

## AN APPROACH TO BUILDING HERITAGE AND ITS PRESERVATION IN SERBIA AND SURROUNDING AREAS

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**Abstract.** *Cultural heritage represents a unique and irreplaceable cultural value of a nation. Preservation and protection of cultural heritage is an important moral role of the entire modern society. The paper singles out the notion of vernacular architecture and traditional houses as a significant part of the architectural heritage. The case study includes examples of traditional houses in Serbia, Romania and Bulgaria. The current condition of buildings, their purpose, the degree of preservation, as well as the applied methods of protection are considered in more detail. By analyzing examples of positive and negative practice, conclusions were drawn about the active approach to the architectural heritage of these countries. The goal of this paper is to consider the approach to the preservation of vernacular architecture and the relationship of these countries to this form of cultural heritage. The methods used in the paper are analysis, synthesis, comparative analysis, modeling method and case study.*

**Key words:** *architectural heritage, traditional house, preservation methods, active approach, vernacular architecture*

### 1. INTRODUCTION

The term "cultural environment" can be defined as the most complete understanding of a quality environment in which the best way of our existence and acting is enabled, and it contains all kinds of natural and cultural heritage (Marasović, 1983). Cultural heritage, on the other hand, represents the heritage of immaterial attributes and physical artifacts of a society or a certain group that constitutes the legacy of past generations, and which is carefully preserved in the present in order to be left as a legacy for future generations (Mikić, 2014). The protection of such entities imposes itself as an immanent task. If the entities have been degraded or devastated by irresponsibility and negligence,

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maximum effort must be made to restore them, which provides instills sense and confirms our existence. The most present part of the "cultural environment" in our everyday life are architectural monuments (Marasović, 1983).

Preservation and attitude towards cultural heritage are a very important aspect of the sustainability of a country's culture and tradition. The protection of cultural heritage, and therefore of architectural heritage, is a complex process and requires a thoughtful and careful approach. The paper deals in more detail with an active approach to architectural heritage, and the most commonly used methods of preserving vernacular architecture, especially on the example of traditional houses. The modern period of active protection refers to the development of conservation awareness and practice, starting from the period after the Second World War.

The problem of relations with these facilities was also considered, and in what condition they are, whether they are in active use or completely neglected. The case study includes selected examples of good and bad practice in Serbia and its surroundings, with special reference to Romania and Bulgaria.

The goal of this paper is to consider the approach to the preservation of vernacular architecture and its current state, as well as the relationship of these countries to this form of cultural heritage. The very notion of architectural heritage, hazard and methods of preservation will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter.

## 2. HAZARD AND METHODS OF PRESERVATION OF ARCHITECTURAL HERITAGE

Architectural heritage is the materialization of the essence of a nation, its identity, culture, value systems, possibilities and potentials. The term architectural heritage implies immovable cultural properties created by human work from prehistory to modern architectural achievements. This term includes historical cities, settlements or their parts, old buildings and their parts, archeological sites, as well as areas that have historical, cultural, artistic or ambient value. One of the classifications of the architectural heritage is into architectural units, historical buildings and archeological sites (Marasović, 1983). A special emphasis in the work is the condition of traditional houses, which belong to the group of historic buildings. Historical buildings reveal values both to an individual and to the entire society. These values primarily derive from their characteristics and functions.

Monuments of vernacular architecture did not receive much attention in the past, and very few researchers in our area have devoted themselves to their study. For years, the protection of cultural monuments has been mostly focused on sacral monuments. This contributed to the fact that many monuments of vernacular architecture were left to time and deteriorated, while others necessarily had to undergo changes. A large number of old buildings have been remodeled and partitioned, modified to adapt to new needs. Thus, the original constructions were violated, and many elements were replaced with modern ones that do not correspond to the traditional spirit (Findrik, 1985). All this speaks of the hazards of the architectural heritage and the possible causes of its deterioration.

