

## **CROSS-CULTURAL PARK OF THE BENEDICTINE MONKS IN THE ADRIATIC**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Starting from an analysis of the potential proximity that exists between the two opposite coasts of Dalmatia and Gargano, the paper proposes a project idea applied to this context. The transcalar methodology adopted has led to observe some anthropic relationships between the two shores, such as the twin monasteries of Benedictine monks founded in medieval times. The project proposes the enhancement of these and other potentials of a cultural nature through a vast area project that also proposes designs as an example applied in two of the identified historical sites: the monastery of Santa Maria di Pulsano on the Gargano and the Monastery of Blaca on the island of Brac.

**KEYWORDS:** Benedectine Monasteries, Adriatic culture, proximity, urban and landscape design.

## **INTRODUCTION**

Usually, when you attempt to identify an area where it is possible can confirm the permanence of cultural and architectural characteristics, it refers to a portion of land territory. The history of architecture often results in geographic areas in a given historical period that have produced architecture very similar to each other. The case of the Benedictine monasteries in the Adriatic area is an incredible exception. The fact that important monasteries like Santa Maria of Pulsano on Gargano have had identical foundations with the same names on the numerous Dalmatian islands can only intrigue any culture and design researcher. In medieval times, a priest and Benedictine monk from the Tremiti islands was invited to found a monastery on the island overlooking Ragusa, the current Lokrum; and still the noble Savino, at that time, Count of Ragusa, founded the monastery of Rozat and put him in the direct care of the abbey of Montecassino; still reads that the Croatian Prince Desa donates some of its lands on the island of Mljet to the monks of the Abbey of Santa Maria of Pulsano to build an identical monastery on the Dalmatian island. These are just a few examples that testify to an intense exchange between the monastic foundations between the two shores of the Adriatic. Monographic studies have counted many Benedictine abbeys in the Puglia area that have had relationships with many abbeys on the Dalmatian islands. In particular the Gargano peninsula and the islands of Dalmatia have the highest number of foundation twins. In every way Benedictine monasticism was very instrumental in the construction of the anthropic landscape and agricultural Gargano and that of the Dalmatia. In fact, the work of the Benedictine monks was closely linked to the natural landscape and the processing of the same in the agricultural landscape. Firstly, the monks reached the most inaccessible and enchanting places to locate their hermitages; places where they lived in poverty and continuous prayer, contemplating the nature that surrounded them. Then, in some of the secluded settlements, monasteries were built which kept a very strong connection with the natural component of the places in which they existed. In addition, the monks were often entrusted with the activities in the fields and then they were actors in the transformation of the natural soil into agricultural soils. The monks also built roads, pipelines, monastic houses, outbuildings, farms, wells, and churches, which were found to benefit not only the monasteries themselves, but also all civil society that revolved around it. Both the settlers the monks themselves were operating the field, clearing and tilling the soil. This last point is considerably important for our research

purposes. The territories of Puglia and Dalmatia have always had a link to the original material from which it is composed. Limestone is a material present on the mantle surface, and which prevents the cultivation of crops. All architecture in rural dry stone have to accommodate to all the material resulting from the tillage of the soil. Therefore, it is not inconceivable that the work of the Benedictines in Puglia and Dalmatia are closely related to construction in dry stone terracing on the vast mountainous regions of the Gargano or the tholos constructions scattered throughout the region. The monasteries themselves were often made of the stone found in the construction site, like the existing caves, hermitages that we previously spoke of. Among the most valuable examples is the unforgettable complex of San Michele in Monte Sant'Angelo on Gargano.

