Chapter 5: THE FUTURE

I am no longer at an age of expectations, I need certainty

José Saramago

"I am no longer at an age of expectations, I need certainty." These lucid words are by the Mediterranean Nobel prize winner José Saramago, and express the great need and opportunity for traditional architecture.

Traditional architecture constitutes an immense stock of buildings throughout all Mediterranean countries, representing an invaluable testimony of the past centuries and ways of life. It represents a considerable part of our civilisation and bears our roots. If the traces of change are engrained in the very flesh of its walls, traditional architecture nonetheless still represents what a century of modernity couldn’t alter in our taste, our models and our roots. What is at stake today? Will the ongoing processes of transformation succeed in accommodating inhabitants, will they provide a good quality of life for people who justifiably need and expect it? If the solutions are material ones, the matter which we must reflect upon is of a more global essence.

Policies to recover historical centres have been implemented everywhere for as little as one third of a century. They have been developing in each country, but in order to prove useful, they must become more harmonious, integrated and well defined social projects. From a young growing practice, an under developed market, restoration could and should reach a more professional level. It needs to embody all the requirements and expectations of a modern society: culture and identity, economic prospects, social needs, and a longer breathed objective to preserve our real-estate capital. As for large urban programmes, traditional architectural recovery can be a wonderful project, a substance for great policies, both from a cultural angle and for housing objectives.

A CONTRASTED SITUATION

Combined assets

Traditional architecture possesses advantages that are in agreement with today’s sensitivity and consciousness. Its patrimonial value need not be proven; heritage awareness has evolved from the highly exceptional monument to a broader cultural territory and its building fabric: heritage is a living centre of reflection on preservation and use. The growing number of preserved areas proves this ambition. Traditional heritage is a centre of preservation despite the modesty of these architectural types; it has become a new field with prospects of wiser future developments. Less technical and restorative than a mere physical preservation of a monument’s materials, this potential can evolve and invent new ways to interpret, adapt, create and develop a more flowing expression of traditional architecture. A place of free expression that enables updating the past as well as nourishing the present with history.

On a social level, there exists an extraordinary stock of already built residences, woven throughout the core of cities and villages, rich with the past, part of the urban heart and pace, and with already existing nearby services. Often decayed or even ruined, compressed or sometimes too dense, nonetheless suitable for regeneration, a more satisfactory choice than rejecting its populations to the outskirts of the city. Moreover, these central districts are strewn with buildings that are easily re-adapted for equipment and local service necessities.

A great market provider of labour, the re-conquering of traditional architecture encourages the development of local small and medium-sized undertakings. It reactivates dying sectors of traditional production, transformation, material, and delivery. It generates stable and flexible economic activity, well adapted and in touch with the private individual.
Placing populations well within the heart of the historical centre and greeting patrimonial tourism are two great aspirations for a traditional architecture rehabilitation project.

Tourism, a powerful economic asset, will probably become, after housing, the best activator although its forces require more monitoring. Indeed tourism, a phenomenon identified for the first time in the 1811 Oxford Dictionary, became the world’s number one industry in less than one century (according to data from the World Organisation for Tourism). The Mediterranean being the number one tourist destination in the world. The Conference of the United Nations on Environment and Development (Rio 1992) where durable development was legitimated at an international level, included neither tourism nor traditional architecture as a central objective. However it is "local activity" that feeds tourist industry! Let us look at the alternatives of littoral tourism more closely (1) and consider the conquests of eco-tourism or rural lodging, which bear promising potential, although we are still faced with major hurdles. We pointed out the extent to which tourism is precious to traditional real estate and heritage, whether in urban environments or immersed in genuine country strokes.

Beyond job prospects, these construction transformations for new uses create new income possibilities for local populations, maintaining them locally and stopping the exodus.

We can re-use material sensibly and create wealth by giving value to already existing substance and casting a new light on culture and heritage. These are the many arguments that lead to a powerful integration of local development.

Traditional architecture should not be understood as a particular or marginal issue to be processed in an isolated way. It should, on the contrary, be a full and substantial part of a social and economic corpus. Traditional architecture should not be stigmatised: it should be re-integrated in a natural, dynamic daily context, generating a future where it can both give and receive. Traditional architecture is not a problem, it is an enormous opportunity. A solution that contributes to improving territorial balance thanks to a better distribution of the housing offer and living conditions. It is a solution, a great market potential for construction. It can re-use technical solutions, materials, labour, existing structures, and contribute to reducing effects of pattern and monotony. A fully satisfactory solution that re-uses existing elements and preserves the environment (2), a durable solution that saves significant energy, and avoids a foolish waste of valuable land and space.

