

RURAL ARCHITECTURAL AND LANDSCAPE HERITAGE IN THE CONTEXT OF VAL PESCARA (ABRUZZO, IT): A QUESTION OF HERITAGE RECOGNITION

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RESUMO

O artigo objetiva refletir sobre a transferência e aplicação da Arqueologia da Arquitetura europeia do estudo de caso realizado em Laranjeiras-SE. A experiência em questão, bem como a análise da documentação produzida, nos levou ao entendimento da necessidade de pensar em estratégias específicas para a aplicação da leitura estratigráfica das edificações históricas brasileiras.

Palavras –chave: Arqueologia, Arquitetura rural; Paisagem; Patrimônio.

ABSTRACT

Rural architectural and landscape heritage in the context of Val Pescara (Abruzzo, IT): a question of heritage recognition.

The article aims to reflect on the transfer and application of European Archaeology of Architecture in a case study conducted in Laranjeiras, SE. The experience in question, as well as the analysis of the produced documentation, lead us to understand the necessity of developing specific strategies for applying the stratigraphic reading of Brazilian historical buildings.

Keywords: Archaeology; Rural architecture; Landscape; Heritage.

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RURAL BUILDINGS AND THE RELATED

landscape contexts are at this historical moment in Italy more than ever at risk especially due to the possibilities offered, in recent years, by tax incentives, post-earthquake reconstruction (still in place in these areas) government aids and by the most recent and immediate public building interventions planned and financed by the National Recovery and Resilience Plan.

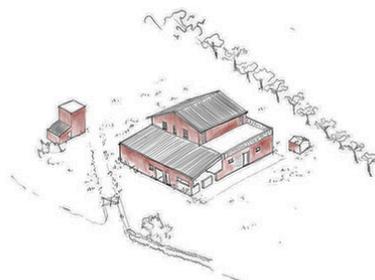
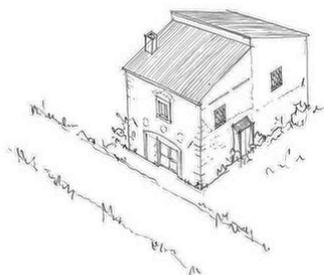
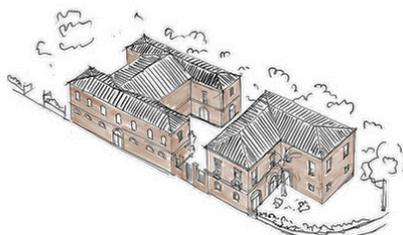
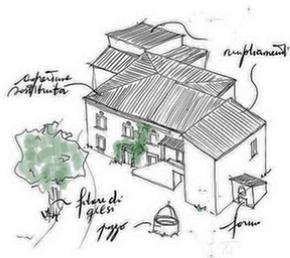
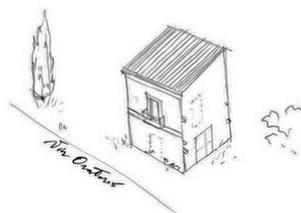
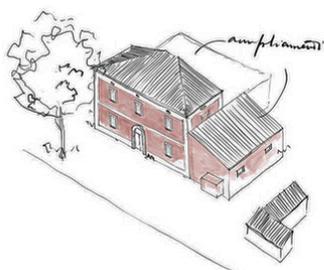
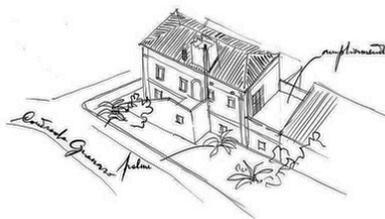
The landscape alterations, which have occurred in particular in the last century, are often the result of small-scale phenomena and processes which produce over time, from their stratification, radical changes. These

changes are capable of permanently modifying the landscape characteristics. The growing attention to the theme of architecture and rural landscape and the urgency of protecting it by reckless interventions is, however, recently confirmed by the cataloging work started and promoted by also the PNRR¹. (Ils. 1a, 1b)

