

**From
Vernacular
to World
Heritage**

edited by
LETIZIA DIPASQUALE
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


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Stampato su carta di pura cellulosa *Fedrigoni Arcoset*



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Introduction



LIVING AND VIRTUAL VISITING EUROPEAN WORLD HERITAGE: AN OVERVIEW

Mariana Correia
Escola Superior Gallaecia

Introduction

World Heritage sites have an outstanding and exceptional significance for humankind. *Living and virtual visiting European World Heritage* opens the minds of people to discover the 'spirit of place' and the remarkable vernacular heritage still existing in Europe. This is a unique chance to experience World Heritage special character, through virtual travelling to these sites' intrinsic spatiality and architectural quality, daily experienced by their inhabitants.

The key-idea is to share the exceptional character and the quality of living of vernacular buildings in these unique World Heritage sites. This is possible by: seizing the cultural space of today's architecture and its historical evolution; submerging through new realities brought up to non-traveller audiences that do not have the chance to experience this unique heritage in situ; developing the creative potential associated with these site's intangible culture and the site's vernacular expression; sharing through capacity building publications, building workshops, and digital visualisation, the knowledge associated with the inhabited dwellings of European World Heritage.

Key-questions and aims

To better address the purpose of *Living and virtual visiting European World Heritage* and its unique vernacular architecture, 3DPAST project established some key-aims that became fundamental for the success of the project. The project's main idea was to learn how the dwellings were inhabited and authenticity maintained; to identify and disseminate the ancient building systems, and the local building culture; and to develop new interactive ways to transfer knowledge to new audiences, considering creative and technological approaches.

The key-questions of the project were:

1. How construction of the vernacular dwellings was undertaken in the *past*?
2. How maintenance is addressed at *present* in vernacular architecture?
3. How to contribute for the *future* through awareness and preservation of local knowledge and traditional building?

These questions resulted in core aims that helped define the project:

1. To share vernacular architecture quality and its intangible local know-how, regarding the preservation of authenticity and integrity in World Heritage sites.

opposite page
Chazhashi, Upper Svaneti,
Georgia © M. Correia, 2018

④ Identifying coordinates for survey, Chazhashi, Ushguli, Svaneti, Georgia
(© G. Duarte Carlos, 2019)



2. To explore the inhabited heritage experience through different dimensions and components.
3. To establish a genuine transdisciplinary approach, by interconnecting architecture, history and intangible culture through creativity and digitisation.
4. To bring to light to new generations, vernacular and traditional know-how through interactive and digital technologies.
5. To enhance and preserve the intangible building culture of World Heritage Sites in Europe.
6. To stimulate and improve vernacular heritage knowledge within the cultural sector, across Europe.

Focus of the Project

This project focused on the vernacular dwellings located in different sites across Europe. Their outstanding value and knowledge were studied in World Heritage properties from Eastern Europe, as in Georgia and Albania, to Western sites as in Portugal and Spain, to Northern properties as in Finland, Central sites as in Romania, or to Southern sites as in Italy and Greece. The project focused on exploring the architectural dimension regarding the building's maintenance, which would contribute to the awareness and the preservation of the authenticity and integrity of these sites.

Moreover, the project contributed to identify the historical attributes of the dwellings' sites, which were recreated through 3D visualisation and augmented reality. This is a powerful didactic tool for children, young people and interested citizens, which helps to learn and value the relevance of vernacular buildings. These little-known dwellings should be preserved, and more enhancement should be given to the intangible culture still in-use nowadays, regarding the buildings' architectural techniques, materials and building systems' maintenance: a legacy passed down from generation to generation, essential to survive, as part of the European identity. The project aimed to attract non-travellers, young people and different visitors to these sites through the use of Mobile Apps and a digital platform, which opened the mind of citizens to other ways of inhabiting.



Vernacular architecture in World Heritage

The reinforcement of cultural and creative connections between countries of the European Union and countries of the Council of Europe contributes to strengthen cultural ties, regarding intangible knowledge across Europe. Also, some of the World Heritage sites from the Council of Europe countries are isolated and do not receive many tourists. Preparing virtual reality visits to these sites would contribute to the circulation of knowledge and the dissemination of cultural heritage diversity across Europe. Furthermore, as intangible heritage is more alive in isolated sites, this project becomes a unique chance to learn from empirical knowledge in remote European regions.

