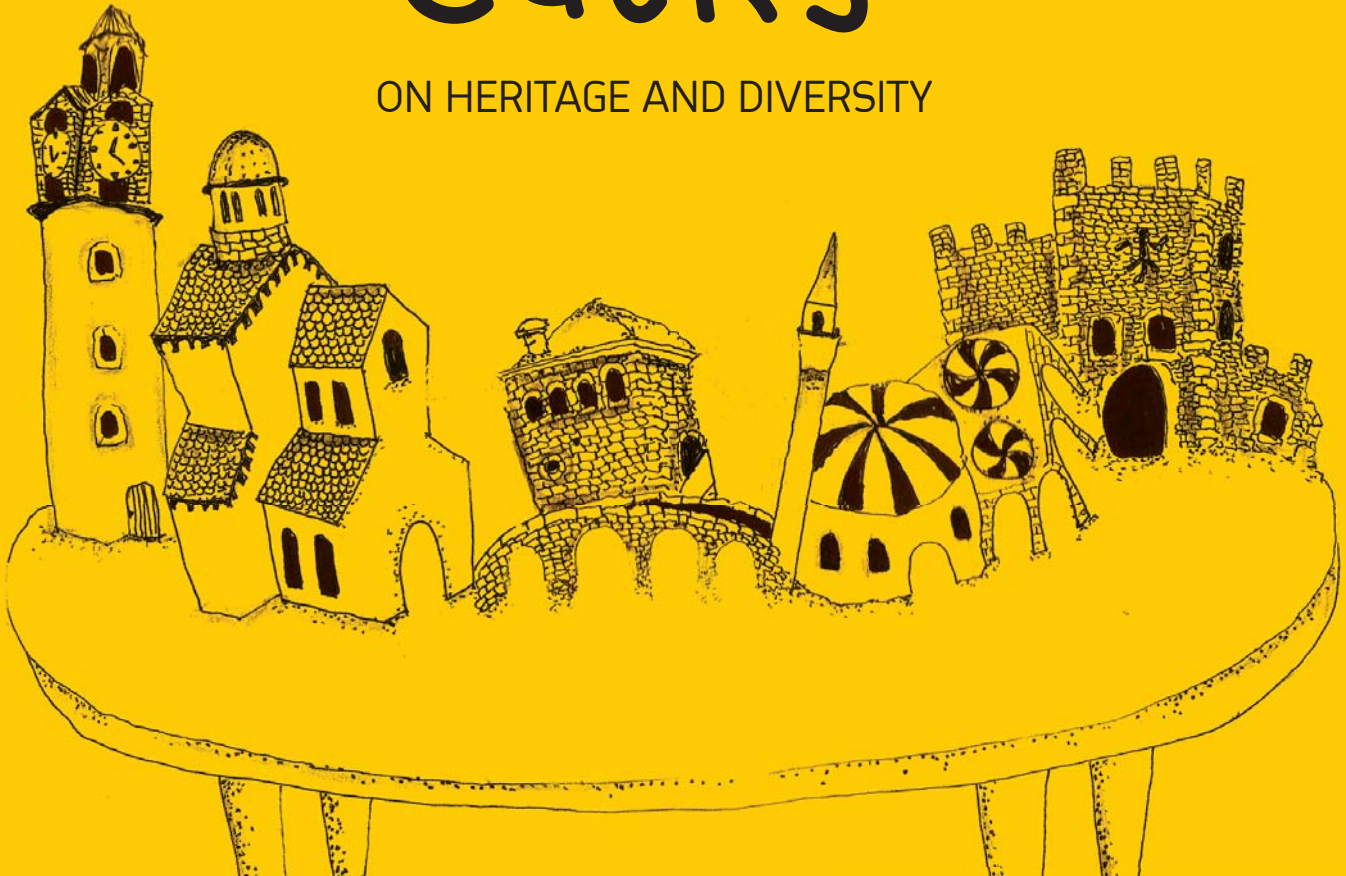


# coffee talks

ON HERITAGE AND DIVERSITY



JP - EU/CoE Support to the  
Promotion of Cultural Diversity (PCDK)

Funded  
by the European Union



Implemented  
by the Council of Europe





coffee  
talks



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# Acknowledgements



The PCDK project staff would like to express their gratitude to a number of individuals who have consistently shown great commitment, participation and engagement in the dialogue sessions.

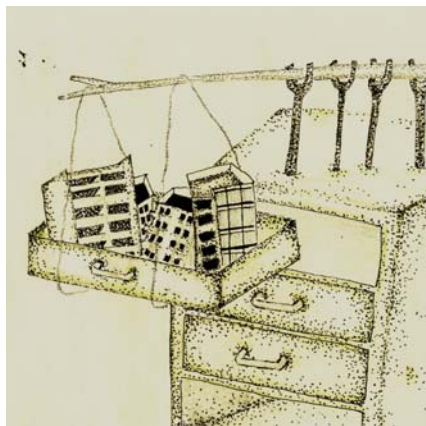
We would first like to give special mention to the sociologists, artists, journalists and those from other academic fields for their constructive and professional approaches towards the project, their valuable contributions and inspiring opinions.

Our great appreciation also goes to the artist Driton Selmani for his dedicated work on the drawings which accompany the articles.

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Alongside this, a special thank you must go to PCDK's Educational Assistant, Arif Muharremi, for the coordination of this whole process.

Finally, we would like to thank all the individuals who have provided support, shared their knowledge, offered their insights, instructions and perspectives, and who have contributed to the successful culmination of this project.





# Foreword



‘Coffee Talks’ is a process of intercultural dialogue on issues that are at the core of the aim of the Council of Europe: preserving and promoting human rights, democracy and the rule of law. The project highlights the essence of hearing voices of people in all communities regardless their diverse ideas and backgrounds. Indeed, it emphasizes the value of diversity, which is promoted in Council of Europe conventions and activities.

Dialogue sessions were conducted in the context of European Union/Council of Europe Joint Project- Support to the promotion of Cultural Diversity in Kosovo\* (PCDK) in order to foster critical thinking about values, different interpretations of heritage and the importance of valuing diversity in today’s Kosovo. The project created a platform for the evaluation of ideas and individual views through a process that was both dynamic and productive. This book represents the very essence of an educational journey carried out by individuals across different components of society in Kosovo between 2010 and 2012. Among various education and awareness raising initiatives of the PCDK project, dialogue sessions allowed various interests and sectors to express themselves, which in itself has been one of the main principles of the PCDK project. We are actively promoting an inte-

grated and multidisciplinary approach to the wider understanding of heritage and belonging.

Under the auspices of the Council of Europe’s regional programme in the South-East of Europe, the PCDK project has been implementing many activities that provide assistance to communities and authorities in Kosovo, supporting them to learn about and adopt accepted European standards for promoting and protecting common heritage.

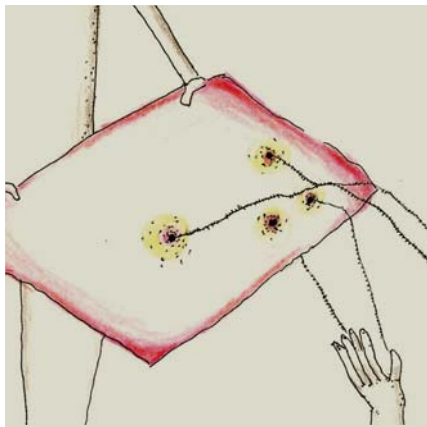
The Council of Europe remains committed to the notion of cultural and natural heritage as a means of fostering the basic principles of human rights and democracy. The work of the PCDK project is a successful example of an initiative that promotes intercultural dialogue to better ensure a collective responsibility towards a greater understanding between cultures.

I wish to thank the many contributors to this book who have shared their insights and expertise, hoping that readers too will add to these through their own thoughts and actions.

**Robert Palmer**

Director of Democratic  
Governance, Culture and Diversity  
Council of Europe

\* This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo Declaration of Independence.



# Foreword



Cultural heritage is widely recognised across Europe as a vehicle of cultural identity. The protection of our common heritage and the promotion of cultural diversity are also very important instruments for bringing different communities closer and enhancing dialogue between different cultures.

The “coffee talks” organised as part of the “European Union/Council of Europe Joint Action – Support to the Promotion of Cultural Diversity in Kosovo (PCDK)” have been a stupendous example of how dialogue helps us to become familiar with and appreciate our own culture and those of the other communities. By bringing together people from different backgrounds to discuss topics relevant to heritage and diversity, these talks have also contributed to promoting a better understanding of the role and importance of cultural heritage.

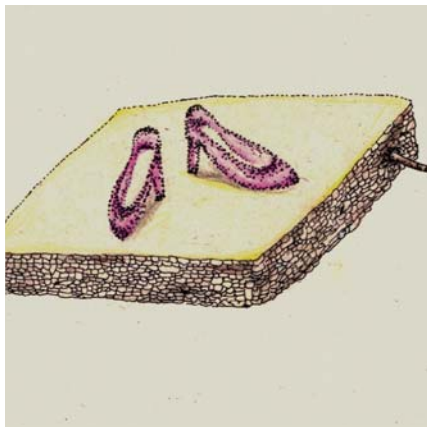
Readouts of these talks have now been collected

in the booklet “Coffee Talks”, giving us an idea of the reflections of over 100 individuals which participated in the dialogue sessions. The booklet perfectly illustrates the importance of cultural heritage and diversity through the variety and diversity of thoughts and visions shared.

Preservation and promotion of cultural diversity are among the founding principles of the European Union, and a guiding principle in our cooperation with Kosovo. By stimulating further thoughts and discussions on these issues, I hope that the “Coffee Talks” contribute to promoting a better understanding of the role and importance of cultural heritage and strengthening the dialogue between different communities.

**Samuel Žbogar**

Head of the EU Office/EU Special Representative



# Introduction



A cup of coffee represents a lot to those who live in or pass by Kosovo, no matter where they come from and where they go. Inviting someone for a cup of coffee is an invitation to get to know each other, process, analyse, deconstruct, criticise, gossip, share information, learn, teach; simply engage in active dialogue for issues that matter to people.

What might be seen as a 'waste of time' in some cultures is indeed time needed for networking, time for digesting information and living in the moment. Simply, it is not all about coffee, but time spent over coffee allowing space for further exploration and coming to terms with their surroundings and issues that important to them. No matter what the topic is, talks around a cup of coffee are often sincere, passionate, informal and full of stories.

With daily observation of this practice, the PCDK project organised a series of dialogue sessions among individuals who showed interest to engage in dialogue on issues relevant to heritage and diversity. In this capacity, individuals from different walks of life including academics, practitioners, civil servants, artists, performers, architects, archaeologists, sociologists, international workers, students, and teachers participated in small group sessions, sharing their personal views on selected topics for each session.

Facilitated by PCDK staff, notes from each session have been compiled in an article, with illustrations by a local artist accompanying each article. With average participation of 12 persons in each ses-

sion, the booklet "Coffee Talks" is the reflection of approximately 120 individuals who genuinely shared their concerns, interests and visions.

While each session has been solely an intellectual exercise, each article is the product of individuals who participated in respective sessions and contributed to the production of single articles. The articles are the reflections of diverse community members in Kosovo. Through these discussions, we hope to generate further discussions among the public to further raise awareness on heritage and diversity.

As dialogue is a process and has a co-operative nature, it is important to us, as it enhances community and builds social capital, leading us to think and act in ways to make conditions better for all.

At PCDK, we feel privileged to be able to gather these individuals together over a cup of coffee and participate in significantly productive talks. We are further proud to be able to work with local artists in producing this book, contributing to critical thinking for positive social change in the society. We hope you enjoy reading "Coffee Talks" over a cup of coffee with friends, colleagues and family and share ideas to generate richer discussions for the betterment of the society.

