

Promoting personal growth through hands-on training in safeguarding built cultural heritage

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Many heritage buildings in Romania are degrading over time. The Ambulance for Monuments (AfM) project intervenes to protect their further decay.

A major challenge they encounter is the shortage of appropriately skilled labor, craftspeople proficient in using traditional materials and techniques. This is part of broader phenomena of declining interest in traditional crafts and increasing detachment of young generations from manual vocational skills. The AfM project collaborates with craftspeople and architecture experts to offer hands-on training in traditional conservation techniques to students, young professionals, and laypeople who volunteer in these interventions.

We discuss ways to enhance interest in hands-on occupations among Romanian youth by exploring the connection between such career choices and long-term personal growth and well-being.

We used a mixed-method research design. We collected data from volunteers who participated on-site in AfM interventions using surveys and from craftspersons using semi-structured interviews.

Our preliminary results indicate that the volunteers are students, professionals, and laypeople, most of them with an interest in architecture. Regarding the motivation for participation, a vast majority indicate interest in cultural heritage, and about half mention personal development and growth as reasons for participating. They see the gains of this participation in both professional and personal development.

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