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Considering the Vernacular, the Traditional and the Modern Houses in Front of the Earthquake:

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Abstract
The Vernacular in Front of the Earthquake

Dramatic events such as the ones which happened in Bam (Iran), and in South East Asia the 26 December 2003 and 2004 respectively, are not without bringing architects, engineers and professional builders to question their roles and responsibilities in regards to prevent, check, or unfortunately, even sometimes, amplify the devastating effects of these terrible events.

Although the traditional and vernacular techniques are rarely in cause, the media people always succeed to show us destroyed adobe wall or house (often with a widowed person with children crying beside), to picture the scope of the disaster, and/or to present us a culprit, perhaps essential to help us to go into mourning and make senses of such devastation.

In a similar (emotional) way, too many architects, engineers, planners and policy-makers which are key-role players in the post-disaster reconstruction reject the traditional/vernacular building materials and techniques in favour of expensive high-tech and/or foreign solutions, as if the *tabula raza* were to relieve them from their guilty feelings of being powerless to prevent the great losses that come with such disasters.

However, this approach is too often not only in conflict with the local building culture but also, most of the time, with the local dwelling culture, this, impeding the social reconstruction of the community. As mentioned earlier, the vernacular is rarely failing but rather a generic architecture, a kind of *no mand's land* created by a *bricolage*, a combination of vernacular and the modern technique and materials which did not succeed to meet (and connect) properly.

This paper is a reflection on this theme. Using examples around the world the paper will demonstrate how some of the most efficient techniques for houses not to be destroyed by earthquakes are inspired by traditional vernacular buildings, the latter being most of the time, an expression of flexibility, working with, rather than against, nature.