Either functional or patrimonial real estate, traditional architecture wavers between two alternatives: transformation, which is utterly uncontrollable, and preservation, which calls for specific measures and subsidies.

Fragility and doubts

The modern industry has multiplied technical means by ten. These new construction materials and techniques produce a brutal impression of upheaval. The slow processes of transformation of the past with its handicrafts cannot compete with the massive power of today’s construction industry. Today, everything is a question of size and speed; thus, intervention sometimes means mutilation. Even when intentions are well-disposed to improve, equip and adapt traditional architecture, they end up costly and result in deep alterations. Formerly, a more natural evolution was practised: the same materials and means were used for additional modifications as were used for the original building. This harmony is tumbled by modern methods: a building, a small grouping, or a whole district can become unrecognisable. In other words, if the intervention is not supervised by a technically valid plan (a sensible legal project, with a trained architect or a skilled expert) it loses all control, and disregards local and patrimonial contexts, and will no doubt drift away from the original construction. This is
one of today’s greatest paradoxes: maintenance or heavy restoration must resist construction reflexes and standard solutions if we want to preserve the harmony of older buildings and their specificity. It is necessary to introduce new tools to reach a form of harmony with a traditional environment. We must overcome this contextual aspect and develop this project with the appropriate plan, right training of the actors and adapted speed. Unless we do so, the force of transformation or the effects of abandonment will eradicate the fragile stock of buildings, because these buildings will be choked between two different eras. We are faced with both emergency and danger at the same time. However, if transformation projects were appropriately appraised and channelled, the current means could be redirected and applied positively to safeguard and revitalise this architecture.

There will never be a systematic and overall preservation policy of traditional architectural sites in the Mediterranean area. The basic problem is: what must we absolutely preserve, and what can we afford to lose. (3) We must determine what can only be kept in records, as a satisfactory documentary memory before vanishing. In parallel, we need to define what must be undertaken urgently: what works of protection, restoration, rehabilitation and re-use should we implement now. We probably need both expertise and local responsibility to make this decision. The "Vernacular Architectural Heritage Chart" by the ICOMOS (ratified in 1999) proposes a collective approach for the short term, (4) although it doesn’t clearly state the points concerning selection criteria, a point we find most central. There is also a second issue: who will be granted preservation programmes and funds? As the first role of traditional architecture is essentially housing, it will have to serve the populations it shelters, it will have to bring them towards an improvement of their living standards, without obtruding comfort. It must guarantee a transmission of architecture to future generations, and, at the same time, exploit all the capacities for progress and quality of living. Policies for the revitalisation of traditional architecture must take into account both advice and assistance. If the market is not sustained, and the sector is not properly organised, we will never be able to effectively penetrate the areas concerned. Today, traditional architecture is between two waters: when plain it risks disdain or doom, and when valuable enough it is protected under a patrimonial wing. (5) The third part is how we can enforce preservation. Traditional architecture is built using ancestral techniques, rooted in essential cultural values we cannot give up, neither in terms of preservation nor in terms of use. Transmitting know-how to young masons is thus essential; but on the same token we cannot turn our backs on the qualities of contemporary materials and techniques. (6) A balance between traditional and contemporary is at stake in the recovery of traditional architecture, with patrimonial respect and a true concern to improve the living standards of local populations.

When traditional architecture is protected, national legislation is applied. The countries of the Mediterranean Basin have laws or codes for the preservation of architecture, updated or only recently created in the past decade, incorporating current views on the issue, sometimes with significant differences in definition. In each country, the greater the regional autonomy, the more preservation legislation is viewed in a regional perspective: this is better for traditional architecture as the approach is generic and more inspired by local realities. In more centralised states, laws tend to describe and assess architecture on a national level, making help and opportunity less available on a local level. As for the spirit of the texts, some have a conservative colouring while others adopt a more revitalising attitude. Decentralisation encourages the second tendency, probably because it tends to be impregnated with reality and use and has to integrate social and economic issues in order to find answers. On a regional scale, the time frames and priorities are determined in extremely flexible ways. This variable policy extends to determining the architectural stock to be protected, taking inventory and deciding the various levels of protection. But the major problem is the tremendous difference between legislation and application. The lack of tools (legal, human and budget) makes it very difficult to apply law in certain countries.

