

URBANISM WATCH

Urbanism of Prizren under
Constant Watch

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PRESS RELEASE

The analysis “Where is the cobblestone of Prizren?” and the Map of old houses released

‘EC Ma Ndryshe’, on Wednesday, within the “Urbanism of Prizren under Constant Watch” project, introduced two new products addressing urban identity and cultural heritage of the city, that are being transformed day after day, giving a different and distorting view to Prizren, contrary to the collective memory of the community.

The first product is the research on the cobblestones of the streets of Prizren, titled “Where is the cobblestone of Prizren?” which brings to the fore the developments in relation to this material, which was replaced with asphalt, even within the perimeter of the first zone of the Historic Centre, without a proper debate with all social stakeholders.

The second product is the map of old vernacular houses of Prizren, which is the result of an extensive work of documenting this part of the cultural heritage. The old houses (citizen) of Prizren are the cultural heritage category which has suffered the most in the last 15 years. Map of the old houses is also an effort of EC Ma Ndryshe to plea for civic and institutional action for rescuing the remaining houses. You can check the map at the link <http://cdb.io/1qIYO48>.

The research “Where is the cobblestone of Prizren” highlights the fact that Prizren, as an urban centre, has been distinguished for centuries by its architectural features, where the city was built with traditional materials, amongst which the cobblestones represent historic identity of its streetscape (streets and alleys). As such, the cobblestone has bestowed character and charm to the squares and the streets of Prizren in the past, continuing to award that spirit to this day in the remaining parts.

This culture stratified over the centuries, which is inherited up to the present day, according to the findings of the research was faced with the risk of disappearing from the streets of Prizren due to interventions on behalf of the development of a modern infrastructure, by fully ignoring the identity of historic urban centre of the city. Furthermore, local government has taken these actions with an authoritarian approach, without any comprehensive debate and with the belief that only the municipal establishment knows what is best for the city and its citizens.

As an outcome of such approach, during postwar years, in some central streets of Prizren the cobblestone was removed and replaced with asphalt. For the sake of easing vehicular traffic, one of the elements of the historical identity of the city had been sacrificed. And the cobblestones removed, according to the report, were deposited in two locations, with an inventory record which did not excel for accuracy. Meanwhile, the history of the decision for the removal of the cobblestones with the designed projects has been erased also from the institutional memory of Prizren municipality due to the fire which has gobbled up local administration building.

Subsequently the ashes have covered many questions that still remain unanswered. For accountability or responsibility couldn't care less. But what the report ascertains is that a part of Prizren's identity has been mutilated that could hardly ever be restored.

This report therefore comes more as an input towards the promotion of the value of cobblestones, documenting the damage caused to the city with its removal from the central streets, presenting the need to preserve it and possibly opening of the debate about reinstatement of this material at least in the central zone of Prizren.

In July of 2013, 'EC Ma Ndryshe' began with the implementation of the "Urbanism of Prizren under Constant Watch" project, financially supported by the Kosovo Foundation for Open Society (KFOS). The need for overseeing developments in the urban planning sector has naturally emerged as a result of numerous adverse developments during the post-war and transition period that were manifested in urban degradation and lopsided spatial planning. The project will continue to monitor and publish findings from the field of urbanism and spatial planning, as well as in addressing institutional responsibility.

With regards,

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