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Context, Climate, Culture. Traces of Vernacular Architecture in the Travel Notes of the Fourth CIAM

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**SONDERSCHRIFT
DES DEUTSCHEN ARCHÄOLOGISCHEN INSTITUTS
ABTEILUNG KAIRO**

Vernacular Architecture as Frame of Life in Historic and Ancient Communities

Proceedings of the International Conference Held in Berlin in April 4 to 7 2019

BERNADETA SCHÄFER, HERMANN SCHLIMME, and FATMA KESHK (eds.)



SDAIK 39 – 2023

This volume presents a selection of the papers presented at the international conference "Vernacular Architecture as Frame of Life in Historic and Ancient Societies", held in Berlin in 2019 as part of the DFG-project „Nubian Architecture“. Researchers and experts from all over the world presented and discussed case studies of vernacular architecture from different periods and cultures, with a special focus on Nubia.

The academic and artistic examination of vernacular architecture has a long tradition. European vernacular architecture first gained widespread interest during the Romantic period of the 19th century, when it was (mis)understood as the preserver of the „national soul“. Early modernists drew inspiration from vernacular architecture in the Mediterranean. In post-war modernism, the respective domestic vernacular architecture was stigmatised by historically oriented research and musealisation as being bound to the past and backwardness. Since the publications of Bernard Rudofsky and Hassan Fathy at the latest, however, its appreciation as part of the material culture of humanity has been steadily growing.

Today more than ever, the aspects of sustainability are coming into focus, and the guiding principles of vernacular architecture can be ground breaking for the necessary turnaround in building practices.

VERNACULAR ARCHITECTURE AS FRAME OF LIFE IN HISTORIC
AND ANCIENT COMMUNITIES

PROCEEDINGS OF THE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE HELD IN
BERLIN IN APRIL 4 to 7 2019

DEUTSCHES ARCHÄOLOGISCHES INSTITUT
ABTEILUNG KAIRO

SONDERSCHRIFT

39

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Vernacular Architecture as Frame of Life
in Historic and Ancient Communities

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edited by
Bernadeta Schäfer, Hermann Schlimme, and Fatma Keshk

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Cover photo: View of the hamlet of Bijje on the island of Bijje
Photo M. Kačičnik 2015, © TU Berlin/DAI Kairo

The conference was organized in the framework of the DFG-financed project „Nubian Architecture“

In memory of Hermann Schlimme
(1969-2023)

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The Topicality of Vernacular Architecture

Preface

BY HERMANN SCHLIMME

The present publication is a compilation of papers from the international conference “Vernacular Architecture as Frame of Life in Historic and Ancient Societies”, held in Berlin from 4 to 7 April 2019. The conference took place within the wider context of the project “Nubian Architecture: Documentation and Investigation on the Example of the Villages on the Bigge Island”, which is conducted jointly by the Chair of History of Architecture and Urban Planning of the Technische Universität Berlin (scientific direction: BERNADETA SCHÄFER; persons responsible: JOHANNES CRAMER and the present author) and by the German Archaeological Institute (DAI) in Cairo (person responsible: STEPHAN SEIDLMAYER). The project, financed by the German Research Foundation (DFG), studies vernacular villages on the island of Bigge in all their different aspects. It is based on an architectural analysis of space, function and construction and on anthropological studies of daily life and social structures, all set in their historical and environmental context. The aim of the 2019 conference, which was conceived and organized by BERNADETA SCHÄFER and OLGA ZENKER (both of the TU Berlin) and FATMA KEHSK (of the DAI), was to further establish the project “Nubian Architecture” within a wider field of investigation and to disseminate the research results. The conference also aimed to set the project in the context of a new display of interest in vernacular architecture as part of the current global architectural discourse.

Vernacular architecture is a topical theme. It can be seen as the basis for a sustainable and climate-conscious approach to construction. “Vernacular” means that a settlement draws on local conditions, on the prevailing climate of the site, the available building materials and traditional constructional methods. It can serve to make present-day architecture — indeed, the entire building sector — more sustainable and more responsible in its use of resources. For generations, vernacular settlements all over the world have been repeatedly modified, reused and adapted to the changing needs of the

inhabitants. Alterations and refurbishment work were usually carried out by the residents themselves. Vernacular developments, therefore, seem to be characterized by a perfect correspondence between spatial and social structures. In constructing buildings and settlements of this kind, it is not necessary to focus on a scientifically founded history of architecture and theories related to forms and proportions. As a rule, vernacular settlements were and are erected without the input of architects trained academically in accordance with Western models — a fact that says nothing about the quality of the buildings, however.

