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**Heritage for
people**
*Sharing vernacular
knowledge to build
the future*

authors

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AN OVERVIEW OF UNIVERSITY AND POST-UNIVERSITY EDUCATION IN VERNACULAR ARCHITECTURE

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An educational premise from VerSus & VerSus+

One of the premises advocated by the two European projects – *VerSus / Lessons from Vernacular Heritage to Sustainable Architecture* and *VerSus+ / Heritage for people* – is that vernacular heritage, both in its tangible and intangible components, can teach invaluable lessons and principles concerning sustainable architecture. Vernacular architecture is indeed a good example concerning sustainability, since it fully integrates cultural, social, and economical aspects, but especially constructive traditions while respecting the surrounding nature and habitat.

In order to reach the full potential of these lessons and assure vernacular heritage protection and survival in this fast-paced world, a strategy for its teaching and awareness is required. University training plays a central role in this outcome, since it can raise awareness for the values of vernacular architecture in the sustainable development of cities and communities. In this sense, this chapter will present a series of good practices of university education, associated with this important challenge.

A first approach surveying vernacular architecture

The research approach that was developed intended to address a first overview of the courses that teach vernacular architecture worldwide. The main aim was to identify which universities and educational levels currently have vernacular architecture, as part of their curriculum, especially in the field of architecture, but also history, geography, anthropology, among others. The method was structured sequentially, which means that a first approach was addressed through meta-analysis; and a second approach was developed through content analysis. The meta-analysis followed a literature review, study courses' descriptions review, and a survey.

Regarding the survey, all members of ICOMOS - CIAV | International Committee on Vernacular Architecture and of ICOMOS – ISCEAH | International Committee on Earthen Architectural Heritage were contacted. As a result, more than 30 responses were received. Individual responses were addressed, to identify the accuracy of the information. Following, a key search was undertaken on search engines using both 'vernacular architecture', 'vernacular architecture education', and 'vernacular architecture courses' as keywords. This was addressed in English, French, Portuguese, Spanish, and Italian. Information was considered in particular, regarding the last 10 years.

Following the analyses of the CIAV members' and ISCEAH members' responses, and after double-

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Exhibition on the vernacular architecture of Sefrou (Morocco), outcome of a workshop held by students from the *Architecture, Materials and Environment* course, held at the Department of Architecture, University of Florence, Italy

(credits: D. Borruto)



Information collected from the online survey sent to the ICOMOS-ClAV and ICOMOS-ISCEAH members.

All subjects were translated to English.

(credits: authors)

CONTINENT	COUNTRY	UNIVERSITY	COMPULSORY SUBJECT
Europe	Austria	Vienna University of Technology	"Vernacular Architecture"
	Estonia	Estonian Academy of Art	"Studio"; "Craft Theory"; "Historical Materials and Conservation Techniques".
		Tartu University, Viljandi Academy of Culture	"Vernacular Expressions and Analytic Categories"
	France	Chaillot School, City of Architecture and Heritage	"Conservation and Restoration of Ancient Buildings"
	Germany	Brandenburg Technical University	"Study Project: Sustainability of Vernacular Architecture in Organically Evolving Cultural Landscapes"
	Ireland	Trinity College Dublin, Department of Civil, Structural & Environmental Engineering	"Advanced Building Repair"
		University College Dublin, School of Irish, Celtic Studies and Folklore	"Aspects of Ethnology"
		Irish Research Council & Carrig Conservation	"Energy Efficiency in Traditional & Heritage Buildings"
	Italy	University of Florence, School of Architecture	"Architecture, Materials, Environment" "Knowledge, preservation and structural safety of the built heritage"
	Norway	Oslo School of Architecture and Design	"Form Studio: Modular Vernacular"
		Norwegian University of Science and Technology	"The History of Western Architecture, 1400 to 2000"
		Bergen School of Architecture	"Vernacular History"; "Diploma Project: Inspired by Place - Why We Build"
	Portugal	University of Algarve, Faculty of Human and Social Sciences, Faculty of Sciences and Technology	"Cultural Landscape and Traditional Architecture" (optional); "Project and Cultural Landscape"; "Architecture and Heritage in the Mediterranean"
		Portucalense University, Department of Architecture and Multimedia Gallaecia	"Studio Design - Analysis"; "Materials and Constructive Analysis"; "History of Construction"; "Ecological and Sustainable Architecture and Urbanism"; "Diagnosis and Technology of Conservation and Restoration".
		University of Porto, Faculty of Humanities	"History of Vernacular Architecture"
	Romania	University Babes-Bolyai in Cluj-Napoca, Faculty of History and Philosophy	"The Vernacular Architecture and Rural Settlements in Central and Eastern Europe"
	Slovenia	Ljubljana University, Faculty of Architecture	"Vernacular Architecture" (Optional)
Spain	Universitat Politècnica de València, School of Architecture	"Restoration of Non-Monumental Architecture"; "Architectural Restoration"	
UK	University of Liverpool, School of Architecture	"Environmental Design 2"	
	University of York, Department of Archaeology	"Building Conservation Projects"	
Asia	Lebanon	American University of Beirut, School of Architecture and Design	"Architecture Design IV: Environmentally Responsive Architecture"
	Oman	Sultan Qaboos University, Department of Civil and Architectural Engineering	"History II: Islamic and Vernacular"; "Omani Vernacular Architecture"
	Turkey	Mimar Sinan Fine Arts University, Architecture Department	"Conservation of Vernacular Architectural Heritage"
Africa	Algeria	Polytechnic School of Architecture and Urban Planning	"Earth Architecture and Construction"
	Egypt	Cairo University (AAST), Department of Architectural Engineering and Environmental Design	"Vernacular Architecture in Egypt"; "Heritage and Architecture"
		Arab Academy for Science, Technology and Maritime Transport	"Vernacular Architecture"
		BUC "Badr University in Cairo", Department of Architecture	"Vernacular Architecture"
	Morocco	Euro Mediterranean University of Fez, Architecture School	"Mediterranean Vernacular Architecture"

