

INTRODUCTION

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Introduction: earthen architecture, an endangered vernacular heritage

Mariana Correia* and Gilberto Duarte Carlos

Throughout the centuries, earthen and vernacular architecture have revealed outstanding building cultures across the world. This rich and unique architecture is expressed through different tangible expressions in distinct cultural regions. For the last 50 years, a fragile earthen vernacular heritage is disappearing, even with rising awareness for its protection. The earthen endangered heritage is today at a higher risk of vanishing, especially due to man-made actions, such as urban pressure, globalisation, climate change, human conflict, but even through gentrification and inadequate interventions.

This edition of *Built Heritage* Journal is a unique opportunity to contribute in the disciplinary area of earthen architecture. The traditional architecture with rich and diverse building cultures is not enough valued and protected. This is perceived as approximately 15% of the human population still lives in earthen structures, especially in the developing world; and 25% of the World Heritage earthen architecture properties were in the World Heritage List in Danger, according to the World Heritage Committee in 2006. This reveals the vulnerability of this field of study and the need to address, in a critical way, the challenges faced by its technical and cultural conditions, regardless of the multicultural nature of the approaches. Especially, in a changing time as we are facing today, with a well-known paradigm shift of society, there is still an opportunity to save and safeguard this exceptional heritage and the intangible know-how to keep it alive.

'Earthen Architecture, an Endangered Vernacular Heritage' number offers the opportunity to learn from authors from Argentina, France and Madagascar, Mali and Japan, Yemen and Germany, Spain and Italy, Oman and Algeria, Thailand, China, and Portugal. Experts coming from a number of institutions, academies, committees, and networks that have carried out throughout the years, rigorous and consistent work in the field, constituting a valuable source of knowledge, with high relevance that even becomes a document, for nowadays fast-changing world. Their contribution reveals an exceptional in danger heritage, witnessed in several continents, with great challenges to survive.

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