to keep the craftspeople traditions alive: they represent the evolution of humankind. If we lose these traditions, we will lose part of our evolution. Restoring historic buildings communicates with the craftspeople from the past, and through our careful observation we can understand their skills and techniques applied in the construction. It is very important to learn from the past experiences and carry them forward into present practices and transmit them to future generations.

For this reason, we are creating the AAA House, which means Artisans, Artists, and Architects' House, also called 'Himalayan Bauhaus'. Our ambition is to create an active platform to sustain the knowledge and skills of local craftspeople. The goal of this platform is to engage architects and artists, who will learn from each other during exchange programs and workshops. We organise classes and practical courses to merge theory, design, and making. We aim to preserve and adapt the wisdom of the traditional arts and crafts in the High Himalayan regions and apply it to new creations, and to train human resources and sustain them in developing a longer vision.
Initially, we plan to include carpentry (structure and furniture), masonry, painting, metal work, weaving, and textiles. We aim to record traditional crafts in different media to be archived and processed as teaching tools. For example, we have a project in collaboration with young talented Indian designers and artists who design modern furniture to be made by our Ladakhi artisans. The idea is to help both artisans and designers enlarge their market, and to continue practicing their trade.



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28. Map of Leh Old Town Heritage Zone. Courtesy of Tibet Heritage Fund, Okuma Ken and Hirako Yutaka.2015.

Ladakhi wool is of great quality and there are still many people who know how to spin it by hand. To keep this tradition alive, we plan to collaborate with designers to use the local material to create something modern, combining local traditional ways of weaving and modern design to keep these skills alive.

We worked with the local government to nominate Leh Old Town as a Heritage Zone (fig. 28), in order to create regulations and guidelines to protect the whole of it. The Heritage Zone covers an area of approximately ten hectares and consists of a "Heritage core zone", formed by the hilltop structures of the Leh palace complex, Dart fort and Namgyal Tsemo castle complex, plus other major parts of the old town mohallas (districts). There is a "Heritage buffer zone" comprising areas just outside the Heritage core zone.

We are also proposing to create a Heritage Conservation Committee – a management structure within the local government including local experts. So far in the local government, there is no counterpart with whom we can cooperate in cultural heritage conservation work. We have to visit a number of different offices to discuss about the conservation and heritage protection projects.

For the financial part, we are proposing to create a Ladakh Tangible Cultural Heritage Conservation Loan. The majority of the properties are privately owned, but some people have economic difficulties, maintaining the restored buildings is not a priority for them. We want to create a registration system to help owners who want to implement a rehabilitation project to get access to loans from the government.

We also work in documentation. Reports disseminate our knowledge, and we contribute to formal publications. We have written many studies about Lhasa and Beijing (André Alexander 1999, 1999, 2004, 2005b, 2013, 2019; André Alexander et al. 2008; André Alexander and Azevedo 1998; Dorje et al. 2010). Pimpim made a beautiful illustrated book to teach vernacular architecture to the young generations (Azevedo 2011).

We have a long-term vision for our future. We plan to go ahead with three things: the restoration and rehabilitation of the physical structures because this has an immediate impact; the 'Himalayan Bauhaus', to create a platform for artisans to continue the practice of their skills; and the preservation of knowledge, producing surveys and other documentation and making them available to the public.

## Discussion

**Kiichiro**
You are working following the traditional techniques and materials. Are there earthquakes where you work? Are you required to use structural reinforcement using new technologies? How do you associate these new technologies and the traditional techniques?
In Japan, traditional buildings are resistant to earthquakes, but sometimes we are required to apply the current building code to them. The properties of traditional architecture and techniques are difficult to demonstrate.

**Pimpim**
We work in zones affected by earthquakes.
In Jyekundo, for example, we restored a house, and after the completion, a strong earthquake happened and flattened the city. Over five thousand people died, the concrete buildings collapsed, and many historic buildings were damaged. The house we restored stood standing. This showed that even compared with concrete buildings, the traditional ones can be more earthquake resistant. The Himalayan peoples have traditional ways to tackle this issue: for example, in Ladakh and some regions of Pakistan and Kashmir, wooden horizontal frames are used around the building to make it strong in case of earthquakes. Local people also say that the walls must be slanting because they make the structure more stable in case of earthquakes. We don't want to use cement. It is not guaranteed that the structure is going to be stronger using it if an earthquake happens. Personally, I prefer not to be inside new constructions in Leh. They are quite scary. Sometimes in a concrete frame, the pillars are not on top of one another. In Ladakh, people say that everybody can build their own house. With reinforced concrete is not like that, and it can be unsafe.
We prefer to use the local wisdom to solve this and other issues. Natural disasters are not something new, and the people have their local traditional knowledge about them. We also try to adapt this ancestral wisdom and to unite it with modern knowledge, for instance the Japanese one.

**Yutaka**
We are aware of earthquakes. They do not happen here as frequently as in Japan, however.
One of the local ways consists in applying a horizontal ring beam at every section of the building. It stabilises the wall construction and avoids the complete vertical crack that makes the building collapse. We try to promote this traditional solution, introducing (if necessary) some ameliorations: for instance, sometimes we enlarge the area of the ring beam. We are not using steel or concrete as reinforcement because these are materials unrelated to the vernacular architecture.

# BOULOUKI



# Hands-on heritage: three early projects in Epirus (Greece)



Ionas Sklavounos

Boulouki is a crafts-research collective dedicated to the study of traditional ways of building, as embodied and inherently situated forms of knowledge.
Our work encompasses ethnographic fieldwork, seminars and participatory building projects which are organised in collaboration with local communities and international experts.
We develop what may be described as a hands-on approach to cultural heritage and to the study traditional building crafts, considered not only in terms of protection and preservation, but also with an eye to contemporary building practices.

In Greek, μπουλούκι (bulúki) means 'gaggle', a 'travelling group'. It is a word that evokes the journeying companies of builders and artisans travelling throughout the Balkans, Europe and the world (fig. 2-3).
Originating in the Albanian and Turkish languages, the primary meanings of the word refer to "a small division of disorderly troops in the time of Ottoman Empire", "a troupe that tours the countryside", and more generally, to "an unruly group of people".
"Boulouki – Itinerant Workshop on Traditional Building Techniques" is an interdisciplinary group, with members and collaborators from diverse disciplines: architects, archaeologists, engineers, artists, and of course experienced craftspeople, mainly stonemasons and carpenters.

In this presentation, I will be focusing on the three first projects of our team, carried out in the mountainous area of Tzoumerka (Τζουμέρκα) in Epirus (NW Greece), a region that has historically been a cradle of stone craft.
Through these projects, realised between 2018 and 2019, I will also present an outline of how our team understands the question of rehabilitating traditional heritage.





1. P. Stone mason P. Vichas, tutor in Boulouki's workshops. Photo credit: P. Radin, G. Zoilis. Source: Boulouki Archive.
2. A 19th century boulouki of builders. Source: Spyros Mantas Archive.
3. Master-masons and apprentices of the "Kalderimi X2" project. Photo credit: P. Radin, G. Zoilis. Source: Boulouki Archive.

## Boulouki at the Bridge, Plaka (2018)

The first project that I will be discussing is called "Boulouki at the Bridge". The bridge is the historic bridge of Plaka (Πλάκα), on the river Arachthos (Άραχθος) in the area of Tzoumerka. Until its collapse in February 2015, this was the largest single-arch bridge in the Balkan region, with a span of about 40 m. The restoration of this important monument took place in 2019 through the cooperation of many actors and institutions of the Greek state, and was a unique project in many respects. Within this wider context and in view of the forthcoming restoration, in 2018 our team decided to organise a twelve-day workshop on traditional stone masonry in this very location. More specifically, we decided to work on the old *kalderimi* (καλντερίμι, cobblestone path) that historically led to the bridge of Plaka (fig. 4), collectively restoring and repairing specific parts of it. Furthermore, taking the adjacent historic bridge as a point of reference, this workshop focused on three types of stone construction, which occur in traditional bridgework: the arch, the wall, and the *kalderimi* (fig. 5-7).

4. The Bridge of Plaka ca 1950. Photo credit: A. Vertodoulos.




The first step was to discover what was 'still there' – what remains of the *kalderimi* – by cleaning the pathway and uncovering its surviving parts. We did this together with the participants of the twelve-day workshop and members of the local community. We also tried to connect this activity to a customary communal practice that is still remembered in the area, called *midati* (μιντάτι). This word refers to collective 'self-help' amongst mountain communities, where all members were due to assist each other in tasks related to dwelling and communal life. Everyone was welcome to participate in this *midati* to uncover the old path.

The next day, after the path had been cleared, we organised a communal feast with music and dance, to which we invited elderly craftsmen from the area. In this festive atmosphere, the participants were introduced to the materials and tools with which they would work during the following days. Under the guidance of local builders-tutors P.

Vichas, D. Fotis and C. Tsekas, they began to try their hand at stone carving and dry stone building.

In the days that followed, the participants worked in three different parts of the path, where they explored the techniques of the arch, the wall and the *kalderimi* (fig. 8-10). In practical terms, this meant repairing parts of the existing cobblestone and loose walls in selected places, but also constructing a new small arched bridge at a point that had already been altered by modern interventions. The introduction of this small bridge was appropriate, as it was combined with a pre-existing system of furrows, through which the traditional path also channelled the river's water to the surrounding agricultural fields. The small arched bridge we constructed emphasised this element of traditional water management (fig. 11).

The project was also framed by a series of lectures of technical and theoretical content by professors from the National Technical University of Athens and other universities, as well as by presentations of cultural institutions











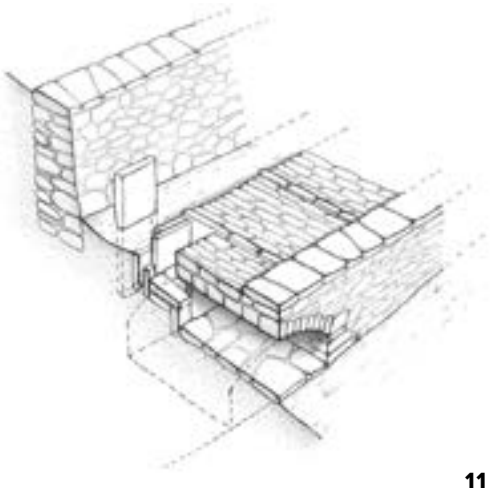








5-7. Working on the *kalderimi*, the arch and the wall during the first Boulouki workshop. Photo credit: G. Dimitrakopoulos. Source: Boulouki Archive.
8-10. Three points where damaged parts of the pathway were restored or rebuilt. Photo credit: G. Dimitrakopoulos. Source: Boulouki Archive.



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from Greece and abroad. In this way, we sought to approach the question of the revitalisation of traditional building crafts and the rehabilitation of cultural heritage at large in a comprehensive way. In the same vein, in cooperation with other local groups a series of cultural events was organised, such as the open-air film screening next to the river and the ruined bridge that was awaiting restoration (fig. 12).

11. Axonometric drawing of the small arched bridge. Credit: G. Koutropoulos. Source: Boulouki Archive.
12. Open-air film screening next to the ruined bridge. Photo credit: Vasiliki Tsimi, Source: Boulouki Archive.

## Melissourgoi and Pramanta Mountain Refuges (2019)

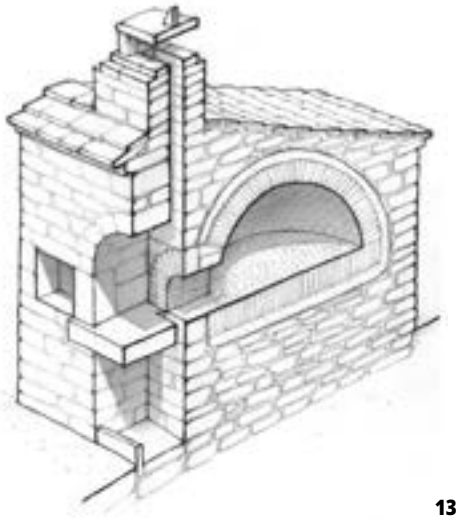
Already before the implementation of the first workshop, our team was travelling in the region of Epirus in search of experienced craftspeople. During these journeys we often stayed at the two mountain huts in the region Melissourgoi (Μελισσουργοί) and Pramanta (Πράμαντα). A friendship with their managers gradually evolved. Through this relationship, the idea of organising two parallel workshops also came about.

The Melissourgoi refuge was in need of a wood-fired oven, while the Pramanta refuge wished for a tree house. Thus, it was decided that two workshops would be organised, respectively focusing on a) stone (as well as brick, and clay) and b) wood. Together, the two projects provided our team with an opportunity to experiment with traditional techniques in ways that may not have been equally plausible, for example, in the protected environment of the historic site of



Plaka. Clearly, this was even more so in the case of the tree house project, whose connections with traditional building were not easily discernible.

In the first case, an important part of the research that prepared the workshop and the actual construction concerned the different types of traditional ovens in Greece. Our aim was to arrive at a synthetic proposal that would combine different typological features, while fitting the local context of Epirus and its building culture. In the framework of this preliminary research we also collaborated with experts and scholars specialised in traditional architecture, whom we invited to give lectures on vernacular infrastructures for fire.
The workshop and the actual building of the oven were carried out in collaboration with the local craftsman P. Vichas who had worked in Plaka, this time assisted by clay expert C. Kyriakogonas. The contribution of the local craftsman proved invaluable in many ways. Among these, his role in the final shaping of the oven's crowning can be mentioned here – which drew from the typical form of the Epirus roof with stone roofing slabs.



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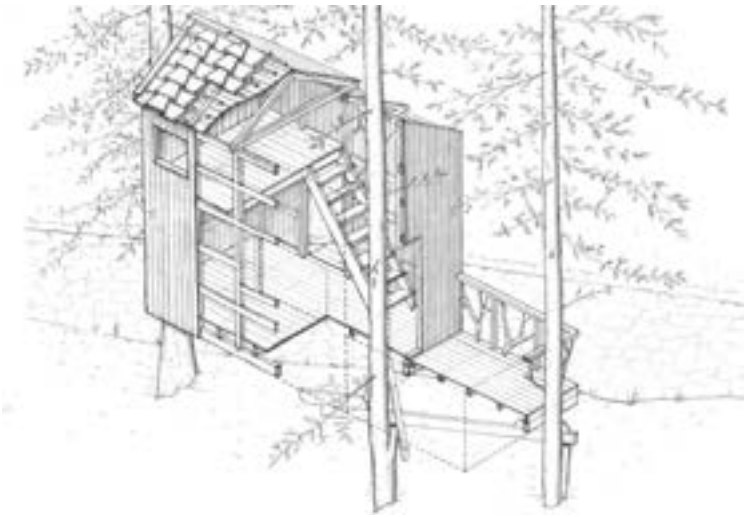


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13. Axonometric drawing of the wood-fired oven. Credit: G. Koutropoulos. Source: Boulouki Archive.
14-16. Working with stone, bricks, and clay in Melissourgoi mountain refuge. Photo Credit: P. Radin, G. Zoilis. Source: Boulouki Archive.
17. The completed wood-fired oven. Photo credit: P. Kostoulas. Source: Boulouki Archive.



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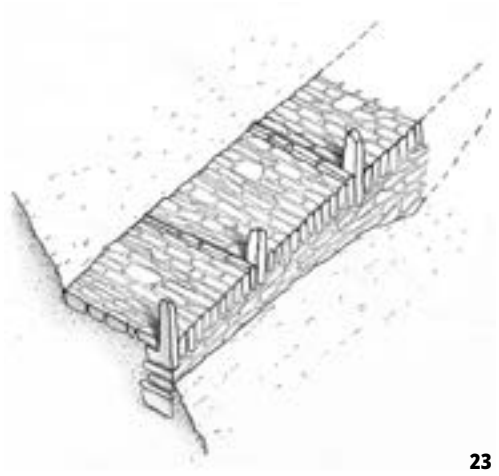
At the same time, the workshop at Pramanta refuge was progressing.
Again, the preliminary research brought us in contact with experts in wood technology and traditional carpentry, such as professors E. Tsakanika and G. Mantanis, whom we subsequently invited as key-note speakers in the workshop.
Together with members of our group, local carpenter T. Papaioanou and architect-carpenter G. Karvelas led the construction of the tree-house, which was built between three fir trees (18-22).
In this project, where we were clearly not dealing with an 'indigenous' typology, traditional knowledge was put to work in building details. Firstly, in the application of traditional timber joints such as mortises and half-lap joints. Secondly, in the use of pine tar to protect the wooden shingles from the harsh weather conditions.
In their turn, these tar-dipped wooden shingles were designed as a reinterpretation of the dark stone slabs used on Epirus roofs, which were at the same time employed on top of the wood-fired oven of Melissourgoi refuge.

## Kalderimi X2, Plaka (2019)

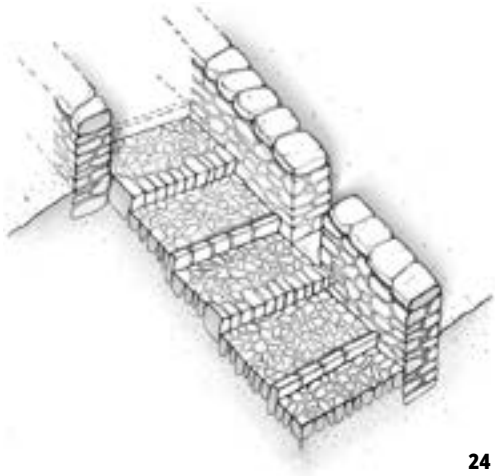
A few months later, our group returned to Plaka, this time to work specifically on the *kalderimi*.

On the previous year, our intervention had focused on three specific points along the pathway which, as a whole, still remained in a poor condition. Now, the intention was to finish what we started and repair the entire pathway: of its 400 m length, almost 200 were in need of repair.

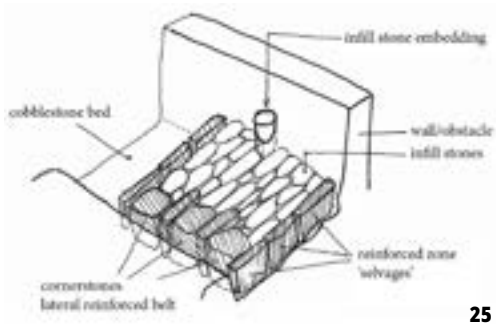
However, such a project would require more time than the few days of a standard workshop. To accomplish our task, we organised a two-month apprenticeship in traditional stonemasonry, through which the main body of the work could be carried out. Importantly, this apprenticeship was combined with an intense twelve-day workshop aimed at a wider audience beyond people with a professional interest in traditional stonemasonry. This twofold character of the project, aimed on the one hand at a new generation of professional craftspeople and on the other at students and practitioners of architecture, heritage and related disciplines, is what gave the project the name "Kalderimi X2". At the same time, a strong cross-cultural character was pursued: in the case of the apprenticeship programme, three out of the nine positions were reserved for apprentices from other Balkan countries (namely Albania, Serbia, and Croatia); while out of the twenty-five participants of the twelve-day workshop, more than ten came from countries other than Greece.



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18. Axonometric drawing of the treehouse. P. Radin. Source: Boulouki Archive.

19-20. Workshop on wood and treehouse construction at Pramanta mountain refuge. Photo credit: P. Radin, G. Zoilis. Source: Boulouki Archive.

21-22. Construction process and final outcome of the treehouse. G. Koutropoulos and G. Zoilis. Source: Boulouki Archive.

23-24. Axonometric drawing of two types of *kalderimi* reproduced during the "Kalderimi X2" project. Credit: G. Koutropoulos. Source: Boulouki Archive.

25-26. Key features of the *kalderimi* type (left); detail of the placement of so-called 'selvages' (right). Source: G. Michail, *The pathways of Epirus and Albania* (amended by the author). Photo credit: A. Lagaria. Source Boulouki Archive.

Kalderimi is a particular kind of dry-stone cobbled pathway. This technique, based on the vertical placement of stones without the use of mortar, has been largely forgotten in Greece and the Balkans, especially since the 1950s, as a consequence of the proliferation of modern construction methods based on the use of industrial cement. As is well known, particularly in the environment of so-called traditional settlements, this has led to a progressive erosion of their historically shaped architectural character. By raising the question of the 'original' kalderimi, we mainly wished to foreground this neglected way of dry-stone building and place it in contrast to the neo-traditional versions of kalderimia that nowadays overwhelm the mountain settlements of Greece, and which are mainly based on industrial cement and standardised building products.

In this direction, we also traced and documented the different kinds of paving present in the pathway leading to the bridge of Plaka, identifying two main variations of the kalderimi type. This study of the surviving parts of the traditional kalderimi subsequently informed the restoration and rebuilding of the pathway (fig. 23-24).

Three experienced stonemasons led the project: K. Tarnanas, D. Fotis and Y. Anastasiadis. They undertook the most demanding parts of the construction, such as the carving and placement of



27. The wall and the hackberry tree. Photo credit: I. Sklavounos. Source: Boulouki Archive.





28-29. Before and after the *kalderimi* reconstruction, and the placement of the upright stones called *arkades*. Photo credit: G. Koutropoulos, P. Radin and G. Zoilis. Source: Boulouki Archive.

cornerstones and the construction of structural frames, within which apprentices were placing the 'in-fills'. As the apprentices improved their skill, they would get involved in more challenging parts of the work and eventually, they would take on the role of tutors in the twelve-day workshop.

It is worth emphasising that the insights gained in this project were not only related to the mastery of craftsmanship or the technical aspects of the work, but rather touched on broader architectural questions, such as the kalderimi's relation to the surrounding landscape. Interestingly, such architectural insights grew around issues that arose as the works proceeded, with answers gradually emerging through collaborative work and on-site consultation with the veteran craftsmen. One such instance occurred where a hackberry tree had broken into the path, knocking down one of the side walls. The answer of how to deal with this came gradually as the loose wall was dismantled and the root system of the tree was revealed. The intricacies of the situation at hand and the accumulated experience of craftsman D. Fotis gradually led to the formation of a particular resting place, a configuration that embraced the roots while framing the tree as a symbolic presence (fig. 27).

Another such example of architectural insights that emerged 'on the road' occurred at the steepest part of the path, which had been roughly repaired in the recent past (fig. 28). If the removal of the crude paving was rather inevitable, what was not obvious was how to deal with the exposed side of the path and the fairly dangerous height. Building a parapet was always an option, albeit one that would cost us in building material and time. Again, it was through consultation with the craftsmen that an answer slowly emerged; namely to place upright vertical stones – the so called arkades – a traditional way of marking the side boundaries of stone bridges (fig. 29).

This arrangement enabled us to mark the exposed side of the path while referencing the historic bridge of Plaka to which the kalderimi leads.
At the same time, this process was also of technical interest: as the "Kalderimi X2" project placed dry-stone building (that is, without cement or any other binder) at its core, the upright stones









30. Timber scaffolding constructed on site. Photo credit: A. Lagaria. Source: Boulouki Archive.
31: Carving the arkades. Photo credit: I. Sklavounos. Source: Boulouki Archive.
32. The stone relief with the snake figure, carved by sculptor Theodoros Papagiannis. Photo credit: I. Sklavounos. Source: Boulouki Archive.
33. Communal feast during the "Kaldermi X2" project. Photo credit: P. Radin, G. Zoilis. Source: Boulouki Archive.

had to be carved in a particular 'L' shape in order to be firmly fixed – literally built – into the cobblestone, with no mortar (fig. 31).

What becomes evident through the above is how the immersion in local, traditional ways of building gradually led our team beyond the narrow limits of the project's strict scope towards a more encompassing architectural perspective. This was also expressed in the incorporation of a series of stone reliefs on the kalderimi, depicting motifs historically used by the folk builders of Epirus. The idea of incorporating such reliefs in the pathway emerged through field trips to important sites in the region. Such were our visits to an 11th century monastery (where, for example, we encountered the figure of the snake), as well as to the village of a renowned sculptor, Theodoros Papagiannis, whom we asked to carve a number of reliefs for the restored kalderimi of Plaka (fig. 32).

As in our previous projects, also in "Kalderimi X2" the cultural events framing the actual works played an important role. Among these events, one that I would point out is a communal celebration involving food, music and dance, a feast dedicated to the elderly craftspeople of the area, many of whom were also present. This was not only about engaging the local society, which is no doubt important. I would like to emphasise how in Boulouki's approach, traditional building knowledge cannot be detached from broader expressions of culture (fig. 33). Rather, I would argue, the knowledge and insights gained in

the apprenticeship were significantly informed by such moments of concerted action, where the ideas and values underlying the project would come to the surface. Why are we doing this? How do we mean it? What kind of memory, history or tradition is it that we're trying to rekindle? Such questions were also raised in the lectures and open discussions framing this project, which other groups and organisations from Greece and the Balkans were invited to contribute to.

Such events also bring to the fore the challenges raised by attempts to recover traditional systems of knowledge, which, as mentioned, are inseparable from systems of cultural values. The complexities (and pitfalls) that such rehabilitations entail are well illustrated through an image drawn from the archive of independent researcher and stone-bridge historian, Spyros Mantas, which was exhibited during the "Kalderimi X2" apprenticeship – depicting the construction of a kalderimi in the region of Epirus, around 1937 (fig. 34).

In this photograph one may observe how the women (on the right) are the ones who undertake the labour of carrying heavy stones, while the men (on the left) assume the role of the craftsman or the observer. This highlights how traditional knowledge is also entangled with hierarchies and roles that, thankfully, most of us today are not willing to embrace – and thus with values that need to be negotiated anew. Thus, tradition presents itself as a contested term, urging one to be cautious when invoking it and even more so when attempting to rehabilitate it. Nevertheless, to the extent that the complexities and tensions involved in such rehabilitations are acknowledged, traditions can also serve as places and means of empowerment for those who today are deprived of knowledge and power.

## Discussion

**Eltjana**

I am interested in learning more about the apprenticeship system, particularly in the context of contemporary challenges. As the global economy evolves, the demand for specific skills and professions transforms the dynamic nature of the workforce. Sectors like cultural heritage feel threatened, therefore the need for adaptability, continuous learning, and an understanding of the cultural and economic shifts is urgent.

Does Greece face similar issues? In our experience, this is a significant concern, especially given the impact of emigration and the tendency of younger generations to shy away from craft professions. Many young people perceive these trades as outdated and believe they do not offer a viable future.

Understanding how Greece navigates these challenges could provide valuable insights into preserving traditional skills and encouraging the youths' engagement in craftsmanship.

**Ionas**

Indeed, acknowledging that this embodied knowledge is at risk of being lost, because it needs people to be maintained and developed, is a starting point for Boulouki in general.