Moreover, when governed on a national level, traditional architecture is at the crossroads of several authorities: culture, lodging attribution, urban planning, regional planning, agriculture, environmentalism... traditional architecture is torn into fractional aspects and consequently never constitutes a whole coherent project: the older real-estate is sometimes functional, patrimonial or
additional. The situation and management are handled with very heterogeneous criteria, inspired by contradictory policies: they comply with either one ministry or another.

These three soft spots: physical when aggressed, existential when between dead and born again, legal when divided among too many authorities, endanger, but by no means doom heritage. On the contrary, they provide opportunities for creativity, as we can see throughout the area.

**A Group of initiatives**

Many aspects found in our study are dealt with from day to day. However when initiatives are only undertaken locally, here and there, more or less successfully, they too often remain isolated and confined, lacking continuity. They remain limited to an administrative territory or a single site. Although these interventions are irregular and inconsistent, they are brilliant and prove the excellent vitality of preservation, widening interesting perspectives on procedures, strategies or implementation. We won’t take a comprehensive inventory here, but shall point out a few bench marks.

*Three decades of restoration policies and reflection are the basis to succeed in integrating traditional architecture in our modern society*

- **Restoration policies**

Restoration policies are solutions to the degradation of our heritage. They have enabled very effective organisation systems for 25 years: area management, mobilisation of economic resources, investigation teams, subsidising (7), management and monitoring. A true operational spirit was initiated to improve housing, revitalise central trade and craft industry, and enhance infrastructure related to modern life and urban development. For example, stone is generally only recommended according to means and income. These experiences have often been undertaken in the richest countries; the resulting know-how circulates among operators, architects, and specialists in various disciplines. Grouping this co-operation contributes to constituting an expertise of a new kind, beyond bilateral exchanges. We are sharing and exchanging ideas rather than models and evaluating others methods using a more creative approach: this tends towards blending the approaches of the two Mediterranean banks and broadening networks. Our CORPUS network is developing incentives to prospect new ways, new systems and is also reviving former strategies that have been set aside or lost over the past decades; we are going beyond the perceptible and modest aspect of our subject to rethink the Mediterranean, as far as traditional architecture is concerned.

- **International action**

Innumerable conferences assert the importance of Mediterranean heritage on a daily basis. Researchers and intellectuals collect examples that prove the miracles of certain community efforts on the one hand, or the damages of a changing world on the other. This great volume of exchanges produces a certain level of tolerance and a number of poetic impressions or feelings of proximity. But these exchanges also result in texts, recommendations, and charts, bold compromises that show the way towards possible future trends. The men working on location would certainly regard these texts as most inaccurate and non-operational. Their criticisms are hasty. Their low opinion of existing documentation results from a certain misunderstanding: the goal is not to solve problems but rather to reflect and try to relate elements to context rather than act by reflex, without taking enough time for doubt and analysis. The reference nearest to our subject is the vernacular heritage construction chart by the ICOMOS, mentioned above. Beyond universal general information, this text sums up its ideas in four fields, four angles, which we have also used as our keys: area, studying the statute of an individual object in an ensemble, time, considering an object from points of history, evolution and contemporary use, value, seeing the angles of interest and beauty, responsibility, which tries to determine how to deal with the durability of this heritage. This text and other perspectives, are
appreciable contributions because they represent a balanced approach rather than just a competition. Though not sole representatives of the Mediterranean, and though they don’t reveal all its complexity, these texts propose a form of wisdom – nobody will ever carry out a particular work along those lines (As, for example, a handbook applicable to this whole area shared amongst three continents). A call for co-responsibility rather than a recipe. A civil proposition for decision makers “to think globally but act locally”.