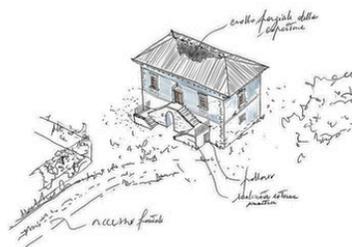
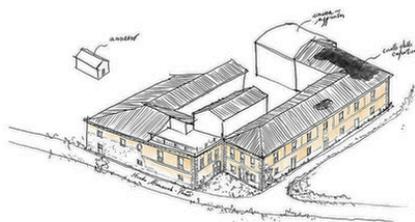
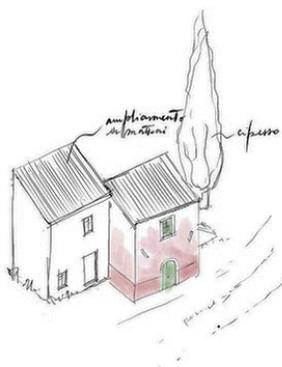
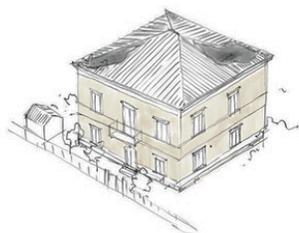
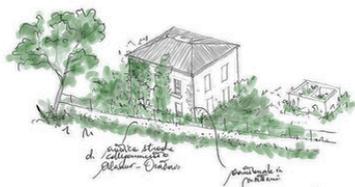
One of the key points to develop conservation and valorization strategies in order to prevent the disappearing of this heritage is understanding which objects are included in the definition of “rural architecture”. Very often the term “rural architecture” is exclusively associated with humble peasant dwellings and the rustic buildings next to them. But rural buildings are also historic “villa”, “casini”, “masserie”, etc. Other rural architectures are the ones used for the transformation of raw materials such as mills, oil mills or even those “micro” architectures that design the rural landscape: the fountains, the dry stone walls that surround the limits of the properties or fields.

To intervene in the rural context it is necessary to become aware of its patrimonial value, here meaning by heritage “the set of material and immaterial elements that testify the particular relationships that a human community has established over time with a territory” (Zerbi M.C., 2007), a product of its place and inextricably linked to it. Rural heritage is the landscapes resulting from the transformations of human activity, immovable and movable assets and local products.

¹ Investment M1C3|2.2 “Protection and enhancement of rural architecture and landscape”, Component 2 “Completion of the census of rural built heritage and implementation of national and regional information tools aimed at gathering knowledge on rural architecture and landscape, intervention methods and techniques, transfer of good practices and culture of reuse” in implementation of the provisions of Ministerial Decree 144 of 30 March 2023.



II. 1a: Some of the catalogued architectures including villas, casinos, masserie and more humble houses.
Source: Personal work.



Il. 1b: Some of the catalogued architectures including villas, casinos, masserie and more humble houses.

Source: Personal work.

The case study, the Pescara Valley, in Abruzzo is an extremely complex and fragile site because it is highly infra-structured and exploited by dense residential and industrial urbanization and at the same time the historical centers of the small villages reveal a growing demographic decline and forms of abandonment with a consequent reduction in activities and services. Here the landscape generally presents itself in two ways: the valley, rich in natural elements and emergencies (the Pescara river, the wooded areas close to it, flat agricultural fields), is characterized by industrial settlements, road infrastructures (railway, highway), residential concentrations; the surrounding hilly areas predominantly presents traditional agriculture, small fields and isolated houses. In this particular context could be intricate to read and understand the value of the rural landscape and its products, such as rural architecture. (Ils. 2 and 3).



