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22 November 2026

ReUso 2026

New heritage and future strategies

Perspectives on conservation and promotion

14th International Congress Barcelona-Girona, 4-7 November

edited by
Alessandro Scarnato
Marisa García Vergara
Ángeles Layuno Rosas



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I just want to make my last demand in reverence
to the work that has been done by architects of the past.

What was, has always been.
What is, has always been.
What will be, has always been.

Such is the nature of beginning.

Louis I. Kahn, "The Invisible City", Aspen, 1972

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NEW HERITAGE AND FUTURE STRATEGIES
Perspectives on conservation and promotion

Alessandro Scarnato – Universitat Politècnica de Catalunya
Ángeles Layuno Rosas – Universidad de Alcalá
Marisa García Vergara – Universitat de Girona

The accelerated technological, environmental, and social transformations of the twenty-first century are redefining the conditions under which heritage is recognized, interpreted, conserved, and transmitted. Climate change, ecological vulnerability, technological innovation, and evolving patterns of habitation challenge established conservation paradigms and call for a critical reassessment of the very notion of heritage, the values through which it is defined, and the criteria governing its transformation and transmission to future generations.

Heritage can no longer be understood as a self-evident category determined exclusively by historical, aesthetic, or material attributes. Rather, it emerges through historically situated processes of recognition, selection, interpretation, and value attribution. Consequently, conservation must extend beyond the preservation of material fabric to address the dynamic relationships between continuity and transformation, permanence and adaptation. It may therefore be understood as a critical practice concerned with the management of change, informed by historical, cultural, material, environmental, and social knowledge.

The conference promotes interdisciplinary dialogue among historical research, conservation science, architectural design, urban and territorial planning, landscape studies, and heritage management. Particular, though not exclusive, attention is devoted to the architectural, urban, territorial, and landscape heritage of the second half of the twentieth century, whether embedded within pre-existing historic contexts or conceived as part of newly developed environments. Its recognition and conservation require a reassessment of conventional chronological, typological, and aesthetic categories, together with appropriate criteria for evaluating significance, vulnerability, authenticity, integrity, and adaptive capacity.

Within this framework, adaptive reuse constitutes a central concern. More than the assignment of new functions to existing structures, reuse entails a critical negotiation between inherited materiality, heritage significance, and contemporary requirements. It also establishes a direct connection between conservation and environmental sustainability by extending building life cycles, reducing resource consumption, and preserving embodied material and cultural values.

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Contemporary heritage discourse is inherently dynamic and subject to ongoing critical reassessment. It is shaped not only by the designation of monuments and sites considered exemplary for their exceptional significance, but also by broader ideological, economic, social, and political forces. The tensions between globalizing trends and local identities, the pressures of tourism, the impacts of climate change and decarbonization policies, processes of depopulation, and the growing demand for public participation all present challenges that extend beyond the scope of legal protection and technical conservation measures. Addressing these issues requires integrated approaches capable of situating heritage within wider environmental, cultural, and societal transformations.

The conference is structured around four interconnected fields of inquiry: Knowledge; Diagnosis and Treatment; Intervention; and Management, Interpretation, and Heritage Valorisation. These should be understood not as autonomous stages but as interdependent dimensions of a continuous conservation process.

Taken together, these four fields define conservation as a continuous, interdisciplinary, and critically informed process. Knowledge informs diagnosis; diagnosis guides intervention; and management, monitoring, use, and interpretation continuously generate new forms of knowledge.

Acknowledgements

The conference organizing and scientific directors of ReUso 2026 want to acknowledge the fundamental academic support given by the founder's committee of ReUso Association, as well as the universities of Girona, Alcalá and the Polythecnic of Catalunya. The conference is a part of the scientific activities promoted within the frame of the Retranslates research project, funded by the Spanish Government.

Among the institutions, a particular thank has to be expressed towards the COAC (the Catalonian architects' association) and, above all, the Insitut Français of Barcelona for their operative support.

Local administrations have also played a significant role allowing, among other aspect, to insert the activities of the congress within the broader framework of Barcelona World Capital of Architecture 2026.

This conference and its proceedings would have not been possible without the authors (professionals and scholars) that have submitted their contribution and the precious, unceasing work of the logistic committee, composed by students from the involved universities.

PRESENTATION OF THE REUSO 2026 PROCEEDINGS

Stefano Bertocci President of the REUSO Association

The publication of the proceedings of the 14th edition of the International REUSO Conference, held in Barcelona and Girona from 4 to 7 November 2026, provides an opportunity not only to present the outcomes of an intensive scientific exchange, but also to reflect on the meaning that heritage conservation and reuse assume today. The title chosen for this edition, *NEW HERITAGE AND FUTURE STRATEGIES. Perspectives on Conservation and Promotion*, clearly expresses the twofold direction of the work that brought together scholars, practitioners, institutions and early-career researchers: on the one hand, to broaden and critically reassess what we now recognise as heritage; on the other, to develop strategies capable of guiding its care, transformation and transmission to the future. These volumes bring together the results of this commitment and bear witness to the plurality of perspectives through which a shared responsibility can be addressed.

We live at a time when technological, environmental and social transformations are unfolding with a speed and intensity that challenge established categories and tools. The climate crisis is altering territories, landscapes and living conditions; environmental fragility is exposing buildings and settlements to growing risks; digital innovation is changing the ways in which knowledge is produced, represented and managed; the energy transition requires us to reconsider performance, consumption and life cycles; and new residential and productive models are driving the transformation of spaces, including historic urban centres, conceived for uses and ways of life that have since changed profoundly. Added to these are the effects of tourism pressure, the depopulation of inland areas and smaller towns, inequalities in access to cultural heritage, and tensions between global processes and local identities. In such a context, conservation cannot mean shielding heritage from change; it must mean managing change so that it does not erase the evidence, relationships and values through which communities recognise their history and imagine their future.

Architectural and urban heritage emerges through historically and culturally situated processes of recognition, selection, interpretation and value attribution. It encompasses individual objects and monumental complexes, but also ordinary architecture, urban systems, productive landscapes, infrastructure and collective spaces, together with memories of use and social practices now recognised as intangible heritage. The task, therefore, is to consider material and intangible dimensions together, as well as continuities and discontinuities, accumulated values and new demands. Speaking of “new heritage” does not mean pursuing an indiscriminate expansion of the field of protection; rather, it means assuming the critical responsibility of understanding which legacies contemporary society

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chooses to recognise, according to which criteria and for what purposes.

This question takes on particular significance when attention turns to the architecture, cities and landscapes of the second half of the twentieth century, a specific, though not exclusive, focus of the conference. This is a heritage that is close to us in time, often still in use and continually being transformed, and whose assessment cannot rely solely on historical distance or on categories developed for earlier periods. The works and settlements of the post-war decades raise distinctive issues: standardisation and constructional experimentation, the rapid obsolescence of materials and building services, the territorial scale of many interventions, their relationship with urban growth, changes in forms of dwelling, and the contested social perception of buildings and sites that are not always recognised as a shared legacy. Whether embedded in pre-existing historic fabrics or belonging to newly formed neighbourhoods and landscapes, they require appropriate criteria for assessing their quality, authenticity, integrity, vulnerability and capacity for adaptation.

Within this process, adaptive reuse occupies a central position. Reuse is not simply a matter of assigning a new function to an existing structure. It means engaging with its material fabric, documenting and understanding the traces of change, and balancing recognised values against the needs of contemporary life, in search of an equilibrium that cannot be determined in advance. Reuse is therefore an act of interpretation and design: it can reactivate abandoned buildings, restore continuity to parts of the city, support local economies and renew the relationship between places and communities. It must, however, be grounded in criteria of compatibility, understood not as an abstract requirement but as the outcome of a conscious negotiation between continuity and transformation within a specific territorial context.

It is on this complex ground that the REUSO Conference has built its identity since its first edition, held in Madrid in 2013. Born from an encounter among scholars and practitioners from different disciplinary and geographical backgrounds, over the years it has become an established forum for interdisciplinary dialogue on heritage protection, conservation, reuse and enhancement. The continuity of the initiative lies not only in the succession of its meetings, but also in the growth of a scientific community capable of connecting different experiences, methods and cultural traditions. The REUSO Association has embraced and sustained this legacy, fostering exchange among research, education and professional practice, while encouraging the participation of different generations of scholars.