**Hakan Shearer Demir**

PCDK Team Leader

# Framing 'The others'

## (The common difference)



In Kosovo, the idea of diversity has suffered and been degenerated over the past decade, since it was first brought to public attention as a condition for peaceful coexistence and reconciliation. While this concept was essential for post-conflict Kosovo, it felt fabricated and imposed by outsiders, causing implicit and internalised resistance, and digressing from the real meaning of the concept. Meanings which were lost in translation did not allow time for the general public to analyse and understand the term in Kosovo's local languages.

In Albanian, the term 'diversity' is perceived as 'difference'. It is perceived as variety of cultural representations identifying one's collective/historical memory. Today, however, many people from Kosovo – from children to the elderly – are trying to grasp pieces of the puzzle. Public discourse and reflection is still greatly needed. Nevertheless, the presence of diversity has on many occasions been interpreted as a political imposition, and such representation in Kosovo has created a number of prejudices and stereotypes.

Indeed, what is diversity in Kosovo? What is its connection with cultural heritage? What are the stereotypes of people from Kosovo? What kind of stereotypes do people in Kosovo have about others? This was the topic of the first session of these dialogue series, which focused on stereotypes held by people regarding diversity, and the role of diversity in identification of one's sense of belonging in Kosovo. Local heritage experts, artists, sociologists and other competent profiles from Kosovo, were invited to discuss and share their views on the issue from their standpoint.

### Which difference?

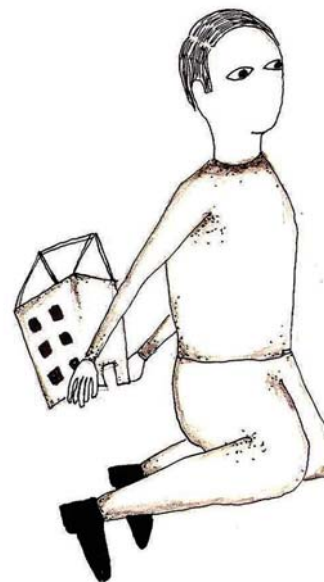
In the local context, diversity is perceived as difference, and the linguistic origin of the terminology is also questioned. It is considered a foreign idea which imports something unknown to the people of Kosovo.

However when speaking unconditionally about diversity one speaks and thinks about variety. There is an opinion that says that within Kosovo communities, diversity is perceived as representative of ethnicities and not cultures, while external views see the territory as a diversity of community cultures.

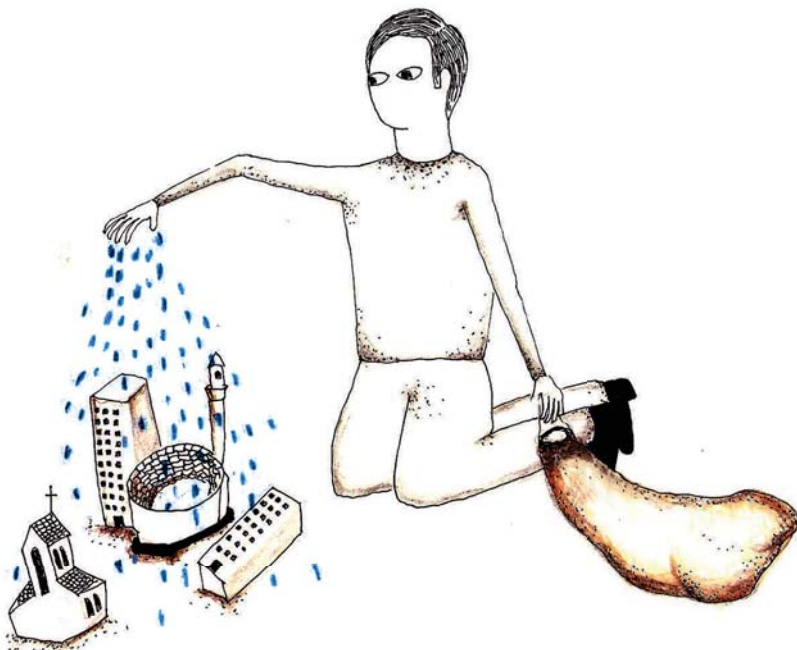
Kosovo has historically been the victim of stereotypes, and these stereotypes have been politically framed – from various circles of interest. Often these views lead to ethnic divisions, perpetuating already rising radical nationalist movements. Manipulation of diversity in the 90s led cultural heritage to be in the middle of ethnic divisions, which brought the destruction of monuments and had a negative impact on the psychology of people in Kosovo.

One of the most serious gaps referring to the diversity issue in Kosovo remains framing this terminology within the political framework, and consequently of mainstream culture neglecting the promotion of this terminology within Kosovo's communities, as it is perceived to be highlighting ethnic differences.

In the Kosovo context, diversity as a term is not completely understood, leaving considerable space for misconceptions. The causes of these misconceptions are multifaceted, as there is a lack of ability to explain what diversity really means universally, and what it represents using ordinary terminology and examples in the context of Kosovo with its recent history. There is also a lack of interest in recognising



**Cultural diversity and cultural heritage are captivating issues, and most communities in Kosovo<sup>1</sup> find themselves in the middle of this debate, and sometimes very easily. The Joint Project "EU/CoE Support to the Promotion of Cultural Diversity in Kosovo" (PCDK) has been organising regular dialogue sessions with local artists, academics, professionals and intellectuals who are interested in exchanging views with fellow colleagues, to discuss and analyse the commonalities and differences that shape themselves and the others in today's Kosovo.**



**These sessions intend to bring various viewpoints to the surface and create a platform where the general public is inspired to carry on a public debate on these issues.**

other cultures through awareness activities, such as sending Kosovo Albanian pupils to see icons in the Serbian Orthodox churches. This stands in contrast to older generations, who state that they clearly remember when, for example, they visited Pejë/Peć Patriarchate every weekend and felt the site as their cultural element, while many others had the chance to be brought up in a mixed neighbourhood and learned a second language.

Nevertheless, there is significant work to be done on issues of diversity within Kosovo communities. One important aspect of this work is to challenge the reduction of the concept only to ethnicity. Urban – rural divisions are very noticeable and felt by the majority of people in Kosovo, with the rich diversity of rural communities seeming to be undermined in the name of modernity. These divisions and differences are more noticeable as demographic structure changes, migration to urban areas increases at a very rapid pace, and generation gaps and memories influence cultural perceptions and differences in Kosovan

society. In the light of all these rapid changes and looking for improvement, what is the selfimage of Kosovo and what image would Kosovans like to pass through to future generations?

### **On Young Europeans**

In 2009, an internationally renowned company was commissioned to produce a visual campaign for Kosovo's representation in the world. Its aim was to showcase Kosovo's capacity for Western potential investments, as well as to improve the territory's image for countries that did not recognise its independence.

The campaign, "Young Europeans", evoked mixed feelings among Kosovo populations. Some see the campaign as beautifully packaged 'lemonade' which does not correspond with Kosovan reality, but at the same time, there is a positive reflection of the diverse portrayal of young people. According to some opinions, this visual product also contains an ironic message, because diversity in Kosovo on various levels was neglected. Some lament that the designers did not find anything more valuable for this important presentation.

On the other hand, it is perceived that the campaign breaks the stereotype of Kosovo as an unstable region with an ongoing ethnic conflict. The dilemma is that through this campaign, there is an attempt to establish an image about Kosovo which in reality has failed to hold true.

There is a danger of Kosovo becoming mono-cultural, while aiming at a multicultural society, if the process is not internalised and owned by the people, with a clear understanding of universal values that are common to humanity. For Kosovo, using the previous analogy, the issue comes down to being aware of being the "nicely packed ready lemonade" or going through the organic process of making "ajvar", which is local, familiar and traditional. To those who know ajvar, or pay attention, there are many varieties to be tasted.

# Intangible Cultural Heritage: a strangely familiar concept!



Intangible cultural heritage in Kosovo, with its rich background, faces difficult times. This is due in part to influences of global popular culture, as well as a lack of acknowledgement or embrace of local cultures at a local level.

Inadequate acknowledgement of traditional values including rituals, dances and folk songs as essential elements of today's society leads to further alienation among younger generations, where a paradigm shift is taking place influencing attitudes toward cultural heritage. While society remains indifferent to the destruction of tangible heritage sites, elements of intangible heritage further suffer due to a lack of awareness and education among the general public.

The absence of this awareness calls for a viable way of reminding and promoting these values within communities, particularly in young generations who are essential elements in defining the approach toward cultural heritage in Kosovo.

For many years, social scientists, including ethnologists and linguists, conducted cultural studies in Kosovo, documenting local customs, cultural practices and folklore in various publications. Unfortunately, this process experienced severe stagnation during the 90s when intangible heritage was excluded from the institutional agenda. The concept of intangible heritage systematically disappeared from the realm of academia with the territory facing political and economic uncertainty in the outbreak of conflicts in the former Yugoslavia.

At present, documentation of intangible heritage in Kosovo is neither available nor easily accessible by the general public. Working toward creating this data is greatly needed in the circles of culture heri-

tage, academia and local institutions.

A dialogue session hosted by the PCDK project on intangible cultural heritage brought together cultural experts, artists, academics, sociologists and other professionals from Kosovo who shared their views and raised issues affecting this component of cultural heritage in Kosovo. The session aimed to bring the intangible cultural heritage debate to the surface and provide a platform from which the general public is actively engaged.

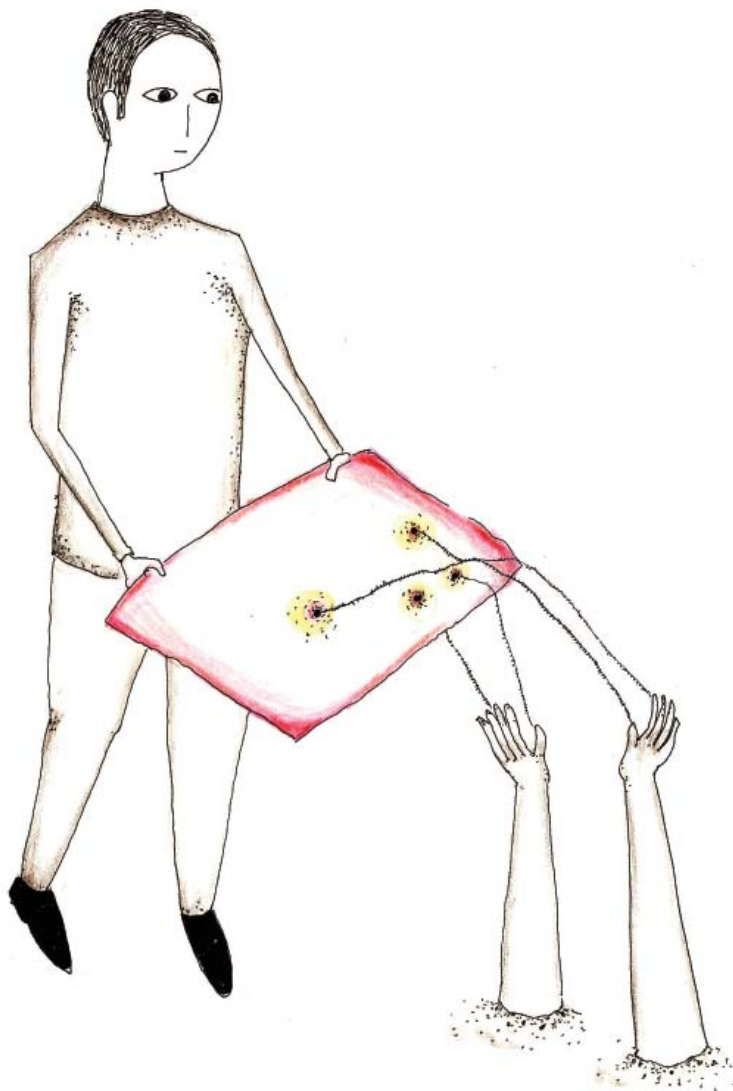
## **Everything begins with acknowledgement**

Oral tradition and folklore have been present throughout the history of Kosovo, where these two elements played a crucial role in communicating important information, history and events among communities and generations. A low literacy rate and dynamics of lifestyle in rural areas limited the ability to document important developments in written formats. Consequently, communities transmitted important national events and collective memories to younger generations through oral traditions, including legends, songs, proverbs and stories.