Il. 2: Area close to the Pescara valley between Alanno scalo and Manoppello scalo characterized by the large presence of industrial settlements, urbanized areas, by the passage of the highway and the railway line close to the river basin.

Source: *Google Maps*, 2024.



Il. 3: Traditional hilly agricultural area in Pianella characterized by small, mostly open fields, small wooded areas, settlements concentrated in historical centers, small nuclei (hamlets), and scattered houses (generally located along the roads).
Source: *Google Maps*.

For this reason, it is essential to retrace the historical developments that have affected this area from the agricultural systems point of view and study the texts of well-known authors. An important contribution is the Sereni's "Storia del paesaggio agrario italiano"², which provides us an overall vision of the agricultural development on the national framework. Abruzzo is a region on the border among various geographical areas and it presents mixed characteristics: the nord has traits mostly similar to those of the agricultural system of the Marche, while southern Abruzzo is more representative of the southern Italy agricultural system. The area of L'Aquila, predominantly mountainous, is mainly linked to pastoralism, rather than to agriculture. Another wide-ranging contribution on the theme is "La casa rurale in Italia"³ by G. Barbieri and L. Gambi, part of a series of research on rural dwellings in Italy proposed by the National Research Council initiated from the middle of the last century. This contribution, tracing the different developments of Italian rural houses, inevitably retraces the variations of the linked agricultural system. In the same vein as the previous one, "La casa rurale negli Abruzzi"⁴ by M. Ortolani makes a focus on the different peasant dwellings and the rustic buildings declinations in the Abruzzo region.

The scattered humble buildings described by Ortolani, are mainly the result of an important transformation into the agricultural system that takes place starting from the beginning of the XIX century. In this geographical area until that time the peasants' residence was located within historical centers, mainly in hilltop villages, while the surrounding lands were large properties owned by feudal lords. In the countryside we could find some "Villa" or "casino" where the landowner resided seasonally or spent periods on holiday. All around there was a series of few minor buildings intended for farmer residence to look after the land.

² SERENI, E., *Storia del paesaggio agrario italiano*. Bari: Laterza, 1976.

³ BARBIERI, G., GAMBI, L., (A cura di), *La casa rurale in Italia*. In: *Ricerche sulle dimore rurali in Italia*, V. 29. Firenze: Leo S. Olschki, 1970.

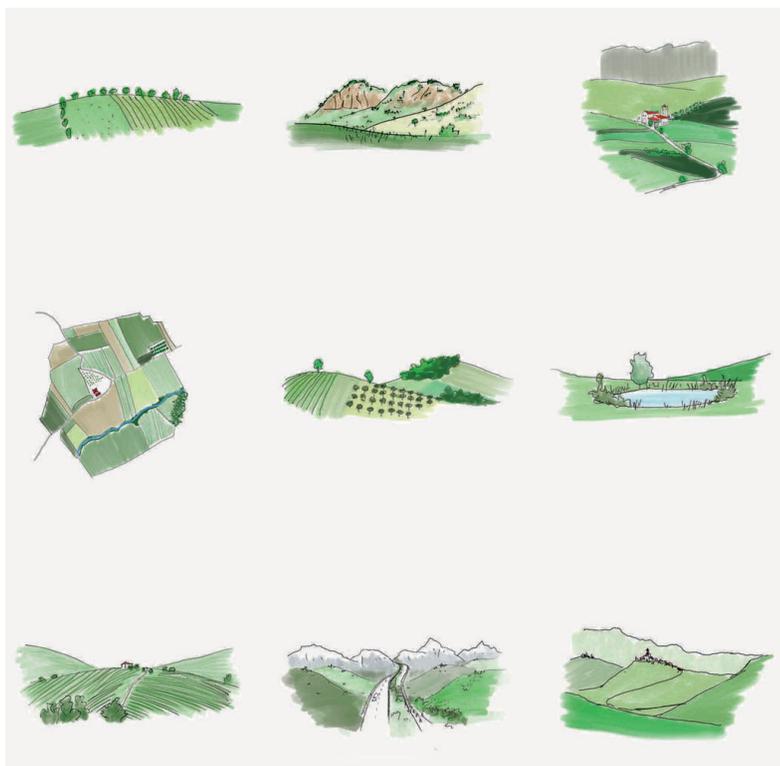
⁴ ORTOLANI, M.. *La casa rurale in Abruzzo*. In: *Ricerche sulle dimore rurali in Italia*, V. 21, Firenze: Olschki, 1961.

