



PREPORTR

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DEMOLISH
ROCKS

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We can even demolish rocks

The intervention in five cultural heritage sites is proof of the lack of a serious approach that the state of Kosovo has towards cultural heritage values. They were developed by construction companies, leaving no authenticity whatsoever to these cultural heritage buildings and sites

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One of the most sensitive and significant areas that outline the identity of a nation - cultural heritage - for a long time now has been left in the hands of construction companies in Kosovo. Wherever they have worked, they left behind incredible damages to cultural heritage buildings that, seemingly, even other investments would not be able to bring back the intrinsic values of these buildings.

The most brutal intervention took place in the Grand Hamam of Pristina and in the Fortress of Harilaq in Fushë Kosovë. After an enormous investment that was put into these buildings, what you can see today is the transfiguration they endured. Preportr focused on five cultural heritage buildings and sites: the Fortresses of Prizren, Pogradjë, Harilaq, the Grand Hamam of Pristina, and the Hamam of Gazi Mehmet Pasha në Prizren, where damages caused to these sites are evident. The Fortress of Harilaq is torn apart off - with demolished walls and stones painted with cement scattered around - as if it was hit by an earthquake. The situation is not much better in the fortress-

es of Prizren and Pogradjë, where there are demolished walls due to the application of the same methods of work in all those sites. In addition, the two Hamams have almost no authenticity left in them, and no feeling of antiquity whatsoever.

Five to six years after the termination of work in these sites, the Ministry of Culture was forced to intervene once again in some of them, whereas the works in the Hamam of Pristina were stopped in search of an answer as to what should be done further with this project.

These sites were damaged due to the fact that restoration bids were granted to unprofessional companies, which considered restoration and conservation as an ordinary construction process and a good profit opportunity. They failed to realize the important responsibilities that come with restoration work. Even more scandalous is the fact that companies that were contracted were not at all licensed for restoration and conservation work. Taking into account that these companies were not professional in this field of work, except for the area

of construction, they used ordinary cement in their work. This oversight caused the most severe damage to fortresses and other cultural heritage sites.

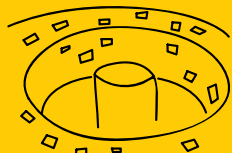
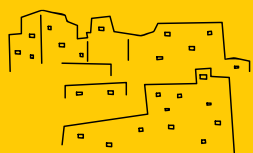
Preportr contacted experts who are experienced in the field of restoration and conservation and they said the work was completely unprofessional, as is the case of using cement in the process of restoration and conservation. Cement only absorbs water and does not disperse it, and also is not resistant to low temperatures. They say that instead of cement, a special lime should be used - the one that absorbs and disperses water.

No professional criteria

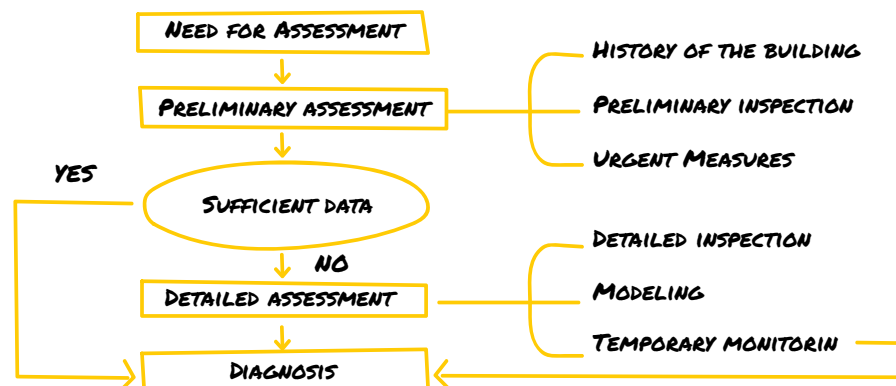
The research of Preportr as well as all other documents that were provided brings us to conclusion that the intervention in cultural heritage buildings and sites was either made with no genuine project outline (The Fortress of Harilaq), or there were deviations in the course of the project (The Grand Hamam of Pristina).

