

Préfaces

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In one of the most difficult periods in our recent history, defined by many as “suspended”, the Department of Architecture of the University of Florence DIDA, together with the Department of Architecture and Design of the University of Genoa and the Institute of Cultural Heritage Sciences of the CNR, has strongly wanted to maintain the usual methods of scientific exchange, comparison and innovative research elaborations. A meeting that was strongly desired, also to respond to the difficulties generated by the pandemic that did not allow normal academic life, research, study, and exchange between the two shores of the Mediterranean. Despite the uncertainty of the moment, we have kept the flame of scientific research alive by hosting, albeit virtually, the 8.5 edition of the RIPAM, International meetings of the Mediterranean architectural heritage.

The edition of RIPAM was numerically defined 8.5 because it represented an intermediate edition between the one held in Rabat (Morocco) in 2019 and the one scheduled in Lisbon (Portugal) in 2022. Reflecting “on the intermediate” also means reflecting indirectly on this pandemic, suspended time, which makes our life uncertain, as well as the theme of the meeting: Villages and neighborhoods at risk of abandonment. Strategies for knowledge, enhancement, and restoration.

An edition that reflects on weak Mediterranean territories, in search of innovative and unconventional strategies for their rebirth. It is an important subject of study, now common to many areas of the Mediterranean, considered as a strategic point of the new European policies. The progressive abandonment of internal regions is typical of countries characterized by economic weakness and emigration (factors that push urbanization towards major metropolitan areas), and by fragmentation (which cause both architectural and territorial problems). Aspects of this abandonment are also found in some urban areas, focusing on entire neighborhoods. In both rural and urban cases, the theme of the conference is focused on the causes of abandonment and on possible management strategies deployed at multiple levels.

The meeting was a challenge, due to the difficulties in organizing an event without being able to meet and dialogue, even for the minor aspects. It has been a success, given the considerable number of contributions that have been proposed, witnessed in this book. Researchers and scholars, who live, work and study in the three continents bordering the

Mediterranean met: Africa, Asia, and Europe, coming from universities and research centers in 11 countries: Albania, Algeria, Croatia, France, Italy, Israel, Morocco, Portugal, Serbia, Spain, and Tunisia. Studies that embrace other national realities such as Armenia, Asia Minor, Lebanon have also enriched the debate.

The meeting was also an opportunity for discussion for all scholars and researchers interested in reflecting on design strategies to stop and try to reverse these trends, in the different sensitivities of action and in its different interpretative and implementation phases. Hence the presence of scholars and academic researchers, managers of cultural heritage, conservation and restoration professionals, conservation scientists, architecture professionals, urban planners who study, analyze and work on all the various fields of architectural heritage.

The meeting was also an opportunity to question the possible methods of intervention for what the possible countries and neighborhoods affected by abandonment phenomena in the near future will be, precisely on the basis of the principle that tomorrow will be different from today and that the crisis pandemic in progress is one of the most evident indicators of dysfunctions in the city and in the way of thinking about spatial relations.

The near future starts from the immediate present, where the Mediterranean is seen by many as an area of large migratory flows where countries of emigration, immigration, and transit face. Economic migration prevails over the total, making up many flows affecting this area. Both the countries of the north shore and those of the southern shore of the Mediterranean are the destination of millions of people in search of better living conditions.

However, an area that is not particularly large, just 2.5 million square kilometers, but overlooked by three major continents with 14 countries, for a total population of about 450 million people. But with a much broader and more extensive background with a population of about 1 billion people: one sixth of the entire world population.

Yet, the Mediterranean is not only migratory flows: it is also the history of human civilization, it has been and is a crossroads of cultures, customs, ideas, religious paths; it is an expression of different futures rooted in stories originating from local contexts. An immense source of wealth of tangible and intangible resources.

