

400 Years of Cultural Legacy: Research and dissemination of the heritage of a historic building during a fifteen-year period

María-Jesús Mañez-Pitarch^a, Jose-Teodoro Garfella-Rubio^b and Jaume Gual-Ortí^c

Universitat Jaume I de Castelló, ^a, manez@uji.es; ^b, garfella@uji.es; ^c, jgual@uji.es.

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Abstract

This communication aims to showcase the research and dissemination work carried out over fifteen years on a historically significant historic building celebrating its 400th anniversary this year.

The methodological approach ranged from extensive data collection to obtain an accurate digital twin of the construction, modelling key architectural elements, to creating models using 3D printing technology, enabling a tangible physical representation.

Furthermore, the results have been widely disseminated in various media and formats. These findings have significantly enriched knowledge about this historical monument, providing new perspectives and facilitating its local and global valorisation. Likewise, they have contributed to preserving and promoting their cultural legacy for present and future generations.

Keywords: heritage, dissemination, Cultural Legacy, research.



1. Introduction

Vistabella del Maestrazgo is a small mountain town located 1250 meters above sea level in Castellon, Valencian Community, Spain. The municipality belonged to the "Reino de Valencia" during the Middle and Modern Ages. In this small municipality with medieval roots, there is an important building, its parish church, the church of "Nuestra Señora de la Asunción". The building was built outside the medieval walls in the early seventeenth century (Figure 1). This is one of the finest Renaissance churches in Valencian architecture and was declared a Cultural Heritage with the category of the monument on September 28th 2007.

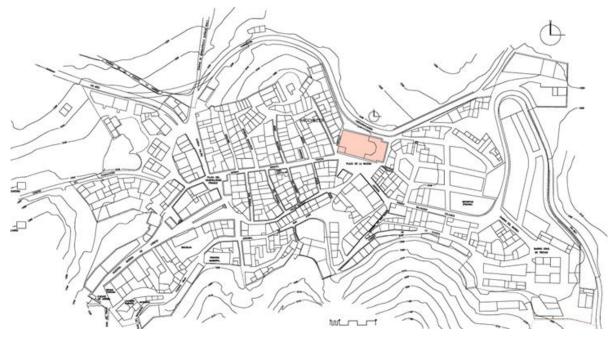


Figure 1. Construction site. Source: Mañez (2014).

Legacy, synonymous with inheritance, encompasses tangible and intangible things passed on to one or more persons. We obtain a more precise definition by adding the term "cultural" to legacy. Cultural inheritance can be considered as inheritance related to art, intellect, and education. This transmission should ideally contribute to the evolution and education of society.

There is no doubt that when we speak of a religious building, we deal with transmitting religious manifestations and the religious legacy. This legacy makes it possible to preserve and maintain spiritual and social values.

Therefore, the cultural legacy related to religious architectural heritage is invaluable. It is a symbol of cultural and spiritual identity. In addition to being extraordinary construction and artistic landmarks, these buildings have hosted traditions and events for years, brought people together, and given them a sense of belonging and rootedness to their community. These structures have witnessed the history, culture, faith, and communities that built them and continue to preserve them (Viñals & López-González, 2022).

In terms of preservation, religious architectural heritage presents unique challenges due to its age and often lacks financial resources for its maintenance. However, its conservation is crucial to ensure that future generations can learn from these architectural, cultural, and spiritual treasures.

The rules and principles for preserving monuments have been numerous and have evolved from the Renaissance to contemporary UNESCO initiatives.

Interest in the preservation and study of classical architectural heritage emerged during the Renaissance. In the 19th century, the figure of Viollet-le-Duc in France emphasised the importance of authenticity in restoration. In the 20th century, the "Carta del Restauro" promoted minimal intervention in heritage conservation. Riegl (Riegl, 1987), also in the 20th century, emphasised the importance of valuing monuments for their historical and cultural

significance and preserving these buildings for future generations. The UNESCO World Heritage Lists and recommendations for conserving cultural and natural sites are also fundamental. In 2018, the European Year of Cultural Heritage was declared, highlighting that European cultural heritage is not only a legacy of the past but also an indispensable resource for our future, given its unquestionable educational and social value, its considerable economic potential, as well as its important dimension in international cooperation (Ministerio de Cultura, 2018).

