

Learning from History: Sustainable principles in Portuguese Vernacular Heritage

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In a contemporary world, where sustainable assessment is mostly based on numerical analysis, we are prone to disregard vernacular constructions and vernacular traditions. However, being those structures the result of the knowledge that is acquired and sedimented over time, the vernacular settlements and constructions can foster a wide range of teachings that can be integrated into our current practice.

In the late 50s of the 20th century, Portuguese architects began a national survey on regional architecture, aiming, in government eyes, to find the character of the Portuguese Architecture, its true style, in a process of national architecture valorisation, stimulating the affirmation of its vigour and its personality. The continental country was divided in 6 regions that shared some characteristics (climatic, settlement type, population, agricultural production), and 6 teams of young architects went through the territory, for 3 months, identifying, analysing, photographing and drawing.

What they found was not the Personality of Portuguese Architecture, but several constructive cultures, an architecture rich in its diversity, in the adaptation to local characteristics, needs, and constraints. The book "*Arquitetura popular em Portugal*" was published in 1961 and had a valuable impact in Portuguese architecture, not only in the moment but also for the future generations.

Taking as the departure point the book along with the 50s photographic survey, in this communication, we will explore the potential of teaching that is embodied in vernacular cultures. The rammed earth construction in the Alentejo Region will be addressed as a particular case study.