



The protection of Cultural Heritage Properties in the Republic of Kosovo

Gjejlane Hoxha, Kaltrina Thaçi

(Architect, Conservation Specialist Gjejlane Hoxha, Kosova Council for Cultural Heritage, Sylejman Vokshi, No. 12, 10 000 Prishtina, Kosovo, gjejlaneh@gmail.com)

(BArch, MSc Historic Building Conservation Kaltrina Thaçi, Cultural Heritage without Borders, Str. R. Zogovic 8, 10000 Prishtina Kosovo, kaltrinathaci@gmail.com)

1. ABSTRACT

Kosovo is a country with an ancient history and a wealthy cultural, tangible and spiritual heritage, created over eight thousand years ago. These heritage assets are important from a historical, aesthetic, architectural and social perspective. They play an important and irreplaceable part of Kosovo's memory.

Until the second half of the last century, cultural heritage properties of Kosovo were maintained and protected intuitively from locals. In the recent past, these properties were not valued properly. They have been treated with denigrated and degraded methods; as such the lost is enormous. Especially during the '98/'99 War in Kosovo thousands of traditional buildings were burnt and destroyed from the Serbian forces. Thousands of archaeological and ethnological collections, as well as the cultural heritage documentation of Kosovo are being held unfairly in Serbia.

In the post-war period, the protection of destroyed cultural heritage was not considered according to the real requirements. The heritage was left in a degraded state to be further threatened by uncontrolled developments. However, the destroyed monasteries and orthodox churches in 2004 were totally repaired.

Since 2006, there has been a development in the system of legislation and administration of cultural heritage protection in Kosovo. With the definition of Kosovo's Status as an independent democratic state, the protection of cultural heritage is demanded as one of the main preconditions.

In the cultural heritage field, systematic activities are being developed thus progress is visible. However this does not cover the actual requirements. Regarding the implementation of legal protection, there are halts for different reasons. In this way the protection of cultural heritage properties is being faced with big challenges. Intangible heritage is not being supported and is endangered from being vanished.

The paper will explore the treatment and conservation of Kosovo's built heritage within the context of current situation. Furthermore it will describe the legal definition and management mechanisms, underline the demands for development and modernization of administrative mechanisms responsible for managing the protection and enhancement of build heritage, as well as Professional Standards and training programs for conservation, according to international principles.

2. Introduction

The Republic of Kosova is situated in the heart of Balkans. It covers an area of about 10,000 km², populated by over 2 million people (according to 1998 estimates). 90% of the population is Albanian, whereas 10% is Serbian, Turkish, Bosnian and other ethnic groups. Albanian and Serbian are the two key languages. With regards to religion, the majority of the population is either Islam or Catholic, whereas the Serbian community is Orthodox. Its capital city is Prishtina. (MESP & ISP, 2010, p.19)



Fig. 1 Map of Kosovo (Albanian Diaspora Chamber of Commerce, 2011)

Throughout the past, the environment of Kosovo has been shaped by people responding to the surroundings they inherit and embodies the aspirations, skills and investment of successive generations. Its cultural landscape contains unique and dynamic records dating from the Neolithic, Roman, Byzantine, Ottoman and further periods. (MCYS, 2010)

Until the mid-twentieth century, Kosovo's cultural heritage symbolised peaceful coexistence. The different ethnic and religious groups preserved the artistic, aesthetic and social values of its rich and multi-cultural heritage over generations as part of their deeply-rooted lifestyles.



Fig. 2 Historic Center of Prizren, 2000 (CoE, 2000) Fig. 3 Old Prishtina 1933-1950 (KIPM, 2012)

The occupations and conflicts have also been part of our history. Our traditional rich cultural heritage such as archaeological sites, well-preserved historic urban centres, traditional houses and religious buildings, libraries, archives, museums and other cultural and educational institutions, for a long period have been systematically neglected and intentionally attacked, violated, looted and destroyed. (Riedlmayer 2000 a, b; Frederiksen and Bakken 2000)

In general terms, the cultural heritage assets of Kosovo are in a precarious and most vulnerable situation arising from the dire consequences of armed conflicts of 1998/1999, the natural processes of age and decay greatly exacerbated by environmental pollution, significant long-term neglect and a chronic lack of policy, strategies, proper inventory, conservation plans and funds for preservation and rehabilitation according to the international principles and standards. (KCCH, 2010)

In the early twentieth century, Kosovo was under the domination of the kingdom of Serbia, Slovenia and Croatia. After the Second World War, Kosovo became a province on the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY) and enjoyed a certain degree of autonomy during 1974-89. The Yugoslav Republic began to break up during the early 1990s with Slovenia, Croatia and Bosnia breaking away from the state. An upsurge in violence by Serbia in Kosovo in 1998 drew the attention of the international community, leading to an eleven-week armed conflict in the spring of 1999. This resulted in thousands of victims and the destruction of cultural heritage monuments and sites throughout Kosovo. (IIC, 2001)

Following the NATO air-strikes that began in March 1999 and Serbia's June capitulation, according to the UN Security Council Resolution 1244 (1999) Kosovo became a UN protectorate under UNMIK. Over the last decade, with the participation of international actors, it has become evident that the Balkans as a whole, as well as Kosovo in particular, have experienced a fundamental political transformation, bringing new dimensions and principles into society. The aim is the creation of Kosovo as a country that will have the greatest chance of lasting stability and development. Although it is recognized by most international authorities that certain conditions and temporary limitations on sovereignty will have to be imposed if a peaceful transition is to be achieved. (UN Security Council, 1999)