For the past seventy years, (8) large forums for a universal awareness have produced and refreshed a reflection on memory and preservation, trying to keep it tangible so as to remain meaningful. This point should always be stressed. But one day we shall have to insist on gaps and remaining questions: we will have to connect cultural goals with the means allocated to preservation. We need to make a critical analysis, on a regional level, to assess what is being carried out in order to concentrate on future strategy and feasibility. We must evolve from a political point of view to a more managerial perspective. As regards heritage, we speak of “regional”: this word best characterises a level of policy and awareness. However when we want to speak of action, “local” is most appropriate. On a local scale, construction uses an operational logic together with regional principles that integrate elements of: area, time, value, responsibility. These are the determining factors of traditional architecture we evoked earlier.

Associating everyone to the future of their living environment and a better understanding of their area, always blending memory and project will develop a new form of citizenship in the Mediterranean area

• Studies and publications

Parallel to universal considerations, local, national and sometimes regional reflections have produced a great amount of written material. This material constitutes a foundation layer: hundreds of good works and thousands of articles grasp traditional architecture in a variety of ways. We find all kinds of publications to the glory of our land that stimulate preservation and make knowledge popular and accessible to all. We also find university research materials, published or used for pedagogical purposes: information booklets, local monographs, restoration guide books, territorial description corpsuses or scientific editions. We must also point out the extensive inventory and catalogue work undertaken in bordering countries, (sometimes over a sufficiently long period to have invaluable records describing long vanished buildings: a knowledge which is not hampered by a physical disappearance). We find a systematic inventory for preserved heritage, but only a random inventory for all other constructions. Traditional architectural types are now spotted and described for all main areas even though the subject is granted more or less priority according to countries.

• Training

Heritage is subject to specific training, especially in the field of monumental preservation and area protection. In many bordering countries, schools and universities of architecture created specialised credentials on this subject (9). These initiatives are gradually expanding from major heritage to include traditional architecture; though the latter is more often than not disregarded as a minor subject, and has yet to gain full acknowledgement.

In the more informal but very active field of professional training, we now see a significant amount of professional education being set up for the actors on the market: experts, architects, technicians and decision makers. This training is definitely aimed at the restoration of traditional architecture. Although this is a good omen for the future, this approach is found sparingly and unequally in the area. When training exists, it accompanies options to aid and support professionals: training cycles
organised on the sites, inside business training, technical expertise on building sites, fast technical improvement or skill improvement...

These initiatives open up so many possibilities, they contribute to defining intervention on traditional architecture. These growing and abundant trends assert a global confidence in the area. We must now learn how to improve their structure and put them into practice: on a local level for action, and on a regional level for reflection, partnership and co-operation.

FUTURE BEARINGS

A reference frame

Our proposals are articulated around five points all converging towards preservation, rehabilitation and re-use of traditional architecture.

1. - Pull traditional architecture out of today’s isolation and confinement. It is too often banished from great decisions and doomed, considered as a marginal, minor issue. Draw traditional architecture out of oblivion.

2. - Combine regional and local scales in an operational and effective way. The same actors can access and interact on these two levels. Go from a level of reflection, dialogue, planning, exchanges, to a level of astute project application. Collect all results and group all connections concerning evaluation and initiatives, on a local level, so as to take them into account for future strategies and decision making. Get ideas and facts to go both ways and convey on both scales, to guarantee a highlighted diversity and specificity.

3. - Dispatch assets in the fields of skill and proficiency; be present and influential. Interventions mustn’t be confined. They must on the contrary propagate through training and have stimulant effects. Arise and develop other centres of interest (ethnology, history, corporate aspects and training...) on a horizontal and vertical level, with market regulators and decision-makers.

4. - Harmonise decision centres and balance their strengths. They are the three corners of the triangle: the user, the rule, the originator. Essential dynamic elements (commission, administration, market, corporation, training...) can influence the energies between the three corners of our triangle.

5. – Ensure good "feedback" from a regional network grouping all Mediterranean countries. A network based on common and interdependent objectives, aiming at joining work and experience. All actions and results would definitely converge towards the preservation and restoration of Mediterranean traditional architecture.