34. Communal construction of a kalderimi in Epirus in 1937. Photo credit: S. Meletzis. Source: Spyros Mantas Archive.

In Greece, it's been decades that stone masonry is facing real challenges – at least since after the war (and particularly the Greek civil war), this knowledge has been declining. We're trying to find people who still hold this practical knowledge and engage them as tutors our apprenticeship programs, aiming to train a new generation of craftspeople. Of course, such efforts contradict with how contemporary built environments are being produced and reproduced today.

To be sure, you cannot simply claim that vernacular settlements are somehow 'important' or 'beautiful' and thus suggest that today people should still build like that. This would be a rather simplistic approach that doesn't take into consideration contemporary values and standards of living. Holding up to such values and standards is not always feasible with traditional ways of building, if these are not somehow reinterpreted.

To make a change in this direction requires sustained effort and there are many groups and organisations around the world that try to address the related problems. For example, if craftspeople have professional rights and good wages, if states provide ways in which their kind of knowledge can be valued, then there could be a chance for crafts to survive and develop. I know there's been great work done in Albania regarding this matter.

**Eltjana**

Are there professional schools in your country specifically dedicated to training masters in traditional crafts and trades?

Before 1990, our country had several such schools organised by categories of crafts. These institutions offered specialised training for various trades, ensuring that students developed the necessary skills to become masters in their respective fields. In addition to formal education in these professional schools, there were also workshops (or ateliers) where students could gain hands-on experience. These ateliers were not limited to the school setting; they were often situated in the community, particularly in regions where cultural heritage was emphasised, like Gjirokastra.

**Ionas**

You are touching one of the most important aspects, the , and this is something we have been intensively discussing in Greece. Currently, there are no such schools in Greece (at least regarding traditional stone masonry) and there are efforts from different sides to establish them. From our point of view, such schools should be oriented not only to conservation, but also to face contemporary problems. The challenges in establishing such schools are also related to legislation and institutional frameworks. This is an ongoing discussion, and we are part of the effort to make something like that happen.

The way we try to incorporate apprenticeship schemes in our projects, compensates to some extent the absence of vocational schools in Greece, but certainly cannot substitute them.

We also take advantage of an interest that comes from different kinds of participants, not always interested in becoming professional craftspeople: architects, engineers and artists who want to work with their hands and together with craftspeople. Again, all this doesn't answer all problems, but I believe that such efforts do help to cultivate a certain momentum.

**Umberto**

I would like to underline the fragility of these objects and places, and their exposure to deterioration risk. Those who work in the field of heritage and restoration normally know how to manage this risk; maintenance is important.

Another very interesting thing is the knowledge that is crystallised in heritage and buildings. In your projects one finds multidimensional layers – landscape, constructions, materials – and wisdom about the way to build and recover the traditional knowledge.

**Ionas**

Fragility is a key concept, and there are many ways in which it is present in our work. Consider also the discussion about dry-stone building vs using industrial cement.

In broader cultural terms, cement is often understood to express durability, mechanical strength, and even a certain 'cleanliness' (or at least that's

often the case in the Greek countryside). On the other hand, dry-stone building often comes to express a certain fragility as it needs to be taken care of, to be maintained – and this is a kind of fragility that should be valued and celebrated.
You are right, it is important to unfold the knowledge that is crystallised or embedded in these structures. We are often limited to an aesthetic appreciation of the picturesque qualities of vernacular settlements. Indeed, for example, the way dry-stone pathways behave in conditions of rain or frost are very different than the behaviour shown by cement pavements. The whole philosophy of water management that goes together with the dry-stone kalderimia is also important in this discussion. The fragility that underlies such structures and settlements describes a thread of knowledge; a thread that, if followed carefully, brings one to appreciate that a truly holistic approach is at play here.

**Paolo**
In several countries, significant efforts have been made to document and support traditional craftsmanship. For example, Spain has seen valuable contributions, particularly through the work of the Traditional Building Cultures Foundation. Similarly, in Romania, the Asociatia Monumentum has significant contributions towards traditional crafts.
In Italy, however, the situation is quite different. We lack a comprehensive inventory of skilled craftsmen, and there is limited awareness of the current state of traditional craftsmanship across the country. This is despite the substantial number of master masons and specialized craftsmen who specialize in conservation work. I believe Greece faces a similar situation; both countries have developed and sustained craftsmanship knowledge through conservation projects dating back to at least the 1980s, however, their expertise is not easily traceable.
How are you connected with this network of craftsmen that aligns with the work of the Hellenic Ministry of Culture? Moreover, how do you view the state of countries like Italy and Greece, where there is an abundance of skilled artisans whose expertise could greatly benefit not only conservation but also mainstream architecture? It's concerning to see that, despite the high demand in construction, the quality of architecture remains low in Greece, where masons are often trained primarily in cement and modern materials.

**Ionas**
We're also impressed by the low quality of architecture in Greece, but even when it's not about low quality, questions can be raised about the orientation of architecture and about what kind of audiences architects want to address.
You rightfully identify monuments and heritage, both in Italy and Greece, as places where craftsmanship has been preserved: I immediately think of marble craftsmen in the Parthenon, who very often come from the school of Tinos (Cyclades), an island with a long tradition in sculpting marble.
Boulouki's perspective is somehow different. We focus on what might be described as a modest kind of heritage: agricultural landscapes, terraces, dry-stone walls, pathways. Our hope is that this can somehow bring craftsmanship closer to everyday life, to the production of architecture such as people building their houses, small municipalities having their squares or public spaces renewed. It is on this level that we try to intervene and to suggest that there are alternative ways of doing architecture – ways of building that might be closer to us than we think. The way these places were built – not hundreds of years ago, but even fifty years ago – often drew from local forms of knowledge that considered the context and the history of the place.
State institutions such as the Ministry of Culture have a key role to play in such efforts.

# GO2ALBANIA



# First steps in the Shkodër region



Eltjana Shkreli

After spending 20 years away from our hometown in the Shkodër region, gaining experience in Tirana and across the country, my colleagues and I returned to establish the NGO GO2Albania. Focused on sustainable spatial planning and the management of urban and natural environments, our initiative brought innovative practices to the region.

For fifty years, Albania was isolated under a totalitarian regime. During that time, mobility was completely sustainable, relying entirely on public transport, cycling, and walking, with no car ownership. After the 1990s, a trend towards car ownership emerged, like what had happened across Europe in previous decades. As a result, most Albanian cities and settlements lost this tradition of sustainable mobility, except for Shkodër. Here, approximately 30% of people still cycle, and 44% walk. This practice is part of our intangible cultural heritage, which is why we began our work. We focused on the sustainable, active and clean mobility issues, like a culture of movement in Shkodër, therefore we named the NGO "Go on 2 feet and 2 wheels".

We have been operating for ten years with a vision of improving the quality of life for our communities. Our mission focuses on enhancing the built and natural environment through sustainable land use models.

Our work is centered around three main pillars: **sustainable urban development, rural and environmental development** (particularly in protected areas), and the **cultural heritage** created by communities as a form of living expression.

Given our multidisciplinary approach, our staff also comes from diverse backgrounds – not only from Shkodër region but from all over the country. A core team of five people is engaged full-time, and the broader network of national and international collaborators is included part-time, some of whom we hire through project-based subcontracts.
GO2Albania Organization employs a variety of methodologies to achieve its objectives and implement their programs, like: Logframe approach, capacity building, participatory approach, action research approach, community-based participatory research (CBPR), Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD), Human-Centred Design, Sustainability Planning, Cultural mapping, etc.

The community has been playing a key role in our daily work, as we aim to empower them and to achieve a sustainable socio-economic impact. Engaging local people fosters a sense of sense of belonging that strengthens their commitment to maintain and protect their own heritage in the future.

1. "The people, the city" documentary screening on collective memory of old traditional houses in Shkoder city. Liridona Ura. 2019.

## Albanian alps_National park

The Albanian Alps National Park spans 86,000 hectares (in 2022) and has emerged as the most prominent and appealing tourist destination in Albania over the past decade. The main attraction in the Albanian Alps is Theth, a breathtaking village that has been welcoming tourists since the 1930s, while the rest of those Highlands has been inaccessible till the 1960s. Nestled in a stunning valley at an altitude of 800 meters above sea level, Theth is surrounded by towering mountain peaks that reach heights of up to 2,700 meters. This dramatic landscape provides not only a picturesque backdrop but also presents unique challenges for its residents. Life in Theth can be quite difficult, as the area experiences complete isolation for up to six months each year due to heavy snowfall. The harsh winters require the local community to be resourceful and resilient, relying on traditional practices and strong communal ties to survive.

The inhabitants of Theth are known for their conservative values, deeply rooted in their cultural heritage. In the mountainous region, a deeply ingrained code of hospitality (Kanun of Leke Ducagin) shapes the way locals interact with guests. Traditionally, residents found it difficult to accept the notion of charging visitors for their hospitality. However, as time has passed, attitudes have begun to change. In some areas, residents are now more open to the concept of monetising hospitality services. As a result, many locals are starting to see the potential benefits of sharing their rich cultural heritage with visitors while also sustaining their livelihoods.

About fifteen years ago, emigration had emptied the whole area undermining the local communities and economies – there remained only 6 families in the village compared to 2,000 inhabitants in 1990. At that time, the representatives from the German Agency for International Cooperation (GIZ) visited the area and recognised the potential for sustainable development through tourism. They proposed a grant initiative, offering small financial support – approximately €2,000 per family – to assist locals in renovating their traditional homes, known as *kulla*. These unique structures, characterised by their stone construction and distinctive architectural features, are integral to the cultural identity of Theth.

Through GIZ's assistance, residents began to restore and adapt the functions of the old houses, to build new ones, combining traditional craftsmanship with modern amenities. This initiative not only revitalised the local architecture but also fostered a renewed sense of pride in their heritage. As families adapted their homes, they transformed Theth into a more appealing destination for visitors, enhancing the community's economic prospects while damaging its rich cultural legacy.

2. Map of "Albanian Alps" National Park. Liridona Ura 2022.





3. Shala Valley, Theth village surrounded by the high mountains of the Albanian Alps. Luigj Shyti 2007.

A strong impetus for tourism development has been the cross-border project involving Montenegro, Kosovo, and Albania. The "Peaks of the Balkans" hiking trail was established that allows adventurous tourists to explore the region over a span of ten to twelve days. This transnational trail winds for 192 km through one of the most remote and wild mountain regions of the Western Balkans and earned a **UN Tourism Award for Outstanding Destination Stewardship** at the World Travel and Tourism Council's (WTTC) in 2013. This initiative marked a significant milestone in the tourist development of the area.

Residents returned to the mountains for one purpose only: tourism. Mountaineers are shifted from pastoralists and farmers into tourist entrepreneurs, and the pressure for construction has quickly transformed the cultural landscape. Many locals have chosen to convert their traditional homes into guesthouses to accommodate the growing influx of visitors. Due to the change of function from



4. Traditional dwelling in Shala Valley, Theth village. Irhan Jubica 2017.
5. An example of the pressure that exist in the area: next to a stone kulla, a new one made by concrete and tiles. Irhan Jubica 2017.

permanent residence to guesthouses, some hamlets have been transformed in form, size, materials, and construction techniques; families have become smaller, and the occupation of their members is now the provision of tourist services, while breeding and agriculture are on the verge of extinction.

In response to these phenomena, GIZ (Mr. H. Mueller and Mr. A. Diku) invited our organisation to develop a manual for restoring and adapting traditional houses, as well as constructing new ones that respect the region's architectural heritage. This manual aims to strike a balance between modern needs and cultural landscape preservation.

To create these guidelines, we organized a series of meetings and interviews with various stakeholders, including skilled craftsmen, community elders, and residents. Some of the sessions were facilitated by students, fostering intergenerational dialogue and involving the youth in preservation efforts (fig.6). This collaborative approach not only ensures that diverse perspectives are represented but also encourages community control over the preservation process.













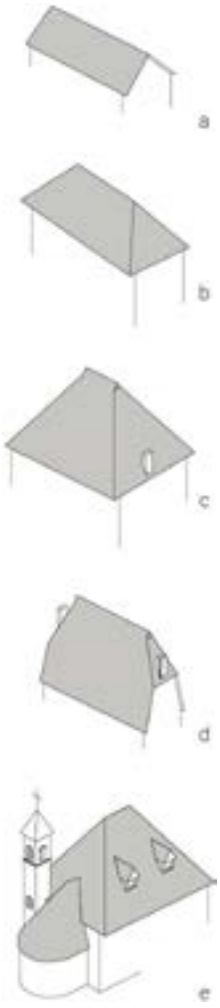
6. Meeting and encounters between inhabitants and GO2 staff. Liridona Ura 2018.
7-10. Tangible and intangible heritage collection, which includes among others the 2500 species of flora (40% of which are endemic) and the various rituals, like the Men's Lament of Dukagjin as pagan ritual. 7) Grave in Kelmend. Edith Durham. 1908. 8) Pagan symbol in doors, Theth. GO2Albania Archive. 2018. 9) "Xhubleta", the women's dress that the national government has applied to recognise as UNESCO heritage. René Bénézech. 1938. 10) A horizontal watermill in Theth. GO2Albania Archive 2018.

We prepared a comprehensive 200-page design handbook (Shkreli 2018) along with a series of informative charters, which were made accessible not only to the local community but also to investors, scholars, professionals, and decision makers from both local and national government.

This initiative served as a pilot project for rural settlements in Albania, aiming at providing practical guidelines for preserving and restoring traditional architecture.

Following our project, the national government launched a similar initiative in Himara, the southern coastal region of the country. While our specific project has been put on hold, we remain hopeful about the possibility of developing design guidelines for other areas in Albania, contributing to the preservation of our cultural heritage.

In a related effort, we documented both the intangible and tangible cultural heritage, engaging all five senses (fig. 7-10), to recognise and preserve it.















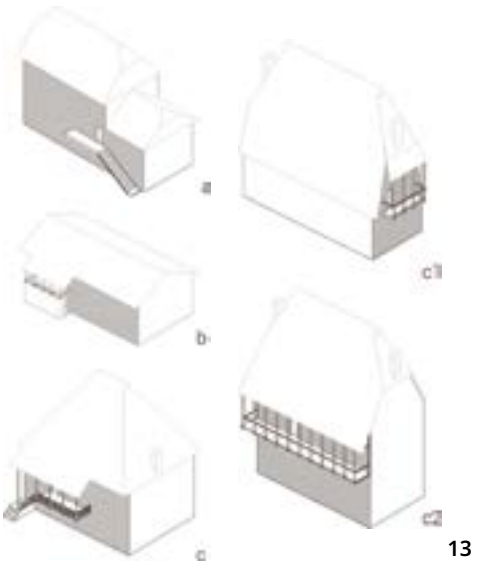




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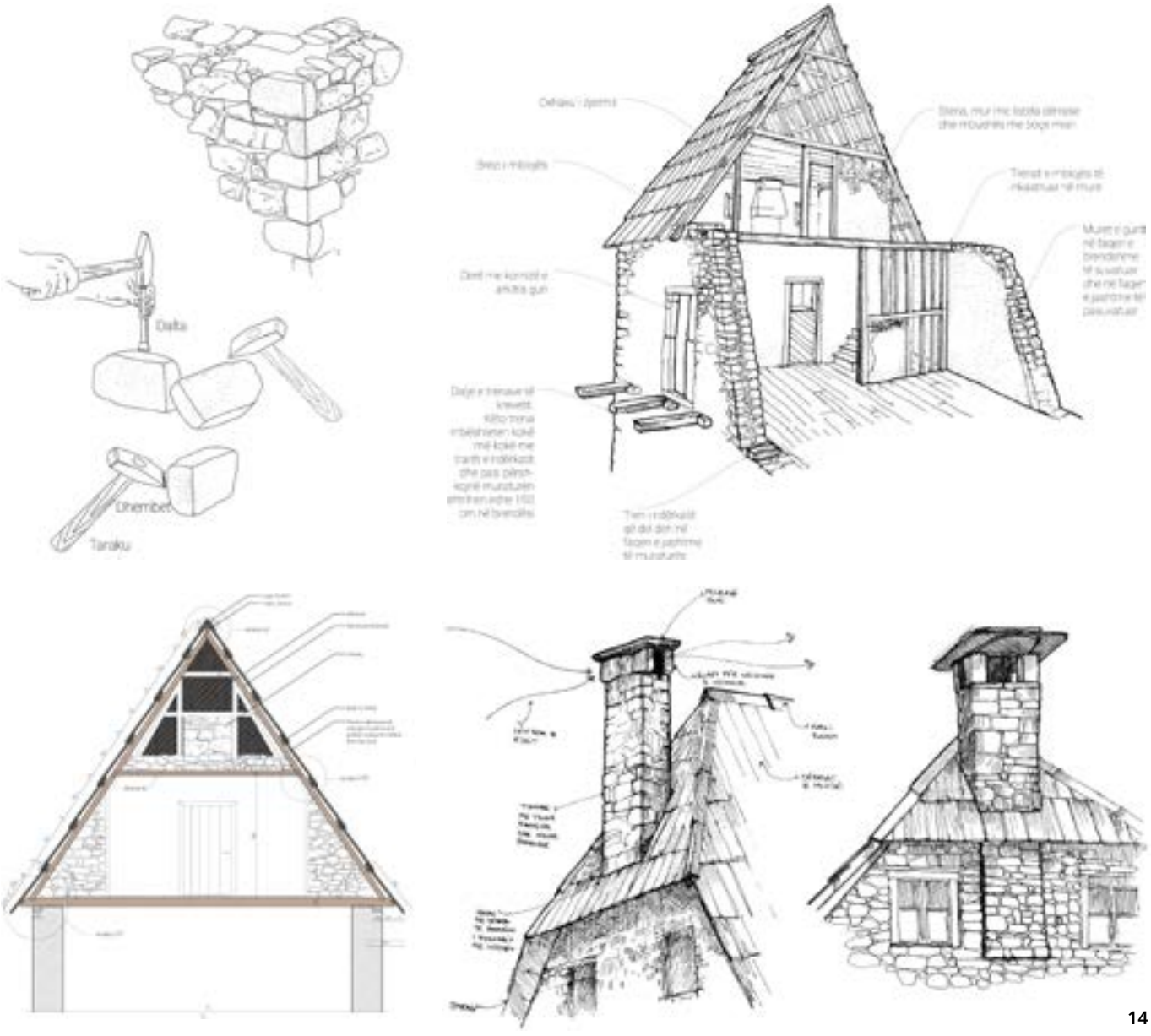

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Our research included a detailed analysis of the typology of the **kulla**, the traditional Albanian tower houses. We studied the various roof designs, noting that they are typically steep, with angles from 45 to 70 degrees (fig. 11).

We also explored the **krevet**, a distinguishing traditional structure that facilitates access from the ground floor – often used for livestock – to the first floor of the kulla (fig. 12-13).

To disseminate our findings, we created illustrated boards showcasing the distinctive features of these traditional homes, including typical wall constructions, architectural plans, roof designs, wooden structures, the configuration of krevet element, and horizontal water mills (fig. 14).

11 a-e. Kulla typology based on roofs. GO2Albania 2018.
12-13. Kulla typology based on *krevet*. GO2Albania 2018.
14. Drawings from the architectural layout plans, timber roofs construction, wall typologies and masonry. GO2Albania 2018.




**14**



15. Workshop "Innovation meets Kulla" on mapping and valorisation of Kullas in Valbona Valley, Albanian Alps 2021.

## Cross-border collaboration for high mountains

Two years ago, we organized a cross-border camp called "Innovation meets Kulla" that brought together students from Kosovo, Montenegro, and Albania supported by the ILUCIDARE project. Participants had different backgrounds, including architecture, cultural heritage, and archaeology, fostering interdisciplinary collaboration. The workshop aimed to contribute to intercultural relations, and to enable exchanges of methodologies, knowledge, and to share the best practices regarding cultural heritage.

The initial phase involved creating a comprehensive database to assess the condition of the Kulla in Valbona valley, mapping and documenting them. As deterioration is high, due to abandonment, it is urgent to valorise this heritage and raise awareness in the local community about their own values and demonstrate effective practices in heritage preservation.

## Discussion

### Umberto

I think that differentiation and similarities are the key point of heritage. How can we maintain unicity in a universal discourse?

I agree when you say that to "declare and restore is not enough". Without communities, without people that enjoy, feel, and use the landscape, architecture, and heritage, our work doesn't have sense.

I also think that the pressure of the construction sector and of touristification is a very important engine driving economic growth, but also threaten the future of heritage.

It's difficult to keep the balance between development and conservation. They are usually contraposed, but I think there is a need to make transformation and conservation live together.

### Eltjana

The impact of globalisation on cultural heritage is multifaceted. While it presents opportunities for cultural exchange and preservation, it also poses significant challenges, such as the homogenisation of culture through loss of diversity and shift in values, and the commercialisation of culture through tourism impact and cultural appropriation. Balancing the benefits and drawbacks of globalisation is essential for protecting and promoting cultural heritage in an interconnected world.

For example, governments can support local communities by providing subsidies or financial assistance in the form of interest-free loans, cash subsidies, or tax reductions specifically aimed at the restoration of traditional houses and practices. Additionally, supporting local NGOs to organise traditional festivals can be beneficial, as these events celebrate and embrace local customs, songs, dances, and other cultural practices. Such initiatives not only preserve cultural heritage but also foster community pride and strengthen social bonds.

Ultimately, by recognising and addressing the challenges posed by globalisation, communities can develop sustainable practices that honour

their cultural heritage while adapting to the evolving global landscape.

**ABG**

I have a question regarding your very detailed code of practice. What was the reception of these guidelines? Obviously, it is not compulsory to build according to those rules, and sometimes you don't even find the local skills which are needed to build today according to the building tradition. On one hand you have a very scrupulous portrait of what used to be, and on the other you have actual building practices which do not necessarily match.

**Eltjana**

Among the primary issues this mountain region faces are ownership rights and application of appropriate procedures. During totalitarianism in Albania (1945-1992), all land was nationalised and became public property. After 1990, the land was not returned to former owners but to new ones, creating a complicated socio-economic conflict. As a result, many mountain residents broke those tule refusing them, and they still lack official certification of the ownership of their land. Without property papers, they cannot apply for construction permits at the municipality, which renders much of their building activity illegal. Despite their expertise in traditional building practices, they face restrictions that hinder their ability to carry out their work.

Unfortunately, decision-makers often lack a deep understanding of a region's traditional architecture, and this is the case of Albanian Alps. Therefore, the guidelines are not tailored to the local community, which possesses invaluable knowledge of how to build in the traditional style, but primarily target architects and officers at the municipality, the Ministry of Culture and the Institute of Monuments who are in charge of such heritage. In our work, we found that nearly 80% of the most significant challenges stem from the actions and decisions of policymakers rather than the local communities themselves. Although public policies are established, they frequently go unenforced.

Moreover, even when local communities do not fully recognise the value of their assets and their relationship to natural capital, it is possible to educate and persuade them about their importance in a relatively short time. By empowering communities with knowledge and resources, we can help them advocate for their rights and work towards sustainable development that honours their cultural heritage.

**ABG**

As you know, I have a personal thing with natural materials. I always wonder how easy it is to use these materials today. I understand it is sometimes possible in restoration projects, because, of course, these are the materials which were used in the original building. It is not the same thing when it comes to use the natural materials in new buildings, even in protection areas such as national parks or similar, where special regulations apply. Also, because natural materials are deemed not to be strong enough in terms of seismic resistance or they are not adapted to comply with energy regulations.

I'm wondering if you have something to tell us about your experience in terms of compatibility between natural materials and current regulations.

**Ionas**

I can answer more from the perspective of what is often described as traditional building techniques, which does in part overlap with the discussion on natural materials.

Even in the simple example of a dry-stone cobble pathway, this question came up immediately. Because we speak about project that are in a way considered 'public works' and so they need to comply with certain regulations – and in Greece these regulations tend to ignore drystone building. So most often, drystone building is not considered as an option, or it would even be considered illegal to build like that. Trying to work in such 'natural' or 'traditional' ways immediately raises doubts and creates problems that you have to deal with in informal ways.

In our projects, what we often do is invite all kinds of formal bodies and institutions (from

the Technical Chamber of Greece, to Ministries, to local and regional authorities, and son on), and demonstrate that even though what we are doing might not be entirely in accordance with regulations, it still is something that they all agree with – and thus we also open the discussion about changing the regulations that are currently in place.

Yet one should also keep in mind that, this rigidity of regulations and standards is often coupled with the locals' affect for good old concrete.
So, it's a double problem in our view: on the one hand, it's about legislation and institutional frameworks. On the other, it's about the everyday popular culture (that should not be idealised). The cultural habits by which we build have been shaped by ongoing processes of industrialisation and modernization.
From our small experience it is certainly possible to use both traditional techniques and natural materials. There's not really a question about if such ways of building can adequately perform, but there are biases against them, both at 'high' institutional levels, and at the broader levels of society. To the extent that these biases are confronted, research can further advance, and specific questions can be addressed, and we can see how certain materials or techniques operate. Just to give one example, one member of our group, N. Meimaroglou does his PhD (Meimaroglou and Mouzakis 2019, 27–39) on the mechanical behaviour of earthen materials and has participated in laboratory research regarding the earthquake response of earth block masonry.

**Eltjana**
As I mentioned, it is essential for authorities to develop clear guidelines on how to effectively preserve the region's built heritage. Without clear benchmarks or regulations, builders and architects may struggle to determine which traditional methods and materials are appropriate for preserving the cultural integrity of structures.
For local inhabitants, the challenge lies primarily in the costs associated with using natural materials for construction. Building with traditional, natural materials is significantly more expensive than using modern industrial materials like concrete. This cost disparity encompasses not only the price of the materials themselves but also labour, which is approximately three times more expensive than for industrial counterparts. Conversations with local communities have revealed that economic concerns are the most pressing issue.
Natural materials, and particularly local resources such as timber, are both costly and increasingly scarce. In the Albanian Alps, traditional roofs were historically made from red pine, a durable species capable of lasting up to sixty years. However, the availability of this wood has dwindled, making it prohibitively expensive. Currently, most wood used in construction is imported, predominantly from Sweden, as local natural resources are no longer sufficient for large-scale supply.

**Ionas**
There are deep contradictions running through legal frameworks in Greece. When it comes to concepts of protection and preservation, these become more pronounced. When one wishes to build or repair a structure in a traditional settlement in Greece, on the one hand they are obliged to conform with a series of formal requirements and standards regarding, for example, morphological issues; on the other, they are not allowed to extract stone from the quarries that these very communities historically used to build their edifices, and thus they have to import stone from distant places. So, there you have a clear schism between the protection of the natural environment and the protection of cultural heritage. And you can't have both if you think like that, it is either the one or the other. Of course, what we suggest is not a return to extractivist practices of the previous decades but rather, a local kind of production, local small-scale extraction for communal purposes.
Such changes are the ones we are advocating for in Greece.