Since 17 of February 2008, the Assembly has declared independency of the Republic of Kosovo. (Kosovo Assembly, 2008). The exercise of Kosovo's independence and its fulfilment of the obligations set forth in the Kosovo Status Settlement is being supervised and supported by international civilian and military presences. (UNOSEK, 2007) The administration system is democratic and its authority is exercised based on the respect for human rights and freedom of its citizens and all other individuals within its borders. (Kosovo Assembly, 2008) The cultural heritage protection is guaranteed by the Constitution and laws. The religious and significant cultural heritage of minorities is granted to be protected by the Comprehensive Proposal for Kosovo Status Settlement 2007. (UNOSEK, 2007 Annexes V, XII)

Today, the cultural landscape of Kosovo has changed dramatically from 60 years ago, and much of what has been left gives evidence of Kosovo's diverse cultural traditions. The territory still contains unique and dynamic records dating from the Neolithic, Roman, Byzantine, Ottoman and further periods.



Fig. 4 Significant cultural heritage features (By author, 2010)

These features of the past represent the significant cultural heritage of Kosovo and are important from a historical, aesthetic, architectural and social perspective. In addition to that, these assets are bedrock for the sustainable development, which ensures continuity in the use of buildings and continuity of endeavour from the past.

3. Destruction of the past

It was not until after the Second World War that cultural heritage management as a state-organized activity was established in Kosovo. (Riza, 2005) In the second half of the 20th century (c. 50 years) when Kosovo was part of the Yugoslavian state and came under the Serbian domination, cultural heritage was re-defined and managed according to the standards set by the political regimes. (Herscher, 2010) After the last war, circa 3000 cultural heritage sites have been identified in Kosovo between 1999 and 2005. However, between 1947 and 1990, only 425 monuments and sites were officially listed. (MCYS, 2010) These included 96 archaeological sites, 16 cemeteries, 116 secular monuments and 174 religious sites, 139 of which were Serbian Orthodox churches or monasteries. Only 32 Islamic religious monuments were listed during this period, there was a strong bias towards Orthodox religious sites. (Riza, 2005) Since listed sites were researched, promoted and maintained better than unlisted sites, this bias had a direct effect on their survival.



Fig. 5, 6 Destruction of the historic centre of Prishtina after 1950 (IPMP, 2012)

The limited evaluation criteria and policies directed towards such a small number of cultural heritage monuments and sites, demonstrated an ignorance or disregard of the cultural heritage diversity in the territory and a failure to embrace the implications of Article 1 of the Venice Charter for the Conservation and Restoration of Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS 1964): *'The concept of an historic monument embraces not only the single architectural work but also the urban or rural setting in which is found the evidence of a particular civilization, a significant development or an artistic event. This applies not only to great works of art but also to more modest works of the past which acquired cultural significance with the passage of time'*.

Through the ignorance and apathy of politicians, many valuable assets have been ignored, threatened and lost. Already in 1998, before the destructions of the war began, the selective cultural heritage state policy had changed the cultural landscape of Kosovo in a dramatic way. Classified chronologically and stylistically, the worst systematic devastation has suffered by properties dating from prehistory and antiquity, followed by those of the Ottoman period of the 15th-20th centuries. (Riedlmayer, 2000a)

The built cultural heritage of Kosovo had already dwindled through neglect, and the subsequent war destroyed much of what was left, beyond retrieval. The urban historic centres of Prishtina, Prizren, Peja, Gjakova, Mitrovica, Gjilan and Decan, as well as more than 300 archaeological sites and traditional historic nuclei in rural areas were devastated, along with many individual buildings that the Kosovo Institute for the Protection of Monuments had evaluated as embodying significant cultural heritage values.

In the spring of 1998 until the summer of 1999, Kosovo was exposed to the dramatic armed conflict and ethnic cleansing. Around one million Kosovars were driven from their homes and thousands were killed. Their houses and traditional cultural heritage monuments and sites were looted and destroyed. (Riedlmayer 2000a, b; Frederiksen and Bakken 2000) The large-scale destruction, both in urban and rural areas, resulted in loss or damage of thousands of cultural heritage monuments and sites, amongst them more than 200 mosques, a dozen of Catholic churches and hundreds of other traditional houses and historic buildings and sites. (Riedlmayer, 2000a)

In the period following the 1998-99 war, during the reconstruction period, the assessment and consolidation of cultural heritage sites were focused on emergency issues. In the last ten years after 2000, a great deal of activities in the field of cultural heritage has been carried out in Kosovo with international assistance and some results have been achieved. These works were conducted in parallel with the structuring of institutional and legal framework and accompanying measures for capacity building, supported by international organizations, cooperation agencies and NGOs. (KCCH, 2010a)

The development of a number of projects has been supported by local and international institutions, mainly by CoE, EC, AER, UNMIK, CHwB Sweden, Intersos, Italy, US Office in Prishtina and Turkish Government. This support has had a number of beneficial effects such as integrating cultural heritage in the post-war reconstruction of damaged or destroyed settlements; the start of a compilation of a register and inventory of cultural heritage monuments and sites for the entire territory; building capacity on management, technical skills, inter-ethnic and inter-cultural cooperation; recording endangered monuments and sites; promoting the diversity of cultural heritage; integrating cultural heritage conservation into spatial and urban or rural development; developing new legislation; developing new policies and strategies for conservation, as well as the preparation of the Priority Intervention Lists and Feasibility Studies. However, none of these activities came close to meeting the actual demands and real needs of the post-war situation. Of c.1000 sites that were destroyed or damaged during the conflict, only few of them were professionally restored or reconstructed such as five traditional stone houses, four mosques, two old mills, one hammam and a sequence of the old bazaar in Gjakova. (KCCH, 2010a)



