

Valorizing vernacular architecture. Historical keys for the ongoing discourse

La valorización de la arquitectura vernácula.
Claves históricas para el discurso actual

JUAN ANTONIO GARCÍA-ESPARZA

Abstract / Resumen

The article analyzes how vernacular architecture was valorized depending on the place, the cultural background and the external influences in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. The discourse relates Spain with Central European countries, those who were pioneers in encouraging culture, traditions and pedagogy through a new way of observing and feeling the beauty of certain objects. As it will see, eclectic views took place, from those who defended tradition, to those who viewed the weight of history as a burden detrimental to the evolution and progress. In that sense, the intended approach on the modern perception of the traces of vernacular architecture is novel because the topic is focused from the cultural and societal divergences from the different temporalities. The paper concludes the analysis of the place and their traces by noticing their topicality with contemporary assessments on the vernacular architecture and society of the different Cultural Environments.

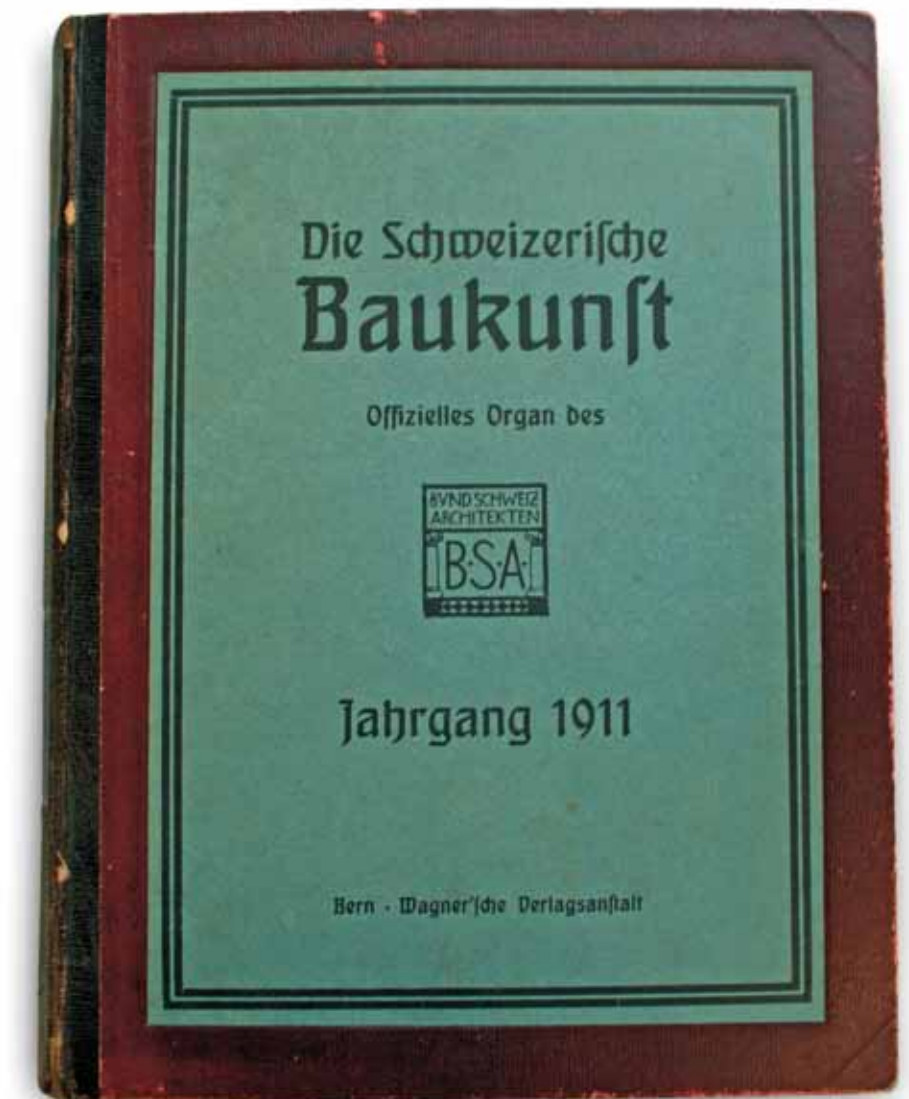
El artículo analiza cómo la arquitectura vernácula fue valorizada en función del lugar, el contexto cultural y las influencias externas a finales del siglo XIX y principios del siglo XX. El discurso relaciona España con países de la Europa Central, pioneros en alentar la cultura, las tradiciones y la pedagogía a través de una nueva forma de observar y sentir la belleza de ciertos objetos. El discurso analizará diferentes visiones eclécticas que tuvieron lugar, desde los que defendían la tradición a los que consideraban el peso de la historia como una carga perjudicial para la evolución y el progreso. En ese sentido, el enfoque pretendido hacia la percepción moderna de las trazas de la arquitectura vernácula es novedoso porque se centra en las diferencias culturales y sociales de las distintas temporalidades. El documento concluye el análisis del lugar y sus trazas al denotar su actualidad referida a los estudios contemporáneos sobre la arquitectura vernácula y la sociedad de los diferentes entornos culturales.

Keywords / Palabras clave

Vernacular architecture, architectural eclecticism, perception, conservation, cultural evolution.