**ABG**

I think this is relevant. You have spotted most of the really problematic issues which appear when you try to address this problem. It is a multifaceted thing: the cultural bias, the rules, the cost, the skills.

All of these things are really hindering the actual continuous use of natural materials in construction.

You are perfectly right when you stress, Ionas, the fact that there is a contradiction between sustainability goals on one hand, and other formal regulations on the other.

I'm totally with you, Eltjana, when you stress the fact that availability should be checked, because if we label a certain material as the local material which should be properly used in a certain area, and for some reason that material is not available anymore in that area, what are we speaking about?

Maybe red pine was the proper material for shingles. For some reason this is not available anymore and maybe we consider using some other timber species or we can resort to other materials, provided they are reasonably compatible.

I would provoke you by saying that maybe a vernacular building is not necessarily the one which is similar to the built tradition of the past: it is whatever building is built in one spot, making use of the locally available resources of that spot.

**Ionas**

I would agree. I believe we need to both broaden and examine more carefully terms such as 'vernacular' and 'traditional' and to keep on interrogating notions of authenticity (which can certainly prove problematic). I like it when you say "reasonably compatible" because such a wording can encompass a variety of concerns, from technical issues to contextual and cultural questions. With all the complexity it brings forth, it seems like a very useful concept to work with.

# 4.11

まるやま組

# MARUYAMA GUMI



# In search of contemporary hyaku-sho in Noto peninsula (Japan)



Hagino Kiichiro

## Tokyo-Philadelphia-Noto: why and how I moved to a rural village

I was born, raised and studied architecture in Tokyo. It is full of concrete and devoid of greenery. At the same time, it is a big city bursting with stimuli and energy.
When I was a student, I was more interested in Western modern architecture than in Japanese traditional architecture. I was thinking to go to the United States to study architecture, however my mentor, Professor Kōyama Hisao, suggested me to wait until I found a reason to study abroad. So, I worked for Professor Kōyama as a staff of his studio and an assistant at the university for several years.
Finally in 1993, I was lucky to get a Fulbright scholarship which brought me to the University of Pennsylvania. I was very surprised that lots of historic buildings are actively used in and around Philadelphia. I thought the United States were a very new country compared to Japan, where we spent our daily life in a completely post-war built environment.
As I was excited to live in a community with history, I stayed after I got my degree and worked for a designated internship period. However, due to the immigration rules related to my scholarship, I was forced to move back at the end of 1996.

Back in Tokyo, I suffered from a severe reverse culture shock. I felt strange that everyone dressed in black suits and kept quiet in the crowded trains. And everybody seemed to share the same opinion, vision and fashion.
It took several years to me to finally understand and appreciate the cooperative attitude based on the tradition, skill and pride of Japanese people.
For example, I met many Japanese craftsmen, like carpenters and plasterers who are very cooperative with each other and rich in traditional skills (fig. 2-3). Once I noticed this, I felt ashamed about how little I knew Japan and its





1. Osaki Shoemon urushi dozō project, passing the mud balls and applying them to the round bamboo wall. Hagino Kiichiro 2007.
2. Japanese plaster craftsmanship: trained, skilled, cooperative. Hagino Kiichiro 1999.
3. Paper maker, as well as farmer, in a rural area of Noto. Hagino Kiichiro 2000.

4. Shōfūsō, Japanese house and garden in Philadelphia. Hagino Kiichiro 2003.



traditions. I finally noticed the value of Japanese tradition and techniques. It took a very long way to become aware of the value of the culture of my own country.

My wife and I became interested in Japan's rural areas which are full of traditional and natural resources. We asked suggestion about a rural area where my wife, Yuki, could learn the Japanese traditional paper making to an American friend who had been living in Tokyo for a long time and owned a Japanese crafts store. She kindly introduced us to people in Noto. Then, we quickly visited Noto, rented a vacant farmhouse and stayed there for a couple of months in the summer of 2000.

Noto is a place where one can find something that today's Japan has lost: *satoyama*, which means the harmony between people and nature, and is characterised by various features such as agriculture, biodiversity, and traditional culture. Many activities take place in *minka* (old traditional houses) and storehouses.

In that period, I started my own practice and designed several houses in Tokyo. I always asked my clients to work together on each project. I was also a part-time lecturer at the Meiji University and assigned students the task of building real stuff like chairs or a small pavilion, not just making drawings or models. Actually I am still assigning similar tasks at the University of Toyama. I think it is important to teach how to design using natural materials, to think with your hands and make with your bodies. We also did surveys of old houses and studied the revitalisation of vacant areas in small cities.

Overcoming the reverse culture shock, I could enjoy our life in Japan and learn traditional techniques. However, I got a job offer in United States, so in 2001-2004 I moved back to Pennsylvania and worked at an architectural office outside Philadelphia doing many renovations. During this second time in the United States my lifestyle was totally different.

I tried to introduce the Japanese culture to the Americans. I became a board member of the preservation of the Shōfūsō, the Japanese house and garden designed by Junzō Yoshimura in 1953 (fig. 4). It was originally built in the courtyard of the MoMA in New York, and after the exhibition it was moved to Fairmount Park in Philadelphia.

In summertime my family returned to Japan and my wife made *shoji* paper. Once back in Philadelphia, we offered a workshop on how replace it at Shōfūsō. We also joined an exhibition introducing Japanese paper.

One turning point occurred when I turned forty years old. I thought that we should settle down somewhere where I could build my own house

using natural materials. Also, I thought it would be better to raise my children in Japan so that they can have a Japanese identity: we decided to move to the Noto Peninsula, where we had spent a couple of summers.

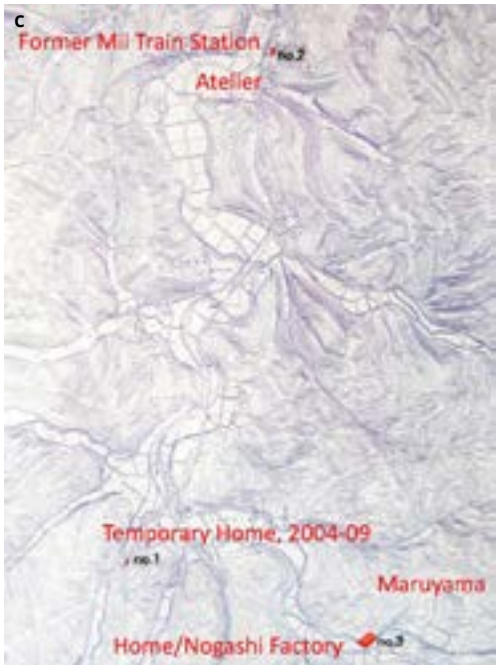
At first, we considered buying an old house and renovating it, but it is very hard to buy a house around there. Even the vacant houses of people who have moved to a big city have a small graveyard inside the property and a small family altar: people come back once or twice a year to pray for their ancestors. Due to this difficulty, we decided to self-build a new house.

Even buying property is difficult: many people don't want to sell their land to people they don't know. A former schoolteacher that I knew very well helped us to buy a property, acting as a contact between us and the community. We were lucky to find a good site just outside the village, with a natural spring. Behind the site, to the east, there is a small round hill, Maruyama. It is a very nice spot (fig. 5a).













5 a-d. The Noto Peninsula and the location of the Haginos house and office. a. T-worldatlas, b. Google Maps, c. Geospatial Information Authority of Japan, d. Hagino Kiichiro 2004.

6. The rented house. Hagino Kiichiro 2004.
7. The traditional spring. Hagino Kiichiro 2004.
8. Hagino atelier in front of the former Mii station. Hagino Kiichiro 2005.
9. Entry of atelier, always working on some renovations. Hagino Kiichiro2005.
10. Cutting the trees from the site to be used in the construction of the Haginos house. Hagino Yuki 2004.
11. Students from Tokyo helped in the construction works. Hagino Kiichiro 2006.
12. Maquette of the Haginos house. Hagino Kiichiro 2005.


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Until the new house was completed, we lived in a rented old house in the same village (fig. 6). We renovated it with our kids so that we could spend there a few years, from 2004 until 2008.
In that area there was no city water system at that time; each house is located at the foot of the mountain and has its own spring water, that is pumped in a basin inside the house (fig. 7).

We tried to enjoy the inconvenience, however we encountered many severe initiations: we had to learn how deal with damp, cold, snow, mould, insects, centipedes, and vipers.

Before moving there, we had only visited Noto in summertime. We were very surprised by the winter: it is quite cold, with lots of snow, and we suffered from it. There is a big difference between visiting and living: living there, you understand a place more deeply.

I also rented a vacant house/store in front of the former Mii train station to use it as the office of Hagino Atelier (fig. 8-9). The service had been discontinued in 2002 and most of the houses and stores were vacant. Summers in Noto are very humid. It happened very often that the footings of old houses were

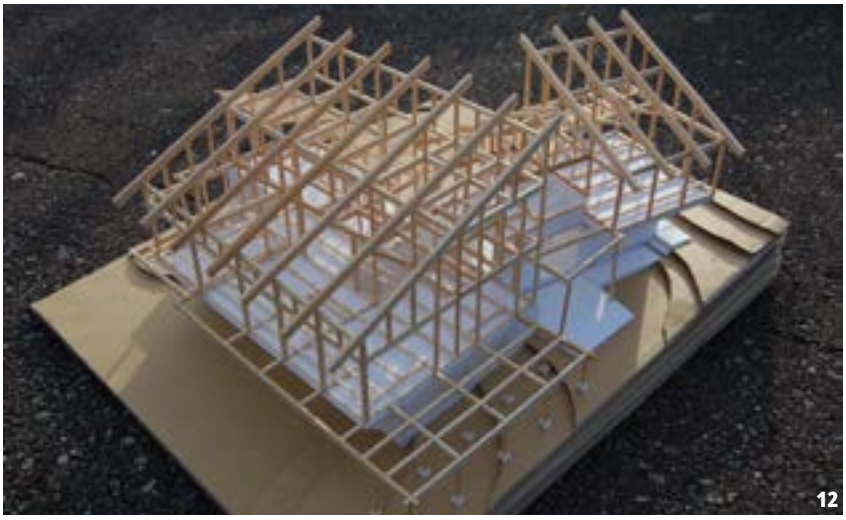
damaged and needed renovation. So, we did frequent maintenance, but this experience taught us the Japanese traditional construction.

It took much longer to build our new house in the forest. First, I had to cut the trees.
Thirty to fifty years ago the former landlord had planted more than 100 cedar and cypress trees and then did not take care of them. I decided to fell them, except broadleaf trees along the edge. Local friends who were professional loggers helped me (fig. 10).
At the beginning, I tried to work all by myself, but I soon became aware of my limitations. I was really impressed by local friends who could fell trees, do concrete works, carpentry as well as farming. So, I hired a local contractor for the concrete works and a local carpenter for carpentry work, and asked them to teach us and to allow students, family and I work together with them as much as possible. For example, I asked my daughters to peel the bark off the trunks and asked friends who taught architecture in Tokyo to send their students (fig. 11).

Forest industry used to be one of the strongest in Noto but declined about thirty years ago. One of the reasons why I moved to Noto was that lumber such as *hiba* (*Thujopsis dolabrata*) and cedar were easily available. So, I tried to use lumber I felled at the site as well as other local lumber for my house (fig. 12).


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## Lessons from renovation workshops: learning from traditional architecture and craftsmen

*Dozō* (storages with thick mud walls) were originally used for fire protection and used for storage of important items, as well as rice and miso (fermented Japanese bean paste). But many *dozō* in Wajima are part of small factories producing *urushi* lacquerware. Wajima is the most famous area of traditional Japanese craftsmanship of *urushi* lacquerware (fig. 13).

13. The process of making urushi lacquerware. Hagino Kiichiro 2007.
14. Earthquake damage in Touge, Monzen, Wajima, Hagino Kiichiro March 2007.

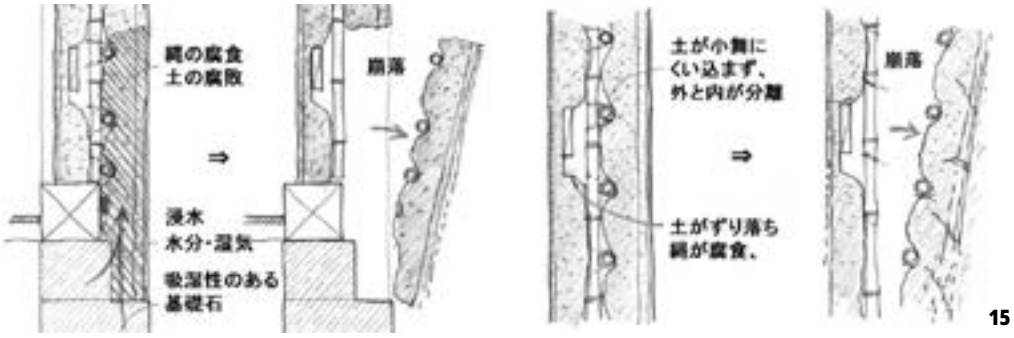






The sap of the *urushi* tree (*Toxicodendron vernicifluum*), a natural lacquer, gets harder when humidity is high. The *dozō* were originally used for applying the finishing coat of *urushi* lacquer, since humidity and temperature are stable inside their thick walls obtained superimposing many layers of mud.
Even before the earthquake, Wajima and the surrounding fishing and mountain villages had serious problems of depopulation. After the bubble economy burst in the early 1990s and due to the modernisation of manufacturing equipment this industry has declined, and a lack of appreciation is evident of both Wajima lacquerware industry and the buildings where this traditional craft was performed. Some *urushi* craftsmen moved to the modern facilities and some others closed their business, so that many traditional *dozō* buildings were abandoned.

In the middle of the construction of our house, on March 25th, 2007 there was a big earthquake in Noto. Even our house was a little damaged, but structurally it was ok.
After tidying up the temporary house, my atelier, and our house under construction, as an architect, I wanted to help to restore traditional buildings in Wajima that suffered the biggest damage. In April 2007 we made a survey. We found that many *dozō* had been damaged along with traditional houses. The earthquake severely damaged the *dozō*, and the city of Wajima and the Japanese government decided to allocate subsidies for demolition and removal of buildings assessed as “half-destroyed” or above. For this reason, many people decided to destroy them – more than 600 *dozō* and storages in Wajima were demolished.




15. Detachment of portions of the earth wall. On the left: caused by rising damp from the foundations; on the right: caused by lack of cohesion between the inner and outer part of the wall. Drawing by Hagino Kiichiro 2007.

We decided to form a team of professionals who worked together to renovate *dozō*, and founded the *Dozō* Culture Study Group NPO (輪島土蔵文化研究会). After the survey, we concluded that we could restore *dozō* by repairing the damaged wooden structure, weaving the bamboo wattle and applying the daub to the wall. It might take time, cost and effort but we could rely on many craftsmen and volunteers.

Some of the wooden structures had tilted due to moisture and termites. The most notable damage was falling earthen walls (fig. 15). The reasons were: low viscosity of soil; poorly weaved wooden sticks and ropes; disconnected interior and exterior earth layers; insufficient drying during construction; erosion due to water and moisture.

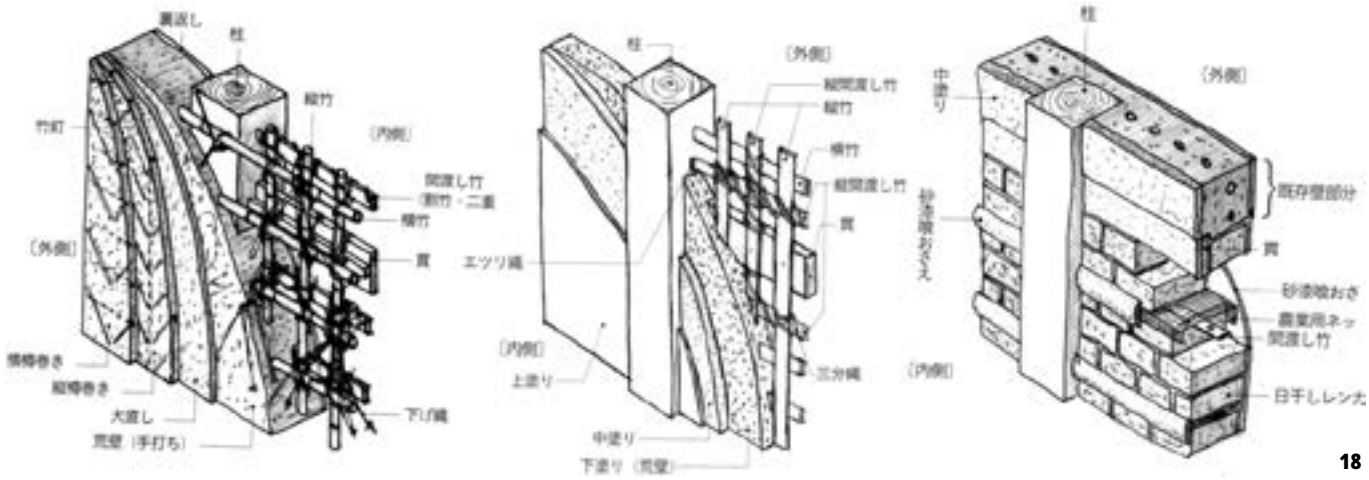
I personally did not agree with demolishing, but I helped to demolish several *dozō*. Through this experience we could learn how *dozō* were made by hands and bodies. We salvaged the wooden posts and beams that would inevitably be wasted otherwise, and stored the material to be reused later (fig. 16).

Since many abandoned *dozō* started to be demolished using public money and many people thought it was hard to restore damaged *dozō* with mud walls fallen, we needed to hurry to demonstrate that *dozō* could be restored. Also, we thought some *dozō* could be rebuilt not with mud walls but as storehouses with wooden walls, making use of the reclaimed wooden structures of thick zelkova or chestnut posts and beams which we would not be able to obtain today. First, we searched for good soil with enough viscosity, collecting and examining different local soils. Builders now buy the material, but traditionally people just picked up the soil around the sites. Then, we sourced straw from one hundred old tatami mat thrown away from demolished houses, that we finely chopped and mixed with mud to daub the walls (fig. 17).





16. Extracting materials that can be reused from the demolition of a dozō in Wajima. Hagino Kiichiro 2007.
17. Cutting the old tatami straw into chops to be mixed with mud for plasters. Hagino Kiichiro 2007.




18. Mud walls typology: on the left the traditional thick solution with round bamboo; in the centre a thinner mud wall like traditional houses using split bamboo; on the right infilling of collapsed walls with sun-dried mud bricks. Hagino Kiichiro.
19. The bamboo sub-structure is tied with straw ropes. Hagino Kiichiro 2007.
20. Some straw ropes are left hanging from the first coat to help supporting the next layer of earth mix. Hagino Kiichiro 2007.
21. Applying another layer of mud. Hagino Kiichiro 2008.
22. Building a wall with split bamboo wattle. Hagino Kiichiro 2007.
23. Handmade preparation of the earth sun-dried mud bricks during a workshop. Hagino Kiichiro 2007.
24. To stabilise the wall, cut bamboos and synthetic net for agriculture are laid between the brick courses. Hagino Kiichiro 2007.

In Japan the number of traditional mud buildings has been drastically declining, so as the number of plaster craftsmen (*sakan*). Today, most plasterers are working with cement, or ready mixed materials, not with natural earth. Luckily enough, one of the most skilled and famous *sakan*, Kuzumi Akira, kindly offered to help our rehabilitation projects, came to Noto many times, and directed the works according to the traditional techniques. Master Kuzumi proposed three different solutions to demonstrate the variations of *dozō* rehabilitation (fig. 18). Many plaster craftsmen from all over Japan were interested in seeing Kuzumi work and came to Noto to volunteer in our project. Next to craftsmen, architects, urban development consultants, people who work in various fields of architecture, urushi craftsmen, sake brewers, and owners of *dozō* participated. Students and various other people from Japan and overseas joined as volunteers.

We held several workshops to prepare and practice in June and July 2007. We mixed soil, straw, and water and shed this mixture for a couple of months to make a stronger wall (fig. 20). Then, we started three projects in August.

In Osaki Shoemon *urushi dozō* project (大崎庄右ェ門塗師蔵) we used the traditional technique of thick mud walls made of round bamboo (fig. 18-left). After removing the damaged mud wall, we weaved the bamboo wattle using natural materials only: bamboo and straw rope (fig. 19). These grids can last for more than one hundred years when embedded in an earthen wall. Then we made mud balls and applied them to the wall in many layers: from the first coat some of the ropes were left hanging out to ensure the connection with the next coat and obtain a thicker wall (fig. 20-21).

In Tsutaya *urushi dozō* project (蔦屋漆器店塗師蔵) we built thin earthen infills on split bamboo wattles (fig. 18-centre, fig. 22).

In Furukubo *dozō* project (古窪邸前蔵) we used a solution uncommon in Japan: we infilled only the collapsed part of the wall with more than two thousand handmade sun-dried mud bricks (fig. 18-right, fig. 23). In between the bricks we put some bamboos to reinforce the wall (fig. 24).

After the renovation we had a party and a concert.


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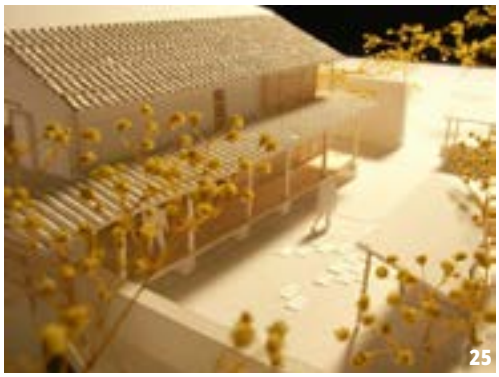

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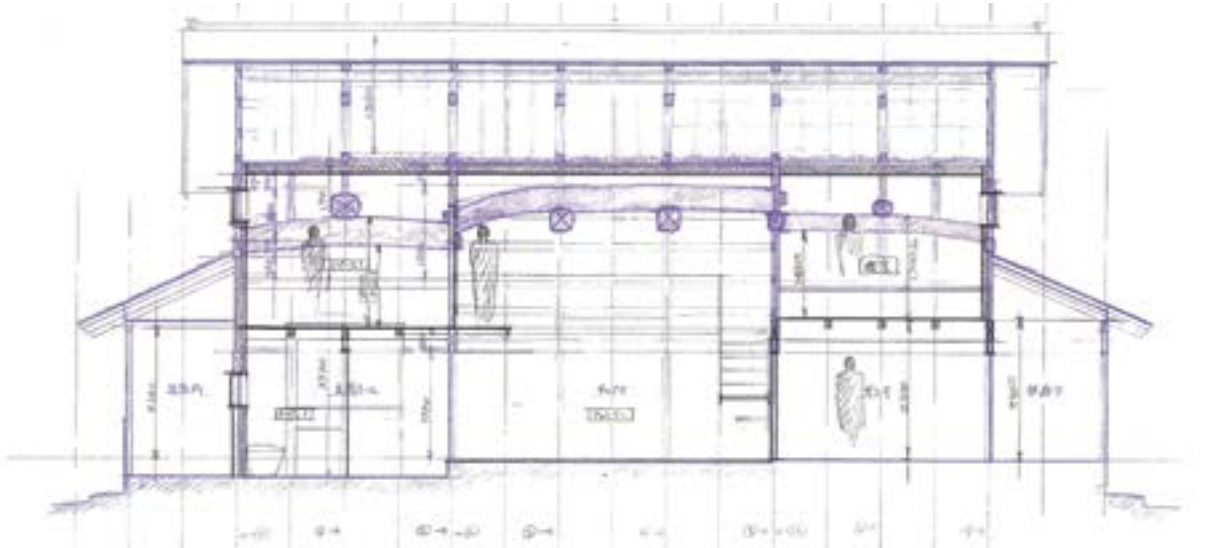
25. Maquette of the workshop on the renovation of a *dozō* to be used as a site to learn the earthen techniques. Hagino Kiichiro 2007; 2008.
26. Vertical section of the renovation of an old house in Hakui. Drawing by Hagino Kiichiro 2013.


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We got public funding and support which was not enough but we performed several renovations because many people worked for free. We accomplished the rehabilitation of several earth warehouses through intensive work in the first years and repeated work in another few years. Our goal was not only to recovery the buildings (providing advice, information, and support), but also to preserve, rediscover, and renew the *urushi* culture, as a core asset for the future development of Wajima and Noto.
Moreover, renovating *dozō* could be a good opportunity to pass down traditional techniques to the plasterers, providing an opportunity to practice them.

Besides three rehabilitation projects started in 2007, the *Dozō* Culture Study Group worked on several other projects. We proposed to rent *dozō* on the verge of demolition for free of charge for ten years, and in return, we would work on rehabilitation using funds the group would collect. We held workshops with architectural students from all over Japan and from the United States to design these *dozō*.
For example, the Nanao Residence *dozō* (七尾邸土蔵) was a former *urushi dozō*; students designed its conversion into a gallery with a kitchen and a community restaurant, based on the theme of lacquerware and food (fig. 25). The rehabilitation took place and the *dozō* was restored with thick mud walls but because of the limited funds we could get, we used Nanao Residence *dozō* as a base camp for plasterers and students to stay and eat when they came to Wajima for workshops until 2017.

The Amano Residence *dozō* (天野邸土蔵) was used as a training centre for plasterers during rehabilitation workshops until 2017.


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27. Foundation reinforcement, level adjustment, and footing. Hagino Kiichiro 2013
28 Exterior wall sheathing and insulation. Hagino Kiichiro 2013.
29. Structural reinforcement Hagino Kiichiro 2014.
30. Finishing workshops. Hagino Kiichiro 2014.

What I have described so far are rehabilitation works after the Noto earthquake of 2007. One reason I moved to Noto is to hold workshops for renovations and rehabilitations, however I had no preparation before the workshops after the 2007 earthquake. There are many points I think I should have organised and take records more precisely. However, it was a great experience to learn traditional Japanese architecture and to get acquainted with many special craftsmen with whom I have been often working together since then. Besides the *dozō* projects, I have worked on many renovation and rehabilitation projects as an architect in Noto and other areas.
For example, I worked on the renovation of a traditional house in Hakui in 2014. The house was built more than 150 years ago and renovated several times (fig. 26).

Originally, the client's family was thinking to demolish the old house and build a new one. But I examined the house and explained the value and stability of the house full of good old materials, and proposed that we could turn that dark and cold space into a comfortable, warm space. The owner decided to preserve and renovate the building while solving these problems. Priority was given to thermal insulation, light colouring, and cost. Renovating an old house needs understanding and motivation from the owner's side.
In this project, there was no need to apply for permission because the site was outside of the designated urban planning area and there was no expansion – indeed, the final surface area was reduced. I just checked the structural performance by wall calculation, and reinforced it (fig. 27-30).