Fig. 10 Reconstruction of the Old Bazar in Gjakova, 2003 (greengopost, 2011)

Regrettably, damage and destruction of cultural heritage sites did not end even though the war ended in June 1999. During an outbreak of ethnic riots in March 2004, additional cultural heritage and religious sites were damaged. In the riots of March 2004, 34 religious and cultural heritage sites (Orthodox churches, monasteries, cemeteries, funerary chapels and some traditional houses) were destroyed. (CoE, 2004)

Since the events of March 2004, the protection of cultural heritage has been given a high profile in the national and international political agenda, with much attention given to the protection of Orthodox churches. The damaged orthodox monasteries and churches have been repaired or reconstructed by the Government of Kosovo with the international support. (RIC, CoE, 2009)



Fig. 11 St George, Prizren, March 2004 (RIC, CoE, 2009)



Fig. 12 St George, Prizren, after reconstruction, March 2011 (RIC, CoE, 2009)

Restoration and post-conflict reconstruction works were hectic, especially after the riots of March 2004. Only one Conservation Development Plan has been prepared for historic areas at risk, enabling the consolidation of a small number of monuments which were in a particularly bad condition. (KCCH, 2010)

DEVELOPMENT OF GOALS AND OBJECTIVES
SURVEY AND ANALYSES OF PRIZREN STUDY
DATA COLLECTION
FORECASTING
EVALUATION AND PLANNING DECISIONS OF THE PRIZREN CONSERVATION PLAN
FORMULATING CRITERIA FOR DESIGN
PLANNING DECISIONS RELATED TO LAND AND BUILDING USES
PRELIMINARY PLAN DESIGN
PRELIMINARY SCHEME FOR CONSERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT PLAN
PLAN DESIGN
PLAN EVALUATION
IMPLEMENTATION

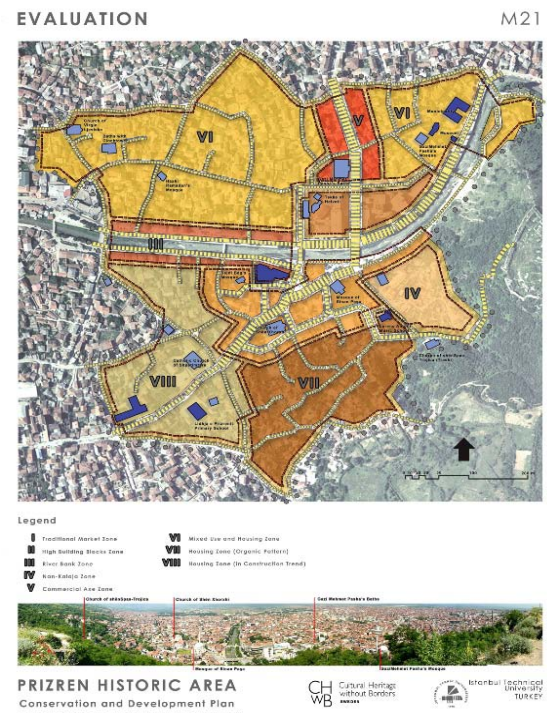


Fig. 12 Prizren Historic Area Conservation and Development Plan (CHwB & ITUT, 2008)

The destruction of the cultural heritage in Kosovo has been classified as a crime against humanity. (ICTY, 2011) The damaged cultural heritage monuments and sites are still neglected, in danger and in a very alarming stage of decay. In addition to that, the ongoing conservation activities proceed without supervision, elaborated and coordinated conservation policy and planning.

Even today more than a decade after the armed conflict, a large number of cultural heritage monuments and sites in urban and rural areas, including historic centres, religious and traditional residential architecture that were destroyed and damaged during the war remain beyond adequate care, treatment or technical assessment.



Fig. 13 Traditional stone houses in Decan Municipality, 2010 (KPM, 2007)

The historic and archaeological sites are left on the mercy of time and the destructive interventions of developers. (Fig. 14, 15, 16, 17, 18)



Fig. 14 Archaeological site-antique Castle, Vushtri, 2011 (By author, 2011)



Fig. 15 Hammam of Prishtina (c XV) (By author, 2011)



Fig. 16 Historic core, traditional houses and Sinan Pasha Mosque (XVI c) Prizren (By author, 2011)



Fig. 18 Left: Patriarchate of Peja, 2005; Right: Inappropriate intervention in 2009, lost of authenticity of the WHS (UNESCO, 2009)

The public and professional access in the Cultural Heritage properties such as monasteries and orthodox churches in Kosovo are restricted both for public, institutions and professionals. The documentation taken from Kosovo Institute for Protection of Monuments and more than thousand of archaeological and ethnological objects taken from the collections of Kosovo's National Museum have to be returned by Serbia. (Kosovo Government, 2011) The completion of the legal List of Cultural Heritage, Professional Guidelines for conservation, and inclusion of the cultural heritage in the territorial urban and rural planning and consolidation of funds are imperative of today. (KCCH, 2010b)

4. Protection efforts - conservation challenges today

Kosovo has lost a lot of its cultural heritage in the past sixty years, but we still have much to preserve and a lot to contribute to the collective world heritage.