To describe a rural landscape it is useful to refer to Turri's ideas of Iconemas. "The term Iconema defines those elementary units of perception, those particular frames of reference on which we build our image of a given place. It can be said that Iconemas are to the landscape as the phoneme is to the word". The "units of perception" are parts of territory that each user makes its own and in which it recognizes itself are Iconemas. Moving among these numerous images, it starts a process of continuous re-reading of the territory. Continuous because these Iconemas are in permanent evolution, as much as the territory itself is in evolution. The aim is therefore to recognize forms of permanence and to adequately represent them with diagrams or photographs capable of capturing their role in the context.

The Pescara Valley is a territory that presents different historical matrices and different evolutionary paths of an economic and social type: perched villages of medieval origin, recent coastal development, industrial concentration of the valley, etc. It needs many Iconemas to describe itself. They are strictly interrelated with each other and none of them can be recognized as "the landscape" that identifies the Pescara Valley, but all together they contribute to identifying it as "territorial objects as objects of nature and objects of culture"⁵. Iconemes are for example: the church among the fields, which is inseparably part of a given view (this is one of the most frequent Iconemes in Italy); the tree-lined avenues on the crests of the reliefs, or aligned with the roads, or on watercourses also represent important and easily recognizable icons; the organization and morphology of the fields (more elongated or pea-shaped, regular or irregular, etc.); the presence of rural architecture usually arranged more or less on the top of hill reliefs, etc. The loss of these elements and many others, as well as their compromise, would inevitably vary the perception of that given view. (Ils. 4a, 4b and 4c)

The abandonment of rural areas in Italy that began in the 1920s and 1930s also introduced a new type of Iconema, recurrent in the area under examination. New scenarios have been created that often feature ruined

⁵ TURRI, E., *Semiologia del paesaggio italiano*. Venezia: Biblioteca Marsilio, p. Scheda Iconemi, 2014.



Ilus.4a, 4b: Some of the most recurrent Iconemes in the Pescara Valley.
Source: personal work.





Il. 4c: Some of the most recurrent Iconemes in the Pescara Valley.
Source: personal work.

farmhouses, uncultivated or overgrown land, orchards in total abandonment. The significant and incessant industrialization has also produced an unbridled constructionS of new artefacts that are foreign to the contexts to which they belong in terms of typology, materials and techniques. These new construction has favored the abandonment of the existing building heritage and the rapid proliferation of these “new rural forms” that have overlapped and continue to overlap with an older and slower-constructed matrix, partly mitigating its perception, partly through their cancellation (examples are the processes of demolition with reconstruction).

These rapid and invasive operations are clearly phagocytizing the perception of a collective imagination. In the area under examination, elements such as the view of the Maiella mountains, Morrone and Gran Sasso, the hilly reliefs with the other residential nuclei or, if you look towards the north-east, the Adriatic Sea, are always present as a landscape backdrop. This type of Iconeme is difficult to change, or rather, it requires significant historical periods to achieve substantial variations, but the relationship that these have with Iconeme on a closer scale can be brutally changed if the necessary precautions and measures are not taken in the landscape context.

To prevent drastic changes in these rural environments it is necessary to raise awareness among the actors involved, starting with the experts in the sector, passing through the administrations to reach the communities. Only through an awareness of the historical value of these assets it will be possible to start operations aimed at the conservation and enhancement of rural landscapes.