Three narrowly linked lines of action

It is impossible to preserve the values of traditional architecture without creating new conditions and a new concept of this stock of architecture. This should bring us to dedicating as much energy to ideas as for action. Changes must first take place in people’s minds and habits. For example, this can be understanding the relevance of preserving genuine urban material, by making it adaptable. Knowledge and understanding of this "heritage without identification papers" must be encouraged, in order to establish local experts, expertise and activities. It’s necessary to conceive and introduce new work methods, after coming up with a better diagnosis and setting up better communication between administrations. We also need to broaden job profiles and define how subsidies or support are dispatched.
• Raising awareness

Making traditional architecture alive implies developing an identity network. This network should reach out to all social categories and infiltrate all professional activities with a new traditional architectural message. An efficient network will spread this message to the general public, making traditional architecture a familiar subject. It will be integrated to a level where inhabitants and users will be its first and best partisans. This effort to develop sensitivity is beneficial because traditional buildings are a common social object, used and shared by an entire community. It has a practical value, representing an environment that speaks to all and that all can relate to: it isn’t especially elitist and doesn’t characterise the overly elaborate aspect of more monumental heritage: everyone can relate to this simple, common construction. It is a familiar place where all find their identity, flavour and distinct characteristics. At a time when trends tend to transform old constructions, we must join two simultaneous needs: preservation and improvement. Both must be accepted and understood, leading to appropriate architectural solutions and still be culturally satisfactory in terms of quality. We must convince the professional actors who intervene on a daily basis that they can carry out initiatives and be responsible for the quality of their work, and proclaim that old construction is compatible with contemporary use. This sensitivity can be particularly efficient if we produce better informational tools that clarify another angle of reality: living conditions, buildings, materials and construction trades. The idea here is not to train but to shed new light on the issue.

It is possible to increase public awareness by extending the use of processes and tools, and improving the networks: schools and universities, professional architectural organisations, corporations, trades, state departments, local authorities, and civil servants. By relying on the media: press, television, video, and local events and councils.

Public awareness can take on many different shapes and use individual or collective tools, for specific targets or for a wider public:

— booklets on trades, architectural shapes, rules applicable to an area and a type of construction,
— a combination of local or regional thematic events,
— regional television programmes on the subject,
— a support network of workshops on heritage, permanent expertise offices on location.

This list could be extended, and the right tools should be adapted to each target. The key point would be to join the various groups and promote projects together in a concerted plan; the same groups are dedicated to developing awareness and training.

1. Community personnel

This group is made up of people in charge of intervention regulation and also powerful public property developers. This group controls the general trend of the restoration market. It draws the zones where traditional construction is concentrated, and determines whether they become forsaken or museum-like neighbourhoods, urban emigration transit areas or "high society" districts.

Way beyond an academic level, training must be persistent and at hand for the actors and users of architectural heritage

2. Professionals and students in construction

We need to develop the restoration market to elevate it to a level of substantive trade within construction and architecture activity. This implies mobilising a large range of specialised know-how, experience (observation and diagnosis), projects, regulations, and quality control systems. In this scope, it is no longer relevant to oppose the new and the old: the two fields play a full part in the training and credentials of an architect.
3. Trades, craftsmen, corporations, and trainers
Professionals must be the first representatives and users of traditional construction techniques, while integrating and adopting modern construction technologies at the same time. They understand the qualities and drawbacks of traditional and contemporary techniques; they can, therefore, appreciate them on an objective level and use them wisely in the most befitting situations.

4. Users/inhabitants and young people
The social role of senior and young users must be substantiated so they can be the first to appreciate and claim the qualities of traditional architecture. This group acts first; they are a force. They can best support the necessary investment in traditional architecture through popular lobbying, enabling a community to be involved in preserving heritage and architectural shapes.

5. N.G.O. preservation societies and associations
These civil actors need to be brought into contact with each other, to broaden sources of information, develop networks, and share useful experiences in order to play their role successfully as ambassadors to traditional architecture.

• Training

Training must be a knowledge network for the five categories above. At least one "à la carte" training product should be created for each group of actors on the restoration market. Working at first with practising professionals appears most relevant as it concentrates energy on action. This system could be flexible, added on and adapted to opportunities, not requiring prior negotiation with education authorities. The ideal solution would be to work with specialised and professional training networks. However today’s need for speed, seems to prefer continuous professional training, primarily because it is flexible, easy and mobile (progress can be made in short and in situ sessions for men of the trade). Moreover it is simple to set up, owing to the fact that an identifiable network (architect society, attached state department or ministry…) manages each group. Each network can call upon a spokesman, an advisor, a recruiter or an organiser.