Ripam 8.5 wanted to give voice to this diversity, and I am happy to have been able to host this plurality of voices in the Department of Architecture in Florence. For this I would like

to thank everyone: starting with my predecessor, Saverio Mecca, and the president of the School of Architecture, Susanna Caccia Gherardini, who initiated and supported the project; but above all I thank the group of organizers Giovanni Pancani, Lamia Hadda, Daniela Pittaluga, Fabio Fratini, Stefano Galassi, and Massimo Carta, who were the real driving force of the international meeting.

Niccolò Casiddu

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In 2017, the international conference RIPAM7 “Conservation et mise en valeur du patrimoine architectural et paysagé des sites côtiers méditerranéens” hosted in Genoa, at the DAD department, focused attention on some specific issues relating to the conservation of the Mediterranean architectural heritage. In particular, some elements had emerged on which it would have been appropriate to work in the following years and among these, in particular, the problem of the conservation and recovery of abandoned areas or in a state of neglect.

These first suggestions were reflected in the international conference “Villages et quartiers à risque d’abandon. Stratégies pour la connaissance, la valorisation et la restauration”, organized by the University of Florence for Ripam 8.5 in November 2020; by virtue of the close link with the issues addressed in Ripam7, the DAD Department of Genoa was involved, together with the CNR of Florence, in the organization of the conference, confirming the cultural interest in the deepening and development of the comparison on those issues.

The book collects and organizes the contributions of the Florentine conference and contains several essays by experts who approach the question from different points of view. Due to its socio-economic and cultural implications, the issue of small towns in the process of depopulation is increasingly the attention of Governments and Institutions for the identification of strategies that can effectively counter the spread of this phenomenon. The problem of abandonment must be analyzed by looking at the complexity of the problem, the reasons that may underlie it, the consequences that these dynamics entail and finally the possible conservation and enhancement strategies.

In this scenario, the new socio-spatial needs caused by the pandemic and the Covid19 emergency have underlined a condition of potential fragility of metropolitan areas, both in terms of capillarization and the quality of personal services. This has led to a reconsideration, both in the public and in the academic debate, of the opportunities offered by smaller towns in terms of a better quality of living, greater sustainability of travel, a different relationship between supply and demand for services, including digital ones, in relation to the system of interpersonal relations and the supervision of a “closer” territory. It is possible to define a precise geography of these places throughout Europe, where most of the environmental and historical-architectural heritage is preserved with clear typological, morphological and

construction characteristics.

In Italy, a recent study prepared by the National Association of Italian Municipalities (ANCI) finds that about 70% of the 7,954 small Italian municipalities have less than 5,000 inhabitants, with a significant concentration in the Alpine and Apennine regions. As a result of the new demographic trends and the effects of concentration in the plains and coastal regions, the Italian population of the Inner Areas (Barca, 2014) represents about 1/6 of the national population (9,972,140). In particular, the municipalities with less than 1000 inhabitants are the 1963 of which 72% are small mountain villages.

These considerations become significant when we refer to the most fragile subjects, of any age and condition, who continue to live in these territories and for whom the theme of living also becomes a structural theme that is intertwined with the protection, assistance and the management of daily needs through inclusion and neighborhood service networks. ICT, home automation and the opportunities offered by Internet of Things systems, if appropriately interpreted in the digital agenda and addressed to a soft recovery or active adaptation to the environment, can increase some performances of the existing assets, in which the space virtual integrates with the structural constraints and the new accessibility requirements of the physical space.

Territorial supervision, reduction of the digital divide, enhancement and care of settled communities (healthy aging in place), with adequate support for actions aimed at the recovery and conservation of the building heritage, once again become rewarding and unavoidable categories of intervention. In line with the principles of the “National Strategy of Internal Areas” (SNAI) compared to what has already been developed for the use of EU funds 2014-2020, the technologies to support assisted living spaces represent a further horizon of research in which virtual space is not the alternative place for relationships, but constitutive of the territorial dimension capable of completing the performance of an offer calibrated to the site-specific needs of a diversified user (user-centered). “Home care” is one of the possible interpretations for addressing the problem of territorial abandonment, especially in contexts lacking infrastructure or which have seen over the years the depletion of territorial resources at the service of communities. In this perspective, two considerations emerge in particular:

1. the prevalent users of these contexts, ie the residents, mostly elderly, clearly express housing needs which should correspond to new performance of the built environment;
2. the intervention to counteract the abandonment of these places, at the same time, must be based on the maintenance of those architectural, identity and cultural characteristics capable not only of making these places unique for the tourism sector, but also and above all to revitalize a local economic-productive fabric and facilitate the recovery of the building heritage in terms of accessibility, inclusiveness and comfort, optimizing living spaces by type of user.