America	Canada	Carleton University, School of Indigenous and Canadian Studies	"Heritage Conservation"
		Université Laval, FAAAD School of Architecture	"Vernacular Architecture"
		University of Guelph, School of History	"Rural Studies"
		Willow Bank School of Restoration Arts	"Heritage Conservation Diploma"
		University of Calgary, School of Architecture, Planning and Landscape	"Advanced Special Topics in Environmental Design"
	Chile	University of Chile, Department of Architecture	"Vernacular building techniques. From rural to sustainability"
		Pontifical Catholic University of Chile, School of Architecture	"Earthen construction: Tradition and innovation"
			"Architecture and Construction in Raw Earth: Multidisciplinary Analysis of a Traditional Material"
	Dominican Republic	Pontifical Catholic University 'Madre y Maestra', Faculty of Social Sciences, Humanities and Arts	"Indigenous Built Vernacular Heritage in Chile"
		National University Pedro Henríquez Ureña, School of Architecture and Urbanism	"Vernacular and Popular Architecture"
	Mexico	Mexico National Autonomous University	"Vernacular and popular architecture in the Caribbean"
		Yucatán Autonomous University, Faculty of Architecture	"Vernacular Architecture"
	USA / Hawaii	Columbia University, Graduate School of Architecture, Planning and Preservation	"Mayan Culture"
		University of Colorado at Denver, Department of Architecture	Traditional Building Technology
		University of Hawaii at Manoa, School of Architecture	"Regionalism(s) and the Vernacular"; "Special Topics Cultural: Architecture & Nature"
		"Vernacular Architecture"; "Hawaiian Indigenous Architecture"	

checking the available data of the courses online in different languages, an overview table was created to structure the data in terms of country, university, name of the course. Then, a second table was created with information from published literature. A content analysis was undertaken to identify and cluster the similarities and contrasts between the content of the courses. This small sample was enough to give an overview, even if not definitive, since it aimed to be a starting point of reflection on the gaps and trends of education in vernacular architecture.

An overview of vernacular architecture courses worldwide

The *Charter of Built Vernacular Heritage* (ICOMOS, 1999), within its lines of action, advocates for educational hubs, such as universities, the responsibility to implement initiatives aimed at teaching the values of vernacular architecture, and as a result, raising awareness for its conservation. Based on this charter, one course of vernacular architecture in South America, justified the relevance of the course due to the fact that a third of Colombia's listed architectural heritage were totally or partially built on earthen traditional building techniques (Sánchez Gama, 2007).

Despite the importance of studying vernacular architecture, from the typological and constructive perspective, but also as an added value regarding the adaptation to climate change, vernacular architecture is rarely included in architecture higher education programs and degrees. In heritage conservation, this type of study is neglected and is considered a sub-theme or an optional subject.

CONTINENT	COUNTRY	UNIVERSITY	COMPULSORY SUBJECT	OPTIONAL SUBJECT
Europe	Belgium	Catholic University of Louvain, Faculty of Architecture, Architectural Engineering and Urban Planning		"Vernacular Architecture"
	Cyprus	University of Cyprus, Department of Architecture	"Vernacular Architecture and Contemporary Issues"	
	France	Britanny National College of Architecture	"Design Studio Workshop: Landscape and Vernacular Architecture"	
		Lille National School of Architecture and Landscape	"Vernacular"	
		Paris-Belleville National School of Architecture of Paris-Belleville	"Living in the Contemporary Countryside"	
		Sorbonne University, Faculty of Arts and Humanities		"Architecture, Environment, and Sustainable Development"
	Italy	University of Pisa, Department of Energy, Systems, Land and Construction Engineering	"Vernacular Architecture"	
	Sweden	Umeå School of Architecture		"Vernacular Architecture of the Nordic North"
	Serbia	Faculty of Architecture, University of Belgrade [Discontinued]	"Vernacular Architecture"	
	Spain	Polytechnic University of Madrid, Higher Technical School of Architecture of Madrid		"Popular Architecture from Lanzarote"
Switzerland	Federal Institute of Technology in Lausanne, School of Architecture	"Alpine Architecture"		
Asia	China	Tsinghua University School of Architecture		"Traditional Houses and Vernacular Architecture"
		University of Hong Kong, Department of Architecture		"Design Research on Architecture and the Environment" and "Vernacular Architecture in Asia"
	India	Indian Institute of Technology Roorkee, Department of Architecture and Planning		"Vernacular Architecture"
	Indonesia	School of Architecture, Planning, and Policy Development, Institute of Technology Bandung		"Vernacular Architecture of Indonesia"
	Saudi Arabia	King Fahd University of Petroleum and Minerals, Architecture and City Design Department		"Special Topics in Regional Architecture"
	Sri Lanka	University of Moratuwa, Department of Architecture		"Measured Drawing of Devala Buildings"
North America	USA	North Carolina State University, School of Architecture		"Vernacular Architecture"
		Polytechnic University of Puerto Rico, School of Architecture	"Vernacular architecture at Puerto Rico and at the Hispanic Caribbean"	
		University of Florida, College of Design, Construction and Planning		"Vernacular Architecture and Sustainability"
		University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, Department of Landscape Architecture		"American Vernacular Cultural Landscape"
		University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, School of Architecture and Urban Planning		"American Vernacular Architecture"; "Vernacular Buildings and Groupings"
Central America	Haiti	University G.O.C., Department of Architecture	"Vernacular Architecture I"	

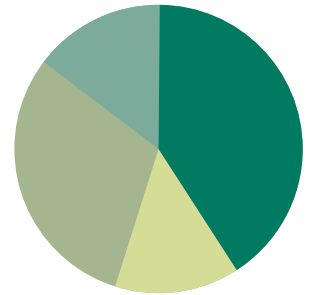
South America	Brazil	Luciano Feijão Faculty, Architecture and Urbanism		"Vernacular Architecture"
		Federal University of Pará, Faculty of Architecture and Urbanism		"Architecture of the Tropics"
	Colombia	La Gran Colombia University, Faculty of Architecture		"Introduction to Vernacular Architecture"
Africa	Algeria	Ferhat Abbas Setif University 1, Institute of Architecture and Earth Sciences	"Vernacular Architecture in Algeria"	
	Egypt	American University of Cairo, School of Sciences and Engineering	"Vernacular Architecture"	
	Senegal	University College of Architecture of Dakar	"Vernacular Architecture & Sustainable Construction"	
	Tunisia	University of Gafsa, Higher Institute of Arts and Crafts of Gafsa	"Vernacular Architecture"	
Central Polytechnic Private School of Tunis		"Vernacular Architecture"		

Tables 1 and 2 show an overview of the courses on vernacular education, following the data collection phase, an online survey and a literature search, respectively. Table 3 shows the visualization of the overall courses taught by country. All universities and courses' names were translated to English.

Trends in terminology

Most of the degrees with vernacular architecture subjects/courses were found in Europe, Africa, and Asia, whilst regional architecture was identified in North, Central, and South America. In some cases, other terms were used interchangeably to refer to vernacular architecture, in spite of different meanings (Duarte Carlos et al, 2015). It was the case of popular architecture (Spain) (Barbero Barrera et al., 2012), old architecture (Serbia) (Roter Blagojević, Nikolić, 2019), traditional houses (China) (Porrás Álvarez et al., 2016), traditional construction (Norway), traditional buildings (Ireland), popular architecture/traditional architecture (Portugal) rural settlements (Romania), and rural and indigenous architecture (Mexico). More recent courses addressed contemporary issues such as sustainability (Cyprus) (Philokyprou, 2011), changes that are needed to adapt to social and climate constraints.

It is important to highlight the difference between vernacular architecture, traditional architecture, and popular architecture. Popular can be usually associated with poverty or modesty, but also with economic pragmatism, often it is self-built with precarious means (even modern materials) and without specific actors dedicated to the art of building. Traditional is a broader term and refers to a constructive tradition and empirical knowledge. It can have specialized actors subjected to scholarly influences, even without scientific training. Finally, Vernacular is a term that is closer to Regional architecture (not Regional Criticism) and to Autochthonous architecture. In vernacular architecture local techniques and local construction processes are used. By definition and according to Duarte Carlos et al (2015, p.14), "all Vernacular Architecture is always Traditional and it can encompass a component of Popular architecture". It is no longer associated with primitive building processes, more with local ways of building. Most of the identified courses of vernacular architecture taught in Europe, Africa and Asia address the subject, as "Vernacular Architecture". This is the case for instance of Austria, China, Egypt, France, In-



■ Europe: 41.7%
■ America: 31.9%
■ Africa: 13.9%
■ Asia: 12.5%

↑ Chart showing the percentage of universities worldwide that have studies in vernacular education, according to this first overview conducted in 2023

opposite page
 Information collected from the literature and search engines
 (credits: authors)

dia, Indonesia, Oman, Portugal, Slovenia, Spain, and Sri Lanka (Gunewardene, 2016; Porras Alvaréz et al., 2016). In some universities, the courses are optional. Only a few of the courses are taught on a bachelor's level, as most are taught at a Master's level.

Furthermore, some of the courses add specific geographic and cultural contexts to their title, such as *The vernacular architecture and rural settlements in Central and Eastern Europe* (Romania), or *Design Research on Architecture and the Environment and Vernacular Architecture in Asia* (China). Other courses address vernacular through the lenses of sustainability (Germany), or through intangible heritage related to crafts (Norway). One example of this cluster is a course at the TUWIEN (Austria), which addresses vernacular architecture based on a selected object, to identify region-specific building typologies; understanding specific traditional building techniques; and critically reflect on methods of conservation. The course includes theory about tangible and intangible aspects of vernacular architecture, a visit to a museum, an on-site object documentation, and analysis of typologies, materials and constructions. In the USA, *Regionalisms and the Vernacular* (University of Colorado, Denver) is mandatory for historic preservation students, focusing on vernacular architecture, cultural landscapes, and regionalism through the lens of the built environment. In Brazil, at the Federal University of Pará, the specialization course *Architecture of the Tropics* (now discontinued) was created with a regionalist foundation. In both cases, USA and Brazil, the courses value the importance of the regional approach, regarding the architecture of the place. Kenneth Frampton's *Critical Regionalism* (Frampton, 1983) highlights critically the approach to modern architecture for its universal progressive qualities while valuing the geographical (topography, climate) and cultural (tectonic, typology) contexts. In this sense, critical regionalism in architecture differs from vernacular architecture in the sense of the production of new architecture which seeks to mediate the global (technological developments) and local (spatial-cultural) contexts.

Conclusion

This chapter intends to give an overview of university and post-university education in vernacular architecture, as a step towards the survival, the awareness and the need for protection of vernacular architecture. Several universities worldwide offer courses or include on their program's subjects related to vernacular and traditional architecture, specifically regarding heritage, methods, materials, and practices. On the one hand, some courses have been discontinued, on the other hand new courses are being taught combined with the sustainability subject together with climate change adaptation.

This was a first attempt to survey and give an overview of vernacular architecture in higher education. It is a limited research and it is not meant to be definitive. Still, it helped identify gaps and trends on education regarding vernacular architecture, such as the interchangeability of vernacular architecture with traditional architecture and popular architecture. This reveals the need to further advance on the *Charter of Built Vernacular Heritage* (ICOMOS, 1999), as further debate is needed on the etymology and terminology, but especially on the importance of vernacular architecture education in undergraduate

and graduate degrees, as they could be key to contribute for vernacular architecture protection and preservation.

Moreover, the conservation and the rehabilitation of vernacular architecture are becoming vital subjects, especially in a globalized world where they are fast disappearing. Leading and innovative Universities can play an important role towards vernacular architecture protection and survival. Especially if they involve undergraduate and graduate students through education and research. More than just providing awareness, universities can prepare future architects, engineers and conservators with fundamental tools to work in traditional settlements and assure the protection and continuation of their cultural significance.

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