
MONOGRÁFICO: ARQUEOLOGÍA DE LA ARQUITECTURA EN LATINOAMÉRICA:
UNA FUSIÓN DE TENDENCIAS / MONOGRAPH: ARCHAEOLOGY OF ARCHITECTURE
IN LATIN AMERICA: A FUSION OF TRENDS

Conclusions: *Um novo olhar*. The Archaeology of Architecture broadens its horizons*

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INTRODUCTION

I am writing these lines from the standpoint of a European archaeologist who has been working for nearly two decades on Archaeology of Architecture (referred to henceforth as AA), and who started meddling a decade ago in Latin American archaeology. And I feel the satisfaction of seeing how both realities that had hitherto been evolving in parallel now converge in this monograph. I am also writing from the perspective of responsibility, with the bittersweet feeling of needing to highlight a praiseworthy collective effort and ensure it shines even further, if possible. In doing so, I shall attempt throughout the lines that follow to assess the contribution made by the texts contained in this monograph towards the development of AA. I shall thus continue with the valuable, reasoned and brilliant historiographical summary with which A. Azkarate has contributed to this volume, and I shall be using his introductory text by way of additional support. Viewed from this angle, the work presented provides a unique opportunity to assess the state of AA in Latin America. Some of the texts provide their own summaries of practices related to the study of Archaeology of Architecture in Argentina, Colombia and Brazil (Igarreta, Cohen, Ferreira), while other authors provide a reflective look back over their own research

via case studies that extend from the Basque Country to Brazil and Argentina (Mesanza *et al.*; Zarankin and Funari). For its part, the only text based on the development of a specific case study provides patterns that both enrich and update approaches to the material nature of Argentinian architecture (Schavelzon).

No more optimum set of materials occurs to me for the purpose of providing a general overview of the state of development of Latin American AA. Especially if we take into consideration that the body of works brought together in this monograph was previously presented and discussed in a congress I was lucky enough to participate in. In terms of what follows, I shall confine myself to highlighting those aspects which, in my opinion, are the most noteworthy and representative of the set of works that makes up this monograph. I consider that, among many other issues, the works brought together here represent: a new conceptual system for the study of Archaeology of Architecture that is both inclusive and innovative, and a growing commitment to built-up and lived-in areas. After analysing each of these aspects on an individual basis, I shall conclude this epilogue proactively by raising some questions that I think might enrich AA practice and others that I understand to be the main challenges facing it in the future.

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A NEW CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK FOR THE STUDY OF ARCHAEOLOGY OF ARCHITECTURE

Via a historiographic approach, that has a multivocal vocation, Azkarate (this volume) outlines a plural Archaeology of Architecture in which a rich tradition of architectural studies pursued within the framework of archaeological digs on the one hand and new approaches to buildings that are still standing, to cities and to the landscape itself on the other, converge. The set of works that makes up this monograph acts consequentially by analysing its historiographic framework with a view to explaining and assessing the different approaches to built-up areas via their material condition, and via an in-depth study of the condition of historical architecture as a resource for learning more about the past. The different approaches are combined beneath the same umbrella in this monograph by sharing the subject of study and objectives, and understanding about built-up areas as a means for working on the material memory of places and the materials studied (Olivier 2013a, 2013b). The results obtained from this volume both legitimise and *de facto* validate the initial historiographic approach. This is done by leading theory to practice and thus take the form of a clear testimony to the open outlook of the AA.

Apart from combining different analytical perspectives and historiographic frameworks in which AA has been developed in different places in Latin America, this volume also represents a rethink about two of the most basic concepts in archaeology: antiquity and sites. On the one hand, it makes the extension of the time arch covered by archaeology clear, which has tended to only concern itself with “ancient things”. Although this process had already been announced early in the 21st century (Hicks 2003), it fully manifests itself in this monograph – and this it does in several senses, both owing to the relatively recent chronology of the cases provided and also as a result of going beyond the original medieval vocation pursued by European AA (Azkarate, this volume). The cases gathered analyse both sets of pre-Hispanic monuments and modern-day houses with the same legitimacy, although the great majority study recent architecture from the Modern Age onwards. On the other hand, it reflects the broadening scope of the study, by extending from architectural remains exhumed into an excavation, to standing walls, sets of buildings and their own environment. Consequently, the works contained in this monograph represent the landscape of

a framework modified by humans on different scales – ranging from a humanized natural milieu, albeit one with its own dynamics (a forest), to a highly-anthropized landscape (a city), going through appropriations of determined spaces through material resources (individual buildings or sets of buildings).