Several levels are to be considered when setting up training tools for professionals or other networks:

- teaching engineering to contribute to the development of new training centre resources, or to adapt existing centres by adding new activities,
- creating general purpose modules, linked to experience and management in restoration, (products for decision makers, site operators, NGO, in charge of supervision and strategy).
- creating thematic modules related to the fields of project and know-how (products for architects and high-school teachers dealing with global questions of traditional construction).
- creating specialised modules, linked to know-how, materials and techniques (products for trades and trainers, to improve their workmanship in traditional techniques).
- setting up workshops on building sites with revolving trainers who partly co-operate in the works.

This is one system among many possibilities. In each field, the goal is to create a more open interaction between all the actors on a project. We can assume this will have an impact on working methods, influence the compliance of rules and regulations, modify specifications, improve projects, change supervising procedures and quality control, and make technical behaviours evolve. As concerns discipline, this propagation process is turned towards the training of all other professionals who have to deal with any traditional architectural issue: economists, sociologists, historians… who are involved in the pre-intervention phase. This also concerns administrative departments, patrimonial NGO, tourist operators who play a post-intervention part in the management and future of traditional architecture.
• Research

There are two ways of interpreting the word research: collecting information for something that already exists but is under-documented, or working on a fragmentary subject that needs improvement, production, creativity and speculation.

In the first case, a vast data base could suffice. This is the purpose of an organised network which shares its resources. Such a data bank could be a sort of directory (listing actors, products, processes and work forces) giving information about a corporate trade or sector, as well as on production and market trends. But it could also serve a global agenda: a forum for discussion.

This research could be general material or associated to a specific project or intervention. In the latter case, it would collaborate with a professional training counterpart, and it could work on modules dealing with the same fields and centres of interest. General research should join four sectors:

- production and marketing of materials, working on the improvement of manufacturing processes of traditional materials, on the improvement of quality, on the adaptation of new materials to older ones and on opening up the market. (Improve mud brick, prepare ready-to-use mortars with lime, develop the wooden beam repair systems, fight against moisture.)
- building trades and businesses dealing with: work site management, application of traditional and modern techniques on traditional architecture, quality control, materials, distribution networks. (Small hauling and lifting equipment, scaffolding systems, mortar injectors, data processing tools adapted to site management.)
- design, to work on protocols, calculation, tests, monitoring, and theorisation. (Methodology for diagnosis and project; decision tools; inspection tools; technical software; restoration manuals).
- regulations and supervision to focus on: the legislative corpus, decision maker tools and procedures. (Inter-departmental co-ordination, teaching and training systems, technical supervision, financial support and grants, and guides to renovation campaigns.)

For each of these sectors, research is an executive decision, involving processes of analysis and sampling tested in situ, with a trickle down effect, making it possible to correct mistakes, to patent or model effective solutions.

We insist on the importance of a full partnership with Universities at this stage. Universities are generally independent: they have great means and significant experience, and can produce a substantial amount of work on programmes established with pupils and teachers. This is a most precious intellectual potential.

We have evoked three ways to penetrate groups and ideas. Intelligence is shared and diffused: various publics, various roles, specific know-how, diverse sensitivities, multi-form practices. In order to prevail, restoration must cumulate and combine them all. The nature of revitalisation is to maintain multiple aspects and involve many diverse skills, joining all forces in a project.

*The area and its networks must develop rehabilitation for reasons of identity, economic opportunity, and a better management of its exceptional assets*

Our three lines of action, public awareness and sensitivity, training, and research guarantee stability. The joint effectiveness of these actions and a good balance shall fortify the recovery process of traditional architecture. These actions will suffice to produce a direct effect for the preservation of this heritage. However, they should trigger the necessary impulse and incentive to constitute the basis, the heart of our restoration corpus, producing the tools necessary to achieve valuable and coherent restoration.
The rehabilitation & revitalisation of traditional architecture

Improve comfort and preserve heritage
The ancient city shall celebrate its rite of spring
Rebirth
The old heart pulses for the future
Keeping the old downtown alive
Modern technologies and ancient solutions
Programmed operations for the improvement of housing, to preserve the “genuine” city

These are some of the slogans and publicity used for the multiple restoration initiatives developed in both villages and urban environments of the Mediterranean area over the past few years. In addition to these slogans, figures concerning the restoration in the various Mediterranean countries speak for themselves: in some countries the activity of the construction sector for the maintenance and improvement of existing buildings exceeds 60% of all annual investments; in other countries, however, this activity barely achieves 10%. We could say that an expansion in the field of restoration is a basic indicator of economic growth.