## Learning from living in a rural area: "designing not architecture but lifestyle"

In 2008 I resumed working at the construction of my house, that had stopped after the earthquake, and many workshop attendees came to help. We started living there at the beginning of 2009 (fig. 31).

After the designation of Globally Important Agricultural Heritage System (GIAHS), the local government spent a lot of money to promote tourism in Noto. And many souvenirs, sweets, and foods with the GIAHS label have been put on sale for tourists. I think this kind of tourism is superficial.

In Japan, it is hard to make a rural area's economy run. It is hard to earn a living just working on the renovation and rehabilitation of old folk houses and *dozō* earth warehouses. So, I also taught at universities, such as the Kanazawa College of Art and the Kanazawa Institute of Technology; I am now teaching at the University of Toyama in Takaoka, one and a half hours' drive away from my village. Having a position at the University gives me a chance to do research and work with young people. Making a living in a rural area is difficult. However, it is not true that the quality of life is lower than in a big city where big money circulates. Life in a rural village can be very fulfilling and rich, as it allows you



31. View from the main room of the Haginos house. Hagino Kiichiro 2009.






32. The rice-planting flowers. Hagino Kiichiro 2010.
33. The different viewpoints regarding the rice-planting flowers. Hagino Kiichiro 2010.

to have a larger house and even own some land, eat fresh, seasonal food both from the mountain and the ocean, drink pure water, breathe clean air and be immersed in a beautiful scenery. The value of life is not measured by money. This point was also made by the Japanese economist, Motani Kōsuke in his book *Satoyama Capitalism* (2013). He explains that *satoyama* has a lot of potential for a future, sustainable life. The Japanese perception of nature is based on creating harmony between nature and human lifestyle. In *satoyama*, local old people do not look passively at nature, but work in it and make use of the natural resources that surround their villages. They live by exchanging goods, hunting, and gathering food, helping each other in the community and benefiting from useful traditional wisdom. They work very hard to cooperate with nature. It's very interesting to see the old people working and knowing what they need to do in each season: for instance, in spring they cut the branches before the new sprouts come out; the cut branches are used for tying the beans in the field. Nothing is just for one purpose; all things are related to each other.

As a resident of a rural village, I think it is important that the value of *satoyama* is not assessed through the same criteria applied to cities. We must re-evaluate the real values of rural villages.

I'm trying to search the future lifestyle looking through the old people's lifestyle in this area, but of course it is hard to maintain. One negative thing is that people with traditional wisdom are getting old and every year several of them pass away; in my village the population is now about seventy.

We started researching the local plants with an ecologist researcher at the Kanazawa University who is interested in nature and the *satoyama*, but we understood that it is as much important to communicate with the local people and learn from different viewpoints.

For example, we analysed a certain flower (fig. 32), and many viewpoints emerged: a researcher was interested in the scientific species; one of my friends wanted to know if the plant was edible; my wife, an artist and designer, was interested in colours and shapes; local farmers shared their traditional knowledge regarding that species (fig. 33) – they call it the "rice-planting flower" because they used to plant the rice when that flower is in bloom (nowadays they do it a bit earlier). One of my friends, a young farmer that moved from the Tokyo area to create an organic farm, continues planting according to the traditional way and schedule.


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This is the kind of issues Team Maruyama focused on (the Team took its name from Maruyama, the hill near my house). The activities of Team Maruyama have been various. Originally, we made surveys with small groups, but we decided to extend them to twenty to thirty people, with different backgrounds and from different places – from the village, from Wajima and other cities of the Noto Peninsula, from Kanazawa, but also from Tokyo and foreign countries. There are local farmers, ecologists, biologists, architects, teachers, sake brewers, public officers, housewives, Shinto priests, etc.; of any age, from children to over eighty. We try to learn by exchanging different viewpoints and ideas.

We organised activities on the second or third Sundays of each month: in the morning people got together in front of my house. We did some agricultural work and then walked together around the Maruyama sharing what we found and doing plant surveys (fig. 34-35). We picked up plants and make a kind of herbarium (fig. 36). We tried to study plants and enjoy them through various viewpoints: for instance, those of an ecologist from Kanazawa University who knows about the scientific aspects, and of a local farmer who knows the use of each plant (e.g. medicinal) and the history of their name. We had been selected as one of the monitoring sites of the Japanese Ministry of the Environment.

After this, the house was opened to collective cooking, emphasising the use of local and seasonal food. People from outside contributed bringing food they had prepared (fig. 37-38).

Sometimes a forestry specialist came to talk, together with a local forester who knew about local trees (fig. 39). During this learning, they were not the only teachers – everybody shared information.

We thought walking and eating together was good way to communicate. Food must have been a key element too.

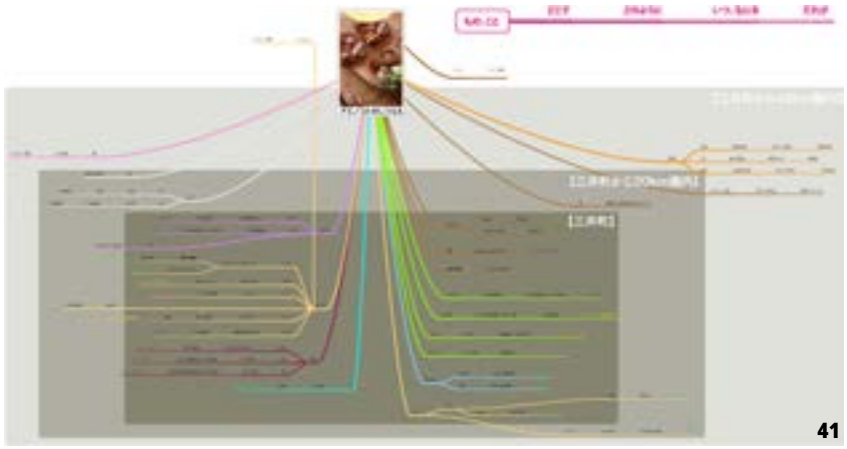
My architectural office staff was also invited to farm and make soy sauce. We had lot of things to learn from the local people and from various activities.

We made a kind of calendar book of the lifestyle of this area (fig. 40); it shows which plants grow and what people do in each season. We tried to visually investigate local life and knowledge.

34. Talking, finding, picking, watching together. Hagino Kiichiro 2014.
35. Working together. Hagino Kiichiro 2014.
36. 11-12 Survey, encyclopaedia of living plants. Hagino Kiichiro 2014.
37, 38. Lunch at open kitchen, cooking and eating together. Hagino Kiichiro 2016; 2012.
39. Learning, teaching each other and sharing. Hagino Kiichiro 2016.
40. Calendar of local life & biodiversity: rediscovering lifestyle with down-to-earth research. Hagino Yuki & Team Maruyama 2014.



**40**



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41. Diagram showing where food and supply for Aenokoto come from. Hagino Yuki 2012.
42. Visiting the lumber yard during the Satoyama Local Education program. Hagino Kiichiro 2017.
43. Visit to a sawmill. Hagino Kiichiro 2017.
44. Visit to a construction site. Hagino Kiichiro 2017.
45. Learning about the area from the elderly: Map of local house-family names of Ichinosaka Village. Hagino Atelier 2011.

We learned also from the traditional customs: rice farmers pray the god of rice fields, and they invite invisible spirits to spend the winter in their homes. We are trying to do something similar, learn from the villagers and pick up their own lifestyle. Diverse people come to pray and communicate like a big family.

My wife studied from where our food and supply for Aenokoto – a unique traditional agricultural ritual, expressing thanks to spirits of the rice field – come from. In fig. 41 the dark grey ones are from inside the township, the middle grey from a 20 km radius, the light grey from 40 km. Most of our ingredients are local. This diagram shows how we live with both feet on the ground.

We also offered education for local kids. In our village the primary school was very small (it just counted with approximately twenty pupils from first to sixth grade). It was easy to move around the village with a small bus and to fit such a program in the school's curriculum. Children were closely tied as if they were siblings, and elder children were taking care of the younger very well.
In the Satoyama Local Education program, we set themes for each year.

The area used to be famous for forestry, which was the main industry in our village until thirty or forty years ago. Recently, nobody takes care of the forest. In 2016-17 we asked local old people to teach us about the traditional wisdom of forestry. We proposed different ways to focus on the forest industry to the pupils: we visited a plantation of new trees, a lumber yard, a sawmill, and one of my timber construction sites (fig.42-44). Local elderly people demonstrated how to plant trees, cut branches, fell trees, and carry logs.

In 2019 the theme was traditional local food. Learning from local elderly people, children picked up edible wild plants and prepared pickles. We tried fishing at the creek with a traditional technique, and we cooked the traditional meal for the harvest festival.

In my village all people have their own family names of course, but people call each other using different names, that are local house-family names. In Edo Period they did not have family names – they used the name of the house instead –, and villagers are still calling each other in the old style. For example, the name "Nizo" comes from some ancestor's first name Nizō（仁蔵）. "Kōya" from an ancestor's occupation, the traditional indigo dyer (Konya, 紺屋). Some descend from immigrants from Manchuria, so they are called "Manshu" (満州).

Newcomers like me cannot understand these names, so we made a map of the traditional house-family names with the village kids (fig. 45).

Team Maruyama has been active from 2010 to 2020, when Covid limited our operation.



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46. Nogashi Trail, eating local and seasonal sweets around Maruyama. Hagino Kiichiro 2020.
47. Nogashi Trail, eating sweets while watching the nature around. Hagino Kiichiro 2022.

In 2020 we started our new challenge, “Nogashi Factory and Café”. Based on the activities of Team Maruyama, my wife learned making Japanese sweets using azuki beans and local natural ingredients gathered around Maruyama in each season. We renovated our house making a new kitchen and sometimes we open our family space to café customers. Once a month, we offer the “Nogashi Trail”: we walk around Maruyama and outdoors we eat seasonal Japanese sweets made from wild plants (fig. 46-48).

To conclude, in Japan there are many differences in architecture and lifestyle between big cities and small villages, like the one where I live. The views of insiders and outsiders are totally different. People in the village still see me as a foreigner. Modern aspects coexist with traditional ones. There are many kinds of layers of this diversity – it is an interesting field to explore.
Working with architecture implies not just understanding through words, ideas and concepts, but also through forms, concrete examples, illustrations and actions. I think is important to make everyone understand with illustrations and examples, not just using the head but also the five senses and bodies: by visiting, seeing, touching, and living.

**Addendum**

On January 1st, 2024 we had another earthquake in Noto, much stronger than that of 2007.
My atelier collapsed and many *dozō* we rehabilitated after the earthquake in 2007 were severely damaged again. The damage is huge and widespread all over Noto.
It seems that it might take many years to recover, and population has already declined.

However, I found that the local village where we live is resilient – it does not rely on city water but mountain spring water, temporary toilets were self-built, the community cooked and lived together.
Making use of our experience from the previous earthquake and from Satoyama lifestyle, we will tackle this huge disaster and try to turn this difficulty into an opportunity to establish a new local vernacular lifestyle and a new community based on tradition.

48. Nogashi Factory, explaining how to make Japanese sweets using local ingredients. Hagino Kiichiro 2020.





5

# ROUND TABLES

Fundación Altiplano 2018

# 5.1

# LOCAL COMMUNITY



# The (fruitful?) dialogue of inside and outside



Andrea Bocco

This panel is about the dualisms bottom-up/top-down, and outside/inside. I am concerned about how recovery initiatives are experienced by local communities.
We have often noticed that those who first value a certain traditional heritage are not those who live in the area, but those who observe it from the outside.
Yona Friedman said, with the lucid intelligence that characterised him, "the 'beauty' of a building [is] what an outsider who does not use the building sees"(Friedman 1978, 38). A memorable sentence. Friedman meant that the inhabitant first and foremost cares that the building works well, that it meets their needs. The attribute "beautiful" is typically conferred by someone else, who that building did not build and does not inhabit.
Not that people have done things randomly, without a sense of harmony; but the aesthetic purpose for beauty's sake is something just the rich can afford, and all in all is quite recent, compared to the use value of the built heritage and everyday things in general.
This is the history of many districts that have had an extraordinary success in terms of image: for example, the success of Chianti and Tuscany in general began centuries ago, and should be ascribed to English travellers, who "discovered" that those places were "beautiful". Now even we Italians take it for granted that they are.
The founder of the Canova Association is in fact an American, who was seduced by Ossola's stone houses. Mind you, Santino Langé's book already existed (1989). But neither Santino Langé was born in Crevoladossola.
Therefore we can recognise a perhaps fundamental, or in any case important, role of the external look in the valorisation of the lesser heritage; a look that can recognise an aesthetic value also for ideological reasons. It is not a role to be underestimated, because beauty is one of the most powerful driving forces behind a subsequent enhancement intervention.
(By the way, the word "beauty" was academically taboo until yesterday or the day before yesterday, and perhaps still today it is not much admitted in intellectual circles. But if you scratch under those more convoluted formulas that describe a building such as, for example, "Property of historical/architectural documentary value", underneath it there is someone who said "wow! how cool!" But intellectuals cannot say "how cool" in public and even less in a scientific publication – they have to use an exoteric jargon.)
So I am ready to recognise a utility in the outsider's gaze.

But it is not that insiders do not realise the value of their own heritage because they are ignorant of the evolution of cultural thought and perhaps of aesthetic

fashions – it is because they often associate that heritage with backwardness, fatigue, poverty. At a certain point of their history, they need some kind of social redemption that passes through the refusal of a certain heritage.
If we rich Italians are not in that condition, it is because we have already gone through it. In passing through it we have devastated our landscape and destroyed thousands of buildings.
It seems to me that this phenomenon has an undulatory motion. It has a peak moment in which traditional buildings are rejected, and one or two generations later someone will complain: "What has my father done? What did my grandfather do? How could he knock down that wonderful traditional house and build a concrete one next door?"
In other countries the destructive wave is coming now. When an outside group, although armed with the best intentions, recognises a value in a heritage system and comes to restore it, there is a serious risk. Often the attitude of these people towards the locals is basically "You don't understand a thing, we are the ones who recognise the value of your stuff". The insiders, for their part, often don't understand what the outsiders are doing, and point out their arrogance: "What do they want from us? They come to teach us what's good and what is bad, they even bother us because we'd like to add a room, put a satellite dish, create a garage inside the house, and want to prevent us from doing that".

Therefore, my question is about the dialectics between outsiders and insiders. As I said before, the groups that have worked to recover the traditional local heritage in marginal areas often came from outside (an exception is the case of Gjirokastra: the Foundation was born from the town itself). These groups should be aware of the consequences of their action in terms of possible social conflicts or economic problems.
Try to imagine that someone decides that in a certain area (for reasons of preservation of the landscape, heritage, authenticity...) only a certain material, traditional of that area, should be used; and that they also codify the way that material should be laid out, according to the same logic with which 'legitimate' *pesto genovese* is codified.
In this regard, reading Angelini seems fundamental to me: he investigated Genova's hinterland and found a host of traditional family *pesto* recipes. How do you tell a grandma who lives in the Genoese Apennines that her family's recipe is not the authentic one, because the right one is the Pesto IGP recipe? Clearly the grandma is right. And this grandmother is even more right, if the grandmother from the house opposite says "In my family pesto has always been made in this other way" (Angelini 2005).
What I mean is that the introduction of a norm may kill the practices, and what's more, it often ends up expelling local people from traditional buildings. Let me explain better: if a rule states that stones must be laid in the roofing in a certain specific way, and in the whole valley there are only two old craftspeople left who know how to lay stones in that way and redoing the covering of a 23 $m^2$ building costs 30.000 €, then the rule – perhaps beyond the intentions of those who wrote it and enforced it – implies that the locals move into new buildings made of reinforced concrete, and the traditional houses become second, third or fourth houses for

rich tourists, as the latter are those who ‘understand the value of the heritage’ (and can, of course, afford the monetary burden of its legally acceptable restauration). The risk that the imposed authenticity will result in expulsion and economic discrimination is very great. These issues are of particular concern to us.
To be more specific about regulations: the real point is about discerning rules intended as an obligation and which have above all descriptive characters (those that prescribe the use of a certain material, impose the adoption of a typological solution, etc.); and "tool" rules. When rules are tools, it is hoped that they are tools that you keep on the side of the handle, and that you use to do what you need. By definition the tool is useful – as long as it is not sharp and the blade does not point to your belly. I am absolutely convinced of the usefulness of the "tool" rules, all the more so in case of performance standards, i.e. they express principles and objectives, and do not prescribe solutions. They do not say: "You have to do this (and do it this way!)", but rather: "Make sure that what you do allows you to achieve this kind of result".
The regulations that I cannot tolerate are those that postulate things like: if you don’t put this much of extra virgin olive oil, this much of basil, this much of pine nuts, etc., it’s not pesto. Angelini reports that in the hinterland of Genova there are even elderly women who make pesto with no basil. It’s not an innovation by a creative chef; it’s a family tradition.
Finally, I would like to add that in my opinion heritage is codified and its transformation over time is hindered when people are afraid, when they feel threatened. While a self-confident society is much freer to interpret, hybridise, even ‘betray’ its own traditions.

Unfortunately, even in countries that are demographically much younger and still growing, like Latin American countries, a fairly rapid and extensive process of territorial polarisation is taking place: people are moving to big cities, often at lower altitudes. Even on the Andean plateau where the Fundación Altiplano works, only a few old people now reside. In the territories covered by the NGOs at this seminar, the number of residual inhabitants is still greater than in Elva, a village in the Piemonte western Alps where there are more dead on the monument to the fallen of WWI than living residents today – but it is only a matter of being a little ahead or a little behind in a process that is similar in those marginal places, even if they are physically very far apart.
Having said that, let’s do a purely fictional exercise: a handful of people from this room sets up an association and decide to recover one of the ten thousand more or less abandoned villages that exist in the Alps.
Who is the community of this village? Us "settlers", with all our good intentions and our intentional community cohesion? Or those who, although not living there, still own a house and maybe return there each summer? Of course they are, they too are local community. If not themselves, their parents must have been born in that house. That village is theirs somehow. And certainly, are local community that elderly couple who still, in defiance of any economic convenience, and any consideration of practicality, prefer to live there and perhaps remain isolated for a fortnight in winter when the avalanche comes down, rather than go down to their children who have moved to Dronero, Borgo San Dalmazzo, or Cuneo.

I will keep forever in my memory a woman in her eighties who lived in a village in a side valley of Valsesia. Almost blind, she lived alone in a hamlet, not reachable with a motor vehicle. I was surveying the whole village, and I went to meet her. She followed me, in the sense that she perceived where I was. In the morning, she would go out, collect the egg, a few herbs from the garden and then we would chat a little. She would say to me "Yes, they tried to take me down! I had to be admitted to the hospital in Varallo, but as soon as I could, I ran away and came back here, because I felt caged there!" A neighbour, who was also elderly and who also lived alone, in the village below, once every one or two days passed by, just to know if she was all right. They would say hello to each other, and he would come back down. That was her life.

Why do I tell this pathetic story? Because if we outsiders decided that that village is beautiful and has beautifully preserved houses and everything, and we wanted to revitalise it, we could only start from that residual community that person represents. Not against her, even if the demographic survival of that village can only be entrusted to possible new inhabitants (who perhaps have ethnically, if you allow me, nothing to do with that village: maybe the new inhabitants were born in another region and fell in love with that place or with the possibilities which that place provides, for example of a life 'in contact with nature', where you can practice organic farming because the land has not been contaminated, etc.).

What I mean is that, unless we are facing an archaeological excavation, some form of community exists.

I remember a very difficult job, which in fact failed, on a hamlet in Ossola where there was no longer any resident, but there were obviously some owners, most of whom lived quite close. Whatever we proposed to do on those buildings, they were against it. You will say: "They were letting the buildings go to hell and yet they were opposing a redevelopment project?" Of course they were, that was their home! They were right, from a certain point of view. Despite the fact that their plan was to let everything collapse as long as no strangers touched anything. This is certainly not gratifying, as a project that a community can give itself with respect to its future. The active participation of a community in the rehabilitation programme is crucial.

### 5.1.1 Dynamics between local communities and outsiders

**Andrea B.**

All the NGOs attract people often from far away and even from abroad, to more or less marginal places, for instance to carry out 'field school' training activities. The organisers themselves are mostly alien to the local communities.
What are the **dynamics between the local communities and these outsiders**?
Locals often do not understand what these strangers want from them and their territory; non-locals often feel superior to locals because of their greater formal education or monetary wealth and do not understand why locals do not roll out a red carpet under their feet.
In your experience, does **suspicion or cooperation** prevail?
Is there a **positive evolution** of the relationship between insiders and outsiders over time, one that gives hope for some form of fruitful, mutual hybridisation?

**Chiara (SBAP)**

Hybridisation is surely the most correct term we can use to answer your question. In the School's experience (I'm speaking both as a former student and as a teacher) the relationship between theoretical approaches and direct contact with the complexity of real yards has always been preached and practised.
The opportunities to deal with locals have therefore been a constant, and paradigmatically prescribed, characteristic in its organisation, aimed at a mutual acceptance – this is the first step – and subsequently at a profitable hybridisation. We normally organised preliminary surveys, to 'take the temperature' of the context, to verify the level of public engagement in affairs concerning the landscape or monuments, and then to select the (not only academically or professionally) best qualified stakeholders, to be introduced to the specificity of the places. We consider – I think this is one of the assets of the School – each place as a sort of *unicum* (with its own values and characteristics, representing the 'identity of the place').
For example, we worked hard, and for more than a decade, on the identity of a wide- and partially wild-area between Piemonte and Liguria. The local community is very involved in landscape protection, and extremely aware – even fiercely proud – both for traditional reasons and because of the condition of living in a border area. Historically that border was not between administrative regions as today, rather between States, with spies, ambassadors, armies, and tradesmen crossing it. This transit left a wide consciousness in the population remaining there (a quantity emigrated to bigger cities, like Cuneo, Torino, Savona, Genova), who is extremely aware of its historical relevance, even nowadays, when they suffer from the reduction of commerce, redirected on more comfortable routes and from the general industrial crisis – there used to be factories there since the 18th century, which were established by the rich local aristocracy, first of all the very powerful marquis of Ormea, minister of the King. We were not in a position to teach them anything... and we started to listen to them, to learn, and there was a lot to learn!
On the other hand, their legitimate pride was not supported by a methodological approach to their history: they were extremely wavering in their analysis, not always objective in the examination of sources, obviously not neutral when looking

to their landscape... We have been extremely gentle (and it was natural to be so, as they have always been openly courteous in receiving us and let us feel at home in their own home) in proposing our interpretations and in suggesting more detachment while observing the complexity and richness of their territory. We found extraordinary, open-minded interlocutors.
In other contexts, sometimes, relations have been a little less straightforward, but we could always find a solution, without pouts or discussions: it's only a matter of mutual respect and, happily, this has always been given for granted!

**Edvin (FG)**

I agree with the idea of involving the community, which we do, even though sometimes it is difficult.
We now have cases in Albania where decision-makers pretend to involve communities through so-called public consultations, but often this is only in theory. Sometimes the idea of consulting and involving the public is abused. We have as well examples which show that sometimes consulting the public can be a failure: for instance, in rural areas people are not always well educated and don't understand what we do. Sometimes having to deal with the community is very confusing, but I am happy if we do it, and it is obvious that they will benefit. I want to stress that if you are a team of technicians and architects you also benefit in understanding them and wanting them to really understand you, otherwise it is just pretending.
When we bring groups in training to Gjirokastra, we try to accommodate them in guesthouses run by local families, and a great accord always builds up between students and locals.
In Albania, not only in Gjirokastra, these are very good situations because the locals always like the idea of receiving foreigners. If you walk down the street in front of an old house, they will open the door and they will invite you in, which is a great thing. They have a genuine approach to everything which comes from abroad and to foreign visitors in the town. Usually, locals get along very well with visitors and they engage a lot in helping with hands-on work projects, with the volunteers and so on.
But when it comes to complex, big projects, dealing with the community is very serious because the discussion is not always truthful. For instance, stone roofs are one of the main features of the built heritage in Gjirokastra, but there are examples of illegal constructions which have abused the original building by using concrete, so it is still a challenge: the inhabitants want to live in a 'contemporary house'; a traditional stone roof needs frequent maintenance while a concrete one is considered to be more durable. We are having this issue with the roofs because owners want to insulate properly, but wood and stone were traditionally laid *a secco* [dry construction]. People have the right to live a conventional life in their own properties. Just saying to them that their house is a beautiful monument and they have to respect the conservative restoration principles is not enough. This is a real struggle in the field, which involves us and the authorities, who sometimes close an eye and pretend they didn't see the concrete mixer going in into the historic town.
Sometimes I think that restoration has rather become diplomacy, and decision making. Maybe we need to invent another word.

**Maurizio (AC)**

Sometimes it is not easy to share what we are doing with the community. Some understand very well, some don't; but I don't think this is a problem.
We always try to involve the community and the local authorities.
I will tell you my personal experience. I studied Landscape and historical preservation at the University of Milan and, when I returned to the [Ossola] valley, my world was falling into pieces because of the gap between what I had learnt at the university (which was, of course, a lot) and the reality of the place where I grew up. The coming back – the being a U-turn immigrant, as the Japanese call people who were raised in a community and come back to the community after formal training – taught me that what I needed was to work with my hands. Understanding this changed my life: I started working hands-on with Associazione Canova. So, I started from the humblest level, from the ground. This in an important way to earn the respect of the community and it is what happened when locals saw what we were doing. Therefore, I can witness through my direct experience that what we do is important for the community as well.

**Lorenzo (BdF)**

From our point of view, restoring a stone roof with heritage conservation methods is sometimes very difficult to explain to local people, but it is very easy when you are talking with people from abroad who, for example, bought a stone house in the area. Why are people from abroad so open to heritage conservation methods and why are the local people so far from this idea?
It seems clear that being surrounded by something does not make its beauty appreciable; while taking a step back can awaken this awareness.

**Nadia (BdF)**

Since we work a lot in the summer, our workshops are attended mostly by university students: this helps us be welcomed in the community because locals love seeing young people working all day and enjoying it. Local people are, in a way, very proud of the fact that there are young people there working in the restoration of the local built heritage, even more so if it is the property of the municipality.
The elderly craftspeople involved are also locals. We notice that they feel part of this project and they talk about what they do with their families and friends who come to see what is going on.
Another way to involve the community in what we are doing is holding social events such as open-air cinema nights, social dinners, open lectures etc.
The Association wants to create a disperse hotel which is supposed to be managed in the future by an enterprise of local young people. In fact, it is not easy to find young residents in the area. For example, we need someone to clean or cook for the students but it's not easy to find them because just a few people live there nowadays.

