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URBAN DESIGN



Paesaggio Urbano – Urban Design is a bimonthly magazine on architecture and urban design, founded in 1989 and is published by the Maggioli Group. The magazine has a multidisciplinary approach, ranging from design and survey issues to urban morphology, architectural design and local and international cultural trends.

Paesaggio Urbano – Urban Design è una rivista semestrale di architettura e urbanistica fondata nel 1989 ed edita dal Gruppo Maggioli. La rivista ha un approccio multidisciplinare che spazia dalle tematiche del disegno e rilievo a quelle relative alla morfologia urbana, al progetto di architettura e trend culturali locali e internazionali.

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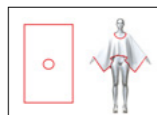


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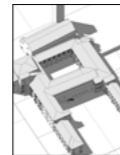
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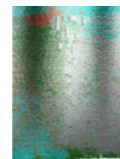


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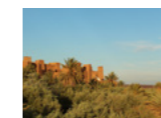


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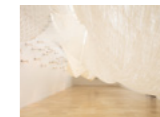
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Digital nomadism and new practices in heritage documentation

Nomadismo digitale e nuove pratiche di documentazione del patrimonio

Giulia Albini

Dipartimento di Architettura, Università degli Studi di Ferrara | giulia.albini@unife.it

Lucia Antognozzi

Dipartimento di Architettura, Università degli Studi di Ferrara | lucia.antognozzi@unife.it

Lorenzo Del Chierico

Dipartimento di Architettura, Università degli Studi di Ferrara | lorenzo.delchierico@unife.it

Alessandra Perez Amitrano

Dipartimento di Architettura, Università degli Studi di Ferrara |
alessandra.perezamitrano@unife.it

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The intersection of research and journey generates an intangible heritage that deserves to be cataloged as anthropological data, bringing scientific research closer to the traveler's experience.

In this context, the phenomenon of **digital nomadism** and "vanlife", intensified by the pandemic, emerges as an expression of a desire for autonomy and authenticity. Thanks to their on-the-ground experience, digital nomads can actively contribute to co-creating content, expanding **permanent archives**, and ensuring the preservation and accessibility of relevant data. The integration between digitalization and mobility represents a valuable element for enriching the global cultural narrative, which, through photographic, documentary, or social contributions, can extend into new forms of information.

Digitalization represents a crucial tool for enhancing **cultural heritage**, enabling the collection and dissemination of scientific and historical information.

The paper, based on ongoing research, explores the theme of digitalization and the experiences of digital nomads, analyzing their impact in terms of knowledge and awareness of cultural heritage and urban contexts, fostering new forms of interaction between exploration and innovation.

00.

"Van life". Greg Mills photography.

L'intersezione tra ricerca e viaggio genera un patrimonio intangibile che merita di essere catalogato come dato antropologico, avvicinando la ricerca scientifica all'esperienza del viaggiatore.

In questo contesto, il fenomeno del **nomadismo digitale** e del "vanlife", accentuato dalla pandemia, si inserisce come espressione di un desiderio di autonomia e autenticità. Grazie alla loro esperienza sul campo, i nomadi digitali possono contribuire attivamente alla co-creazione di contenuti, ampliando **archivi permanenti** e garantendo la conservazione e consultazione di dati rilevanti.

L'integrazione tra digitalizzazione e mobilità costituisce un elemento prezioso per l'arricchimento della narrativa culturale globale, che attraverso contributi di tipo fotografico, documentario o sociale può estendersi verso nuove forme di informazione.

La **digitalizzazione** rappresenta uno strumento essenziale per la valorizzazione del **patrimonio culturale**, consentendo la raccolta e la diffusione di informazioni scientifiche e storiche.

Il contributo, partendo da ricerche in corso, esplora il tema della digitalizzazione e delle esperienze dei nomadi digitali, analizzandone gli impatti in termini di conoscenza e consapevolezza del patrimonio culturale e dei contesti urbani, favorendo nuove forme di interazione tra esplorazione e innovazione.

In recent years, digitalization has progressively transformed the preservation and communication of cultural heritage. Technologies that were once confined to academic or museum settings are now intertwined with widespread and accessible experiences. Among these, digital nomadism emerges as a phenomenon capable of generating and sharing cultural content through participatory and interactive modes. Digital nomads, moving across different territories, do not merely consume images or information, but produce cultural content using various forms of language (visual, textual, multimedia), contributing to the creation of distributed and participatory archives. In this context, we are witnessing the emergence of a new approach to digitalization that is no longer just technical-scientific, but extends to human contributions, becoming a field of cultural experimentation, open to the cross-pollination of formal and informal knowledge, data and lived experiences.

