



The Newly Founded Libyan Rural Centers – Architecture and Urban Design (1934-1940 / 2009)

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The paper proposes a comparative analysis of the historical and current urban and architectural forms of the new rural centers built in Libya, on the costs of Cyrenaica and Tripolitania, during the fascist occupation.

The historical period of reference dates back to 1933-34 when the building of the first centers had started -- marking the beginning of the construction activity in Cyrenaica for the political, religious and administrative control of the territory -- until 1940, with the project for the last centre, this remained unrealized due to the outbreak of the Second World War.

Some of the major common urban and architectural design characteristics of these rural centers will be critically analyzed, such as the square as a principal design element, the use of porticoes, for the delimitation and definition of the perimeter of the villages, the access road, as the generating element of the plan, the church, as the most important building for the organization of the space.

The aim of the paper is to propose a critical interpretation of the urban and architectural mechanisms which generated the rural centers. From one side considering them as the basic element for the physical organization of the territory, on the other side, as places for the identification and social encounter of the rural communities and finally as the material expression of the political power.

The paper's ultimate goal is however to propose an overall overview of the current state of use of this architecture. What happened to these centers when the principal symbolic meaning, associated to the relative political historical connotation, has ended? How much the forms of the rural centers influenced the territorial development of Libya? The paper will be illustrated by a comparative presentation of historical and contemporary pictures in order to highlight the re-use of the colonial centers from the Libyan population.