The theme entails the need to bring into play specialized skills relating to different disciplines both from a technical point of view (technological, structural, reading of materials and decay) but also from a historical and social point of view. The disciplinary contribution of the DAD department has above all seen the involvement of researchers active in the field of intervention on the built and on the territory.

With the initiative of the conference, first, and the volume, then, we also emphasize the urgency and need for action with respect to this problem by creating synergy and putting in place all possible initiatives. The need to intervene as soon as possible on this complex problem is not only an Italian requirement but is a reality of the whole Mediterranean, as, in fact, some essays included in this volume testify. It is therefore an important opportunity for reflection and deepening on a process that cannot and must not be considered irreversible. The reflections of these scholars from various geographical and disciplinary backgrounds can in this regard constitute a valid point of reference for outlining new paths and creative solutions.

Costanza Milani

Direttrice dell'Istituto di Scienze del Patrimonio Culturale, ISPC-CNR, Italia

The Institute of Heritage Science was pleased to participate in the organization of this conference on the theme “Villages and neighborhoods at risk of abandonment”. It is a common theme in many Mediterranean towns/hamlets. The progressive abandonment of inland regions determined by numerous factors, the most important is transformation of the production cycle that bring to the state of abandon of the subsistence agriculture practice. This has given rise to a profound transformation of the territories, landscape, architectural and cultural heritage environment with consequences often negative. Remaining on the theme of the architectural heritage, in the countries surrounding the Mediterranean the towns/hamlets are holders of numerous architectural, historical and artistic heritage assets and, thanks to the inhabitants who still live there, custodians of a patrimony of knowledge and traditions (the intangible patrimony) which has already been partly lost.

It is a heritage that has not yet been subject to homologation, extremely differentiated because strictly dependent on the material resources and environmental characteristics (climatic, morphological...) of each individual territory. Depopulation and abandonment, with the interruption of maintenance interventions, lead to a slow decay of the artefacts until their transformation into ruins. On the other hand, the absence of maintenance has preserved and maintains its authenticity. We are faced with two challenges: to make the smaller villages alive again for the conservation of the material and intangible heritage they represent but at the same time to manage their maintenance to ensure they remain authentic. This is what we hope for, as an institute that deals with the conservation and enhancement of the architectural and historical-artistic heritage.

The success of the conference, with the presentation of 87 communications representing 8 circum-Mediterranean countries, testifies to the interest in this theme, also taking into account the rediscovery of life in small villages favoured by the pandemic event that made us aware that many tasks can be performed remotely.

Mounsiif Ibnoussina

Secrétaire Général du Réseau RIPAM, Université Cadi Ayyad de Marrakech-Maroc

Depuis sa première édition en 2005 à Meknès au Maroc, les RIPAM (Rencontres Internationales du Patrimoine Architectural Méditerranéen), représentent un rendez-vous biennal incontournable pour les différents acteurs du patrimoine bâti méditerranéen. La dernière édition qui représente la huitième et demi édition a eu lieu en 2020, à Florence en Italie.

Les Rencontres Internationales du Patrimoine Architectural Méditerranéen (RIPAM) sont à la fois des rencontres et un réseau de personnes et d'institutions œuvrant à la connaissance et à la conservation du patrimoine architectural méditerranéen, elles contribuent à la préservation de l'identité historique et culturelle des peuples de la Méditerranée. Le présent livre de la huitième et demi édition des RIPAM dépasse ainsi le public d'architectes, de chercheurs, d'universitaires, d'historiens, de scientifiques, de conservateurs, d'artisans, etc., issus de pays et d'institutions du pourtour de la Méditerranée, à qui il est destiné. Il regroupe les travaux consacrés à l'analyse et à l'étude du très riche et très diversifié patrimoine architectural de la Méditerranée, à travers des approches pluridisciplinaires ; historiques, archéologiques, architecturales et techniques, etc.