Oral traditions have also served as vehicles to pass cultural values to the next generations and taught lessons about collective memories and experiences, which played a bridge role between generations. While oral traditions had a very positive effect over the centuries, they also enforced social and legal regulations, such as the five-century old Besa and Kanun, which were established and maintained by the traditional institution called oda (chamber).

The concept of 'oda', whether it is considered as gathering at a space or a traditional institution,





is a rooted intangible cultural heritage asset in Kosovo. Figuratively, *oda* represents a special and distinguished space of a house, which is exclusively dedicated to the older men to discuss important family, community or national issues. Moreover, *oda* symbolises a court of law where men gather to discuss and solve property problems, blood feuds etc. This space was also an important platform of social and cultural life, and entertainment for men. Today, after many centuries of practice, '*oda*' is still alive and valued in certain communities in Kosovo.

The German philosopher Walter Benjamin divides traditional institutions' contributions into two levels while representing the oral tradition: anecdotes and conflict resolution.

In the Kosovo case, on the anecdotal level, a recent publication shows how various *oda* stories by famous oral storyteller Xhemajl Obria survived more than 100 years of collective memory, until they were eventually published.

It is essential to note that in spite of existing evidence of intangible heritage promoted through *oda*, some sections of society refer to this traditional institution in the past tense. For others, it is still a daily life practice and in some cases overshadows existing modern laws in Kosovo. While this difference of opinion might possibly be the reflection of urban and rural states of mind in Kosovo, the general public doesn't seem to recognise it as part of the territory's intangible heritage.

With its positive and negative implications, the notion of *oda* remains an essential part of one of the sub-cultures in Kosovo, as well as its valuable intangible cultural heritage. A genuine public debate acknowledging it as a cultural asset and analysing its role in society is deeply needed to come to terms with what it means to society today.

### **Neglected heritage?**

Favouritism in the realm of cultural heritage can easily lead to alienation and isolation of certain groups in Kosovo society. Whether it is an urban

marginalised or rural traditional group, all should be entitled to a respected place in society. Avoidance of any of these sub-cultures would inevitably create clashes between them, regardless of their background or origins. No culture or sub-culture should be ridiculed, labelled as 'primitive', 'worse' or 'backward'. Intangible cultural heritage as an essential asset of society should not be neglected and should have its deserved place in Kosovo, without feeling the impact of hatred or subject to jokes.

The roots of negligence towards intangible heritage in Kosovo can be traced back in the 60s. The so called 'Cultural Circle of Pristina', comprised of the most prominent intellectuals of the time, signed a petition calling for a boycott of the old cultural practices including dances, folklore, etc. and their promotion. Fifty years later, communities in Kosovo find themselves torn between imported and widely embraced cultural practices, and half abandoned old traditions and customs. Local heritage community members note that the Kosovo population has been pulled into numerous campaigns, calling for replacement of traditional values with modern ones. Culture is a dynamic notion and is inevitably subject to change. The harmonious combination of the old and the new makes it richer and valuable to subsequent generations. Valuing the intangible cultural heritage and its traditional assets is imperative for a healthy introduction of the new.

The essence of education in Kosovo should highlight the importance of these values for new generations and the public in general to raise awareness on intangible cultural heritage. Civil society plays a very crucial role in promoting and safeguarding intangible cultural heritage, reaching out to diverse communities, bringing their cultural practices and artisanship

into the sunlight. Increased awareness within civil society would also encourage local authorities to allocate needed funds toward promotion and protection of intangible cultural heritage practices and assets.

An inclusive approach to cultural heritage with necessary attention to intangible cultural heritage, encouraging a public-private partnership with long term economic sustainable planning, would give a positive message to young generations in Kosovo and encourage further participation in efforts of promoting and protecting common heritage.

### **Walk our talk!**

So many topics have been discussed on cultural heritage in Kosovo. Protection first begins with acknowledgement, without favouring one cultural asset over the other, as they all represent diverse segments of society.

This acknowledgement encourages a constructive attitude toward social harmony and respect for diversity. A story from an elderly person with years of life experience, traditions, and customs, introducing these values to new generations with dignity, is what makes a community proud of its history and its future.

An active and inclusive dialogue among academics, civil society organisations, local institutions and communities is imperative to find a common path to identify, protect and ensure the survival of the rich intangible cultural heritage assets in Kosovo.

There should be no excuse to postpone this action due to lack of funds or willingness of involved stakeholders. It is time to actively discuss this issue and 'walk our talk', before it is too late to recover what is being lost on a daily basis.

# A dilemma: use of cultural heritage for tourism or utilisation of tourism for the protection and maintenance of cultural heritage?



Local development is a process that ideally comes from within. Since every community has its own dynamics and pace of life, progressive steps<sup>1</sup> call for well-analysed, inclusive approaches that take local cultural practices into consideration. Often imported practices are replicated without a thorough analysis and tend to be short lived, which leads to undesired and unplanned development. Historically this has benefited corporate interests at the expense of a local community's resources, territory and heritage.

Kosovo, in the midst of substantial change, finds itself in a developmental phase where tourism is considered an essential asset. The Ministry of Trade and Industry set a goal that tourism will constitute 10-12% of the GDP by 2020. While this ambitious objective is encouraging, it also raises a number of questions including whether the territory has the necessary resources, infrastructure and capacity to meet this goal, not to mention the long term vision and a sound strategy to be sustainable. Setting high expectations for progress can positively expand the limits of success.

However, reaching an ambitious goal by any means necessary can have devastating, perhaps unforeseen, consequences. On the one hand, it would be great to see this goal achieved by 2020; on the other hand, it is essential to analyse the potential consequences and impact on local communities if, and how, this goal is achieved. This presents a formi-

dable challenge to the authorities and communities throughout the region and calls for a greater public discourse for what sort of tourism industry Kosovo expects in the future: opening to large investments made by international and local elites that profit from the existing resources and often leave minimum profit for locals, or local community-based entrepreneurship where local resources benefit the local communities to a greater extent.

The Pejë/Peć region, with its fascinating natural resources and significant tangible and intangible cultural heritage assets, has been the centre of attention for local and international actors for the last decade as an ideal spot to attract tourists (and offer unique services). Carefully managed assets combined with proud, hospitable locals, could provide a positive example for the rest of the territory and the region.

Constructive thoughts and visions like the one above were discussed by intellectuals who took part in a dialogue session organised by the "EU/CoE Support to the Promotion of Cultural Diversity in Kosovo" (PCDK) project. In addition, a number of the challenges experienced by artisans, civil society members, business representatives, local authorities and minority group representatives were also highlighted. The event took place in the context of the European Heritage Days activities in 2010 and aimed to review promotion of tourism in relation to cultural heritage in the region and its potential for local economic development.

<sup>1</sup> In 1960, the American Economic Historian, W. W. Rostow, suggested that countries passed through five stages of economic development.

‘Heritage – Tourism – Economy’ as an essential element of development in Pejë/Peć has been neglected for a considerable amount of time. Historically, linkages between these elements have not been established properly, and participants of the session collectively expressed their frustration over the gaps between central and local authorities. This frustration lies in the fact that so much can be discovered a short car ride away from the capital: quiet walks through an Old Çarshia, the Haxhi Beut Hamam, reconstructed mosques, amazing frescos in the Patriarchy, world-class mountain/rock climbing, cave exploration and delicious local food, all nestled in the Rugova Mountains. Although the region offers a number of wonderful opportunities, the lack of visitors and their reluctance to experience the region is puzzling. More disturbing is that the area often called the ‘beautiful flower’ of western Kosovo among local communities may soon vanish due to negligence, environmental degradation, destruction of cultural heritage sites and the end of the artisan tradition.

### **Tourism – an allegory to celebrate the past**

Older generations are quick to recall, and praise, the glorious past of the region’s uniquely skilled artisans that were in great demand, even in Dubrovnik. In addition to artistic merit, these works had commercial value and brought a substantial amount of revenue to the region, ensuring local businesses based on traditional crafts were sustainable. The authentic architecture and ways of life around these assets presented a unique aesthetic, which differentiated the region from the rest of Kosovo. The possibility of a plan that follows this successful model, built around the unique assets of the region, is being threatened by what is typically referred to as development, or progress.

The value system of the past sharply contrasts with the present and can be easily seen in the number of tourism and artisan businesses that have failed in Pejë/Peć. Today, the reputation of the region

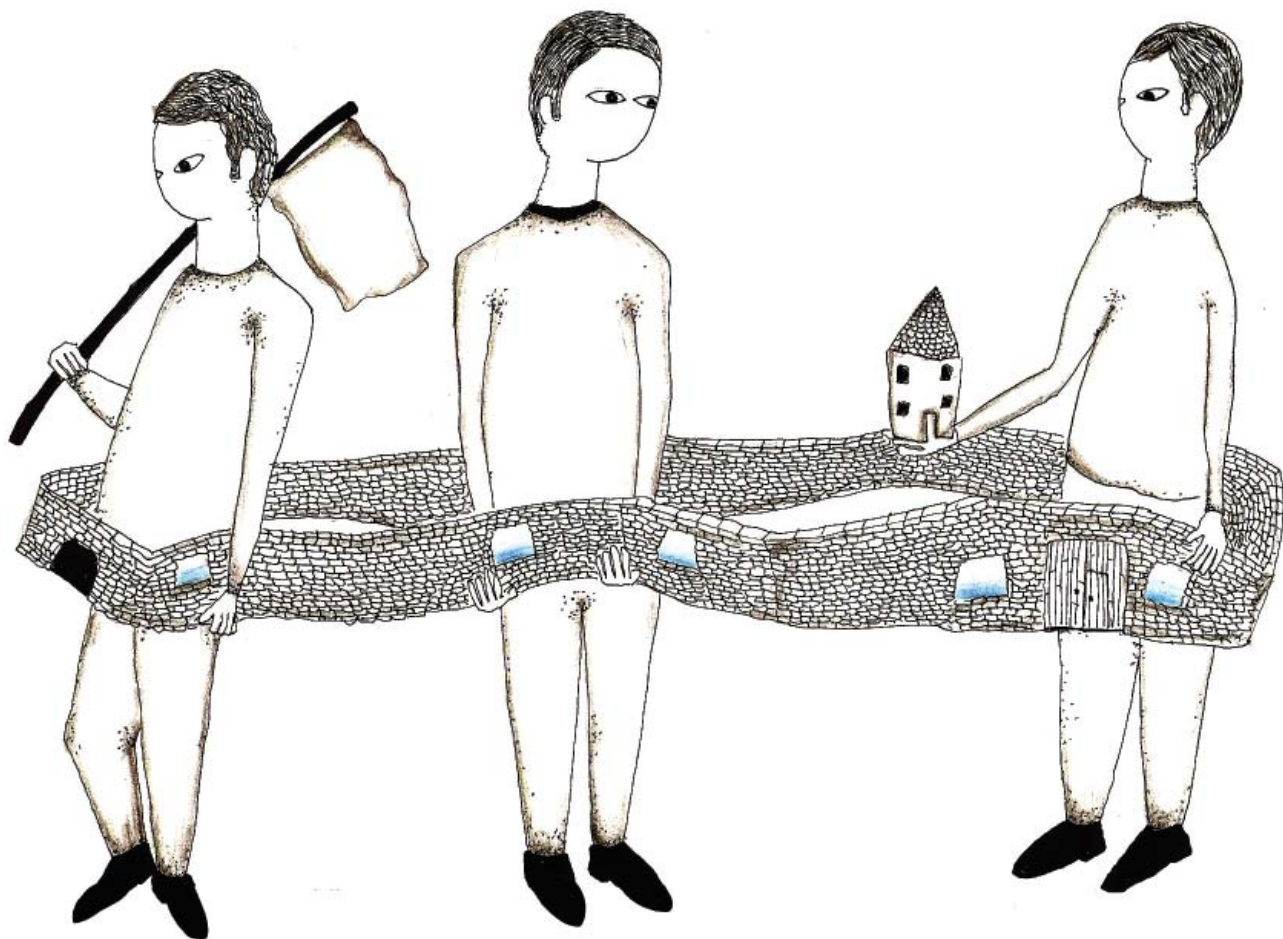
does not attract many tourists, and those who do visit, mostly internationals working in Kosovo, do not have a significant impact on the economy. Cultural heritage sites are suffering economically, and most of the artisans depend upon external funds, such as municipalities and international donors, to survive. Traditional artisans are facing extinction as new trends, such as betting shops and small scale gambling businesses, lure the younger generation away from traditional cultural practices and values.

