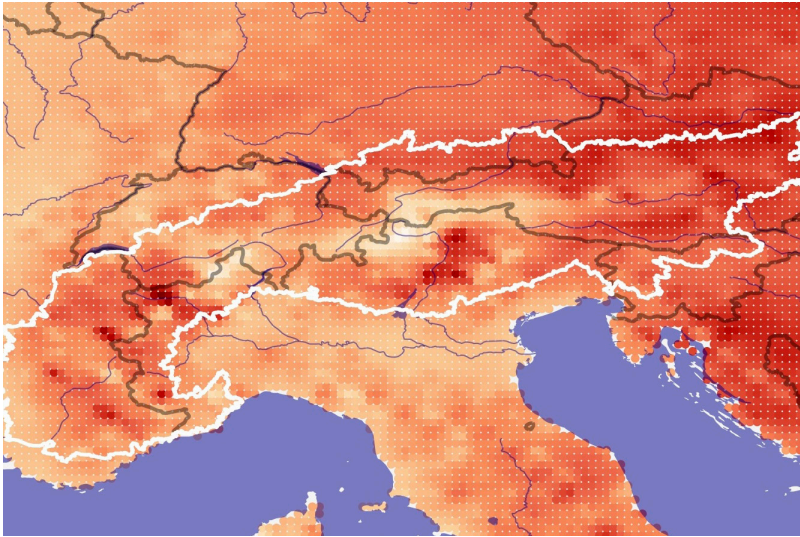


VERNACULAR FUTURES

Intertemporal and interdisciplinary perspectives
on vernacular architecture and climate



Anomalies and extremes in surface air temperature in 2024 compared to 1961-1990. Graphic by: Martin Pospichal, 2025.

Based on: COPERNICUS C3S Atlas Data (<https://doi.org/10.24381/cds.h35hb680>),

Features (naturalearthdata.com, Perimeter of the Alpine Convention).

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OUTLINE

SYMPOSIUM 1: VERNACULAR FUTURES

Intertemporal and interdisciplinary perspectives on vernacular architecture and climate

This symposium will explore various ways in which locally specific and culturally embedded forms of architecture are shaped through dynamic interactions between climatic, environmental, social and technical processes. Bringing together historical and contemporary research from a broad range of academic and applied disciplines, the event seeks to clarify the role climatic factors play in the transformation of vernacular architecture over time, as well as to identify the main threats and opportunities it is likely to face over the remainder of the 21st century. This may include discussion of emerging risks and vulnerabilities as well as strategies, innovations, and interventions that could bolster resilience in future.

The symposium adopts a resolutely comparative, intertemporal and interdisciplinary approach. It will provide ample space for the presentation of specific methodologies and focused case studies, while encouraging exchange between scientific, technical, and social science experts. The aim is to develop collaborative platforms for the generation of comparative insights concerning vernacular architecture and climate across temporal, spatial, social, and disciplinary frames. The event will focus primarily on the Alps and the Himalayas, but research from other mountainous regions and different bioclimatic zones will provide vital comparative scope.

BACK TO THE FUTURE

Intertemporal approaches to vernacular building and buildings

A1 | Interpreting and representing the past.

This panel invites comparative analysis of vernacular architecture across temporal frames and methodological approaches. As well as considering archaeological, historical and scientific studies of vernacular architecture in the past, it encourages reflection on how such work might better inform our understanding of the present and vice versa, while also probing the advantages and limitations of intertemporal analysis.

A2 | Vernacular Futures.

This panel will trace out the major transformative processes shaping vernacular architecture in the present day and reflect upon the emerging threats and possibilities it faces over the rest of this century, notably in relation to climate change. Bringing together scientific work on climate change and extreme weather, social science perspectives on vulnerability and resilience, and technical research into adaptive construction, the panel aims to generate interdisciplinary insights concerning the future of vernacular architecture.

A3 | Land use, infrastructure, and regulation.

This panel will examine relationships between governance regimes, infrastructural systems and vernacular architecture. How do changes in land use planning, building codes and other regulations shape the distribution, construction, maintenance and use of vernacular buildings? What role do houses and construction activities play within infrastructural assemblages? Engaging with such questions requires reflection on dynamic interactions between government policies and regulations, mobility and economic activities, landscapes and the built environment.

A4 | Climate-triggered changes in timber construction.

This panel examines the ways in which changing climatic conditions have shaped timber construction over time. What can different disciplinary approaches and methods (e.g., architecture, archaeology, anthropology, carbon dating, dendrochronology, materials science, agrometeorology) tell us about such changes? How can interdisciplinary and intertemporal perspectives enrich our understanding of these transformative processes? How can studies of past periods of change (e.g., from the interglacial period to the Little Ice Age) inform studies of present dynamics, or vice versa?



SESSION B

CLIMATE CHANGE AND EXTREME WEATHER EVENTS

Vulnerability, resilience, mitigation, and adaptation in interdisciplinary perspective

B1 | Vernacular buildings in the Anthropocene.

This panel considers small-scale, locally-based responses to the increased risk that formally unprotected vernacular buildings (e.g., farmhouses) are facing from changing climatic conditions and extreme weather events. This could include the adaptation of buildings in terms of design, structure and materials; changes to settlement structure; new building usage patterns; or larger-scale interventions aiming to mitigate the impact of floods, droughts, storms or wildfires.

B2 | Climate change and protected vernacular monuments.

This panel focuses on strategies, case studies and best practices for the protection or adaptation of prominent vernacular buildings (e.g., religious structures, fortified or elite buildings) which are subject to formal protection at local, national or global scales. This requires critical consideration of the politics, economics and practice of heritage conservation in relation to climate change discourses, policies and ground realities.

B3 | Narratives and metrics of vulnerability and resilience.

This panel will explore various ways in which local people perceive, experience, discuss and act upon climate-related risks and vulnerabilities in relation to vernacular architecture. It also invites participants to compare and contrast locally-grounded views with scientific accounts of climate related phenomena, opening space for deeper understandings of vulnerability and resilience across subject/object, local/global and science/craft divides.

B4 | The “noble vernacular” revisited: Sustainability and suitability in question.

This panel invites participants to revisit Marcel Vellinga’s 2013 article questioning the academic trend towards presenting vernacular architecture as inherently ecologically sustainable, culturally appropriate and socially desirable. As well as critically evaluating such discourses, the panel asks how we might ensure more nuanced and balanced representations of localised architectural forms.

FURTHER DETAILS AND NEXT STEPS

The above structure remains tentative and the program will evolve according to the responses and propositions received. If you are interested in participating or presenting a paper at Symposium 2, please visit our project website <https://climate-arch.eu> for further information and online registration.

Further details of Symposium 3 will follow over the coming months. You are welcome to attend all three events, but if this is not feasible, please select the one that resonates most with your research interests. Note also that publication projects are linked to all three symposia.

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Dates:

Symposium 1 | 10th – 13th February 2026

Symposium 2 | 17th – 20th November 2026

Symposium 3 | February 2027 (dates t.b.d.)

Venue: Austrian Academy of Sciences, Vienna (Austria)