The selection criteria for the European World Heritage sites addressed within this project comprised:

- Vernacular architecture, reflecting local traditions, the uniqueness of the different building cultures, and the singularity of the empirical knowledge, still exists throughout Europe. As the number of vernacular dwellings is decreasing at an alarming rate, the existing World Heritage sites with vernacular expression becomes crucial as referenced examples to consider for the preservation of this unique heritage.
- Inhabited sites, which embraces the engagement of local communities. The in-use vernacular dwellings could be located in isolated European regions, or in World Heritage historical centres. As monumental heritage is usually under more attention, the focus on inhabited vernacular dwellings, highlights the exceptional character of this living architecture.
- Traditional techniques and materials, that are recognised and specific to each site. Stone, wood, and earth are the traditional materials that constitute the main structural compound of the vernacular buildings, assuring an expressive geographical selection of World Heritage sites. One of the main focuses of the project was the traditional heritage associated with construction know-how, to be valued for the maintenance of the inhabited dwellings.

Case studies across Europe

The selection of different types of World Heritage properties in different contexts and regions assured that the developed approach could be further implemented in the future, in other sites in Europe, and across the world.

④ Material transportation, Chazhashi, Ushguli, Svaneti, Georgia
(© G. Duarte Carlos, 2019)

④ Roof tile production, Santa Luzia, Pico, Portugal
(© M. Mourão, 2017)

Localisation of the eight selected case studies in Europe

Pico island



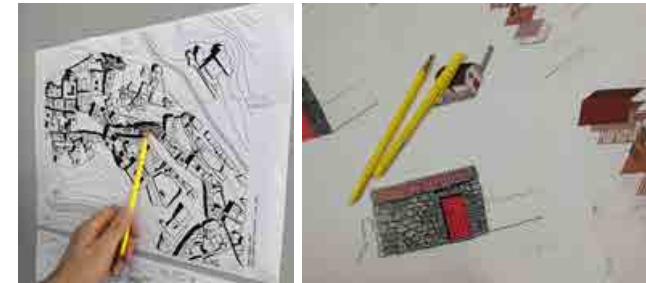
Eight World Heritage properties from different geographical locations in Europe were selected, analysed and their outstanding value was enhanced. Each property is found in a different country, with six case studies located in the European Union, and two others in countries from the geographical area of the Council of Europe (Albania and Georgia). All the selected sites represent, geographically, unique contexts of the European territory, from the north (Finland), centre (Romania), south (Italy and Albania), southeast (Greece), southwest (Spain), and from the east (Georgia) to the west (Portugal) of the continent. Also deprived economically regions were considered, such as Transylvania in Romania; Pico island, in the Portuguese Atlantic Azores archipelago; and Svaneti in Georgia.

Following, the 8 selected case studies were:

1. Landscape of the Pico island vineyard culture, Azores, Portugal (island)
2. Historical walled town of Cuenca, Spain
3. Historical centre of the city of Pienza, Italy
4. Old Rauma, Finland
5. Villages with fortified churches in Transylvania, Romania
6. Historical centres of Berat and Gjirokastra, Albania
7. Historic centre of Chorá on the island of Pátmos, Greece
8. Upper Svaneti, Georgia

Development of the project

The project was structured to explore the distinctive dimensions of World Heritage properties (their architectural heritage, historical building culture, and intangible construction), correlating them with



Plan of the World Heritage Historical Wall Town of Cuenca (Spain), produced for 3DPast project (© M. Mourão, 2020)

Technical drawings, printing trials, ESG, Portugal (© G. Duarte Carlos, 2020)

different components (such as digitalisation, creativity and communication), to enhance the exceptional character and outstanding value of vernacular dwellings.

The development of the project began by data collection, followed by several missions organised to the case studies, in order to develop site surveys, and collect records, and documents. In each site mission, observation, analyses, interpretation and co-relation were a key-approach for the content's development in the planned publications, the platform, and the App.

This contributed to enhance the quality of vernacular dwellings and for its maintenance and preservation. It definitely became a unique chance to experience the World Heritage special character, allowing citizens in general, youngsters and elderly, but also minorities and challenged people, to digitally travel as virtual visitors, to these sites.

Outputs of the project

The project enclosed a programme of interdependent activities, which were carried out over a four-year timeframe. The activities included: an International Conference; several scientific digitalisation workshops developed by professors and university students (closely linked to the plenary meetings developed by the partners); in situ technical workshops for the transfer of local knowledge; survey missions covering geographically the European territory; several seminars developed during the time frame of the project and an international conference for further scientific dissemination; the creation of several dissemination tools as publications (illustrated book, booklet in different languages, international proceedings); and inter-active communication tools, such as a website with a digital platform to support virtual reality, videos, a digital booklet, a digital book, and an App.

The research was carried out with focus on World Heritage Sites selected across Europe. These were particularly relevant as they consisted of Inhabited Architectural Vernacular Sites that had been preserved, recovered and safeguarded by local craftsmen and their knowhow – a legacy passed down from generation to generation.

These European World Heritage dwellings were deeply studied, as were their building cultures, traditional systems and materials. Empirical vernacular knowledge was also fundamental to help understand heritage, and to widely disseminate local know-how, a positive reference for community good-practices.