The documents also show that the monitoring of projects, especially those that were run by

The budget for this year for the Cultural Heritage Department in the subvention line is **417,286** euros whereas in the capital line it is **980,000** euros. The subvention line supports the operation of institutions while the capital line supports projects.



The Fortress of Harilaq was restored (Restoration and Conservation of the Fortress of Harilaq), in October 29, 2009 by "Arting" company from Gjakova, and cost 74,400 euros. The Institute for the Protection of Monuments intervened twice in the same place in this fortress, in 2008 and once again in 2013. This year another intervention will take place in one part that was damaged by the company with a sum of **40,000** euros allocated by MCYS and **20,000** euros allocated by the Municipality of Fushë Kosovë; not all funds will be used for the conservation.



construction companies, was not at the required level. Moreover, there were clashes between companies and experts (especially archeologists and architects) related to the works that were being conducted without respecting the criteria in terms of the approach towards cultural heritage. This went so far as using inadequate material and equipment such as cement, when it comes to materials, and an excavator when it comes to equipment.

Six years after the intervention, there is still no answer as to whose interest it was, or why this negligence of basic criteria and this damage took place. Not only in the buildings, but also in terms of these finances this occurred. However, voices and suspicions are many, taking into consideration that all damages, especially the ones in the Hamam of Pristina, were done mainly for financial profits.

No one knows so far who took the decision to open the call for bids for the restoration of cultural heritage buildings and sites, bearing in mind that this is a specific field requiring particular expertise. The fact that there is no company in Kosovo fulfilling the criteria makes this especially puzzling. The bids were granted to construction companies, while the main criterion was the low price, and not professional experience in the area of this specific work. Such an action was illegal. The Law on Cultural Heritage sets out that conservation and restoration works related to cultural heritage are to be done by a competent institution, and by legal and physical entities licensed by the Mministry. The Ministry of Culture still did not meet the legal obligation to license companies and archeologists, including other staff that deals with cultural heritage specifically. The Law on Cultural Heritage is in the phase of modification and it still has not reached the Assembly.

The director of the Institute for the Protection of Cultural Monuments, Alban Bakija gives yet another dimension to the interventions made in cultural heritage buildings. He believes that the way in which investments are made in cultural heritage has a

political connotation ; a political orientation.

"I think it was a tendency of politics to prove something, which they thought best through the memory we have for the past, an ancient past which is archeological heritage. I believe the best would have been if they had not touched it at all, and we would have preserved it for the generations to come," he said.

The Fortress of Rozafatil

The Fortress of Harilaq is not the size of the Fortress of Rozafati – it is much smaller. But it turns out to be as problematic as the legend of Rozafati. The works are never-ending. Almost every work that has been done needs to be done once again. The Preportr team paid a visit to this fortress during the spring. The appearance was rather ugly. The most part of buildingsThe majority of buildings, though conserved, were as covered with Geotextile, a material that keeps cultural heritage buildings from being damaged as a result of climate and the shrubs that cover them.

Under this material the centuries old fortress, - and according to some professionals of the field - the fortress with incomparable values was "lingering", the only one of the kind in the whole of Southeastern Europe. Many parts of it were lying on the ground, while stones were scattered all around.

But no one can precisely say who is to blame for the damages caused, since these damages reached their peak during with the work of the construction company. Besides the works at in this site, much a lot of money was spent too – some granted by the Ministry of Culture and some other by the Municipality of Fushë Kosovë. The Municipality of Fushë Kosovë gave 15,000 Euros for the conservation of the fortress, while in 2009 the bid for the conservation of this tower cost the Ministry of Culture 74,400 Euros. The works in this fortress were conducted by "Arting", a construction company from Gjakova.