Toutes les rencontres scientifiques et culturelles organisées au cours de ces dernières décennies par les RIPAMistes ont converti ce patrimoine architectural dans toutes ses formes et manifestations, en un élément porteur pour déterminer l'image d'un pays. L'événement scientifique ou culturel est ainsi devenu le scénario privilégié d'importants engagements en faveur de sa réhabilitation et donc de sa valorisation.

Partie essentielle de l'héritage culturel qu'a généré l'imaginaire collectif des peuples de la Méditerranée, cette richesse patrimoniale est représentative de l'état d'esprit qui a permis de l'édifier sur les rives sud et nord de la Méditerranée et qui doit permettre de la réhabiliter et de la préserver.

Les travaux d'analyse des caractéristiques ainsi que des typologies de l'architecture méditerranéenne, réalisés par les participants aux différentes rencontres des RIPAM, montrent que ce patrimoine vivant, puisqu'en grande partie habitée, a gardé la pureté de son caractère tout au moins dans les grandes cités de part et d'autre de la Méditerranée. Il est donc l'expression fondamentale de l'identité civilisationnelle des communautés de la région.

Au nom de tous les membres de notre réseau RIPAM, j'aimerais remercier de tout cœur toutes les personnes qui, à titre personnel ou comme représentant d'une des nombreuses

institutions qui soutiennent notre organisation, ont contribué à la réussite de ces rencontres depuis leur avènement à Meknès (Maroc 2005) jusqu'à la dernière réunion tenue à Florence (Italie 2020).

Je vous suis reconnaissant d'y avoir si bien travaillé et je vous envoie mon plus amical souvenir.

Stefano Baccelli

Assessore alle Infrastrutture, mobilità e governo del territorio della Regione Toscana

The risk of abandonment and depopulation that countries and neighborhoods run is a crucial issue of this time. Understanding the causes and identifying possible strategies for managing the phenomenon is one of the central themes of the policies of the Tuscany Region. The opportunity offered by this beautiful and in-depth discussion that arose during the international conference RIPAM (Rencontres Internationales du Patrimoine Architectural Méditerranéen), of which we present the scientific contributions produced by the scholars who participated in the conference, confirms the need to indicate in urban regeneration, that whether it refers to inland or urban areas, one of the real themes of the restart after the tragic pandemic event. It is not a question of a simple intention, but a concrete and effective will. We have the tool for declining urban regeneration in Tuscany: the Recovery fund.

But we need ideas, functions and souls for our territories, to transform economic resources into possibilities for regeneration. To pursue sustainable urban development and improve the quality of life of citizens, the Tuscany Region has issued tenders for 10 million euros from which 31 municipalities have benefited.

The projects envisage both the functional redevelopment of buildings and degraded areas or in a state of neglect, and the enhancement of open spaces and urban connections. But also the recovery of heritage, the promotion of socio-cultural projects or professional start-up. We have put in place a real strategy for inland areas, through actions that aim to counteract the phenomena of aging and abandonment of territories.

However, I am strongly convinced that the real challenge is the quality of urban redevelopment. Efficient tools and economic resources are not enough: the real challenge is to combine all this with quality ideas because the purpose of urban regeneration is to improve the lives of people, of social relationships by putting the citizen at the center and making him a privileged user of places, cultural heritage of the territory as a whole.

The following acts are the contributions of academics, managers of cultural heritage, conservation and restoration professionals, conservation scientists, architecture professionals, urban planners who study, analyze and work on all fields of architectural heritage.

They are valuable and enlightening ideas, reflections, thoughts to outline government action in this field.