DIGITALIZATION AND CULTURAL HERITAGE

The digitalization of widespread cultural heritage has become a priority for numerous institutions in recent decades.

In a context of increasing urbanization and the need for efficient and sustainable city management, City Information Modeling (CIM) has emerged as a strategic tool to support the collection, storage, integration, and analysis of multidisciplinary digital data related to urban contexts, with the goal of creating platforms that can be shared among stakeholders involved in a given territory (Zhou & Deng, 2021).

CIM has evolved into a systematic framework that synergizes multisource heterogeneous data integration with advanced computational analytics to enable intelligent urban planning and digital governance. Distinct from isolated technological solutions, CIM establishes a cyber-

Online blog of a travel blogger specialized in Cultural, Natural & UNESCO World Heritage Sites



DESTINATIONS EXPERIENCES SMART LIFE UNRAVEN ABOUT ME CONTACT

Beautiful weekend destinations and adventures near Mumbai / Pune



Author



Namaste! I'm Medhavi

Davda.

I travel to Evolve..

In Nature, I con ide..

I find my calling in the Himalayas..

In the Oceans, I meditate..

A High-Altitude Trekker & PADI certified SCUBA Diver, I love exploring the heights and depths of the planet with my regular

Hike to Lohagad Fort

One of the most popular monsoon destinations of Maharashtra is Lohagad Fort. Nature lovers of all ages from kids to senior citizens, are found hiking up to the beautiful fort on monsoon weekends. It is approachable from station called Malavali on Lonavala train route. You can start walking from the station itself, either by following the crowd or by asking the directions from locals. A simple hike of couple of hours takes you to the fort.

01.

Online blog of a travel blogger specialized in Cultural, Natural & UNESCO World Heritage Sites

physical system through the convergence of GIS, BIM, IoT sensor streams, and urban operation records. Furthermore, cities like Singapore place significant emphasis on fostering citizen engagement, leveraging digital platforms and mobile applications to enable collaborative and data-driven decision-making, thereby strengthening government-citizen interaction (Yu et al, 2025).

These structured and open-source digital archives represent a fundamental resource for the intelligent management of cultural heritage. Through access to historical, technical, cadastral, environmental, and regulatory data, they enable the creation of an information database capable of withstanding the changes of time and human interventions. The ability to structure and query this data digitally has opened new perspectives for the development and conservation of urban cultural assets.

However, despite the progress made, experiences to date highlight some critical issues that limit their effectiveness and widespread adoption.

Recent research (Daniotti et al., 2022) highlights one of the main issues as the fragmentation and heterogeneity of information sources. Urban data, coming from various entities and structured according to different protocols, is often difficult to integrate into a single interoperable platform. This hinders not only data sharing across institutional levels, but also

the possibility of developing integrated and participatory projects, as well as the creation of models that are easily accessible.

Visualization interfaces, although increasingly advanced from a technical perspective, often remain inaccessible to non-expert users. The high complexity of 3D models, combined with navigation and consultation challenges, limits the potential of CIM platforms as tools for widespread and inclusive knowledge.

Although CIM holds great potential, its actual implementation is still hampered by structural and methodological limitations. Overcoming these issues requires a coordinated effort in standardization and training, so that CIM platforms can become truly effective in the preservation and enhancement of urban heritage.

Digital nomadism as a cultural phenomenon

Digital nomadism arises from the intersection of technological evolution, the growing spread of flexible work arrangements such as remote work, and a desire for new experiences and adventure. Although it has roots in socio-technological transformations already underway since the 2000s, the phenomenon gained significant momentum during the COVID-19 pandemic, becoming an increasingly common lifestyle and work model that redefines paradigms of mobility, productivity, and interaction with the surrounding space (Baran, 2025). In this context, travel is no longer a temporary or extraordinary experience, but becomes part of daily life and often a foundational aspect of a person's identity.

The digital nomad, being systematically in direct contact with different places and cultures, becomes an observer and documentarian of the tangible and intangible heritage of the territories they traverse. In this way, their presence becomes a vehicle for generally unplanned documentation, and they represent not only a socio-economic phenomenon but also an opportunity for developing methodologies to explore new forms of storytelling and archiving of cultural heritage.

In these contexts, the concept of stigmergic collaboration, borrowed from biology and developed by Elliot (2007), is particularly relevant: digital nomads, through their actions in the territories and the online sharing of their traces (photos, videos, maps, audio, texts), contribute to the collective construction of participatory and stratified digital archives, acting as "intelligent swarms" documenting the present and enhancing the understanding of the places they visit [Fig. 01.].