All these norms and principles, influenced by key figures and movements throughout history, have contributed to establishing international standards for preserving architectural and cultural heritage.

Considering all of the above, it can be affirmed that the Vistabella parish church represents a significant cultural legacy not only for the village itself but also for the province level. This church symbolises faith and devotion to the local community and embodies a rich architectural and cultural history spanning centuries. Its importance must transcend local borders and be recognised both regionally and globally.

2. Aims and objectives

The communication aims to show the research and dissemination work carried out over fifteen years in a building of great historical importance, celebrating its 400th anniversary this year. In addition, an analysis of the impact of these works, both academically and socially, is carried out.

3. Procedure

The various activities carried out during the last fifteen years are listed below. They have followed the three fundamental pillars of this type of study: conducting architectural surveys, preparing documents that objectively and rigorously represent the buildings, and disseminating the results.

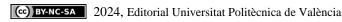
3.1. Precedents

Initially, the research focused on preparing a doctoral thesis from 2010 to 2014 (Mañez, 2014). The thesis was framed in the conservation and enhancement of architectural heritage. The aim was to study renaissance religious architecture in Castellón, focusing on the parish church of Vistabella del Maestrazgo and to prepare a graphic and written document that would document the building and serve as a reference for future work. At the same time, other buildings with similar characteristics were studied.

The research was justified by the importance of the temple within the Valencian Renaissance architectural context and the lack of previous exhaustive studies. Moreover, despite the oblivion that Renaissance architecture had suffered in the lands of Castellón, recognised authors such as Elías Tormo (Tormo, 1923), Fernando Chueca (Chueca, 1953), José Camón (Camón, 1984), and Joaquín Bérchez (Bérchez, 1994) had highlighted the exceptional nature of the Vistabella parish church in their books. However, until then, only superficial descriptions, small articles by local authors, some photographs, and two restoration projects were available.

3.2. PhD thesis completion

The thesis focused on the period from the mid-16th century to the beginning of the 17th century, characterised by the transition from Gothic to Baroque. Renaissance ornamental and constructive solutions were combined with Gothic elements, such as ribbed vaults, during this architectural period. In addition, the study delved into Renaissance religious architecture in the province of Castellón, with a specific focus on the Vistabella del Maestrazgo Parish Church (Figure 2), to prepare a document, both graphic and written, that testifies the building and served as a reference for future work. In parallel, other buildings with similar characteristics were analysed.



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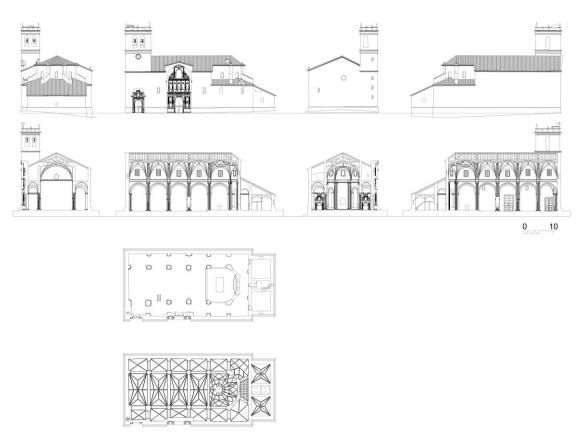


Figure 2. The church of "Nuestra Señora de la Asunción" Source: Mañez (2014).

3.2.1. PhD thesis methodology

For the thesis, a deep architectural survey was carried out. This consisted of a mixed information capture system comprising three activities. In the first, a large number of archives and publications were consulted. In the second, an exhaustive graphic survey was carried out with a 3D scanner, which provided a digital twin of the construction. This allowed for precise building planimetry and the creation of physical and digital models. Finally, in the third activity, a comparison was made with buildings of the same style and period.

It is important to highlight that, of all the activities carried out, the graphic survey was the activity that provided the most data for the development of the work, providing a very precise and previously unpublished clone of the construction.

3.2.2. PhD thesis presentation

The PhD thesis, supervised by Dr Concepción López and Dr Fernando Fargueta, was defended on March 21, 2014, at the Universitat Politècnica de València (UPV). The PhD thesis received an outstanding grade from the examining committee. This milestone represented years of research, analysis, and intense work, culminating in Ph.D. studies. A thesis review was published in the journal EGA n.24 in 2014. The following year, this institution was awarded the extraordinary Ph.D. prize.