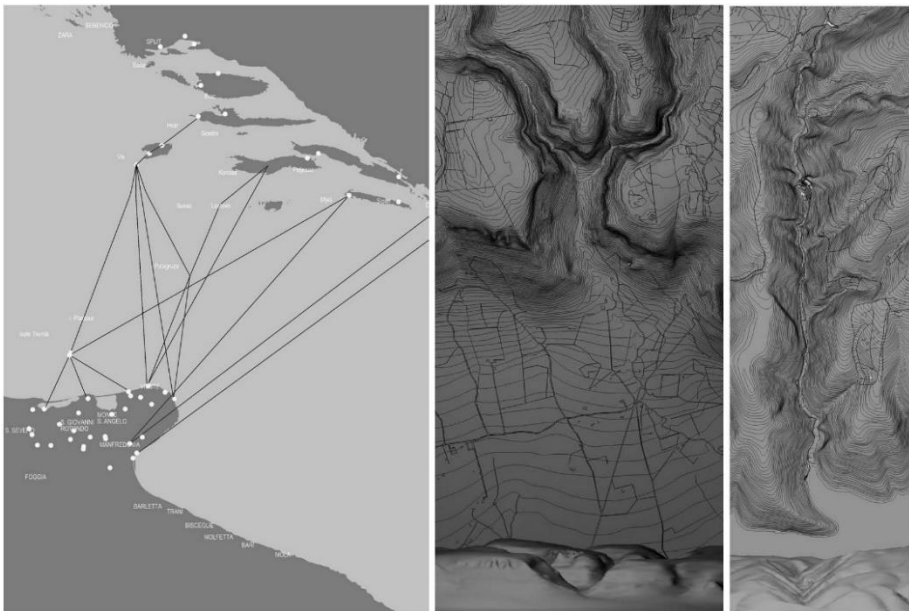


Figure 1: Interested Adriatic area and territorial example cases

## **The project**

To sum it all up, it is possible to define a geographic area characterized by two strips of land bordering the same sea where, in a given historical period, the mostly Benedictine monastic culture, acted leaving indelible marks in time. These signs are now made from the remains of the monastic houses, hermitages scattered by the natural

landscape and man-made signs in the area of agriculture. The action of the monks binds strongly to a constructive culture which is the stone that characterizes in a decisive manner the landscapes of which we speak. The design of a cross-cultural park between the two opposite sides of the sea, belonging to two different states is complex and deeply related to economic planning and policy. Any design choice at this scale, involves large capital movements and outlines the fate of some areas and other social and economic repercussions. It is clear that the proposal described here is far from solving a massive design problem but suggests one of the possible strategies to regenerate proximity effects on tourism and the use of the territory. The current state of the connections between the two sides is variable in intensity, between summer and winter: Bari and Dubrovnik are connected by a ferry line as is the case for Ancona and Split; outside of these distances from time to time there are ferries from Pescara and Vis in Dalmatia.

The initial idea of the project is the creation of links between the two areas directly without intermediate steps such as urban a split, Dubrovnik and Bari. This will allow the intensification of already existing internal connections that would serve the remainder of the fields on the two coasts.

Such a network would create tourism between the two sides, tied to routes of different natural and cultural-religious landscapes with the idea of cross-border park of Benedictine settlements. The creation of a new network of direct connections between the two areas will create travel routes across the sea to visit similar monumental monastic settlement divided by the sea. Therefore, the park will have to be made by means of mid-term planning that will cover the individual macro areas-Gargano and the Dalmatian islands.

The project starts from sacred path Langobardorum on Gargano, which brings a series of culturally valuable highlights. The project gives present day value back to this ancient path in its entirety, making the journey remarkably valuable in some areas like the central point of reference, Monte Sant'Angelo, and the hermitages of the S. Pulsano Maria monastery. The monastery of S. Maria di Pulsano, located four meters high, is placed at the end of a high-level hike that starts from Monte Sant'Angelo which overlooks the Gulf of Manfredonia. The site summarizes several peculiar characteristics of the promontory; the road that leads to the monastery is a branch of the Via Sacra Langobardorum which was traveled a long time ago by Giovanni (John) of Matera. He founded the monastery in a safe place where it was the presence of

hermits before, but at the same time, is one of the most beautiful places  
in natural value of the area.

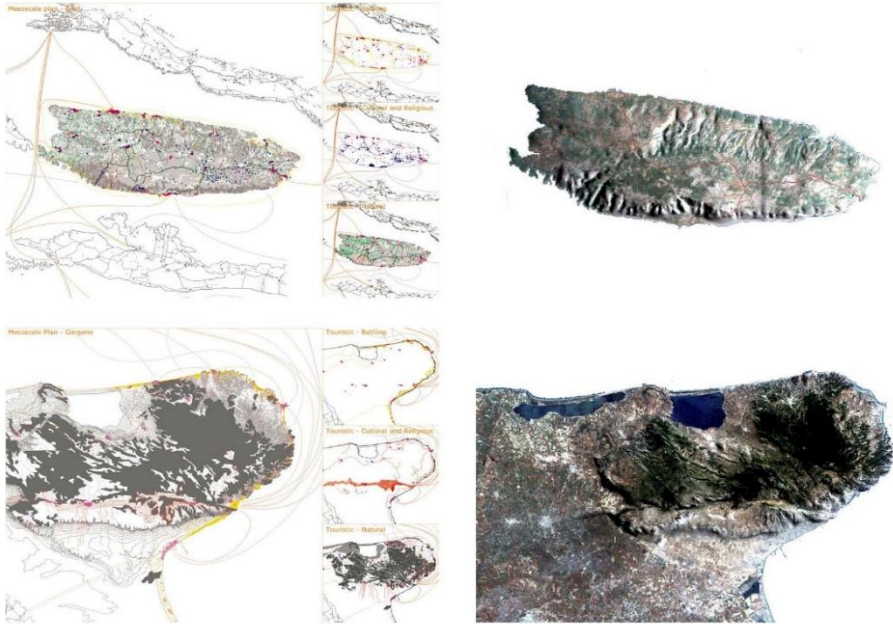


Figure 2: Landscape project



Figure 3: Santa Maria of Pulsano project

The stone and the relationship with it are the essential features of the landscape. The valley is an incision into the rock, and everything seems to form a part of it. The agricultural system is arranged in terraced farming in dry stone; the first settlements, ancient monasteries, places of solitary life in the search of the ascetic, bear witness to the long history of coexistence between man and stone: the search for a shelter, a natural cave, the excavation work on it and the next partial closure through a wall. The next monastic facility tells is a wonderful example of a philosophy of building in stone. Here too, the first settlement was a cave; after the building of the monastery came to pass on it for layers and layers through the use of stone. The project enhances this place as a cultural site of great interest and provides for the development of the ancient paths carved into the rock that can reach the hermitages scattered throughout the valley.

On the right side a guesthouse equipped conference and museum exhibits has been designed. The prospectus analysis of the monastery suggests how all the buildings set against the rocky ridge never exceed the level of the plateau behind except the last buildings of the 60s or newer; In fact, once arriving at the monastery, its presence is hidden by the cliff. The project is being positioned on the right side of the monastery, visibly unresolved as a margin. It is linked to the system of terraces below through a system of lifts which lies on a natural concavity gaining the perception of the landscape. The main theme of the guesthouse respects of the portion of the land which coincides with the covering and consequently grows inwards by an excavation under the open sky in which the building fits. The project interprets the theme of structural material continuity through a yard of stone to build through a plasticity of form and a constructive large form, deliberately cyclopean, to emphasize the potential of the material.

The path from the holy shrine of Pulsano continues with a trail that leads from Monte Sant'Angelo to appear on Punta Rossa and through a road that descends to Mattinata. Here there is the chance to sail to the Dalmatian archipelago, the sacred places of the 'deserts' sacred Brac, which is one of the most richly evocative. The network of connections designed identifies four countries of landing on the island: Supetar, Sumartin, Bol and Milna. From these four centers branches off a series of coastal trade along the coast, reaching the other countries of the sea and secluded bays, and an extensive internal network that identifies the same routes described in the Gargano. The cultural route linked to monastic settlements is drawn through a mesh of roads and trails that allow the observation of the landscape by visiting different

places rich in cultural and historic value. Among the most interesting destinations linked to the sacredness is the area of the so-called 'deserts', which translates in an exemplary manner the mix of cultural and natural routes. The draft prepared by the valley of Blace is an application in micro-scale of the overall strategies undertaken in the project area on the island.

The site is characterized by the presence of natural and cultural values; in a particular context are natural geomorphology next to the component represented by the major erosional valley Glagolitic monastery on the island of Blace. It is on a spur about two and a half kilometers from the bay and evokes the ancient monastic presence. Browse the valley ran a river of stones stands, interspersed with vineyards, which flow into the slopes of olive trees, cliffs shaped by water, forests of Aleppo pines. Currently, the monastery is accessible from the hinterland to the sea while the path is closed to those not using a private boat.

A system of cabotage around the island and the inclusion of the Bay of Blace within this route allows you to rethink the ascent from the sea towards the monastery, the monk's once Glagolitic beaten track.

After landing at the new redesigned pier, the journey continues through the valley, walking alongside the natural images and almost always compromised by the presence of man; the only interventions assumed in the valley provide for the redevelopment of some of the ruins present, the rehabilitation of some dikes and trails in the valley, and the arrangement of equipment and places to rest.

The monastery project is seeking to create a guesthouse in addition to the existing museum, with a view to establish a center that will support sustainable, once fervent, agricultural production, through the entire area surrounding the relocation of the levees, and the planting of orchards, vines, and the water supply.

The design of the guesthouse has the intention of preserving the external perception of the site, an excellent summary of the building into the landscape. Without adding volume, it was decided to be built by digging in the basement consists of a wall that contains part of the fill and occlude the bed of rock which rises from the monastery itself.

The project is, therefore, an excavation and construction on the rock made by shaping a ditch from which we sight the landscape and the monastery above.



Figure 4: Santa Maria di Blaca project

## **CONCLUSION**

Why is this important today? It is not only a matter of interest to scholars, historians, enthusiasts, but also because culture in the broad sense, is now a great potential for the so-called tourism industry. Throughout the ages, there have been questions about the past and somewhere, someone has tried to revive it with precise aesthetic and cultural intentions. Our age has a varied attitude towards the past. It is an era that inherits great opposing ideas regarding ancient and modern history; in the avant-garde of the first half of the twentieth century and supports those who argue the value of a continuity between past and present. Today however, what most affects the relationship with history is the possibility to create a sort of 'time machine'. The time machine is a pipe dream as old as the world. In reality, however, no one has ever approached it like us, the men of the twenty-first century. We have not the means to bend time, but now we can build a good approximation of any context or history of the past. The ability to virtualize the history of modern man in the digital world has reached unimaginable levels only a few decades ago. One of the shocking goals of the electronic era. Now is the time to rebuild a real tourism economy, especially in those areas with not only a profitable geo-climatic context, but are imbued with signs of stories, all waiting to be told.

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