The changing face of quaint towns, like Pejë/Peć, shifting to neon lights and betting shops could be considered as economic development and necessary steps for municipalities to attract tourists. However, opinions outside the municipality blame the authorities for not doing enough to protect valuable heritage sites and supporting local, traditional businesses as a means to encourage tourism. The representatives from civil society, including artisans, urge local administrations to develop a sound strategy and take practical steps to support local businesses and artisans by promoting tourism through tax cuts.

While local authorities are often under scrutiny, initiatives by local businesses are also not promising. Often over-reliance on limited external resources to prop themselves up paralyses efforts for businesses to create sound strategies and to promote/profit from/sustain local traditional approaches. Although there seems to be willingness, there is something missing to bring all the stakeholders together with a synergetic approach to take concrete steps together. As it is, productive conversations on the future of tourism development threaten to only take place by the nostalgic elders in coffee shops.

### **What next?**

In the name of modernisation and progress, younger generations seem to have abandoned one of the most precious resources in Kosovo – cultural and natural heritage – which includes rich biodiversity and natural beauty, significant built heritage,



artisanship, handicrafts, unique traditional customs, and diverse music and cultural practices. While newly established shopping centre developments have mushroomed across Kosovo, there has been no collective effort to protect and maintain the existing and living heritage. Attention has been focused on ownership of these sites, to the detriment of protecting the fast-fading traditional and local practices. In a world where comparative advantage is the essence of attracting tourism, Pejë/Peć region, and Kosovo in general, should be able to find its unique identity in Europe by offering its essential elements, which exist only among diverse communities in Kosovo, and avoiding the detrimental path of importing models from the Swiss Alps or Austrian villages.

By being itself, finding its unique niche, valuing the experience of the elderly and the energy of the young generation, Kosovo could transform the existing untapped/under-utilised local resources into a sound, locally supported and sustained economy where people of the region continue to be proud and earn a liveable wage with dignity.

While the pervading attitude is to make grandiose plans and quick money, small opportunities are crucial steps that are being missed. Modest approaches/events, such as street fairs, encourage the promotion of products like traditional clothes, carpets, instruments and food as well as visits to interesting sites. Whether small or big, projects that continue sporadically, i.e. without coordination, will spell trouble for healthy progress. A proper and sustainable solution relies on the development and promotion of local tourism, based on the local resources, with local people involved in the decision making process and directly benefiting from the outcomes/profits. Ideally, this is conducted with the idea of thinking globally and acting locally, as the local traditions and cultural identity are essential to communities in Kosovo.

Since 1999, support received from international organisations, while greatly appreciated, is not a sustainable fix for Kosovo's economy. In the face of these gradually decreasing funds, local authorities, businesses, and artisans should be able to find viable solutions through effective encouragement of public-private partnerships. This cooperation, with a clear strategy, will allow communities to decide what kind of development through tourism they would like to see. In addition, it would give communities an opportunity to grapple with essential questions dealing with such elements as the social and cultural expense of tourism, the role of cultural heritage in tourism and the elements necessary to understand a healthy linkage between cultural heritage, tourism and local economy in a region like Pejë/Peć.

The participants of the session agree on the following suggestions:

- A sound mechanism that would promote cultural heritage through local traditional businesses while attracting more visitors to experience the region's natural heritage.
- A strategy that would utilise the magic triangle of Pejë/Peć region: rich heritage, touristic destination and economic development.
- Strategic and convincing efforts to attract international donors and investors.
- Raising awareness among local populations to demand that towns in Kosovo should not become attraction points for easy money, such as gambling and betting establishments, that replace the invaluable cultural identity of the towns.
- Acknowledgment of artisans and their labour, while making an effort to transfer their skills to younger generations, where local decision-makers lead the change for better and present a good example for the rest of Kosovo and the region.

# A breath of fresh air: Interculturalism - Intercultural cities; Urban identity vs. Conformism



Someone's search for creativity and diverse ways of being could mean anarchy to others. On the other hand, determining a set agenda in the name of rules and regulations, and building an image of multicultural society, if not being generated from grass roots, could end up with all the elements of mono-cultural structures. The issue, then, is to be aware of when and how one realizes this situation and what measures are to be taken, halting the pretence that the walk has nothing to do with the talk.

While for over a decade now inter-ethnic dialogue has been put as the number one item on the agenda in Kosovo, did people in Kosovo have the opportunity to have an inner dialogue to assess their relationships with their surroundings and their capacity to make informed decisions about their own future? The danger of a fabricated life that is not well understood or internalized by the communities, coupled with the dependency on either the international community or diaspora, is that it can lead to unsustainable futures for communities in Kosovo. While working towards a multicultural society, current economic difficulties and consumer-based lifestyles might lead to distinct divisions among groups, leading to further alienation and isolation of society based on socio-economic backgrounds.

Pristina, a city that accommodates approximately a quarter of the population in Kosovo, and with its own dynamics, is in search of its urban identity with its current dominant and sub cultures. While there is possibly a local authority urban plan, a sense of urban chaos is a familiar feeling to many people. In

the light of a new, post-war urban landscape being constructed, improvisation seems to be a common practice, excluding the community spirit and needs. As the practices of the dominant mainstream culture are becoming a norm, marginalized sub-cultures are flourishing in the various pockets, which constitutes the new urban human landscape and urban identities in Pristina. From outside one can define the urban landscape with all the distinct groups in Pristina, not realising that these groups feel themselves part of the collective urban identity in Kosovo. Are there multiple identities within the urban identity in Pristina or are these distinct groups perhaps expected to conform to the mainstream culture?

Understanding sub-cultures in an urban setting and creating a space for them to exist is essential to respect each other's viewpoints and to honour the diversity of urban identities. Lack of awareness of the other's existence and reasoning endangers the survival of the nature of urban identity and keeps this notion away from intercultural and diverse nature of urban life style, thus leading to mono-cultured and sterile viewpoints. Survival of diverse sub-cultures is the essence of urban lives where creativity, diversity and willingness for co-existence become the norm for all who value urban identities.

In defining urban identity, is there a collective action to maintain its diverse nature, or a number of independent self-initiatives put together to create the mosaic of this identity? While there are a number of complaints often expressed by individuals against the institutions, lack of organized civic initiatives are

worth noting. In many circles lack of initiatives and collective action often remain as just 'coffee talks'. Small circles of individuals occasionally take small actions limited to the members of their like-minded group and individuals, and they again remain in the comfort zone of their own culture.

Urban-rural divisions as well as divisions among socio-economic groups are more apparent than ever, presenting an obstacle in front of potential integration of various groups, especially university students. The sub-cultural groups often prefer to stay in their respective groups, perpetuating their set ideas about the other and keeping themselves separate from the urban life and what it has to offer.

A city of a quarter of a million calls for a rich cultural life where its diversity is the guarantee for survival of its rich cultural assets. Such cultural life brings up collective joy and memories of urban life and belonging. Societies that lack such cultural life do not have much to offer to their younger generations which are pre-destined to their way of existence away from potential social change. Policies of urban cultural life and urban identities are important elements for collective well-being and inclusiveness. While such policies should be taken into consideration by local authorities, civic action is imperative to close the gaps and work toward a healthy society.

Such actions should be the responsibility of all in order to be able to shake oneself out of the reactionary attitudes and undertake an active role in the process of shaping the urban identity. In times of transition, cultural life and diversity should not be abandoned and sacrificed by the daily conform to politics of the dominant group. It seems better to stay away from the apparatus of isolation and choose

instead to bring societies closer. The European community is opening its doors to diversity and globalisation is bringing cultures closer, so it would not be feasible to be stuck in a mono-cultured society.

### **Source of inspiration - an important role in the belief system**

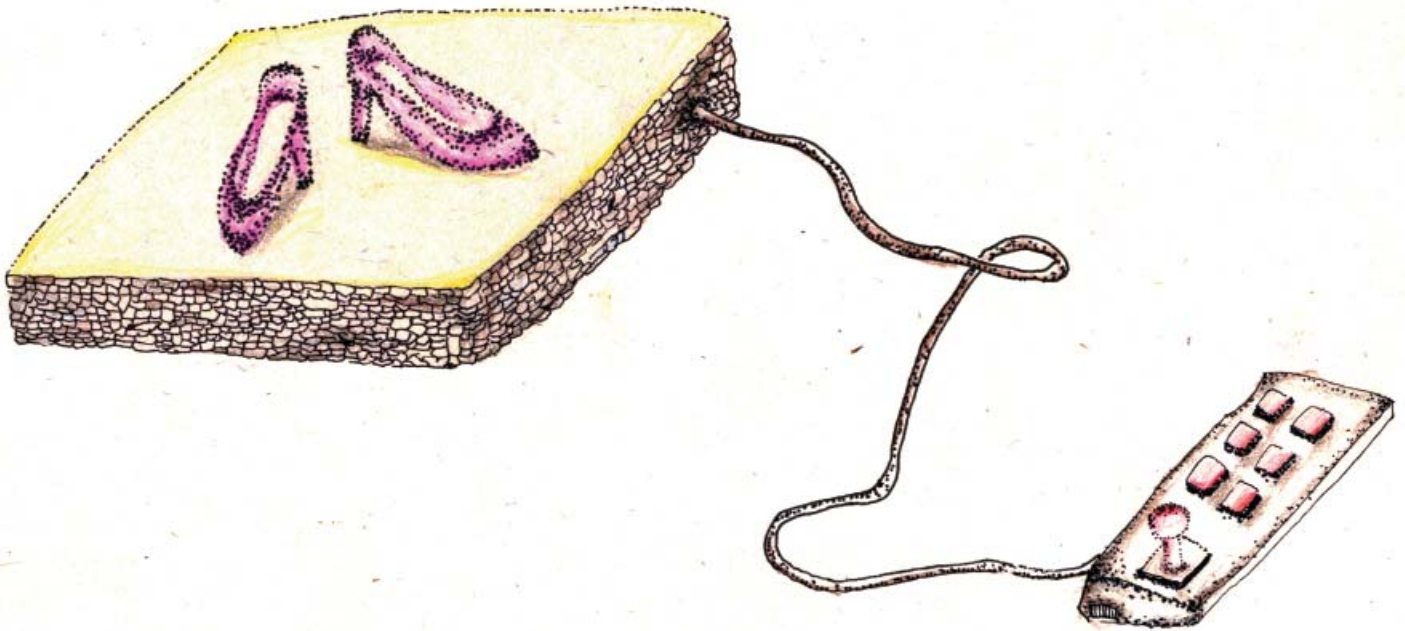
Can the politics on this issue change? Is there a culture of proactive protest in contemporary culture in Kosovo or are protests preconditioned and planned for the benefit of monocultural gains? What are the challenges of marginalised groups to break away from their small circles?