From the very beginning, each building has been exposed to various influences that compromise its original or values adapted in time. The causes of degradation are very numerous and diverse, and can result in consequences such as complete or partial demolition of the building, inadequate upgrades, change of purpose (conversion), as well as environmental damage. The causes of endangerment can be long-term and momentary,

with the former existing from the very beginning of the building, and the latter implying damage caused by sudden changes. Also, there is an increasing presence of new causes of degradation, conditioned by the modern way of life, which endanger the complete environmental situation of our planet (Marasović, 1983). Long-term degradation implies the action of natural and climatic factors, but also the action of man. Momentary degradations are most often caused by natural disasters such as earthquakes, floods, fires, landslides. Along with these numerous examples, man often, consciously and unconsciously, causes the destruction of the architectural heritage by his actions.

Special emphasis is on the unconscious forms of degradation, them the most terrible consequences being left by wars. Also, there is negligence in the maintenance of the buildings that causes deterioration, or inappropriate use of the facility that violates the original values. Uncontrolled construction stands out as a problem, which usually involves construction of additional floors. These problems are present both in Serbia and in the surrounding countries. The cause of the problem is primarily related to changes in the social structure of the population and the economic crisis, as well as the emigration of the population from rural areas. There is a sudden deterioration of houses, both exterior and structural; and they become unsafe to live in (Ćurčić et al, 2019).

Throughout history, individuals and communities have taken certain measures in order to preserve cultural heritage, and thus the architectural heritage. Protection is the systematic implementation of legal and professional protection measures, in accordance with the rules of the conservation and restoration profession, with a goal of preservation (Mikić, 2014). Protection of a building requires a methodologically correct, logical and systematic approach; and certain principles must be observed. What is very important in the attitude of a country towards the architectural heritage is the organization of protection and arrangement. The contemporary approach to the architectural heritage allows the application of different methods of preservation, which are chosen depending on the character of the building, and the possibility of application. These methods involve different levels of intervention, such as:

- conservation and consolidation by which the building is protected on the basis of the existing condition,
- adaptations and revitalizations by which the building is converted for new purposes or the original purposes are revived,
- anastylosis which recomposes the destroyed original sections,
- restoration that to a greater or lesser extent restores parts of the building,
- reconstructions by which the demolished buildings are rebuilt, on the basis of precise reproduction of the original condition or with new forms harmonized with the environment
- interpolation by which a new part or building is incorporated into a historical entity,
- dislocations by which the buildings in their original condition are moved to a new place for protection,
- replicas with which buildings are built on the new location after the original buildings,
- new ambient construction which retains the traditional character of architecture in a certain environment with the help of a clear historical recollection (Marasović, 1985).

The paper includes case studies of examples of positive and negative practice, buildings on which various methods of renovation were performed, or those that were neglected and inadequately treated. In order to better understand the problem of attitudes

towards architectural heritage in the examined area, the notion of an active approach and the importance of population participation in the whole process is also treated.

### 3. ACTIVE APPROACH TO PROTECTION AND PARTICIPATION OF POPULATION

Access to cultural heritage is a complex concept. Throughout history, the attitude towards the architectural heritage has changed, one of the main changes occurred after the Second World War, when the development of a modern, i.e. active approach to protection began. The period of active protection was preceded by the period of biological protection, which in European countries began at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and lasted until the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Marasović, 1985). This attitude was based on the protection of the entire biological growth of one building, however, over time an extreme view developed where the protective activity was reduced mainly to conservation, without allowing restoration activities. This has resulted in the fact that in many European countries, including the Balkans, the main protagonists of protection are exclusively conservation services, i.e. experts within the institute for the protection of monuments, or regional institutions.

Contrary to such an attitude and practice, in the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the development of a new protection doctrine and the formation of the concept of an active approach to protection began. This comprised the involvement of institutions and experts of various profiles in the protection process, as well as the transfer of heritage protection competencies to the authorities. The very notion of an active approach is used to emphasize the active role not only of the traditional service, but also of all other protagonists in this process, as well as the activation of architectural heritage in modern life (Marasović, 1985). It is important to emphasize that this type of protection now includes other methods, in addition to classical conservation, i.e. conservation methods that are listed in the previous chapter.