The choice of Barcelona and Girona as the venues for the 14th edition lends particular significance to the discussion. Barcelona, designated UNESCO-UIA World Capital of Architecture for 2026, provides a privileged setting in which to examine the relationships among heritage, urban design, innovation and collective life. In the complexity of its historical layers, the city demonstrates how architecture can become part of a public discourse

capable of bringing memory and transformation together. Girona, with its historic fabric and strong urban identity, offers a complementary context in which to consider continuity, adaptation and the long-term care of the city. The relationship between the two venues gives tangible form to one of the central themes of the conference: heritage belongs neither to a single scale nor to a single period, but is shaped through the interaction of architecture, city, territory and landscape.

The contributions have been organised into four closely interconnected fields of enquiry: *Knowledge*, *Diagnosis and Treatment*, *Intervention*, and *Promotion*.

The *Knowledge* section recognises knowledge and documentation activities as the basis of every decision and encompasses research and critical history. To know means to document and interpret, but also to make data and methods accessible, transmit expertise and continually renew the questions addressed to heritage. Digital technologies now expand the possibilities for acquiring, analysing and sharing information; their effectiveness, however, depends on the quality of the questions asked, the transparency of the processes employed and the ability to turn data into instruments of understanding.

Diagnosis and Treatment brings together preliminary studies, techniques for identifying deterioration and defects, protocols, procedures and tools for conservation. Diagnosis is understood here not as a merely instrumental stage, but as a process of knowledge that relates deterioration phenomena to constructional characteristics, the history of transformation, environmental conditions and patterns of use. Advances in analytical and monitoring techniques offer important opportunities, provided that they remain connected to direct observation, critical understanding and the assessment of effects over time. From this perspective, planned maintenance and post-intervention monitoring become essential components of a strategy of care.

The *Intervention* section addresses conservation, design and planning at the architectural, urban, territorial and landscape scales. The studies collected here show that intervening in heritage means making choices, establishing priorities and clearly stating the criteria that guide transformation. The shift between scales is crucial: the effectiveness of an intervention on a building may depend on the quality of public space, urban connections, economic dynamics and the structure of the landscape. Conservation and design thus cease to appear as opposing fields and become parts of the same critical engagement with the built environment.

Promotion encompasses compatible uses, regeneration, management and communication of architectural, landscape and natural heritage, together with strategies for its interpretation. Thoughtful communication can strengthen the social recognition of heritage; when separated from knowledge and protection, however, it can instead lead to simplification, cultural consumption and excessive pressure on places. *Promotion* therefore means creating the conditions in which heritage can continue to

generate knowledge, a sense of belonging and quality of life.

The two volumes presented here give editorial form to the richness of the conference. The first brings together the abstracts of 121 contributions, offering an immediate overview of the breadth of themes, geographical contexts and research orientations represented. The second contains the full papers and provides the space needed to explore methods, case studies, results and proposals in depth. Their structure responds to two complementary needs: to provide a concise map of the discussion and, at the same time, to preserve its scientific and documentary substance. Taken as a whole, the proceedings do not seek to advance a single or conclusive position, but to make available to the academic and professional community a body of knowledge open to further examination and development.

All contributions underwent double-blind peer review to ensure the scientific rigour of the publication. On behalf of the REUSO Association, I would therefore like to express my sincere gratitude to the reviewers and scientific coordinators, who devoted their time and expertise to reading and assessing the papers. The quality of these volumes also rests on work that often remains out of sight: careful observations, dialogue between authors and reviewers, and meticulous editorial attention. My thanks also go to the scientific and organising directors, the scientific, honorary, review and logistics committees, the host institutions, and all those who contributed to the organisation of the conference and the publication of its proceedings.

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INTERVENTION



Beyond the “murallicidio”. Accessibility, inclusive reuse and a museum proposal for the Antonellian fortification of Cartagena de Indias (Colombia)

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Keywords: Fortification, Inclusive accessibility, Design for heritage reuse, hyper-tourism, Integrated valorization

1. Introduction

Founded in 1533 as a colonial stronghold protecting Spanish interests in Latin America, Cartagena de Indias has moved through the centuries while remaining firmly anchored to its strategic role in controlling and defending the commercial routes of the Spanish Crown. The constant threat of pirate and privateer incursions culminated in the English siege of 1586, led by a fleet commanded by Sir Francis Drake in the service of Queen Elizabeth I. Despite relying on the system of bays and channels that facilitated the defense of the port, as well as the submerged chains positioned at the narrowest entrance to the bay (*Boca Chica*), Drake’s tactical skill and the military superiority of the English forces resulted in a Spanish defeat.

Upon Drake’s departure in March, the devastation of Cartagena was so severe that Philip II of Spain was compelled to immediately devise a plan to fortify the entire Spanish Caribbean in order to safeguard its wealth from further attacks. A first design was drafted by Italian military engineer Bautista Antonelli (Fig. 1), who in those same years devoted his expertise and efforts to the other Spanish ports of the Caribbean basin, beginning with Havana and continuing with San Juan in Puerto Rico, Veracruz, and Panama.

Antonelli’s design for Cartagena – implemented by his successors, including his nephew Cristóbal de Roda and later his son Juan Bautista – envisioned a *fortificación permanentemente abaluartada*, *alla moderna*, ring, composed of curtain walls punctuated by bastions and flanked by moats, crossed only at a few controlled points to access the city. It would be Antonelli’s son and nephew who ultimately enclosed Cartagena in its fortified ring.

The natural bay – shaped by marine currents and by the rivers descending

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Oltre il “murallicidio”. Accessibilità, riuso inclusivo e progetto di un museo per la fortificazione Antonelliana di Cartagena de Indias (Colombia)

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1. Introduzione

Fondata nel 1533 come piazzaforte coloniale, a protezione degli interessi ispanici in America Latina, Cartagena de Indias ha attraversato i secoli senza quasi mai allontanarsi da una posizione strategica per il controllo e la difesa delle rotte commerciali della corona spagnola.

La minaccia costante di incursioni di pirati e corsari culmina nell’assedio inglese del 1586 con una flotta capitanata da Sir Francis Drake, al soldo della regina Elisabetta I. Pur contando sul sistema di baie e canali che facilitava la difesa del porto, e le catene sommerse posizionate all’ingresso più stretto della baia (*Boca Chica*), l’abilità e strategia di Drake e la superiorità militare degli inglesi determinarono la sconfitta spagnola.

Alla partenza di Drake, nel mese di marzo, la devastazione di Cartagena è tale da pressare Felipe II a predisporre immediatamente un piano per fortificare l’intero Caribe spagnolo, per proteggerne le ricchezze da ulteriori attacchi. Un primo disegno generale è elaborato dall’ingegnere militare italiano Bautista Antonelli (Fig. 1) che, negli stessi anni, dedica il suo ingegno e le sue fatiche anche agli altri porti spagnoli del bacino caribeño a partire dall’Avana, per proseguire con San Juan di Porto Rico, Veracruz e Panamá.

Il disegno di Antonelli per Cartagena, implementato dai successori tra cui il nipote Cristóbal de Roda e poi il figlio Juan Bautista, è quello di un anello della *fortificación permanentemente abaluartada*, *alla moderna*, di cortine scandite da bastioni e fiancheggiate da fossi attraversabili in pochi punti per accedere alla città. Saranno il figlio e il nipote di Bautista Antonelli a chiudere il cerchio di mura del nucleo centrale di Cartagena.

La baia naturale, disegnata dalle correnti marine e dai fiumi che dalle Ande

from the Andes, weaving a network of channels, lagoons, and marshes – was exploited by the Antonellis and the engineers who followed them as a secondary defensive system. Only those familiar with the depth and the navigability of these waterways could move effectively across the territory and repel incursions.

Reconstructing a precise chronology of the development of the fortification system of Cartagena's center, of the adjacent neighbourhoods of Getsemaní and San Diego, and of the *cerros* of San Felipe and the monastery of La Popa, is a complex undertaking. The continuous succession of attacks and sieges forced each governor and each engineer into feverish revisions of plans and defensive strategies, including in response to the shifting coastline produced by the very process of fortification. A notable example is the submerged structure of the *Escollera de La Marina*, whose construction—intended to protect the northwestern arc of the walls (approximately from the Santa Cruz bastion to the Santa Catalina *tenaille*)—resulted in the emergence of a sandy stretch that Antonio de Arévalo had to defend by integrating into the Santa Catalina bastion the eponymous *Espigón* (today *Espigón de la Tenaza*).

