



Report of Activity 3

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Introduction

It is already recognized that contemporary interiors in Europe, especially the ones of the post-war period (mainly the 70's and 80'ss), are rapidly disappearing essentially due to fashion-driven rigorous renewal and a lacking of cultural continuity, which threatens the sense of local “belonging” as well as it conflicts with a conscious and sustainable use of resources.

In that way, Revintage is an international project that aims to contribute to the responsible, sustainable, and affordable preservation of these interiors and raise the quality of VET education to value Europe's heritage. This is achieved by looking into local case studies, uncovering a network of local stakeholders, identifying practices of care and destruction that impact a part of our daily life, and communicating this to an interested group of learners on the VET level.

Since it is an international project, in this Activity 3, the perspective of three countries is shown: the Netherlands, Portugal and Malta. Although they are diverse, the common goal in each of them is:

- To investigate how we can serve the primary target group (people engaged in professionally teaching construction and design skills where is often a lack of knowledge about the preservation and restoration of authentic elements from interiors) through modern means, even with a target group that is not necessarily looking for the information we offer (formal and non-formal professionals in the field of interior preservation and documentation, as well as groups engaged in the sustainable preservation of interiors, that have precisely the knowledge that the primary target group can use).

Countries concerned and places of visit

Three countries were involved in activity 3: Portugal, Malta and the Netherlands.

In the Netherlands, it was visited RIBO in Hengelo; in Portugal, the visit was to the Bank of Materials - Porto and last, in Malta, it was seen the Palazzina Vincenti in St. Julians, Balluta Baía, where, during the meeting, they talked about the life and work of the architect Gustave Vincenti.

Steps of activity 3

To develop activity 3, the following steps were followed:

- each country made a study visit to a place according to the object under study;
- a set of questions was formulated based on the objective described above;
- After the study visit, two focus groups were formed (with teachers and students) to answer the formulated questions.

In all of them, two focus groups were conducted with the participants of the visit (teachers and students). In the case of Portugal, twenty students from a VET course in tourism - Externato Senhora do Carmo, Lousada; and five teachers from the areas of Tourism, Communication, History and Geography were involved. And in the case of the Netherlands, the students did not visit RIBO but interviewed by other means.



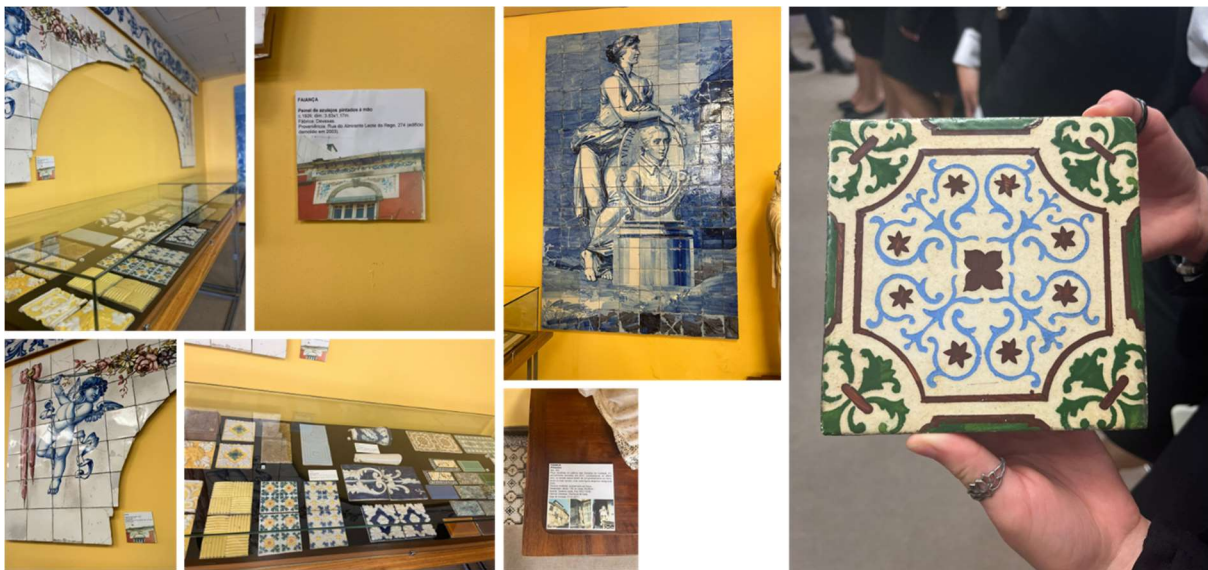
Questions

The script of the interview covered the following topics:

- Information about the case/institution visited and the work developed there, as well as its significance;
- information about the context of the item/collection, how it is preserved and if it is possible to compare it with others;
- information about the importance of preserving culture and heritage and how it can be done, and what significance is attributed to the item/collection visited;
- information to know the role and the contributions of the citizens, students and teachers in preserving culture and heritage.

