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EDUCATION STRATEGIES

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The safeguarding of vernacular heritage and the transfer of the intelligences that gave rise to it are complex issues to resolve. In addition to financial aid packages and legal protection measures, promotion and education are indispensable tools to ensure the safeguarding of this precious heritage. But who to educate and in what form? The answer must be multiple. The owners of vernacular houses must first of all be made aware of the values of their property and educated about the existence of good practices. If out of ignorance they do not see the need to respect the values of their heritage, they will not see the need to call on competent professionals. Owners are therefore one of the first audiences to be targeted in order to encourage them to take care of their property in the framework of clear landscape charters and regulatory systems. But they are not the only ones. It is the whole chain of actors who must share the same knowledge and sensitivities so that the heritage resists irretrievable alterations. Forums for exchange such as public meetings or festivals sometimes allow connections between these stakeholders who together must build this awareness on heritage values. We recall here the main levels of training that an education strategy should include.

Education of local government decision-makers and technicians

In a single geographical area of Europe subject to the same heritage rules, we sometimes notice great disparities from one municipality to another. The safeguarding of heritage and the application of regulations depend largely on the skills of the civil servants and local councillors responsible for their implementation. These staff are waiting for knowledge to better guide conservation or development policies, based on local heritage assets. In the absence of training by heritage professionals, bad practices end up imposing themselves and becoming the norm. Training adapted to their role is therefore essential as they are the custodians of good practice. If they do not master the broad spectrum of heritage values, they will not hesitate to authorise inappropriate destruction or transformation.

Education of house owners

Homeowners are the primary decision-makers for alterations and are also the ones responsible for destruction. Old buildings rarely meet contemporary needs for large spaces, light and thermal insulation. Transformations are therefore inevitable and the orientation of owners is essential so that their

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Training of homeowners on conservation techniques
(credits: N. Sánchez)



↕
**Training of urban planning
 officers on heritage values
 and appropriate conservation
 techniques**
(credits: author)

rehabilitation projects respect the architectural charters and suitable building materials, particularly for all parts of buildings visible from the public domain. This education of owners can take different forms such as regular information days but also the distribution of highly illustrated documents explaining in a very clear way the regulations in force.

Education of kids

The education of children is extensively illustrated in this book and detailed in the next chapter. The future generations need to be made aware from an early age of the values of heritage and the options for quality interventions. It takes years of learning to appreciate heritage in all its richness and complexity, hence the importance of starting as early as possible. In societies where vernacular architecture is still practised, children are naturally integrated into building and maintenance practices. They do not wait until adulthood to learn about construction. Education of children is possible at multiple levels: physical interventions, observation walks, taking possession of sites, etc.

Education of craftpeople and building technicians

Good practices for safeguarding heritage are forged through hands-on experience over long careers on the building site. Young craftspeople do not have this cumulative knowledge to do quality work. The transfer of knowledge is a pillar of the transmission of vernacular knowledge and the initiation from master to apprentice was once a matter of course. This intergenerational transfer is still practised in many villages in Africa and allows young people to learn pottery or decorative plaster



techniques from their grandparents. This mode of transfer has been lost in Europe and must be revitalised, particularly on workcamps where the transfer of knowledge is done by gesture and experimentation. Working with the best people to document good practice through books and videos is also a good way to safeguard knowledge.

📌 **Training of homeowners on conservation techniques**
(credits: author)

Education of architects and engineers

Architects and engineers are trained in the use of industrial materials and heavy forms of construction such as reinforced concrete structures. They are therefore disoriented when they come across an old building with serious pathologies. Due to a lack of knowledge, they will disguise the problems with unsuitable materials or simply raze the structure to the ground and rebuild it “identically”, i.e. with the same volume and the same openings but using different materials. This lack of knowledge of vernacular buildings leads thousands of buildings to denaturation or simple ruin.

Education of building materials dealers

Finally, we should not forget the building materials retailers who often recommend the use of unhealthy ready-made industrial materials for old structures. Most of them think they are making good recommendations but they are wrong. It is therefore necessary to involve them in strategic meetings and training so that they adapt their advice and sell materials that are compatible with the heritage. The shift of these actors towards the sale of healthy materials is underway but awareness needs to continue.

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Joint training of architects and masonry students on a rehabilitation site

(credits: author)

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