3.3. Academic publications

Detailed documentation of the research findings has been conducted through numerous reports, conferences, scientific articles, and book chapters. This has facilitated disseminating research results, knowledge, and experiences to the academic community and the general public. These activities have contributed to the advancement of knowledge.

3.4. Research projects

Three research projects were undertaken as part of the research.

The project "El Renacimiento: Impronta arquitectónica en la provincia de Castellón. Huellas, rastros, trazas y vestigios" was conducted from 2016 to 2018 and funded by the Universitat Jaume I. It aimed to investigate Renaissance buildings in rural areas of Castellón, providing previously unpublished documentation and creating accessible Renaissance routes. These routes included tactile and tangible models, allowing people with visual impairments to experience the heritage through tactile exploration. This project was built upon the doctoral thesis on Renaissance religious architecture in Vistabella del Maestrazgo and additional research on integrating three-dimensional symbols in tactile maps by researcher Jaume Gual Ortí.

The project "Estudio de técnicas y materiales de prototipado rápido para la obtención de relieves táctiles permanentes del patrimonio arquitectónico aptos para exteriores y orientados a personas con discapacidad visual", was financed by the Generalitat Valenciana. The objective of the project was to investigate the potential of rapid prototyping systems to produce haptic reliefs of architectural heritage suitable for outdoor use.

3.5. Publication on social networks

Dissemination activities have been conducted to share the research findings with a broader audience, utilising social media platforms. An email account was set up, along with creating a website, a Facebook page, and an Instagram account.

Email account: arquitecturarenacentista@uji.es Website: www.arquitecturarenacentista.uji.es Facebook page: www.arquitectura renacentista.com/Facebook Instagram account: www.instagram.com/arquitecturarenacentista/

3.6. Making physical and tactile models

Over time, elements ranging from the building's floor plan to vaults or facades have been modelled and printed using 3D printers (Figure 3) and a numerical control milling machine (Figure 4).



Figure 3. Model of a vault and 3D printed model. Source: Mañez, MJ. & Garfella, J. (2024)



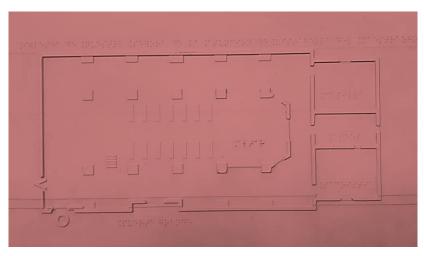


Figure 4. Tactile map. Source: Gual, J. (2020)

3.7. Teaching activities

Through the teaching aspect, the research findings have been utilised to deliver classes and cultivate students' interest in architectural heritage. Moreover, a significant number of students have received training in these disciplines through scholarships or internships within the ARDIPA research group. This has played a role in fostering the development of skills and competencies necessary for research and work across various disciplines. In addition, several final degree projects have been developed. Notable examples include "Estudio arquitectónico, constructivo y modelado virtual del palacio castillo de Betxi" in 2014 and "Estudio y representación gráfica de la Iglesia Parroquial de la Asunción de Nuestra Señora de Benlloch" in 2022.

3.8. 400 years exhibition

This year, the Vistabella monument is celebrated 400 years since its construction. To commemorate this milestone, panels and models are being created for a permanent exhibition. In addition, there are plans to host a conference in August. The objective is to make all inhabitants and visitors aware of the importance of this monument, which has been a witness to numerous social, political, economic, and cultural changes over the past four centuries.

4. Results

In this section, a distinction is made between results or impacts that are academically focused, such as research advances, academic publications or educational achievements, and those that relate to social aspects, such as community influence.

4.1. Academic results or impacts

4.1.1. PhD thesis results

After conducting research in over 20 documentary and photographic archives, consulting around 400 publications, and conducting a thorough graphic survey, 28 buildings were identified. These included churches, hermitages, and chapels constructed in the Castellón province during the study period. Additionally, connections were established with Gothic-Renaissance temples in the Teruel and Tarragona provinces.

