BALKAN RESEARCH JOURNAL

Conservation of Heritage Buildings and the Role of Architect

Jasna Grujoska-Kuneska

© IBU

DOI: https://doi.org//10.69648/ILNS5590

Journal of Balkan Architecture(JBA), 2024; 1(1): 31-40

jba.ibupress.com

Online ISSN: 2955-2524

Application : 01.09.2024

Revision : 03.10.2024

Acceptance : 25.10.2024

Publication : 28.11.2024

Kuneska, J. (2024). Conservation of Heritage Buildings and the Role of Architect. Balkan Research Journal, 1(1), 31-40.

https://doi.org//10.69648/ILNS5590

Jasna Grujoska-Kuneska

International Balkan University, Skopje, N. Macedonia

The paper was presented at the Media, Digital Culture and Religion Congress, Kayseri, Turkiye. I declare no conflicts of interest.

Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Sead Dzigal, Email: sead.dzigal@ibu.edu.mk

BALKAN JOURNALS

Abstract

Cultural heritage is a rich and diverse mosaic of tangible and intangible assets, inherited from past generations. As part of the tangible heritage, historic buildings are standing witnesses of the time, culture, and people who created them, and as such, are perhaps the most remarkable and deserve special devotion and treatment.

The meaning and the treatment of cultural heritage through history have been constantly exposed to changes, but in the last century, it finally taken its rightful place. Protection of cultural heritage is a multidisciplinary task that combines traditions with modern techniques and involves professionals from different fields. The aim of safeguarding heritage is to maintain its authenticity and preserve its material and semantic values. Therefore, any conservation process should be based on a clear concept that requires minimum intervention.

This paper aims to present the key steps in every conservation process, primarily through the coordinating role of the architect. It highlights not only that the architects need to develop a wide array of skills and knowledge to carry out any work on historical buildings and sites but also that an architect has an essential role in identifying the potential challenges and opportunities of historic buildings, extending its lifetime and enhancing the values.

Keywords: cultural heritage, conservation, multidisciplinary team, architect's role

Introduction

Cultural heritage is the legacy of past generations that provides invaluable insight into our evolution and promotes a sense of social identity (Wijesuriya et al., 2013; Stanton-Geddes & Soz, 2017). As a reflection of historical, social, and cultural values, heritage can play a significant role in tourism development, economic growth, and sustainable development of the countries. Today, it abounds in great diversity. According to UNESCO (The United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization) it is generally divided into two main groups: tangible and intangible heritage. Tangible heritage refers to monuments, groups of buildings, sites, artifacts, and other significant works of art. Intangible heritage embodies the knowledge, skills, traditions, and rituals that are transmitted from one generation to another (Stanton-Geddes & Soz, 2017).

As part of tangible heritage, historic buildings are perhaps the most remarkable, primarily because of their capacity to evoke people's interest and express the individuality of the nations. These are the buildings that have persisted over the period of hundreds or thousands of years and today hold many values: historic, cultural, social, economic, architectural, aesthetic, and many others. During the long period of existence, historic buildings are exposed to adverse impacts of natural, biological, and human factors, which lead to gradual damage to their materials and structure. Lack of maintenance and the loss of traditional knowledge have also increased their vulnerability in many regions of the world (Feilden, 2003).

The meaning and the treatment of cultural heritage throughout history have constantly changed. Not long ago, the protection of heritage buildings only concerned the physical condition of the monument and cared for the visible and tangible elements. Over time, this perception has changed, and the importance of preserving the semantic aspects of the monument is also considered (Taher Tolou Del et al., 2020). The modern approach involves maintenance of the authenticity and preserving the material and semantic values that make the monument unique. For this purpose, there is no simple "recipe," primarily because each monument is a case on its own, but the existence of a clear concept with chronologically set activities will certainly lead to correct decisions and suitable protection.