The aim of promoting and conserving whatever cultural heritage is left has a particular resonance in its positive message. Kosovo's cultural heritage consists of a variety of properties within a range of built settings. It includes architectural and archaeological heritage, together with natural elements, important monuments, groups of buildings and historic areas (the man-made environment as a whole) and the intangible heritage. These cultural heritage assets belong to all mankind. They are part of the common heritage of all civilizations, and their loss is irreplaceable. (Kosovo Assembly, 2008)

The diverse cultural heritage expressions are remarkable and significant resources of Kosovo. With a view to improving the quality of life and living environment of local communities, the preservation of cultural heritage assets has begun to be recognized as one of the valuable sources for the overall political, social, economic and ecological regeneration.



Fig. 19 Archaeological Site Ulpiana, Prishtina
(By author, 2010)



Fig. 20 Traditional restaurant in historic core, Prizren
(By author, 2011)

Since the preservation of cultural heritage is a shared responsibility of all people living in Kosovo, irrespective of race, ethnicity, gender or religious affiliation, the cultural heritage potential must be regarded as a vital mechanism in the development of improved mutual understanding in a cohesive civil society, rather than a focus for conflict. (CoE, 2004) Furthermore, from being a challenge, the preservation would become an opportunity for promoting local economic development. (CoE, 2005)

Considering the breadth of meanings in this context, in the Constitution of the Republic of Kosovo, Article No. 58.5 states that: *'The Republic of Kosovo shall promote the preservation of the cultural and religious heritage of all communities as an integral part of the heritage of Kosovo. The Republic of Kosovo shall have a special duty to ensure an effective protection of the entirety of sites and monuments of cultural and religious significance to the communities'*. (Kosovo Assembly, 2008)

Towards the preservation, revitalization and promotion of exiting cultural heritage in Kosovo, consistently with Kosovo's Constitution and inspired by international conventions, recommendations and guidance, the following legal mechanisms have been put in place:

- Law on Cultural Heritage, No.02/L-88, 9 Oct 2006;
- Law on Spatial Planning, No.2003/14, 2003;
- Law on Special Protective Zones, No. 03/L-039, 20 Feb 2008;
- Set of 7 Cultural Heritage Regulations, 2008.

Cultural heritage is classified in the following five categories:

- The architectural heritage (monuments, group of building and sites);
- The archaeological heritage (monuments, group of buildings, sites and archaeological reserves);
- The movable heritage;
- The intangible heritage;
- The cultural landscapes. (Kosovo Assembly, 2006/2003)

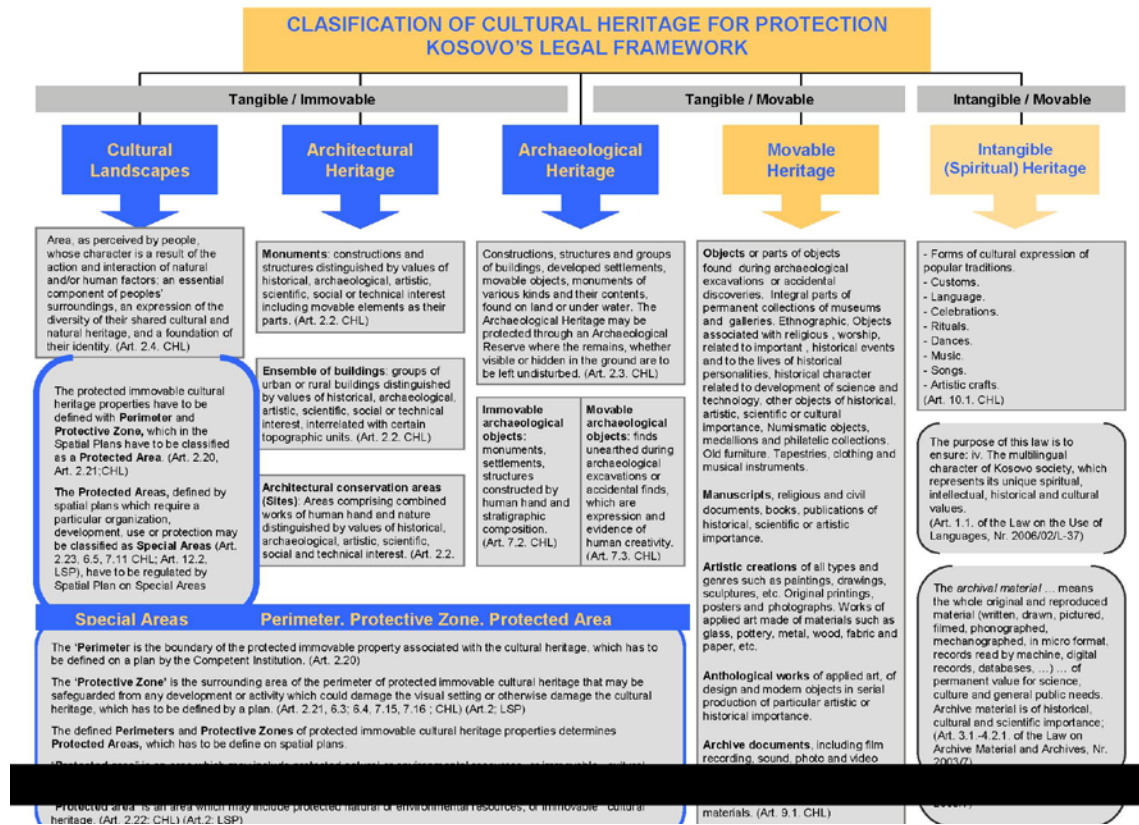


Fig.21. Legal classification of cultural heritage properties (KCCH, 2011)

The laws emphasize objectives that the conservation of cultural heritage and its sustainable use have a human development and quality of life as their goal. The promotion of cultural heritage protection is a central factor in the mutual supporting objectives of sustainable development, cultural diversity and contemporary creativity.