Proven the effectiveness of its defensive strategy and the resilience of its fortifications, the city withstood two further sieges: the attack by the French fleet of Baron Pointis in 1697, followed – on an even larger and more violent scale – by the assault of Vernon's Royal Navy in 1741. It is difficult to pinpoint a true moment of "completion" for Cartagena's fortifications, which are symbolically considered concluded only at the turn of the XVII century with the construction of the barracks known as *Bóvedas de Santa Clara*. Less than thirty years later, independence from the Spanish Crown marked the end of a laborious process that had unfolded over more than two centuries. At the same time, with the loss of its defensive function, the *cordón amurallado* entered a period of decline.

How, then, did the fortified heritage of what is now Cartagena's *Distrito Turístico y Cultural* survive? The nascent nation gravitated toward the Andes rather than the Caribbean, overlooking Cartagena as a distant frontier – peripheral and marginalized with respect to the new continental political barycenter. (Múnera, 2024) The poverty resulted from commercial restrictions with the interior of Nueva Granada halted the city's growth which, despite the absence of interest or effort devoted to its maintenance, did not suffer from the constrictive enclosure.

The path toward the re-signification, understanding, and valorization of the *muralla* was anything but linear or free of obstacles. In the forty years straddling the XIX and XX centuries—the years of President Rafael Núñez's *Regeneración*—Cartagena entered a new growth phase, and, as elsewhere, it was precisely this drive for progress that cast the walls as a cumbersome obstacle to the city's trajectory into modernity. The first structures to fall were the ravelins guarding the city gates, gradually followed by several stretches of the seafront fortifications toward Getsemaní, later filled in to build the contemporary city.

portano le proprie acque al mare, disegnando una teoria di canali, lagune e paludi, è sfruttata dagli Antonelli e dagli ingegneri a loro succeduti come un secondo sistema di protezione: solo chi conosce la profondità dei fondali e la praticabilità di queste vie d'acqua può muoversi agevolmente sul territorio e respingere le intrusioni indebite.

L'elaborazione di una precisa cronologia dello sviluppo del sistema di fortificazione del nucleo centrale di Cartagena, dei confinanti quartieri di Getsemaní e San Diego, e dei *cerros* di San Felipe e del monastero de la Popa, è faccenda complessa. La continua successione di attacchi e assedi forza infatti ogni governatore, ogni ingegnere, a revisioni continue dei piani e delle strategie di difesa, incluso di fronte ai mutamenti della linea del litorale provocati dal processo stesso, come nel caso della struttura sommersa della *Escollera de La Marina* la cui realizzazione – a protezione dell'arco nord-occidentale delle mura (indicativamente dal bastione Santa Cruz fino a raggiungere la tenaglia di Santa Catalina) – risulta nell'emersione di un tratto di spiaggia che Antonio de Arévalo deve proteggere integrando al bastione di Santa Catalina l'*Espigón* omonimo (oggi *Espigón de la Tenaza*).

Provata l'efficacia della strategia e della consistenza delle difese *cartagenere*, la città resiste ad altri due assedi: l'attacco della flotta francese del barone Pointis nel 1697 a cui succede, ancor più esteso e violento, quello della Royal Navy di Vernon nel 1741. Difficile stabilire un momento "a regime" per le fortificazioni di Cartagena, simbolicamente concluse sul volgere del XVIII secolo con l'ultimazione delle *Bóvedas* di Santa Clara. Ottenuta meno di trent'anni dopo, l'indipendenza dalla corona di Spagna segna la fine di quel laborioso processo protrattosi oltre due secoli. Contestualmente, alla perdita del valore riconosciutogli nella difesa della città, per il *cordón amurallado* inizia un periodo di declino.

Come si è salvato il patrimonio fortificato dell'attuale *Distrito Turístico y Cultural* di Cartagena? La nazione nascente guarda alle Ande più che al Caribe, lasciando Cartagena, come una lontana frontiera di una realtà periferica e marginalizzata rispetto al nuovo baricentro politico continentale. (Múnera, 2024) La povertà indotta dai vincoli commerciali con l'interno della Nueva Granada, arresta la crescita della città che, pur senza alcun interesse o sforzo rivolto alla loro manutenzione, non patisce la costrizione del cerchio fortificato.

L'approdo alla risignificazione, comprensione e valorizzazione della *muralla* non è però un percorso lineare e privo di ostacoli. Nei quarant'anni a cavallo tra XIX e XX secolo, gli anni della "*Regeneración*" del presidente Rafael Nuñez, Cartagena torna a crescere e, come altrove, è quella crescita e voglia di progresso che legge nelle mura un ingombrante ostacolo all'ingresso della modernità in città. I primi a cadere furono i rivellini di guardia ai varchi della città, e poi, via via, alcuni tratti della fortificazione lungo il mare, verso Getsemaní, poi colmato per costruire la città contemporanea.

The demolition process – carried out with such speed and violence – was dubbed *murallicidio* by the newspapers, (Lara Ramos, 2015) a difinition later preserved in the writings of historians such as Lemaître. (Múnera, 2024) Subsequently, in November 1924, with the enactment of the *Ley 32* (*Régimen Legal sobre la conservación y embellecimiento de los Monumentos Históricos de Cartagena*), any form of demolition of the fortified heritage was outlawed, and no governmental authority was given power to issue authorizations for such actions. At the same time, by means of the same law, the central government identified and appointed –under its direct supervision – the *Sociedad de Mejoras Públicas de Cartagena*, a private entity officially established the previous year (SMPC s.d)(Cunin, Rinaudo, 2005) to oversee all initiatives and interventions concerning the fortifications.

A few years later, the *Ley 5 of 1940* consolidated and strengthened the principles of protection, further formalizing preservation activities. This was followed, among other measures, by the official declaration of Cartagena's colonial center as a national monument, enacted through the *Ley 163* in December 1959. It would then be in 1984 that the fortification complex of Cartagena received UNESCO World Heritage status, in recognition of the extent and degree of conservation of the defensive system built around the city - an enduring testament to the genius of military architects between the XVI and XVIII centuries, as well as a pivotal node in the Atlantic trade routes linking Europe and the New World.

2. The fortification complex of Cartagena: a proposal for valorization

Bautista Antonelli's ingenuity was not limited to exporting to Latin America the military techniques and fortification technologies he had acquired over years working alongside his elder brother, Juan Bautista. Through his drawings a concept of territorial defense conceived as a "network" germinated, capable of linking together the several strategic nodes along the intercontinental trade routes. The Caribbean Sea was, in a sense, assimilated to the Mediterranean, and through a comparable military strategy the port cities of Cartagena (Colombia), Portobello and San Lorenzo (Panama), Havana (Cuba), San Juan (Puerto Rico), Santo Domingo, San Juan de Ulúa (Mexico), and others were delimited and protected by a system of walls and bastions designed to ensure optimal defense—primarily toward the seaward front, but also along the flanks exposed to land-based attacks—thus safeguarding the galleons from enemy incursions (Fig. 2).

This concept of defense became so pervasive and compelling that it effectively unified the identity of these port cities: the sentry boxes, the bastions *alla moderna*, and the structural organization of the walls became a shared visual and architectural language – still recognizable today, regardless of political or administrative boundaries. This, we believe, is one of the main reasons – if not

Il processo di demolizione, consumatosi tanto rapidamente e violentemente, fu ribattezzato *murallicidio* dai periodici dell'epoca, (Lara Ramos, 2015) definizione che poi si è conservata negli scritti di storici come Lemaître. (Múnera, 2024) Successivamente, nel novembre del 1924, per mezzo della *Ley 32 – Régimen Legal sobre la conservación y embellecimiento de los Monumentos Históricos de Cartagena*, (Régimen Legal sobre la conservación y embellecimiento de los Monumentos Históricos de Cartagena) qualunque forma di demolizione del patrimonio fortificato diventa proibita e a qualsiasi autorità è impedito di rilasciare autorizzazioni in tal senso. Contestualmente, per mezzo della stessa legge, il governo centrale individua e incarica, sotto la propria direzione, la *Sociedad de Mejoras Públicas de Cartagena* – ente privato ufficialmente costituito l'anno precedente (SMPC s.d)(Cunin, Rinaudo, 2005)– della supervisione di tutte le iniziative e degli interventi relativi alle fortificazioni.

