

Highlighting the Heritage of Meseta Ibérica

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Topic: T1.1. Study and cataloging of vernacular architecture

Abstract

Meseta Ibérica is a region placed along the border between Spain and Portugal in the international Douro river area. This region has an exquisite rural landscape, of which the urban landscape is part. A detailed characterization of the existing buildings was also possible to perform. As stated above, six villages were selected as a reference to the urban heritage of this region in a rural context. These villages were Atenor, Rio de Onor and Bemposta, in the Portugal side, and Fariza, Riomanzanas and San Martín de Castañeda, in Spain side. Altogether, 767 buildings have been studied according to different parameters such as the type of building, the type of utilization, the stage of conservation, type of building materials, type of structure solution, the colour of the façade, among many more. This paper intends to share some of the obtained results from the heritage perspective. These results may give guidance for future urban rehabilitation management.

Keywords: Heritage; Meseta Ibérica; Vernacular; Rural construction.

1. Introduction

An international research work was done focused on studying the landscape of the Mesteza Ibérica which is an important biosphere reserve, Fig. 1 (*Paisagem Iberica – Projecto Paisaje Ibérico Poptec Interreg*, 2015). The primary relevance of this work was to characterize this inheritance to give guidance in terms of maintenance.

This paper intends to highlight some aspects of the urban areas on a village scale. In particular, it wants to show the important heritage in the rural areas of this territory. This purpose is related to the fact that a village is also part of the landscape, and its evolution may disparege it when it is not done correctly (Alcindor et al., 2021; López Sánchez et al., 2020).

A considerable amount of data was produced and treated. Surveying was done in some villages considered as reference. A detailed

characterization of the existing buildings was also possible to perform. Simple statistical analysis was done concerning several technical building aspects, and also some of them were mapped by village.

Similar research works were done in similar contexts (Cardoso, 2013; Cepeda et al., 2010; Leserri et al., 2018; Padrão et al., 2020; *Surveys - Vernacular Architecture and Landscape Architecture Resource Guide - Library Guides at UC Berkeley*, 2022)

This paper is structured in six parts. Apart from this introduction, a brief description of Meseta Ibérica is done in the second part. The identification of the selected villages studied during this research work is made in the third part. In the fourth part, a brief description of the adopted surveying strategy and the presentation of the used application form are considered. Afterwards, in part five, some

results are delivered. Finally, in the last part, some final remarks are made. It is concluded that Meseta Ibérica is rich in terms of heritage. These villages and their traditional buildings keep their identity. The buildings present specific building details which are worth preserving. The original built rural areas are in harmony with the landscape, and there in deep respect with nature. The simplicity, the volumetry, the shape and the adopted materials of the building solutions confirm this statement.



a) Low vegetation



b) Vineyards

Fig. 1. Some highlights of the Meseta Ibérica landscape

2. Meseta Ibérica

Meseta Ibérica is a vast region that includes both Spain and Portugal territory. Since June 2015, UNESCO has recognised it as a cross-border biosphere reserve that has five natural parks such as Montesinho, Lago de Sanabria y Alrededores, Douro Internacional, Arribes del Duero, and Vale do Tua. Its landscape, natural resources and culture are some of its unvalued richness.

3. The studied villages

As it was stated above, six villages were selected as a reference to the urban heritage of this region in a rural context. These villages were Atenor, Rio de Onor and Bemposta, in the Portugal side, and Fariza, Riomanzanas and San Martín de Castañeda, in Spain side. Each village's digital map was used as an operational element base of the surveying performed during this research work. Fig. 2 shows an image of the Fariza village, and Fig. 3 presents its digital map as an example.

4. Surveying form

In order to characterize the existing heritage of the territory, it was required to prepare a specific application form to systemize the surveying process. Several technical building technical aspects were considered for this purpose.

5. Some results

5.1. Some examples of heritage of Meseta Ibérica

All studied villages are rich in heritage. Buildings are likely to have two floors. The volumetric of the buildings is regular, and the architecture is plain. The ground floor is mainly used to keep cattle and agricultural products, and the first floor is for accommodation.

In general, they are vernacular. Stone (e.g. schist or granite) masonry walls are the main vertical structural elements. However, other

vertical structural elements applied are tabique walls, adobe walls, timber and stone columns. Timber floors are the main horizontal structural elements. The structure of the roof is also likely to be built with wood. Exterior stairs tend to be made of stone.

Balconies tend to be built by stone and timber. In roof covering, ceramic and schist tiles are the most traditional solutions. Fig. 4 exemplify this type of heritage.



Fig. 2. Fariza village



Fig. 3. Fariza digital map



a) Example 1



c) Example 3



b) Example 2



d) Example 4

Fig. 4. Heritage of Meseta Ibérica

5.2. Some examples of building details

Based on the above buildings solutions, the number of building details is pretty significant to be referred to in this paper. Therefore, only a few building details are presented in Fig. 5 to exemplify this matter concerning the heritage of Meseta Ibérica.