The new organization was accompanied by the formation of legal regulations, international documents and conventions. Local authorities, in addition to the great role played by the state itself, play an important part in the process of preserving vernacular architecture; regarding that many decisions are first made at the local level. International professional organizations such as UNESCO and ICOMOS, in addition to various institutes in the republic, play a crucial role. However, it is very important to point out that not only experts, but the entire population participates in shaping and preserving the built environment (Čuričić et al, 2019).

One of the basic features of the modern approach to the preservation of cultural heritage nowadays is the participation of citizens. In addition to acting through socio-political communities, the action of the individual is very important. Experiences in this area are very different in individual countries, and this practice is more common in Western European countries than in Eastern ones, thus in Serbia and the surrounding area. Therefore, in addition to research and conservation work on the study and protection of cultural heritage, equally important, but insufficiently developed and emphasized in our country, is the work on educating the population in recognizing the value of heritage in their own environment, and its active involvement in protection processes (Dimitrijević-Marković, 2010). Numerous conventions and charters dedicated to cultural heritage throughout history advocate this position, so the first Athens Charter indicated that "the best guarantee in the matter of protection of monuments and works of art comes from respecting and winning over the people themselves" (Jokileto, 2001). Charters, i.e. conventions that followed later, remained

consistent with this position, while adapting to specific examples, i.e. countries. The success of the protection and preservation of the architectural heritage in the future and in the long run depends to a large extent on the ability of an environment to provide the best possible education for the population. The importance of education and citizen participation is also shown by the data obtained in several studies in England, as a result of work on raising public awareness. There has been a significant increase in the number of people who really care about protecting their historic environment (Dimitrijević-Marković, 2010). The education of the population can take place in many ways, now also owing to modern technologies, and thus through public services and media, social networks, but also through the classic systems of primary and secondary schools, through colleges.

In addition to this, the participation itself, involvement, i.e. engagement of citizens in decision-making is also important. The population can participate in the active protection of buildings as part of the local community, as individuals: owners, natives, visitors, neighbors; more precisely as part of different interest groups. Through this approach, they have the role of consultants, support, as well as participants in the project itself. Also, residents can be part of active protection as volunteers. Representatives of the local community can become members of the working or advisory group and thus invest their expertise and knowledge to help in the implementation of specific and time-limited tasks. Volunteers are an important element of architectural heritage management. However, cultural volunteering has not yet been developed in our region, and there are no registers of such associations in the countries. The advantage of volunteering is that young people, unemployed citizens, and pensioners can participate in it. In general, there is a great need for training and education of the population and learning about volunteerism in this area (Čuričić et al, 2019).

#### 4. VERNACULAR ARCHITECTURE AND TRADITIONAL HOUSE

Traditional culture is most prevalent in rural areas, less accessible and hilly and mountainous areas. One of the features of traditional culture is vernacular architecture as a harmonious combination of material and spiritual values in its original form (Vukanović, 2014). The image of vernacular architecture that is known to us today represents the experience of centuries-old architectural skills that have been passed down from generation to generation. Vernacular architecture is characterized by the use of natural building materials, mostly from immediate surroundings, local craftsmen, knowledge passed down from generation to generation, simple tools and aesthetic features focused mainly on the proportion of the building, and less on detail and decoration (Čuričić et al, 2019, Deroko, 1968).

Vernacular architecture is not just a set of spontaneously created buildings, everything that people build is based on experience. Over time, certain habits, patterns and rules were created, common to all construction. By analyzing the architecture and typological characteristics of vernacular architecture in the Balkans, it can be concluded that the basic principles of local architectural patterns are based on the model "nature knows better". The authors point out that hypothetically vernacular architecture is based on the following principles: "materialisation principle (material availability principle), coloration principle (availability of color choice) and mimicry-mimezis principle (relationship to the surroundings principle – "spirit of place")" (Vasov & Cekić, 2018).

Vernacular architecture in Serbia and the surrounding areas is the result of the influence of numerous cultures. It can be especially characterized as a mixture of Old Slavic

culture, which the builders brought from their native lands, with the indigenous, Roman, Byzantine, and later oriental culture. Central Europe (Austria-Hungary) also had a significant influence on the development of construction in the region. Traditional knowledge of construction meant observing building rules based on the use of anthropometric measures, knowing the characteristics of the material, as well as the skill of its processing, but also on finding a favorable place to build a house. Although the beginning of the development of this kind of construction originates in the countryside, over time, some local groups of builders began to work on orders outside their places of residence. Gradually, changes took place, and under the influence of the city and modern principles, educated masters began to build houses (Vukanović, 2014). Thus, this form of construction began to appear in urban areas.