Alcuni anni più tardi, la *Ley 5 del 1940* consolida e rafforza i principi di tutela, formalizzando ulteriormente le attività di protezione. A questa segue, tra gli altri provvedimenti, la dichiarazione ufficiale del centro coloniale di Cartagena come monumento nazionale, sancita con la *Ley 163 del dicembre 1959*. Sarà poi nel 1984 che il complesso delle fortificazioni di Cartagena riceverà il riconoscimento di Patrimonio dell'Umanità UNESCO, alla luce dell'estensione e del grado di conservazione del sistema fortificato sorto intorno alla città, testimone dell'ingegno degli architetti militari tra il XVI e XVIII secolo nonché snodo centrale delle rotte commerciali atlantiche tra l'Europa e il Nuovo Mondo.

2. Il sistema fortificato di Cartagena: una proposta di valorizzazione

Il genio di Bautista Antonelli non si limita a esportare in America Latina le tecniche militari e le tecnologie fortificatorie apprese dopo tanti anni di lavoro a fianco di suo fratello maggiore, Juan Bautista, ma divulga anche un concetto di difesa territoriale "a rete" per mettere in connessione tra loro i diversi poli strategici delle rotte del commercio intercontinentale. Il Mar dei Caraibi viene in un certo senso assimilato al Mediterraneo e, con la medesima strategia militare, le città portuali di Cartagena (in Colombia), Portobello e San Lorenzo (a Panama), L'Avana (Cuba), San Juan di Portorico, Santo Domingo, San Juan de Ulúa (Messico), ecc. vengono delimitate e protette da un sistema di mura e bastioni tale da garantire l'ottimale difesa prima verso il fronte a mare, ma anche verso i fianchi esposti agli attacchi da terra, così da proteggere dalle incursioni nemiche l'imbarco e lo sbarco dai galeoni. (Fig. 2)

Questo concetto di difesa diventa così pregnante e cogente da unificare in un certo senso i caratteri identitari di queste città portuali: le garitte, i bastioni alla moderna, l'organizzazione della sezione delle mura, diventano un elemento unificante dell'immagine di queste città, ancora oggi riconoscibile,

the principal one – why UNESCO granted these site World Heritage status. It is also a legacy that Italy can rightfully claim, as it is the product of the ingenuity of a military engineer who deserves far greater recognition and consideration than he has received to date.

To engage today in the recovery, restoration, and enhancement of the walls of Cartagena de Indias shall not only mean ensuring the long-term preservation of a heritage asset of immeasurable material and immaterial value, but above all transmitting to future generations an identity-bearing sign that shapes the historical image of a people, and of humanity as a whole. The walls of Cartagena are certainly a tourist attraction, yet they are also guardians of memory, of the past, of a *fifth dimension* (Mellano, 2025) of the city, a cultural depth (Dameri, Giordano, Gron, Mellano, Rodelo Torres, Rossi Gonzalez; 2018) that shall avert processes of commodification, reduced to a medal or trophy to be displayed; they must be protected and meaningfully valorized.

Drawing from a consideration on the Italian translation of *heritage*, *pater–munus* is the etymological root of said translation *patrimonio*, and it is from these terms that we should draw guidance in our actions of safeguarding and valorization: the *father's duty* should be to appreciate and enhance what has been handed down from the past – by ancestors, by history – to care for it, maintain it, and protect it, so as to transmit it to his offsping as a legacy to be enjoyed and cared for, ensuring that its identity, its evocative power, and the authentic, original meaning of the ensemble of signs that shaped one's roots, essence, and at the same time one's originality and individuality, are not lost.

Like – and perhaps even more than – other cities fortified by the Antonellis in the Caribbean, Cartagena possesses a complex of monuments whose architectural characteristics depict belonging to a territorial system unique in the world. For this very reason, it is essential that each of these cities act – through protection, conservation, safeguarding, and promotion – in a synergistic, shared, organized manner, coordinated so as to become a single organism, multinational rather than merely international. Albeit possessing own identities and differences, these are all brood of a common forefather and embody the same creative genius. That of an Italian military engineer who, with remarkable foresight, was the first to understand and implement what would prove, over time, to be a fundamental geographical palimpsest for territorial governance: those few cities, together with their ports and fortifications strategically positioned across the Caribbean Sea, made it possible to control and protect the trade routes to and from Europe. Today, they constitute privileged nodes for the development of a form of tourism which, beyond being a mere component of the commercial balance, could and shall become cultural, educational, and formative, fostering and contributing – within a region still marked by political conflict and severe social inequalities – to a form of cooperation that, over time, could lead to a new geopolitics of Central

indipendentemente dai confini politico-amministrativi. Questo crediamo sia uno, se non il principale, dei motivi per cui l'Unesco ha attribuito a questi luoghi la qualificazione di patrimonio dell'umanità, ed è un lascito che l'Italia può vantare in quanto frutto dell'ingegno di un ingegnere militare che meriterebbe maggiore rispetto e considerazione di quanto non ne abbia avuto finora.

Dedicarsi oggi al recupero restauro e valorizzazione delle mura di Cartagena de Indias significa non soltanto mantenere e garantire la permanenza nel tempo di un patrimonio che rappresenta un bene materiale e immateriale di valore incommensurabile, ma soprattutto è un modo di comunicare e tramandare alle generazioni future un segno identitario che caratterizza l'immagine della storia di un popolo, dell'umanità intera.

Le mura di Cartagena sono certamente un'attrazione turistica, ma rappresentano un bene che custodisce la memoria, il passato, la *quinta dimensione* (Mellano, 2025) e la *cultura* di una città (Dameri, Giordano, Gron, Mellano, Rodelo Torres, Rossi Gonzalez, 2018) che oggi non si può limitare a esibirle come medaglia o trofeo, ma deve anche saperle proteggere e valorizzare.

Pater-munus è l'etimologia della parola Patrimonio; da questi termini dovremmo farci aiutare e guidare nelle azioni di salvaguardia e valorizzazione: il *compito del padre* dovrebbe essere quello di apprezzare e valorizzare quanto gli è stato tramandato dal passato, dai propri avi, dalla storia, per curarlo, mantenerlo e salvaguardarlo, così da trasferirlo ai suoi figli e nipoti, come eredità da godere e prendersi cura, perché non se ne perda l'identità, la forza evocativa, il significato autentico e originale di un insieme di segni che ha caratterizzato le proprie radici, la propria essenza, al tempo stesso la propria originalità e individualità.

Come (e forse più) delle altre città fortificate dagli Antonelli nei Caraibi, Cartagena possiede un complesso di monumenti i cui caratteri architettonici definiscono un'appartenenza a un sistema territoriale unico al mondo, e proprio per questa ragione è necessario che ciascuna di quelle città agisca, nella tutela, nella conservazione, nella salvaguardia e nella promozione, in maniera sinergica, condivisa e organizzata, programmata per diventare un organismo, multinazionale più che internazionale, i cui elementi possiedono certamente identità e differenze, ma provengono dallo stesso embrione, fruiscono dello stesso genio creativo. Quello di un ingegnere militare italiano, che per primo, con grande lungimiranza, ha capito e realizzato ciò che si è dimostrato, nel tempo, un fondamentale palinsesto geografico per il governo territoriale: quelle poche città, che con i relativi porti e fortificazioni, posizionate in punti strategici del Mar dei Caraibi, hanno permesso di governare e proteggere le rotte commerciali da e verso l'Europa, oggi sono i punti privilegiati dello sviluppo di un turismo che, da mero fattore della bilancia commerciale, potrebbe anche diventare culturale, istruttivo, formativo, per promuovere e contribuire, in una parte del mondo ancora tormentata da conflitti politici e gravi diseguaglianze sociali, una cooperazione

America.

Utopia? Illusion? Fantasy? Perhaps. Yet the physical and logistical premises for establishing a transnational system for the management and valorization of these key sites of the Caribbean basin already exist. A grain of political will, an expression that may seem vague, but is not, would suffice. If it were understood that the fortified cities built by the Spanish in the XVI and XVII centuries could pool their wealth of monuments, museums, walls, and bastions to become a shared heritage, mutually reinforcing one another, and managing and enhancing their collective treasure in a coordinated, systemic, and confederated manner, tieing partnerships that transcend national borders, then the *lago de piedra* (Segovia, 2006) could become a single, vast, exceptional, and distinctive geographical basin. A basin capable of attracting not only tourists, but also scholars and specialists in landscape, nature, history, society, economics, and more – without the obstacles of mobility restrictions, visas, limitations on freedom, or embargoes, in a climate finally marked by calm, reconciliation, and serenity.