**Junko (DSW)**

In the interaction between communities and students, local communities are very kind, perhaps they even feel a little proud because the students come from outside and therefore, they think that some value is acknowledged to their place.

### Beatriz (FA)

I think that there are many possibilities according to the kind of heritage you are working on. In our case it is the living heritage of Andean communities. Since the heritage you are working on is alive, you have to put away your mind as a technician, and read the needs of the community. Manfred Max-Neef affirmed that all humans have the same basic needs (Max-Neef, Elizalde, and Hopenhayn 1994). These include subsistence, protection, affection, understanding: Andean communities share such needs with all humans on earth. For example, we were working in Tacora in a façades restoration project and as technicians we proposed to paint the metal roofs in oxide colour because we thought that over time roofs would naturally oxidise anyway. The community said: "No, that colour makes the village look like it was abandoned and old! We want shining colours, we want gold, we want silver..." So, we understood that they needed to assert "Hey, we are here, we are surviving the abandonment of the village and we want it look as new." As technicians, we wouldn't have been able to imagine this. I think we need to look through the lens of the needs of the community when we work with living heritage.

The Chilean government doesn't invest in new projects if the local community does not manage its own heritage; this is a very wise stance from the public side which prevents public money to be wasted in interventions just focussed on restoring the buildings for the sake of doing it. In case the community doesn't, it is our task to accompany the community to work on a management plan that can be implemented after we leave.

Regarding the interaction between foreigners and locals when it comes to field schools or volunteers, our case is very similar to that reported by Junko: locals feel very proud when foreign people come and appreciate their heritage and ask them about farming. They feel really proud, it's a good interaction.

### Ángel (MD)

In countries as Peru, where there is a strong imbalance between urban and rural areas, with associated historical burdens of socio-economic inequalities and cultural prejudices, it is likely that any training or educational initiative, aimed at less favoured regions, will arise or have been gestated from Lima or some other leading city. During the 1990s, a variety of State actions were implemented with support from Peruvian and foreign non-governmental agencies, including international cooperation agencies. Without detracting from the purposes and efforts deployed, almost all the aforementioned entities devoted themselves to assistance that, due to the overwhelming issues of the time, prioritised food, basic infrastructure and health. For this reason, the vision of local development ran in the short term and was rather sectorial. As opposed to this, in the final stretch of the 20th century third-sector bodies have begun working in educational projects. Then, in some way, under the good pretext of capacity building, the communities and their territories were observed from a comprehensive perspective.

But observing is not the same as understanding, and the aspirations, needs and interests of the beneficiary communities still have to be fully acknowledged. However, the daily relationships established between inhabitants and 'development enthusiasts' tend to be open and active, and this is a good point to build

upon. The task would involve transforming outsiders into 'committed developers of the territory', with proactive and transversal attitudes and skills.
Until now, rural populations have sensed that those training ventures will last as long as there are funded; the entities that promote new knowledge and innovative paradigms tend to go bankrupt sooner rather than later and to be completely disconnected from the local culture and politics. Ego, pretension, and personal vanity have no place in the exercise of development of peripheral spaces, and if this is the case, the practitioners involved have to quickly connect with the communities' essence and idiosyncrasies. In my personal experience – shared with many comrades – the spirit of cooperation has prevailed. However, set-up initiatives were often discontinued due, among other reasons, to these territories' historical and structural limitations in economic and possibilities, which can hardly be overcome. In Peru, the need for a harmonious and effective coexistence between cooperators and beneficiaries is recently being understood, and reciprocity is now agreed as a beneficial element for local development.

**Carmen (Tr)**

I absolutely agree with the sentence: "the 'beauty' of a building [is] what an outsider who does not use the building sees", and I would add: "luckily outsiders still look at the others' buildings". Otherwise, even more cultural heritage would have disappeared – here, there, and everywhere. The unpleasant situations that have been mentioned about expelled inhabitants should be avoided with local policies that encourage locals to stay and maintain their buildings.
Terrachidia's experience in rural southern Morocco has always been positive but the beginning of our project, in 2012, wasn't easy. That was something expected because locals didn't know us at all and the only reference they had about us was a common friend. Our proposal was to 'swap the expected roles' and make them teach us about their cultural heritage and, specifically, their built heritage. All were quite suspicious about the work we asked them to do and couldn't believe that we were not paid. During the workshops, experts in traditional building techniques became 'masters' and both local young men and foreigners learnt from them. Words like "beauty", "heritage" and "preservation" were difficult to understand for them, and they only referred to the functional reasons of architecture. At the end, our interest and their purpose brought fruitful opportunities forward. After eight years working with them, things are clearer and both sides understand and respect the other's expectations. At present, fortunately, our relationship is much stronger that it was at the beginning and even in a difficult situation as the one we are having with Covid-19, confidence allows us to go forward with our projects thanks to online working and communication media.

**Ever Mamani**[11]

Purchasing power in the communities is increasing and is often reflected in more modern constructions: people mix up poverty with tradition and improvement with modern constructions. What was the biggest challenge you faced in dealing with the communities, during the development of your projects?

[11] Senior Master Restorer of Fundación Altiplano.

### Carmen (Tr)

At the beginning the biggest challenge was to gain the trust of the locals, to make them understand that we were in good faith, that we did not want to speculate, that we had a certain interest in their culture and architecture, and that we wanted to learn how to build their way, through the cooperation with them. I don't want to give a utopian or ideal image, but in reality, it wasn't a great challenge: once the first phase was over, it was really easy – you just have to show what you do, that you do it with passion, that you are professionals and that you want to work. At the most, sometimes there were communication problems, or problems of mutual misunderstanding.

### Americo (Pl)

To answer this question, I would start by describing some aspects of our context. First, we work in an area defined as depressed, with a decreasing population. In addition, we work jointly and coexist with the Associação para o Estudo e Proteção do Gado Asinino (AEPGA). Our co-presence on the ground works very well in many ways. AEPGA has greater proximity to animal breeders and owners, being in contact with them daily. Their efforts in community relations also work well for us, who, associated with them, are not seen as outsiders. Sometimes the local population even confuses the two associations, or they do not know that we are two separate entities – this has its advantages and disadvantages. Unfortunately, or fortunately, most of the people who have worked or work in both associations are from outside the region, coming from other parts of Portugal or even from other countries. This implies that the local population sees us as outsider groups.

Palombar is mainly concerned with observing nature in different aspects, depending on which the population's perception of us changes. When, for example, we talk about wolves, the population does not want to be involved in our work and we are asked to leave. When we deal with heritage, on the other hand, the attitude is more cooperative.

Another aspect to consider is the evolution of the relationship with the community during our 21 years. Palombar began as an association of dovecote owners, so inevitably the emphasis was mainly on dovecotes. Most of the people who were there in the beginning are no longer part of the association. The association was born as a continuation of the establishment of the Douro International Natural Park (PNDI) in 1998, but has always been independent of it. The negative perception of the population towards the Park, linked to the imposition of rules with direct impacts on the inhabitants, influenced their feeling towards the association and our work. Various events testify these problems – for example I was the only one in my village (where there are between twenty and thirty dovecotes) to have accepted to join a rehabilitation programme carried out before the association was born. In fact, the perception was that they would 'steal' the dovecotes.

Initially, the population showed a lot of distrust and mistrust towards us, although they appreciated our work. Over the years, the relationship with the population has gradually evolved, leading to a paradigm shift. Currently our work of dovecote restoration is totally accepted, and people want it. Today we receive requests from owners who want to rebuild their dovecotes on a regular basis, so much so that we are unable to respond to all these requests since funding is insufficient. Most

of the heritage in the region is in fact privately owned, only the government buildings are public property. Another difficulty we are having is at the financing level: sometimes people are a bit opportunistic, they want to recover for free. In relation to stone walls, the perspective is good, people like them. We try in many cases to involve local masons in the construction, but the people are not very cooperative: they would rebuild them with concrete and feel that we are the ones who know how to do it without it.
The community perceives that our presence has a positive economic impact: because it both helps to attract visitors to the area – who in turn rent houses, spend, and consume – and to create job opportunities. In the villages where we organise the workshops more frequently, there is an appreciation, and subsequent nostalgia, for the convivial time created by our meetings: in fact, the work camps function as a kind of approaching, bringing for two weeks movement to places where otherwise there would not be much going on. In fact, we also offer activities with local musicians, festivals, and dinners that bring volunteers and the villagers together... Not all people come, but we always try to involve them. All these things, over the years, are slowly changing people's perceptions.

**Kiichiro (MG)**

I moved to Noto Peninsula to create my own lifestyle in a small village, far away from big cities and modernisation. I believed that this was a great place to live, full of resources – both natural resources such as trees and the traditional wisdom of *satoyama*, that is based on the harmony between human life and the surrounding nature. Many people from the rural areas move to the big cities, to make a living or get a higher education. They don't understand why people, like me, want to go the opposite direction. It is hard to explain, and it takes lot of time.
Living in a small village, I noticed that there are so many layers – village section; village, small town; town; small city; big city. Sometimes, those who live in big cities feel a sense of superiority over villagers. In Japan, marginal areas run the risk of emptying out. After WWII many people from big cities tried to prevent this, travelling all around Japan and collecting research materials from rural areas. However, this mono-directional relationship of giving and receiving helped strengthening the sense of superiority, and some researchers acted as a kind of aristocrats. I think is important to do field surveys. They help people from the cities to understand the rural world, and villagers are always kind and welcome them, but sometimes the outsiders made surveys just for their own purposes. Researchers should respect local people, build a relationship with them, and avoid nuisance during field surveys, as it was pointed out by the great Japanese anthropologist, Miyamoto Tsuneichi (Miyamoto 1983) and his disciple, Ankei Yuji (Miyamoto 2007; Miyamoto and Ankei 2008). The product of the research should be shared with locals, and subtle variations within a territory should be understood. In Japan not only rural areas, but also big cities are facing serious economy, safety, and environmental problems, so I think that arrogant help from outside should rather be directed towards the place where one lives, to solve local problems.
I'm now living in a small community. I think that to work on the rehabilitation of traditional heritage it is very important to live or be at the site. After twenty years, I'm still regarded as a stranger or as a kind of invasive species to the local

community. On the other hand, visitors see me as one of the locals. I think both are true and this teaches me that my role is to create a good connection between locals and visitors, acting so that exchange can happen. There is much positive communication between local people, scientists, and visitors. I think that the life-size scale and the shared space and time are very relevant.

**Elena (ARF)**

I would just like to share my impression from the fieldwork on the phenomenon of perception. When we first came to Gostuša, we were recording everything because we were fascinated by how many buildings were well preserved. People were suspicious about what we were doing, did it have to do with taxes? Why were we there? Why did you survey my house? They had thousands of questions, and they didn't even want to let us record their properties and their houses. After we spent some time there, they changed their opinion in a way. When you start doing research you have to be mindful of the people's perception of your work.

**Eltjana (GO2)**

Building trust within a community is essential for successful collaboration and project implementation. This process cannot be rushed; it requires patience and consistency over time. If you approach community members with honesty and transparency, and they recognize that you are genuinely working toward a common goal, they are more likely to support your efforts. Once they see your commitment, they can become some of your most valuable allies.
Through ongoing engagement and support, we aim to empower them to take ownership of their heritage, ensuring that it is cherished and maintained for years to come.

**Ionas (Bl)**

As you can imagine, at the beginning of a project there is always a certain reluctance on the side of the locals, but again, when a work is completed there is always a deeper relationship, or at least with a good part of the local community. It takes time. I think this is the key point – it takes time to build trust. For us, as an itinerant group, this also presents a challenge, because we do want to travel; we want to keep on discovering different places. And to a certain extent, travelling means always starting from scratch. With each new journey, new people and new communities come along, new relationships that need to be built. One thing we have learned so far, however, is that building a 'real thing' is very different from just going there for a few days to organise some kind of cultural or educational activity. And as we go on, the fact that our group has a record of previously implemented projects plays a big role in gaining a community's trust; it serves as a proof of a certain commitment to delivering something concrete and tangible – something that is not always easy to attain; indeed, it is always laborious and challenging.

Moreover, the way you engage in dialogue with locals before, during and after the project is also important. I mean that how a project is formulated, implemented and received, has a lot to do with how much you listen, how much you include people in different stages and aspects of the project. Overall, we try to involve local communities in as many aspects as possible. A first step we often take is

inviting locals to co-organise communal feasts, in which local food (as well as local habits, ideas and concerns) may be shared with our team and with workshop participants. Such activities help in cultivating a sense of intimacy that allows for further discussion to unfold. To be sure, one needs to be careful not to limit community engagement to feasts with food and dance, but rather use such activities as beginnings to involve local communities in a project in meaningful and empowering ways. And of course, it is a challenge to weave such different dimensions together, to open discussions with local communities that may not be easy to manage; to really listen to what they want, what they expect, what they fear, what they hope. This always implies some friction, it's not easy, it takes time. Thus it's also important to remember that some things cannot be resolved instantly. They will only be resolved – if they will be resolved – along the way.

During these years we also found out how important it is not to idealise local communities; to accept that these communities too, are filled with tensions and contradictions. The way a community understands its heritage or what it wants to 'do with it' is not the same for all of its members. Parts of the community will embrace the project, or come closer to see what's it about; others will be sceptical no matter what. But in any event, there are profound exchanges taking place within such encounters. There are many nuances in such processes, and there are many interesting things that come up once time is allowed to come in.

Regarding a community's responsibility, or the extent to which local communities take on what we initiate or propose: in one of our previous projects – not the ones mentioned in my presentation – just a few weeks after Boulouki's work was done, some of the local residents started to discover pieces of old cobbled paths that had been buried and lost, in other parts of the settlement. In a sense, our project had managed to effectively inform the local community's understanding of its heritage, and encourage them to take it into their own hands.

### Eltjana (GO2)

Our organisation engages extensively with rural local communities, which often exhibit a strong sense of homogeneity and connection among their members. This close-knit nature can present both advantages and challenges.
On the positive side, the strong bonds within these communities allow us to integrate quickly into their social fabric. This facilitates relationship-building, enabling us to persuade them of the honesty of our goals and achieve tangible results in a relatively short time.
Moreover, there is often a sense of inferiority among rural communities when compared to urban ones. Many rural residents perceive themselves as underdeveloped, which can affect their self-esteem and willingness to engage with external initiatives. However, within these communities lies a wealth of valuable assets, including rich cultural heritage, oral histories, and a small-scale circular economy rooted in breeding, agriculture, and traditional building practices.
From our perspective, it is crucial to help these communities recognise and take pride in their unique cultural heritage and resources.

5.2

# REHABILITATION OF TRADITIONAL HERITAGE



# The social role of technology



Andrea Bocco

The requalification of the built heritage might be understood as a technical issue, in fact a very high level of skill is needed in order to intervene in an aware way on heritage buildings: they deserve respect. Many times, it happens to see mal-adjusted technologies which are not appropriate to heritage buildings.

There is some kind of bias against traditional technologies in certain regulations, and sometimes traditional technology smacks of poverty or backwardness. It is crucial to promote the qualities of these technologies to continue these traditions in a very aware and contemporary way. According to me this is just one side of the coin.
The other is that those people who are very skilled and take on themselves this challenge to promote the continuation of traditional technologies may also develop a very high sensitivity in terms of local populations' needs, in terms of working together with them to build a future for the local society and economy.

Most of the foundations, associations, groups who convened to our seminars happen to work – and not by chance – in marginal areas (sometimes mountain areas, sometimes difficult access areas), which in some way help to preserve the physical integrity of heritage, but also imply difficult living conditions in comparison with urban, flatland areas, and this leads to phenomena such as ageing, depopulation, impoverishment. The challenge here is to find people who take care both of the physical heritage (the buildings, stonewalls, terraced landscapes...) and the people and their livelihood. To preserve a building without the inhabitants – without those who don't only make use of it, but also give meaning to it – is not particularly remarkable.

### 5.2.1 Conception and perception of heritage

**Redina**

Many of you are working in contexts different from where you have lived and been trained; some have even settled in these local communities since long, and they became part of them. But not always what is considered heritage in theoretical frameworks and particularly in the western conception, is relevant for the local population. Did you experience such a difference?
What approach did you take to understand this difference and integrate the two conceptions? In the training processes you carry out, especially with out-comers like volunteers and students, what approach did you take to narrate both the values that we conventionally recognise as 'universal', and the local narrative together with the values which come with it, that are relevant to communities?

**Andrea L.**

I am an architectural historian, so of course I'm interested in building techniques and practice, but I am especially interested in the processes of 'heritagisation'. The social, political, ideological, or religious reasons that make 'heritage' some of the objects and the knowledge we receive form the past. We choose something and make it heritage. I will therefore pose a couple of questions that cut across the various contributions. I start from a lexical issue connected with the very title of this series of seminars. Each of the speakers interpreted in a personal way the concept of 'tradition' and 'traditional': different duration, different depth, different periodisation. I suppose that behind the technical choices made by every team, there are particular meanings of the concept of 'tradition'. When we compare this concept of traditional with the times of history, I wonder – when did a knowledge, an experience or a common practice become traditional? Which is the relationship between tradition – meant as vernacular, popular, spontaneous – and history – usually linked to monuments, power, authority? Dealing with processes of 'heritagisation', how can scholars study the phenomenon of the 'perception' of heritage? the way people feel about their built environment? How do scholars manage to connect the 'things' – the buildings, the places, the sites – with their cultural 'values', which make these 'things' and places meaningful for a community?

**Chiara (SBAP)**

History and knowledge are fact, while tradition is sometimes perception. Especially in Italy, but this would be true everywhere else, we are immersed in heritage. I mean that we are surrounded by monuments and also by traditions. More and more we consider tradition as a part of heritage. Maybe less defined and clearly understood as such, but nevertheless part of cultural heritage. The perception of what surrounds us and the merge between intangible tradition and tangible monuments is becoming more and more evident. In this context, culture is one of the criteria to establish what to preserve thoroughly, without introducing any modification, and what to preserve introducing some amount of innovation.
What I can report from the experience of the School of specialisation is that the less of knowledge and culture we have and the less we consider the heritage we have around. The question of identity is absolutely prominent. Probably heritage,

tradition and identity are strongly connected with each other in, and are specific to, a given geographic and social context. When the connection between heritage and context is lost for any reason, identity is also lost, and we do not perceive the quality of the spaces in which we live anymore. When we lose such perception we also lose our patrimony, a synonym of heritage.
The turning point is when we start considering that what we have around is extraordinary and that everything we destroy of it makes our self-consciousness weaken.

### Kiichiro (MG)

I'm not an historian but I'm very interested in the word tradition. Based on my perception, 'history' or 'knowledge' are very objective words; 'tradition' is a subjective word. Depending on the person, the definition of tradition is slightly different, and it is hard to tell what is traditional and what is not.
One reason I am interested in tradition is that natural materials like wood, stone, and grass are often used in traditional building technology. Using natural materials, not only skilled craftspeople, but also volunteers can join and work together. I'm interested in doing research on architecture not only through theory and head but using the hands and body. I think that traditional things give me the chance to do that.
I also think it is important to understand the wide variety of values and ways of thinking. There are differences not only between West and East, but also within Japan between villages, towns and big cities, and between farming villages and fishing villages. Even within our village, there are differences between the larger section facing the main street and marginal smaller sections.
I think we do not need to overcome the differences. All we need is to make the differences explicit and find out how to make them coexist. Even better if we enjoy the differences, which can teach us diverse ways of thinking.
A very effective way to make people with different ideas and backgrounds communicate and exchange points of view is to create a situation where they perform together some simple action, such as walking or eating. Soon, they will start talking and trying to know each other.
The word "biodiversity" is now very common, not only the field of biology and ecology. I think the diversity of human beings and viewpoints is even more fundamental. Also, it is better not to have a fixed identity, but to accept and cultivate the presence of many different elements within oneself.

### Ángel (MD)

It is very important to consider the situation of each territory: for example, the most important city in southern Peru, Arequipa, is 160 km from the Colca. Arequipa is located at 2300 m above sea level. To get to the Colca, you have to overcome altitudes of 5000 m and descend to 3600 m. The Peruvians, or even the population of Arequipa, do not necessarily know rural places like the Colca. Neither architecture students nor architecture graduates have familiarity with the problems of rural areas.
I have been in contact with the people of the Colca Valley for more than twenty years, and I can confirm that they have their own narrative regarding not only the concept of heritage, but also the evaluation of what communities possess, which

does not necessarily coincide with what we have learned in our formal education or what we often believe from theoretical approaches. For this reason, trial and error processes have been present in almost all projects. In terms of self-criticism rather than criticism, we could say that there has been a space-time of mutual understanding.
Those of us who have lived longer and continue to share with new generations, should get even closer to the communities to try to share our sensitivity about heritage. It would be very presumptuous to think that we have the answers to their own aspirations. I don't think this has improved that much over time, and universities still do not equip their graduates with tools to tackle practical issues about landscape and heritage.
From occasions of debating and sharing like this, I expect to gain a more universal understanding of heritage, but at the same time we all should develop a sensitivity to relate intimately to communities and be able to interpret their aspirations. No doubt, we need an education that does not neglect the academic knowledge, but it should also develop much more capacity to apply theoretical concepts to concrete issues regarding the heritage, which emerge from the field.

**Pimpim (THF)**

In many of our projects it was never case of discussing about this. We were preserving the heritage, they wanted to preserve something that was part of their daily life. The heritage we are talking about is often the continuity of the way we grow up, or the context where we grow up, or the things that surround us, and is about keeping past things living on and on. In some projects we didn't talk much about heritage. For example, in the case of Tibet, it was more about identity.
Also in Mongolia our work was not about heritage, it was just ensuring the continuity of their tradition, of their life. Since the monastery had been closed and turned into an army camp, eight years had passed without religious ceremonies, and people wanted to pray for their beloved ones who had passed away.
So, the heritage we were preserving was a living heritage, their day-to-day life.
Many terms we use in our work, are often misused: for example developers and tourist operators are talking about heritage and preservation. The developers because if they talk about sustainability, about organic, about heritage, they appear to be good, and that they align with current global goals, but in fact they betray the real nature of these principles and giving a different meaning to them. There is so much misuse of the words that sometimes we don't know which word to use to avoid falling in *clichés*. If we are trying to save 15th century buildings and somebody else wants to tear them down, the fact that both use the same terminology is confusing.
About the perception of culture, values, and modernisation: people adapt some alien and modern things to their new needs, but at the same time they can stay very strongly attached to their traditions. What is convenient and good, people take it.
I believe that cultural values and heritage are a continuity of things that you receive from your grand-grand-grandparents. On these values and these things, you build up the continuity of the future cultural heritage.

**Yutaka (THF)**

Now I live in Ladakh. Even in this small area with a small population, there is a great diversity of cultures and religions which coexist: Buddhist, Muslim, Hindu; different ethnic groups including several from outside the Himalayas or Tibet, from the Pakistan side, but also from Kashmir. The totality is created in this way. All communities brought some inputs, and their diversity became the tradition of the local community. In addition, everything evolves in continuity: in our modern time, every influence is gathered in a very fast way. However, people still need some time to digest before something good becomes part of their cultural tradition.
Culture is composed of layers. You don't always know when something became traditional, it is a continuous process.
Even Muslim or Buddhist communities, that are very jealous of their different backgrounds, share lot of things with each other, especially during festivities, like new year, Ramadan, or the Losar festival – a kind of Ladakhi and Tibetan new year. This sharing is based on respect of the other. The different traditions bind the community.

**Carmen (Tr)**

We went to work in Morocco also because in Spain it would have been impossible to start a similar path: on the one hand, only a few masters remain who are still skilled in these traditional techniques, on the other, regulations pose serious limitations to carrying out similar initiatives.
In Morocco, traditional construction techniques are still alive, and therefore the concept of heritage itself is different. When I opposed to the demolition of a portion of a wall 100 or 150 years old, the local population did not understand me, since it would have been possible to rebuild the wall with the same technique and the same material – wouldn't it be better to have a new one built exactly the same way? They explained to me that the concept of heritage as such, as we understand it, does not exist in Arabic, they have other definitions, which do not imply cultural identification. This is a question we have been discussing with the local population for a long time.
While we initially tried to give the students all the information we had, we later realised that it was more interesting to give them a few brushes of essential information and put them in contact with the local people. After which they would be left free in discovering the place, conducting some of the work and contributing to it with their own vision and way of doing things, even incorporating their previous experience into the project.

**Marta (Tr)**

I think that a very important point is to maintain the local identity because every place has a specific way of building and if we lose that we cannot improve and keep the cultural heritage alive. However, many times, people think that traditional constructions are the constructions of the poor.
We work in the south of Morocco where since centuries people live in very closed settlements which are adapted to the hard climate (it can be as hot as 50°C in summer). It's a specific urbanisation with specific dwellings and ways of building.

Many years ago, new forms of urbanisation and new materials came in. People lost their identity and their life conditions worsened. Concrete houses are not better, because concrete is not adapted to the land and the climate.

**Elena (ARF)**

When we as experts plan our work we have to think about people living in this built heritage, interacting and spending time with them to understand what this heritage actually represents for them.
This area was abandoned in the Seventies due to the industrialisation process. Those who remain there live in a poor condition: they don't have roads and other basic services. Until the end, they could not understand why we were there and why we really wanted to work on the houses in their villages.
After many years and many interactions with locals we still find that those stones used for roofing, that we consider remarkable, for them are a burden they want to remove and replace with some lighter material.

**Américo (Pl)**

At the beginning people were suspicious and didn't see dry-stone walls and buildings as heritage. They saw them as a burden and something difficult to maintain. Instead of collecting stones in the field, you might buy one thousand bricks and you would just have to stack them on top of the other to get a wall.
In the last twenty years that we have been working there, maybe because we did it and we promoted it – or maybe because of the tourism factor that attracts more visitors to the region – the locals' perception has changed. Now it's normal to keep building stone walls.
Regarding the tradition, and the perception of tradition: in my presentation, I used the word tradition with reference to different periods. Now that you have asked the question, I start questioning myself whether I was talking about houses that are from the 18th century, pigeon houses from the 10th, or techniques that are from the last fifty years.

**Junko (DSW)**

In the case of dry-stone retaining walls, the conflict of values is less pronounced. Older people seem to prefer concrete walls to dry-stone walls because they do not require maintenance. However, now that rural areas are becoming depopulated and the cost of concrete work cannot be repaid by farming, young people are beginning to prefer dry-stone walls because they can build them themselves.
Furthermore, the Dry-stone walling school illustrates the value of dry-stone walls from an environmental point of view, leading to an appreciation of this technique by those who have migrated to the countryside to start farming.

**Cristian (FA)**

I'm not an expert in anything, I just walk in community. We try to collaborate to help in the need of heritage conservation. We have discovered and learnt in these humble native communities a lot of things about conservation. Most of them have nothing to do with the academy. It is important not only to decolonise heritage, but maybe also to de-academise heritage.

We affirm a ‘naked’ vision of heritage – colonised heritage is too academic and boring, while heritage should be cultivated the same way one cultivates the land. Heritage with the feet sunk in the mud, that we must take care of for the future as a treasure.
The need of cultural conservation is a human need, as is the need of sustainability. The goal is making the treasure of the ancestral heritage available to the new generation, which understands conservation not only as necessary, but urgent and definitely practical, not theoretical.
Conservation should be economically sustainable: and please don’t talk to me about tourism which is proven to be totally unsustainable. The question is the vocation or the utility of the conserved asset. Capitalism is talking a lot about ‘sharing economy’. Maybe we who work in heritage conservation should begin to speaking about ‘conservative economy’. Yesterday Umberto Maturana died, he was a singular Chilean thinker. He said something very beautiful about conservation: “The most important thing in innovation is what you want to conserve” (Madurana n.d.). There is the key: the magnificent future of the small villages seems evident. At the village community scale, heritage means housing, food, education, recycling, technology, responsible living.
To work with heritage is to talk with the dead, and the dead are saying to us that in architectural schools you don’t find the needed, sensible approach to heritage.

**Maurizio (AC)**

Here in Ossola we have a Romanesque heritage – all buildings are made of stones, roofs are made of stones. What I see around me is the result of a ten centuries-long dialog between the population who lived here and the nature and resources around. I think that at one point of history something changed and we clearly realise that we are in a specific time when everything changes fast, and everything is new in a way. Many villages around me, that today we call historical heritage, only one hundred years ago were houses. This means something.

### 5.2.2 Sources and documentation

**Andrea L.**

I pose the problem of 'sources' and 'documentation'. I imagine that traditional techniques and knowledge have been transmitted as word of mouth from generation to generation. How is it possible, in the different case studies, to reconstruct the historical depth of the constructional solutions adopted? Are there (scholarly, academic, religious, or political) written sources that somehow reported about the tradition? Or that maybe misrepresented the tradition with ideological aims?

**Américo (Pl)**

We mainly use oral sources for the construction techniques because there are no records, at least in the region. There are publications about similar techniques from other regions, but not in our region.
The person I know who best masters traditional construction techniques is Nunu, the first president of the Association. He learnt many techniques from his father and grandfather, who were construction workers. We learnt a lot from him.
In addition, we often relied on people's oral accounts: we looked for people who were able to practise these techniques and recorded their stories. From these, we have tried to reconstruct the processes behind the techniques, to keep alive what we had been told.
We combine this oral knowledge with external knowledge gained from workshops and literature. For example, we work a lot with lime, on which there is a lot of information in literature, from how to apply it to durability.
About the uses of the traditional dovecotes, we have some record, especially from the church because they use to register everything. Some sources from the 15th-16th centuries mention rules on these. In the last fifty years, some anthropologists investigated these structures, their uses and the deep connection with the local culture.

**Maurizio (AC)**

We don’t have many documents to take information from. This is one of the reasons why we decided to ground our project in a village. The meaning of what we are doing is to find information from the houses and the walls.
I’m quite sure that this is the first point to try to do a good project in the future. We cannot approach a restoration project having less knowledge than people had in the past. We have to know buildings very well and grasp what was done in the past, and then we have to decide what to keep and what to change, and of course add all the new contemporary knowledge to continue history and to adapt houses to our style of life.

**Marta (Tr)**

People who are living in traditional houses know how to build them. We help them working with them to keep such knowledge alive, and maintain the local identity.

### 5.2.3 Technology transfer processes and innovations

**Andrea L.**

If we spend our time studying the history and designing the future, the risk is to leave the present to somebody not able to interpret the relation between past and future. We leave the present to immediate reactions and emotions. We are not able to envisage the future that we would like, we run the risk of projecting nostalgic feelings on a past that we don't know anymore, and we risk losing the present. This is the main field of commitment of everybody working about heritage, involving everyone with their historical, technical, economical knowledge. If we share our approach, we can organise something useful and interesting, and of course gather diverse perspectives. I appreciate very much the approach proposed by Cristian because the responsible living is one way to inhabit and cultivate the present. He said "cultivate heritage like land": every day we have to take care of our land and of our heritage. The risk now is to lose part of our memory, of our past, of our identities while we are reflecting about them. This is the real issue for both historians and designers.

**Emiliano**

I would like to ask a question that has to do with technology transfer processes. In most cases, the projects involve the employment of local labourers and experts with their traditional knowledge, which, combined with scientific experiences carried out in universities and research centres, produce an improvement or update of traditional techniques. In your experience, do innovative technological solutions emerge from the joint work of local actors and foreign participants, which can then be adapted to the local context?

**Andrea B.**

Another more specific side of the question: I was stroke by what Yutaka commented on the museum in Leh (THF 4.8): in that museum I saw that traditional technology is something you can play with. If you became totally one with a tradition, and tradition is not imposed by regulations, you can play with the materials and the building techniques and you can build a new thing which is not mimicking the past, yet is absolutely in tune with the past. Somebody said that tradition is "a continuous project which we associate with". It seems to me that in some cases you were able to associate so much that you became part of the flow. It is extremely stimulating to observe a tradition that is rooted in the past but points to the future.

**Chiara (SBAP)**

Traditional technical knowledge has been used for a long time and is the reflection of a community. Buildings are an adaptation to the specific conditions of the place where they rise. This becomes even more evident when we pass from the single building to the organisation of buildings in a settlement. The more a settlement is able to respond to the local conditions, the more it becomes an emblem of the ability of culture to adapt and make the best use of local resources. Those who visit places and do not just look at them as if they were a postcard, perceive very well this transmigration of cultural elements into architectural and settlement choices.

They therefore have a vision of the landscape mediated by the recognition of this adaptive response. Attentive observers perceive what is the fruit of that capacity to settle and adapt, and what is somehow dissonant. When I say dissonant, I do not imply uglier, but to some extent at odds with the local tradition.
Nowadays, we historians think in terms of "territorial cultural systems": identified not because of political borders, not even historical ones, but because of the spread of common cultural elements. Outcomers must somehow fit into these systems: they must understand them and adapt to the specificity of the territory.
Heritage is a matter of conservation, but there is a moment when conservation passes through innovation and courage. The moment when we must be brave, face the complexity and add something. Can the past in architecture and in landscape suggest solutions for the future? This is a question that the historians themselves are often facing. The answer is extremely complicated; it depends on the context. I think the motto “think globally and act locally”, can be a good way to answer. If we consider the past globally, probably we perceive a relentless transformation of everything. But it’s hard to apply this vision to a specific request at the local scale. We are normally requested to act in spaces where the micro-history and the local traditions are at the centre of the stage, not the global history. It’s a question of strabismus, to embrace the rhetoric image Andrea Bocco has used. A cross-eyed condition in which we have a general idea of big history, but we have much more knowledge of the peculiarities of the local historical context. And maybe we try to find solutions derived from such specific knowledge. Our experience is that if the solutions we suggest respect the local historical use of the landscapes and the natural sources, these will be accepted more easily by the population and embedded more easily in the context.

**Yutaka (THF)**

“Think globally, act locally”: our normal approach is act locally and find the way to adapt things from the global level, not just copy and paste them. I love vernacular architecture because it is the best reflection of traditional environment, knowledge and lifestyle of the people. Every people in every corner of the word live in a different context, environmentally and resource-wise. Communities use locally available material to assemble the best structures and create the best spaces, so to spend their life comfortably. This is reflected in the variety of vernacular architecture, that makes it so interesting for us.
I’m not against the modern and comfort – everybody desires it –, but I see that often things are just copied from the outside without really understanding them nor the context where they are imported. In this process it is important to act locally and adapt from the global level, allowing the time to digest. This is the way to continue local specificities in the future.

**Maurizio (AC)**

The relationship between heritage conservation and technological innovation is part of a wide-ranging and ever-changing scenario with sometimes opposing forces involved. It is not easy to determine how much investigation work done in collaboration with research centres, even when carried out on site, can be really transferred to the local context. However, looking at the last twenty years we can

appreciate a general and positive evolution in the approach to conservation and I believe that the work carried out by the Associazione Canova has contributed to a constructive debate. I would like to conclude with a personal consideration, which aims to approach what I consider the heart of the matter. I believe that where the aesthetic, cultural, economic, and historical 'value' of a construction is truly recognised, the best solutions and techniques will be adopted to conserve it properly. Communicating 'value' is, in short, the highest objective of our work.

**Ángel (MD)**

What concerns all of us, who are in permanent contact not only with communities but also with the public and private management of heritage, is not only the initiation, but the continuity of projects. I think this is where an imbalance is generated, which can cause a breakdown in their sustainability, and this has to do with technological innovation.
A coexistence of preservation and innovation is fundamental. It is important to advance on the path of the protection of local heritage; but it is also necessary to understand the demands of the population and how they can be interpreted in an intercultural dialogue. Paradoxically, this is not done necessarily by local actors, but by people like us who come to these places and try to understand what these demands are, and what the future possibilities might be.
Many projects of ours have succeeded in becoming seminal. There are periods when we benefit of important 'heritage investments' from some public or private entity, but these are followed by periods of drought, when it is difficult to implement further operations. In these times, when budgets are scarce, what can be done is to strongly appeal to inventiveness.

**Junko (DSW)**

I learnt the art of dry-stone walls from local elders. By adding the value of sustainability, I was able to give a modern meaning to the technique, which goes beyond tradition. As a result, the number of people wanting to learn dry-stone walling has increased. Our work has opened possibilities not only to preserve old walls but also to build new ones.

**Edvin (FG)**

We all face a challenge in the choice of materials in the recovery of heritage, especially at UNESCO sites. In my experience in Gjirokastra, we try to be as authentic as possible, but we cannot achieve 100% authenticity. Albania is developing, and we feel a lot of pressure from businesses and the government. In the initial stages of a project, we can try to adopt a sensible approach, but when in the later stages it goes into the hands of the government, we lose control over the authenticity of the materials. If the initiatives are private, there is also the haste to complete the work.

**Hagino (MG)**

We are always trying to learn from both traditional wisdom and scientific knowledge. I think that reconciling them would allow to take advantage of the most interesting points of both and provide understanding of the lifestyle and the richness of traditional *satoyama*.

### 5.2.4 Transmission (to young generations)

**Emiliano**

As a person in charge of the heritage policies in a large city, which has not, however, managed to consolidate a heritage education policy, I would like to know if you work with formal and/or informal education and valuation processes to overcome the negative perception of traditional techniques and their association with poverty and 'lack of development'. Have you partaken any educational processes with children, teenagers and young people who may be interested in the valorisation and conservation of this heritage and in the revaluation of traditional techniques and local identity, who may then receive technical training in this area?

**Chiara (SBAP)**

Those who act to safeguard the cultural heritage of a territory and its specific form of traditional culture must recognise that they are faced with a heritage and be trained to interact with that heritage. This is more evident if one tries to overcome the opposition between 'monuments' and 'lesser' heritage. What is lesser heritage? The building constructed of earth bricks? The building constructed the same way as the heritage monument but which is of a lesser value? The building not signed by an important architect? When we say lesser heritage, we basically mean diffuse heritage, which lives in relation to its specific context. The ability to recognise such lesser built heritage can be the result of education, and such education starts in childhood. This allows children (and the adults they will become) to perceive the local cultural specificity, and to identify heritage settlements and buildings. Recognition leads to a more respectful approach, that is more careful not to include disharmonious elements. This is not a crusade against reinforced concrete: in some cases, it is all very well; in other cases, however, the inclusion of unrelated elements leads to a loss of heritage specificity.

**Maurizio (AC)**

Educational activities have always played a fundamental role. The participation of many students from various Italian and foreign universities in the camps we organised has encouraged an important cultural exchange that has repeatedly highlighted the thread that links the problems of conserving the 'lesser' heritage in geographical areas very distant from each other. I believe that what we are doing is important for us and for the universities too, because every time we hosted students, I noticed a gap between the academy and the world outside. The experience we offer is typically ten days long and we do not expect to fill such gap, but at the end of each camp I see the face of the students and I am quite sure that they'll go back with some new tools in the backpack.

**Junko (DSW)**

Most of the students at the Tokyo Polytechnic University were born and raised in urban contexts – in Tokyo or near Tokyo, a megalopolis. They don't know anything about the country life. Having lived in the city, they never had the opportunity to perceive their physical limits, because they always use transport to move and have always found everything 'ready' in life. When working to build dry-stone

walls, however, one immediately feels fatigue; the students finally perceive the limits of their body and understand that humans are part of nature and are some kind of animals. After graduation, many of them will work for the government (ministries, etc.), local administrations, or enterprises that collaborate in territorial policies, but if they don't understand this point, the policies they carry out will be wrong. By recognising the limits of human capacity, perhaps it is possible to create a sustainable society. I think this is very important.
As for the interaction with the younger generation, I held workshops for teenagers; while with 7-12 year olds, I did workshops with scale models of dry-stone walls.

**Carmen (Tr)**

I think it is vital to have a university education related to practice, vernacular architecture, and alternative construction techniques. I graduated in architecture in 2000 and no course related to heritage or conservation was offered to me. Only afterwards, when I was deciding whether to become an architect, I started looking around and found courses, masters, and complementary training. Now these subjects are also covered in universities, and I think it is a great progress.

**Beatriz (FA)**

The Fundación Altiplano operates in a very large territory. We are recovering traditional techniques and developing sustainable development initiatives in thirty-four communities. Built heritage and traditional techniques are greatly devaluated now, which makes this process hard. We have put up a school-workshop (*escuela taller*) system that offers employment plus apprenticeship. The projects trigger the recovery of earth and stone works and are the occasion to recover intangible heritage; stories on built heritage are being collected. But it is very difficult for this to continue over time: political will is also needed; perhaps thanks to a new emerging paradigm the revaluation of heritage will progress a bit. Through our work to recover the trades in the Arica y Parinacota region, a strong exchange of knowledge has been generated. The local population is being trained, revaluing techniques that they had heard about, and which had been lost. For instance, in a town 4,000 metres above sea level, we recovered a way of building ceilings with earth and straw, called *caruna*, which the workers remembered being used by their grandparents.

**Kiichiro (MG)**

We have set up education programs in the elementary school of our village together with local elderly people who transmit traditional knowledge to the younger generation. We should learn much more from the old people as long as they are alive. Most children in our small village will move to big cities after completing the high school to study at some university or start working. And many of the grown-up villagers have an inferiority complex towards the residents of large cities. This is why we think it is very important to teach local children the character and the traditions of the village. Even though they will move away in the future, we hope all children will have knowledge of and feel pride about the place where they grew. I think this kind of educational activities could fit in many places, and it is very important to transmit the local identity to the children. Also, it is very significant that older and younger generations work together.

5.3

# LOCAL DEVELOPMENT



# 'Heritage' and 'local development' as contested concepts



Francesca Governa

My perspective is somewhat eccentric due to both my disciplinary and research background. I hope that examining the connections between heritage and local development from a different point of view will add value to the discussion.
I would like to highlight three main points, beginning with some doubts I have concerning the two keywords at the centre of this seminar: “heritage” and “local development”.

Let’s begin with the notion of heritage, particularly traditional, vernacular, or lesser heritage. Rather than approaching heritage from a historical and architectonical standpoint, I’d like to examine it from a spatial/geographical point of view.
I think we need to question the meaning of heritage.
Heritage can be defined in many ways – as material or immaterial, as an object, a process, a perspective, an experience, and perhaps in other forms. From a spatial and geographical viewpoint, questioning the concept of heritage requires, at the very least, acknowledging its entanglement within multiple times and spaces. Heritage intersects with diverse, sometimes conflicting policies, projects, uses, and expectations – whether private or public, individual or collective, local or supralocal.
Heritage can, and perhaps must - be framed as a contested concept. It is not sure and simple. It is complex and uncertain; it always involves power relations across various spatial scales and within each spatial scale.
I’ll try to be a little clearer referring to some case studies presented by Doreen Massey in her works. Massey was a brilliant geographer from the Open University in the UK. In a book titled A Place in the World? Place, Culture and Globalisation (1995), she scrutinised heritage definition and strategies in various locations – the English countryside, and some regions of Honduras. She highlighted that inhabitants and institutions ascribe to heritage questioning the meaning of “tradition”. What is considered traditional and what is not? As well which is the meaning “local”, who counts as local and who does not, and the meaning of “locality”, where, in fact, is the locality.
Massey argued that the idea of “Englishness” in the English countryside is a contemporary construction, one that contrasts industrialization with a so-called “tradition” rooted in an idyllic past, a past that likely never existed, especially for those who worked there. What Massey highlighted is the importance to dig into the past, not only for historical understandings but particularly to uncover clashes, changes, shortcomings and conflicts. In her analysis of some indigenous communities in Honduras, Massey explored the conflictual negotiation over what constitutes

heritage and who has the authority and the right to define what is traditional and what is not, what is heritage and what is not.
To address, or at least make sense of, the contested and uncertain definition of heritage, Massey introduced the phrase "global sense of places" – that may initially seem a kind of paradox.
Place is normally considered as a synonym of "local", so why should one introduce a global perspective? Massey explained that what appears as local today, is actually part of long processes of contaminations, interactions and exchanges, flows of people, knowledge, money, extending far beyond conventional notions of local and locality.
This raised a central issue in geography, and beyond: the question of boundaries. Where is the locality? Where does a place truly begin and end?
The concept of a "global sense of place" suggests viewing local boundaries not as closed and fixed, but open and dynamic. This perspective challenges static understandings of place and space, promoting a relational approach that encourages connections with the outside, both in theoretical and practical terms. This shift is also important from a political point of view. By questioning conventional notions of local identity, the "global sense of place" emphasizes that the local (and its identity) is, and has always been, the product of interaction and exchange, rather than closure and exclusion.

The second point – the meaning of "local development" – is too broad to be discussed in detail here. I will therefore focus on the economic dimension of local development and the role heritage plays in local development processes and strategies. Heritage encompasses multiple economic dimensions and plays significant role in local development policies, projects, and plans. Angelo Pichierri, an Italian economic sociologist, in his book La regolazione dei sistemi locali (2002) addressed local development from an economic perspective. He described the relationship between heritage and local development as ambiguous, noting that heritage is expected to fulfil too many roles in local development policies. According to him, heritage is normally treated as a commercial activity, a location for businesses, a contributor to environmental quality, a pillar of local identity, a constituent of place promotion and branding, and a catalyst in regeneration policies. Perhaps too much. This extensive list invites reflection, and I believe that grounding our understanding in practical experiences can help us better frame the complex relationship between heritage and local development.

My final point serves as a recap of the previous ones. About six years ago, I conducted research aimed at understanding and improving local development processes in some Lombardia's mountain areas, focusing on the most fragile regions rather than on tourist hotspots (Governa, 2008).
Indeed, during that research, I felt some discomfort with how heritage was framed in local policies. In short, local plans and projects too often treat traditional heritage just as a resource for tourism, with tourism itself positioned as a catch-all solution to various issues.

However, I have serious reservations about this 'tourism rush,' stemming from several concerns. Tourism is a highly competitive sector and can often be unsustainable. It risks eroding the unique qualities of places and their heritage.
I believe that approaching heritage as a contested concept can open pathways to explore new approaches.
Tourism and other similar one-size-fits-all solutions seem, to me, overly simplistic and insufficient to address present political and environmental challenges.
The very concept of local development implies that multiple forms of development are possible. In my research experience, I observed that the complexity inherent in local development is often oversimplified, with a single pathway promoted—one heavily centered on tourism. Of course, tourism takes many forms, but we must remain cautious of this prevailing trend. It is a risk we must be aware of.
For those working in marginal areas, it's essential to understand the needs of local inhabitants, which include earning an income, and sustaining a viable livelihood. A functioning economy is essential, yet I view economy not as an abstract concept or as financial flows, but as a practical means of using heritage to connect the habitability of a place with economic opportunity. An economy that is not distant or detached but deeply embedded in the fabric of society itself.

### 5.3.1 Local development processes and results

**Andrea B.**

I would like to see if, besides tourism – which is more or less always present as an ingredient of the local development recipe –, there are other activities igniting local development processes, and generating income for the local community from the local community itself, therefore contributing to a circular local economy.

**Emiliano**

Are there experiences where technology transfer has allowed the development of new production activities, livelihood tools for the local population, or small enterprises?

**Martina**

Did the processes implemented – based on the conscious revival and transmission of traditional techniques – have in turn a positive influence on issues linked to local socio-economic dynamics?
Did they increase the sense of belonging and pride in traditions and settlements?
Did you perceive any changes, regarding for example the demographic trends, or the willingness of the population in collaborating with you in the recovery of heritage? Did you notice bottom-up processes of heritage conservation and maintenance?
What was your impact?

**Chiara (SBAP)**

More than change I would speak of impact as long as the School of specialisation is concerned. In our so-called ateliers – we stay for a week in a certain area and work together with the local population, associations and cultural organisations – we could appreciate a growth in the population's consciousness about the values of the territory and the heritage.
Our experience has been extremely positive along the years.
At the beginning there is a sort of suspicion – why is the Politecnico coming, what do they want to do here? Do they desire that our habits change? Are they biased against the area where we live? – Extremely quickly, this sort of suspicion changes into the idea that we can do something together.
Obviously this attains the cultural sphere much more than practical interventions, because as a school we cannot build or restore. But the exchange of information became quite quickly a sort of leitmotiv of the week spent on the field.
Decade after decade – the School has been in operation for forty continuous years now – our links with different local communities became stronger. Nowadays we can say that we are quite recognised as subjects who interpret territories and suggest possible forms of understanding the local heritage.
In Italy and Europe in general, even lesser heritage presents considerable intricacies: even in the most remote chapel there may be stuccoes, complex masonry, stone coming from local quarries that you need to put back in operation if you are to use again that very kind of stone in restoration works, and you would also need to find workers skilled in that very way of building if you want to rebuild with the same material.

Over the years, our School has published manuals of good practice: instructions for interventions close in conception to that of the original buildings. The basis of these instructions was always a deep knowledge, grounded on very refined preliminary studies. We are very proud of these preliminary studies, which experience has shown can give rise to compatible instructions, inspired by a principle of mediation. Indeed, the cost of reopening a historic quarry is exorbitant; the same applies to restoring certain stuccoes, because good labour is not enough, you need specialised craftspeople.
Listening to very different experiences presented in this series of seminars, we realise that in different forms and contexts, we are facing the same problems: first of all, there is a need for awareness, for knowledge of the traditional constructions which together make up the heritage to which we are referring; only on the basis of such an awareness is it possible to propose interventions, in continuity with the local tradition or even breaking away from it – this should not scare us. From our studies and experiments it emerged that the worst damage is done, as Oscar Wilde said, with the best of intentions, but without sufficient knowledge.

**Pimpim (THF)**

I don't know about Europe, but I assume that in the last decades a lot of change happened there. In our side of the world, in the last ten or twenty years things have been changing quite a lot. Especially in places that were not much developed. There are places where I worked in the past and I can't recognise anymore because they were transformed into cities. There is a lot of development here and it's going fast. The whole society is becoming more money oriented than traditional culture oriented. I also see lot of very fast change in Ladakh, like the new powerful development plans that might affect all communities and the ways in which they live. The change we witnessed in the last twenty years is absolutely unprecedented and very frightening, and sometimes you feel hopeless. We are scared not because of change per se, but because we don't have enough time to reflect on the new information and the new things. And sometimes the reaction is a disaster, especially for heritage and landscape.

**Yutaka (THF)**

Development and modernisation can burst suddenly, without allowing the time to digest them.
But I see also their positive side for a good future. For example, many of the young generation go to India to get a degree. Due to the pandemic, many of these young people are returning. These Ladakhis who have been exposed to the outside and have returned, start seeing the value of their own traditions and culture. During the time they were away, they adapted to the outside conditions; then they came back importing new things, but at the same time they became aware of the local heritage. They don't see it anymore just as something old, something that nobody wants. They show interest in it.
Some of the houses we restored in the old town are not inhabited by the original family anymore: they have been rented to local young people who use them as gathering places, cafés or similar functions which were imported from outside.

**Elena (ARF)**

A lot of things changed since we started.
We gave the inhabitants a different perception of their heritage. We showed them some values that they were not aware of, and they understood in a different way what is important in their environment. However, they are still fighting their battle n a daily basis. I don't think that their life changed much because of our projects.
For me as an architect and restorer, the most important thing is that we record the maximum amount of the local built heritage. We have now built up a rich documentation that can be used for other projects or any other purpose in the future. The first step in preservation is documentation.
The church was in such a bad state that for sure it would now be a ruin if we did not rehabilitate it. Thanks to our project, people were able to enter the church and use it after more than thirty years of neglect.
The most important change is that the local district government started to fund heritage projects: after our project they understood that rehabilitation can be sustainable, that heritage is something important and that they should pay more attention. Since then, we had more than ten projects going on, some of which are completed. This changed the people's point of view on the importance of heritage.

**Américo (Pl)**

About the positive side of change, we have seen an increase of the demand for traditional techniques, and we receive a lot of requests for help in restoring houses and dovecotes from private owners. They want to restore their structures and look for financial support and technical advice.
The former president of our Association founded a company for eco-construction, called "Green-eco construction". It has been so successful that he has no time left. There is a lack of people able to build houses with the traditional techniques.
Since I came there six years ago things have changed at least regarding the dry-stone walls: when I arrived people were building dry-stone walls but they completed them with a coat of cement. I think that this has decreased.
Local people started to see our organisation as a benefit for the region: if we stopped it would be bad for the region.

**Maurizio (AC)**

I like to call this period of history 'cultural tsunami', and I think that we are now at the end of this process. In our place, the old generation is not there anymore, and the new generation has different views about our historical heritage.
I am moderately optimistic about the future because year after year I see more people exploring the idea of living in the countryside and trying to restore the old houses. Even last year with the pandemic many people contacted us to restore houses and have a new life outside of the town.

**Marta (Tr)**

We have been working in Morocco for ten years now.
When we arrived, local people and communities only recognised the big monuments as cultural heritage. They did not believe that traditional constructions were also heritage, that deserved to be preserved and lived in.

We work with the inhabitants; our labourers are always local. They teach the young people how to keep alive the traditional construction techniques. I think that they believe that this is a way to conserve the value of heritage.
Last year signed an agreement with the local municipality to establish a school of construction for the youth.
Some years ago, local people thought tourism was the only perspective, but now, with covid-19, they've seen that tourism is broken, and it does not ensure a livelihood.

**Beatriz (FA)**

After many years spent with the Andean communities there have been so many positive changes that I just mention them: creation of new opportunities; heritage and identity put in value; the stimulus for a responsible tourism given.
Obviously, we cannot focus on the issue of recovering traditional techniques only, but it certainly helps development. In Tacora, some of the artisans we trained in the restoration project's school-workshop have set up their own construction company, called Pachacuti, continuing the work passed on to them and generating development. The same happened in San Pedro de Atacama.
These are the things we must try to make happen. But to make them happen and be sustainable over time – which means, among other things, not dependent on an institution such as the Fundación Altiplano –, we need to work on education and job creation.

**Cristian (FA)**

We are working on a report on the development of Fundación Altiplano and the results it has obtained. We are trying to provide evidence of the sustainability of conservation work.
I recently made a research on the economic sustainability of six world heritage cities. I was surprised that we have dedicated very little time to the economic issue. In the cultural heritage sector, we have been very comfortable if we compare ourselves with the nature conservation sector. Our understanding of value – the key issue in heritage conservation – is very shallow, as our approach to economy matters. In the face of climate change and the collapse of the neoliberal model, there is an urgent need to preserve dignity through the conservation of heritage, and through the construction of future opportunities. Heritage preservation cannot be an effort of the knowledge elites – it is directly linked to the human groups who promote it, who need it and who ultimately justify it.

**Carmen (Tr)**

Initially, the local people, accustomed to tourists taking camel rides, didn't really understand what we were doing and why we were working. After seeing us come back a couple of times they understood what our interest is and now they work with us very intensively: they have understood that their heritage, their way of life and their culture is their legacy and that protecting them is also an opportunity for development.
We would like to have more impact on the economy of the oasis, but this is not in our hands.

**Junko (DSW)**

Our school teaches techniques on-site, restoring dry-stone walls in certain places. Many participants come from other areas. Many of them learned the technique and then restored walls back home. Some of them are now able to organise workshops in their communities in collaboration with us. Two young people have started working as builders and instructors. For our School, holding a workshop is a business in itself. Some of the participants are paid by their neighbours.

Dry-stone walls are only the support of agricultural fields – they do not directly affect the local economy. However, when you experience the work of restoring the dry-stone walls, you realise that in the past the terraced fields were constantly built and rebuilt. This changes the value of the landscape because you realise that it is not just a panorama, but the result of work. By working on their restoration, communities feel more connected to the place, because they organise their space using materials from the surrounding area.

**Ángel (Md)**

The revival of traditional construction techniques is a big aspiration, the greatest utopia perhaps. We are permanently eager to connect with techniques that are still alive, but which, I am afraid, are nowadays the subject of prejudice.

Transformations are under way in the Colca Valley. They are obviously visible in the use of new materials, which threaten the tangible identity. But, at the same time, professional teams and public institutions are beginning to understand the quality of traditional forms of construction, and regulatory requirements are becoming more demanding to save stone walls, thatched roofs, and native wood. They even begin to question whether to integrate some elements from other Andean regions that are not necessarily predominant in the valley, but which are – compared to concrete, brick and iron – much more respectful.

At the same time, it is not possible to maintain a construction identity until an ad hoc industry is developed, to nurture natural construction. If you review the *Manual básico de restauración y conservación de construcciones patrimoniales de tierra y piedra de Arica y Parinacota* (FAMSV 2012), you will immediately understand that there is a need for action in this area. It is not only the quarries that provide the stone or the earth that are of concern, but also the existence of prickly pears or cactus that will be employed in mixtures and mortars for joining adobe with adobe. To become sustainable for a community depends not only on being involved in the construction work, as they are, but also on being allowed to prepare stone or adobe materials, or specific organic mixtures to supply restoration sites. For want of immediate solutions, perhaps due to a lack of technical competence, materials that could be reused in the maintenance of houses, or in new construction, are not available.

Seen in this way, the answer to your questions implies a holistic vision of development. Public policy and community vision should cooperate in establishing locally adapted, 'on scale' norms. In our region between Chile and Peru, such norms should be able to tackle the technological issue, the crucial heritage factor, and earthquakes. Our possible intelligent and intuitive responses should embrace local materials and be based on reliable technology, so to make these constructions durable and efficient.

**Kiichiro (MG)**

Since I moved to Noto in 2004, I have been involved in two major activities. One is the rehabilitation of *dozō*, traditional earth-infill warehouses damaged by the earthquake of 2007. The second is learning and preserving the traditional *satoyama* lifestyle.

Beside the rehabilitation of warehouses, our activities have contributed to the continuation of the traditional *urushi* lacquerware industry: several *urushi* shops restarted their business accommodating the traditional production process in the warehouses we restored.

At the same time, our activities provided a place for learning traditional earth plastering techniques. As dry construction systems have become popular in the last fifty years, the number of both plaster craftsmen and jobs for them drastically declined. Pretty many plaster craftsmen from all over Japan came to help in our projects because they could learn traditional techniques, under one of the most known and skilled plaster craftsmen, Kuzumi Akira. Some of them are now working on the rehabilitation of *dozō* severely damaged by the East Japan Earthquake of 2011. And myself, as an architect, sometimes make a modern use of traditional plasters in my projects and employ craftsmen who developed their skills during *dozō* rehabilitation activities.

As for the activity on *satoyama* lifestyle, we try to introduce changes slowly and be as unobtrusive as possible regarding the current lifestyle. However, we observed several interesting changes during the last ten years.

One example is that local elderly farmers started to spare the rare plants in the process of mowing wild grass. They learnt they were endangered through survey activities led by an ecologist. On the other hand, the ecologists learned local traditional names and usages of plants from elderly natives.

Another positive change is that a few young people have moved in our village. Some of them had visited our village as students of the Tokyo Agriculture University, to make field research on farming villages, and were attracted by the lifestyle in tune with nature.

I think a certain number of young people in Japan are interested in living in a rural village, which did not occur when I was a student a few decades ago. The growth of the economy has stopped and there are lots of vacant houses in the countryside. Pretty many wise young people are now interested in making use of the existing structures in towns and even marginal villages.

It is not a rapid transformation; time is needed for change to happen in such small communities.

### 5.3.2 Interdisciplinary teams

**Andrea B.**

Associations and groups working on heritage restoration should not only be composed of specialists in construction, architecture, and building techniques, but also of people with ethnographic expertise and people with economic, heritage management and business development skills. In my opinion, without these contributions it is difficult to set up lasting processes. Do you agree, based on the experience of your NGO?

**Yosuke**

On the one hand you carry out your project mainly through practical work. On the other, the need to conduct analyses, document and disseminate the knowledge acquired through practical work is also very evident. Did you have collaborations with people from other disciplines beyond architecture and construction during workshops or in dissemination activities? If so, what was the result?

**Chiara (SBAP)**

The School of Specialisation was founded in 1989, and was declaredly interdisciplinary: at that time, it was not yet called transdisciplinary as we do today. Differently from the other schools that were being set up in those years, which called themselves restoration schools, our school was born with many souls: one historical, one linked to restoration, one with an attention to the territory and one linked to economic evaluation. Over time, other competences have been added, such as a focus on historical and traditional materials, an important contribution of information technology, courses on GIS and surveying, also using very advanced technologies. The initial idea of working together, bringing together different skills, continues. In addition to conventional lectures, every year – and this distinguishes us from other Italian postgraduate schools – we organise a field workshop, in a place that changes every three or four years so that we can acquire a good knowledge of the area. In these places, we carry out an integrated study, which must therefore be inter- and trans-disciplinary. In recent years we have had archaeological excavation camps; the activity of the archaeologist was flanked by survey activities, the study of archival documentation, territorial observation, the study of materials, etc. The integration between disciplines is therefore not a programmatic statement but is practised in the field. Obviously, all territories are not the same: depending on the region, one component may have more relevance than another. Even when the archaeologist leads, the find is considered in its context and is viewed in the light of different, highly integrated disciplines. We approach complex contexts. It is necessary to be many and with different disciplinary backgrounds in order not to risk losing their complexity or misrepresenting it.

**Maurizio (AC)**

We call the medieval village of Ghesc, where we have been working for years, a 'village-laboratory'. For us, the meaning of the term 'laboratory' goes beyond the concept of place where experiments are carried out that have to do with stone construction and traditional stone building techniques. At a time of rapid acceleration

in history, we look back with interest and without nostalgia to the last ten centuries. We look back at the history told by the stone buildings that surround us and search for lessons that we can bring into the future. Laboratory is therefore meant in the broadest sense imaginable, and – in addition to the technical disciplines – art, the humanities, botany, zoology, archeoastronomy, archaeology, etc. are also called in to participate. The experiences of past years have confirmed how much results can be amplified thanks to the integration of very different points of view.

**Junko (DSW)**

The Dry walling school has promoted the fact that masonry restoration encourages communication and is useful for team building, which has led us to create relationships with people outside the construction industry. In particular, companies are increasingly using our school for training in human resource development. This also generates an income for the Dry walling school, which contributes to the continuation of our activities.

**Beatriz (FA)**

I guess most of us here have a technical background as architects. Development and conservation projects with communities should be addressed by multidisciplinary teams because on the one hand you have technical issues such as structural and constructional ones, but on the other it is important to integrate a model that considers the value of buildings and techniques to a community, as well as the needs and the risks felt by that community. It is difficult for technicians alone to cover so many issues, so it is important that soft skills are involved when dealing with heritage actions.
In the region of Arica y Parinacota, the Fundación Altiplano has been working for the last twenty years on the valorisation of both tangible and intangible heritage. We work in multidisciplinary teams – anthropologists, art historians, video makers, engineers. Cristián Heinsen has a degree in literature, Bosco Gonzáles, who collaborates with us, is a sociologist – so we try to integrate different visions into our projects, going far beyond the technical problems of restoration. We have a dissemination department, which is responsible for making the value of such heritage known and for opening the village to visitors who may appreciate the indigenous life. This is mostly done through two festivals: a rural film festival called Arica Nativa (yearly in October) and the Arica Barroca Festival, an art, music and anthropology festival that focuses on the Barroco Andino heritage buildings, but promotes traditional techniques and heritage in general (yearly at the end of May).

**Ángel (Md)**

In the last twenty years, there has been an evolution from the architect's linear view to a transdisciplinary and open view. Our knowledge of the Colca Valley has not been limited to the field of architecture or planning, but has been extended to ethnographic, anthropological, and archaeological aspects. No work, no intervention is possible without the participation of a larger team, which not only generates a professional dialogue, but is able to connect with community knowledge. To all the fields encompassed in our academic training, we must add the fields embedded in the community's heritage: the community, now empowered in word and action,

collaborates in determining the course of projects, reflecting a greater authority legitimised by the knowledge inherited over the years. We have arrived with good intentions, but it has been very difficult for us to understand the wisdom or know-how that existed in the tectonics of the land and the community. Perhaps something is still missing regarding our understanding of the philosophical depths of the territory. I am not referring to poetry because the territory itself has a poetics, which does not necessarily need a human transmitter – to capture it you just need to perceive the vibrations that the space offers you, in its rituality, in its sacredness.

**Carmen (Tr)**

Interdisciplinary collaboration always enriches and allows a more objective view of the project. We are architects trained in heritage preservation and basic habitability, but we work together with people from other disciplines and other countries: architects from Lebanon; craftswomen from Portugal; historians from Mauritania; archaeologists from England; tourist guides from Morocco; designers from Russia. Usually, we architects think we can do everything... but this is not true and once you receive a contribution from a different point of view, the project grows and progresses. Obviously, associations and NGOs should be interdisciplinary, but this is not always easy due to the reduced budgets that force them to work for free. Sometimes small associations have been founded by specialists with homogenous professional profiles, maybe because work, interests and passion have joined them.

**Hagino (MG)**

I think it is important to work with various disciplines, not just with professionals related to architecture, because we are working not just to restore architecture, but to restore and sustain the society and the living environment. Also, I think it is important that this kind of multidisciplinarity is acquired inside each single person.

The Japanese word for peasant, *hyaku-sho*, literally means “one hundred family names”. The dictionary says that originally it meant “general public”, but in the 15th or 16th century it started meaning “farmer”: the farmers had lots of skills. It is true that my neighbour farmers can cultivate, fell trees, dig canals, build houses, repair woodworks, maintain machines, tie ropes, repair thatched roofs, plaster walls, hunt wild animals, and many other things. And they are proficient in all fields. My interpretation of *hyaku-sho* is therefore “people with one hundred expertises” or “skilled in one hundred trades”.

During the last fifty or one hundred years, specialisation has increased so rapidly that many people have forgotten the fundamental ability of being human. In order to survive in a future sustainable society, people need to become adaptable and flexible again, and be ready to take up diverse ideas, viewpoints, skills and techniques. I think this has become clear especially after the pandemic, which forced us to stay confined in small territories and deprived of direct interaction. In our time it is essential to search for a sustainable lifestyle. I’m trying to learn from the *hyaku-sho* concept and to follow a *hyaku-sho* lifestyle: not only to be an architect, but to do lot of things and refer to both traditional and scientific wisdom, and to practise harmonic ways of coexistence between nature and humans. I think everybody should have many abilities.

### 5.3.3 Tourism

**Andrea B.**

So far we have been speaking about topics closely related to the building trade and physical restoration, but, as I tried to express in my introduction, I see this as just a part of a broader engagement in local development. I would like to understand what your opinion about tourism is. Sometimes tourism is seen like the only development opportunity for a local community. It is taken for granted that if any income is going to be generated in the community, that will be thanks to foreign money – when I say foreign I don't necessary mean from another country – and that such money coming from without will help the local community to survive.

**Chiara (SBAP)**

I am extremely worried about what I call the "Grand Tour syndrome" or even – if you want – the "colonial syndrome", with which I mean looking for a sort of redefined landscape. We want to see something, and we are ready to pay the cost of the travel, the cost of the transformation, and even the cost of the maintenance, if the landscape we find at the end of the journey answers to an idea we have about it. Unfortunately, such an image may be absolutely different from the real landscape.

To better express what I mean, let's put it like this: we love the ruin, we want the ruin; we love the idea of the vineyards, we want to see the vineyards, which is, for example, a big problem for the Langhe, because their landscape packed with extensive vineyards is extremely recent. In the past it was a mosaic of different cultivations because peasants could not survive out of drinking wine only... they needed to eat bread, vegetables and maybe some fruit. The historical landscape was very different, a cultivation patchwork, but visitors – foreigners and Italians alike – don't care: they want to visit Chiantishire (or rather Baroloshire or Barberashire to apply the British ironical term to our own wine districts) and see them filled with vineyards. Is this a 'real' landscape or a 'false' landscape? Everybody loves a beautiful picture, but it is important to know when the picture is fictional.

Tourism is probably the easiest way to obtain visibility for a region and raise interest both in the monuments and the lesser heritage we are discussing today. Probably *ciabòt* are made easier to promote just because they lie in vineyards, and the nearby, beautiful forest can be described as attractive because it is a portion of the land which is different from the homogeneous vineyard. The forest is interesting not because of its historical value, but because it contrasts against the insisted continuity of the landscape.

In my opinion the question stands extremely sharp: what are we restoring, and what are we inventing? And what does the local population think of our intervention? There are not just insiders and outsiders, not only inhabitants and foreigners. There are also ancient inhabitants who emigrated to a city, or even to another country, and who later come back to their native land. Also the landscape they want to preserve is in fact idealised. It's an image transmitted by their

grandparents, or an idea they elaborated while they were away. A sort of fantasy, or a dream if you prefer, in which nostalgia as well as myth play their role.
I think there are at least three different levels: what we know directly (we can love or hate it – it is very unlikely that we are neutral); what we see when we visit an area; and what we think is affordable. In extremely lucky cases, these three visions match obtaining a sort of wonderful synthesis between desire, opportunities, and possibilities. In other cases, we must choose.
Somebody would say "don't create a new window because the wall must remain exactly as it was centuries ago", but nowadays we are used to have natural light to cook, to wash, to write, or simply because we want to see the panorama. The issue of the view is extremely recent, but everybody accepts to pay more for a house with a beautiful vista; I don't want to overlook my neighbour's kitchen, but in historical cities this was and remains common.
Every place has its own capacity to deal with transformation, even outside economical plans: throughout history the landscape, the cities, the monuments themselves, have always changed. Change happens all the time, and "no mummies" should be the slogan, while the vineyard countryside is a sort of mummy – in my very personal opinion. A very rentable one, to be true. As tourists, we adore to visit the wonderful Swiss landscapes, with cottages and cows so graciously placed that they might have been staged by a set designer.

**Edvin (FG)**

In the beginning, we really wanted visitors. But now I think tourism is endangering the sites and Gjirokastra as a whole.
Restoring or preserving buildings requires some time to draw the project and then to build it, like they did in the past: slowly and according to the traditional techniques. Now in some cases owners come and ask to build three more rooms to accommodate visitors within the next month. But theirs is a monument house, so time is needed to prepare the project. Because of this pressure there are cases where the project is too hasty and big changes in the structure of the house are made, at least in the interior.
Moreover, sometimes tourism changes the landscape. Some things pretend to be traditional, when in fact they aren't – they are just fake. For instance, in Albania we have now a lot of wine tasting tours in the vineyards. Wine was traditionally produced in Albania, but the country is not famous for its wine. Our wine is good but very unrefined. Now everyone wants to have a vineyard and a canteen for wine tasting because this is what tourists want. The same thing happens with cheese: I was surprised when I went in a village and they offered different cheeses for tasting, like yellow cheese with different fruits and so on. This is not Albania. Our traditional cheese is feta cheese, the white, plain one. This is pretending something is traditional when in fact it is not, and this affects the landscape a lot.
Because of tourism pressure, things like these are created and described as traditional. Therefore, I think tourism, if massive, is very dangerous, because it kills the authentic experience. I believe that we should fight for authentic things, not invented ones.

Some places in the country are not visited by tourists, despite having a potential and a need. In Gjirokastra I think we are at high risk because of the pressure of tourism: it's a small town of 35,000 people. It is a matter of balance.

**Andrea B.**

Firenze is much larger than Gjirokastra but the physical impact of tourism on the city is so huge that now you can hardly find a local person living in the city centre, you can even hardly find a real proximity shop in the city centre because the shops are selling bullshit to the tourists or have been converted into fake 'typical' restaurants. This is what happens in mature tourists' cities, and it's not by chance that the residents of cities like Barcelona or Palma de Mallorca are now rising against tourism because tourism has devastated the local people's opportunity to afford a rent in the historical centre; residents can't even roam freely because of people taking pictures everywhere. In Gjirokastra you're feeling in danger, but it may be much worse.
Of course, in Gjirokastra, people were not wealthy in the communist era. Now a lot of tourists come, they pay to visit the vineyards. Villagers who have lived in poverty don't feel bad about earning money from the tourists. They will transform their land into a vineyard to meet the tourists' (supposed) expectations. What should one do about this? How could one control this phenomenon?
As we said, we don't have solutions to that. My opinion is that if the local economy is strong there is not much need for foreign money. Foreign money is welcome but it's just an addition. When foreign money makes most of the economy, then you are at risk. It is good to use tourism, to leverage a local economy, as it was done in Gjirokastra, but temporarily, to give an initial breakthrough. From that a truly circular local economy should rise and flourish. Otherwise, you are in danger. Imagine: in a single year a few planes are burst by terrorism. The world tourism collapses because suddenly nobody wants to fly anymore. Or there is a big energy crisis and the price of fuel skyrockets and again, nobody wants to fly anymore because it's not affordable. Or whatever. I mean, whenever you depend on foreign money, you are weak because you have no control on the source of your wealth. So, it is a good thing to take advantage of your heritage and earn some money from the tourists but whenever the share collected from tourism is too large you must know you are at risk, maybe not tomorrow, maybe not next year, but sometime.

**Maurizio (AC)**

I think we are all tourists here. Let me explain which kind of tourists we are. Historically there were a few tourists in a few places. Then tourism changed into contemporary mass tourism: tourism for everyone, everywhere in the world. I believe we are close to a new era of tourism in which different kinds of tourists will coexist. We must realise that tourism is there and, of course, it can be an opportunity.
I chose to live in the countryside and my employment opportunities are limited compared to people living in an urban area. Maybe tourism can be a part of my income. Of course, we need to be careful: we have to be able to choose the right type of tourism, and build and take action in accordance with it. We should also

promote authentic values. This is an opportunity especially in well-preserved areas such as the one where we work.
The population of metropolitan areas is still increasing at the global scale. In 2007, almost 50 percent of the world's population was living in urban areas: according to the UN's prospects, this percentage will increase to 68 percent by 2050.
In Italy, I believe that some right actions might convince some people who now live in metropolitan areas to move to rural areas that had been abandoned. Something is moving in this direction, and I am optimistic for the future.

**Nadia (BdF)**

In our region, it is difficult to imagine a risk of a future invasion of tourists, because now it is out of any mass tourism circuit; however, the nearby Bassa Langa, where in the last 10-15 years tourism boomed, shows that this cannot be ruled out.
Our project aims at making the community aware of the importance of preserving the built environment and the landscape, but also at prompting local authorities and stakeholders to work on projects to attract a 'responsible' tourism, one that is sensible to culture, to art, and to the authenticity of the land.
For example, the path along which we would like to create a disperse hotel connects not only natural and landscape highlights, but also some interesting businesses. In this way tourists would visit local entrepreneurs such as cheese or wine producers and support them economically.
If the local community had its own solid economy and social life, potential negative consequences of tourism would be limited, but this is not the case of our region where agriculture has collapsed excepted the cultivation of hazelnuts, for which there is still a high demand. A few other small activities survive.
However, those who remain are very connected to the land. In fact, it is still difficult buying land or rural houses. Nevertheless, local businesses are mostly small-sized, so tourism could provide a great development opportunity.
I think that the development of a new kind of agriculture and other rural activities could potentially be very positive for the area. For example, a group of small landholders created an association to restart the production of almonds and wine – both were traditional products but are nowadays forgotten and could give a good economic return despite the huge initial investment required on terraced hills.
Some locals are managing to live on agriculture, mixed with tourism: they rent rooms, they breed animals, they grow something.
Our school is attracting "a new generation of tourists": people from Workaway – which is a platform that allows members to arrange home stays and cultural exchanges (volunteers or "Workawayers" are expected to contribute a pre-agreed amount of time per day in exchange for lodging and food, which is provided by their host) –, young people of the European Solidarity Corps, students, and in general people who are looking for training and practical experience.
I think that this kind of tourism will grow in the future, maybe more than traditional ways of travelling, and this can bring a lot of advantages compared to mass tourism in terms of cultural exchange, and respect of the environment and the local community. The inflow of young visitors is particularly relevant in a badly depopulated area. Old people are dying and there are hardly new generations. All those who could leave already left.

**Filipa (BdF)**

In recent years, not only the population decreased but also services that are essential to keep residents (such as schools, hospitals, public offices, etc.) have been shutting off. A high percentage of those who went away for higher education did not return.
Of course, internet brought the possibility of remote working but if you want to start a family, the services should not be dozens of kilometres away. The income of those who remain is related with the land.
The seasonality of these places is also a problem, since in summer there are lots of tourists and events but in winter shops are closed and there is not much social life going on. This situation is common to other inland areas, and basic services should be provided to reverse the current scenario and attract immigrants.

**Junko (DSW)**

I deal with terraces, so it is a bit difficult to talk about income through tourism: tourists do not pay for the consumption of the landscape: one pays a ticket to visit a museum, but not to see a landscape. Buses take tourists to see famous terraced landscapes, but these visits don't leave any money on the spot. If tourists come, it is the tourist agency that makes the money, not the farmers. Furthermore, in Japan we do not have a system like agrotourism, and in general, we have no way of appreciating the value of the landscape economically.
For the inhabitants of terraced areas, the only way to survive is to sell their agricultural products (rice, vegetables, etc.) with some added local value. Instead, in Japan nowadays, administrations are promoting productivity and industrial agriculture. Therefore, the search for added quality (as opposed to quantity) from the locals' side goes against the national agricultural policies. That's a problem. From this point of view, Japan is more than thirty years behind Europe.
During the nine years I lived in Tokushima, I worked on planning for revitalising rural villages. However, I perceived a limit: in this context of agricultural policy that seeks only production efficiency based on large extensions, the promotion of local foods just creates local competition, between local actors who are looking for urban customers. Instead, the competition should oppose the highlands and the lowlands, and industrial agriculture should be involved in the match. Urbanites must learn to buy products from mountain areas to safeguard their culture and environment, rather than buy agricultural products grown in the lowlands where efficiency is all what is sought. Otherwise, rural villages would be consumed in the fratricidal competition to be chosen by urbanites. And if the urbanites' sense of value is incorrect, the aforementioned competition often leads to the environmental destruction in the villages.
I think that agricultural policies in Japan must change, which is why I am currently writing about the Common Agricultural Policy of the European Union and the relationship between environment and agriculture. Doing this is also very important for the conservation of dry-stone walls.

**Beatriz (FA)**

San Pedro de Atacama is one of the most famous tourist destinations in Chile, and an example of mass tourism. We have been restoring the church there.

It is an oasis in the middle of the desert exploited by tourism already during the 20th century. In summer, at the peak of the tourist season, water is cut off for the local people living in villages around San Pedro, there is no gas in the gas station, there is no money at the ATM, so nobody lives there anymore.
For Fundación Altiplano, San Pedro was an example of what to avoid, to not make the same mistakes in Arica and Parinacota.
We think that tourism can be a part of the solution for developing some villages, but only if well planned, and respectful to environmental values. We are also trying to promote experiential tourism, which is working in Titicaca and many other sites where tourists aren't disconnected from the real life of people. They learn how to make wine, how to cook, how to farm the lamas... It seems there is a change of mentality, and that visitors enjoy coming to rural areas to live more calmly and re-establish some connection with nature.
In my lecture I spoke of four ecosystems connected by the Ruta de la Plata which was essentially a trade route; this economic linkage is still working. The difference with the past is that the interaction is centralised in the main city, at the sea level. Perhaps this interaction should occur at all the four levels, and thus contribute to the development of small towns that are suffering from depopulation. If this interaction worked in conjunction with the re-activation of the Ruta de la Plata, sustainable tourism might contribute a great opportunity for local development.

**Ángel (Md)**

Undoubtedly, the components of territorial development are diverse, and this assertion is valid in any part of the world. Therefore, believing that only tourism could solve a large part of community aspirations and/or needs is a mirage.
Yet, it cannot be denied that tourism can, to a certain extent, contribute to the self-esteem, pride, and sense of belonging of local communities. Tourism is often designed as a consensual charity project.
The Colca Valley is a polysemic palimpsest in formation, which contains an enormous material and immaterial wealth; therefore, its opportunities are diverse despite the latent threats. From the year 2000 until February 2020, tourism had been progressively growing, up to more than 350,000 visitors per year. The impact on many Colqueños has been ostensible.
It is totally externally controlled activities, which depend on quite unpredictable conditions, that they make local economies vulnerable; and in fact, during the pandemic, tourism activities have collapsed. Things will never be the same again. However, who knows, in the medium term, we might find out new ways of tourism based on a radical rethinking of the concept of "territories to visit and recognise". Of course, we need to be careful with what the communities think of tourism. We must accompany them, not disturb them with city abstractions.
However, the richness of Collaguas and Cabanas territory does not exclusively benefit tourism. The main vocation is agriculture. At present, about 8,000 hectares are dedicated to the production of corn, potatoes, barley, quinoa, beans, among other crops. In addition, crafts have gained planetary recognition that deserves an attentive rethinking, to make them lucrative. Likewise, the local cultural strengths linked to landscape resources, seem to ensure unmatched potential for the construction sector. Consequently, the circular economy is latent and should be made actual.

**Carmen (Tr)**

Terrachidia works with and for locals, as well as with and for non-locals. Our training activities link locals and non-locals in a common project whose outcome will benefice them all. Tourism alone is too simple a development perspective that will not enrich the community and will not create jobs in the medium-long term. A development project should consider cultural values, natural resources and the community's capacities to empower their village, their culture and their local economy. Once this is set up, tourism will come as a natural consequence and will be beneficial.

**Eltjana (GO2)**

Recently we have undertaken another project on sustainable tourism and green entrepreneurship aiming to to enforce the circular economy principles, and to preserve the environment and cultural landscape.
As part of this initiative, we are developing small interventions that promote recycling, reusing, and reducing. By encouraging these practices, we hope to inspire locals to recognise the value of their heritage and take an active role in sustaining it, e.g. we proposed to repurpose the abandoned granaries that used to store animal feed as self-informative corners for tourists.

**Pimpim (THF)**

I'm curious about the impact of the tourism in Gostuša. Is it already becoming a tourist area? What is the impact? How do the residents see this? How is your organisation seen? How is the park seen? How are the tourists seen? How does tourism affect your project?

**Elena (ARF)**

In this site there is no mass tourism, there are just five guest houses with five beds each. Not much people can be accommodated there, but a lot of people are coming on day visits. We want tourism to grow, but in the last year for example, when the borders were closed and Serbian people could not go abroad for holidays, there were so many tourists in the area that the local system could not take them in and manage them – it was just not ready.
Tourism can be good for the local community but bad for the nature. This problem needs to be tackled at a higher level first and then implemented at the village scale.

### 5.3.4 What after?

**Andrea B.**

Obviously if the initiative is managed by a local group, i.e. composed and led by people from a certain community, my question does not apply because continuity over time can be expected.
But if instead, as it happens in many instances, after having been working in a certain area for years, you have been successful in restoring a number of buildings and you move to another project, or if for some reason your organisation collapses, dissolves or loses its initial drive, what do you leave behind, as your intangible legacy to the community?
How do you empower the local community?
Has the community acquired tools and skills that allow it to continue in its own way the work you initiated?
Will they be able to appropriate their own destiny, and have control on their future?
And at what point in this process do you feel you are?

**Emiliano**

Once knowledge has been transferred or collectively generated, and work has been completed, how do you follow up and monitor the preservation of heritage, to see if this learning has continued developing?
In transmitting the acquired knowledge, does the work you have done continue in the subsequent actions of the community?
Are the building techniques actually adopted by the locals?

**Chiara (SBAP)**

It's not easy at all to answer these questions... only posterity probably could seriously evaluate the quality and the 'durability' of our work. Heritage is the material we work with; but it is hard to resolve whether we'll leave some heritage after us.
If we have correctly approached the territorial complexity, it's possible we have also encouraged locals to consider their landscape (I mean both the physical dimension and the cultural heritage characterising the country so deeply to define its specificity) with more awareness. It's a matter of consciousness, and the more the insiders really know their land, the more they are able to envisage interventions, better than us, who are inevitably outsiders. It's again the relationship between the landscape and the image of the same landscape, I was recalling before: for us, who do not live in the area, it remains extremely hard to separate reality from 'prejudice' (in the etymological sense of the word: the judgment formed before knowledge) we formed in our minds in dependence from what we had heard, read – from savant essays to leisure novels – or seen in photos, paintings, engravings, etc.
Residents know their land by heart; they can decide to ignore, or even to refuse it, but they know about it, and this is their wealth. So I'm quite convinced that, if they wear a good pair of glasses, therefore creating a minimum of detachment that can provide a little more of objectiveness, they will be able to choose the better way to ensure the necessary 'durability' to both our work (the years we spent working in their area) and their own work (the actions they will decide to take). Our job, then, could be to offer such goggles.

**Carmen (Tr)**

The buildings we have restored do exist and locals use them, meet inside them, and pray close to them. Several spaces have been recovered for the community; this is objective.

When it comes to intangible heritage, the answer is not that easy. I think that asking locals to be our masters and teachers has reinforced their self-esteem and raised awareness about their culture and capacities. This should be a push for them to lead other projects and initiatives even when we are not there, but this has only occurred on a few occasions. They acknowledge our collaboration as an initiative we lead, and they just follow us. New suggestions and creative ideas from locals would be very welcome.

My impression is that after these small projects or collaborations something takes hold, and that there is some continuity on the part of the population. When we leave, however, most of them cannot create opportunities for themselves, such as starting a business, and the local government itself is not interested in this. To be sure, I suspect that the same would happen in Spain.

However, in the M'hamid oasis, thanks also to our encouragement, some women started two cooperatives, opened a couple of shops, and now sell their products both to tourists and the local population.

On the other hand, I notice that the students and professionals who participate in our workshops are touched by the first contact with this heritage and take this experience with them for the rest of their lives. Many of them are very young, 20-22 years old, and after this experience they continue this path.

**Beatriz (FA)**

These are difficult questions. Our work is based on three legs, and we need all three: one is economical, one is technical, and one is social. They need one another to keep the balance. For now, we are the technicians, but in the future, we will leave the place, Fundación Altiplano doesn't want to exist for the eternity and this is why we are creating the Escuela de Conservación Sostenible Saraña. It is supposed to teach people the techniques, the materials, how to make a restoration project but also leadership, empowerment... now we are even building a kitchen for traditional cooking. The technicians want to leave someday and now we are in the process of passing the knowledge over to the communities. The community must remain, but they need some empowerment and leadership.

A committee was recently created with representatives of all the villages to control the ongoing tourism and restoration programs, to make projects by themselves. They do not need us anymore. For the moment, there are donations and government grants, but we don't know how to ensure the funding from the government in the future. We wish that the restoration process can create a local economy.

**Edvin (FG)**

One of the words I like to use when I talk about the work of the Gjirokastra Foundation is catalyst: it is part of our mission. When we started working in Gjirokastra we were alone, but now a lot of actors are very able to carry out activities and work in the area. Sometimes I have the feeling that we somehow completed our mission: we are still supervising and advising them, but they can

work independently. You have to create space for other people to be involved. The process will go its own way, and you feel that you left something behind which is very good. However, it is not a goodbye. It is a good feeling to have accompanied groups that are now important actors in town and carry on their work independently; at the same time, one can feel a bit nostalgic, I admit.

**Junko (DSW)**

My situation is probably a little different because I don't work in a stable location. I started this project thinking about the moment I would leave the place. In fact, I started when I lived in Tokushima, but now I live in Tokyo – I have already moved. But the project continues because my activities are not tied to a single place: I created a system to continue the activity that I started.
In each place we work with our School there are local protagonists of the activities who learn how to build dry-stone walls and then continue their own. We often go back to the same places to allow the locals to reach an autonomous capacity. We take care of all Japan; local inhabitants take care of their place.

**Maurizio (AC)**

In this adventure, I feel like a guest of the place rather than someone who owns the place. I feel that I am a part of something that is moving on. Maybe in fifty years Ghesc will be different and in one hundred it will be abandoned again, but this is history. It is not very important. I am probably shifting the discussion to a more philosophical level, but what I am doing here is more for myself than for the place that I restored. I am doing something to live better, and I am following my principles. If in this path I can share my experience and inspire someone else, this is the highest result that I can reach. It is important doing something in a place, but the most important thing is doing something to find yourself and doing it the right way. Then it becomes a part of history.

**Lorenzo (BdF)**

Being part of this process is very interesting for us, because, in a sense, we are taking care of a landscape and a heritage site that before us nobody was taking care of. Our work is an attempt to demonstrate to the inhabitants how their traditional buildings can be enhanced without seeing them as a burden. We are talking to people about very practical actions that have to do with building and restoring houses with stone and wood. I don't think there is anything more tangible than this. Yet, for us it is very important to convey emotions, because they could boost similar practices somewhere else.
The result of these practices is very difficult to predict. There are so many variables in these processes, for example your success in raising funds, and in rising the awareness of local institutions who would support. At least, we can say that we have already had an excellent feedback: the creation of the Banca del Fare project in Sardegna, thanks to two extraordinary people who have chosen to use our method there.

**Ángel (Md)**

We obviously cultivated friendships and affections, but pretending that what was said and shared has remained would be an overestimation.
I believe that the greatest accomplishment is to have become a kind of external spokesperson for the values of these territories. I gave part of my soul and some of my knowledge to those lands. Fortunately, I gained more than I believe to have contributed.
Even now and from where I am, I continue to collaborate with tangible and intangible interactions, in addition to contributing research, plans, projects and publications. In a certain way, it is moving, from the imagined to the concrete. Contributions flow and are disinterested.
I believe that the best contribution to the empowerment of local communities is the multi-scalar management and the productive reconversion of the territories, in full harmony with local knowledge and contemporary planetary knowledge. In this way, the territorial actors would once again become environmental authors and doers allowing, consequently, greater agency in each of the components of sustainability and, above all, political and technical participation would occur. This would force them to account for their actions instead of asking for explanations from 'outsiders' or 'foreigners' about their own future prospects.
Urbanity has prevailed over rurality, but there is no rational being in the world that is unaware of the vitality of the interdependence of these polarities. At some point, hopefully soon, countries will have to converge on a renewed imaginary. A strategic return to rurality would be an intelligible move to ensure food and sustainability. In this regard, it is possible to be optimistic amid the uncertainty regarding the continuity of life in peripheral spaces.

**Kiichiro (MG)**

Maruyam a-Gumi has not yet accomplished a mature ability for monitoring the ramifications of its activities in terms of knowledge development. Anyway, I think that the build-up of research and relations does not need to hurry up; it takes time to live in practice what one has learnt. We do not need to rush to get a result.
It is hard to hand over the activities (even if they went on for a long time and in the same place), especially in case they were led by people from outside.
Giving an example in which I am involved, the rehabilitation of *dozō* after the earthquake of 2007 involved many plasterers from all over Japan, attracted by the opportunity to learn from experienced masters. However, most of the local plasterers had been too busy in repairing buildings in the conventional ways to join and learn the traditional techniques. We missed the opportunity to revitalise the traditional techniques in the area. I should have asked local craftspeople to join our project more strongly. This experience taught me the importance of embarking people from different places (natives and outsiders from various areas), and also from different backgrounds (not only craftspeople).

### 5.3.5 NGOs' planning for future

**Andrea B.**

What you have been doing has a lot to do with working on past things, which are now available to our pleasure, to our fruition, to our operation. I would like to tell the same story in another way and say that you are not working on past heritage – you are working on the future of these communities and their heritage. In some of your words I felt that there is a project of the future and I'm very interested in hearing about how, working on the heritage of the past is a part of planning for a sustainable future.

**Americo (PI)**

Of course, we have plans for the future, otherwise we would stop working tomorrow. We mainly work on natural conservation with a specific focus on some species.
Regarding architecture and traditional techniques, we like to see ourselves as a catalyser for the region. We like to show to locals that we are inviting people from outside, and we try to involve the residents on work with these techniques by asking, "Why do you think these people came from outside to do the work you would normally do?". We also show the importance of local traditions to avoid that the very few young people who still live here to leave. At the same time, we try to attract people here and try to make them fall in love with region. Without people there can't be a future.
We also have plans regarding the traditional pigeon houses. If we reconstructed them just because they are beautiful, in some years we would have to redo the job because there would be no maintenance. We have to find new uses for them, respecting their outer appearance. Where such new uses are viable, we fund those who experiment with these.

**Maurizio (AC)**

Our problem is that many villages are completely abandoned, and we cannot force anyone to go and live there. We can just show that it is possible, and that the quality of life can be higher than in urban areas.
In this sense, our mission completely points to the future, and we hope this can happen because it is a pity to see centuries-old buildings fall down. If this does not happen, there will be ruins all over the place, as it was the case with other civilisations in the past. We cannot do more than that.

**Pimpim (THF)**

The sustainability of the future is connected to the sustainability of preserving the traditions and using the traditional materials. Building traditions and memories of the past can be useful to preserve the environment, because for example traditional materials (at least in the area where we work) have less impact on the environment than cement, that is imported from somewhere else. You can make mud bricks; their use entails a minimal impact on the environment.
In terms of conservation, traditional houses made by wood, stone and adobe can last for a very long time. While the new buildings start showing problems of maintenance very soon, and anyway don't last very long because they are not high

quality. Even where they are, as in Europe, cement buildings are very difficult to conserve. The idea that cement is a very strong material that can last for eternity, may not be accurate.
I think it is very important to inform people not only about which decisions to take for new building, but also about how to keep their old house. People are often not informed on this; they just show a biased preference for what is new. But after they move to their new cement building, they fall sick with rheumatism or other diseases, because in spite of the altitude buildings lack central heating. Then they finally figure out that the thermal performance of traditional buildings was much better. Providing information so that people take appropriate decisions is a relevant goal, as it is to show the environmental impact of natural materials – all of us should do something against climate change and to protect the fragile environment of the Himalayan region.

**Yutaka (THF)**

About the building materials: the Indian government encourages people to build concrete constructions (which are called pucca houses, meaning "strong houses"). Instead, the vernacular architecture, which is made with natural materials, is regarded as very weak. Under the modernisation wave, everybody made the shift to concrete.
Our location is extremely cold and dry – the town sits at 3550 m above the sea level. We have very harsh winters, so concrete buildings are not suitable. Many people get joint pain because of the cold. People living in concrete buildings need additional energy to keep the temperature up. The walls of traditional buildings are very thick, typically 60 to 90 cm, and are made by material like stone and mud with a much better thermal performance than concrete. Moreover, they were designed so to receive the maximum amount of sunlight. In traditional buildings the use of local materials creates spaces that best fit in the local environment.

**Elena (ARF)**

Researching on built heritage, we go further and try to understand the people's life. There is not only the built heritage: people are the most important element, because if there are no people in those villages, what is the point of our work? The most important thing we have done is realising this. We need to help each other and learn from each other. This is the only way to plan a good future both for the people and the heritage, and to design a good life with the heritage.

**Marta (Tr)**

For me traditional construction is obviously the point and is my task both of the present and the future. Traditional construction uses local materials and is better for the environment.
Moreover, in our projects we have limited budgets. If we used imported materials like concrete, we'd have to spend a lot of money. If we use local materials, we have the chance to pay much more money to the local labourers and generate local development. This is useful for the future; if you don't generate human development maybe traditional construction will die. To keep traditional crafts alive and pass them to the future, people must be able to make a living out of them.

**Beatriz (FA)**

Preservation and conservation of traditional heritage are ways to sustainable development – I advocate this not on the basis of a romantic vision, but very practically.
In the Andean communities the value of traditional techniques and of natural materials have undergone a crisis due to the use of industrial materials.
We helped to create economic development and employment. For example, in Codpa a woman built a hotel with natural resources and traditional techniques, and now hosts guests from everywhere. In Tacora, 4000 m above the sea level, we worked at the restoration of heritage façades: some of the local young participants created a traditional construction company to work by themselves.
I think that heritage can provide solutions for the social, economic, ecological, and environmental development of places.

**Ionas (BI)**

I think that for us it is important to consolidate our links with Epirus and in particular with Tzoumerka, as it is the place where we have worked the most so far. Nevertheless, we have also placed a lot of energy and time in other places. I did not present these projects, but we have also worked on a few islands and their vernacular settlements, especially in the Aegean; during the past two years we have been running a project on the islands of Therasia and Santorini. We feel we have gained a lot of knowledge through this kind of 'opening' to geographies other than Epirus, but I think in this moment we're really in need of a regrouping, working on our base in Epirus. Within this framework we will try to build upon the findings of the past years, and also to become more viable as an organisation (fundraising always takes a lot of effort).
Finally, a long-term goal of our team is to bring local and traditional ways of building closer to contemporary construction practices. Currently there is internationally a growing interest in such explorations; for example, around how natural materials and traditional forms of building knowledge can be introduced in contemporary urban contexts. We are interested in following such developments and in contributing to them through our own experience of how such questions present themselves in the Greek, Balkan and Mediterranean contexts.

**Eltjana (GO2)**

Securing funding for our initiatives poses a significant challenge. Our primary step will be to apply for an EPA project in collaboration with our cross-border partners in Kosovo and Montenegro aiming to document the cultural landscapes in the valleys of Albanian Alps, including kullas (traditional tower houses). The common methodology would be expanded to the valorisation of other cultural landscapes throughout the country. The next step will focus on restoration: we wish to demonstrate a successful conservation model of one kulla, a water mill, or some dry-stone walls. Community members are enthusiastic about implementing traditional conservation techniques, but it is crucial to showcase a completed and successful project to inspire confidence in these methods.

Regarding the actors, undoubtedly, this undertaking requires substantial investment, and it will be important to negotiate with property owners, who may even consider co-financing the restoration work.
We also aim to involve young professionals such as architects, archaeologists, and anthropologists in our projects. Their expertise will help disseminate valuable knowledge and skills, benefiting not only the Albanian Alps but also other mountain regions in the South.
Additionally, we are actively seeking opportunities to establish long-lasting partnerships that facilitate collaboration, knowledge exchange, and mutual learning among stakeholders. By fostering these relationships, we hope to enhance our collective efforts in preserving cultural heritage and promoting sustainable development in the region.

# Final discussion



Paolo Vitti



Umberto Bonomo

**Paolo**

First, let's examine the term "development" itself, as it raises several fundamental issues. What do we mean by development? Often, we equate it with ideas of evolution, expansion, or progress. But in today's world, "development" is primarily linked to economic growth, an objective that, in many respects, has reached its limits. For those of us in privileged societies, living standards are already high. So, where exactly are we trying to go beyond this point? Do we genuinely believe that further economic growth will bring happiness and well-being to communities that have not reached the same level of material wealth?

Rather than focusing solely on economic growth, I believe we should prioritize the development of society and human relationships. To create environments where we can live and work in harmony, we must foster healthy, supportive relationships – a dimension that has been neglected in many developed societies. Human connections, especially in the spaces where we live, have suffered significantly.

When we look at our heritage and study past societies, we must ask ourselves: What aspects of these traditions are healthy, and which are not? What values have we built in developed countries, and what strengths do so-called "underdeveloped" countries still retain?

Those of us who work as experts, professionals, NGOs, or concerned citizens recognize the value of heritage, which extends far beyond the beauty of historical places. Heritage represents a model of human connection that we could benefit from reclaiming in our own lives. It highlights a quality of relationships that has been lost – a quality that many traditional communities have managed to preserve, and which gives their way of life a unique significance.

While I acknowledge that modern progress has brought many benefits, I also see a need to recover certain simple values that we have cast aside. Cultural heritage offers insights into many of today's pressing issues, like climate change. In historical societies, we often find examples of sustainable living. "Sustainability" was not a concept they discussed, because their way of life inherently prioritized balance with the environment.

We should question the ways we design and build our current living spaces and ask ourselves what materials and technologies truly serve a sustainable future. Too often, the modern building industry uses materials and techniques that make it nearly impossible to incorporate traditional methods. This approach disregards the lessons from the past – lessons we desperately need as we move forward.

Communities with meaningful traditions exist worldwide, even near mega-cities. These communities hold values we urgently need to cultivate a better world.

Associations play a crucial role in this process. They are embedded within communities, understand them deeply, and are well-positioned to engage in meaningful dialogue. Experts, governments, and policymakers need to collaborate with such associations, recognizing the social and cultural support they provide. This cooperation is essential to developing heritage projects that genuinely resonate.

**Umberto**

I support the idea of development related with heritage because here in Chile the means to operate in the heritage sector are nil. We need to support heritage policies and projects with numbers, money, human resources, innovation, investigation, technologies. I am not suggesting that industrial development or tourism industry would be viable perspectives. We need to demonstrate that a different kind of development is possible, one that is connected with communities. We want to be able to support our activities in the very fragile contexts where we work. Fragile but at the same time very rich in identity and sustainability.
I am speaking from a university. For people like those at Fundación Altiplano, who work in the field, in the mountains, this problem is magnified. It is incredible what we suffer and how much we succeed to do with nothing.
But I agree with you, Paolo: we need to use the idea of development responsibly.

**Paolo**

In both common thinking and governmental practice, the concept of development is typically seen as moving in a single direction. However, we urgently need to shift this trajectory. While we all want to improve communities' living conditions, we sometimes overlook the fact that the lifestyle in these fragile communities often holds values we lack in our modern cities. It's essential to avoid a colonialist mindset.
One critical issue is the lack of cultural and heritage relevance in public policies. Currently, culture and cultural heritage are not central to these policies. At Europa Nostra, we are working hard to bring these issues to the forefront of the political agenda. For example, in 2021, we published a green paper highlighting that the European Green Deal document doesn't even mention the word "culture" (Potts 2021).
Our discussions on these topics are undoubtedly important, yet they often go unrecognized, and we're now facing a dramatic shift in scale. When we examine vernacular architecture or historic landscapes, we're looking at places that starkly contrast with the aesthetic challenges we encounter in many urban areas today. The images we've seen today are stunning, yet I believe it's crucial to consider the reality outside this room. We must address this lack of aesthetic quality and rethink our approach given the pressures of a growing global population. With climate change, we're likely to see an increase in megacities. Can vernacular architecture really address this? Are the issues we're currently discussing truly at the core of what we'll face in the future? Why do we study cultural heritage, and what role can it play in tackling these challenges?
These are questions we must prioritize, as they concern the future and the next generations. I'm simply posing these questions – I don't have all the answers. We're here to seek them together, through study and reflection.

As Eltjana mentioned (GO2 4.10), we need to document, learn, and preserve, which aligns entirely with what I've dedicated my life to. But the challenge now lies in ensuring that culture and heritage are truly relevant in our governmental policies. For instance, the European Union's policies for greening the built environment, while well-intentioned, have inadvertently increased labor and material costs, at least in Italy. These measures often push in the opposite direction of our discussions, neglecting historical insights.
When we face a problem, the prevalent approach in many architecture and engineering schools is to turn to advanced technology. Yet the buildings we're examining today were built with basic techniques and a profound connection to their environment. This fundamental relationship is something we must reconsider as we look toward sustainable solutions for our built environment.

**Umberto**

It's different to talk about heritage with a community in the countryside or in a school of architecture. I think that the very important issue that we don't analyse, and we don't work out enough in our schools, is the issue of beauty. We don't talk about beauty anymore in universities, we have lost the tradition of Beaux-Arts. We are even proud to have broken with the Beaux-Arts.
The idea of beauty is fundamental when you make projects for the future. With my students I speak about heritage as a time machine: if we assume we are in Firenze in the 16th century, we see that the problem was power, economy and beauty – and the importance of beauty in that moment, in that city, made Firenze what we know and protect today, and made it a UNESCO site.
I think it's important to talk about beauty with our students to made them responsible of the beauty that they leave for the city and the society of the future.

**Paolo**

I'm back because you called me here. I teach at the University of Notre Dame, home to the only remaining Beaux-Arts school of architecture today. I'm in full agreement with you on the importance of beauty. I'd also like to recall that in 2021 Ursula von der Leyen launched the "New European Bauhaus" program, aiming to reintroduce that long-neglected category, beauty, into public discourse. Yet, what stands out is that current discussions around beauty often avoid engaging with history. Modernist architects strive to achieve beauty through originality and innovation but tend to dismiss the idea that creativity might also include a dialogue with the past. Their approach consistently leans toward inventing without precedent, without recognizing the value that historical continuity can offer.
In Florence, a city where enlightened bankers first began to recognize the cultural value of art and beauty, history was not treated as a separate, static entity. The past was part of the regeneration of arts. During the Enlightenment, however, the concept of the past underwent a profound transformation. Thinkers like Baumgarten and Kant began to theorize and categorize history and introduced a rift between the past and the present. The past was increasingly seen as something to be studied and analyzed rather than something in continuity with the present. This separation laid the groundwork for a view of the past as an 'other,' which gradually influenced modernist thinking in the early 20th century.

By the 1920s, architects and urban planners increasingly viewed history as a relic rather than a source of inspiration. They envisioned a new world of cities shaped by innovative materials like concrete, iron, and glass, and shaped by energy waste systems. This dream was fueled by the belief that modern materials and technologies could create ideal environments – a world superior to the one inherited from the past. However, after a century, we've seen the consequences: materials that were once the foundation of that dream – concrete, iron, and glass – are among the most unsustainable on earth, contributing heavily to environmental crises like climate change. Urban designs inspired by idealistic visions, such as Le Corbusier's Ville Radieuse, have often resulted in neighborhoods with significant social challenges and diminished quality of life.
Now, perhaps more than ever, it's essential to reconsider what beauty means and to understand its potential to connect us with a sustainable and meaningful sense of place and history.

**Final remark**



Andrea Bocco

We went through a full palette of experiences. Different paths have been taken for more or less long periods of involvement and engagement in local processes. I think that all of these have taken root in local contexts and made a whole bunch of new initiatives start, or at least promoted them. This is extremely in tune with the general aim of this series of seminars. We are not interested in monument preservation per se, we are rather interested in the social ramifications of the preservation activities which nevertheless should be based on respect and knowledge. The single word I want to use here is "care." It seems to me it is a keyword for describing what we have been speaking about in these seminars. It is an act of taking care of, and even of healing. All of you met something which you felt deserved some attention, some practical acts of care. These things you acknowledged as something valuable, which you got from the past and took upon yourselves to bring them to some future meaning and existence. These care actions stemmed out of some spontaneous movement of your soul but are certainly part of a vision, although not always intended and clearly decided from the beginning. This vision was there, even if latent. Of course, care cannot just rely on intention. Good will is not enough: one needs to have or to develop proper techniques, know-hows, skills, otherwise an intervention on such valuable heritage items would be irresponsible. The objects of care are at once technical – the shells where activities are carried out, where people live, the building envelope, the material skeleton – and social – the animals living inside the shell, with all their interactions and beliefs. In this act of care – that is, of taking the responsibility of managing for the better such existing heritage and transmitting it to future generations, to some kind of new sustainable balance – I see the highest scope of your work. This is also what I recognise as keeping together all of these efforts, all the wonderful things you are doing in your areas and communities. We began speaking about the past, but it seems to me that we have actually spoken about the future.


Hagino Kiichiro 2008

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