In Serbia, as well as in Bulgaria and Romania, a large number of older buildings has been preserved. These are usually small and modest buildings, such as huts, in mountainous and hard-to-reach areas. At the same time, there are numerous examples of more spatially developed and structurally complex buildings, such as houses in the countryside or houses in cities. Most of the houses that have survived to this day were built in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, but they were actually built during a long period of time. According to a very rough and conditional classification, monuments of vernacular architecture can be divided into two larger groups: protected monuments in the city and protected monuments in the countryside (Findrik, 1985). The following chapter provides a case study of selected examples of “urban houses” and “rural houses” in Serbia, Romania, and Bulgaria. The terms “urban house” and “rural house” are formed in this way because the intertwining and mutual influences in construction are always present; thus, some urban houses developed directly in the image of rural houses, while numerous urban influences on the rural architecture are known. The characteristics and types of houses differ depending on the areas in which they were built and developed, on the soil and the climate. Although this is a very extensive topic, four basic features of houses can be singled out:

- One can observe the uniform attitude towards the choice of construction material, and materials used are those abundant in the immediate surroundings;
- Very often, unified material properties are utilized, and mostly two or three basic materials are present;
- Spatial organization is well designed in most of the cases;
- The buildings were constructed with good measure, good spatial relationships, and in harmony with the environment (Findrik, 1985).

However, in the past, due attention was not paid to the monuments of vernacular architecture, and a small number of researchers participated in the study. Until the 70s of the last century, the protection of cultural monuments was mostly focused on sacral monuments, mostly churches. Other types of monuments, and therefore houses, were more or less sidelined. As a result of such long-term treatment, in Serbia and the surrounding countries, the national monuments deteriorated or were adapted to new needs, whereby losing the original spirit of vernacular architecture. Although increasing work has been done in recent years on the problem of heritage preservation and restoration of buildings, there is still a large number of buildings that need to be rehabilitated and restored (Ćurčić et al, 2019).

## 5. CASE STUDY – SERBIA AND SURROUNDING AREAS

In order to better understand the problem of the attitude towards vernacular architecture and the degree of its preservation on the territory of Serbia, Romania and Bulgaria, a case study was done. Examples of good and bad practice were selected, i.e. buildings that were successfully preserved and renovated, as well as buildings that were in poor condition or treated inappropriately, were presented. The basis of this study was a traditional house from this area. Most of the buildings were built in the period from the 18<sup>th</sup> to the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Also, examples include both houses in cities and houses in the countryside.

### 5.1. Serbia

One of the most famous examples of vernacular architecture in Serbia is the open-air museum "Staro selo" in Sirogojno. Within this museum, the architecture, interior design of buildings, the way of farming and the organization of family life of people in the hilly and mountainous areas of the Dinaric region are presented. About 50 buildings are distributed on an area of five hectares. All buildings were dislocated and transferred from the surrounding villages of Zlatibor mountain. The permanent museum exhibition consists of two classical Zlatibor curtilages, with residential and commercial buildings such as those possessed by cooperative rural families in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Fig. 1 a). All buildings are equipped with authentic furniture,



**Fig. 1** "Staro selo" Sirogojno: a) Permanent exhibition and one of the principal houses  
b) Interior of the houses with authentic furniture (Source: <https://www.sirogojno.rs/>)

Institute for the Protection of Cultural Monuments. The development of the museum complex began with the idea of creating an authentic ethno ambience in which wool-knitters would present the traditional procedure of making wool objects, and it was achieved through the persistence and engagement of experts, ethnologists, competent republic institutions and numerous associates (Vukanović, 2014). During the decades of its existence, the museum has received several awards. One of the most significant is the special recognition of the jury of the European Union in the field of education, training and raising awareness of cultural heritage in 2012, for the project "Houses of Zlatibor since the 19<sup>th</sup> century to the present day"; while in 2013 it was declared a cultural institution of national importance for the Republic of Serbia.