In the practical terms, the laws define the statutory measures by which the various actors should protect the cultural heritage in five primary areas, such as the architectural, archaeological, movable, intangible and t cultural landscapes according to certain minimum standards. These include the identification, documentation, evaluation and selection of properties to be protected; ancillary financial and fiscal measures to provide support for maintenance and restoration; authorization and supervision procedures on preventive, disfigurement, dilapidation or demolition, sanction provisions, integrated conservation policies, and the mechanisms to encourage consultation and co-operation in the various stages of the decision –making process.

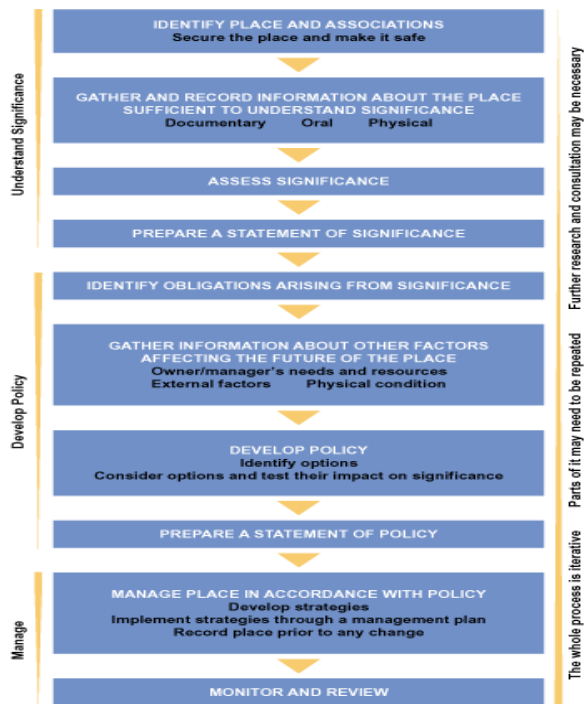
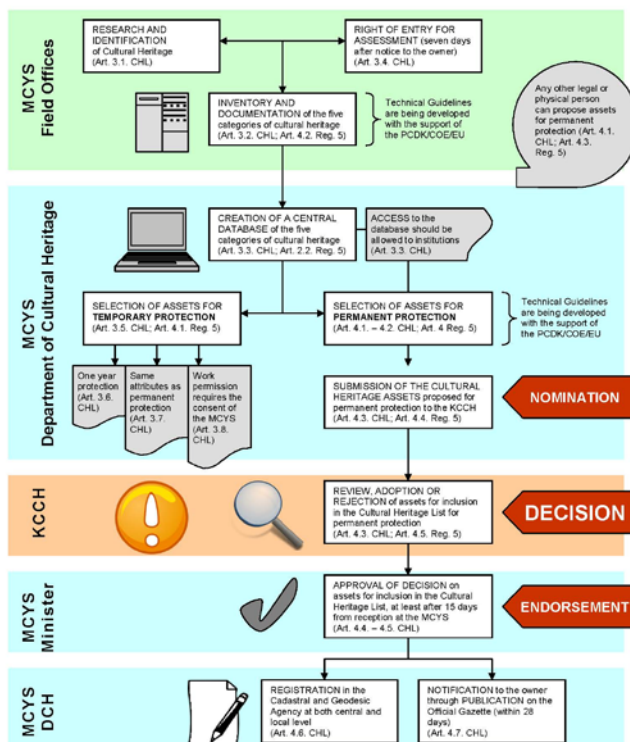


Fig. 22 Sequence of investigations, decisions and actions (Australian ICOMOS, 1999)

The procedures and criteria for identification and selection of cultural heritage properties to be protected demand the creation and maintenance of an inventory, illustrated below.

The legal inventory process for temporary and permanent protection



Reference to the legislation: Cultural Heritage Law, Nr. 02/L-88/2006 (CHL) and Regulation Nr. 5/2008 (Reg. 5)

Fig.23. Flow chart of the inventory system (KCCH, 2011)

The flowchart of the inventory system, with reference to the Cultural Heritage Law and Regulation No. 5/2008, illustrates the process' functions, the stakeholders and their responsibilities. The establishment of the inventory system is still underway and some gaps need to be filled in order to ensure an effective performance in line with technical standards. (KKCH, 2011)

In order to complete the inventory as a tool on planning and decision for protection, the legislation requires inclusion of five categories of cultural heritage such as the architectural, archaeological, movable, intangible and cultural landscapes. In the surrounding of immovable cultural heritage properties the enhancement of the environment have to be undertaken. The protected immovable cultural heritage properties, with clearly defined Perimeter and Protective Zones (Buffer Zones) have to be included in the spatial and urban plans as Protected Areas. The defined protected areas which require a particular organization, development, use or protection may be classified as Special Areas and should be regulated by the Spatial Plan on Special Areas. (KKCH, 2011)