Many ideas underlying the current architectural discourse on sustainability are based on the principles of vernacular developments. Microinterventions in a given urban environment adopt the small-scale, ongoing adaptations characteristic of vernacular settlements. The reuse of historical, local and renewable materials like clay, or the renaissance of wood, even for the load-bearing structures of larger buildings (e.g. CREE by RHOMBERG; KATERRA/DMD Modular), also reflect vernacular forms of construction, which typically rely on renewable, locally available materials. Generating knowledge and prototypes for the built environment in a post-fossil society is a major topic in the current global discourse on architecture. University chairs like the Natural Building Lab (Institute for Architecture, TU Berlin, <https://www.nbl.berlin/> – site visited 21 March 2022) as well as many architects are convinced that climate-adapted construction systems using natural, renewable resources facilitate a future-oriented, holistic building culture in the interests of the common good. This approach shares its principles with historical, centuries-old, vernacular building traditions – a link that became evident when the head of the Natural Building Lab, EIKE ROSWAG-KLINGE, chaired a session at the Berlin conference.

Design-build is another modern concept that has principles in common with vernacular settlements. The term Design-build describes a process, in which the creation of a building, from its design to its

execution, is in a single hand. Design-build enhances the social and identity-creating dimensions of holistic construction and tends to reverse the long-standing division of labour between design and execution in the building process. In Renaissance Italy, the figure of the architect had re-emerged on the basis of the *disegno* concept, which describes the process of building design and its drawn representation as an intellectual act distinct from the implementation of a structure. This division is overcome in Design-build, which plays a key role in the profile of the Institute for Architecture at the TU Berlin. It involves the chairs CODE (RALF PASEL-KRAUTHEIM), Architectural Design and Building Construction (JACOB VAN RIJS, individual projects) and, once again, the Natural Building Lab (EIKE ROSWAG-KLINGE).

This interest in vernacular architecture is not a recent phenomenon, however. Vernacular architecture provided a model for architecture throughout the 20th century. From the 1950s to the 1980s, however, vernacular models — often derived from the Mediterranean — were removed from their original contexts and employed in different climates and societies. Modern materials were used, and slow growth was simulated by applying structuralist approaches or formalized user-participation processes. Vernacular models were even extended to the huge scale of megastructures. Today, one finds a different approach to vernacular architecture. Not only historians see it in its respective local and historical context. Design architects, too, analysing the whole social and cultural context of vernacular settlements all over the world, see the existence of vernacular housing as a starting point for sustainable urban development strategies. The aim is the continued inhabitation of vernacular settlements. This may be referred to as “cultural sustainability”, which can be achieved by sensibilizing people to the value of their local built heritage. A blind process of modernization that alienates people from their habitat should be avoided. The “belief in the need to overcome traditional trajectories of knowledge production and transfer, disciplinary fragmentation and persisting knowledge hierarchies” is a guiding principle of the Habitat Unit, Chair of International Urbanism and Design, headed by ELKE BEYER, ANKE HAGEMANN and PHILIPP MISSELWITZ (Institute for Architecture, TU Berlin, <http://habitat-unit.de/> – site visited 21 March 2022). The Habitat Unit is involved in many projects in sub-Saharan Africa and South-East Asia. A stakeholder- and development-oriented approach bestows an important role on the local context. A session at the conference was chaired by PHILIPP MISSELWITZ. Architectural and urban design

on the one hand and historical and heritage studies on the other work together to ensure the continued habitation of vernacular settlements. The historical aspect is important in maintaining the value of these developments and in protecting them as manifestations of human knowledge in the realm of social and constructional sustainability.