Master Vasa's Residence (*Konak gospodar Vase*) in Kraljevo was treated as one of the examples of an urban house, Fig. 2 a). It represents one of the numerous examples of lodgings and family houses that have been restored in Serbia, such as the Master Jovan Residence in Čačak, the Prince Miloš Residence in Topčider, the Princess Ljubica Residence in Belgrade, the Musselims' Residence in Valjevo and the like. This cultural monument of great importance is located in the city park, across from the Church of the Assumption of the Virgin. The bishop Jančić had it built in the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. It was built in the style characteristic of the times of Miloš Obrenović, with elements of traditional Balkan architecture. Master Vasa's Residence was rebuilt several



**Fig. 2** Master Vasa's Residence in Kraljevo: a) Current condition of the exterior b) Spiritual center and working salon (Source: <http://infokraljevo.com/gospodar-vasin-konak/>)

times and its purpose was changed. Until the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, it was used for diocesan needs. Then, the Šumadija Field Artillery Regiment was housed in it, followed by the boarding school of the Farmers' School. In the period between 1946-1951 it also served as a prison. For that reason, it has undergone significant changes. The porch on the first floor was walled up and threatened to collapse due to dilapidation, the rafters of the



roof structure and the eaves were shortened, and the former wooden entrance staircase for the first floor was replaced with a concrete one. The building was successfully renovated in 1951 with extensive and complex conservation and restoration works. After the renovation, the building became the National Museum in Kraljevo (Ćurčić et al, 2019, Milić, 1998) Nowadays, this building serves as a spiritual center, a bookstore is located on the ground floor of the Residence, while on the first floor there is a large working salon and a chapel dedicated to Bishop Nikolaj, Fig. 2 b).

Katić's house in Trstenik has been shown as one of the examples of poor treatment. It was erected in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and is a cultural monument of great importance. The original owner of the house was the merchant Stevan Katic (<http://spomenicikulture.mi.sanu.ac.rs/spomenik.php?id=801>). The building basically belongs to the Morava house type with oriental influences. It is assumed that the design of the house itself was brought from Lebanon or Syria. The building originally had a residential purpose with Katić's business premises on the ground floor. Later, the basement of the house and most of the yard were turned into a restaurant of national cuisine. For a short time, the house had the role of a gallery. Although it has been under state protection since 1947, it has not yet been adequately restored. It is currently abandoned and in very poor condition, Fig. 3 a). The facade is dilapidated, while the structure is visibly damaged, Fig. 3 b). Inadequately performed works on the facade are visible from the period when it had a catering purpose. It is currently privately owned, while the Municipality of Trstenik plans to purchase it and start drafting design documentation for restoration (Ćurčić et al, 2019).



**Fig. 3** Katić's house in Trstenik: a) Current condition of the exterior b) Katić's house in Trstenik: Visibly derelict façade and ceiling damage (Source: <http://spomenicikulture.mi.sanu.ac.rs/spomenik.php?id=801>)

Unfortunately, there is still a large number of buildings in Serbia that have been neglected, inadequately treated, extended, and even demolished in some period. Also, the full potential of many buildings has not been used. One such example is Vljaković's house in Grocka, built at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Fig. 4 a). This house was not demolished, but it is in a very bad condition, as a result of unresolved legal property relations and lack of funds, Fig. 4 b) (Živković, 2011).



**Fig. 4** Vljaković's house in Grocka: a) Appearance of the house in 1972 b) Current condition (Sources: M. Dedić, S. Negovanović)