Traditional architectural rehabilitation is not only the concrete actions carried out to improve the solidity and services of a building, this point is clearly stated, even in preservation slogans. It is also just as important to keep restoration in close relation to a recovery of urban patterns and landscapes. This both improves the living conditions of the population and consolidates commercial and economic structures, which are often cast aside when they should be associated to every restoration process. This is the regeneration of the social fabric of a community. We could say that this is a question of durability. The fundamental objective of any form of restoration clearly consists in regenerating life and reviving energy by revitalising residences, trades, workshops for craftsmen, buildings, streets, districts, urban environments and anything that constitutes cultural heritage. It is vital to keep everything alive.

Looking at the figures we wonder why the restoration activity is developing with such vigour in certain countries and so feebly in others, considering restoration policies are all relatively recent. The determining factors are varied but nonetheless linked to one another. The first, most essential factor that fuels the activity is economic. The value of the hundreds of thousands of buildings constituting traditional Mediterranean real estate is absolutely inestimable. Today, re-housing the millions of people who live in these buildings would be exorbitant, even for the wealthiest countries. On the other hand, we can easily imagine improving the existing real estate, creating worthier living conditions for its inhabitants. This option is adopted by the most developed countries who have chosen to maintain, rehabilitate, and revitalise.

In addition, we must realise the considerable economic impact of tourism for a country possessing first rate sites and places of interest. Nowadays a well preserved historical centre of a town or city, combined with accommodation offers that are fully integrated within traditional neighbourhoods represent a major asset to tourism. We must acknowledge that economic interests are substantially linked to restoration activities. Many countries join private and state initiatives to make restoration a reality: they propose a true alternative to a systematic new construction reflex.

Despite the many positive aspects of restoration, we are very far from a standard of efficiency on a regional level. We unfortunately cannot contemplate the future with boundless optimism regarding the preservation of the traditional architecture heritage. We highlighted some of the main obstacles in the previous chapter: let us just recall that many buildings are rejected as they are considered outdated and obsolete. This is an obvious result of a lack of commitment on behalf of authorities, a tenacious trend for the use of new materials, imported construction systems, but also a lack of understanding and information on behalf of political leaders, technicians, and professionals. There is also a lack of
economic and practical resources available for appropriate operations, as well as many other minor factors that we have noticed on a local level.

An area, a matrix, a crossroad: words to acknowledge our regional reality.
The revival of excellence is in our hands, sharing proficiency and yearning to assert our ways of living and transmitting our heritage.

Rehabilitation is neither risk-free nor exempt from drawbacks. We can learn a lot from the numerous attempts of these last few years, and better understand what is appropriate and what must be avoided. Nowadays, as a result of incoherent rehabilitation programs, many cities and villages (especially European) transformed their historical centres into museum-like places; they now look like thematic amusement parks, where souvenir shop salesmen and tourists seem to be the only occupants. It is no surprise to find urban environments where rehabilitation completely changed social life, pushing the original inhabitants out to the peripheral zones to create enchanted luxury districts in the very heart of a city. Another mistake in certain rehabilitation is a short-sighted approach, often disconnected from the reality and identity of a given location. This results in a standardisation of historical centres, with an indistinct use of materials, urban furniture, standardised decorative elements. The local flavours and colours of a typology are destroyed in the name of an allegedly universal tradition.

Facing such trends and difficulties is no easy task. The economic interests and capital gain prospects around a restoration program are enormous. The pressure of consumption and mass tourism produce contradiction in priorities; solutions are intricate and decisions difficult to make. Luckily, we can account for many successful projects in various historical centres, which prove that while restoration and revitalisation are never free from difficulty, it is nonetheless possible to find a good balance of action. The three groups we mentioned earlier are the coherent and strong basis for any restoration operation. These actions are the solution. Prosperous restoration achievements and genuine revitalisation can only be the result of a good balance between political, economic, social and cultural factors. Success will be the result of a sustained sensitivity campaign and the result of a globally shared training approach, profitable to all actors at all levels, where all learn how to use the new tools and profit from the progress born from our research programs.