The notion of progress often remains linked to and mistaken for things such as unplanned building constructions in the centre of the town, whereas the rights and quality of life for citizens is ignored. Unanimous decision-making and imposed cultural visions of the city will continuously expand the gap between all groups of community. These continuous measures raise the possibility and potential for cultural authoritarianism and the emergence of centralist approaches to the cultural sphere.

Progress is measured with the stories built in the centre of town. Loss of individual creativity and existence in the name of fabricated collective being is sacrificed in the name of the few.

These attitudes would allow for uniformity to ascend and possibly aspire to represent the common lifestyle among the communities. If so, the question then raises whether such an objective is preferred and determined from communities; or, was it the agenda of a small group of decision makers to establish the apparatus of isolation and close the doors at the same time when the world is opening up?





# Multiple Identities of the Self



Considering and discussing cultural identities with Pristina citizens, and in particular the treatment of 'the other', viewpoints on the subject vary depending on the background of the individuals, such as their age, education level, family background, individuals' capacity for tolerance and their personal experience.

'The other' in the Kosovo context is perceived as anyone who does not display conventional norms of the majority and mainstream population. In this sense 'the other' is considered anyone from a different ethnic and religious group, sexual orientation or any individual displaying signs of unconventional lifestyle. As members of the group agreed, Kosovo, as any other place in the world, is rich with different cultural identities and that there is a pressing need to start a catalyst of change in the perception of these identities.

'Plastic tolerance' is termed the superficial tolerance to 'the other'; that is, non-discriminating tolerance as expressed in the following:

'I don't really care if you like me or not but I do care if you would employ me or not based on my personal identities (gender, ethnic, religious, etc)'<sup>12</sup>.

In the quest for recognising 'the other', reality on the ground is not promising according to many. Introduction of new and diverse ideas or ways of being often face indirect rejection through intolerant behaviour which manifests itself through negligence, intellectual intimidation, demotivation, feeding into distancing from the other. Narrow-mindedness as such can lead to offensive and unacceptably discriminatory social behaviour.

Discrimination, based on stereotypes and prejudice, in the Kosovo context is grounded much more on the nationalistic context fed by nationalistic historical narratives. Discrimination in these terms,

is viewed as a protective shield or even patriotism, for national survival and fight against cultural assimilation. In this sense, the identification of discriminatory stereotypes in Kosovo by the international community can be more valuable due to their potential for objectivity and neutral attitudes.

## The view from the turtle shell

The need for self-reflection and identifying the construction of stereotypes is considered a good starting point for any development of tolerance within society. In the Kosovo context, there has been a shift of power balances; the 'victimised' community and perceived minority of yesterday are now the dominant and intolerant community, whereas the majority and dominant group of yesterday represent the 'victimised' and perceived minority community of today. This shifting of roles and attitudes were considered a direct consequence of social change and surroundings that people find themselves in. As a consequence, the victimised group and the dominant group generate myths and stereotypes for each other that might not necessarily reflect the facts and are potentially biased.

Another social aspect that has not helped in encouraging mutual cultural understanding and tolerance in Kosovo society is the international imposition of what was called 'multi-ethnicity' or multi-ethnic Kosovo. The international community's idea of multi-ethnicity derived from the western concept of multi-ethnicity based on their experiences and circumstances. However, people in Kosovo did not often consider each other as multi-ethnic groups, because nationalities living in Kosovo had much more in common than the international community could imagine, despite the violence of 1990s wars of former Yugoslavia. Therefore, with

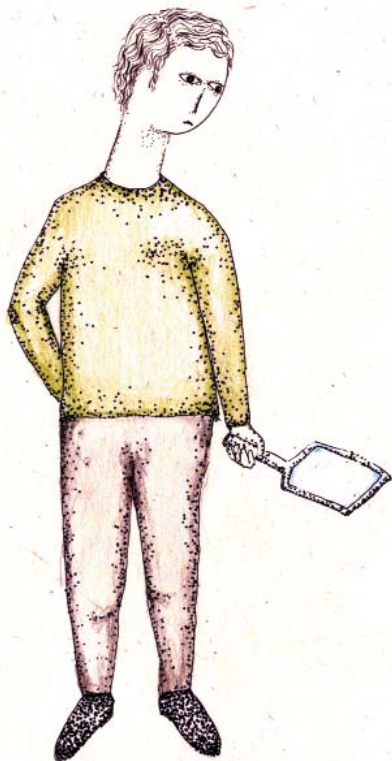
**'Since subjects engage different and multiple identities in response to the social contexts in which they find themselves at a given moment...'<sup>1</sup>.**

<sup>1</sup> <http://science.jrank.org/pages/7777/Multiple-Identity.html> [accessed 10th Feb 12]

<sup>2</sup> Member from discussion group

all good intentions, the international community's approach was perceived as too preaching about multi-ethnicity without allowing more space for tolerance to develop, based on local traditions and practices at local level, and thus preventing genuine reconciliation processes to take place.

It is believed that there is a general lack of self-reflection and self-criticism in Kosovo that could potentially contribute to deconstructing myths and prejudices about 'the other' and allow for mutual cultural understanding and exploration of similarities rather than differences. Additionally, the poor economic situation in Kosovo does not help the development of tolerance, as it becomes an easy route to often blame 'the other' for poverty and lack of prosperity.



### **The others from Planet Diaspora**

The isolation and rather limited integration of the Kosovan diaspora living in Western Europe, especially in Germany, Switzerland, and Great Britain, is prominent. Lower degrees of integration in Germany and Switzerland is explained by lesser means of financial and educational backgrounds of the migrants, who are often said to come from rural Kosovo. As it has been seen among other immigrant groups, (e.g. Irish, Greek and other communities in the US), the Kosovo diaspora has also adopted protectionist and self-isolating social behaviour in order to safeguard their national identity with tendencies of increased nationalism and patriotism.

However, the Kosovan diaspora, due to closer proximity to home, goes a step further in safeguarding national identities, in making sure that youngsters marry from Kosovo if they can't find a suitable partner from their diaspora community.

So it has become a local joke during the summer months when local people see men from the diaspora driving their flashy, fast cars and showing their 'wealth' in pursuit for a bride from Kosovo. The Kosovan diaspora living in Great Britain is, however, considered more integrated into British society, since they come from more educated backgrounds and thus are more employable, aspirational and educated in Britain, too.

The isolating social behaviour of Kosovan diaspora living in Western Europe generates frustration among local communities in Kosovo, linking this to the difficulties experienced towards European integration, tolerance and economic development in the EU. In order to understand 'the other', one must attempt to understand and accept humankind with generosity and curiosity and avoid isolation and alienation. Everything begins with the acknowledgement of the other and making the effort to getting to know better. Communities in Kosovo have been familiar with this for centuries, offering their hospitality and a cup of coffee.

# Dialogue and Communication: Constructing messages in contemporary dialogues



Shifting from traditional mindsets to more liberal and contemporary systems of values is considered an essential transitional process, and is shaping new ideas and beliefs for Kosovans.

Hand in hand with this, society is increasingly having to adapt itself to recently introduced ethics and norms, while assimilating popular and global principles.

Consequently, belonging to this social and cultural *Zeitgeist* is increasingly mainstream. It is considered an instrument of social progress, a process of cultural integration into Western culture.

However, the practice of cultural separation, class division and stereotyping dominates the media and public discourse, and with this arises the tendency to misjudge and contribute to misguided perceptions about other cultures, leading to forms of social and cultural ghettoisation.

As a consequence of these general classifications, everyday forms of communication based on such cultural labelling have now become established cultural gaps where people are increasingly tending to group themselves according the agenda constructed by social patterns of belonging that serves the purposes of political elites and powerful economic groups.

How is dialogue constructed in contemporary society? Who drafts the mass media agenda and forms of communication? To whom are these messages aimed at today, and for what purpose?

This session shared and discussed the views of prominent individuals in society, focusing on dialogue and communication patterns as a means to construct cultural and social viewpoints as well as to define their implications on approaches to communication today.

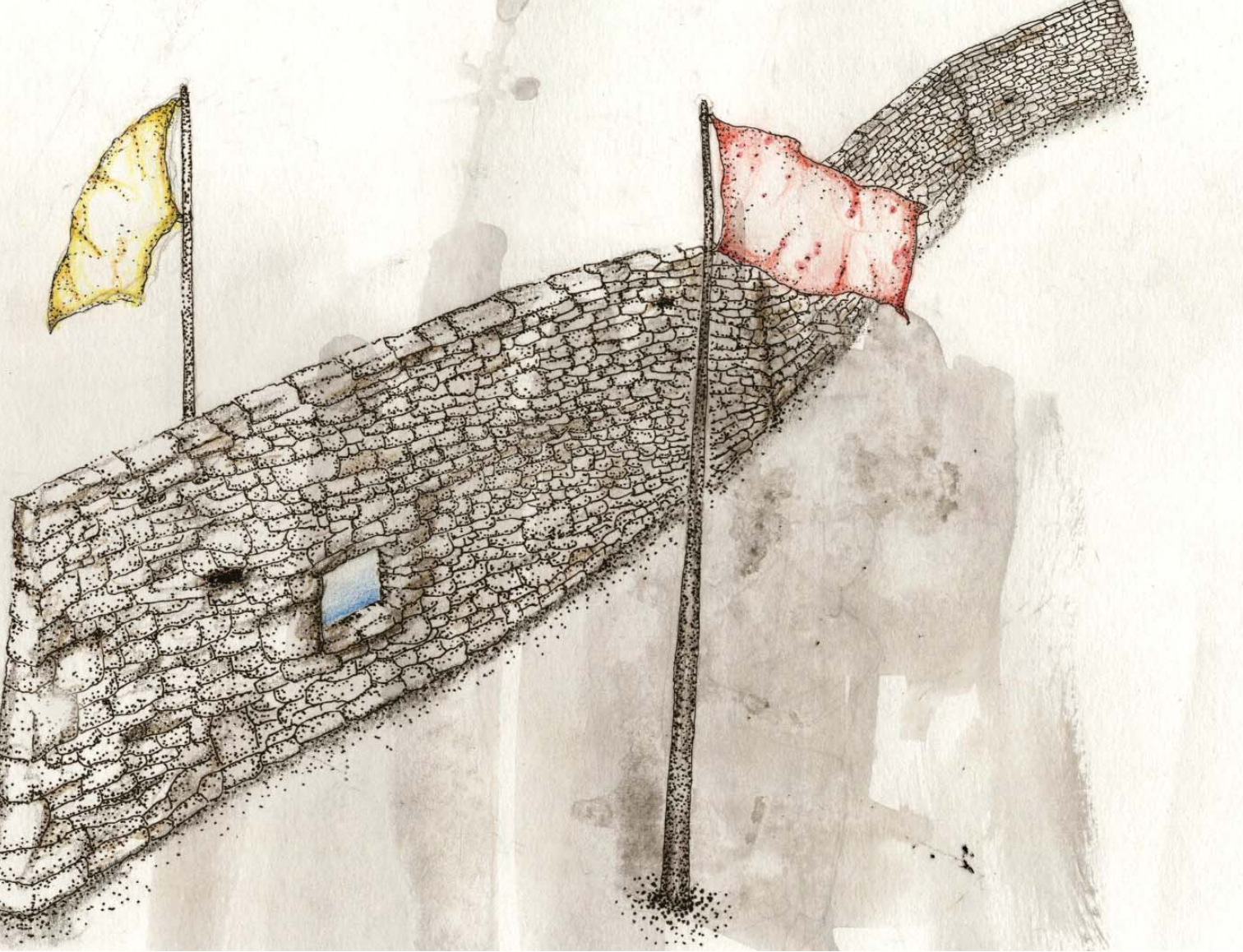
## **Media shaping views on our 'aliens'**

From the common perspective, the role of communication and platforms for dialogue is perceived as an instrument for enhancing cross-border collaboration and the establishment of professional networks. More importantly, it is used as an instrument to accomplish a climate of intercultural tolerance and mutual understanding.