The legislation applicable to the cultural heritage is not separate from the administrative organization that implements it. According to laws on cultural heritage and spatial plan, there are accurate authorization procedures and supervision on preventing the cultural heritage properties from disfigurement, dilapidation, demolition and alteration. The transfer or dismantling of protected properties is prohibited. For the maintenance and restoration of protected cultural heritage properties, and in accordance with national, regional and local competencies, the public authorities are obliged to provide financial support within the available budget, the fiscal measures and through encouraging private initiatives. (Kosovo Assembly, 2006/2003)

Conservation includes properties which are significant for its historical, artistic, architectural, archaeological, social, scientific, economic or technical interest. The different cultural heritage types and categories have to be conserved in a balanced manner. This presupposes the implementation of all measures having as their final goal the continuity of heritage, its maintenance in an appropriate environment, built or natural, and its modification and adaptation to the needs of society. Its real conservation will be achieved if the conservation is one of the main objectives of urban and country planning and development. In order to achieve accurate conservation, the legal framework of cultural heritage protection requires co-operation between people working in a whole range of occupations, in the field of conservation and urban and regional planning. Therefore, according to the legal provisions, the Integrated Conservation Policy is required for coordination of the multispectral work. (Kosovo Assembly, 2006/2003) Towards the integrated approach on conservation, the institutional protection planning and decision system is defined based on shared responsibilities amongst the authorities such as legislative and executive in central and municipal level, including institutions on cultural heritage, planning, education, finance, economy, civil society, owners, etc.

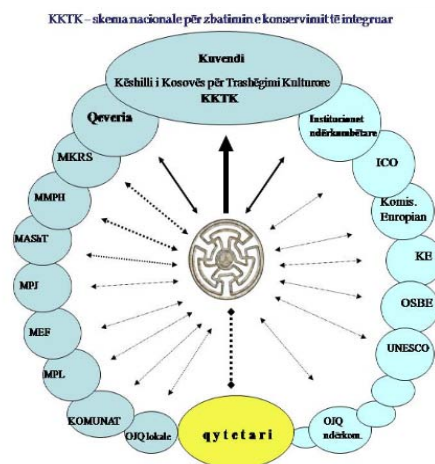


Fig. 24 Stakeholders on cultural heritage protection (KKCH, 2010b)

The main authority for the adaptation of legislation, national policies, Spatial Plan, Spatial Plans of Special Areas, resolutions and other general acts is the Kosovo Assembly with the committees in charge for the Spatial Plan, Agriculture and Rural Development, Education, Science, Technology and Media.

The main stakeholders responsible for the management and implementation of regulations and standards on the cultural heritage protection are:

- Kosovo Council for Cultural Heritage (KCCH), under the Cultural Heritage Law, article 4.8, is an independent professional legal authority for protection of cultural heritage;
- Prime Minister Office;
- Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sport (MCYS)/ Department of Cultural Heritage (DCH);
- Ministry of Environment and Spatial Plan (MESP);
- National Museum; Institute of Archaeology; Kosovo Institute for the Protection of Monuments and regional branches in Prishtina, Prizren, Peja, Gjakova, Mitrovica and Gjilan;
- Regional and municipal museums;
- Municipal planning and construction authorities;
- International Civilian Office (ICO), in charge for monitoring and support of the cultural and religious sites specified in the Comprehensive Status Settlement of Kosovo (from 2007-ongoing).