In 2025, an Italian cooperation program was launched, allocating substantial funding to Cartagena de Indias to celebrate 160 years of diplomatic and political relations between Italy and Colombia. Our research group is involved in this program, tasked with studying and implementing a set of interventions and training activities focused on the heritage of the Caribbean city.

The project *"Conservación del patrimonio histórico, turístico, cultural y fortalecimiento de capacidades de actores turísticos para la promoción y fomento del turismo innovador, sostenible y responsable en el distrito de Cartagena de Indias"* includes, in fact, a specific objective entrusted to the Politecnico di Torino: *"Technical Assistance for the Conservation of Cultural Heritage and the Promotion of Sustainable Tourism in Cartagena"*.[1] This objective takes shape through a series of interventions on the historic walls of the colonial city, as well as through a program of training and heritage-awareness courses designed for a very broad range of participants (from middle- and high-school students to professionals; from tourism operators to homeowners and hotel owners; from municipal officials across various departments to taxi drivers, carriage drivers/*cocheros*, and costumed performers/*palenqueras*).

The proposed interventions on the *muralla* aim to create a system of uninterrupted and universally accessible pathways, with the intention – almost – of composing a new narrative that can simultaneously recount past events (the defense of the city from enemy ships, the flows of commerce) and those that, today and in the future, will be written by those who visit these places in the

[1] Project funded by the Joint Committee for Cooperation and Development of the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation (MAECI), Resolution No. 214 of 16/12/2024.

che, nel tempo, potrebbe portare a una nuova geopolitica del Centro-America.

Utopia? Illusione? Fantasia? Forse, ma i presupposti fisici e logistici per la realizzazione di un sistema transnazionale di gestione e valorizzazione di questi capisaldi del bacino caraibico già esistono; basterebbe la volontà politica, che pare ma non è soltanto una parola, perché se si comprendesse che le singole città fortificate dagli spagnoli nel XVI e XVII secolo potrebbero mettere a fattore comune la propria ricchezza di monumenti, musei, mura e bastioni, per diventare patrimonio comunitario, e potenziarsi a vicenda, gestendo e valorizzando il tesoro complessivamente posseduto in modo coordinato, sistemico e confederato, con forme di sodalizio al di sopra dei confini nazionali, il "lago de piedra" (Segovia, 2006) potrebbe diventare un unico, grande, eccezionale ed esclusivo bacino geografico, capace di attrarre non soltanto turisti, ma anche studiosi, cultori del paesaggio, della natura, della storia, delle società, dell'economia, ecc,… senza più problemi di mobilità, di visti d'ingresso, di limitazioni alla libertà, di embargo, in un clima finalmente disteso, riappacificato, sereno.

Nel 2025 è iniziato un programma di cooperazione italiano che investe su Cartagena de Indias un cospicuo finanziamento per celebrare i 160 anni di rapporti diplomatici e politici fra Italia e Colombia. In questo programma è coinvolto il nostro gruppo di ricerca, per studiare e realizzare un insieme di interventi e azioni di formazione sul Patrimonio della città caraibica.

Il progetto "*Conservación del patrimonio histórico, turístico, cultural y fortalecimiento de capacidades de actores turísticos para la promoción y fomento del turismo innovador, sostenible y responsable en el distrito de Cartagena de Indias*"[1], infatti, contiene un obiettivo specifico, affidato al Politecnico di Torino: "*Assistenza Tecnica per la Conservazione del patrimonio culturale e la Promozione del Turismo Sostenibile a Cartagena"*. Tale obbiettivo si concretizza in una serie di interventi sulle mura storiche della città coloniale, e in un programma di corsi di formazione e sensibilizzazione al Patrimonio, per un ventaglio di utenti molto largo (dai bambini delle scuole medie e secondarie ai professionisti, dagli operatori turistici ai proprietari di case ed alberghi, dai funzionari dei diversi uffici comunali ai tassisti, guidatori di carrozze/*cocheros* e figuranti in costume/*palenqueras*).

Gli interventi proposti sulla *muralla* mirano a realizzare un sistema di percorsi senza soluzione di continuità ed accessibili il più possibile a tutti, con l'intento quasi di scrivere un racconto che, al tempo stesso, possa costituire la narrazione degli eventi passati (la difesa della città dagli attacchi delle navi nemiche, i flussi

[1] Progetto finanziato dal Comitato Congiunto per la Cooperazione e lo Sviluppo del MAECI-Ministero degli Affari Esteri e della Cooperazione Internazionale italiano, Delibera n. 214 del 16/12/2024

contemporary city. The *camino de ronda* once patrolled by guard detachments can now be walked by anyone wishing to enjoy the panorama of the Caribbean, the sun setting on the horizon, pelicans diving headlong into the sea to catch their prey, and children chasing one another across the esplanade in front of the bastion, flying their colorful kites.

What once served to command the horizon and to monitor the arrival of potential invaders now allows one to enjoy, from a privileged vantage point, a view and a landscape of unmatched beauty. What once repelled – and had been designed to keep out those who were not meant to enter – now opens itself to welcome those who seek to discover, admire, and experience a place whose beauty is concrete, not ephemeral, rather steadfast across the centuries, and still tangible and inclusive, appreciable by all – regardless of age and ability – in its full essence (Fig. 3, 4).

3. The new *Museo della Muralla*

The narration of history can become a project of accessibility, but also of valorization of the heritage asset—both for its conservation and for transmitting this legacy to those who will come after us. Cartagena lacks a place where the history of the *muralla* can not only be told, but also become a center for research and documentation, for dissemination, for the organization of cultural events, and for fostering and sharing the awareness that this city, its memory and its identity, constitutes the roots of a people, of a community. This imposing and still almost intact system of fortifications, conceived and built thanks to the genius of an Italian architect and his descendants, and handed down to us despite the attempted *murallicidio* carried out over the years, must be able to speak, express, and reveal its importance, to assert its essence, identity, and character, to legitimize its presence and be respected as such, not merely because UNESCO has declared it a World Heritage Site.

In the Bastion of Santa Catalina, therefore, within the existing cisterns and vaulted storerooms, restored in the mid-1990, a new museum has been envisioned: the Museum of the Walls of Cartagena. It is a new concept, one might say a *museum 2.0*, in which the core mission ceases to be a mere display of relics of a glorious past, rather one centered on communicating everything that the Caribbean fortification system, beyond Cartagena and its bay, represents today, seeking to route toward a future of rediscovery, positioning itself as a fulcrum of Cultural Heritage and as a catalyst for new strategies of reuse, conservation, and protection of this living Heritage.

The *Museo de la Muralla* arises from the need to rethink the traditional concept of the exhibition space, transforming it into a dynamic, accessible, and deeply engaging environment. Its primary goal is to move beyond the classical

di commercio) e di quelli che ogni giorno, oggi e in futuro, potranno essere scritti da chi visiterà, nella contemporaneità, questi luoghi. Il cammino di ronda che un tempo percorrevano i drappelli di guardia, oggi può essere praticato da chi vuole godersi il panorama dei Caraibi, il tramonto del sole all'orizzonte, mentre i pellicani si tuffano a capofitto in mare per pescare le loro prede e i bambini si rincorrono nella spianata di fronte al bastione, facendo volare i loro aquiloni colorati.

