

INTIATIVE FOR PROTECTION OF LUMBARDHI CINEMA

Advocacy Training & Resource Center (ATRC), AKV Lidhja e Prizrenit, Alter Habitus, Anibar, Balkan Investigative Reporting Network (BIRN), Caritas Switzerland, Chopin Association Kosova, Dogru Yol TKSD, Dokufest, Durmish Asllano, EC Ma Ndryshe, ESTA Kosovë, Evolution Dance, Festivali DAM, Fondacioni ArsKosova, Fondacioni i Kosovës për Shoqëri të Hapur (KFOS), Fondacioni i Trashëgimisë Kulturore LEGATUM, Fondacioni Kosovar për Shoqëri Civile (KCSF), Fondacioni Together Kosova, Forumi për Iniciativë Qytetare (FIQ), Grupi për Studime Juridike dhe Politike (GLPS), Iniciativa Kosovare për Stabilitet (IKS), Iniciativa për Progres (INPO), Instituti Ballkanik i Politikave (IPOL), Instituti Demokraci për Zhvillim (D4D), Instituti Demokratik i Kosovës (KDI), Instituti GAP, Instituti i Prishtinës për Studime Politike (PIPS), Instituti për Politika Zhvillimore (INDEP), Keshilli Rinor Kosovë (KYC), Konsumatori, Kosovo 2.0, Kuarteti Pentagram, Leo's Art Org, Lëvizja FOL, N'GO, Nisma e të Rinjve për të Drejtat e Njeriut Kosovë (YIHR), Orin, ORION, Qendra ARTPOLIS, Qendra Multimedia Prishtinë, Riverside, Rrjeti i Grupeve të Grave të Kosovës (RrGGK), Stacion – Qendra për Art Bashkëkohor Prishtinë, Syri i Vizionit (SiV), Shoqata e Juristëve NORMA, Shoqata Numizmatike DEMASTION, Shoqata për Art FRYMA E RE, Shoqata për Teknologji të Informacionit dhe të Komunikimit të Kosovës (STIKK), Teatar GetoGracanica, Teatri ODA, Trashëgimia Kulturore pa Kufij Prishtinë (CHwB), Varg e Vi, X40, Xhennet Comics, Youth Voice

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JOINT STATEMENT

Lumbardhi Cinema is part of the cultural identity of both Prizren and Kosovo

Lumbardhi Cinema in Prizren is one of the most important evidences and values of cultural identity of the Kosovar society. Preserving this value is an obligation of the current generation of the society. This is the reason why we, civil society organizations from all around Kosovo have come together for the *Initiative for Protection of Lumbardhi Cinema*. Through this joint statement we would like to clarify our determined stance as well as our readiness to use all possible democratic means to stand against the tearing down of the building or the change of the main business activity (function) of Lumbardhi Cinema. Based on the following arguments, we request a cessation of the privatization process and, at the same time, express our disagreement against the attempts to tear down certain parts of Lumbardhi Cinema.

The decision of the Municipal Assembly of Prizren from last week, to declare Lumbardhi Cinema as an area of general public (social) interest, for the purpose of stopping the privatization process, was the right course of action. However, the decision also mentions a “road expansion” among actions proposed after it was granted this status. Undertaking such an action is in direct violation of the purpose of declaring this area as being of general public interest, in case that the expression “road expansion” actually means the tearing down (and possibly rebuilding) of the closed areas of Lumbardhi Cinema. We are convinced that there are strong legal and social arguments upon which we base our attempts to protect Lumbardhi Cinema from privatization, tearing down and change of business activity (main function). Above all, this initiative is an attempt of the civil society to offer alternatives and to be an active part of revitalizing Lumbardhi Cinema.

Legal protection

Prizren Historic Area Conservation and Development Plan, approved by the Municipal Assembly in 2008 places Lumbardhi Cinema in the highest ranks of buildings that need to be protected, where, according to the importance of monuments, it is placed on equal footing with the Complex of Prizren League. This document foresees the preservation of the existing structure of the Cinema building, together with its main business activity, it being cultural/film (cinema) area. Furthermore, the Conservation Plan does not foresee any road

expansion, but offers a solution for facilitating vehicle traffic and creating areas for pedestrians, always with an aim of protecting the cultural heritage and cultural landscape of the historic area.

Guiding Strategy for the Cultural Development of Prizren, approved by the Municipal Assembly in 2012 identifies Lumbardhi Cinema as one of the most important buildings of the city which is used as a cultural and artistic venue. The purpose of this document is to offer an alternative for cultural policies, by identifying existing potentials upon which the strategy for cultural development of Prizren shall be built. Protection of cultural heritage values in the Historic Centre is among the main recommendations of the Guiding Strategy.