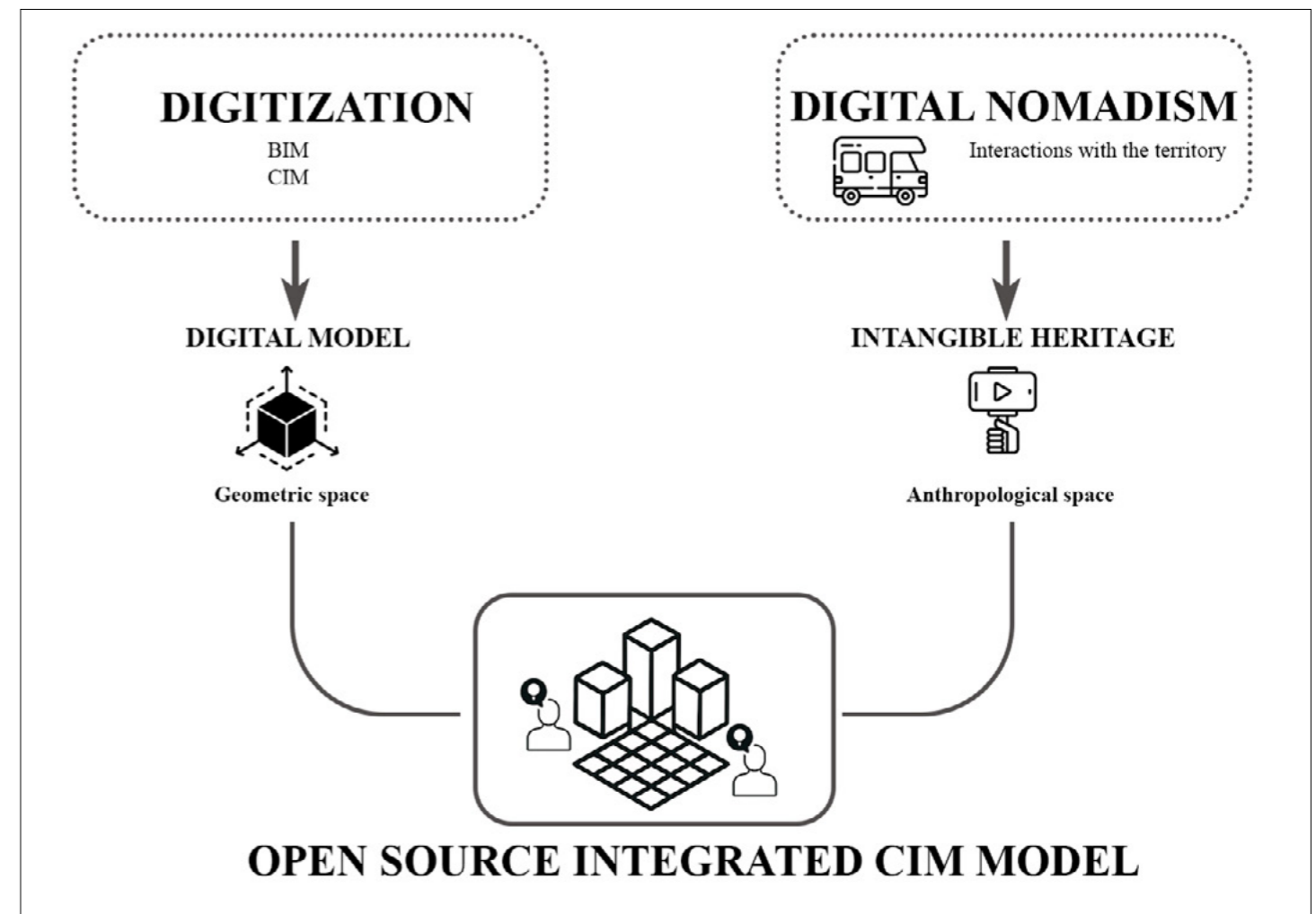
TOWARDS A PARTICIPATORY AND DYNAMIC DOCUMENTATION

In this context, the evolution of CIM could benefit from the contribution of new actors, such as digital nomads, and emerging practices, such as "vanlife". Vanlife refers to a contemporary lifestyle phenomenon in which individuals or communities adopt a mobile, vehicle-based mode of living, often in converted vans, as a means of pursuing personal freedom, minimalism, and closer proximity to nature. While frequently idealized as a liberating alternative to conventional urban life, it also presents distinct social, economic, and logistical challenges (Rodriguez, 2023).

The digitalization of heritage can no longer be limited to the mere digital transposition of geometric models or formal representations. It must evolve into a complex process of constructing narrative and participatory archives capable of embracing subjective experiences and collective memories, human lived experience, integrating this with technical data, allowing the intangible heritage generated by interactions with the territory to be intertwined with the material and geometric [Fig. 02.].

