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COURSE OF
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Abstract

**COMMUNITY PLANNING
AND RURAL ARCHITECTURE:
rehabilitation of Olba's old school (Spain)**

Tutor

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by

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Can architecture help to find original solutions that improve our knowledge on sustainable development?

The synergy between some of the methods and solutions recognized for sustainable architecture was the basis of my thesis project, that, born from a theoretical research exercise, found a practical confirmation in the experience with the population of Olba (small village in the river Mijares's valley, province of Teruel, Aragon, Spain). Together with the inhabitants of the valley, we developed a community planning aimed to recover a traditional building: the old school of one of the villages located in the valley abandoned for 50 years, in respect of its material and traditional building techniques.



Based on the concept of holistic design, I tried to combine different practices by analyzing the possible ways to experience architecture; this allowed me to insert myself in a new context using some tools to study reality from different points of view (culture and traditions, society and environment).

Each one of the practices I've studied and used refers to one of the components of sustainability, which is the point of departure and arrival of my work; these practices are bio-ecological architecture (environmental respect and health of the inhabitants), community planning (social aspect) and the restoration of the rural architecture (cultural and economic aspect).

The thesis contains a theoretical introduction on the concept of construction's sustainability and bio-ecological architecture, trying to catch the meaning of the terms to recognize the appropriateness of their use, and, subsequently, of the practices used for the project.

It then reports my experience in Olba, the synthesis of the community planning undertaken to establish the new function of the building and the architectural project for its restoration that, with particular reference to rural architecture as a product of the cultural values and of the building traditions of rural society.

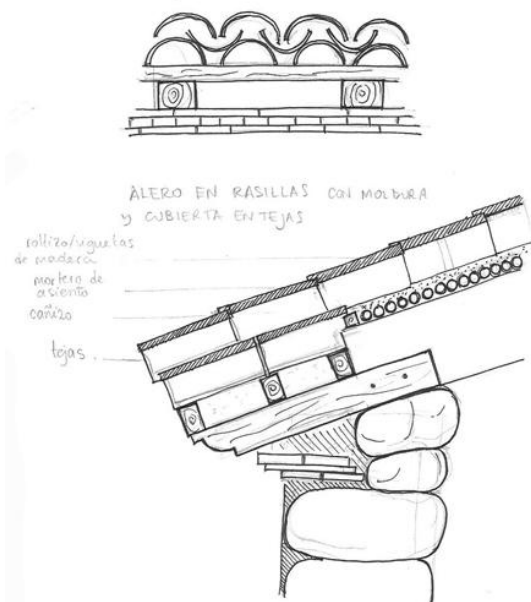
The building I studied is the oldest school of the village of Los Ramones (one of the villages of the valley); the school was built in 1933 and then was abandoned in 1966 as a consequence of the depopulation of the valley. After discovering cultural and emotional bonds towards this building and knowing its past history of community building built by the



inhabitants, I felt that it was important to develop the restoration project with the people of the village through a community planning.

The process lasted 3 months and was developed through moments of shared analysis of needs (questionnaires, walks, World Café) and proposals and presentation of possible new functions in public meetings (focus groups, graphic exhibitions).

Besides the work with the community, I took care of the architectural project for recovering the building, studying the degradations and the traditional building techniques, and planning the restoration work, based primarily on studies of the professors Fernando Vegas and Camilla Mileto (Universidad Politécnica de Valencia) in the field of vernacular architecture. The criteria for intervention which I referred to for the restoration project are: the materiality conservation, the structural and materials compatibility, the compatibility of the function, the preservation of the "symbiosis" with the landscape, the sustainability and the economic development. This allowed me to study the various operations to carry out in full respect of the composition of the original building, thinking about solutions that are compatible with it in terms of materials (as natural as possible and coming from the area).



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