The papers compiled in the present volume are specifically concerned with Nubian architecture, but they have a broader context, too. They cover examples from Mali to Iran, from the northern Mediterranean to the Sudan. They assume different points of view and deal with material and immaterial traditions, ranging from art and everyday tools to language and other expressions of culture. The papers extend from historical research and matters of heritage to the relationship between vernacular and 20th-century architecture. Thanks are due to all speakers, to all chairs of sessions and to all those who participated in the 2019 Berlin conference for their contributions to the intensive discussions, which in many cases have enriched the papers in the present volume. Thanks also go to the German Archaeological Institute for the scope it provided to publish the proceedings in its well-established open-access digital series, and to the German Research Foundation (DFG) for the project funding, without which this publication would not have seen the light of day.

The present volume is a contribution to the topicality of vernacular architecture from the perspective of history and heritage preservation. It also seeks to share specific approaches and findings with the current and more general architectural discourse on sustainability, climate change and bottom-up approaches. Discussion of these topics is now increasing in intensity and will witness many more contributions from all sides. The forum is open.

Berlin, March 2022

Context, Climate, Culture

Traces of Vernacular Architecture in the Travel Notes of the Fourth CIAM

By STAMATINA KOUSIDI

Abstract

Travel has for a long time provided architects with the opportunity to engage in different cultures, indigenous building techniques and materials, employing a variety of architectural expressions influenced by traditions foreign to their own. The modernist era marked an altogether new chapter in the architectural explorations carried out through the medium of travel¹ and it often bridged contradictory views and opinions of the relation between domestic and urban space, nature and culture, building and context. In the travel itineraries of architects and urban planners, as shaped in the early decades of the twentieth century, the choice of the Mediterranean countries as a destination was relevant both in terms of a perpetual interest in the sites of antiquity and of a newly-acquired attention towards vernacular architecture, as part of a broader context that saw the recovery of minor architectures being included in the recognition of classical traditions. As the travels that took place in the 1930s in Greece testify, 'in addition to the antiquity-oriented narrative, yet another collateral myth emerged', a myth that regarded 'modern architecture as direct descendant of the Mediterranean and specifically the Aegean vernacular tradition'². This paper aims to shed light on the 'trip within the trip', a three-day cruise trip across a selection of islands in the Aegean Sea, carried out by a group of CIAM IV delegates and their guests in August 1933. By placing a particular emphasis on the accounts of the Swiss art and cultural historian S. GIEDION³, the paper traces connections among the impressions shared with his fellow travellers, such as L. MOHOLY-

NAGY, P. N. DJELEPY, F. LÉGER, P. M. BARDI and G. POLLINI, and their appreciation of this 'collateral myth' that reconceptualized the Aegean vernacular architecture and culture within a modern context.

Keywords

Modern architecture, Aegean vernacular, Natural and climate resources, Cultural heritage

Introduction

The fourth meeting of the Congrès Internationaux d'Architecture Moderne (CIAM IV), held en route from Marseilles to Athens, offered the opportunity to its attendants to acquire firsthand impressions of the Mediterranean vernacular architecture and culture as they were manifested in Greece. Their short stay in Greece in August 1933 took place among other pivotal architectural expeditions in the country at the beginning of the twentieth century. The 1911 'Voyage d'Orient' carried out by LE CORBUSIER and his friend A. KLIPSTEIN, which included visits to Mount Athos, Athens and Eleusis, as well as B. RUDOFSKY's stay on the island of Santorini in 1929, as part of a longer trip that included the destinations of Istanbul and the Black Sea, Athens and the Cycladic islands that would materialize in his doctoral dissertation titled *Eine primitive Betonbauweise auf den südlichen Kykladen, nebst dem Versuch einer Datierung derselben* (TUWien 1931), have marked pivotal moments of engagement with the Mediterranean vernacular architecture from the perspective of Western travellers. In the years surrounding August 1933, more testaments of architectural travels in the Aegean Sea region would come to light: The photograph of a traditional house of Phira, Santorini would be juxtaposed to the one of a modernist public school building of Athens in H. LAUTERBACH's article *Notizen von einer*

¹ OCKMAN/FRAUSTO 2005; BUCKLEY 2011; DERIU ET AL. 2016; KOUSIDI 2020b.

² ATHANASSIOU ET AL. 2019.

³ This article draws content from the following publications: KOUSIDI 2021, pp. 16–29; KOUSIDI 2020, pp. 33–46; and KOUSIDI 2016.