This report presents the conclusions drawn from the focus groups.

Results



Results of activity 3

This section describes the results obtained from the three countries.

- Information about the case/institution visited, the work developed there, and its significance.

Starting with the first couple of questions, in Portugal, about the Material Bank (Banco de Materiais), both students and teachers said that it is an attractive, helpful and thoughtful work that promotes culture and history, therefore being an excellent initiative, as it is visible in the following testimonies:

I think that the work carried out there is very important for us to know better the history of the tile and how it was preserved until today (Student, Portugal)

Valid work, capable of contributing to the conservation of the national material heritage and preservation of cultural traces that make history about Portuguese culture; it is even work that contributes to fields such as sustainability, and requalification (Teacher, Portugal).

Somewhat similar to the general answers from the Netherlands that also focused on the value of the interior they visited and how important it is to be informed on how to preserve it

It amazes me sometimes how quickly everything breaks down. Even materials that can easily be reused. This is not good in the context of sustainability but

also in the context of preserving our cultural heritage. The problem lies in the unclear valuation (Student, The Netherlands).

At RIBO, we teach students how old building materials can be reused. Whereas in the beginning, old material is still seen as something you can throw away, later in the course, students deal with it entirely differently (Teacher, The Netherlands).

In this way, we see a love for heritage developing.

Meanwhile, in Malta, the answers focused a little bit more on the lack of attention and value that people give to these buildings and the need to value and preserve them as well:

Unfortunately, many people don't see the value of these buildings (Student, Malta).

- about the context of the item/collection, how it is preserved and if it is possible to compare it with others.

Following the line of the questions, in Portugal, most of the responses of both teachers and students were about the fact that the collection allows safeguarding from a cultural point of view, and so it's a way of preserving that will enable them to see the different shades, textures and so on..., as the following testimony reveals

I was surprised that they were preserved well and conserved until today since they belonged to old buildings (Student, Portugal).

It is a multifaceted context, articulating in an integrated way the organisation, the historical context, the location, and the tourist activity, considering environmental sustainability (Teacher, Portugal).

They concluded that it is preserved with a lot of rigour and professionalism, and knowledge:

People treat materials with great care and rigour (Student Portugal).

The rigour with which you preserve and apply the preservation techniques allows materials to have a "new life" (Teacher, Portugal).

The only aspect where teachers and students disagree is about the possible comparison to other collections/items, and the students believe there isn't:

No, because the item in this institution is unique sometimes because it is taken from quite old demolitions and that are sometimes only small samples (Student, Portugal)

While some teachers believe there is indeed possible as well as it isn't:

Like others, it should be widely visited and publicised (Teacher, Portugal).

It is impossible to compare the incomparable since this is a municipal project, a pioneer at a national level (Teacher, Portugal).

In the Netherlands, both students and teachers recognize the importance of this topic and how they would need a module highlighting this because they are more concerned about cultural heritage preservation and preservation than modern interiors itself, and that is what they both explain in their answers:

The topic of your project is fascinating. I can imagine this is an issue in all countries, perhaps to varying degrees (Student, The Netherlands).

We would seriously need a module highlighting this issue. Such a subject could be about cultural heritage in general and then focus on appreciating contemporary interiors. In the Netherlands, you have a system of optional modules. (Teacher, The Netherlands).

About the question of the possible comparison, only teachers responded saying that it is vital to first analyse and carefully investigate, so they know how to deal with it:

In our training, we are concerned with cultural heritage preservation and things like management and restoration. Modern interiors are not discussed. Perhaps also because there is little demand for it (Teacher, The Netherlands).

Now in Malta, the students keep the narrative that it is a unique architectural construction and, regrettably, people care about money more than they care about heritage:

Development in Malta only cares about money; they don't care about architectural value or heritage (Student, Malta).

And the experts complement this opinion by giving ideas of how the building can be preserved as it deserves:

[The palazzina Vincenti] is quite flexible enough to accommodate a new use; you have the garage underneath that can be commercialized or something...even in terms of floors... internally, this building deserves preservation as well (Expert, Malta).

The experts consider that it has to be more permanent work on preserving the building claiming that there is no restoration work there:

There is an emergency conservation order that has been recently renewed [for the Palazzina Vincenti], but there needs to be something more permanent that protects the building from total demolition (Expert, Malta).