The detail of the connection of orthogonal exterior granite masonry walls (Fig. 5. a), the application of adobe units and earth with straw is also referred in Fig. 5.b. The existence of exterior tabique walls (Pinto et al., 2017) and its finishing in the end with a timber element is also considered in Fig. 5.c and, finally, the typical timber balcony built with zimbro (*zuniperus communis*) timber is also included in this part (Fig. 5.d).



b) Finishing of a tabique wall



a) Junction of orthogonal walls



c) Traditional balcony



d) Adobe and earth mortar

Fig. 5. Examples of traditional building details

5.3 Some examples of data delivered

Based on the surveying performed in all the identified villages, it was possible to produce several maps of different technical aspects concerning the heritage of the Meseta Ibérica. The level of conservation of the building, the number of floors, the type of building and the type of utilization were some of the topics considered in this mapping process. Fig. 6 exemplifies this result concerning the Fariza village as an example. This tool may also be used to guide the maintenance and planning of this heritage.

6. Main conclusions

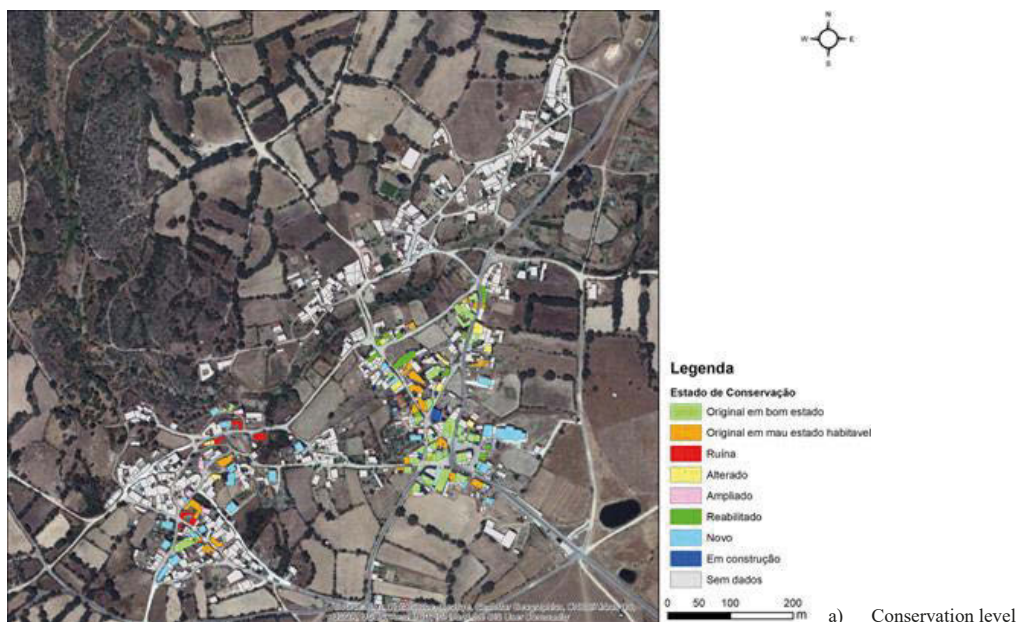
The Meseta Ibérica has an important heritage to preserve and value.

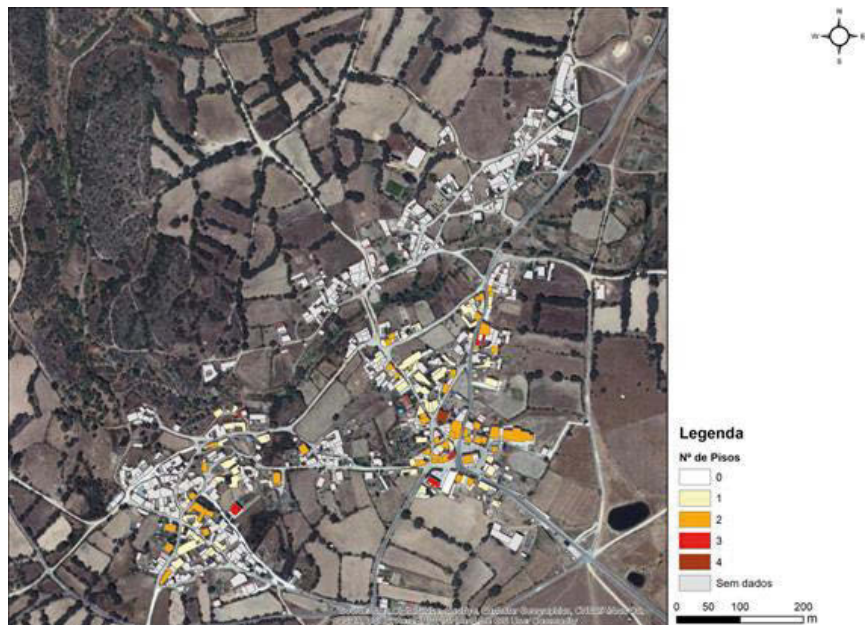
Six villages were studied as representative of the rural built areas of this reserve.

