

## **Geomonumental Routes: an useful tool for the popularization of Architectural Heritage**

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### **ABSTRACT**

The concept of Cultural Heritage covers a wide range of different interrelated aspects, which are also synergistically entangled with the peoples, as it takes part of them and configures their idiosyncrasy. The Cultural Heritage is a very relevant gathering point between the peoples that have shaped it throughout all history, and therefore its preservation is essential.

The European Council undertook from 1987 the Programme of Cultural Routes framed within this philosophy, with the desire of increasing the value of the European Cultural Heritage. For this purpose, The European Institute for the Cultural Routes was created in 1998 and nowadays there are numerous routes that analyse the European Cultural Heritage from several different points of view.

The Geomonumental Routes entail the popularisation of the Monumental and Architectural Heritage from both a social and scientific perspective. This allows the interaction of subjects such as History, Geology, Chemistry, Architecture and Sociology. The prefix ‘Geo’ is used to highlight the depth of the link between Geology and Monuments, as any human urban settlement is conditioned by the geology of its placement and the main resources for building are extracted from the earth. The role of the stone within the built legacy of peoples is pre-eminent, which confers to it a major value by itself within Heritage. In this way, a better knowledge of stone as a building material account for a different way of understanding, conserving and appreciating the Built Heritage.

The study of the stones used in the Architectural Heritage also provides valuable information on the historical quarries, mining industry, ways of transportation, building techniques and preservation methods of each historical period. This represents an essential documentation in what is referred to the Industrial Heritage. A Geomonumental Route must, therefore, show the kind of materials consumed, their provenance, their decay and state of conservation and the possible restoration episodes underwent in the past, besides the artistic and historical aspects of the monuments involved in the route.

In the Built Heritage of the Autonomous Region of Madrid, several stone types confined to this specific region can be found in addition to other geological materials, as those which take part of earthen architecture. The information on the factors that have conditioned the evolution of the use of different materials during the history can be shared with the public through Geomonumental Routes. These routes must include not only the highlights of the Heritage of the region, but also other less-known Heritage pieces in small villages dispersed throughout the region and not included in the usual tourist routes.