A Brief History Overview of Conservation Practice

In the 19th century, led by prominent architects such as William Morris (1834-1896) and John Ruskin (1819-1900), a new movement that shaped the conser-

vation practice in Europe was born. Although conservation initially developed as a critique of restoration practice, over time, it was transformed into a modern approach to the protection of historic buildings and artifacts (Jokilehto, 2017). In 1877, the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings (SPAB) was formed in England, which played a huge role in promoting conservation principles and, later, training the practical skills of architects and other professionals (Goddard, 2020).

In Italy, the influence of Camillo Boito (1836-1914) in the development of international conservation practice is quite important, being the basis for the Athens Charter of 1931. According to him, historical monuments represent the contributions of different periods, and every historical change deserves the same attention. In the protection of cultural heritage, Boito gives preference to consolidation over conservation and preference to conservation over restoration (Jokilehto, 2017).

In the 20th century, interest in historic buildings and sites significantly increased, and conservation became an integral part of architectural education. Great contributions to this educational process had numerous courses on architectural conservation, mostly promoted by architects, including several well-known names such as William Arthur Eden (1906-1975), William Singleton (1916-1960), James Marston Fitch (1909- 2000), Sir Bernard Feilden (1919-2008), Piero Gazzola (1908-1979), Cevat Erder (1931-2022) and many others, (Goddard, 2020).

The Austrian art historian and conservator Alois Riegl (1858-1905) is considered the author of the first modern conservation theory of the early 20th century. His great contribution is related to the art conservation and protection of historic buildings, and he is one of the first conservators to identify the monument as a system of values (Harrer, 2017).

After the Second World War, a number of organizations advocating for heritage protection expanded. UNESCO, ICCROM (the International Center for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Heritage), ICOM (International Council of Museums), and ICOMOS (the International Council on Monuments and Sites) are some of the most prominent. These organizations, through many activities, promote all forms of cultural heritage, support research in this area, engage in the protection processes, and develop educational programs for staff training (Jokilehto, 2017). UNESCO's international charters for the conservation and restoration of cultural heritage advocate standards and recommendations for interventions related to historical monuments and sites. In 1954, the General Conference of UNESCO adopted the Hague Convention on the Protection of Cultural

Property in the Event of Armed Conflict (Jokilehto, 2011). The work of Blue Shield International (1996) is based on this convention and its two protocols of 1954 and 1999, with a broader concept. This organization engages in the protection of cultural heritage across the world in emergency situations - armed conflicts and natural disasters (Blue Shield, 2016).

The frequent conferences in the period of the 1960s and 70s are an indicator of the growing international interest in heritage conservation, including experts in various fields, although architecture remains the dominant profession. These meetings, among other things, highlight the need for additional conservation education for architects. By the 80s, the domain of conservation theory had expanded. Charters and conventions pointed out the intangible aspects in addition to the physical ones (Goddard, 2020).

By the end of the 20th century, the boundaries of cultural heritage were significantly extended. From historic buildings and sites, the field of cultural heritage extends to various architectural, urban, and landscape forms, and industrial heritage, covers more recent periods (protection of the XX-century architecture), and develops a different approach based on values (Wijesuriya et al., 2013).

The beginning of the 21st century highlights the interdisciplinary character and the significance that cultural heritage has in every society as a significant aspect of its national identity. The modern approach to conservation and management of cultural heritage includes material (tangible) and immaterial (semantic) values, combined with the science of modern materials and technologies, (Orbaşli, 2017). At the conference in Cyprus (2017), the Council of Europe promoted the "European Cultural Heritage Strategy for the 21st Century", which aims to enable greater visibility and focus on cultural heritage in societies where heritage is recognized as a common responsibility and involves not only the responsible institutions but also professionals, local associations and the civil society, (Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe, 2017).