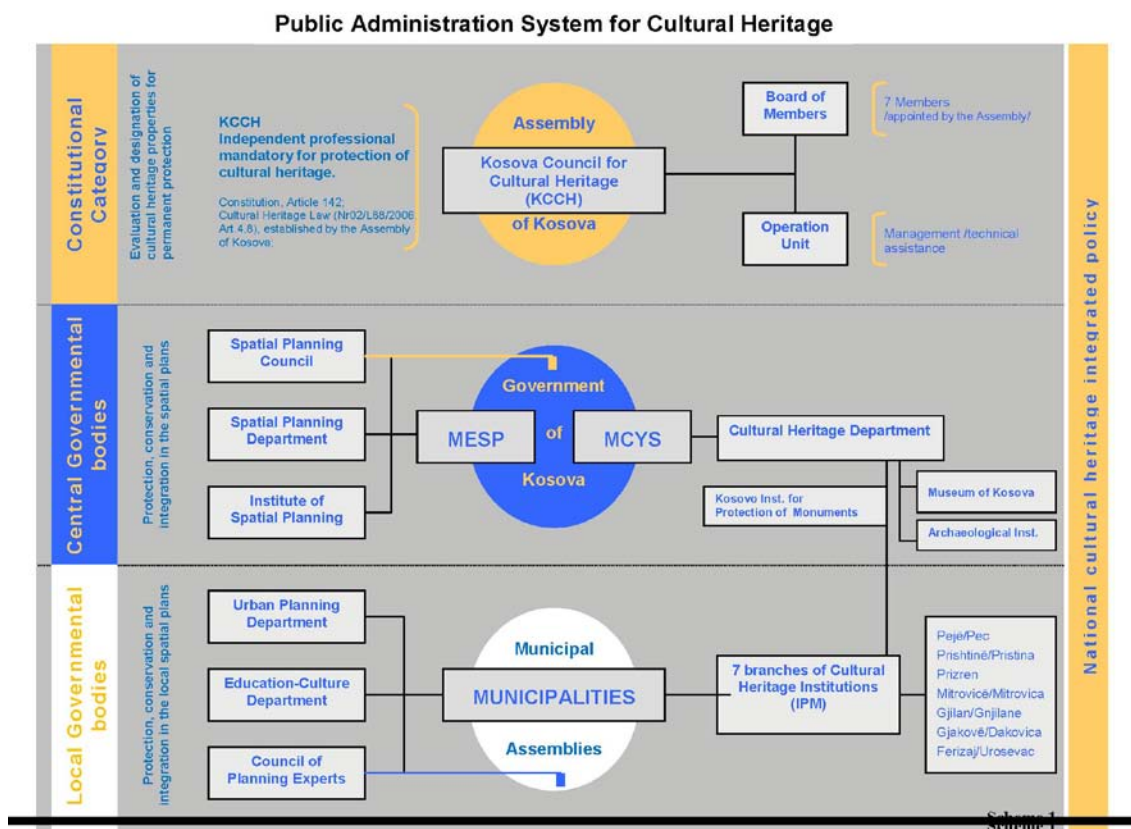


Fig. 25 Public administration system on cultural heritage protection (KCCH, 2011)

The cultural heritage properties can be preserved and maintained if adequate numbers of properly educated and trained personnel in multidiscipline, starting at the highest political or administrative level down to crafts persons, site supervisor, guardians, and guides are available. The list of professionals who might be involved to a greater or lesser extent in the management of cultural heritage is a long one. As so many disciplines are involved, it is essential that there are clear concepts to guide practice, which entails the application of manual skills and scientific knowledge, together with artistic and historical sensitivity, which comes from cultural preparation. Without well defined concepts, conservation will fail in its objective. (Feilden & Jokilehto, 1993, p. 47-48)

In the whole cultural heritage conservation process the generalist is the conservation architect. The conservation architects should possess basic and practical experience as general architect, as well as knowledge and understanding of early building technology and the ability to identify and interpret buildings' original fabric and later additions. They must also be able to coordinate the work of archaeologists, historians, engineers, planners, landscape architects, contractors, suppliers, conservation crafts persons, conservators and others who might be involved in a conservation project. (Feilden & Jokilehto, 1993, p. 51)

The typical career of an architect involved in conservation of historic buildings would include the basic professional study, practice in building and design and specialized training (this phase includes in-depth studies in conservation policy and legal frameworks, understanding of historic architecture and technology, development of new creative approaches to find solutions in challenging situations). (ICCROM, 2000, p. 128)

5. Identified problems

After one decade of hectic activities, carried out by various actors in the post-conflict reconstruction in Kosovo, heritage and landscape preservation and management framework should be structured in a more systematic and effective way. Basically, the laws consider issues of integrated conservation and urban planning, but the processes are not quite rational because the National Integrated Conservation Strategy or Policies and inter-related programs or actions Plans are not adapted. (MCYS, 2009)

The crucial problems to be resolved are:

- Delay in heritage inventory compilation (the Cultural Heritage List), nomination and identification of conservation areas (perimeter, protective zones, protected areas) in spatial plans of architectural and archaeological heritage;
- Unclear approach in principles and practice in cultural heritage conservation (sometimes resulting in questionable works), starting from the terminology adopted (conservation, restoration, reconstruction, etc.);
- Uncontrolled (both legal and illegal) building boom in urban, peri-urban and rural areas, affecting heritage sites and in general the landscapes;
- New architectural developments of low quality and without any relation with the context, impacting also (but not only) the setting of cultural heritage sites;
- Limited institutional capacities and power of the concerned authorities;
- Limited coordination of activities and stakeholders;
- Limited institutional cooperation, both horizontal and vertical;
- Delay in laws' implementation, missing professional standards on conservation and licensing system, inspection and supervision;
- Insufficient education offered in managerial, professional and technical training in the various areas regarding cultural heritage and landscape preservation and management, sustainable tourism development, restoration techniques, heritage crafts safeguard and promotion, etc.

6. Shared vision on protection - Opportunities and solutions

The KCCH (Kosovo Council for Cultural Heritage) is the highest authority for protection of cultural heritage, established under the Cultural Heritage Law (No. 02/L-88, Art.4.8). As an independent professional legal body for protection of cultural heritage it has been established in 2010. The council consists of seven professional members appointed by the Assembly of Kosovo for a three-year mandate and it has an Operational Unit (secretariat) comprising of nine professional and secretarial/logistic staff.

The essential functions of the Council are to:

- Identify, evaluate and designate, on the basis of nominations submitted by cultural heritage institutions as well as by legal and physical persons, cultural heritage properties, which are to be permanently protected under the Law;
- Determine the decision on the objects to be included in the List of the Cultural Heritage under permanent protection;
- Identify priority measures for financial support on the cultural heritage sector for each year by Kosovo Assembly, in cooperation with institutions involved in cultural heritage;
- Assess and determine the compensation price on selling and expropriation of Cultural Heritage;
- Evaluate project proposals submitted by institutions of relevant fields for financing and fiscal measures for the Cultural Heritage;
- Determine policies for the preservation, management and enhancement of cultural heritage protected areas and special areas jointly with the cultural heritage competent institution and the planning central and local authorities.
- Cooperate with the Implementing Monitoring Council for protection and preservation of religious and cultural heritage in the Republic of Kosovo, according to the Law on Special Protective Zones, No. 03/L-039, 2008. (Kosovo Assembly, 2006/2003)

In order to use the cultural heritage potential as a factor in sustainable economic development we need to make a collective effort to identify, assess, protect and enhance the cultural heritage of Kosovo, according to the rules set in the laws, principles and international standards. (Kosovo Assembly, 2006/2003)