Today, two key ideas are fundamental: network and rehabilitation. Network defines a way of working, a structure, and a strategy. Rehabilitation guarantees a project for our architecture. Both have become inseparable, a necessity nobody can deny. Both crystallise the revitalising currents that will disseminate throughout our area of exchanges. The "privileged meeting places" evoked so vividly by Amin Maalouf in the preface of this work. This revitalisation could revile the past into a flourishing future. We have an echo from the Eastern Mediterranean, where our hearts began to beat, in ancient scriptures (10) over 2,500 years old and written in the Book of Kings:

This is the palace I built in Suss.
The people of Babylon dug the ground, cast the rubble, and moulded the bricks
The cedar wood came from a mountain called Lebanon; the Syrian people brought it as far as Babylon; From Babylon the Carians and the Ionians took it to Suss.
The Yaka wood was carried from Gander and Cham in.
The stone pillars were not taken from here, but from of a quarry called Abiradish, in Uja, they were taken there.
The stone cutters were Ionians and Sardinians. The goldsmiths who cast the gold were Medes and Egyptians.
The men who made the terracotta bricks were Babylonians. Those who decorated the wall were Medes and Egyptians.

The text does not end there; scores of craftsmen are listed, all from many different and remote areas! In spite of such a rich craftsmanship and their deep enthusiasm, the result was a splendid, coherent
building, bearing great qualities of unity and harmony in style. Only the extraordinary skill and proficiency of all those who took part in this construction and the extraordinary organisation of the works allowed for this diversity to be expressed, in such richness and harmonious excellence.

This example from the past shows the sort of network we wish to regenerate today. A network which seeks the best in everyone, everywhere. We are also taking part in a common objective: from now on we embrace a better quality of life for all people instead of the prince only. Time will tell if the Mediterranean people of today succeeded in using all their refined skills and arts for a better world. A transcended Mediterranean would be one that successfully and fully restored traditional architecture.
Notes:

(1) If we can acknowledge that over the past 10 years efforts and progress were made regarding tourism and environmental attitude, we must also note that hundreds of thousands of square meters were built everywhere throughout the Mediterranean to meet tourist demands, and that at the same time thousands of square meters of nearly traditional architecture was given up, systematically emigrated, or forsaken until it fell to dust.

(2) Rehabilitation uses up much less material than demolishing and rebuilding, especially if we consider and compute the costs in terms of energy resources necessary to produce modern materials, with the use or re-use of traditional materials. The same applies to recycling or pollution issues.

(3) Claude Lévi-Strauss wrote: “Cherishing local traditions will not suffice to preserve the cultural diversity in a world threatened by monotony and uniformity. The reality and the facts of diversity constitute what must be safeguarded rather than the mere historical contents produced by each generation, and that nobody could perpetuate beyond their time.” Race et histoire, UNESCO, 1952.

(4) Excerpt from the ICOMOS chart: “...vernacular construction is an evolving process that requires constant changes and adaptation in accordance with social and environmental constraints. Throughout the world, economic, cultural and architectural standardisation threatens the perpetuation of tradition. How to resist these forces is a fundamental issue that must be tackled not only by the populations but also by governments, urban planners, architects, preservation institutions: grouping experts from multiple fields.”

(5) We must not obsess ourselves in a quest or the “reconstruction” of the lost area, the lost society, the lost house, the lost man. Today’s world is confused and full of doubt: we have trouble understanding what is alive or perished, modern or old, useful or useless.


(7) To stimulate private individual investment and helping the lower income populations, subsidy systems are common and found throughout the area: they dispatch between 10% and 70% of rehabilitation costs.

(8) Since the Charter of Athens on restoration (1931) we could easily list over two hundred texts: charters, International Conventions, resolutions, recommendations and reports from the Council of Europe, UNESCO, the UN, the ICOMOS and the ICOM, that are in favour of heritage-related activities. A lot of progress has been made since, and these long-breathed considerations and recommendations have had a most significant impact on awareness, triggering the adhesions of many and leading to major achievements.

(9) Tunisia and Lebanon have created their own specific institutions, entirely dedicated to trades in traditional heritage construction, following the French and Italian examples in particular.

(10) Excerpt from the text known as the Document of Siss, told by Darius, king of Persia (522 to 486 BC), who self-proclaimed himself King of Kings, at the time of the construction of his palace in Siss.