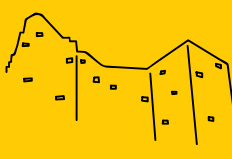
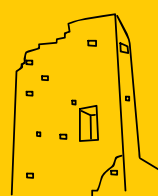
The conservation of the Fortress of Harilaq was based on a preliminary project of restoration

and reassessment that was developed by a restoration architect from Albania, Reshat Gega. He had developed this not very detailed restoration project, according to which the Ministry of Culture had opened the call for bids. Its officers say there was a hesitation to open a call based on this document, which, according to them, was not detailed, and commissioned by the Municipality of Fushë Kosovë. There are voices in the Mministry saying there was a pressure applied in place to open a call based on this project.

Other documents also show that the team of the Archeology Institute, established by the Ministry of Culture for monitoring, even two weeks after the start of these works, did not receive get the legal decision by the Legal Office of the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports (MCYS) for the monitoring of activities in the fortress. For this matter, the team informed the Ministry of Culture.

Later on, another professional committee was established, consisting of Enver Rexha, director of the Archeology Institute of Kosovo, Haxhi Mehmetaj, archeologist from the Institute of Monuments and Regional Museum of Pristina, and Lindita Cëravadiku, conservator from the same institution, in order to assess the works conducted for the conservation of this fortress. The aforementioned officers in this document suggested that, during the conservation of this site, there should be in place a permanent monitoring by the experts in the area of heritage.

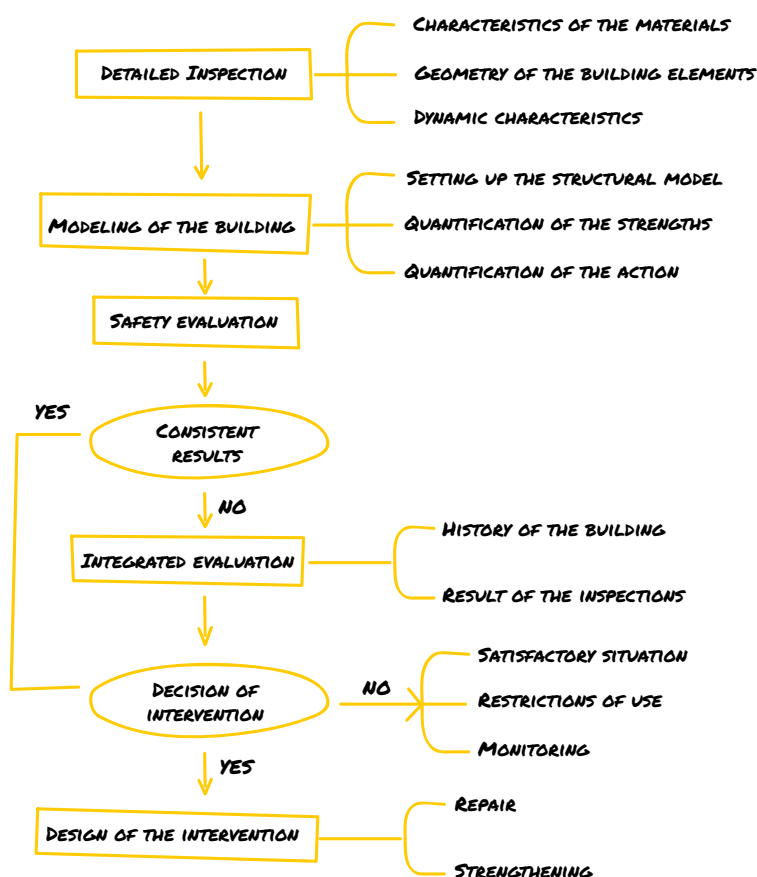
"Since the Fortress of Harilaq is considered as one of the most significant fortresses of Aantiquity, not only in Kosovo but in the whole of Southeastern Europe, and with the aim to provide a smooth process of professional works, the abovementioned committee recommends: Permanent monitoring by a stone conservator who will provide professional suggestions for the continuation of implementation of the said project, in close cooperation with archeologists, especially with Kosovo Museum and Municipal Assembly of Fushë Kosovë," says the report.



The Fortress of Pogradje was restored in October 29, 2008 (Restoration/conservation of the Fortress of Pogradje) by "Arcproject" company from Gjakova, and it cost **42,499** euros.



The Fortress of Prizren was restored in August 1, 2008 (Restoration and revitalization of the Fortress of Prizren) by "Arting" company from Gjakova, and it cost **61,276** euros.





There is a disconnection after this report. Preportr looked into the dossier of the bid, but did not find other reports stating what happened afterwards. There is no neither a technical admission, which, according to some officers of Procurement Department, is an uncommon thing for these kinds of works, especially when it comes to archeological sites.

On the other hand, there is a technical admission for the works done in the Fortress of Pogragjë. When the officers were asked how it is possible come that in the case of two projects of the same nature, one was technically admitted whereas the other lacked one, they replied that in the case of the Fortress of Pogragjë there was a much more detailed project.

However, six years after this intervention, the Ministry of Culture and the Municipality of Fushë Kosovë have to initiate their works in order to preserve save what can be saved from the in this fortress. 40,000 Euros from the Ministry and an additional 20,000 Euros from the Municipality were allocated for these new works.

The director of the Cultural Heritage Department at MCYS, Vjollca Aliu, says that these works will help consolidate the walls, emphasizing that whatever damage caused to cultural heritage sites is something that cannot be corrected and restored to made as it used to be previously was.

“First of all, we hope we will have a consolidation of specialists of the field.; Tthat which is consolidated is to be done well, and that which is not done is to be made ready for some other period, and not to undertake ad hoc actions,” she said.

Speaking about the damages caused to this fortress, Aliu said

that nobody who was part of this project is to be exempt of the accountability.

“What is important and what I emphasize once again is that there should be a higher presence of monitoring of archeologists and other responsible people, in order not to avoid accountability., I.e. the level of responsibility is to be the same both among those who conduct the work and among the specialized staff, so that those who are engaged in a project are to stay and continue with their engagement,” she said.

Aliu said they had to do more with the staff of within the Mministry, and less with the company that did not do their job adequately.

“To tell you the truth, perhaps we did not involve a lot with the company, compared to our involvement with the staff, the employees of the Mministry in this case. There was a request to raise the level of accountability, no matter if the companies did their job well or poorly. There are also reports of technical admission which, in a way, accept those works that have been terminated,” said Aliu.

Enver Rexha, director of the Archeology Institute (IAK), said to have made a report on the work - technical aspect of the work as he described it - and had assessed that the executor complied with the contract made with the Mministry in terms of treating the square meters.

“On the other hand, I know that somewhere out there, there is that document where I noted that the quality of work or mortar, the components, are not my responsibility since those are not part of my scope of work, and I am not a professional in that field,” he said.

Preportr wrote a few years ago about the remarks shared by archeologists that were involved in the excavations on in this site, in relation to the quality of work and the cement used during the conservation of this fortress, the poor level of monitoring, and the lack of accountability, despite the huge damages caused to the site of special cultural heritage values.

Huge damages to in the Fortress of Pogragjë

The Fortress of Pogragjë seems quite damaged. Some walls are falling apart, while in damaged places one could notice that the work was done using cement, which has been destroyed as time passed by together with some walls of the fortress.

No project of conservation or excavation was planned for this year apart from the fact that workers could be seen at the site cleaning it from shrubs, since in most cases they covered almost all walls, as well as the pathway leading to the fortress.

In the case of the Fortress of Pogragjë as well, the conservation and restoration works were done by a construction company called “Arcproject” from Gjakova. This company finished their works at this site in 2009, while the costs of these works reached a sum of 42,499 Euros. According to reports obtained and seen by Preportr, it is clear that, in this project as well, there were remarks coming from those who were engaged in the monitoring and admission of works.