However, in the local context, traditional and patriarchal communication patterns still dominate the discourse of society – patterns which are still particularly pronounced in rural environments and among older generations. Although the traditional, rural institution of *Oda* is losing its importance in the community, the framework of discourse in society and in the media has not experienced a fundamental change or shown remarkable progress.

An example which demonstrates that much communication is based on prejudice is the behaviour of society towards the diaspora community. Society and the media share a common view about the diaspora community as “uneducated construction workers” who financially infuse the domestic economy. In addition, a





popular local view is that they are badly dressed bachelors who rent luxurious cars to lure local women.

On the other hand, the diaspora community finds it difficult to be represented impartially through local media platforms in order to confront local clichés and generalisations about their current identity and cultural representation.

There are numerous cases of the media deliberately employing a discriminatory approach, illustrating and emphasising class divisions and prejudices. Some popular TV shows, for example, depict poor living conditions but neglect their journalistic code of ethics to provide a full portrayal; as such they disregard a neutral approach in representing human

dignity, while simultaneously compounding the perceptions of differences in social classes between their subjects and their audience.

It is widely believed that class and cultural division as sometimes presented in the media is prejudiced and intentional. Its influence and agenda have a negative effect on communities and cultures, ignoring community needs in pursuit of a story that reinforces common misconceptions.

Some even argue that cultural communication encourages this fabrication since the media tools employed by different interest groups deliberately seek to glorify, alienate and create other biased discourses in the public sphere.

### **Crucifying the 'colleague'**

Inter-collegial relationships in the workplace are often based on alliances to certain clique groups, creating a culture of personal dependency rather than the development of professional relationships.

The tendency for this doesn't allow for professional growth and it affects the productivity of individuals in the workplace; for example, disagreements between colleagues do not arise because of intellectual discourse or differing paradigms, but because of the need to defend alliances and protect certain interest groups.

As a result, a habit for nepotism has developed – which equals to corruption in workplace – and which is even a common feature in public institutions. While from a foreign perspective it seems that Kosovan society is attempting to move away from traditional frameworks of communication, this transition has become stuck as the discourse of everyday life and still tends to be based on prejudices and alliances.

In the process of reassessing social standards and reflecting on actual needs, some voices stress that society is still in the process of re-formatting its image while simultaneously having to face long-standing problems. Differing historical narratives that continue to build negative approaches towards 'the

others' are still one of the main sources of prejudice and stereotyping, and tackling these rooted issues is perhaps the key to change.

### **Educational awakening**

The educational system remains one of the most important sources of identifying and constructing means of communication. In this, there is much still to be done.

Manipulation of historical narratives, a process which begins in elementary school, has established a uniform and mainstream mindset which reflects the approach to communication among cultures and communities.

There is an immense need for a reform of the educational system – especially in revision of history books – as a process for triggering and increasing students' capacities for critical thinking and self-reflection, as well as adjusting them to approaches in communication between other cultures and communities.

The international community has invested a lot in Kosovo's development following the wars in the 1990s, in terms of infrastructure, politics, and democratisation processes, for example. However, the need for educational reform from elementary school to university is now the priority, in order to produce critical and open-minded individuals capable of self-criticism, with strong, objective professional skills and an ethical approach.

Education as a tool for knowing oneself and of knowing others should encourage critical and multi-dimensional thinking based on logic and constructive teaching: communication and narratives based on facts and not based on bedtime stories.

While the international community's support in this issue is essential, Kosovo has to face its challenges in the field of education immediately and make them a priority. Through these measures, contemporary dialogue within and between communities locally and internationally can be carried to the next level.

# Common heritage as a collective responsibility



Cultural values have always been part of our heritage, identity and collective memory. The treatment of heritage as a collective responsibility was not the same throughout history; however, in recent decades in Kosovo, the attitudes to safeguarding common heritage have not changed distinctively.

In recent times, while people are more aware of their surroundings and the environment, communities observe the deterioration of buildings that have cultural meaning and are part of their collective memory. The destruction of heritage buildings without consideration for their meaning, age, and what they represent to history, is often undermined with minimal or no care to prevent their destruction.

Fortunately, there are still small groups of committed citizens and organisations that make efforts to protect existing cultural heritage in Kosovo and to oppose the inconsistent policies that affect landmarks of urban identity.

In terms of tourism and cultural heritage, the two have been traditionally and inextricably linked. People visit places for their buildings and the stories they offer because of their cultural and heritage value. Therefore the need to promote cultural heritage, which in turn would help in developing cultural tourism, is essential. Along with heritage buildings, cultural tourism enables local people to promote their local traditions, cultural products, rituals and ways of life in a dignified manner, restoring people's pride for their place and traditions.

## **Heritage and institutions**

In Kosovo there are at least five main institutions that deal with cultural heritage. Their main duties are to manage conservation, restoration, safeguarding and

protection of cultural heritage. However, in practice, fulfilment of duties regarding protection and approach to cultural heritage, including artefacts and written materials, is questionable. Often, treatment of cultural heritage by inhabitants is not at a desired level either due to a lack of awareness about their heritage or popular perception of heritage as something old and hence unworthy.

A lot of time is wasted in disputes about who and which authority should take over the protection of particular buildings. While in the meantime the buildings are left to deteriorate. Quite often, the conservation of buildings is done without quality assurance and proper standards, thus allowing for improvisations that do not represent the true character and purpose of the buildings and do not safeguard their existence for future generations. These improvisations were usually carried out for political gains i.e. in line with election campaigns and for positive features in the media. The inability to safeguard cultural heritage is usually related to post-war developments that focus on income generation and economic development. The argument of conservation during reconstruction is much more costly than new construction. The solution of new construction comes at the expense of common heritage.

## **Collective memory subject to ruling governments' policies**

Social media, internet and games pose a direct challenge in making sure that society and especially young people stay tuned to their culture and heritage values. While these developments might keep youth away from their heritage, it could equally be an opportunity to incorporate values of cultural heritage into the virtual world of the internet and social media.

In the Kosovo context cultural heritage is characterised by its aesthetic values and collective memory. However, considering the existentialist and the hierarchy of needs of the population in Kosovo – whereby people have to worry about their day to day needs – the safeguarding and protection of cultural heritage doesn't come as top priority for the majority of the population.

In the Balkans, due to many changes in political ruling, cultural heritage was treated as a tool to either attempt to delete history, in terms of claiming current victory over previous rulers; or to attempt to resurrect it to claim lineage to a certain period of history, though quite often without sound historical facts.

The previous regime had direct consequences on heritage in Kosovo – in particular on Pristina's heritage, – because of their policy to destroy the old for the sake of the new. Due to this policy, for example, the entire old town of Pristina was bulldozed to allow space for the new style of buildings. The new and the progress in former Yugoslavia was cement and concrete as opposed to the old wooden and clay traditional buildings.

Recent attempts to re-write post-Yugoslav history is important to note as there have been attempts to get rid of heritage related to Yugoslav era, such as the Brotherhood and Unity monument in Pristina. Ideas of replacing this monument with a car park is attractive in some circles. In the same line, the huge construction investments in Skopje attempting to claim ancient Greek lineage for its nation through new buildings and statues is interesting to note. This shows that heritage policy in the Balkans changes with every government, and as such cultural heritage is owned by ruling governments and is not treated as something that belongs to all.

### **Heritage and Tourism**

In Kosovo little has been done to promote cultural heritage for developing tourism. A few initiatives, both institutional and independent, were deemed as ineffective, uncreative and as such these

initiatives did not succeed in drawing noticeable local tourism and even less international tourism to cultural attractions. On the other hand, the international organisations in Kosovo, have made significant effort to create a platform for policy development for cultural heritage. Through various projects and initiatives, the international organisations have managed to encourage local craft production and their distribution and sale through promotional fairs. This in turn encouraged the appreciation of local traditional crafts and raised awareness amongst people about their traditions and, to some extent, their cultural heritage.

Other countries in the region have performed slightly better in implementing strategies for tourism and cultural heritage; some have created firm heritage and tourist attractions such as the Popova Kula development.

### **Media and Education**

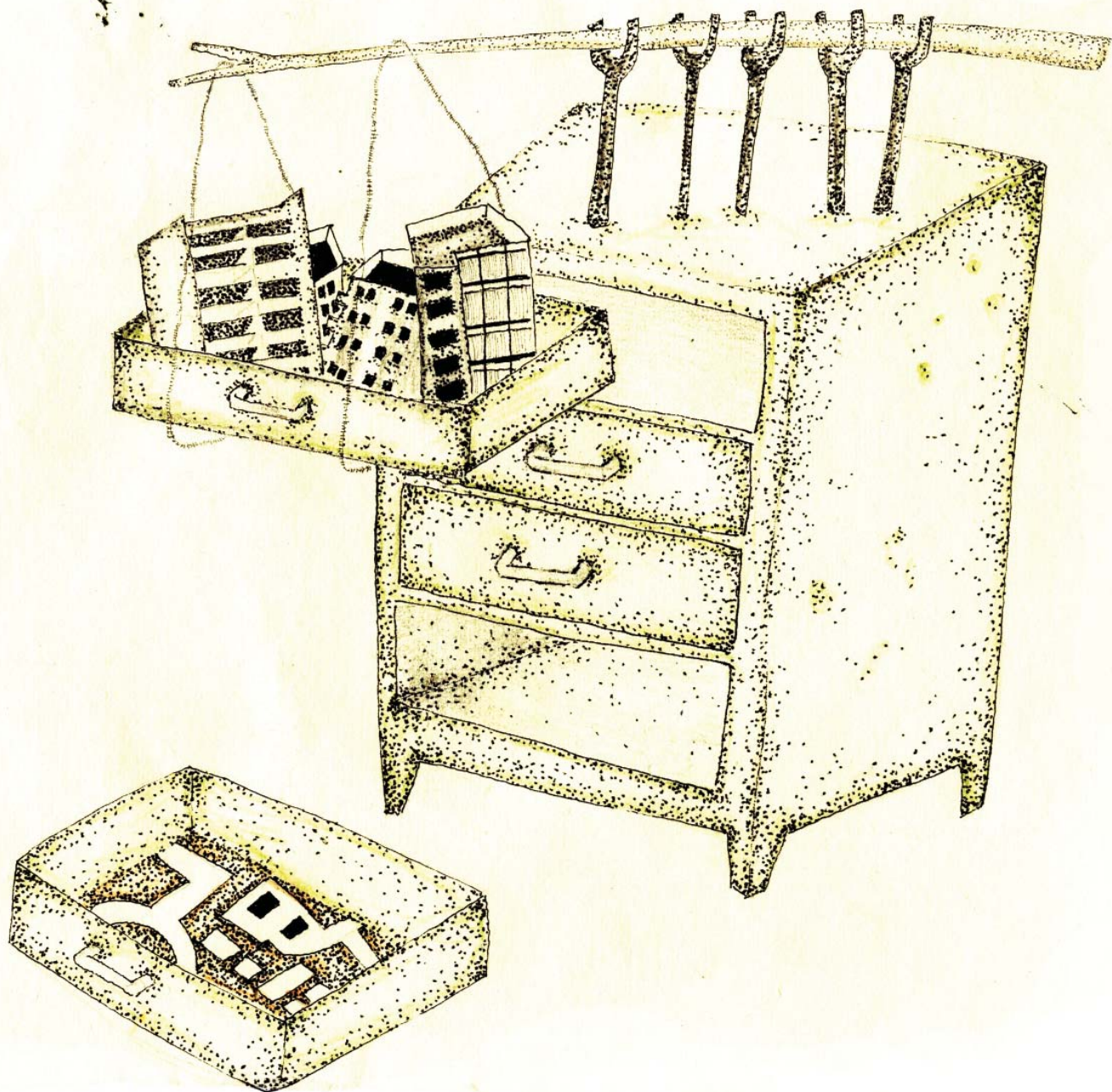
Lack of media coverage and unanimous decision making by authorities on cultural heritage has not given space to citizens for their involvement and knowledge about the fate of their cultural landmarks.

In terms of education, there is a significant gap in the educational system in Kosovo regarding cultural heritage. The subject is treated insufficiently and in very uncreative ways which does not help in raising appreciation for cultural heritage values among younger generations.

The situation for common heritage values and (lack of) collective responsibility in Kosovo can be seen as a combination of limited institutional capacity; citizens' inability to have an impact on policy-making and implementation; and the lack of educational support for raising awareness about cultural heritage.

Finding the balance and prioritising is not always easy, but it seems important to contribute to a prosperous future by investing in younger generations. It is said that a picture is worth a thousand words, but what can we say to our future generations when there are no stories to tell except that our city became filled with tall glass buildings?





# Stories from our backyard



First things first: this is not a wish list of what others expect to see in Kosovo<sup>1</sup> in years to come. This article represents a list of expectations from the international community already living in Kosovo, imagining a visit back in 20 years' time.

In the international media, Kosovo is mostly portrayed as a troubled spot and people outside it have had few chances to hear tales or read stories that reveal and expose the rich cultural life of this small corner of the Balkans. However, the international community who have been working in Kosovo have had the chance to discover the beautiful 'well-kept secrets' that Kosovo has to offer.

But, really, what do they hope to see if they were to visit Kosovo in the future with their families? You can imagine them: casually dressed and recollecting stories from their time in the Balkans, memories of here and there; low-key, bohemian nights at Tingell Tangell; hiking weekends in Rugova and skiing in Brezovica...

Imagine as we like the worldly tourists and a golden future in Kosovo, the reality is not so colourful at the moment.

Episodes of dialogue sessions with intellectuals organized by the PCDK project continued with a special session organized among members of the international community who are working and living in Kosovo, and who are more engaged in and contributing to the fields of heritage, culture, education and the environment.

This dialogue was designed to uncover the perspectives of participants and their visions of Kosovo when they will – if they do – visit Kosovo in the future.

## Wannabe Central

The first point that was made was that 'being realistic about the future one first has to verify its potentials and capacities of the present'. From this perspective, the visualization of what will be a local cultural representation of Kosovo is not clear despite the growing potential for a dynamic cultural scene.

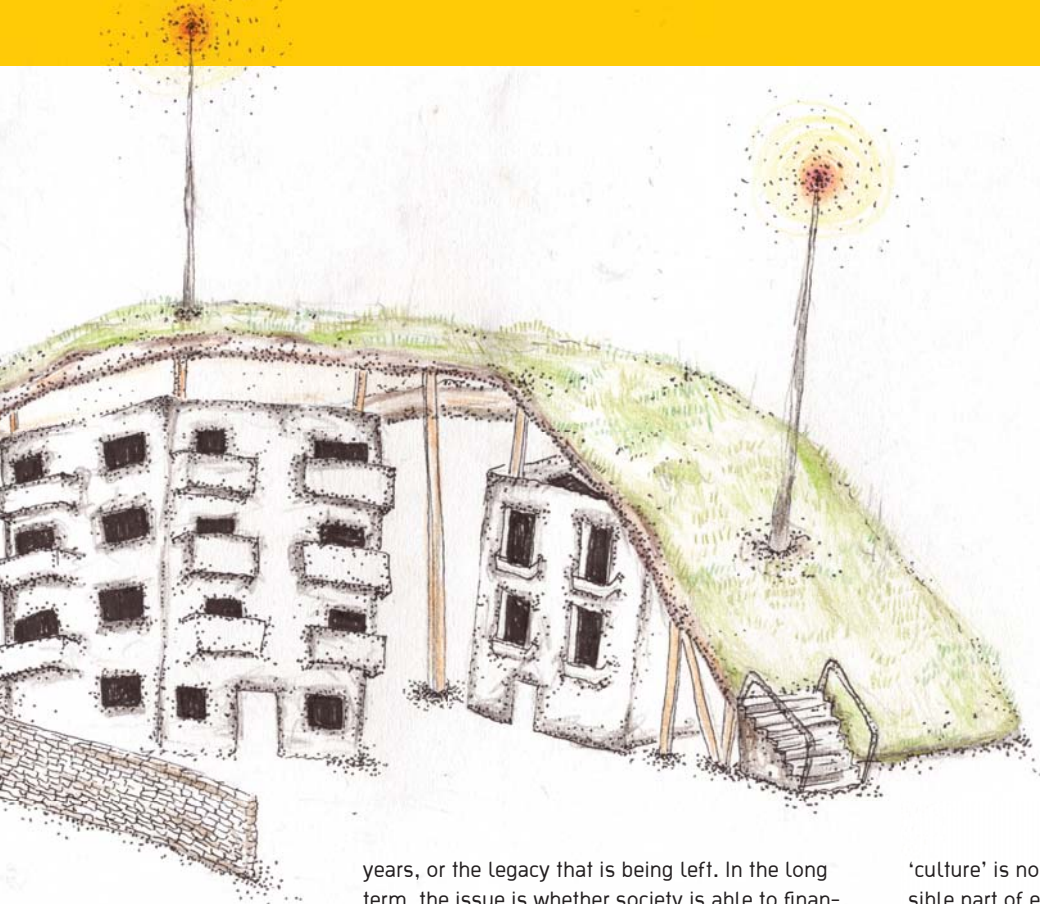
Nevertheless, what is emphasised are the changes expected in the task of raising awareness about cultural heritage. Ideally, in twenty years' time, there are hopes that heritage sites will be accessible to all communities, and that planned development around these locations will integrate heritage into the everyday life of society and the city.

There is a joke that says 'Travelling from Pristina to other towns in Kosovo is like a journey in a time machine'. In this respect, there is a great task ahead in the cultural promotion of other regions. Organizing artistic events aiming to connect people and cultures will contribute to raising the profile of different regions since currently cultural events are tend to be focused in the capital Pristina.

Aside from this centralisation of culture, another issue that has been picked up on is the production of cultural products and events. There is a lack of ownership among the local community of their cultures and traditions, since practically anything cultural that happens is supported by international organisations. Of course, these events usually occur in Pristina – from funding them, to initiating and implementing projects and holding events.

But funding for culture is always uncertain, since for every play that is written there are pennies to be paid and it is hard to visualize the payback over 20





years, or the legacy that is being left. In the long term, the issue is whether society is able to financially afford to support and create cultural activities. The dependence on foreign funds means that there are few positive signals at the moment of a sustainable cultural and arts scene in Kosovo.

Nevertheless, Kosovo would be in a different scenario if it were to experience solid economic development over the next 20 years, allowing people to see beyond the 'full-fridge' and able to afford time to engage with cultural processes and development.

Promoting traditions and inclusiveness is always a difficult part of cultural development, since it firstly requires increased capacities in education and an investment in younger generations. Unfortunately, this is not yet the case in Kosovo.

While the cultural scene in Pristina can be inspiring, it seems to only occur there. Even though

'culture' is not a powerful institution and an accessible part of everyday life, there is already a vibrant alternative scene – and in 20 years' time, there is hope that this will have flourished sustainably and have naturally embedded itself into the everyday workings of society, with its own authenticity as an organically grown cultural product.

However, Kosovo's future tourists are not as enthusiastic for its prospects in tourism. Although there are increasing numbers of tourism development ideas, Kosovo will never be a great international touristic point, mainly because it is surrounded with countries that already have well-developed and resourceful strategies to attract visitors. What it can hope to do is capitalise on what resources it has, and encourage their continuation in the future for the citizens of the place as much as the visitors.

Sustainable development is another burning is-

sue that needs to see visible progress over the next 20 years, and for which governance is said to have led to a sense of 'regress', with knock-on effects on wellbeing. Scandals of corruption, nepotism and mismanagement have reinforced the opinion that those who are in charge of Kosovo are not taking on board the ideas and aspirations of the country's energetic youth.

Nevertheless, it is expected that there will be a collective eagerness to reflect upon the discontent accumulated throughout the years and make changes in all layers of society.

### **Getting environ'mental**

'Trash capital of Balkans' is how one local radio refers to Pristina. As much as the capital of Kosovo is trying to find its way onto the map of must-see places, only tentative steps have been taken to improve the city's image and to self-reflect. In the foreigners' perception, 'people here always find someone to blame for their own mistakes or failures'.

Along with problems of waste management and an inefficient approach to environmental issues, very few steps have been taken to prevent urban areas from resembling illegally constructed favelas and streets being lined with impenetrable mirrored glass. Radical steps should be taken to normalize spatial and urban planning of every town in Kosovo. In this regard, a lack of public space is seen as one of the greatest obstacles for the development of effective and inclusive youth activities and its potential for enhancing and stimulating civic life.

The level of self-criticism remains at a low level, since accountability as a notion exists only on paper. The majority of institutionalised processes and projects serve political parties' agendas, implemented with little regard for transparency or fairness.

The need for a bottom-up approach remains one of the priorities in order to release local potential and to provide opportunities and choices for those who want to contribute to normalisation of living – and of living spaces – in Kosovo.

However, fingers remain firmly crossed for the potential that a revitalisation of Kosovo's agriculture holds. The encouragement of farming practices, accompanied by drastic changes in agricultural strategies and supportive policies for farmers, are seen as a source of hope for the stabilization of the local economy and the creation of new jobs.

### **Summa summarum**

Among the international visitors there is a general expectation that citizens will take a more proactive role in decision-making and that there will be efficient economic prosperity to support that engagement. The empowerment of people through ideas is encouraged, as it is currently believed that 'the culture of the villages' has taken over Kosovo and that the political elite does not represent the urban spirit.

In this context, the role of civil society is powerful – and hugely necessary in order to start moving democratic processes forward as well as increasing inclusion and social integration which, until now, have been poorly observed.

Accessibility and accountability are evident as a need for society to progress and move ahead with truer integration. In this sense, the promotion of cultural diversity and an inclusive approach in decision-making is vital.

The clear message is that the promotion of local potential and resources is only possible by investing in them, and in this regard, a lot of things have to change in order to overcome the stagnation.

One thing is for sure: what future tourists in Kosovo will come to see remains unpredictable. It is certainly dependent on the commitment of citizens and communities to make things work. However, efforts are continuing to enhance the perspectives of every community in every field through targeting education, culture and the economy. At the end of the day, it will depend on whether the local communities view the potential in their resources as a glass half empty – or, in fact, very full.



# Heritage and its hidden potential



A wide concept as 'culture' brings to the table relatively diverse definitions and points of view, depending on the background, education, cultural environment and cultural influences of the participants. Cultural heritage, however, is more specific an issue, incorporating a broad scope of evocative meanings: from the tradition of a grandmother's apple pie, to a pile of stones somewhere in the hills, to a religious building or site.

What is more complicated, though, is the relation of heritage to poverty since, in the list of priorities of daily life, food and basic needs are, of course, far more important.

On the other hand, continuous efforts to promote the rich and diverse cultural heritage sites and cultures are also a priority. But the question is In whose priority list do they fall?: the list of communities or that of the institutions?

The ninth dialogue session of the PCDK project, held in Gračanica/Gračanice, aimed to explore the ties of 'Heritage and Poverty'. NGO activists, academics, artists and human rights supporters were engaged in a discussion exchanging opinions and experiences from the field.