Law on Historic Centre of Prizren, approved by the Assembly of Kosovo in 2012, guarantees a status of historic and cultural heritage site under permanent protection for the Prizren Historic Centre. The cadastral parcels where Lumbardhi cinema is located are an integral part of Appendix I of this Law. Furthermore, at the end of Appendix II of the Law which lists the cultural monuments in this area, there is a special note provided, as follows:

Status of a building under protection

*Rare buildings or buildings of special importance also receive the status of a building under protection, i.e. lighting pillars from the XX century, old workshops, **cinemas** etc. Therefore valuable buildings cannot be represented through an exact number; however this does not mean that the same have no value. We must bear in mind that the assessment process is continuously taking place and that it has not been finalized as such.*

Law on Cultural Heritage and Regulation for declaring an object to be under legal protection foresees criteria (values) for including a property into the List of the Cultural Heritage: historic, archeological, artistic, scientific, social, spiritual, technological and rarity. The cinema is one of the oldest public buildings that survived in Prizren (historic). It is proof of the film tradition of the city and it has had an impact in the creation of cultural and social identity of the community (social). The cinema brought advanced technology of projection of the time through a 35mm film tape into the big screen (technological). The style of the building (dimensions and having an open area alongside its closed one) represents a rare example both in Kosovo as well as in the region, not only at the time of its construction, but even today (rarity). *The Initiative for Protection of Lumbardhi Cinema* has drafted the documents and will soon present a proposal to the Ministry of Culture for the inclusion of Lumbardhi Cinema in the Cultural Heritage List.

Current Cultural Heritage List under Temporary Protection, among the 1428 sites of cultural heritage that are protected, includes the Cinema Theatre “Jusuf Gervalla” in Peja (serial number 454, unique database identifier 000362). The cinema theatre in Peja was built in 1960, years later than the Lumbardhi Cinema in Prizren, whereas its inclusion into the List of the Cultural Heritage is a clear legal precedent that paves the way for declaring Lumbardhi Cinema to be a protected site of cultural heritage.

Social and cultural values

Background of the facility – the cinema was built in the 50s of the 20th century and is one of the oldest public buildings in Prizren. This building first housed the technology of projecting a film through 35mm film tape, whereas this facility, for the past seven decades, has been used for a large number of cultural events. Lumbardhi Cinema is proof of the film (artistic) tradition of the city and has affected the creation of the social and cultural identity of the community.

The birthplace of festivals – Lumbardhi Cinema is the most important area of the cultural scene of Prizren. The facilities of Lumbardhi Cinema have been the birthing and developing place for a large number of city's festivals. An important part of the success, as well as of the identity of these festivals, is related specifically

with the facilities of Lumbardhi Cinema. Therefore any change to this area also means direct attack against these events of the Prizren cultural scene.

Cultural landmark (reference point) – Beside the cultural heritage values, Lumbardhi cinema has become a cultural landmark, since it is one of the most renowned reference points within the Historic Centre of Prizren. As a cultural landmark, Lumbardhi Cinema has been transformed into an icon (a symbol that has numerous meanings) that represents (marks) an era, a zone, a belief, a culture, a city and a tradition. City cultural and historical landmarks are nowadays treated equally with monuments of cultural heritage, whereas in a large number of cases they have also been declared as protected monuments because, with the passing of time, they have become cultural landmarks.

Collective memory – all these social and cultural values give Lumbardhi Cinema a special place in the collective memory of the citizens. The urban structure of Prizren has suffered through drastic transformations during the last years, in which case the memory of the citizens has been put under attack (and not just of those from Prizren) about the city itself. Tearing down Lumbardhi Cinema would be another hard punch for the city that the citizens would like to remember. Thousands of Prizren citizens signed a petition in 2007 for the Protection of Lumbardhi Cinema. Their requests are related to the non-changing of business activities and the preservation of the cinema facility in its current form. Therefore, any attempt to change the current structure of the facility or/and changing it from culture/film (cinema) area into anything else, amongst others, also represents a violation of the documented will of the citizens of Prizren and an assault on their collective memory.

Recommendations for protection and alternatives for revitalizing

Initiative for Protection of Lumbardhi Cinema is organized around a number of actions that will follow this joint statement; whereas our recommendations for state institutions are as follows:

1. Removal of the proposal for “road expansion” from the decision of the Municipal Assembly of Prizren for granting Lumbardhi Cinema the status of an area of general public interest,
2. Cessation of the privatization process (through liquidation) of Lumbardhi Cinema by the Privatization Agency of Kosovo,
3. Declaring Lumbardhi Cinema to be a site of cultural heritage protected by the law by the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports,
4. Establishment of a work group, in cooperation with the cultural community, to draft a management plan for Lumbardhi Cinema,
5. Raising funds from the state budget, international donors and other parties, for the restoration and revitalizing of the Lumbardhi Cinema,
6. Management of Lumbardhi Cinema by a joint body that shall be mandated for the implementation of the management plan that shall revitalize it as a joint cultural space with primary business activity of a city cinema,
7. Establishment of a group of experts (multi-disciplinary) by the Municipality of Prizren and Ministry of Culture to review possible alternatives for solving the problem of the main road.

*On behalf of organizations signing the Joint Statement,
Part of the Initiative for Protection of Lumbardhi Cinema,*

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