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LETIZIA DIPASQUALE
SAVERIO MECCA
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Heritage for people

Sharing vernacular knowledge to build the future

With the support of the Culture Programme of the European Union

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This collective work gathers five European university institutions and integrates contributions from the project leader and the project partners. In addition to the Editors, the main contributors are:

Project leader

Universitat Politècnica de València, Escuela Técnica Superior de Arquitectura, Spain
Camilla Mileto, Fernando Vegas (*Project leaders and Principal investigators*), Valentina Cristini, Lidia García-Soriano, Guillermo Guimaraens, Marina Elia, María Lidón de Miguel, Juan María Songel, Juan Bravo Bravo, Jose Luis Baró Zarzo, Alicia Hueto Escobar, Sergio Manzano Fernández

Partners

Università degli Studi di Cagliari, Italy
Maddalena Achenza, Ivan Blecic, Amanda Rivera Vidal, Alice Agus

École Nationale Supérieure d'Architecture de Grenoble, France
Bakonirina Rakotomamonjy (*Principal investigator*), Sebastien Moriset, Nuria Sánchez Muñoz, Manon Mabille, Audrey Carbonnelle

Università degli Studi di Firenze, DIDA Dipartimento di Architettura, Italy
Letizia Dipasquale (*Principal investigator*), Alessandro Merlo, Saverio Mecca, Lucia Montoni, Edoardo Paolo Ferrari, Gaia Lavoratti, Giulia Lazzari, Matteo Zambelli

Universidade Portucalense, Portugal
Mariana Correia (*Principal investigator*), Gilberto Duarte Carlos, Goreti Sousa, Mónica Alcindor, Rui Florentino, Emília Simão, Ana Lima, Telma Ribeiro, Bruno Andrade

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authors

Maddalena Achenza, Mónica Alcindor, Bruno Andrade, José Baganha, Stefan Balici, Julieta Barada, Sara Bartolini, José Luis Baró, Juan Bravo, Gisella Calcagno, Gilberto Duarte Carlos, Alicia Casals, Carlos Castillo Levicoy, Valentina Cristini, Mariana Correia, Edoardo Paolo Ferrari, Teresa Cunha Ferreira, Soraya Genin, Carmen Gómez Maestro, Borut Juvanac, Marwa Dabaieh, Letizia Dipasquale, Marina Elia, Rui Florentino, Lidia García-Soriano, Alejandro García Hermida, Debora Giorgi, Leticia Grappi, Kin Guerra, Hubert Guillaud, Gaia Lavoratti, Davide Leone, Ana Lima, Saverio Mecca, Alessandro Merlo, Camilla Mileto, Magda Minguzzi, Lucia Montoni, Sebastien Moriset, David Morocho, Cristian Muñoz Catalán, Alina Negru, Amalia Nuevo-Delaunay, Karl Nyqvist, Constanza Pérez Lira, Giacomo Pierucci, Bakonirina Rakotomamonjy, Telma Ribeiro, Amanda Rivera Vidal, Alba Rivero Olmos, Elena Rigano, Nathalie Sabatier, Nuria Sánchez Muñoz, Emilia Simão, Juan María Songel, Goreti Sousa, Angela Squassina, François Streiff, Birgitte Tanderup Eybye, Jorge Tomasi, Antonella Trombadore, Francesco Trovò, Fernando Vegas, Marzia Varaldo, Montserrat Villaverde, Matteo Zambelli.

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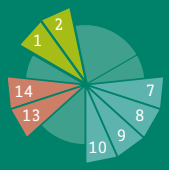
EL CABANYAL: NEIGHBOURHOOD PARTICIPATION AGAINST URBAN EXPROPRIATION

Camilla Mileto, Fernando Vegas, David Morocho
Universitat Politècnica de València, Valencia, Spain

The maritime villages of Valencia, namely Canyamelar, Cabanyal and Cap de França, known collectively as El Cabanyal, were originally an old fishing settlement traditionally linked to the city of Valencia which, at the moment of its foundation by the Republic of Rome, was located 5 km inland, in a meander of the Turia River. These settlements, originally composed of huts with earthen walls and steep thatched gable roofs, were transformed during the late 19th and early 20th centuries into an urban fabric of row houses in the Art Nouveau style, which reflects in the geometry of its plots the previous existence of those old huts. The city of Valencia expanded from its historic centre, reaching the district of El Cabanyal in the 1980s. In 1998, the Municipality of Valencia initiated a process of expropriation of an important section of the district in order to demolish it and to create a large avenue of access to the sea, following a project which had been drafted in the 19th century. In response to this threat, the neighbourhood's population mobilised and fought for almost two decades to prevent the destruction of the district, appealing to regional, national and international legal and judicial instances and giving visibility to this battle for the survival of the neighbourhood, which was finally saved from demolition, and is an extraordinary example of resilience and of grassroots defense of the built heritage. The neighbourhood which was thus saved will be remembered by future generations for the resistance it put up against the destruction that had been planned by the Valencia City Council. Today, despite the urban wounds from that period which still need to heal, it has become one of the most charming neighbourhoods in Europe.

VERSUS SUSTAINABILITY PRINCIPLES

1. Respecting nature and landscape
2. Reducing pollution
7. Transmitting and sharing building cultures
8. Encouraging creativity
9. Recognising intangible values
10. Encouraging social cohesion
13. Optimising construction efforts
14. Extending lifetime



Perspective of the quartier with a colorful row of houses

Art Nouveau tile façade typical of the area

(credits: D. Morocho)

The publication presents the results of the project 'Versus-Heritage for People', funded by the Creative Europe EU programme. The main aim of the project was to actively involve a broad audience and raise awareness among it concerning the value of vernacular knowledge in shaping more sustainable and resilient models of development. The material and immaterial elements constituting a vernacular heritage (encompassing local materials, construction methods, models for living and social interaction, technical and environmental knowledge for the management of territories, natural resources, settlements, etc.) have enormous potential for generating forward-thinking models that can improve the environmental and social quality of our habitats, foster a sense of identity and belonging, and relate in a balanced way to the capacities of our planet. The book explores strategies and tools for managing and transmitting knowledge and the values associated with vernacular heritage. It includes concrete examples and good practices for engaging people in processes of knowledge and the enhancement of vernacular heritage values for sustainability. The outcome is the result of the collaborative efforts between the five academic institutions involved in the project – Universitat Politècnica de València as coordinator (ES), University of Florence (IT), University of Cagliari (IT), CRAterre-ENSAG (FR) and Escola Superior Gallaecia at Universidade Portucalense (PT). A total of 63 authors, comprising both external scholars and professionals, contributed to the book.

Letizia Dipasquale Architect, PhD in Technology of Architecture and Design, Associate Professor in Production and Management of the Built Environment at DIDA, Department of Architecture, University of Florence. Her academic research is focused on the topics of vernacular architecure, cultural heritage management and sustainable transition.

Saverio Mecca. Architect, Professor Emeritus of Production and Management of the Built Environment at the University of Florence, he was Dean of Faculty and then Director of the Department of Architecture of the University of Florence, 2009-2020. He works in the research field of construction management and sustainable innovation of architectural heritage in the Mediterranean region.

Lucia Montoni. Architect, obtained a postgraduate degree in Documentation and Management of Cultural Heritage. She is a PhD student in Technology of Architecture at the DIDA - University of Florence and collaborates with ETA-Florence company, which deals with communication and dissemination of scientific content on renewable energy.

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