The technical admission of conservation and restoration activities in the Fortress of Pogragjë, by a committee established by MCYS, made of Enver Rexha IAK, Jusuf Musa from MCYS,

Lindita Cërvadiku from IMMRP, and Milot Berisha from IAK, (the latter did not take part in admission), was concluded with some remarks.

“The building now has another appearance as an architectural, archeological and representational cultural heritage building in these regions of Kosovo. The walls have been consolidated and a new situation is in place so that theyose are not damaged by nature and will be better protected by a human hand,” says the admission report.

The report further emphasizes that the monitor - Artan Hoxha in this case - director of Regional Center for Cultural Heritage in Gjilan, had some remarks related to the works conducted there.

“After reviewing the final report of the monitor, it found that there are some remarks that we will present as such, and those will represent the necessary obligation of the executor which has to finish its work within 10 days from the day when the executor of activities receives the document of the committee,” says the report.

The remarks were as following:

In the southeastern part of the fortress, the wall approximately eight meters high was not consolidated, and that is the necessary obligation – to be consolidated the way other walls were consolidated;

On the biggest face of the western part of the fortress, the activity of plastering took place by error, but since it was found to be a professional mistake, the intervention was immediate and that layer was cleaned.; Hhowever such interventions are noticeable, and therefore the committee accepts this activity of conservation

and restoration, and the activities of conservation and restoration in the Fortress of Pogragjë with aforementioned responsibilities.

The admission report was signed by all members but the archeologist Milot Berisha, who was surprised to have found his name there. Berisha said he did not sign this document since he visited this fortress only once, and he shared his remarks, among which was also the fact that no works there are to be done with excavators.

“The only time I was there was on 04.05.2009, when we inspected the walls of the fortress. I have produced a detailed report about the works being done there, and this was the only time I visited this fortress,” said Berisha.

Six years after this intervention, which left this fortress in a poor state, the Ministry of Culture is considering thinking of further steps to be undertaken.

“We are waiting for the opinion of the Archeology Institute with the help of archeologists as to what will be the actions to be undertaken. Certainly, this project will be part of archeological excavations of a rescue character,” says director Aliu.

When it comes to damages caused to this fortress, the Mministry officers say there was a transfer of responsibility from one authority to another. Aliu says that in this case as well, they will consider the ways of future interventions, since the responsibility cannot lie only at the level of holding one authority or another accountable. one or another authority.

When discussing the admission report provided by Preportr, the director of IAK says that they (IAK, MCYS and IMMRP) were a kind a committee for the



monitor and the executor, in the sense if these two parties had any kind dispute when this report was produced.

“We have found that the works were finished both by the monitor and by the executor. The monitors officially accept the work for every project. I know he had some remarks and he has yet to do some works. There is the rear wall, and as far as I know he finished it afterwards.”

Rexha does not know what happened afterwards, although he admits the time has had some impact on it, the thin layer – as he calls it – that was placed on the walls.

The Fortress of Pogragjë is considered to be the most important archeological site in the Municipality of Gjilan. It has a gorgeous landscape. It lies on the hill 560 meters above sea level but the road that takes you there is very problematic. Even the road that was opened at the time when the intervention was done has little traces left. This is the best case in order to show that the interventions in the assets of cultural heritage were undertaken with no genuine plan, since it is meaningless to intervene in such a site without providing the necessary infrastructure that makes it possible to visit it.

Poor mortar also demolished the wall of the Fortress of Prizren

The demolition of part of the wall of the Fortress of Prizren

ren proves best that construction companies should not intervene in archeological buildings and sites.

According to experts and the Regional Center for Cultural Heritage in Prizren, the demolition came as a result of precipitations and a poor attachment of the material, which means that the mortar was not inadequate. RCCH in Prizren produced a report about the demolition of this wall. Preporfr asked of from this center to see the report, but no answer was received.

The demolished wall is being consolidated as part of works being done in the fortress, but Enver Rexha has another concern. He does not know what will happen with other parts of this wall.