Arquitectura vernácula, eclecticismo arquitectónico, percepción, conservación, evolución cultural

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[Fig. 1] A. et E. Varin. L'architecture pittoresque Suisse ou choix de constructions rustiques prises dans toutes les parties de la Suisse.

Fuente: Zug (Switzerland), Bauernhausforschung, 1870.

The Central European significance

In the early twentieth century, initiatives were taken to develop tourism. In the case of Saint-Imier in Switzerland, a pioneer effort in regional tourism, the aim was to create a summer and winter resort in a mountain area above the village. The idea was to develop a tourist location in the Jura for both winter and summer, like the big stations that flourished in different parts of the canton of Bern and the Alps. The location chosen was situated in pastures on the steep forest hillsides of the valley. One condition for the development of a tourist resort was accessibility. Saint-Imier had a funicular railway, a line inaugurated in 1903 which joined the village and the location now known as Mont-Soleil.

Among the buildings built at that time were a small number of hotels, homes and an Alpine Club mountain refuge, all reminiscent of the picturesque architecture of the Alpine regions of the country¹. Most of the ideological inspiration in the years of the creation of associations for the protection of the heritage of Germanic countries came from Germany. But in the field of literature, *Heimat* was focused on a great tradition, not only that of Germany, but also that of Austria and German Switzerland² [Fig. 1].

A section of the Swiss *Heimatschutz* [Homeland Protection] in France was developed by Marguerite Burnat-Provins (1872-1952). The poet Jean Lahore (1840-1909), vice-president of the *Société française pour la protection des sites* and founder of the *Société d'art et d'Hygiène Populaire*, boosted *Heimatschutz* in 1905 giving moral support to Burnat-Provins in the style of Godet. In his writings he championed unity

¹ Elisabeth Crettaz-Stürzel, *Heimatstil Reformarchitektur in der Schweiz 1896-1914*, vol. 2. Frauenfeld, (Switzerland), Huber Verlag, 2005, p. 50.

² Elisabeth Boa & Rachel Palfreyman, *Heimat, a German dream. Regional loyalties and National Identity in German Culture 1890-1990*. Oxford - New York, Oxford University Press, 2000, p. 3.

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[Fig. 2] Edmond Bille painting. *Le temps des fenaisons*, 1899.

Fuente: Ruedin, P. *D'edmon Bille a Kircher. Ruralité et modernité artistique en Suisse (1900-1930)*. Moudon, Acatos, 2003.

and health, “the beauty of people”, stating: “Elevating the popular classes to the idea of beauty, imbuing the poorer classes with taste, sensibility and research to guarantee the wellbeing of the working class, while contributing at the same time to their intellectual and moral education”³.

The terminology of the *Heimatkunst* [Homeland Culture] did not merely refer to tradition. The definition of the term *Heimatschutzarchitektur* in reference to architectural heritage arose from a broader movement, beyond a simple declaration of intent to understand a specific architectural style. The term architectural heritage was closely infused with part of the *Lebensreform*, seen more as a melting pot preserving natural art rather than as a decisive battle against the new proposals from local authorities⁴.

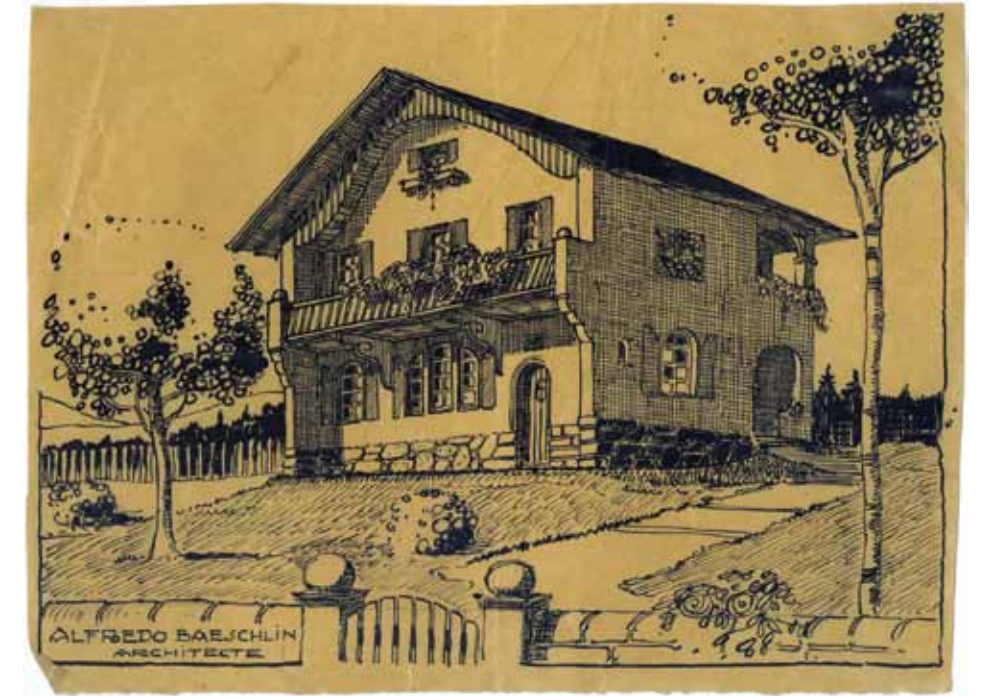
The words of Diana le Dihn referring to the term *Heimatschutz*, speak of a phenomenon which was present on a European scale despite its German roots. Theodor Zink (1871-1934) expressed this in a different way in the introduction to his *Stories and notes for the school and home*: “The history of *Heimat* is only a part of the great world history, and therefore without world history there would be no *Heimat*”⁵ [Fig. 2].