The Conservation Process in Architectural Heritage

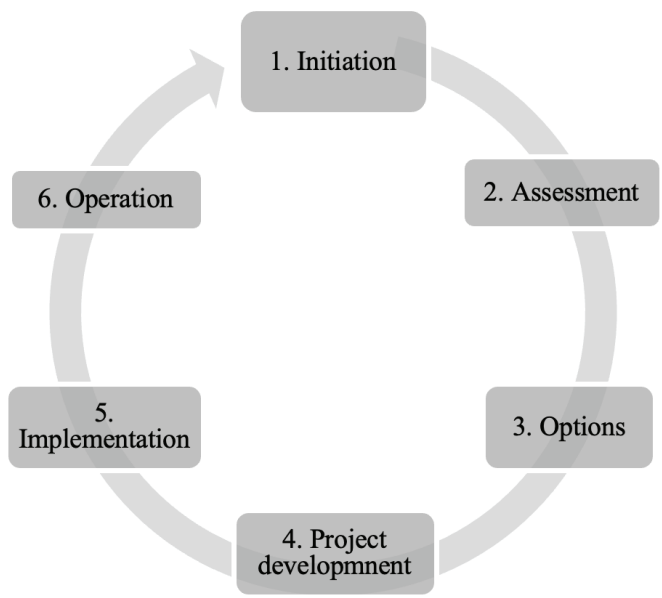
Preservation of historic buildings involves more than simply "saving an old building"; it entails the preservation of cultural, architectural, historical, economic, and all the other values that make the monument unique. Therefore, it is essentially different from the protection of another type of buildings. The conservation plan is a synthesis of the conservation principles and values research. The principles of conservation refer to a few aspects (Maxwell & Bridgwood, 2021)

- Minimal interventions;
- Minimal loss of authenticity;
- Minimal loss of the original material;
- Reversibility;

Every conservation process implies minor or major changes, and as such, is a significant moment in the lifetime of the monument. Although each historic building, as a distinct artistic creation of its time, requires an individual approach, the organizations and institutions such as ICCROM and the Getty Conservation Center, which are the most prominent in this area, point out the presence of certain activities that can be mapped in every conservation process. These activities can be grouped into six important steps (phases), fig. 1 (Letellier, 2007).

Figure 1.

Phases of the conservation process (Letellier, 2007)



Phase 1 - Initiation: In this, first phase, it is important to understand the need for intervention and to clearly define the problem that needs to be solved, which is why the whole conservation team is involved. During this phase, all available documentation that can be found in museums, historical archives, conservation centers, libraries etc. is collected and studied.

The output of this phase is a clear concept of the further activities in the project, presented in the form of a comprehensive report, (Letellier, 2007; Kerr, 2013).

Phase 2 - Assessment: This phase is of essential importance for the conservation process because the overall assessment of the monument can provide the necessary information for an appropriate methodology and minimal interventions. This phase includes an assessment of the values and assessment of the physical condition.

The output of this phase is a good diagnosis (Letellier, 2007).

Phase 3 - Options: At this stage, the team has a clear idea regarding the current condition of the monument, thus defining what is important to conserve. Several conservation approaches are considered during this stage. For each considered approach, cost estimation and a time frame are made. The advantages and disadvantages of each approach are also identified, and a recommendation is made.

The output of this phase is the choice of the best approach (Letellier, 2007).

Phase 4 – Project development: At this stage, the proposed approach turns into a well-defined conservation project. All participants, architects, construction engineers, art historians, technologists, conservators etc., are involved in preparing the project documentation- analyses, precise drawings, specifications, detailed budget and schedule of activities.

The output of this phase is a conservation project design (Letellier, 2007).

Phase 5 – Implementation: In this phase, all previously planned activities are carried out - the conservation is completed. Records produced in this stage may include: work progress, photographs from different phases of work, maintenance regulations, samples of the used material and other important data in electronic form.

The output of this phase is a completed project (Letellier, 2007; Feilden, 2003).

Phase 6 – Operation: In this phase, an assessment of the performed conservation activities and the quality of the work is carried out, manuals for the maintenance of the building are prepared, and a maintenance staff is trained. The entire conservation project is archived.

The output of this phase is a good management of the implemented project (Letellier, 2007).