Ciò che un tempo serviva a dominare con lo sguardo l'orizzonte e a controllare l'arrivo di possibili invasori, oggi consente di godere, da un punto privilegiato, di una vista e di un panorama di ineguagliabile bellezza. Ciò che respingeva ed era stato progettato per tenere lontani coloro che non dovevano entrare, ora si apre ad accogliere chi cerca di scoprire, ammirare e godere di un luogo che possiede una bellezza concreta, non effimera, ma persistente nel corso dei secoli, e ancora oggi tangibile e inclusivo, apprezzabile da tutti - adulti e bambini, giovani e anziani, normo-dotati e disabili - in tutta la sua essenza. (Fig. 3, 4)

3. Un nuovo *Museo della Muralla*

Il racconto della storia può diventare un progetto di accessibilità, ma anche di valorizzazione del bene, per la sua conservazione e per trasmettere l'eredità a chi verrà dopo di noi. A Cartagena manca un luogo in cui la storia della *muralla* possa non solo essere raccontata, ma diventare anche un polo di ricerca e documentazione, di divulgazione, di organizzazione di eventi culturali e di spazio di acquisizione e condivisione della consapevolezza che questa città, la sua memoria e la sua identità costituiscono le radici di un popolo, di una comunità. Questo imponente e ancora quasi intatto sistema di fortificazioni, ideato e realizzato grazie all'ingegno di un architetto italiano e dei suoi discendenti e tramandato a noi, nonostante il tentato *murallicidio* operato nel corso degli anni, deve poter parlare, esprimere e rivelare la sua importanza, rivendicare la sua essenza, identità e carattere, per legittimare la propria presenza ed essere rispettato in quanto tale, e non soltanto perché l'Unesco lo ha dichiarato Patrimonio dell'Umanità.

Nel Bastione di Santa Catalina, allora, all'interno delle cisterne e dei magazzini voltati esistenti, restaurati dalla metà degli anni '90 del secolo scorso, si è pensato di allestire un nuovo museo, quello delle mura di Cartagena: si tratta di un concept nuovo, potremmo dire un *museo 2.0*, nel quale non saranno esposte soltanto le testimonianze di ciò che è stato. Il nuovo museo esprimerà tutto ciò che, oggi, il sistema di fortificazioni caraibiche, non soltanto Cartagena e la sua baia, rappresenta, e cercherà di aprire a un futuro di riscoperta, come fulcro del patrimonio culturale, a nuove strategie di riuso, conservazione e tutela di questo Patrimonio vivo.

Il *museo de la muralla* nasce dall'esigenza di ripensare il concetto tradizionale

contemplative model, in which the visitor is a passive receiver of the displayed collection and apparatus (maps, models, photographs, videos, etc.), and instead embraces an experiential dimension based on interaction and immersion.

The museum is conceived as a place where technology and cultural content integrate harmoniously, through the use of innovative tools such as virtual reality, augmented reality, and advanced interactive systems. These technologies allow visitors to literally "enter" the content, exploring contexts, periods, and meanings in a direct and intuitive way.

One of the pivotal aspects of the project is cognitive accessibility: the *Museo de la Muralla* is designed not only for experts or scholars, but also for a broad and diverse audience. Through immersive experiences, interactive narratives, and customizable visits, even non-specialized individuals will be able to understand in a more immediate and deeper experience the value of the objects on display and the contents the museum seeks to communicate.

Alongside this dimension, the project places great emphasis on physical and sensory accessibility, with the aim of making its spaces genuinely inclusive. They will be designed to be fully usable by people with motor disabilities, eliminating architectural barriers and ensuring smooth circulation. Dedicated solutions will also be provided for blind or visually impaired visitors, such as tactile supports, three-dimensional models, and audio-descriptive content, as well as tools for deaf or otherwise hearing impaired visitors, including subtitles, sign-language videos, and intuitive visual interfaces. Technology thus becomes a fundamental ally in expanding access and promoting a complete and meaningful experience for all.

The installations will not merely provide information; they are designed to elicit the visitor's active participation. For example, virtual environments reconstructed within the evocative cisterns (*aljibes*)(Fig. 5) will allow visitors to contextualize the bay of Cartagena and the Caribbean, while interactive interfaces will offer the possibility of virtually exploring the Antonellian fortifications and understanding their spatiality. Immersive systems will also enable visitors to experience episodes such as the pillage carried out by the privateer Drake (1586) or the siege by the British fleet led by Edward Vernon (1741). In this way, the learning process becomes an engaging and memorable experience.

The museum thus assumes a dual function: on the one hand, it preserves and enhances cultural heritage; on the other, it becomes a space for experimentation and innovation, capable of engaging with new generations and contemporary languages.

The *Museo de la Muralla* therefore represents an evolved vision of the museum of the future: an inclusive, interactive, and immersive environment in which technology does not replace content but amplifies it, making it more accessible, comprehensible, and meaningful for everyone.

di spazio espositivo, trasformandolo in un ambiente dinamico, accessibile e profondamente coinvolgente. L'obiettivo principale è superare il modello contemplativo classico, in cui il visitatore osserva passivamente le cose esposte (mappe, modelli, fotografie, video, ecc.), per approdare a una dimensione esperienziale basata sull'interazione e sull'immersione.

Il museo si configura come un luogo in cui tecnologia e contenuto culturale si integrano armoniosamente, grazie all'uso di strumenti innovativi quali la realtà virtuale, la realtà aumentata e sistemi interattivi avanzati. Queste tecnologie consentono al visitatore di "entrare" letteralmente nei contenuti, esplorando contesti, epoche e significati in modo diretto e intuitivo.

Uno degli aspetti centrali del progetto è l'accessibilità cognitiva: il *museo de la muralla* è pensato non solo per esperti o studiosi, ma anche per un pubblico ampio e diversificato. Attraverso esperienze, narrazioni interattive e percorsi personalizzabili, anche i non addetti ai lavori potranno comprendere in modo più immediato e profondo il valore degli oggetti esposti e le tematiche che il museo intende comunicare.

Accanto a questa dimensione, il progetto pone grande attenzione anche all'accessibilità fisica e sensoriale, con l'obiettivo di rendere i suoi spazi davvero inclusivi: saranno progettati per essere fruibili da persone con disabilità motorie, eliminando le barriere architettoniche e garantendo percorsi agevoli. Saranno inoltre previste soluzioni dedicate a visitatori ciechi o ipovedenti, come supporti tattili, modelli tridimensionali e contenuti audio descrittivi, nonché strumenti per persone audiolese, tra cui sottotitoli, video in lingua dei segni e interfacce visive intuitive. La tecnologia stessa diventa quindi un'alleata fondamentale per ampliare l'accesso e garantire un'esperienza completa e significativa per tutti.

Le installazioni non si limiteranno a fornire informazioni, ma dovranno stimolare la partecipazione attiva del visitatore. Ad esempio, ambienti virtuali ricostruiti, all'interno delle suggestive cisterne (*aljibes*)(Fig. 5), permetteranno di contestualizzare la baia di Cartagena e il Caribe, mentre interfacce interattive offriranno la possibilità di visitare virtualmente le fortificazioni antonelliane e comprenderne la spazialità, ma anche di essere coinvolti, attraverso sistemi immersivi, nel saccheggio del corsaro Drake (1586), o nell'assedio della flotta britannica guidata da Edward Vernon (1741). In questo modo, il processo di apprendimento diventa un'esperienza coinvolgente e memorabile.

Il museo assume quindi una doppia funzione: da un lato conserva e valorizza il patrimonio culturale, dall'altro diventa uno spazio di sperimentazione e innovazione, capace di dialogare con le nuove generazioni e con i linguaggi contemporanei.

Il museo della muralla rappresenta, pertanto, una visione evoluta del museo del futuro: un ambiente inclusivo, interattivo e immersivo, in cui la tecnologia non sostituisce il contenuto, ma lo amplifica, rendendolo più accessibile, comprensibile e significativo per tutti.

4. Hyper-tourism

The tourist drift of recent decades has altered urban dynamics, reshaping spatial and functional balances to the detriment of the local population, with a disproportionately large-scale gentrification. The uncontrolled flows of "touch and go" cruise tourists certainly do not benefit residents - who flee the *ciudad amurallada* to seek refuge in the towers of Bocagrande, Manga, or El Cabrero - nor the local small-scale economy, which cannot prosper by selling a few bottles of water or *aguardiente*, nor low-quality souvenirs to passersby. The gigantic ships disgorge masses into the streets of the historic center for only a few hours, saturating every inch of open space, photographing every colonial doorway, littering everywhere, without understanding the cultural depth, the historical stratification, the thousand characteristics and resources of a city which, in its nearly 500 years of history, experienced Spanish, then French, and later English domination before achieving independence on August 7, 1819.

A visit to the *Museo de la Muralla*, conceived with the most advanced techniques of interactive communication and designed with inclusion in mind, would allow visitors to learn – almost naturally, without requiring any particular educational or cultural background – what this powerful and pervasive territorial sign once was and what it represents today. The representation of the fortification system—both of the bay and of the entire Caribbean basin – would finally and faithfully portray a territory conceived as a unified whole, beyond national borders, and would testify to a value: the coexistence of peoples, cultures, traditions, and practices tied to a geography that cannot be diminished or compromised by shortsighted or harmful policies.