AN OPEN-MINDED, INCLUSIVE AND INNOVATIVE OUTLOOK

On a more epistemological level, the set of works contained in this monograph provides a balanced overview. Added to the great variability in the type of buildings represented by examples of Latin American cases is the comprehensive covering of the urban phenomenon and the Basque landscape itself. Any excesses in certain approaches help to offset shortcomings in others and vice-versa. Because the architectural and archaeological record is not – as maintained in the case of Latin American architecture – largely fractured and scattered (Igareta, this volume), but rather, waiting for the archaeologist to focus their gaze above the ground and broaden their horizons to include their immediate surroundings (urban centre) and/or distant surroundings (landscape). And because, conversely, not all case studies need to be provided with a biographical density that focuses strictly on things from a stratigraphic angle (Mesanza *et al.*, this volume). It is precisely this lack of buildings with a great biographical density that has enabled cases of the types of building subject to study to be increased and architectural sampling to be expanded. We consider that, in this sense, the contribution made by Latin America lies in not only incorporating structuring buildings into the study of AA on a social level (schools, houses, hospitals), but also spaces where those who don't fit in or are deemed undesirable in such structures (lunatic asylums, prisons, Afro-American churches) or those against whom an attempt is made to remove them (clandestine detention centres) are confined. By incorporating this last-mentioned list of buildings, some of which are represented in this volume, AA manages to represent subaltern sectors which, if not cast aside to the margins of the past, have been erased from history and, ultimately, from the present.

These subaltern sectors seldom include buildings of a monumental nature. Conversely, these buildings are used to represent, justify and naturalize the identity of hegemonic social classes. This monograph contains some critical thoughts about the use of such monumental

buildings and certain construction techniques in terms of imposing a colonial-based national identity (Cohen, Ferreira, in this volume). From this critique derives a major reflection about the nature and representativeness of monumental heritage – the type which remains standing and about which a decision is made to transform them into the public domain that needs to be studied, preserved and collectivized. Yet it is clear that Inca and colonial palaces, Aztec and Christian places of worship and Arab and Spanish castles represent a small, biased sample of the past that remains in the present. Having said this, the study of current buildings that remain standing such as houses and schools (Zarankin and Funari, Cohen, Ferreira, this volume) is still overlooked by archaeology on both sides of the Atlantic. Several works contained in this monograph have thus been added to the state of exception represented by some works that attempt to subvert this asymmetrical situation².

This volume rounds off its open-minded, inclusive and innovative vocation via the collection of methodological approaches deriving from the works that form part of the monograph. The analytical wealth and heuristic capacity shown in these works are exemplary. Moreover, irrespective of whether they are viewed as a whole or individually, they go beyond the antagonistic methodological pitfalls attributed to each tradition: European stratigraphism, or the absence of Latin American stratigraphy. On the one hand, the hypothetical more traditional views overflow with creativity and explore beyond the limits of alleged stratigraphism. This is the case with Mesanza and company (this volume) who, in studying a specific road network, return to the most essential archaeological assumptions which are similar to those that Stukeley applied in the case of Avebury (Schofield *et al.* 2011: 27). This is because, despite the fact that their basic approach may be deemed stratigraphic, they neither study the usual architecture nor may their analytical procedure be considered traditional within the AA framework. Something similar occurs in the study of a specific forest by the same authors, in which hardly anything corresponds to stances that defend stratigraphic orthodoxy. On the other hand, neither the presence of wall

coverings nor the recent chronology of constructions has prevented Latin American authors from finding out about and conducting in-depth studies into the material memory of what has been constructed in this volume. Taken as a whole, all the works take into consideration the use of several of the following analytical tools: archaeological excavation, stratigraphic study of elevations, chronotypological analysis, prospecting, configurational analysis, historical and iconographic documentation, space syntax, archaeometry, cluster analysis and micro-stratigraphy. Thus, they show the many ways in which biographical knowledge about built-up areas may be accessed.

A GROWING COMMITMENT TO BUILT-UP AND LIVED-IN AREAS

The need for analytical and interpretative approaches that may adapt to the physical specific nature and historical contingency of architecture has helped to motivate and guide some of the works contained in this monograph (Ferreira, Cohen, this volume). In these cases, their commitment to what has been studied has led them to demand their participation in decisions that may affect built-up areas. The same thing occurred previously in the case of some European experiences in which both architects and archaeologists ended up demonstrating the need to come to a joint agreement about modifications to a historic building (Azkarate and Lasagabaster 2006). If the same claims have been forthcoming within specific contexts, this is because they constitute a response to common problems that emerge within the framework of managing historic buildings that remain standing. Yet they also share the notion of the building as a repository or historic archive, whereby material remains become symptoms of a specific material memory (Olivier 2013a) that needs to be taken into consideration not only in decisions about the past, but also about the present. It is precisely within that context in which repositories are going to be destroyed or modified that responsibility should be taken in archaeology on behalf of the material memory of the element under threat.

The management of remains from the past appeals directly to the present. It might even be said, according to authors such as L. Olivier, that the only thing that is archaeological is the present – a present that is understood not as referring to what is happening now, but rather, the accumulation of pasts that have endured as a result of having been materially preserved (Olivier 2013b: 122-123).

² Among others, Vegas *et al.* 2001 and two most recent PhD theses which, despite representing exceptions, in turn provide evidence about a change in trends: Rolón, G. 2013. *La vivienda popular riojana del ámbito rural: patrones arquitectónicos y contexto social en los valles durante el Período Republicano*. Unpublished PhD thesis. UBA, Buenos Aires; Benedet, V. 2019. *Patrimonio residencial urbano del siglo XX: hacia un protocolo de valoración y gestión inclusiva. Casos de estudio en el País Vasco*. Unpublished PhD thesis. UPV/EHU, Vitoria-Gasteiz.

Therefore, the social and political commitment we take on board as technicians is fundamental in developing complex processes such as urban or landscape transformation. This responsibility has been demanded in several previous works (e.g. Azkarate 2011: 21-24; Azkarate and Escribano-Ruiz 2014), although the call to do so has failed to produce the desired response. As administrators of those memory repositories, we cannot remain on the sidelines of what is taking place – we cannot remain confined within a “de-contextualized and autistic” world, but rather, need to be directly involved in managing the present (Gnecco 2017: 201-215). Being aware of the fact that architecture offers a unique opportunity to pursue courses of action, several authors explicitly demand a type of archaeology from the present and for the present in the monograph (Zarankin and Funari, Azkarate, this volume). Several ways of doing so are implicitly provided, either directly (via the preservation and management of buildings and town planning) or indirectly (by training those who have the capacity to intervene in these contexts or by making society think).

Once immersed on the horizon that lies before us in what the year 2020 has brought, which is as dark as it is unexpected, it would seem that there is a more pressing need than ever for archaeology whose objective is not so much to learn about the world but to transform it (Azkarate and De la Fuente 2013: 62). As Azkarate himself highlights in this volume, the future of archaeology as a discipline will depend on this. In tune with these approaches and making use of a suitable feminist slogan, we believe archaeology will either be socially committed, or it won't. Some of the texts contained in this monograph reflect this attitude insofar as they condemn the existence of social sectors that have been erased from the system and from history (Afro-Americans, victims of political reprisals, indigenous peoples) and attempt to provide material for reflection, with a view to contributing towards a more democratic, fairer society. As we already took into consideration some years ago, power can only be combated by first identifying and then recalling its mechanisms (Escribano-Ruiz 2016). In accordance with the same reasoning, they propose that AA be a tool for condemning and questioning reproductive strategies within systems of power (Zarankin, Funari, this volume) or condemning the use of certain types of architecture in the shaping and “whitewashing” of collective identity (Cohen, Ferreira, this volume). Thus, by shedding light on a past that has not died out but continues to affect the present, they provide a sample of the social role that archaeology should perform (Olivier 2013b: 128).

THE FUTURE

This monograph provides a solid body of works that covers and exemplifies the complex trajectory of archaeological approaches to architecture. Moreover, by exploring new realities in terms of time and materials, this set of texts helps to expand AA with regard to its practical and theoretical approaches. In this sense, the monograph lays the foundations for an AA that is both necessarily reactive and critical. Although its innovative capacity has traditionally been considered as one of the main features of European AA, it is clear that this dynamic has slowed down. Within this context, several of the works contained in this volume constitute a salutary lesson and represent an essential counterpoint to European practices. They might also encourage praxis in Latin America insofar as they constitute more close-at-hand empirical cases that are approached via geographical and heuristic proximity. An obvious example is those works that tackle the problem of “dressed architecture” suggested by Azkarate in his introduction to the volume. The summary of Basque experiences may in turn serve as a sampling of the potential offered by European baggage, by providing operative keys to mediating, for instance, in the transformation processes of historic Latin American cities – as demanded in several texts in this volume (Azkarate, Ferreira).

Some gaps should still be pointed out that we have identified in the monograph and some issues that have been tangentially been raised should be highlighted – these have not been developed to the extent their importance deserves in any of the works presented here. As for the theoretical approaches, a lineament that goes beyond the theoretical framework of post-processualism is sorely missed. Archaeological studies of architecture need to benefit from some of the key theoretical debates of the 21st century which are deemed so relevant, such as Bergson's approach to persistence, which has been represented throughout this text through the influence of L. Olivier. Yet the following may also be deemed relevant: the corpus of reflections on *assemblages* (Deleuzian approaches to help understand architecture based on fluidity and connectivity); the new ontological move towards things (which places material things at the forefront and compels us to think about the effects of architecture on humans and inert objects); and phenomenological approaches (which stress feeling and experiencing the built-up areas themselves). All these ideas could enable new outlooks about the past to be created from material manifestations as important as built-up and lived-in areas.

We have sorely missed the presence of more subaltern groups in that supposed approach to the past. Special mention should be made, for instance, of the absence of indigenous peoples or native societies in a monograph that is mainly Latin American. Despite the fact that these groups have been indirectly mentioned by some authors (Cohen, Ferreira in this volume), this has not been specifically developed in their texts. In this regard, it is significant that their architecture is also not present in some of the main works of archaeology that deal with indigenous peoples (e.g. Gnecco and Ayala 2010), and this reiterated absence points to the need to put together an *ad hoc* research programme. Gender problems in terms of architecture are also referred to by Ferreira (this volume), although this is limited to a mere mention, and that is another of the main challenges to be set out in our agenda – as women were and remain at the core of domestic life (Montón 2000; Falcó 2003). More attention would also need to be paid to the duration of built elements by undertaking an in-depth study of Bergson's interpretation of those elements that endure and that we have alluded to above, rather than our focusing on recounting what changes³. Significantly, the notion of history from the prevailing standpoint of change is linked to male subjectivity, and hence the reason why major narratives have tended to ignore continuity (Montón and Hernando 2018).

In the texts contained in this monograph, we also sorely miss a more leading role by the set of communities and collectives that inherited architectural heritage by force (Ayán and Gago 2012), explicitly represented in a single work (Ferreira), although we sense that the results obtained from the works provided here may be earmarked for them. We believe that closer attention should be paid to present-day collectives, which are in turn the custodians, patrons and users of the built-up areas subject to study here. We need to be participants in and target groups for projects and their outcomes. Furthermore, we should reiterate that, in our opinion, the solution to the real problems facing AA will not come from technology, nor from theoretical approaches, but rather, from any responses we may be able to offer to present-day problems through the past. This means looking beyond interpretation (Alberti *et. al.* 2016), recognising the importance of the past for the present and acting consequentially. We should set aside these last few words to encourage

archaeological practices focused on improving and enriching the human experience (Shanks 2012: 149), irrespective of the means used to do so. In this sense, there is an important seed to be grown from this monograph – all that is yet to come depends on whether it germinates and blooms in AA praxis.

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³ A recent example will soon be published in the proceedings for the Sixth Congress on Medieval Archaeology in Spain and Portugal: Escribano-Ruiz, S. in press: "La reutilización de espacios religiosos medievales en el País Vasco. El caso del Santuario de Nuestra Señora del Yermo".