The European importance of the activities for the protection of national culture first became manifest in the *Exposition Universelle* held in Paris in 1900. Another public manifestation was that of the International Congresses held in Brussels from 1898 until the third and fourth editions in 1910. The *Société pour la protection des paysages* organized the first international congress on the protection of landscape held in Paris in 1909. Subsequently, the focal point moved to German-speaking countries where the first joint meeting of historical and cultural heritage was held in Salzburg in 1911, followed a year later by the second international congress for the protection of the homeland in Stuttgart. Belgium, France, Holland, Norway, Austria and Switzerland participated as well as the German states.

Karl Johannes Fuchs (1865-1934) said in his opening speech that the safekeeping of the word, in every sense, was an international problem referring to the national fight to prevent the destruction of ancient artistic beauties. Of equal importance as points of reference were the writings of Paul Schultze-Naumburg (1869- 1949), those on urbanism by Theodor Fischer (1862-1938), or *Heimatschutzer* texts on agricultural reform based, and also British texts in the form of legislation and specialized journals.

This regional trend, understood from the base of the reform of cultural life in the centre and north of Europe, a renovating spirit spreading throughout England, Finland, Belgium, Germany and Switzerland, developed in the architectural field as something highly specific, the *Heimatstil*. From 1910 on, this expression initially coined by Peter Meyer (1840-1909), was accepted as a sort of scientific expression, an architecture that was on the way to modernity. And secondly, it also came to denote an architectural reform which between 1896 and 1914 took on technical connotations: “the house style or regional style” based on the Renovation Movement stemming from national romanticism and including references to the architecture of the traditional landscape which ran a parallel course in Germany and Switzerland [Fig. 3].

Schultze-Naumburg found a problematic and contradictory relationship between the *Deutscher Werkbund* and the *Heimatschutz*. He maintained that houses should be based on late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century houses, but adapted to the changing circumstances of the current times⁶. The approaches of the *Heimatschutz* were criticized by personalities of the time such as Hermann Muthesius (1861-1927) who in 1911 said in its defense:



[Fig. 3] Alfredo Baeschlin drawing. *Le Jurasienne in Mont-Soleil*, regional construction by Wild & Baeschlin Architekten, 1906.

Fuente: Baeschlin's familiar archive.

“Lately at least, it has managed to attract some public attention to architectural matters. The magic word which has eliminated the apathy is *Heimatschutz*. This system of ideas, I am happy to admit, has become a property of the general public, and I have to recognize that it has done a wonderful job”, although he countered this by saying that *Heimatschutz* was merely a substitute for the real questions affecting art. In short, what Muthesius was proposing for the Annual Meeting of the *Werkbund* in Jena in 1912, was “to determine in any way possible whether the aim of the *Heimatkunde* and the *Heimatschutz* was to hinder constructive development and the progress of forms of this era”.

For Camille Martin (1877-1928), the style maintained all its importance both as a manifestation of the spirit of the time, *Zeitgeist*, and as the spirit of the time applied to all artistic productions of a given era. For Martin, the industrial manufacture of an object gave way to a new beauty, a beauty “attained, needless to say, without any preferences in style and trying to make beautiful forms useful”⁷. Martin's contemporaries reflected on the colonization of technical objects in visually impoverished landscapes whose images led to the confusion of “productive thought” and “nature”.

It was precisely the opposition to this domain of thought that led to the need to create an awareness to guide the new project balancing both realities—nature with tradition and city with production. Thus, the inherited landscape referred to historic or artistic sources loaded with allegorical, religious, mythical, aesthetic, botanical or agricultural values that fed off various ideological streams of thought: romanticism (loss of the natural surroundings); Illuminism (myth of the noble savage); an eastern view of nature (travel narrative); the recognition of the “genus loci” (values developed within the aesthetics of the picturesque); and the need for a reencounter, domestic this time, with nature...⁸.

Values and perception

It seems clear that the image of the metropolis, resulting from the convergence between industrialization, the development of capitalism and techno-science, worried intellectuals, philosophers and educators. The truth is that for some time a reflexive attitude had been demanded to face a social reality which was imposed and was for many, a desperate situation: metropolitan disenchantment

3 Crettaz-Stürzel, *Heimatstil Reformarchitektur in der Schweiz 1896-1914*, vol. 2., p. 121.

4 Crettaz-Stürzel, *Heimatstil Reformarchitektur in der Schweiz 1896-1914*, vol. 1, p. 38.

5 Celia Appelgate, *A Nation of Provincials: The German Idea of Heimat*. Berkeley, University of California Press, 1990, p. 88.