In this country, only the students responded to the last question of this group of questions, easily comparing it to other buildings in Europe and museums:

The house could accommodate a museum or something; it would be great if it became a museum. There is an evident influence of the modernist style of architecture that is similar to other European buildings (Students, Malta).

- the importance of preserving culture and heritage, how it can be done, and what significance is attributed to the item/collection visited.

Moving on to the questions about cultural preservation and heritage and the significance of what they visited in Portugal, the students pointed out why preserving is crucial. It is because later it can be studied, to help in the dissemination of heritage through awareness and training, as well as other initiatives and the teachers, added the issue of tourism being a solid sector in Portugal, as can be read in the following testimonies:

Yes, it is essential to preserve our culture and heritage because, in this way, we can obtain more information about years and centuries ago, and it is also possible to inform future generations about the current heritage (Student, Portugal).

They both associate with this a historical, cultural, tourist and heritage value:

Cultural and heritage preservation is paramount as they constitute legacies left behind and which we should also go to future generations. It is, therefore , crucial to maintain the built heritage in good condition in situ and not to let the practice of immaterial characteristics of culture be forgotten. Observing, collecting and intervening are necessary to avoid losing unique elements (Teacher, Portugal).

In the Netherlands, the students had a difference of opinion on that question, and one of them believes that it is essential since there is a big chance that most of them end up in the profession of painting, and the teachers support that statement by saying that young care the future and restoring industry cannot do it without them;

I think there is a big chance that a Cibap student will have to deal with this since many students from my course end up in the profession of painting, for example (Student, The Netherlands).

While the other one argues that his course goes much more into the practice of painting, so he doesn't think it would fit for his course but should fit more technical ones:

I don't think this would fit my particular course. We are a course that goes much more into the practice of painting, so we would only come into play at the actual maintenance phase of painting. This is because the training would then have to have a subject more global about, for example, building history first, which I don't see happening any time soon given the nature of the training (Student, The Netherlands).

In Malta, the record remains in with the previous responses with the students saying that through education, the preservation can be done since people don't care about heritage and the authorities don't do what they are supposed to do:

The problem with heritage protection in Malta is policy. The authorities can enforce this, but today we live in a day where policy determines everything... (Student, Malta).

The expert added that this case is very dear to his heart because he grew up visiting the place and developed a bond with the architect's son.

- to know the role and the contributions of the citizens, students and teachers in this whole matter of preserving culture and heritage.

Finally, the last set of questions focused on the role and the contributions of the citizens, students and teachers of these three countries in this whole matter they had very similar fundamentals of response and all of them are based on essentially these ideas: invest in keep culture alive, promote education and good information regarding this topic and encourage the interest of everyone (and in the case of the Netherlands, the adjustment of subjects in specific courses), as can be read in the following testimonies:

The first step to keeping our culture alive is to invest in, believe in and consume local culture. Preserving and valuing cultural heritage is a demanding, rigorous and long-term task that requires the effort of institutions and the community. It is up to us to safeguard it, recording traditions, habits, customs, characteristics and the art of know-how for the benefit of future society (Teacher, Portugal).

Citizens could help to preserve heritage; for example, they should not demolish some monuments (Student, Portugal).

The school can carry out activities that appeal to the preservation of heritage (Student, Portugal).

Our depot of old building materials is open to the public. Anyone who needs something to restore their own home can come to us. This, of course, also applies to anyone professionally involved in interiors, etc. People generally leave here very happy. It is sales and a form of awareness (Teacher, The Netherlands).

It is also an interesting module for the excellence track, but I would not make a separate subject at the Cibap. Then other subjects have priority as far as I'm concerned (Student, The Netherlands).

Once again, students in Malta besides that, support the idea that people just don't care and that they need better policies although few experts are working at the Planning Authority:

Take a proactive approach to find the proper channels, target the public, educate them, and show them the importance of the building. But I think it is not enough (Student, Malta), and it's mostly policy that determines what happens, we need better policies, but unfortunately, few experts are working at the Planning Authority (Student, Malta).

Conclusion

To conclude, this activity had significant importance for the project and the mind and perception of everyone involved.

From what we could see, we had a very concrete clarification from all the countries of the importance of this matter of sustainability, heritage and preservation.

The problem most mentioned by the focus group was, without a doubt and especially by students in Malta (but also mentioned by the people from the two other countries), the lack of interest that people have in cultivating themselves on these topics and how important it is for them to be interested and involved in.

For that reason, the impact the activity had is notorious, particularly in the younger generation involved.