Multidisciplinary Conservation Team and the Role of the Architect

Heritage conservation is a multidisciplinary activity that comprises knowledge from many scientific disciplines. It brings together professionals of diverse fields and expertise. Architects, engineer-constructors, conservators, art historians, and technologists are part of the team, but depending on the requirements, other experts may be involved. The effectiveness of the conservation process does not depend on the quality of one person but on the synergy of different disciplines and teamwork (Jokilehto, 2007). The ICOMOS Guidelines for Education and Training for the Conservation of Monuments, Ensembles, and Sites, approved at the Colombo General Assembly of ICOMOS in 1993, emphasize that conservation work should be entrusted to professionals who are competent to carry out the work and possess certain abilities and skills, fig. 2. The figure shows that of these participants, six should meet all the listed criteria, including the architect. For this purpose, he should primarily have the basic and practical experiences of a general architect but also have additional competencies regarding the conservation process (Feilden, 2003).

Figure 2

ICOMOS Guidelines, (Feilden, 2003)

Profession **Tasks**

		A	*B*	*C*	*D*	*E*	*F*	*G*	*H*	*I*	*J*	*K*	*L*	*M*	*N*	*score*
01	Administrator/owner			x	x				x	x	x		x	x	x	8
02	Archaeologist	x	x	x	x				x	x	x	x	x	x		10
03	Architect	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	14
04	Art/architectural historian		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x		x	x	x		11
05	Builder/contractor		x			x	x	x	x	x		x	x		x	9
06	Conservation officer	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	14
07	Conservator	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	14
08	Engineer		x		x	x	x	x	x	x			x	x		9
09	Environmental engineer			x	x	x	x	x	x	x		x	x	x		10
10	Landscape architect	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	14
11	Master craft worker		x				x	x	x	x				x		6
12	Materials scientist		x		x	x	x	x	x	x		x	x	x		10
13	Building economist				x			x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	9
14	Surveyor	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	14
15	Town planner			x	x			x	x	x		x	x	x	x	9
16	Curator	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	14
		7	12	11	14	11	12	14	16	16	9	13	15	15	10	

(a) read a monument, ensemble or site and identifies its emotional, cultural and use significance;

(b) understand the history and technology of monuments, ensembles or sites in order to define their identity, plan for their conservation, and interpret the results of this research;

(c) understand the setting of a monument, ensemble or site, their contents and surroundings, in relation to other buildings, gardens or landscapes;

(d) find and absorb all available sources of information relevant to the monument, ensemble or site being studied;

(e) understand and analyses the behavior of monuments, ensembles and sites as complex systems;

(f) diagnose intrinsic and extrinsic causes of decay as a basis for appropriate action;

(g) inspect and make reports intelligible to nonspecialist readers of monuments, ensembles or sites, illustrated by graphic means such as sketches and photographs;

(h) know, understand and apply UNESCO conventions and recommendations, and ICOMOS and other recognized Charters, regulations and guidelines;

(i) make balanced judgments based on shared ethical principles, and accept responsibility for the long-term welfare of cultural heritage;

(j) recognize when advice must be sought and define the areas of need of study by different specialists, e.g. wall paintings, sculpture and objects of artistic and historical value, and or studies of materials and systems;

(k) give expert advice on maintenance strategies, management policies and the policy framework for environmental protection and preservation of monuments and their contents, and sites;

(l) document works executed and make them accessible;

(m) work in multi-disciplinary groups using sound methods;

(n) be able to work with inhabitants, administrators and planners to resolve conflicts, and to develop conservation strategies appropriate to local needs, abilities and resources, (Feilden, 2003)

From the very beginnings of modern conservation, there has been a close connection between architecture and the protection of historic buildings (Goddard, 2020). In modern conservation processes, the role of the architect remains particularly significant. The architect should coordinate the work of the team, value and prioritize the arguments based on science and experience, compromise different opinions, and lead to acceptable decisions in order to preserve all those values that make the monument unique (Grujoska & Shendova, 2021).

As part of the team, architects have an essential role in every step of the conservation process, from assessing the values of the monument to compiling manuals for its further maintenance, table 1.