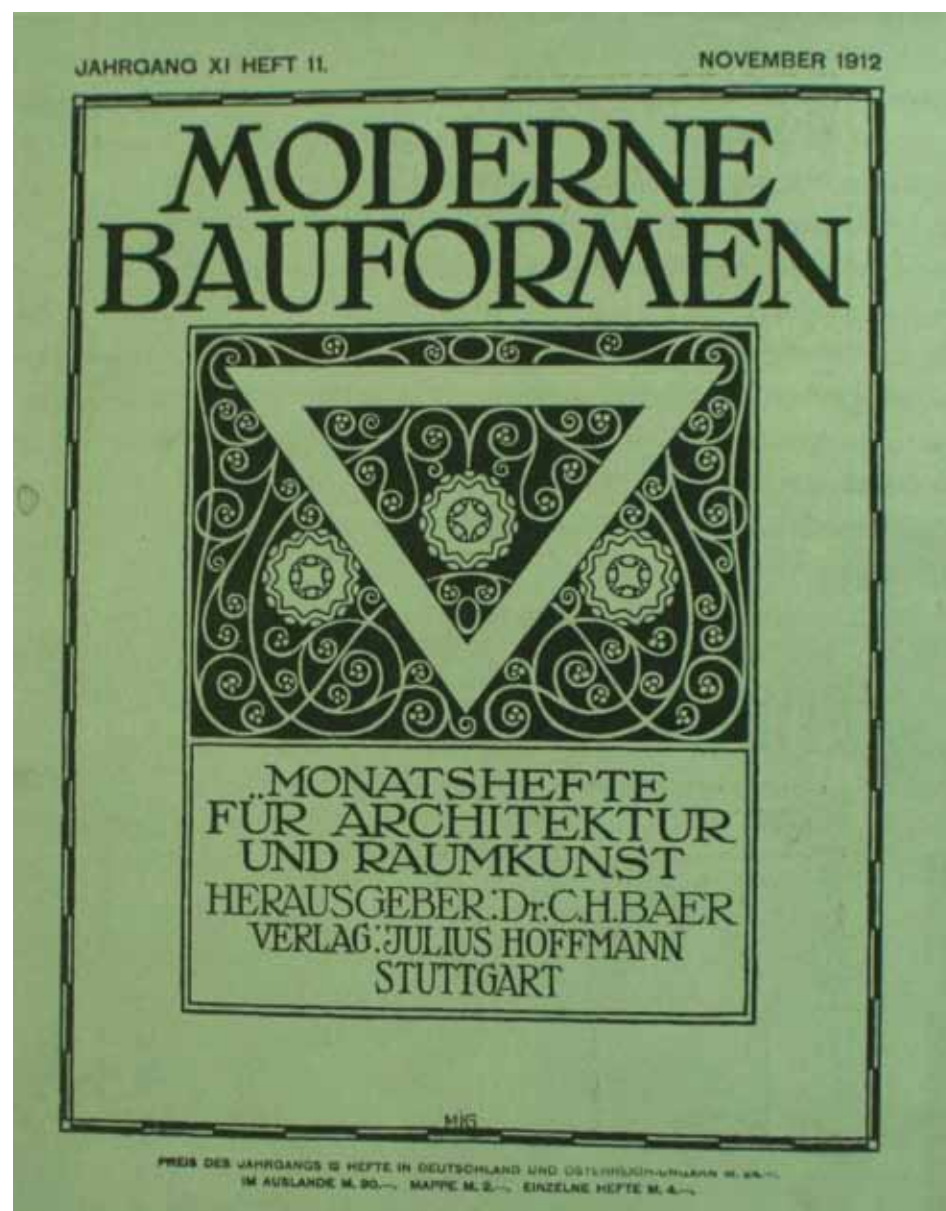
6 José María García-Roig, *Pensamiento utópico, germanidad, arquitectura. La corriente industrialista de la Werkbund en Alemania y el Compromiso Guillermino (1888-1918)*. Madrid, Instituto Juan de Herrera-E.A.M., 2001, p. 16.

7 Jacques Gubler, *Nationalisme et internationalisme dans l'architecture moderne de la Suisse*. Lausanne, L'Âge d'Homme, 1975, p. 94.

8 Antonio Fernández, “La naturaleza como arquitectura recreada,” en *Paisatge i educació estètica*, ed. Eulalà Collellidemont & Conrad Vilanou. Barcelona, Seminari IDUNA, 1999, pp. 98-99.

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[Fig. 4] Werkbund's journal, *Moderne Bauformen*, 1912.

Fuente: Gta Archiv, ETH Hoggenberg, Zurich.

had darkened the charm of the civic utopia from previous eras, a utopia that it also seemed had to be recovered⁹.

The utopian ideal was implicit in many architectural projects that tried to combine rational planning of architecture and the construction of a new society, ensuring the incorporation of architecture into the natural landscape¹⁰. For new architects these activities were possible ties for providing continuity to the agricultural economy by building with a strong emphasis on the traditional models of the Vienna Workshops, defended by the *Werkbund* [Fig. 4], and respecting the connections between the home and the protection of nature¹¹.