A central shift is thus required, from geometric space to anthropological space: what matters is not only the location of cultural assets, but also the narrative and relational experience that transforms them into meaningful places.

Here, the concept of *genius loci* can intertwine with territorial branding, establishing a mode of



02.

Integration of digital nomads' experiences within City Information Modeling (CIM) frameworks. Graphic elaboration by the author.

cultural promotion that goes beyond preservation and aims to create prefigurative experiences, virtual pre-experiences of a given place that can convey both material and immaterial values. *Genius loci* (Norberg-Schulz, 1980), tradition, and innovation can merge into a tapestry of stories and future community visions, articulated in various themes to be easily shared and transferred to both inhabitants and travelers, physical or virtual.

This outlines an innovative perspective in which CIM represents an opportunity to overcome hierarchical knowledge models. No longer merely a technical management tool for urban heritage, CIM can be reinvented as a collaborative and dynamic environment capable of integrating data generated by mobile users, facilitating new forms of territorial storytelling and cultural enhancement. Some experimental types of archives (e.g. Cultural Gems⁰¹, Humap⁰²) show how it is possible to go beyond a strictly conservative approach and embrace narrative logics, in which maps, documents, photographs, or travel stories interact with each other, offering a vibrant and complex representation of territories. Other models focus on the interaction between urban design and architecture, transforming documentation into an active tool for collective research and design (e.g. ArchiDiAP⁰³, archINFORM⁰⁴). In still other cases, priority is given to collecting oral histories and local testimonies, which carry strong political and social value.

Further strategies to make CIM a true cultural tool could include: geo-referenced archiving platforms that allow contextualizing data and experiences in physical space, producing interactive maps rich in stories; open-source and interoperable formats to facilitate the creative reuse of data by communities

and designers; integration with mobile apps and GPS devices to allow in-situ data collection, either automatically or guided, by mobile users; distributed curation, enabling users and communities to contribute to the selection, classification, and interpretation of content; partnerships between cultural institutions and informal networks to legitimize the use of such archives in urban planning and heritage conservation.

Achieving this goal requires the development of more intuitive and accessible interfaces, participatory environments capable of interacting with multiple diverse users simultaneously. In this regard, collaboration between public institutions and individual citizens becomes essential, connecting multiple perspectives on the territory.

CONCLUSIONS

Far from being a mere transitory trend or individualistic phenomenon, digital nomadism today stands as a powerful catalyst of cultural innovation. The intersection of mobility, technology, and storytelling opens new possibilities for documenting and enhancing heritage, fostering a transition towards inclusive and participatory knowledge models. In this light, every traveler can become a cultural activator, every place a living archive of memories and imaginaries.

Incorporating these experiences into processes of conservation and urban design means rethinking heritage not as a static inheritance to be preserved, but as a living resource, in constant evolution, nourished by collaborative practices and multiple perspectives. As Norberg-Schulz (1980) emphasized, the identity of places is revealed only in the dialogue between space and lived experience: thus, the cultural documentation of the future must emerge from the encounter between expert knowledge and everyday narratives, between digital devices and temporary forms of dwelling.

To travel, to observe, to collect, to narrate: simple gestures, yet capable of generating new forms of knowledge and care for our territories.

NOTES

01| *Cultural Gems* is a free, open-source web application developed by the European Commission's Joint Research Centre. It features an interactive, crowdsourced map showcasing cultural and creative locations across European cities. Users can contribute by adding places, descriptions, photos, and comments, making the platform a dynamic repository of Europe's diverse cultural heritage.

02| *Humap* is a user-friendly, web-based platform designed to create and share interactive, multimedia-rich maps without requiring GIS expertise. It empowers users—ranging from educators and researchers to community organizers and archivists—to transform data into engaging, map-based narratives. Ideal for civic engagement, academic research, cultural heritage projects, and educational publishing.

03| *ArchiDiAP* is a collaborative online platform developed by the Department of Architecture and Project (DiAP) at Sapienza University of Rome. It serves as a dynamic repository for architectural works, research, and events, aiming to foster an open exchange of knowledge within the architectural community.

04| *ArchINFORM* is a comprehensive international architecture database that offers detailed information on architectural projects, including both realized and unrealized works. The platform provides access to plans, images, and bibliographic references, facilitating searches by architect, location, or keyword.

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<https://archidiap.com/>

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Lucy Orta, Refuge Wear - Habitent, 1992-1993.
Aluminium coated polyamide, polar fleece, telescopic aluminium poles, whistle, lantern, transport bag, silkscreen print, 125 x 125 x 125 cm.
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