Although some conservation works in this fortress, which cost 61,276 Euros, were done by the company who did the conservation of the Fortress of Harilaq, i.e. “Arting” from Gjakova, Rexha says that the damage is the a result of a much earlier time, respectively the period of the former Yugoslavia, sometime during 70ies or 80ies the seventies or eighties.

“In a report produced by architects of RCCH of Prizren we find that the outer part of about 50-60 centimeters was fastened with mortar, the inner part of over 1 meter, precisely those 5-6 meters where the wall was torn down, was put in place incoherently. and Tthe big floods of last year, the humidity in these 10 years, perhaps the highest one compared to oth-

er years, and the nature in general made the water penetrate into the corridor, and ejected the part of 50-60 centimeters”, says Rexha.

Beside the demolition of the wall, the EU Office in Prishtina in 2011 promised two million Euros for the conservation of the Fortress of Prizren and for other works. This office gave up this commitment due to the considerable and unplanned increase of the cost of the project.

“In 2011 the EU Office in Kosovo financed the preparation of the detailed design for the renovation of the Fortress of Prizren. At that time, 2 million Euros were promised for the construction work and for its renovation. However, in April 2011, the EU decided to give up the project as a result of considerable unplanned increase in of the cost of the project, and due to insufficient commitment by of the Municipality of Prizren”, says a written reply sent by the EU Information Office.

The sum allocated for the preparation of the design according to this Office was 482,770 Euros. Director Aliu says that the works that are taking place in the Fortress of Prizren that include excavations, conservations, and restorations are being done based on this project of the EU Office.

Since it was not possible to secure funds that surpass the 2 million Euros promised by the EU, the project for the Fortress of Prizren is being realized with the funds of the American Em-

bassy in Kosovo, with a sum of 700,000 Ddollars and with the funds of MCYS, with the sum of 200,000 Euros. This project involved the Archeology Institute of Kosovo and Cultural Heritage Without Borders.

Restorations were done without any plans and by unlicensed companies

Projects of restoration and conservation took place with significant domestic and international investments - always questioning whether they are done the way they should be. The institutions that are responsible competent for the protection and the assessment of cultural heritage monuments often raised their voice when it comes to of the way the state approaches this heritage.

Gjejlane Hoxha, director of the Kosovo Council for Cultural Heritage, says that interventions in the cultural heritage sites were always done with no national (state) program or policy, prioritizing real needs.

“Urgent interventions and restorations are mainly done without genuine conservation plans, with unlicensed state teams, neglecting the professional conservation standards,” she says.

As a result, conservation works result in problems that have impacted in the change of authenticity, and damaged the the harm of integrity of the property of the cultural heritage. Hoxha mentions some monuments that

were damaged after the intervention such as: the Grand Hamam of Pristina, the Çarshia Mosque, the Jashar Pasha Mosque in Pristina, the Gazi Mehmet Pasha Hamam in Prizren, the Harilaq archeological site, the Peja Patriarchate, and the Sinan Pasha Mosque in Prizren.

Alban Bakija, director of the Institute for the Protection of Monuments in Kosovo, says that Kosovo lacks a more precise legal framework in the field of restoration and conservation.; it It lacks mechanisms for restoration and conservation, and it lacks guidelines and legal standardization.

“The monitoring is now yet another dimension which is perhaps less problematic, taking into consideration that we do not have a mechanism of an inspectorate in the Ministry of Culture. It is difficult because we do not have a licensing of companies and legal entities that work with conservation and restoration,” he said.

Vjollca Aliu, on the other hand, says that the Ministry of Culture has continuously insisted that the companies that perform do the restoration and conservation of cultural heritage buildings are to be licensed, and “besides that, additional documentation was required, and among others, the Council of Europe guidelines gave recommendations, but those are not in place”. She hopes that the new law will functionalize the licensing system, but also the Cultural Heritage Inspectorate.