The research contextualised the building and analysed its formal, morphological, constructive, and artistic aspects. Details were discovered about the French architect Joan Tell, emphasising his French, gothic and Renaissance influence on the temple's design despite using the Valencian span as a unit of measurement. The author's habit of connecting the chapels between buttresses with large semicircular arches was also noted, creating the impression of side naves. This aligned with the Jesuit model initiated in "Il Gesú" in Rome, designed by Vignola and subsequently followed by a large number of Baroque churches.

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The church, constructed between 1604 and 1624, exhibits distinct Renaissance characteristics such as symmetry, proportion, modulation, correct distribution, correspondence of parts, and the sizing of elements about the whole and its module. Notable features include separate doorways for men and women, a retablo-façade, and strategically positioned windows designed to admit sunlight during religious festivals. For instance, on the 15th of August, sunlight illuminates the altar in the afternoon. The bell tower, standing at 29.48 meters, also dominates the urban landscape.

The retable façade is divided into three sections following the Doric, ionic, and Corinthian orders, influenced by the main altarpiece of the "El Escorial" basilica, which transmitted the dogmas of the Catholic Church promulgated by the Council of Trent. A potential connection was also identified between this architectural element and the master Joan Rigor and the church of "Natividad" in Andorra (Teruel).

The building occupies a surface area of 1209 m2, similar to other contemporary churches. However, its distinction as a freestanding structure, with a single roof encompassing both the main nave and the side chapels at the same height and the fact that the side facade serves as the main facade enhances its grandeur.

4.1.2. Academic publications

The various conferences, scientific articles, book chapters, and national and international significance conferences are listed below, along with a synthesis of the most relevant results. The publications are fully referenced in the biography.

Year	Title	Relevant results
2010	The parish church of Nuestra Señora de la Asunción of Vistabella del Maestrazgo in Castellón. APEGA 2010	The first results of the research are presented
2012	The parish church of "San Bartolome" of La Jana in Castellón. APEGA 2012	First studies of another church designed by Joan Tell.
2013	Study of the concordance between the historical documentation and the graphic documentation applied for the study and analysis of the chapel of San Vicente Ferrer (1610-1618), located in the town of Catí (Castellón-Spain). AID MONUMENTS	It was found that Master Tell used the Valencian span of 23 cm.
2013	The graphic documentation of architectural heritage through the use of advanced methodologies and their application Tortosa Diocese region. TERRES DE CRUÏLLA	The precision of graphic surveys with 3D scanners is shown.
2014	The late Gothic religious architecture in the lands of Castellón at the beginning 17th century. SEVILLA 1514.	There is a synthesis of Tell's work and the metrology used.
2014	Photogrammetry and laser scanning systems, in combination with traditional methods in heritage documentation, for obtaining an inverse architecture and its preservation. REHABEND.	Obtaining 3D models from architectural graphic surveys.
2014	The modeling based on techniques advanced of takes of data for the study of the church of the Asunción in Vistabella del Maestrazgo 1604-24. LE VIE MERCANTI	Explanation of the accuracy of the graphics surveys in the of Vistabella parish
2014	The discovery of the proportions established by Vitruvius and Alberti in the "Maestrazgo de Montesa" lands, thanks to architectural graphic surveys. EGE	Study of the proportions used by Joan Tell in the church
2015	The instructions of s. Carlo Borromeo in the Vistabella church. Castellón. España. LE VIE MERCANTI	Application of St. Carlo Borromeo text in the design of the monument
2015	The implementation of the new technologies for advanced graphic expression in studies conducted using structural graphical statics and its comparison with architectural treatises of the time. CMMOST	Static graphic structural studies.
2015	Comparative Study of Graphic Representation Methods on Architectural Heritage. IGI	Comparative studies using Maestre's land as a test laboratory.