The KCCH strategically emphasized the term for conservation and rehabilitation, which is *the integration of cultural heritage preservation in the social and economic development*. (KCCH, 2010b) In order to solve the problems, the Council has recently adopted its general program, which is currently being developed into a practical action plan. The KCCH's overall program objective is to pursue the integration of cultural heritage and landscape preservation and management in all development policies, strategies, programs and planning. The general program is articulated into eight action groups, aiming at reaching 8 objectives:

- Make cultural heritage a key-component of Kosovo's development strategies;
- Upgrade the legal and institutional efficiency in cultural heritage administration;
- Define the system and procedures for information, evaluation and decision-making;
- Improve the effectiveness and the coordination of programmes and projects;
- Build, organise and maintain an information and documentation system;
- Promote education, awareness-raising, partnership and cooperation;
- Increase the financial resources available for cultural heritage activity;
- Strengthen the operational capacities of the Kosovo Council for the Cultural Heritage (KCCH, 2010)

The process of establishment and operational start-up of the KCCH's activities has not been easy due to various reasons. There is a major misunderstanding regarding the role of the KCCH. It is interpreted by many as advisory, despite the fact that the Cultural Heritage Law clarifies its authority.

To attain the defined program objective, the KCCH seeks to launch activities and events aiming to draw the attention of public and private actors on the potential of the network of cultural and natural resources to foster a sustainable socio-economic development.

KCCH, as an apolitical professional body, can play and has started to play an important role in improving cultural heritage protection in Kosovo. To reinforce the institutional capacities of the KCCH, the following activities are being undertaken:

- Lobbying with the Assembly of Kosovo to adapt the national integrated conservation policy, for an increased political will and budget, to support the cultural heritage as potential for social and economic development;
- Identifying possible incentive to encourage the cultural heritage rehabilitation;
- Supporting development of the National Inventory, Evaluation and Nomination System on Cultural Heritage, as well as National Policy in integrated approach;
- Proceeding with the KCCH's programme strategic planning, to address action planning and implementation;
- Reinforcing the guidance of the KCCH's members and staff, to coordinate their work consistently with the program and to train them in fulfilling their technical tasks; (KCCH, 2011)

In order to be achieved the integrated conservation requires the coordination of activities and funds, reinforcement of laws, powerful political actions, as well as experts and funding support. The legislation and restoration of buildings in isolated approach is not enough to assume heritage protection. To combat the particular problems of unlawful interventions and trafficking of the cultural heritage, other mechanisms, such as awareness-raising within local communities as well as education in all levels and reconciliation efforts between communities are a must. To meet future challenges in the protection, revitalization and maintenance of cultural heritage, all this necessitates an integrated and interdisciplinary planning. (Kosovo Assembly, 2006/2003)

The fundamentals and the preparatory work to entail the consolidation of the existing institutional framework are conditions that in the transitional situation of Kosovo might require some time to be fulfilled. In the meantime, some urgent measures must be taken in order to comply with the implementation of the law and to ensure minimal heritage protection.

These measures are:

- Making an evaluation of the advancement's state of the inventory compilation, diagnosing problems, preparing a phased and budgeted action plan for the completion of both lists for permanent and temporary protection by making a rapid survey and risk mapping to complement the ongoing database;
- Based on the results of the rapid survey and risk mapping, preparing a detailed phased and budgeted program of urgent interventions (including both legal protection and physical conservation measures) in the short-term and finding the necessary financial resources;
- Defining the perimeter of the protective zones of all sites included in the list of permanent protection and identifying criteria for the protection and development of each zone; preparing a list and maps of the protective zones and criteria for each municipality, making a report to share with all the concerned central and local authorities, administrations and other stakeholders.
- Defining extraordinary legal, administrative and financial measures for the protection of the cultural heritage at risk due to the development pressure. (MCYS, 2009)

7. CONCLUSION

The cultural landscape of Kosovo has changed dramatically from 60 years ago, and much of what has been left gives evidence of Kosovo diverse cultural traditions.

The conservation and management framework for the preservation of cultural heritage assets is progressing. The basic legal acts have been approved according to the international principles. The Kosovo's authorities has started to pay attention on preservation through application of the preventive conservation, reinforcement of laws, establishment of the proper inventory system, modernization of administration and education system.

The subject of built heritage conservation in the interdisciplinary approach needs to be included in the education system of Kosovo, particularly in a basic studies at the Faculty of Civil Engineering and Architecture, as well as at the department of history, archaeology, chemistry, ethnology, arts, etc.

In general terms, there is a need for immediate action to physically improving and safeguarding the damaged architectural heritage of the armed conflict of 1998/1999, as well as neglected archaeological sites and cultural landscapes. The return of archaeological and ethnological collections to the Kosovo Museums and the documentation of the monuments are essential. The public and professional access to the Cultural Heritage properties such as Monasteries and Orthodox Churches in Kosovo should be resolved.

Having in mind the alarmed situation of the cultural heritage in Kosovo at the present time, there is an urgent need to:

- Establish the emergency Inventory and digital mapping;
- Prevent the current phenomenon that threatens built heritage;
- Technically assess sites at risk, including those damaged during the war;
- Redefine the role of cultural heritage in the process of development of the territory;
- Elaborate national integrated conservation Policy and development strategies;
- Return the documentation of monuments and sites as well as archaeological and ethnological collections of Kosovo from Serbia;

In order to achieve the above mentioned aims, we need all the support we can get, in terms of political good will as well as in terms of professional skills and funding. Thus in the domain of cultural heritage protection, Kosovo will welcome any bilateral or multilateral cooperation.

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