The conservative German trend established its own particular criticism towards "construction paying special attention to tradition"; and similar actions to those of the architects of the BSA (Bund Schweizer Architekten)¹², were developed with lesser or greater respect to the character of the country, with interventions which, following the criteria debated among engineers and architects, avoided some formal aspects characteristic of vernacular construction. These somewhat innovative interventions warned of the forcefulness of the economic power of the bourgeoisie and its somewhat ambiguous sensibility. The practice of these better-off classes, based on ceremonial forms, was seen as a cosmopolitan lie masquerading as traditional construction. The author of the *Kulturarbeiten* maintained these constructions of the small bourgeoisie were the most miserable secret of what was being built; "as they appear in infinitely large numbers, both on the outskirts of the city and

⁹ Giuseppe Zarone, *Metafísica de la ciudad. Encanto utópico y desencanto metropolitano*. Valencia, Pre-Textos, 1993.

¹⁰ Conrad Vilanou, "Metrópoli i utopia estètica" en *Paisatge i educació estètica*, ed. Eulàlia Collell-demont & Conrad Vilanou. Barcelona, Seminari IDUNA, 1999, pp. 46-48.

¹¹ Crettaz-Stürzel, *Heimatstil Reformarchitektur in der Schweiz 1896-1914*, vol. I, p. 37.

¹² Some of the information contained in this paper and the funds of the *Schweizerische Bauzeitung*, publisher of the BSA, were consulted by a three months research visit to the ETH Höggenberg Zürich.

[Fig. 5] Perspective from a Swiss traditional construction, 1969.

Fuente: *Hausforschung in der Schweiz*, p. 63. *La Chaux de fonds Les crosettes 1614*.



in the country, the forms of rural workers, greatly responsible for the country's physiognomy, are beginning to be transformed"¹³.

The *Kulturarbeiten* criticized the taste of some collectives as sensory sources emanating from a specific culture and social situation, influencing the perception of objects and people from a space which while constructing its own culture and its own taste, was being progressively transformed with the passage of time and changes in styles, directions and trends¹⁴.

What the conservatives sought was a certain sensitivity and empathy linked not only to the organicness of the materials used, but also to the appreciation of their historic importance or aesthetic serenity, and to the passage of time understood as the passage of history. Empathy towards the traditional, towards past times, ways of life belonging to past societies, linked to specific surroundings and a land that evoked specific memories.

The capacity for empathy sought by Schultze-Naumburg bore direct relation to the ability to experience feelings regarding expressions of popular psychology such as "us", "us nationals", "our people", which anthropologists tried to provide direct response to from a sociological standpoint. It was Herder who coined *Volkgeist*, "spirit of the people", for the intangible heritage of our forebears, popular songs, dances, dialects, languages and idiomatic peculiarities, oral tales, traditions, the way in which religion is lived, and family structures which are as valuable as tangible heritage, crafts, art, architecture, etc [Fig. 5].

Swiss art historian Heinrich Wölfflin (1864-1945) used the theory of empathy to admit that the expression of architecture bears relation, on the one hand, to form, and on the other, to materials, colors, history, purpose, etc, a theme he analyzes in his text¹⁵. According to the theory of German art philosopher Theodor Lipps (1851-1914), beauty does not reside in objects but in their relationship with the subject, while aesthetic value depends on the subject's internal feelings about objects, sensed as a living pulse in tune with his vital experience. Lipps' theory helps to interpret the relationship that may exist between the subject and the different forms of representation of the architecture of a certain place and specific era.

The expression of interpretative plurality towards the dominant movements of the time, ranging from those who defended the strict preservation of the constructions of rural workers to those who understood traditional construction as a product that was to be adapted to the spirit of the new times¹⁶, was reflected in the Bern National Expo of 1914, as a paradigm of psycho-social propositions revolving

¹³ Paul Schultze-Naumburg "Aufgaben des heimatschutz" in *Flugschrift zur ästhetischen Kultur* 39 (5), 1907.

¹⁴ Valeriano Bozal, *El gusto*. Madrid, Visor, 1999, p. 13.

¹⁵ Heinrich Wölfflin, *Conceptos fundamentales en la historia del arte*. Madrid, Espasa Calpe, 1985.

¹⁶ Hans Bernoulli, "Die Einheit des Materials im Aufbau der Städte", *Schweizerische Baukunst*, 59-60 (1912), pp. 37-50.



[Fig. 6] Picture from a Spanish traditional construction, 1935.

Fuente: *Huella del Tiempo*. Valencia, Diputación de Valencia, 1997.

around Central European architectural dynamics of the time. At this event a large number of associations manifested their presence and soon found official confirmation of their existence. All these associations, which held divergent points of view regarding the character and multiple factors defining empathy towards identity features of the community, could converge precisely thanks to their ability to understand the needs, feelings and problems of the rest, putting themselves in their place and giving a correct response to their emotional reactions.

Le Dörfli in Bern, eighteen years after the Village Suisse of the 1896 National Expo in Geneva, differed from its prototype from numerous perspectives but fundamentally highlighted that representation was no longer understood as the legacy of an almost tribal heritage microcosm as in the case of Geneva. For the *Heimatschutz*, *Le Dörfli* was proof that the innovative trends in local architecture and tradition were compatible. The suggestion that stemmed from architecture exhibited in Bern promoted the composition of a silhouette deriving from an interpretation of different picturesque elements which was to survive after the First World War¹⁷.