Fig. 1 Photograph by S. GIEDION of a traditional settlement, Pyrgos village, Santorini, 1933 (© gta Archives/ETH Zürich, S. Giedion)

*Reise in Griechenland*⁴; the photographs capturing the daily minutiae and details from Delos' ancient houses would form part of M. BREUER's travels through the Greek archipelago, as part of a broader trajectory in the Mediterranean region (1932-35); and E. MENDELSON's reports from his short stay in the country would be published in the *Berliner Tageblatt*⁵ (1931).

Sundry scholarly works have addressed the significance of the unmediated experiences of the Mediterranean vernacular tradition that the CIAM IV delegates acquired during their brief stay in Greece in early August 1933⁶. This paper aims to highlight the appreciation of this tradition, as acquired by a group of CIAM IV delegates and their guests during a 'trip within the trip': a three-day cruise across a

selection of islands in the Aegean Sea. By placing a particular emphasis on the accounts of S. GIEDION⁷, the paper traces connections among the impressions shared with his fellow travellers, as conveyed through the writings of L. MOHOLY-NAGY, P. DJELEPY, F. LÉGER, P. BARDI and G. POLLINI. GIEDION referred to the 1933 stay in Greece as a 'newly acquired standpoint' and as 'something in the nature of an interval for reflection'⁸. In exploring the ways in which this experience had offered a turning point and how it intersected with the principles of the Modern Movement, this paper aims to capture the significance of the empirical over the theoretical knowledge of the Mediterranean vernacular and its possible influence on its re-conceptualization.

Context

As GIEDION recalled: 'When we climbed up to those houses, MOHOLY pointed out they merged so plastically into one another that the children were playing on their neighbours' flat roofs and how, being built up a steep slope in graduated steps, every house enjoyed a free and unobstructed view over the sea'⁹.

GIEDION'S citation of MOHOLY'S observation on how organically the houses of the village of Pyrgos, Santorini were integrated into their built and natural surroundings is part of his 1949 article *CIAM at Sea. The background of the fourth (Athens) congress*. The text provided a framework to discuss, in retrospect, the experiences acquired from the 1933 trip in which the relation between the architecture and nature was brought to the fore. 'Dawn revealed the summit of Santorin,' GIEDION writes, '– its white-washed houses trailing like a drift of last year's snow along the edge of its precipitous cliff – and later in the morning we lay to before that island'¹⁰. MOHOLY'S film 'Architekturkongress' released a few months after the conclusion of the fourth meeting of the CIAM IV, alluding to E. LOTAR'S documentary 'Voyage aux Cyclades' (1931), offers a visual testimony to this observation. The scenes from the Cycladic islands which the delegates visited during their cruise depict a landscape comprising cubic, abstract, unornamented, whitewashed volumes, organically distributed in space in larger arrangements (Fig. 1). High and low volumes appear to alternate in a disorderly manner so

⁴ See LAUTERBACH 1932, pp. 346–347.

⁵ See: MENDELSON/BEYER 1967.

⁶ TERRAGNI 1999; BLENCOWE/LEVINE 2019; ATHANASSIOU ET AL. 2019.

⁷ WEISS 2010; KOUSIDI 2021; 2020; 2016.

⁸ GIEDION 1949, p. 36.

⁹ GIEDION 1949, p. 39.

¹⁰ GIEDION 1949, p. 39.

that the roof of one building becomes the courtyard of another. Being organized along the steep ground of the islands, the buildings open up towards their surroundings and the landscape.

'Nothing is predetermined, and it seems a mutual agreement to obey the tone of indication: consequently the countries of the islands all show similarity in the nurture and in the configuration, falling from the top to the bottom, down to the docks of the ports'¹¹, P. M. BARDI will underline, citing the avant-garde painter F. LÉGER, in the extensive report of the CIAM IV stay in Greece titled *Cronaca di Viaggio* published in the cultural journal *Quadrante*¹². The report is one of several publications dedicated to the said stay that surfaced in Italy after the conclusion of the CIAM IV and included discussions on the Mediterranean vernacular culture¹³, yet it offers the most extensive perspective. LÉGER's comment on the spontaneity that characterized the spatial organization of the vernacular settlements contrasted with the functional principles promoted by the CIAM members. The unmediated impressions of the island vernacular house and town organization, as acquired in the 'trip within a trip' of August 1933, differed from the theoretical applications of the four-function scheme underlying the CIAM IV discussions on the functional city.

Yet another CIAM IV travel report from Greece would reflect on the ways in which vernacular architecture was related to its surroundings. The Greek architect P. DJELEPY in his 1934 article *Les Maisons de l'archipel grec observées du point de vue de l'architecture moderne* notes how the vernacular architecture of the Aegean region was an integral part of nature because 'it is not simply placed on the ground; it is enshrined in the landscape'¹⁴. DJELEPY's article features in the 1934 issue of the *Cahiers d'Art* magazine that hosted further accounts of the CIAM IV: DJELEPY would also carry out travels across the territory of Greece in search of a direct engagement in its architectural tradition and manifold regional appropriations, in the footsteps of other Greek architects such as D. PIKIONIS and A. KONSTANTINIDIS, in the first half of the twentieth century¹⁵. In the prologue of the 1934 *Cahiers d'Art*



Fig. 2 Photograph of a typical setting in the chōra of Mykonos, 1933 (© Archivio P. BOTTONI, Dipartimento di Architettura e Studi Urbani (DASU), Politecnico di Milano)

issue, the art historian and editor of the magazine C. ZERVOS argues that the characteristic houses of the island of Santorini readily became 'magnificent photos,' for they appeared 'archaic [yet] in tune with contemporary sensibility'¹⁶. The organic continuity between the built artifact and the surrounding landscape was articulated here by the local masons and builders through their construction, choice of materials, the organization of houses and towns, paying tribute to the unique topography of the island.

'The porticoes, the shaded promenades, and the terraces are built like stages in front of the great spectacles of nature'¹⁷, G. DE CHIRICO had observed regarding the ways architecture in Greece accorded with its natural setting. This accord manifested in various ways: in the correspondence between the natural light and the building materials, in the material affinity between the built and contextual elements, in the placing of buildings in the landscape so that it offered multiple points of view from which one could contemplate the latter. Man-made and natural qualities, the inside and the outside, architecture and

¹¹ BARDI 1933, p. 19.

¹² BARDI 1933, an improvised geographical map, following Le Corbusier, in the article *Cronaca di viaggio*, in: *Quadrante* 5, 1933, pp. 5, 19.

¹³ BOTTONI 1933; LÉGER 1934; POLLINI 1976.

¹⁴ '[...] Elle fait partie intégrante de la nature, car elle n'est pas simplement posée sur le sol; elle est enchâssée dans le paysage.' DJELEPY 1934, p. 93. All translations are by the author, unless otherwise stated.

¹⁵ THEOCHAROPOULOU 2010.

¹⁶ ZERVOS in BLENCOWE/LEVINE 2019, p. 95.

¹⁷ DE CHIRICO in J. LEJEUNE/SABATINO 2010, p. 27.

landscape were inextricably bound together. This union would also underpin the exploration of the architecture of the Modern Movement. 'Its houses, with its terraces and the gardens on their flat roofs are a sound combination of modern construction and the old tradition of the Mediterranean culture'¹⁸ GIEDION wrote, with reference to T. GARNIER'S *Cité Industrielle*, in a rare acknowledgement of the intersection between modern architecture and the Mediterranean vernacular. 'Traveling to the not yet fully modernized parts of Europe,' architectural historian H. SCHLIMME writes, 'became a means of articulating a critique to the modern architectural establishment and its disciplinary canons, and of deriving concrete architectural models, such as that of the hill towns' vernacular urbanism and habitat typologies, that impacted architectural thinking in the decades following World War II'¹⁹. Large-scale projects that featured high density, stepped-up terraces and a formal continuity with their surrounding topography would emerge in the portfolios of CIAM IV attendants, as in the case of the Terraced House in Eura (1937-38) by A. AALTO, and they would further advance in the interwar era.

Climate

Quoting F. LÉGER, 'It is a luminous climate where all precisions are allowed, where the detail takes its value. In this burnt and translucent geography, the volume is absorbed, the shadow cast disappears. Everything is architecture and design'²⁰.

The relationship between architecture and its surroundings, from the standpoint of the climate, was not an issue that remained absent from the discussions on Mediterranean architecture which emerged from the 1933 CIAM short stay in Greece. The photograph of the square of Phira, Santorini, which features in MOHOLY'S film documentary, impressively illustrates this relationship. If the border between the small square and the street appears vague, given that the social gatherings on the island are taking place in the threshold spaces between private and public realms, the line dividing the shaded and the sunlit parts is clear. In the midst of the ferocious August

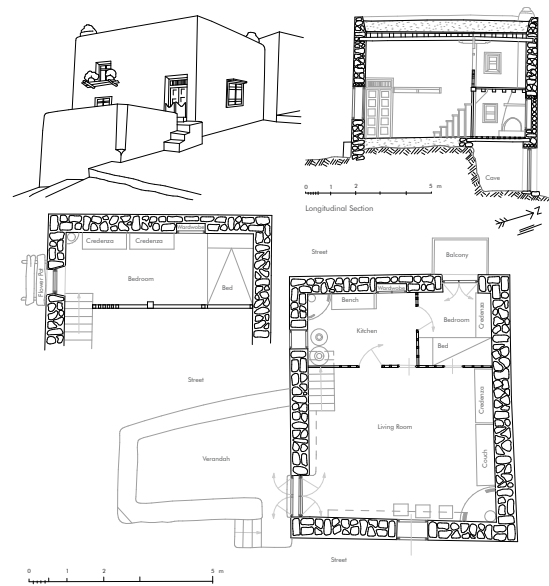


Fig. 3 Plans of a traditional house of Skyros based on DJELEPY 1934, p. 93 (Digital drawing by F. SLOVINJA, term paper under supervision of S. Kousidi, © Politecnico di Milano)

afternoon, gatherings take place in the shadow²¹. The photograph reveals the correlation between collective life and built environment to be inextricably linked to the regional climatic conditions. The ways in which the spatial organization of both towns and houses of the Cycladic islands is in tune with their climatic context held a central role in the discussions that emerge from the CIAM IV travel reports.

DJELEPY, for instance, in his 1934 article would point out how the traditional house of the Aegean Sea bore a functional rather than a merely aesthetic or symbolic role that responded to an absolute necessity (Fig. 3). 'The main concern of the inhabitant of the Greek archipelago,' DJELEPY writes, 'is to adapt, in the tightest way, the plan of the house to his needs, to build solidly, to make fill in his home the role of real shelter against cold, sun, noise'²². Both the abstract form of the house and its integration in its context, pointed to an absolute necessity, as 'the beauty of this house is [...] largely due to the rational forms imposed by the expression of the plan and the technical means used'²³. DJELEPY would go a step

¹⁸ GIEDION 1941, p. 693.

¹⁹ SCHLIMME 2009, p. 149.

²⁰ 'È un clima luminoso dove sono consentite tutte le precisioni, dove il dettaglio prende il suo valore. In questa geografia bruciata e traslucida il volume è assorbito, l'ombra portata sparisce. Tutto è architettura e disegno.' F. LÉGER 1934, pp. 25-26.

²¹ BLENCOWE/LEVINE 2019, p. 108.

²² 'Le souci primordial de l'habitant de l'archipel grec c'est d'adapter, de la manière la plus serrée, le plan de la maison à ses besoins, de construire solidement, de faire remplir à sa demeure le rôle de véritable abri contre le froid, le soleil, le bruit, etc.' DJELEPY 1934, p. 39.

²³ 'La beauté de sa maison ressortit donc en grande partie

further and propose a direct analogy between the houses of the Greek archipelago and the modernist residential projects. For him, the recorded interest of the CIAM delegates in the rationality of the Aegean vernacular architecture of the encountered places was to be traced in the fact that they had been able to trace in the former, the principles on which modern architecture was founded.

'Also in the islands, architecture appeared to be marked by valid rules, even if not always clear, typical of the typologies and deriving, among other things, from climatic factors and from the ways individual buildings were grouped together, relating themselves to the site'²⁴, Italian architect G. POLLINI wrote in his 1976 comprehensive report on the background of CIAM IV published in the architectural journal *Parametro*. His discussion also underscored the aspect of necessity, a struggle for survival that determined the architecture of houses and towns. The terraced house, a recurrent subject of the discussions, is closely intertwined with its surrounding climatic conditions. Following the natural contours of the steep ground, the houses are organized in a stepped-up formation so that the inner core of the house can benefit from cross ventilation and a maximum penetration of sunlight. In this context, '[w]hat should really be honored is the fact that the locals adapted their notion of comfort and other needs to the local setting, and merged the effects of the four elements into an honest, minimalist architectural idiom, thus offering a brilliant example of vernacular environmental sustainability'²⁵.

A closer examination of the Aegean vernacular architecture uncovered strategies that addressed the requirements of the climate and that would also be employed in the explorations into modernism. The latter regarded architecture's interaction with the climate as a central theme of inquiry – invariably exploring the house's ability to admit a maximum amount of sunlight and natural air to better adjust



Fig. 4 Photograph by S. GIEDION of a traditional settlement, Pyrgos village, Santorini, 1933 (© gta Archives/ETH Zürich, S. Giedion)

its performance –, and the vernacular houses of the Aegean islands in the CIAM IV trip provided a validation of this exploration. Questions on architecture's interaction with the climate were also strongly present at the discourse that comprised the Congress meetings. The renowned lecture held by LE CORBUSIER on August 4, 1933, for instance, at the Polytechnic School of Athens, entitled 'Air – Son – Lumière'²⁶, encapsulated his vision of 'one single house for all nations.' In contrast to the passive means that the vernacular architecture adopted to establish an efficient relationship to its climatic setting, LE CORBUSIER'S discussion was centred on technical means of environmental control. Detached from its surroundings and regulated at will, the design models promoted therein articulated a vision of an international expression of architecture. By contrast, the Mediterranean culture of living appeared rooted in its surrounding environment, revealing an architectural stance in accordance with regional climatic data and centred around elements such as light and heat, coolness and shade.

Culture

As quoted from GIEDION, 'Le Corbusier sat behind a column drawing in his blue sketch-book; Van Eesteren had something to say about the lessons of this 'cultural landscape'. Otherwise – perhaps because what we saw in stones, or building or the face of the ground stirred familiar chords in us – we

des formes rationnelles imposées par l'expression du plan et les moyens techniques utilisés. Que cette maison soit imposante ou modeste, son volume, les dimensions des surfaces des murs, le jeu des ouvertures dépendront toujours de l'organisation intérieure. L'utile et le rationnel excluent le superflu.' DJELEPY 1934, p. 39.

²⁴ 'Anche nelle isole l'architettura appariva contrassegnata da regole valide, anche se non sempre palesi, proprie delle tipologie e derivante tra l'altro dai fattori climatici e dai modi per i singoli edifici di raggrupparsi, ponendosi in relazione col sito. Le popolazioni mediterranee apparivano così essersi espresse soprattutto ricercando un rapporto tra la loro povertà e un'azione essenzialmente razionale.' POLLINI 1976, p. 22.

²⁵ STASINOPOULOS 2014, p. 35.

²⁶ LE CORBUSIER 1934, p. 11.

mostly contemplated in silence²⁷.'

One of GIEDION's photographs from the 1933 'trip within the trip' in Greece, featuring in DJELEPY's 1934 article, depicts a man sitting on the vaulted roof of one of the houses in the village of Pyrgos, Santorini (Fig. 4). The human figure is placed in the foreground, while behind it develops the organic succession of built and landscape elements that fades into the horizon. The figure provides a sense of scale and time, as it is depicted against the vastness of the landscape and in the context of an immutable built setting. From within an era that had come to identify modernity with technological advances, industrial production and the machine, the closer study of the Mediterranean vernacular, as documented in the August 1933 trip in the Greek archipelago, nurtured a cultural, rather than a merely technical, functional or formal understanding of architecture.

'The history of man as a seeker of shelter is the history of his relationship to environment'²⁸, S. MOHOLY-NAGY points out in her essay *Environment and Anonymous Architecture*, stressing the significance of the latter in the 'successful relationship between settler culture and settler architecture'. In the context of the Mediterranean vernacular, architecture was perceived in functionalist terms, highlighting the relation between space and user. Addressing the requirements of the site, the climate and its people, the traditional house of the Cyclades and the Sporades, for example, embodied functionalist principles; its aesthetic expression was in line with its function and the latter was, in turn, associated with the needs of its occupant. 'To build his house, he does not care about preconceived theories,' DJELEPY writes concerning the inhabitant of the islands of the Greek archipelago; 'his guide is the exact knowledge of his needs, his masters the tradition of his race and his soul'²⁹.