Table 1. Academic publications

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2016	Geometric studies in the blossoming of the Renaissance in Castellón lands. Between the Gothic and Baroque tradition. TIRANT LO BLANCH	Study of the utilization of geometry by the architect Joan Tell.
2016	The retablo-façade of the Church of "Nuestra Señora de la Asunción "in Vistabella del Maestrazgo(Castellón). EGA	Comparison between the retablo- façade of Vistabella and Andorra (Teruel)
2016	Renaissance-Style Architecture in El Maestrazgo: From Virtual to Tactile Models.IGI	Sample conversion from virtual to tactile models
2018	Process of transformation of architectural graphic documentation into tactile models.EGE	Sample conversion from virtual to tactile models
2018	Study on Different Graphic Representations in Architectural Heritage: Digital and Physical Modelling. IJCMHS	Digital and physical models of the church portal.
2019	Possibilities of additive manufacturing for creating inclusive tactile models. TIRANT HUMANIDADES.	Inclusive tactile models through additive manufacturing. 3D printing
2019	The diffusion of architectural Heritage, through social networks, as a digital Heritage. DISEGNARECON	Reflections on the use of social networks in the dissemination of architectural Heritage.
2021	Promotion and restoration of the architectural heritage of the valencian community through 3D additive manufacturing technologies with ceramic material. TIRANT HUMANIDADES.	Dissemination of Valencian architectural heritage through 3D printable models and the potential restoration of monuments using ceramic materials was explored
2021	Comparative studies of the churches of "santa María de Morella" and "Nuestra Señora de la Asunción de Vistabella del Maestrazgo". Province of castellón. TIRANT HUMANIDADES.	Similarities and differences between two significant buildings
2023	Natural lighting in a Renaissance temple. SIN PUBLICAR.	Explanation of the illumination of the temple through the sun's rays and how they can give information about the building.

4.1.3 Research projects

In addition to the dissemination through the aforementioned publications, the results obtained about 3D printing and the development of tactile models allowed for two research contracts and two research actions, facilitating knowledge transfer to society.

The first contract involved the design and installation of an outdoor tactile map in an inclusive park in the city of Valencia.

The second contract was carried out within the "3D RestaurAM" project (Mañez et al., 2021). The objective was to adapt new 3D printing using ceramic materials to restore and promote Valencian Heritage. This included scanning, modelling and prototyping techniques and disseminating these models in a free, accessible format.

The two research actions in the medical field were carried out by researchers from the Universitat Jaume I (UJI) and FISABIO. These works included prototyping the designs with 3D printing. One of them obtained a patent.

4.2. Social results or impacts

In the pursuit of disseminating knowledge to society, several actions have taken place over the past 15 years.

In July 2010, a conference and visit to the church in the municipality, led by María Jesús Mañez, took place at the Seu del Penyagolosa of the UJI as part of the summer course "L'arquitectura en pedra. Patrimoni cultural."

In March 2014, a diptych was prepared to summarise the main conclusions of the thesis. This diptych should be disseminated for greater knowledge of this emblematic building so that the research does not remain only in the academic field (Figure 5).

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Año 2014



Figure 5. Diptych. Source: Mañez (2014)

In September of the same year, the blog of the "Arxiu de Vistabella del Maestrat" (Ayuntamiento de Vistabella, 2014) and the newspaper Levante (Levante, 2014) echoed the doctoral thesis (Figure 6).

Arxiu de Vistabella del Maestrat	Una tesis desvela quién fue el arquitecto de la iglesia de Vistabella
Tesi doctoral sobre l'església de Vistabella del Maestrat. Tesi sets Mafrez Pitarch és professora de Escola Superior de Tecnologia i Chrides Experimentals de la fuversitat de Casteló, i ei gener de 2014 ha publicat la seua tesi doctoral sobre l'església de Vistabella. El trebal final consta de 652 págines i porta el titol: La Arguitectura religiosa rencentista en tierras: del Moestre la Iglesia de Vistabella. El trebal final consta de 652 págines i porta el titol: La Arguitectura religiosa rencentista en tierras: del Moestre la Iglesia de Vistabella. El trebal final consta de 652 págines i porta el titol: La Arguitectura religiosa rencentista en tierras: del Moestre la Iglesia de Vistabella. El trebal final consta de forta per la Iglesia del Maestratora.	J. TEMA VISTABELLA ■ La profesora de la Universitat Jame I de Castellón, María Jesús Máñez Pitarch, ha publicado una tesis doctoral sobre la iglesia renacentista de Vistabella. 692 páginas donde se reúnen todos los datos bibliográficos, gráficos y archivísticos del templo de la localidad del Maestrat. En la tesis la investigadora definede que el arquitecto francés Joan Tell fue el autor de la iglesia. Para ello se fundamenta en un documento, que en 1987, fue hallado por Ferran Olucha en el archivo de Castelló. Hasta la fecha la autoría de la iglesia de Vistabella se atribuía a Joan Anglés. La tesis explica por qué no fue éste el autor del templo. Según se describe en la tesis en el documento hallado por Olucha en 1987, se desvela que «en dicho documento el propio Joan Tell se define como arquitecto, también maestro de iglesias y habitador de la villa de Vistabella».
En aquesta tesi ha reunit totes les dades bibliogràfiques, gràfiques i anvivisiques existents. També ha fet un exhausti a ukecament gràfic que ha estat realitata a partir de comples trebalis de campos durant els quals ha utilitzat no només sistemes tradicionals de mesurament, com ara instruments i aparells topogràfics, sinó també programari d'última generació. Gràdes a la totalitat de la investigació s'ha localitzat als autors de l'obra: d'una banda l'arquitecte francès Joan Tell "() en el año 1987 Ferran Olucho encontrora un documento en el archivo municipal de Costelido Aorde se desvidabe el verdadero autor de lo abra, pan Tel. En dicho documento el programant de la tesi que Joan Rigor también maestro de iglesias, y habitador de la villa de Vistabella". D'altra banda l'autora manté la tesi que Joan Rigor va ser l'autor de les portades: "() el autor de las portadas de Vistabella (la Joan Rigor, el cual fue reconocido en su tiempo como un contro el encho habilidad". Aina mateix també s'explica perquèJoan Anglès, al qual sempre s'ha atribuit l'obra, no podia ser-ne l'autor.	