Furthermore, the improvement of precise nodal points of the walls – particularly through the construction of simple yet essential ramps, stairways, and walkways at crucial locations along the *camino de ronda*, to make the visiting route continuous and accessible – will contribute to the redesign of public space, defining new places for the community.

As Luisa Bonesio (2014) argues, two main narratives confront one another in the promotion of tourism: experiential marketing and the conscious encounter between residents and visitors. The first approach reduces the territory to a consumer product, while the second seeks to valorize cultural heritage and promote responsible behavior. In recent years, awareness movements concerning environmental and cultural degradation have grown; in Europe, for example, the European Landscape Convention has stimulated greater territorial responsibility and a renewed appreciation of local identities. In Cartagena, however, this approach does not yet appear fully consolidated. Recent local policies seem to favor strategies aimed at immediate economic return, promoting predominantly fleeting and spectacular initiatives rather than structural, long-term interventions

4. Iperturismo

La deriva turistica di questi ultimi decenni ha alterato le dinamiche urbane, rimodellando gli equilibri spaziali e funzionali a scapito della popolazione locale, con una *gentrification* di dimensioni spropositate. I flussi incontrollati dei turisti "mordi e fuggi" delle crociere, sicuramente non giova né ai residenti (che letteralmente scappano dalla *ciudad amurallada* per trovare riparo nelle torri di Bocagrande, di Manga o del Cabrero) né alla piccola economia locale (che non si può arricchire vendendo qualche bottiglietta d'acqua e di aguardiente, oppure souvenir di dubbia qualità ai passanti): chi sbarca dalle gigantesche navi, si riversa per poche ore nei vicoli del centro storico, intasando ogni spazio aperto, fotografando ogni portone di casa coloniale, lasciando rifiuti in ogni dove, senza comprendere lo spessore culturale, la stratificazione storica, le mille caratteristiche e risorse di una città che, nei suoi quasi 500 anni di storia, ha vissuto la dominazione spagnola, poi quella francese, e ancora inglese, prima di conquistare l'indipendenza, il 7 agosto 1819.

Una visita al *museo de la muralla,* concepito con le più avanzate tecniche di comunicazione interattiva, e allestito in modo inclusivo, consentirebbe di apprendere, quasi in modo naturale, senza necessità di una particolare formazione scolastica o culturale, ciò che è stato e quel che oggi rappresenta quel segno così presente e pregnante sul territorio. La rappresentazione del sistema di fortificazioni sia della baia, che dell'intero bacino Caraibico, poi, disegnerebbe finalmente e fedelmente il ritratto di un territorio che è stato concepito come un *unicum*, al di là dei confini nazionali, e testimonierebbe un valore, quello della convivenza di popoli, culture, tradizioni e pratiche legate a una geografia che non può essere sminuita o compromessa da politiche ottuse e criminali.

Inoltre, la sistemazione di alcuni punti nodali delle mura, in particolare la realizzazione di semplici ma fondamentali progetti di rampe, scalinate e passerelle nei luoghi cruciali del cammino di ronda, per rendere il percorso di visita continuo e accessibile, contribuirà al ridisegno dello spazio pubblico, definendo nuovi luoghi per la collettività.

Come afferma Luisa Bonesio (2014), sono essenzialmente due le narrazioni che si confrontano nella promozione turistica: il marketing esperienziale e l'incontro consapevole tra residenti e visitatori; il primo approccio riduce il territorio a un prodotto di consumo, mentre il secondo mira a valorizzare il patrimonio culturale e a promuovere comportamenti responsabili. In questi ultimi anni, in particolare, si sono sviluppati movimenti di consapevolezza riguardo al degrado ambientale e culturale; in Europa, ad esempio, la Convenzione Europea del Paesaggio, ha stimolato una maggiore responsabilità territoriale e una rivalutazione delle identità locali. A Cartagena, tuttavia, questo approccio non appare ancora pienamente consolidato. Le recenti politiche locali sembrano

dedicated to the protection and enhancement of cultural heritage.

The purpose of the initiative launched by our project, by contrast, is to define—organically and systematically—a network of spaces and pathways, complete with signage, embedded within a communication and awareness-raising program addressed to the various segments of the population and user groups. Once implemented, this network could become—hopefully—an example, a virtuous case study to be presented as a good practice in heritage management.

We believe, in fact, that "in the absence of education provided by the State – education that would enable citizens to understand and evaluate what is being decided to their detriment – the task of raising awareness and fostering a more informed public opinion falls to groups or individual citizens, more or less supported by experts or institutions." (Bonesio, 2014) To achieve this result, it is necessary to construct a shared language and appropriate interpretive "keys," capable of guiding an informed and conscious gaze toward those dimensions that escape the "*cliché*-vision of the landscape" (Bonesio, 2014) (beautiful views, exceptional sites, protected areas, historic monuments, etc.), but which in reality constitute the largest part of the territory: contemporary transformations, infrastructures, the modification or erasure of pre-existing elements, ordinary building stock, environmental vulnerabilities, the progressive reduction of open spaces, and so on.

Today, we must educate citizens to become aware and responsible inhabitants, and therefore we must be able to communicate landscape values effectively. This is a process of awareness that leads from not seeing to being able to recognize and articulate the value of a landscape. An identity that once remained implicit thus becomes understandable, shareable, and capable of guiding words, choices, and decisions. In other terms, it is a genuine shift in paradigm and perspective: moving from sporadic, weakly rooted interventions—often driven by temporary or standardized logics—to a way of acting that is more attentive to places, their specificities, and their histories. At the same time, it overcomes the tendency to transform heritage into spectacle, functional primarily to tourism or the market, and instead moves toward a more integrated form of valorization in which the local community becomes an active and responsible protagonist.

The purpose of the training activities organized within our cooperation project moves precisely in this direction: to educate citizens and public opinion about heritage and its values. (Montanari, 2013)

And the architectural interventions contribute to prompting to a new reading of the urban landscape, understood as a shared asset of the community. They aim to recover – within perception, understanding, and everyday practices – those dimensions that economic-functionalist abstraction has progressively weakened, to the point of eroding memory and sensitivity. By acting upon the collective perception of the places inhabited by their communities, these interventions seek

privilegiare strategie orientate al ritorno economico immediato, promuovendo iniziative di carattere prevalentemente temporaneo e spettacolare, piuttosto che interventi strutturali e di lungo periodo dedicati alla tutela e valorizzazione del patrimonio culturale.

Il senso dell'operazione avviata dal nostro progetto, invece, mira a definire, in modo organico e sistematico, una rete di spazi e percorsi, completa di segnaletica, inserita in un programma di comunicazione e sensibilizzazione delle diverse fasce della popolazione e degli utenti che, una volta realizzata, potrà diventare – si spera – un esempio, un caso di studio virtuoso da rappresentare come una buona pratica di gestione del patrimonio.

Siamo convinti, infatti, che "in assenza di una formazione da parte dello Stato, che metta i cittadini in grado di comprendere e valutare quel che viene deciso a loro danno, il compito di sensibilizzazione e formazione di una più consapevole opinione pubblica ricade su gruppi o singoli cittadini, più o meno supportati da esperti o da istituzioni." (Bonesio, 2014) Per arrivare a questo risultato è necessario costruire un linguaggio condiviso e delle adeguate "chiavi" di lettura, capaci di orientare uno sguardo informato e consapevole verso quelle dimensioni che sfuggono alla "visione-*cliché* del paesaggio" (Bonesio, 2014) (belle vedute, brani eccezionali, aree protette, monumenti storici, ecc.), ma che costituiscono in realtà la parte più estesa del territorio: le trasformazioni contemporanee, le infrastrutture, la modifica o cancellazione delle preesistenze, l'edilizia ordinaria, le criticità ambientali, la progressiva riduzione degli spazi aperti, e così via.

Oggi bisogna formare cittadini che siano abitanti consapevoli e responsabili, e quindi bisogna saper comunicare adeguatamente i valori paesaggistici. Si tratta di un percorso di consapevolezza che porta dal non vedere al saper riconoscere e raccontare il valore di un paesaggio. Un'identità che prima restava implicita diventa così comprensibile, condivisibile e capace di orientare parole, scelte e decisioni. In altri termini, è un vero cambio di paradigma, di prospettiva: si passa da interventi sporadici e poco radicati, spesso guidati da logiche temporanee e standardizzate, a un modo di agire più attento ai luoghi, alle loro specificità e alla loro storia. Allo stesso tempo, si supera la tendenza a trasformare il patrimonio in spettacolo, funzionale soprattutto al turismo o al mercato, (Montanari, 2013) per arrivare a una valorizzazione più integrata, in cui la comunità locale diventa protagonista attiva e responsabile.

Il senso delle attività formative organizzate nell'ambito del nostro progetto di cooperazione va proprio in questa direzione: formare il cittadino, l'opinione pubblica, al Patrimonio, ai suoi valori.

E gli interventi architettonici contribuiscono a costruire una nuova lettura del paesaggio urbano, inteso come bene condiviso dalla comunità. Essi mirano a recuperare, nella percezione, nella comprensione e nelle pratiche quotidiane, quelle dimensioni che l'astrazione economico-funzionalista ha progressivamente

to activate proactive processes, restoring depth and complexity and fostering forms of recognition and interpretation sufficient to make these spaces once again consciously inhabitable, “poetically and full of merit.” (Isola, 1986)

5. Conclusions

The case of Cartagena de Indias demonstrates that fortified heritage can no longer be interpreted as a simple object to be preserved, nor as an asset to be exploited exclusively for tourism. The walls, originally built as devices of defense and separation, now reveal themselves as an “open” infrastructure, and the contemporary challenge they pose lies not only in the material protection of the *cordón amurallado*, but in defining a dynamic balance between conservation, use, and everyday life. In this sense, the public space that runs alongside the walls becomes the privileged place where the coexistence between residents, visitors, and heritage is manifested – and can be mediated – transforming a potential conflict into a design opportunity.

The proposed strategies, grounded in accessibility, inclusion, and continuity of walkways, hint in a possible direction: not isolated interventions, but a system of urban episodes capable of restoring centrality to the collective experience of space. From this perspective, architectural design assumes a fundamental role as a tool of mediation between divergent demands, contributing to redefining the relationship between the historic city and contemporary life.

At the same time, the issue of *hyper-tourism* compels a broader reflection on the very meaning of development. Cartagena clearly reveals the limits of an economic model narrowly focused on maximizing flows and consumption, without understanding that the quality of urban space and of everyday life constitutes an essential value, albeit not readily convertible and difficult to quantify in immediate terms.

In this perspective, heritage is not only a material legacy to be preserved, but also an active resource through which to construct new models of coexistence and new forms of cultural economy. The historic walls, once a symbol of enclosure, can thus become a paradigm of openness: a shared, accessible, and inclusive space capable of embracing the complexity of the present without detriment to the depth of the past.

The contribution of this research lies in proposing an integrated reading between analysis and design, one capable not only of offering a strategy for Cartagena de Indias, but also of serving as a methodological reference replicable in other historic contexts marked by similar dynamics of tourist pressure and urban transformation.

attenuato, fino a indebolire memoria e sensibilità. Operando sulla percezione collettiva dei luoghi vissuti dai loro abitanti, questi interventi cercano di attivare processi propositivi, restituendo profondità e complessità e favorendo forme di riconoscimento e interpretazione sufficienti a rendere tali spazi nuovamente abitabili in modo consapevole, “poeticamente e pieni di merito”. (Isola, 1986)

5. Conclusioni

Il caso di Cartagena de Indias dimostra come il patrimonio fortificato non possa più essere interpretato come un semplice oggetto da conservare, né come un dispositivo da sfruttare esclusivamente in chiave turistica. Le mura, costruite come strumento di difesa e separazione, si rivelano oggi come un’infrastruttura “aperta”, e la sfida contemporanea cui ci sottopongono non risiede più, o soltanto nella sola tutela materiale del *cordón amurallado*, ma nella definizione di un equilibrio dinamico tra conservazione, fruizione e vita quotidiana. In questo senso, lo spazio pubblico che costeggia le mura diventa il luogo privilegiato in cui si manifesta – e può essere mediata – la convivenza tra residenti, visitatori e patrimonio, trasformando un potenziale conflitto in occasione progettuale.

Le strategie proposte, fondate sull’accessibilità, sull’inclusione e sulla continuità dei percorsi, indicano una possibile direzione: non interventi isolati, ma un sistema di episodi urbani capaci di restituire centralità all’esperienza collettiva dello spazio. In tale prospettiva, il progetto architettonico assume un ruolo fondamentale come strumento di mediazione tra istanze divergenti, contribuendo a ridefinire il rapporto tra città storica e contemporaneità.

Allo stesso tempo, il tema dell’*hyper-tourism* impone una riflessione più ampia sul significato stesso di sviluppo. Cartagena evidenzia con chiarezza i limiti di un modello economico ottusamente fondato sulla sola massimizzazione dei flussi e dei consumi, senza comprendere come la qualità dello spazio urbano e della vita quotidiana rappresenti un valore imprescindibile, seppur non monetizzabile e difficilmente quantificabile in termini immediati.

In questa prospettiva, il patrimonio non è soltanto un’eredità da preservare, ma anche una risorsa attiva con cui costruire nuovi modelli di convivenza e nuove forme di economia culturale. Le mura storiche, da simbolo di chiusura, possono così diventare un paradigma di apertura: uno spazio condiviso, accessibile e inclusivo, capace di accogliere la complessità del presente senza perdere la profondità del passato.

Il contributo di questa ricerca si colloca nella direzione di proporre una lettura integrata tra analisi e progetto, capace di costituire non solo una strategia per Cartagena de Indias, ma anche un riferimento metodologico replicabile in altri contesti storici segnati da analoghe dinamiche di pressione turistica e di trasformazione urbana.



Figura 1 -Plan of the city of Cartajena de Yndias, 1684 (Archivo General de Indias, MP-PANAMA, 96)

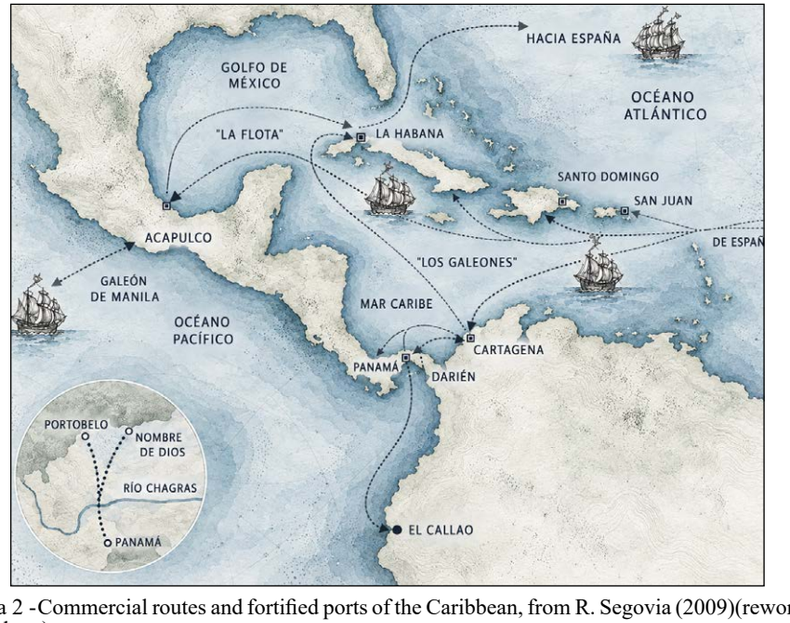


Figura 2 -Commercial routes and fortified ports of the Caribbean, from R. Segovia (2009)(reworked by authors)



Figura 3 - Proposal for the Espigón de la Tenaza



Figura 4- Proposal for the Espigón de la Tenaza



Figura 5- Proposal for the museum of the Muralla inside the cisterns (*aljibes*)

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1

ReUso 2026
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Perspectives on conservation and promotion

ReUso

This volume compiles the full papers of the 14th ReUso Conference (Barcelona-Girona, 4–7 November 2026), marking the first publication of the conference proceedings within the *ReUso* series of Firenze University Press. Centred on new heritage and future strategies, it provides in-depth case studies and adaptive reuse practices across *Knowledge, Diagnosis and Treatment, Intervention*, and *Promotion*, focusing on late 20th-century architecture and landscapes. The book offers a rigorous scientific platform for sustainable interventions and strategies to manage change, connecting research, protection, and design.

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