Similarly, MOHOLY in his own recollection of the Aegean vernacular culture, as captured in a letter to his wife S. MOHOLY-NAGY, refers to how 'the people whitewash their villages once a week' and to how 'everything blazes with cleanliness [...] even the treads of the stairs are white, and on every tread there are only two specific places to step, hence permitted to become grey'³⁰. MOHOLY includes references to the 'white sharpness of the island architecture set with wonderful clarity on the hills,' which represented

to him the 'greatest experience' during the trip. It was, he claims, the people that 'belong to all these things'³¹, underscoring the strong bonds between architecture and cultural expression.

Conclusion

The modern gaze that the CIAM IV delegates cast on tradition was one of many facets. A set of modern cultural media – magazines, criticism, photographs, film – underpinned this gaze and served as a vehicle for the dissemination of the travel findings to a broader audience, connecting different voices and thereby bridging disparate cultures in the promotion of, and in the research into, the principles of the Modern Movement. Travel reports and critiques became fundamental sites for reflection and debate but also for publicity and propaganda. A continuous relationship between the interwar and the post-war architectural travels can hence be traced as the 1933 'trip within a trip' gave impetus – sometimes directly, others indirectly – to further architectural pilgrimages in the Mediterranean in the second half of the twentieth century. The recorded interest in the vernacular architecture and culture of Greece echoed in the individual travels reports of architects, such as A. and P. SMITHSON (1951, 1958), R. VENTURI (1955), W. GROPIUS (1957) and L. MIES VAN DER ROHE (1957). It was also present in the collective pedagogical and scientific initiatives of the 1955 CIAM Summer School, such as the 1955 CIAM Summer School, directed by F. ALBINI, I. GARDELLA, E. N. ROGERS and G. SAMONÀ, and the Delos Symposia (1962-74), organized by the architect and town planner C. A. DOXIADIS in collaboration with J. TYRWHITT, taking place completely or partly in the country.

What emerges as central in the visual and literary documentations of the August 1933 trip which focus on locational attributes such as light and shadow, textures and touch, atmospheres and temperatures, notions of cleanliness and on colour is the importance of the non-mediated experience of the built environment. Similar to the eighteenth-century travelogues from the Cyclades, which 'provide the first signs of an emerging interest in island settings and their potential for fostering that sought-after, emotional, introspective experience'³², the 1933 travel notes center on the powerful impressions of the inhabited space. The interpretation of the houses and towns, landscapes and panoramas encountered during the

²⁷ GIEDION 1949, p. 36.

²⁸ MOHOLY-NAGY 1955, p. 3.

²⁹ 'Pour construire sa maison, il ne se préoccupe guère de théories préconçues. Son guide c'est la connaissance exacte de ses besoins, ses maîtres la tradition de sa race et son âme.' DJELEPY 1934, p. 39.

³⁰ MOHOLY in BLENCOWE/LEVINE 2019, p. 124.

³¹ MOHOLY in BLENCOWE/LEVINE 2019, p. 126.

³² BERG 2012, p. 76.

trip emerges, to a large extent, as driven by a sensorial and perceptual understanding of space. In the spirit of sociologist H. LEFEBVRE, who points out that the visitors of a monumental space 'will contemplate and decipher the symbols around them and they will thus, on the basis of their own bodies, experience a total being in a total space'³³, the value of studying the Aegean vernacular architecture on-site, through the tangible experience of the built environment, emerges as closely connected to the reinterpretation of architecture as rooted in its context and in a human-centered approach. From within a period that questioned any form of continuity of the past, this reinterpretation anticipated further intersections of the heritage of the vernacular tradition with concepts of modernity, through an attention on the relation between the built artifact and its physical, climatic and cultural context, which would be further strengthened in the post-war period through architectural works and theories that embraced regional variations of a strikingly modern language³⁴.

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³³ LEFEBVRE 1991, p. 221.

³⁴ This article is an expanded version of the paper presented at the conference held in Berlin in April 2019 as well as of the articles published by the author in 2019 and 2021 on this topic.

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