Figure 6. Newspaper Levante and Arxiu Vistabella Publication. Source: Levante & Arxiu. (2014)

The social media accounts were established solely for scientific dissemination. The limited number of visits, followers, and likes received has been noted.

- Website: www.arquitecturarenacentista.uji.es. Visits: 200
- Facebook page: www.arquitectura renacentista.com/Facebook. 123 likes 132 followers
- Instagram account: www.instagram.com/arquitecturarenacentista/ 143 followers •

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Additionally, ITC established a website to share open-access models via the Sketchfab platform.

• ITC website: www.3drestauram.es .Visits: 35780

The models of Vistabella can also be viewed on the Sketchfab platform: https://sketchfab.com/3d-models, by entering the name "3drestauram".

Experts in the field emphasise the need for staff to maintain accounts (social media marketing) and stress the importance of setting objectives, establishing a target audience, specifying content, and monitoring statistics. Additionally, they highlight that the platforms that work best are Instagram, YouTube, and TikTok due to their significant visual impact through images and videos (Barrio, 2022)

5. Conclusions

Despite the importance of Renaissance architecture, studies in the Castellón province had been limited mainly to historical aspects in publications such as the "Boletín de la Sociedad Castellonense de Cultura (BSCC)" and the "Boletín del Centro de Estudios del Maestrazgo (BCEM)". Sometimes, the historical documentation and photographs, was accompanied by an approximate planimetry, but exhaustive surveys were non-existent. Rigorous, precise and technical studies have provided a broad knowledge of this valuable cultural heritage, essential for planning protection, conservation, and dissemination.

The creation of accurate documents representing buildings has evolved. Initially, hand-drawn sketches and floor plans were utilised, which were digitised using CAD software. Later, 3D digital representations were adopted. Today, these models are employed in augmented and virtual reality applications. Additionally, 3D additive manufacturing presents an interesting alternative for reproducing and visualising historic buildings, both existing and defunct, for all kinds of audiences.

The traditional dissemination of results in congresses, books, magazines, and tourist brochures, primarily in printed format, has become insufficient. With the emergence of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs), new opportunities for disseminating cultural heritage are arising, offering free and open access to digital content. These opportunities have a global reach and can engage audiences of any kind, anywhere in the world. However, substantial resources must be allocated for their maintenance. These mediums facilitate scholarly studies to transcend academic barriers and serve as significant sources of information for education, economic development, and international cooperation.

Undoubtedly, the work presented here has improved the knowledge of cultural heritage and socio-economic development in different contexts. Additionally, it has laid the groundwork for future research and collaboration.

The construction of this building was costly financially and in terms of time. It has been ascertained that it took 20 years to build. Experience from research and dissemination work has shown that research into the building and its past is no less costly. However, only knowledge of the past will lead us successfully into the future.

6. Funding

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7. Acknowledgements

To all the people who have contributed to the works presented during these 15 years.

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