A rich heritage was found. Vernacular and traditional building techniques, local and natural building materials and local architecture trends were observed. Tabique and adobe are some of these building techniques which gave some surprise. The usage of the earth as a traditional building material was another interesting fact verified during the fieldwork.

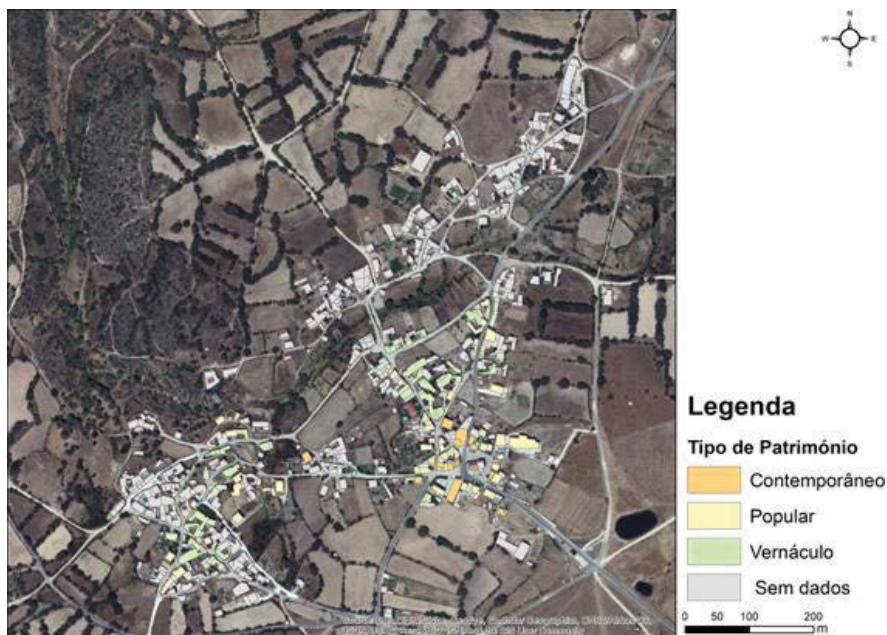
A brief description of the most common types of buildings was done in this paper. The presentation of some traditional building details of this region was also done. In addition, examples of maps of several technical aspects were introduced. The obtained data may be helpful in terms of guiding future managing processes of this important heritage.

Fig. 6 exemplifies this result concerning Fariza village as an example.

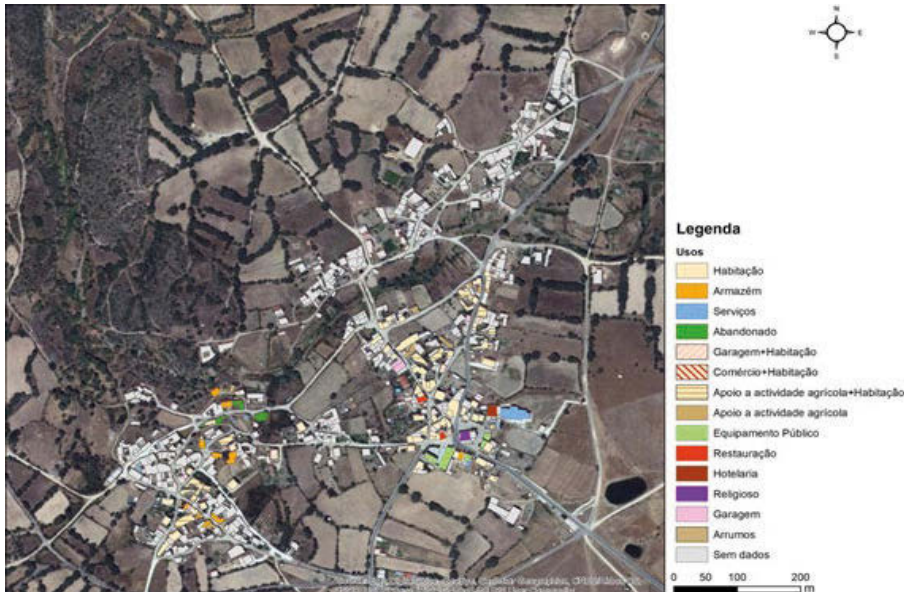




b) Number of floors



c) Type of building



d) Type of utilization

Fig. 6. Maps produced for Fariza village as an example

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