



POLITECNICO  
DI TORINO

# Honors thesis

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MASTER OF SCIENCE IN ARCHITECTURE HERITAGE  
PRESERVATION AND ENHANCEMENT

*Abstract*

## **Tangible and Intangible: the Heritage of Craco between Memory, Architecture and Film**

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The aim of the thesis is to trace a map of connections between cinema, heritage and social memory, in order to examine the role of cinematic production for the architectural and landscape enhancement.

The attempt to clarify what will become of abandoned towns clashes with the dissolution of the tangible and intangible heritage. These characteristics are the fundamentals of the cultural identity of those communities.

Craco, the main case study, is a small abandoned town in the south-western part of Matera region. The historical centre has been partially destroyed by a landslide in 1963, which was the main cause of an extreme reduction of the population, due to emigration. Nowadays, the site is undergoing a process of regeneration in which cinema plays a primary role. The relationship between local inhabitants and their surrounding rural environment has typified the urban development for centuries. Here lies the heart of the “peasant’s world” described in the literary masterpiece *Cristo si è fermato a Eboli* (Einaudi, 1945) by Carlo Levi.

There is a high risk of losing this legacy, due to the community disintegration that was generated by the natural disaster. 1963 represented a turning point seeing as a considerable number of inhabitants decided to emigrate. The ethnologists Vito Teti and Marc Augè traced essential guide lines for a possible anthropological approach to understanding ruins and abandoned sites; their vision achieved a state of consciousness able to include the case study of Craco.

The oral history of the XXth century such as voices, recordings, personal stories and family traditions, represents an opportunity to create a “living archive” that can be preserved as intangible heritage. The main attention has been dedicated to the actions of different subjects working on safeguard and museum coordination. Specifically, the role of cinema as an economical tool interacting with Craco’s site and landscape helped to enhance the analysis of its peculiar features.

The primary methodology followed a tale made of images: portraits, photographic and cinematographic stories created the critical mass to obtain an overall representation of both Craco and the idea of Southern Italy. Carlo Levi has been the first activist of the XXth century who dedicated his efforts to the exposure of this land. The director Francesco Rosi proposed the same imagery again, by using Craco and its surroundings for the movie *Cristo si è fermato a Eboli* (Italia-Francia, 1979), based on the literary novel by Levi. Their gaze towards the past represents a world in transition.

Various movies produced in the last five decades helps with the analysis of the Basilicata Region as a marginal boundary in the Italian context. This region has become a metaphor for the South itself thanks to cinema production.

Useful sources have been found in bibliographic and cartographic work, as well as rare films, photographic collections, documentaries, in both private and public archives. The field work in Craco, using ethnographic methodology and structured interviews, actively involved the local population.

All different kinds of informations, originated from various fields, have been compared in order to a general overview, able to make a new proposal for future developments. The final aim is to create a concrete connection between local inhabitants and their heritage.





Craco before the landslide (1963).  
Source: Craco Ricerche s.r.l. Unknown author



Craco after the landslide (1990).  
Source: Craco Ricerche s.r.l. Unknown author





Gian Maria Volonté on the set of the movie *Cristo si è fermato a Eboli*, by Francesco Rosi (Italy-France, 1979). Picture by Domenico Notarangelo, Craco 1978.

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