Forms of representation

In the first few decades of the twentieth century popular Spain still preserved many of its more specific and traditional peculiarities. Life in immobile and stagnant Spain, enclosed in its own little corner, with hardly any internal communications, was still frequently surprisingly archaic¹⁸. During the first third of the new century, Spanish urban society coexisted together with another archaic and anachronistic society with structures that were typically rural or linked to what is rural, where living conditions had barely improved since medieval times. It was for this reason that numerous scholars from the Weimar court visited the country to study folklore, traditions and also vernacular constructions¹⁹ [Fig. 6].

Industrialization, socially planned and organized in the most advanced European countries, was translated into a modern and evolutionist imposition on a society which was far behind the others in Europe. The whole of Spanish rural society, tremendously poor and uneducated in cultural and sensorial terms, was undergoing a euphoric migration process to cities that were viewed as the remedy to all the evils of its social backwardness. From the start this difference was even more pronounced in backward Spanish society than in more advanced Central European countries.

Traditional architecture and certain features of modernity characterized the particular national identity of many Central European regions for their intrinsic folklore connotations, from history or even from the nostalgic perspective of local traditions and the prosperity of inhabitants. In Spain this matter was approached by extracting the essence of its pedagogical or technical anthropological context, but was only tackled by the architectural artistic side which debated on different ways to be incorporated into European architectural discourse through the search for a National Architecture. The debate on the search for a national art did not take place until 1915 during the 6th Congress of Architects with architect Leonardo Rucabado²⁰ (1875-1918) acting as defender of the regional styles as a driving force in the renaissance of National Architecture.

In the search it is worth analyzing the dialog between Leonardo Rucabado and Demetrio Ribes (1877-1921) arising from that congress²¹. The evolution of this discourse caused nationalist Vicente Lampérez y Romea (1861-1923) to refine his positions, refusing to be affected by “foreign influence” versus Teodoro Anasagasti (1880-1938), who praised Germanic architecture²², not so much for its conceptual innovation but more for its representation of the spirit, the strength, the splendor of a nation; a free architecture, that vindicated from the 9th International Congress of



[Fig. 7] Alfredo Baeschlin photography. Farmhouse of Aramayoka village in Alava region in the Spanish Basque Country.

Fuente: Baeschlin, A. “Vom Baskischen Bauernhaus” in *Schweizerische Buzzeitung*, vol. 96, nº 22. 1930, pp. 304-305.

23 Ángel Isac, *Eclecticismo y pensamiento arquitectónico en España. Discursos, revistas, congresos. 1846-1919*. Granada, Dip. Provincial de Granada, 1987, p. 261.

24 José Laborda, *El congreso de los arquitectos españoles en Zaragoza*. Zaragoza, Institución Fernando el Católico, 2006, pp. 20-24.

25 The debate between Torres Balbás and Lampérez reflected the usual controversies between architects from different generations and with different intellectual stances. The Royal Commissioner of Tourism, under the Presidency of the Council of Ministers expressly drafted a copy with Notes on some of the works in construction, consolidation and dissemination of artistic, monumental and picturesque Spain for the congress. This study was harshly criticized by Torres Balbás and defended by Lampérez. For further information see Laborda, *El congreso de los arquitectos españoles en Zaragoza*, pp. 18-71.

26 Leopoldo Torres Balbás, “Mientras labran los sillares”, *Arquitectura* 1 (1918), pp. 31-34.

27 Juan Antonio García-Esparza, “Lo vernacular, lo nacional y lo internacional. Alfredo Baeschlin (1883-1964) y las revistas técnicas”, *Proceedings of the 8th International Congress on Architectural magazines (1900-1975): chronicles, manifestos, propaganda*. Pamplona, ETSAUN, 2012b.

28 Juan Antonio García-Esparza, “Epistemological paradigms in the perception and assessment of vernacular architecture”, *International Journal of Heritage Studies*, (2012a), DOI: 10.1080/13527258.2012.666755.

29 Fernando García Mercadal refers extensively to some of his publications on art and architecture prior to his 1930 Bibliography. F. García Mercadal, 1981, p. 89.

30 Teodoro Anasagasti. *Arquitectura popular. Discurso de D. Teodoro Anasagasti y contestación del Excmo. Sr. D. Marceliano Santa María, el día 24 de marzo de 1929*. Madrid, Real Academia de Bellas Artes de San Fernando, 1929, p. 11.

Architects held in Rome in 1911 and supported by Ribes, rational and useful, clearly and openly employing new materials²³.

The question of National Architecture continued in the 8th National Congress of Architects held in Zaragoza in 1919, where the intervention of a young architect educated at the Institución Libre de Enseñanza, Leopoldo Torres Balbás (1888-1960) stood out²⁴. The contribution from Torres Balbás aroused the greatest interest²⁵, since he had a high awareness of socio-cultural, and therefore of European architectural processes, and so drew comparisons between the former and the latter, establishing an extensive program of indispensable principles and acts to be fulfilled²⁶ [Fig. 7].

In this context of the nation’s complete lack of cultural maturity, which went by unnoticed by most Spanish intellectuals, a small sector of professional architects began to concern themselves with vernacular construction as something of great intrinsic cultural value. However, others situated their perception of the object as something picturesque which merely served an artistic purpose for professionals²⁷; between those who advocated the cultural value and preservation as such of vernacular construction and the enthusiasts pursuing modernity based on the reinterpretation of folklore aspects of vernacular construction with a view to “nationalizing” architecture²⁸.

The cultural process evolution

Between the second and third decade of the twentieth century the study of large monuments and other constructions of a similar status was grouped under the emblem of National Historic Heritage. It was not until the late 20s that some authors demanded efforts should also be directed towards examining popular architectures for which only a few monographic studies of value had been developed, placing special emphasis on connotations such as regional character, the cult of locations and the particular representations of its inhabitants in prestigious national publications²⁹. However, the foreign perspective highlights qualities that the locals are unable to sense in relation with their perception of what is picturesque, exotic or distinctive and peculiar in every corner³⁰.

In the eyes of urban dwellers, the architecture of villages demonstrated ingenuousness, humility and generosity which delighted with the almost spontaneous situation of

17 Jacques Gubler. *Nationalisme et internationalisme dans l’architecture moderne de la Suisse*, p. 61.

18 Juan Antonio García-Esparza, “El descubrimiento cultural de la arquitectura vernácula. Alfredo Baeschlin en el País Vasco”, *Revista Internacional de los Estudios Vascos*, 58 (2013), pp. 189-209.

19 Juan Antonio García-Esparza. “Alfredo Baeschlin y la arquitectura popular vanguardista, Ibiza 1933-1934”, *Ars Longa*, 20 (2011), pp. 195-205.

20 The architect and industrial engineer, Leonardo Rucabado, was awarded the Gold Medal at the National Exhibition of Fine Arts in Madrid in 1917, for his true regionalist manifesto, applied both to simple rural homes and to the rich bourgeois villas.

21 Inmaculada Aguilar, *Demetri Ribes*. Valencia, Eliseu Climent, 1980.

22 Teodoro Anasagasti, “El arte en las construcciones industriales”, *Arquitectura y Construcción* 18 (1914), pp. 150-155.

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its squares, its hard-to-access streets, its canteens and even symbolic reference elements. This pseudo-exoticism is perceived as virginal until it suffers vile contamination from influences considered strange or foreign to the idyllic character that the urban traveler confers. “How often before my country easel have I heard people criticize their own homes”³¹.

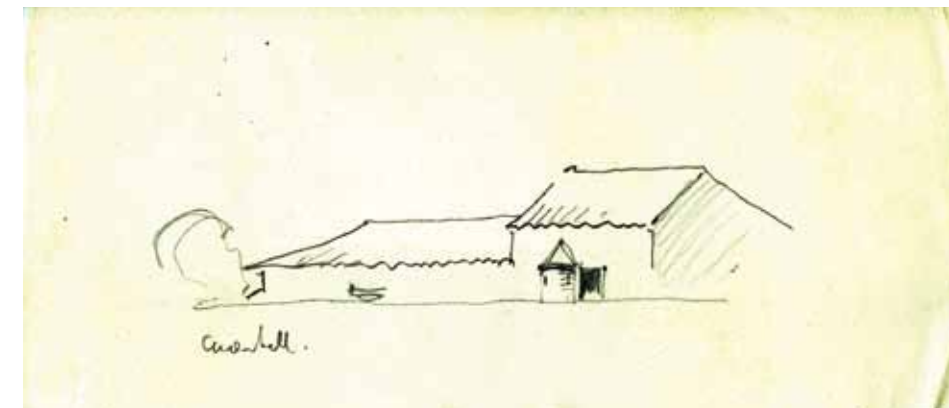
It has become apparent how in Central Europe the perception and valorization of the traditional in the first stage of the romantic *Heimat*, led, brilliantly and naturally, to a Regionalist style for which society and the agents involved in protecting and safekeeping its traditions, engineers and architects, took the rhythm of industrialization as a process for the improvement of a way of life which was cheaper and more functional and comfortable for traditional homes and their inhabitants.

In Spain the process was completely different for two reasons mainly. The first reason refers to educating society to develop sensitivity to objects, things and landscapes as a key part of the autochthonous, directly affecting the valorization, and to some extent, the appropriation and acceptance, of cultural roots and the past. The second is the timelag between events in Spain and Central Europe. In relation to this it is appropriate to recover the opinion of Hermenegildo Giner, who stated that: “It is clear that not all men judge beauty equally. This appreciation of culture and education depends on the habits and customs developed, on race, the people, and the time they live in”³². Despite these clear differences many writings have attempted to form a temporal equation between Spanish architectural movements and those found in Europe from the start of the twentieth century. This work places an emphasis on the opposite, on the difference which provoked a completely different reaction in facing these new processes.

In terms of developing the people’s sensitivity, the *Institución Libre de Enseñanza*³³ [Institute of Free Teaching] and in this case, both Torres-Balbás and Manuel Bartolomé Cossío (1857-1935) in 1913, adopted, in teaching architectural terms, as their own Schulze-Naumburg’s writings from 1907 to 1911, with only a two-year difference in publication dates. This divergence took place among the Spanish architects who, as Anasagasti pointed out earlier, imposed the stylistic whims of the international trajectories of architecture. This is what Rucabado imported from the Central Europe of the *Lebensreform* and the industrialized movements in 1914—something unknown in Spain and foreign to the natural evolution processes of its society which at that point remained rural³⁴. It is for this reason the imposition of a style which was exotic and foreign to Spanish traditional values was not understood or approved from an institutional perspective. And so the extreme defense of popular construction transcended mere materials and was displayed as the defense of a society that operated at a rhythm different to those of other European societies [Fig. 8].

Thus, as stated by Anasagasti, foreign scholars focused their interest on the purely Spanish, which was as yet untainted by exoticism. This stylistic exoticism had not yet infected the poverty of Spanish popular constructions, as the country constituted a reduct of the “natural” artistic perception of a people whose art continued to be the highest and most authentic expression of its culture, as yet uncorrupted by the fast pace of machinism³⁵. But this was to be a short-lived process. The analysis of popular elements can produce opposing positioning; as a consequence of the feeling of loss of localist heritage, permanent and foreign to transient mutations, while in contrast, representing the survival of an imported regional style as an emblem of the “modern” Spanish society³⁶.

To understand this sort of bipolarity, it is necessary to understand the processes that established the primary differences between the *Village Suisse* of the National



[Fig. 8] Alfredo Baeschlin draw. Mediterranean traditional construction. Quartell de les Valls. 1924-1928.

Fuente: Baeschlin’s familiar archive.

Exposition in Geneva in 1896 and the *Pueblo Español* of the International Exposition in Barcelona in 1929 showcasing all the virtues of one and the deficiencies of the other in terms of the educational, training and social processes in both countries. On the one hand, a product of a popular traditional culture inasmuch as it reproduced the expression of a community which was culturally, socially and nationally integrated, well-rooted and supported by national history processes. On the other hand, a product that lacked any prior process of formation and identity was presented as the result of a cumulus of disconcerting, unconnected processes which were not communal in the least. Even taking into consideration a thirty-year timelag the evolution of the cultural process of both societies was disparate.

It is a matter of a unique trace or a background’s preservation?

Societal, environmental and subsequently architectonic transformations seem to need a long evolutionary process in order to be correctly assimilated, or at least assimilated in harmony with the time each place is living. In this sense, lately, experts who have been particularly close to terms linked with architectonic iconographic conservation have stated that some physical traces with outstanding universal values³⁷ have shifted as a result of the growing tension. In a substantial number of places this has provoked a complicated development in historical settings; some of their traces have been blurred or even lost, in a sort of inevitable and permanent shifting³⁸.

Thus, in architectonic terms, a close approach to the near past has shown how today inflexion point is fully dependent on the understanding of how traces can be determined by socio-cultural implications, and decision making directly affecting the equilibrium between the historical legacy, its materiality, its strokes and the necessary changes forced by time and development³⁹. International orientations have to be found to establish clear ways to confront all aspects currently affecting the dynamics of Built Cultural Heritage. However, this cannot be achieved applying standard targets to all the different traces, since each society has its own backgrounds, perceptions, hopes and desires, and these are not the same across the board.

Recomposing social, cultural and physical traces⁴⁰, coming from past tenses, need an attitude of respect, knowledge and reverence far from a mere physical complexion of the landscape. Any approach should be focused on raising awareness in each society of the need to intervene with specific prior knowledge to favor the physical integrity of traditional traces under shifting environments, economies and societies. A new dialogue between reflections on traditional environments and social forces transcending the obligatory nature of norms, resetting goals and creating multidisciplinary thoughts and practices, is needed to achieve harmony in places with traces.

31 Anasagasti. *Arquitectura Popular*, pp. 38-39.

32 Hermenegildo Giner de los Ríos, *Manual de estética y teoría del arte, e historia abreviada de las artes principales*. Madrid, Sáenz de Jubera Hermanos, 1894, p. 26.

33 The teaching model for the *Institución Libre de Enseñanza*, followed the Central European doctrines of Comenius, Pestalozzi and the influences of Karl Christian Frederick Krause’s philosophy.

34 Juan Antonio García-Esparza, *Casas de campo españolas (1930): la revisión de un libro de Alfredo Baeschlin, Ciudad y Territorio Estudios Territoriales*, 174 (2012c), pp. 743-758.

35 Joaquín Medina-Warburg. “La fábrica, la casa, el palacio: Franz Rank and Alfredo Baeschlin, dos *Heimatschützer* en España”. *Actas del congreso internacional Arquitectura, ciudad e ideología antiurbana*. Pamplona, ETSAUN, 2002.

36 Francisco Erice, “Entre la represión y el paternalismo. Actitudes burguesas ante lo popular en la España de la Restauración”, en *La cultura popular en la España contemporánea, doce estudios*, ed. Jorge Uría. Madrid, Biblioteca Nueva, 2003.

37 Ana Pereira, Ron van Oers, “Guidance on heritage impact assessments: Learning from its application on World Heritage site management”, *Journal of Cultural Heritage Management and Sustainable Development* 2 (2) (2012), pp. 104-114.

38 Ron van Oers, & Ana Pereira, “Historic cities as model of sustainability”, *Journal of Cultural Heritage Management and Sustainable Development* 2 (1), (2012), pp. 4-14.

39 Amos Rapoport, *The Meaning of the Built Environment: A nonverbal Communication Approach*. Tuscon, The University of Arizona Press, 1982.

40 Christopher Tweed and Margaret Sutherland. “Built cultural heritage and sustainable urban development”, *Landscape and Urban Planning*, 83 (2007), pp. 62-69.

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Valorizing vernacular architecture.

Historical keys for the ongoing discourse

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