Discussion on this topic produces broad and varied interpretations because in its essence the subject matter – both for 'heritage' and for 'poverty' – ranges widely. It is important to take care in trying to define the terminology and concepts that commonly characterize these two subjects; just as poverty can be understood as an economic, intellectual, spiritual, cultural or moral notion, heritage can also be clas-

sified into categories of the tangible, intangible and natural. In many cases, trying to establish a firm definition of 'heritage' and 'poverty' weaves between several of these concepts along a spectrum. In the local context, poverty and heritage are complementary, influencing each other in positive and negative aspects and having an impact on the quality of life and perspectives of local communities.

## **Financial black hole**

In its recent history, Kosovo has been granted a considerable number of donations. However, the territory continues to experience significant economic problems that are influencing and shaping ideas, views and beliefs among local communities. Local and international reports on the misuse of funds, mismanagement of projects and abuse of power at all levels of administration are frequent.

Consequently, economic (financial) poverty is the prevailing issue in society, with clear indications that there is a weak understanding of and ability to develop the potential of cultural heritage.

Due to the necessity of fulfilling their fundamental needs, communities are prioritising the 'full fridge' rather than focusing on the utilisation of different cultural, natural and/or alternative resources. The current approach is visible in the 'self-destructive' relationship humankind in general has with their surrounding natural environment and green areas.

In the social context, a deficit of investments in the educational system as well as a lack of institutional commitment to support education and invest

in the future is reflected in a general sense that heritage and culture – and their link to poverty – is largely ignored. Brain-drain, the search for a better quality of life, and forced resettlement have resulted in intellectual poverty and insufficient professional human resources in the field of culture, which have consequently enabled and encouraged the engagement of inexperienced and untrained individuals in this domain.

Inefficient political responsibility of institutions is only one of many factors that are slowing down the process of raising awareness among communities. The media dictates ‘trends’ in accordance with different political agendas, and because of society’s dependence on the media, attention to cultural priorities such as heritage is neglected. Existing cultural and social prejudices also colour present views on heritage and cultural diversity. In particular, motivating youth to become engaged in cultural initiatives is lacking. There is clearly a great need for educational and informative programmes that would enable communities to better understand the importance of safeguarding and promoting cultural heritage and the potential for community development through heritage and cultural resources.

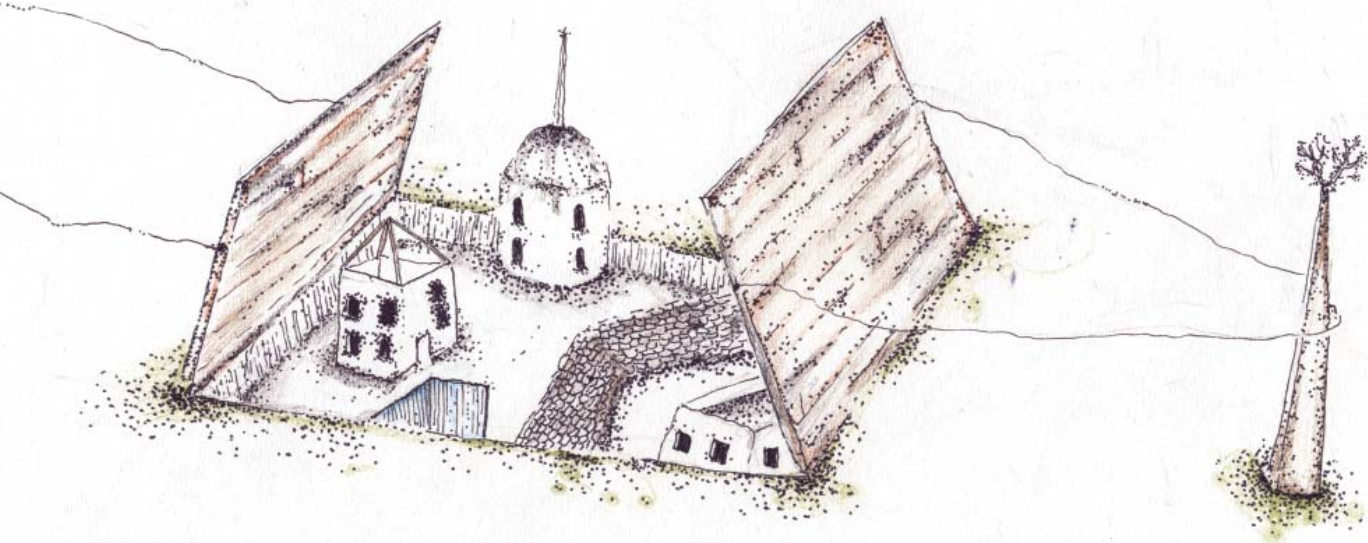
Stereotyping, too, plays a role. The lack of knowledge on the concept of the ‘neighbour’ has led to the foundation of inaccurate pictures about ‘the other community’, since cultural heritage is commonly separated into ‘ours’ and ‘theirs’. Efforts to glorify one nation against the other are in progress, with the result that there is a seeming disparity in the relative importance of one form of cultural heritage over another.

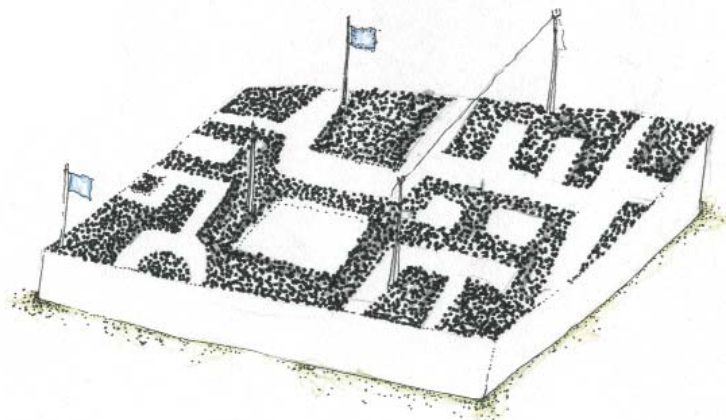
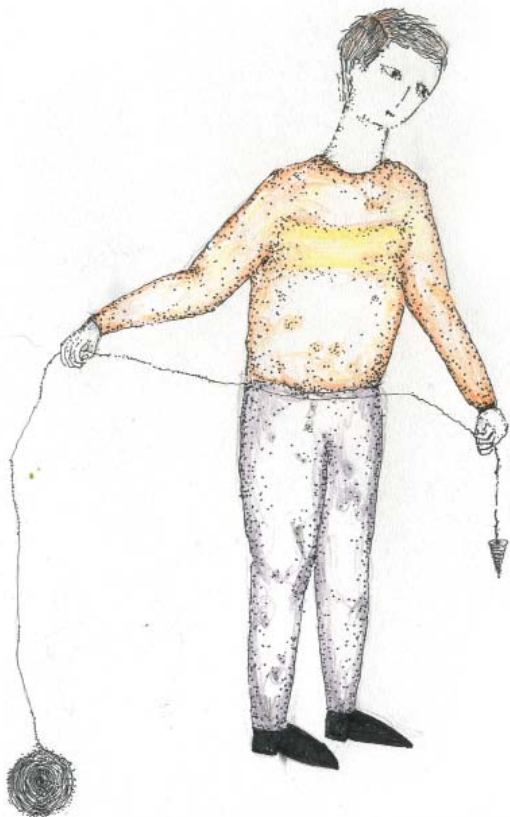
However, when we talk about cultural assets (diversity of cultures, artefacts, sites, buildings, and traditions), not only in Kosovo but in the whole Balkan region, its diversity comes to the fore. Nonetheless, most of the communities living in southeast Europe are not aware of these assets as resources for intellectual and economic development. While in other, more ‘developed’ countries cultural heritage is well preserved and maintained, in the Balkans it was burnt and destroyed. What is more alarming is that this negative trend is still a feature of contemporary urban development and societal ‘modernisation’. Kosovo is not an exceptional case in this.

A scarcity of collective initiatives and the lack of will to communicate are holding back inter-community cooperation with regard to the safeguarding of common, shared heritage and the promotion of cultural diversity. Cooperation between communities is highly significant for ensuring long term solutions in preventing the negative effects of poverty and on heritage. The need for self-reflection, raising awareness and inclusion of youth in the process is vital for safeguarding and promoting cultural heritage which, in turn, can ensure that it can be used as a powerful tool against poverty and to ensure that the inheritance from the past is passed on to future generations.

It is obvious that the region is rich in its diversity of cultural assets. However people remain poor, unaware of the wealth that surrounds them. People in the Balkans do not need Aladdin’s Lamp. They own it. They just need to rub it to unleash its power.









# Pristina, where the streets have no name!



My first step into the landscape of any new destination is to purchase a guide book and study the streets around my hotel and/or meeting place, and I often copy and enlarge a street map of the immediate area. Even the arrival of Google maps has not changed this pattern. I still treasure the guide-book to put flesh on the bare bones of maps. I read up recommended visitor highlights and the less well-known ones that catch my fancy. When I arrive at my hotel I go for a walk as soon as possible, reading the local landscape and getting my bearings with the aid of the maps, street signs and landmarks. 'The magic of the street is the mingling of the errand and the epiphany' says Rebecca Solnit in her book 'Wanderlust: A History of Walking.'

My first visit to Kosovo this year initially confounded those first steps. Admittedly Kosovo has yet to become a well-known tourist destination, thus guide books proved scarce. But two weeks before I was due to depart for my first mission in March 2011, I came across a single copy of the extremely well written Bradt guide book in our local Waterstones. Well written, yes, but the street map of Pristina contained therein was like a map of the New World before it was discovered. The observation in the text under 'Getting Around' did not cheer me much either: it led off with – 'The biggest challenge in Pristina is the relative chaos when it comes to street names'. Apparently they have been changed with each political upheaval: many streets now have three names in active use, but this does not apply to actual signage at street corners; maybe they are waiting for the next upheaval!

So I rambled cautiously, closely reading the streetscape as intensely as a native Indian tracker might read the desert floor. Distinctive buildings were scarce, but I was struck by the clustering of shops – jeweller after jeweller in one long row then

a group of three pharmacies and then again a cluster of ladies' clothes shops. Finally a complete street of ladies' clothes shops, many featuring richly ornamented full length wedding dresses of every possible colour. For me this stands out as the distinct and wonderful urban landscape of Pristina. Wandering further through the city I found this pattern, this grouping, continued: hardware shops in one group, sheet-metal workers in another. I wondered why.

The following day on a familiarisation study visit to the towns of Pejë/Peć and Gjakovë/Đakovica, we visited the former market or bazaar districts where artisans and craftsmen, jewellers, harness-makers, carpenters, blacksmiths, tailors and dress-makers had worked and traded. These districts had been burnt to the ground in 1999. They have since been rebuilt ... in a fashion, but few of the artisans and craftsmen have returned; many of the narrow streets have a hollow emptiness. I am sure (at least I hope I am) that in time, new generations of craft-workers will occupy the streets. The challenge now is to manage the process in a manner that establishes a cultural and urban landscape continuity.

It was here then that I found the answer to my 'flock of frock shops' mystery. In the market each street featured one craft or trade bound together by the tradition of its guild. The shops of latter-day Pristina are ensuring the continuity of this distinctive urban landscape characteristic. The streets may have no name, but Bono and U2 would find much to sing about in Kosovo.

The authors of the guide book warned that 'Pristina is not a city to fall in love with at first sight.' Perhaps not, but as I roamed that distinctive, colourful, lively streetscape I thought that maybe slow-burner love is the more lasting, the more real.

**Terry O'Regan**

## Note

'Pristina, where the streets have no name!', after a song by Bono and U2.

Wanderlust: A History of Walking, Solnit, R., published by Viking, 2000

Kosovo: The Bradt Guide book, Warrander, G., and Knaus, V., published by Bradt Travel Guides, Bucks, 2007/2010

# coffee talks

## ON HERITAGE AND DIVERSITY

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