Participatory approaches to earthen heritage conservation in the Andean highlands (2004-2019)

A framework for our research

Conservation practices are associated with certain conceptions of temporality, that is, a way of defining and perceiving time. Tension that exists between hegemonic notions of temporality and those of many local communities is a relevant issue to problematize the approaches to heritage and its conservation. Contemporary reflections lead to the establishment of new methodologies to achieve an effective participation of communities and their ways of thinking about architecture over time. Ignorance of local knowledge and practices has often led to interventions that have altered the values of these heritages and has distanced communities from their architectures.

Our approach from an ethnographic perspective tries to develop participatory interventions with different communities in the highlands of the province of Jujuy (Argentina), in particular Puna and Quebrada de Humahuaca. Architectures that have been considered have a high significance, historical and religious, for these communities, which have sustained the continuous use of buildings. These are earthen architectures, with different techniques such as adobe for the walls and mud roofs. Knowledge associated with these techniques is currently part of the daily practices of population.

Different methodological approaches

Interventions

Recently, our researches have begun to be inserted in concrete actions for heritage conservation in different communities, specifically in the cases of the colonial residence called "Casa del Marques", in Yavi, the Church of the Santa Cruz and San Francisco de Paula, in Uquía, and the Church of Tabladitas. These are buildings with a high significance for their communities. The first two also have declarations as a National Historic Monument.

These are architectures built between the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries, with different subsequent interventions, and were built in adobe, with stone and mud foundations, and roofed with mud over wooden structures. In the three cases, in recent decades, different projects and interventions have been developed for their conservation, which involved significant transformations that, in turn, have caused various pathologies that must be remedied. These new proposal for its restoration have been prepared under the support of the Secretary of Cultura of the province of Jujuy, Argentina.