Table 1

The role of an architect in the conservation process (Feilden, 2003; Letellier, 2007; Puteri & Puspitasari, 2021)

Phase 1 - Initiation	The architect is usually consulted at the beginning of the process regarding the condition, integrity and usability of the building
Phase 2 - Assessment	The architect is involved in assessing the values and condition of the monument's architecture, collecting data and recording
Phase 3 - Options	Several conservation approaches are studied, the architect give recommendations for implementing interventions with different priorities
Phase 4 – Project development	The architect is involved in the preparation of specifications, scale drawings (situations, floor plans, sections, facades) and details
Phase 5 – Implementation	The architect may be involved in monitoring the progress of the work and to assess the effectiveness of the proposed methods
Phase 6 – Operation	The architect is involved in compiling a program to maintain the life cycle of the monument and train a staff responsible for the further monitoring and maintenance of the building

Conclusion

Historic buildings are a significant part of our shared heritage that provides a tangible connection to our past and invaluable insight into our evolution, traditions and culture. In the last few decades the concept of heritage conservation has been changed and developed a different approach, based on values. The modern approach to conservation includes the material (tangible) and immaterial (semantic) values, combined with the Science of modern materials and technologies. Although there is still no particular standard for conservation, heritage organizations agree that there are certain activities that can be mapped in all conservation processes. These activities can be grouped in 6 phases: initiation, assessment, options, project development, implementation and operation. Conserving architectural heritage usually requires a multidisciplinary approach, involving a variety of professionals. As part of the team, architects have an essential role to play in every step of the conservation process, from assessing the heritage values to providing maintenance manuals for further activities.

References

Blue Shield. (2016). *Blue Shield*. https://theblueshield.org/

Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe. (2017). *European Heritage Strategy for the 21st Century*.

Feilden, B. (2003). *Conservation of Historic Buildings* (3rd Editio). Oxford; Burlington, MA: Architectural Press.

Goddard, J. (2020). Education in Architectural Conservation: Its Origins and Development. *Conservation Perspectives, The GCI Newsletter*, *35*(2).

Grujoska, J. & Shendova, V. (2021). The Role of Architect in Earthquake Protection of Cultural Heritage. *1st Croatian Conference on Earthquake Engineering*, 47–58. https://doi.org/10.5592/CO/1CroCEE.2021.99

Harrer, A. (2017). The Legacy of Alois Riegl: Material Authenticity of the Monument in the Digital Age. *Built Heritage*, *1*(2), 29–40. https://doi.org/10.1186/BF03545661

Jokilehto, J. (2007). An International Perspective to Conservation Education. *Built Environment*, *33*(3), 275–286. https://doi.org/10.2148/benv.33.3.275

Jokilehto, J. (2011). *ICCROM and the Conservation of Cultural Heritage: A history of the organization's first 50 years, 1959-2009*. ICCROM.

Jokilehto, J. (2017). *A history of architectural conservation* (2nd Editio). Routledge.

Kerr, J. S. (2013). *Conservation plan: A Guide to the preparation of conservation plans for places of European cultural significance* (7th Editio). Australia ICOMOS.

Letellier, R. (2007). *Recording, Documentation, and Information Management for the Conservation of Heritage Places: Guiding Principles*. Getty Conservation Institute.

Maxwell, I. & Bridgwood, B. (2021). Understanding Conservation: Need to be Skilled in Cultural Significance. *COTAC*.

Orbaşli, A. (2017). Conservation theory in the twenty-first century: slow evolution or a paradigm shift? *Journal of Architectural Conservation*, *23*(3), 157–170. https://doi.org/10.1080/13556207.2017.1368187

Puteri, S. & Puspitasari, P. (2021). Exploratory study: Conservation practices and the role of architect. *IOP Conference Series: Earth and Environmental Science*, *780*(1), 012061. https://doi.org/10.1088/1755-1315/780/1/012061

Stanton-Geddes, Z. & Soz, S. A. (2017). *Promoting Disaster Resilient Cultural Heritage*. Word Bank.

Taher Tolou Del, M. S., Saleh Sedghpour, B. & Kamali Tabrizi, S. (2020). The semantic conservation of architectural heritage: the missing values. *Heritage Science*, *8*(1), 70. https://doi.org/10.1186/s40494-020-00416-w

Wijesuriya, G., Thompson, J. & Young, C. (2013). *Managing cultural world heritage*. the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization.