

A future for Prishtina's past



“Prishtina is a wonderful modern city featuring remnants of antique cultures: Illyrians, Byzantine and Ottoman. Once discovered, Prishtina divulges its charm and beauty, and you are already in love – with beautiful Prishtina”

www.giskos.com/visitprishtina (2006)



‘Teams of volunteers did one hour of destruction, followed by fifteen minutes of folk dancing’

Prishtina Citizen (2005)

Destroy the Old – Build the New

The story of old Prishtina since 1945 is a story of destruction and wasted opportunities.

In the early communist era, this destruction of the past was the result of deliberate policy. The slogan of “urban development” in the 1950s was “destroy the old, build the new”. As one book from 1959 noted proudly:

“Until the end of World War II, Priština was a typical *Oriental town*. After the Liberation following the Second World War, Priština experienced rapid development in every respect, and it is now day-by-day developing into a modern town. Old shop fronts and other shaky old structures are quickly disappearing to make room for fine, tall, modern-style buildings.”

Priština (1959)



‘Today Prishtina is abandoning its old memories and is departing from its past and becoming a modern city – a new socialist city.’

Pristina (1965)

The “shaky old structures” which were demolished included the covered bazar, one of the largest in the region; the spiritual centre of the town, comprising a mosque, the main Catholic Church and the Synagoge; an old Ottoman Hamam and a large number of Ottoman town houses.

The town grew quickly, and attracted tens of thousands of migrants. But unlike elsewhere in Europe (including, for instance, Sarajevo or Skopje) no attempt was made to preserve the historic centre of what had for centuries been one of the most important towns in the region.



‘We inherited a town without an identity’

Kosovo official (January 2006)



◀Catholic Church (opposite Grand Hotel, today a shopping center)

▼Mother Theresa Street



▼Llukaq Mosque (today Hotel Iliria)



‘In this city without a river
I stand as a stranger,
I take revenge on time with a glass of raki
I’m thinking of you’

‘Hero of a city without a river’, song by Migjen Kelmendi

City Without a River

The old town of Prishtina grew in between two rivers: Vellusha and Prištevka (Prishtina). In the 1950s, the Vellusha river, flowing down from the Germia hills in the East, was covered up. In the late 1970s also the Prishtina river was covered, flowing West of the old town centre. The rivers were simply turned into a sewage system. As a result, even the natural geograpy of the old town was now hidden. By the late 1980s Prishtina had become a town without rivers and a town without a visible past.



‘Architectural heritage constitutes an irreplaceable expression of the richness and diversity of Europe’s cultural heritage’

Granada Convention (1985)

European Standards

In October 1985 European Ministers gathered in the Andalusian town of Granada and passed a resolution calling for “a process of active conservation” of European cultural heritage. They underlined:

“that each country is responsible for the protection of the architectural heritage *within its own territory*, whatever its historical, cultural or national origin, and that the conservation of this heritage is *a matter of general European importance.*”

The signatories to the Convention undertook to protect their cultural heritage; to maintain inventories of what is to be protected; and to ensure that the revitalisation of historic towns and neighbourhoods would be a priority for urban planning.

The Granada conclusions also stress the importance of ‘extending the categories of assets due for protection to cover examples of vernacular, rural, technical and industrial architecture and nineteenth and twentieth century architecture’. They emphasise that the ‘conservation and enhancement of the cultural heritage should be based on active citizen participation’. There was a strong consensus that Europe’s heritage can only survive if it is appreciated by the public at large.

Over the years, a set of European conventions and resolutions – including the 1975 Charter of Architectural Heritage, the Granada Convention (1985), the European Convention on the Protection of Archeological Heritage (1992) and the Convention on Landscape (2000) - added up to a coherent and detailed body of commitments and standards. These should be the standards by which both the outside world and Kosovo citizens measure the performance of Kosovo institutions.

The applicable Law

In 1977 the Assembly of the Autonomous Socialist Province of Kosovo passed a ‘Law on the Protection of Cultural Monuments.’

The law stresses the importance of protecting cultural heritage. It makes clear that the primary responsibility lies with the Institute for the Protection of Monuments (article 4). The Institute is to ‘take measures for the protection of cultural monuments’, including maintaining a registry (article 27). The law notes that for any action concerning cultural monuments or their immediate surrounding a permission from the Institute is required (article 11).

There are clearly defined sanctions included in the law. Article 32 notes that ‘the Institute will be abolished if it does not implement the activities for which it is established’. Article 97 states that ‘anyone who damages or destroys a cultural monument is going to be punished with a penalty or one year in prison.’

The 1977 law is not discriminatory – even though it does not comply with today’s European criteria on preserving cultural heritage. This law is not a law from the Milosevic era. No new law on the protection of cultural heritage has been passed until now to replace it. This means that for the last six years this was and remains the applicable legislation.



The western wall of the Great Hamam in Prishtina – ingrown trees highlight years of neglect

The Kosovo List

Today there are 426 monuments protected in all of Kosovo. This list is no fair representation of *all* of Kosovo's heritage.

Orthodox churches and church ruins	106
Archeological monuments	96
Residences	42
Kullas (traditional stone houses)	28
Orthodox monasteries and ruins	23
Mosques and mosque ruins	23
Historical monuments	22*
Clothes, books, other objects	19
Cemetaries	16
Tekkes and Muslim mausoleums	10
Icons/orthodox iconostasis	7
Bridges	7
Hammams	6
Fountains	4
Catholic churches	3
Bazaars	3
Clock towers	2
Mills	2
Ensembles	1
Others	6
TOTAL	426

*In 2003, the last historical building was added to the list.

In Prishtina town there are 21 protected monuments. See the complete list on page 11.



The Prishtina List

In the last months, ESI and IKS tried to locate all 21 protected buildings in Prishtina town and assess their condition today. This was not easy. For once, there are different lists used by the Kosovo Institute for the Protection of Monuments and the Prishtina Institute. Addresses on the lists no longer correspond with street names, and several monuments have disappeared altogether –nothing remained but their name on the list.

1. Sultan Mehmet al-Fatih Mosque
2. Pirinaz Mosque
3. Bazaar Mosque
4. Jashar Pasha Mosque
5. St.Nicolas Iconostasis
6. Archbishopric Houses
7. Clock Tower
8. Fountain
9. Jewish Cemetary
10. Great Hammam
11. Tjerrtorja Archeological Site
12. Ruins of the Old Hammam
13. Kosovo Museum
14. Kosovo Institute for the Protection of Monuments
15. Private residence/ UCK Str.
16. Emin Gjik Museum
17. Hynylar House
18. Private residence/Tanasko Raisic Str.
19. ‘Hivzi Sylejmani’ City Library/UCK St. 10
20. Private residence/ M. Popovic Str.
21. Collection of Manuscripts of the Islamic Community

To assess the actual situation, it is best to look at each of the monuments individually.



Mbretit Mosque (Sultan Mehmet II al- Fatih Mosque, listed since 1953)

This mosque was built in 1460-1461, only eight years after the fall of Constantinople, by Sultan Mehmet II al-Fatih – *the Conqueror*. Located right in the heart of the old town center, it is Prishtina's largest and most prominent mosque. Its cupola was once the biggest in the region, while today it is the last mosque built by Sultan Mehmet II remaining in the Balkans. The square in front of Mbretit Mosque has always been a popular meeting point. In 1682-83, the mosque was restored under the reign of Sultan Mehmet IV, the minaret was repaired again following an earthquake in 1955. The mosque is suffering from deterioration and unprofessional restoration works; bad infrastructure in the area is causing dampness in the walls and deterioration of the stones.



Pirinaz Mosque (listed since 1967)

Pirinaz Mosque is made of the same stone as Mbretit (Fatih) Mosque. It was built about a hundred years later, in the second half of the 16th century. Its founder, a man called Piri Nazir, served as Vezir under two Ottoman Sultans. The 'Stone of Lazar', located in the garden of the mosque is where according to local legend Prince Lazar was beheaded in 1389. Before being moved to Ravanici monastery, Prince Lazar was buried in Pirinaz Mosque with the permission of Sultan Bayazid.



Carshi Mosque (Bazaar Mosque, listed since 1967)

Carshi Mosque marks the beginning of the old town center. Built in the early 15th century by Sultan Bayazid to commemorate the victory of the Ottoman forces in 1389, it is the oldest standing building in Prishtina today.

In the past, Carshi Mosque overlooked the old covered bazaar of Prishtina. Today, nothing is left of the old bazaar, only the name of Carshi mosque serves as a reminder. Many subsequent changes and repair works have changed the original look of this mosque, but its symbol – the unique stone-topped minaret – has survived for more than 600 years. The mosque is also nicknamed - ‘Tas Mosque’, literally ‘Stone Mosque’.



Jashar Pasha Mosque (listed since 1967)

Jashar Mehmet Pasha was a wealthy citizen of Prishtina. He served as governor of Skopje in 1842. According to inscriptions inside the mosque, the mosque was built in 1834. The original portico was demolished to give way for an expansion of Nazim Gafurri Road passing right in front of the mosque. Overall, the building is suffering from dampness and cracks, infiltrating through cracks in dome.



Iconostasis in Saint Nicolas's Church and the Archbishop's Residences (listed since 1956 and 1961, respectively)

Saint Nicolas Church has in recent years been the only active Serbian Orthodox Church in Prishtina. Dating back to the 19th century, it was probably constructed by stonemasons from Western Macedonia. The most valuable treasure of the church has been the protected iconostasis of 1840. During the March violence in 2004, the church was set on fire by angry crowds. A temporary roof has since been constructed to prevent further dampening of the walls and damage to the wall paintings. The adjacent buildings belong to the Kosovo Museum. Today, they house the Ministry of Environment and Spatial Planning.



Sahat Kulla (Clock Tower, listed since 1967)

The clock tower dates back to the 19th century. Following a fire, the tower has been reconstructed using bricks. The original bell was brought to Kosovo from Moldavia. It bore an inscription reading *'this bell was made in 1764 for Jon Moldova Rumen'*. In 2001, the original bell was stolen. The same year, French KFOR troops replaced the old clock mechanism with an electric one. Given Kosovo's electricity problems – the clock tower is struggling to 'keep time'.



Shadervan (Fountain, listed since 1967)

Between Carshi Mosque and the Kosovo Museum this decorated marble fountain – known as ‘shadervan’- is the only surviving public fountain of its kind in Prishtina today. In the past, dozens of similar public fountains scattered across the town, provided for refreshment and the possibility of ablution (ritual washing).



Jewish Cemetery (listed since 1967)

The Jewish Cemetery is located on top of Tauk Bahqe hill, near Velania. It dates back to the 19th century. At that time, Prishtina’s Jewish Community had about 1,500 members. The cemetery was put under protection in 1967. Back then, it counted 57 tomb stones. Today, the cemetery is in a desolate state. Surrounded by a metal fence, isolated tombstones are scattered between thorny bushes and high grass.



Foundations of the Old Hamam (listed since 1959)

Today, nothing is left of the old Hamam, as it disappeared during successive waves of urban renovation. It was once located besides Carshi mosque. Its ruins were discovered during the construction of today’s Government Building; they were considered important examples of early Ottoman town architecture. However, without due research, they were quickly covered up by previous town planners.



Great Hamam (listed since 1985)

The Great Hamam of Prishtina dates back to the 15th century. It once formed an essential part of the ensemble around Mbretit (Fatih) mosque and served as a social meeting point for both men and women. Legend tells that Sultan Mehmet al-Fatih ordered all workers hired to build Fatih mosque to take daily baths in the Hamam. Following a fire in 1994, the previous regime permitted the construction of three shops effectively closing off the old entrance, and allowing a sewage pipe to run right through the building. Today, little more than a few damaged walls are left, leaving the building in immediate need for protection.



'Tjerrtorja' Archeological Site (listed since 1955)

Tjerrtorja was a Neolithic settlement located on the outskirts of Prishtina. The site was discovered during the construction of the first socially-owned enterprise in Prishtina, a yarn spinning factory. All excavation efforts were halted after the factory was built and the site has never been fully explored.



Kosovo Museum (listed since 1967)

This Austro-Hungarian inspired building was originally built for the regional administration of the Kosovo Vilajet. From 1945 until 1975 it served as headquarters for the Yugoslav National Army. In 1963, it was sold to the Kosovo Museum. From 1999 until 2002, the European Agency for Reconstruction had its main office in the museum building. The Kosovo Museum has an extensive collection of archaeological and ethnological artifacts. In 1998, more than 1,247 exhibit pieces were taken to Belgrade for an exhibition. The Museum is still waiting for their return.



Kosovo Institute for the Protection of Cultural Monuments (listed since 1957)

The building of the Kosovo Institute for the Protection of Monuments is located in the former home of the Kocadishi family. After nationalisation of their private property, the family migrated to Turkey. In 1954, the building was given to the newly established Kosovo Institute for the Protection of Cultural Monuments.



UCK Street 66 (listed since 1967)

The old building under protection was destroyed without permission, and in its place the Kosovo Post and Telecom Company built its new offices. The old protected building was the home of Aleksandar Aca Marovic – a founding member of the Communist Party in Kosovo – and has served as a meeting place for the communists of Gracanica (Prishtina) District since 1941.



Emin Gjiku Complex (listed since 1955)

This home once belonged to the well-known Gjinolli family. Since 1957 the group of buildings – including the servants’ quarters, the guest house and the family’s private home- belongs to the Kosovo Museum. Emin Gjinolli’s nickname was ‘little man’, or in Turkish ‘*Eminçik*’. This later became ‘Emin Gjiku’. Just on the left hand side, as one enters the premises, one can find the only building that survived the destruction of the old bazaar. It was moved here in 1963. Until the 1990s, the complex was used as a Natural Museum. In 2003, renovation works started with the help of international donations to turn it into an Ethnological Museum.



Hynyer House (listed since 1967)

This private home – a typical Ottoman konak- has been under protection since 1967. The family has recently been trying to take their house off the list of protected monuments.



Private Home on Tanasko Raic St. (today's Gustav Mayer St., listed since 1967)

In this building, the founding meeting for the Youth Communist Party of the Gracanica (Prishtina) district took place in 1941. It was put under protection in 1967 to commemorate the role of the Youth Communist Party in the 'National Liberation Movement' in Prishtina town and the surrounding region.



'Hivzi Sylejmani' – Library (listed since 1967)

The building of the Prishtina City Library was built in 1930. Its claim to fame is Miladin Popovic, the former leader of Kosovo's Regional Committee of the Communist Party who was accommodated in this house in 1944. Since 1948, the building houses the Prishtina City Library.



Private House on M. Popovic St. (today's Nazim Gafurri St., housing the Academy of Arts and Sciences Building, listed since 1955)

This protected house is one of a few remaining typical 19th century town houses in Prishtina. After the Second World War, this building was nationalized and became a property of the Cultural Secretariat, the equivalent of today's Ministry of Culture. The Academy of Arts and Sciences has been located in this building since its inception in 1975.



Collection of Manuscripts of the Islamic Community (listed since 1961)

The Islamic Community's Central archive had been established in the late Ottoman period as a provincial archive for records and deeds of religious foundations as well as records about Islamic schools. The archive was torched by Serb policemen on 13 June 1999; the largest part of the collection of records going back for more than 300 years perished in the flames. Only a small part of the records moved to a different building of the Kosovo Archives survived.

A Different Future for the Past?

Communism was responsible for a programme of planned destruction of cultural heritage in Kosovo. A policy of at-best neglect under Milosevic was followed - in 1998/1999 – by a campaign of physical destruction of cultural monuments across Kosovo. In Prishtina town, mosques (Llapi mosque) and buildings (including the collection of manuscripts of the Islamic Community) were burned.

On 9 June 1999, the Serbian authorities took the entire archive of the Kosovo Institute for the Protection of Monuments to Belgrade. No records have been returned since. The Kosovo Museum is also waiting for the return of more than 1,247 archeological and ethnological exhibit pieces taken to Belgrade for an exhibition.

The period *since* 1999, however, instead of reversing a negative trend that has lasted for decades, has seen even more destruction. In August 2000, the Association of Architects of Kosovo published a letter urging action:

‘As a result of the destruction as well as illegal construction the historical heart of the city and objects of architectural and urban value, which reflect our entire cultural heritage, are being badly affected.’

Starting in 2001 there have been many calls by international and Kosovar experts to put together a new inventory of Kosovo’s cultural heritage. Substantial funds have been spent on identifying close to 3,000 monuments and sites, developing a database and training staff in the responsible institutions. Preparing an inventory of heritage sites was also one of the standards to be met. And yet, until today there is no published inventory. No institution appears to be following up in detail what is actually happening to the monuments that are legally protected.

In fact, negligence and destruction continued. If one takes a closer look at the (already very short) list of 21 monuments in Prishtina town, the picture gets even worse: a building under protection has been destroyed to make room for an office building of PTK (UCK St. 66); and while looking for 76 buildings that were put on a preliminary list in 2000 on seven streets in downtown Prishtina, IKS analysts found that 19 had disappeared since 2001.

There is thus an urgent need to change course and reverse six decades of a destructive policy towards the past. It is urgent for three main reasons:

1. Unless the destruction of Prishtina’s cultural heritage is halted now, there will be little to preserve for future generations;
2. Unless Kosovo institutions can prove now that they are able and willing to implement an applicable law that has been in force for decades, what difference will even a new and better law make?
3. Unless the Kosovo government and civil society demonstrate that the commitment to European standards is backed up by the will to enforce these standards now, Kosovo’s position for status talks on cultural heritage is weakened;

Towards a new era...

Based on our ongoing research, and the recommendations already made by numerous national and international experts in this field, ESI and IKS recommend the following:

1. **For the Kosovo Assembly** to declare its full support to European standards in the area of protection of heritage, and to officially embrace the acquis of the Council of Europe in this field;
2. **For the Kosovo Assembly** to hold hearings with all relevant institutions (the Ministry of Culture, the Kosovo Institute, the Prishtina Institute, the Kosovo Museum, Prishtina Municipality and others) to establish clearly what would need to be done to effectively enforce European standards;
3. **For the Ministry of Culture and the Ministry of Spatial Planning** to hold a high-level seminar in Prishtina to underline the importance given to this issue across Kosovo, to discuss concrete ways forward to implement a National Integrated Conservation Strategy for Kosovo, and to give strong political backing to all institutions to enforce the laws;
4. **For the Kosovo Institute for the Protection of Monuments** to complete and publish its existing inventory of protected monuments; to initiate court cases in all instances in which the applicable law on the protection of monuments is violated; and to work closely with the municipality in the field of urban planning to ensure effective protection;
5. **For the UN** to lend its full support to Kosovo initiatives in this area, including the passing of a new and modern law on cultural heritage; and to ensure that the KTA and its privatisation strategy is also respectful of Council of Europe standards and the conservation strategies of relevant Kosovo institutions;
6. **For Kosovo civil society** to raise the profile of this issue, and explain to the broader public the economic and social significance of effective national heritage conservation;
7. **For the international community** to put pressure on Belgrade to return the archives of the Kosovo Institute for the Protection of Monuments as a preliminary step to the opening of the status talks on this issue.

About IKS and ESI

About IKS

IKS is a non profit research institute established in summer 2004 by three Kosovar analysts. IKS offers innovative and policy-relevant research to initiate debates on issues of importance for Kosovo's development. It applies ESI's methodology of empirical policy research from a Kosovar perspective.

The work of IKS is supported by an Advisory Board including Kosovar and international analysts and practitioners. In 2006 IKS is funded by the Balkan Trust for Democracy, the Rockefeller Brothers Foundation, the Kosovo Foundation for Open Society and the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation.

In partnership with 'tiri' – the governance-access-learning-network of eight think tanks from around the world - IKS is undertaking research on corruption and waste in the post-war reconstruction phase. In the coming months, IKS will study the socio-economic conditions of Kosovo Serbs, including in Mitrovica. For more information on IKS please visit www.iksweb.org.

About ESI

ESI is a Berlin-based independent policy institute focusing on European integration and the future of South Eastern Europe in particular. Since its creation in 1999 ESI has published extensively on developments in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Serbia, Montenegro, Macedonia, Bulgaria, Turkey and on general EU policy towards the region.

Starting in 2001, ESI has published a number of reports on Kosovo. These have covered issues of regional development (Peja, Mitrovica, South East Kosovo), international policy (*The Ottoman Dilemma*), minority issues, the future of Kosovo Serbs (*People or Territory, The Lausanne Principle*) and economic development (*Towards a Kosovo Development Plan*). ESI has also produced documentaries. All reports are made available on: www.esiweb.org.

ESI is also supporting the work of newly established think-tanks, including IKS in Kosovo and CRPM in Macedonia.

About the Prishtina research project

For the past months, IKS and ESI have been doing research on the socio-economic fabric of Prishtina, working in partnership with the Austrian Erste Bank Privatstiftung as part of a wider *New Economic Geography of the Balkans* project. For this IKS and ESI analysts have met with policymakers, businessmen, civil society and municipal officials to explore development trends and look at issues ranging from Prishtina's cultural heritage to economic development and urban planning. A full report will be produced as a result of this work in the near future.