## 5.2. Romania

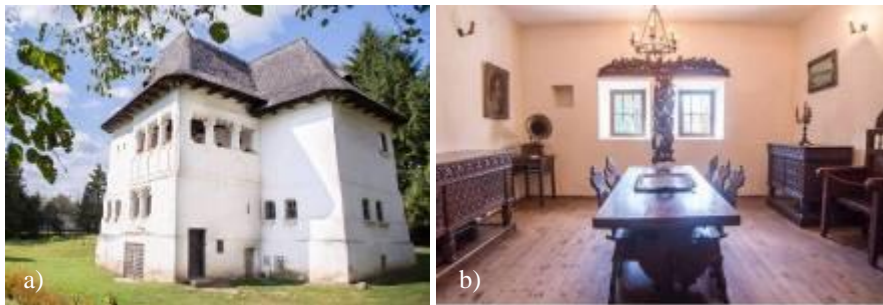
One of the most positive examples of preserving Romania's cultural heritage is the "Dimitrie Gusti" National Village Museum. This open-air ethnographic museum is located in Bucharest and covers over 100,000 m<sup>2</sup>. It was officially opened on May 10<sup>th</sup>, 1936, in the presence of King Carolus II. The museum currently presents 346 houses, which are arranged according to the place of origin, Fig. 5. The museum has expanded over time, the houses have been transferred from different parts of Romania and have been adequately restored and rehabilitated. The museum was affected by two major fires in the past, in 1997



**Fig. 5** Village Museum in Bucharest: a) example of a traditional house of 19<sup>th</sup> century, village of Trăisteni; b) traditional village house in the Maramureș region, village of Berbești built in 1775 (Source: <http://muzeul-satului.ro/en/>)

and 2002. However, with the help of the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage and sponsors, all damaged buildings have been successfully restored (<http://muzeul-satului.ro/en>). Museums of this type can also be found in Serbia - such as the previously mentioned museum "Staro selo" Sirogojno, and the ethno museum Etar, in Bulgaria.

Măldărești is a small village in Vâlcea county on the southern slope of the Carpathian mountains. In the village itself, several authentic houses have been preserved, which are now in the form of a Maldaresti Museum Complex representing a very important tourist location of this area. The most important structures are three unique buildings the Greceanu and Maldarescu Mansions (*Cula* in Romanian), and I.G. Duca Memorial House. Many other *cule* however are still derelict and in need of renovation all through the Oltenia region. Greceanu Mansion stands out as one of the oldest documented Romanian fortified house-towers, Fig. 6 a). This mansion has been a part of the museum complex since 1956, and currently serves as a museum, and the house owners themselves participate in preserving the authentic of the house. It was often used as a film set for making movies and series. Greceanu Mansion dates back to the Ottoman period, as it is suggested by its name. However, the present day appearance of the mansion dates back to 18<sup>th</sup> century, when it was restored by Gheorghe Măldărescu and his wife. The mansion, which features elements of the Brancovenesc style, was restored starting in 1967 and is now opened to visitors. Nowadays, after several hundreds of years, the exterior of the tower is almost unchanged, while the interior is also well preserved, Fig.6 b), (<https://www.castleist.com/400k-maldaresti-romania-historic-fortified-house-for-sale>).



**Fig. 6** Greceanu Cula: a) preserved authentic exterior appearance; b) one of the rooms in the museum with permanent exhibits. (Source: <https://www.castleist.com/400k-maldaresti-romania-historic-fortified-house-for-sale>)

On the other hand, there is a problem in many villages, where one can see an example of many neglected or inadequately renovated traditional houses, Fig. 7 a). A large number of buildings have been abandoned. Also, the local population, i.e. the owners of the houses that are passed from generation to generation, renew them in an uncontrolled manner, whereby the houses lose their original values. The examples given below are traditional Romanian country houses from the Tara Motilor area. Exactly on the topic of restoration and revitalization of these buildings, in 2012, an extensive case study was done with specific proposals for renovation and new purposes, Fig. 7 b), (Barbieri, 2012). Similar examples can be found in almost all parts of Romania, mostly as a result of leaving the village. This problem is present both in Serbia and Bulgaria (Ćurčić et al, 2019).



**Fig. 7** Traditional houses in Tara Mator area: a) some of numerous houses which are still used, but inadequately treated; b) one of the examples of derelict houses, with the initiated renovation process, and the presentation of the possible solution (Barbieri, 2012)

### 5.3. Bulgaria

In order to preserve the rich cultural heritage of Bulgaria, numerous architectural reserves have been formed. These reserves cover entire villages, districts or parts of the city, and enjoy a large number of tourist visits. Some of the examples are Koprivshtitsa, Old Plovdiv, Kovachevitsa, Melnik, Arbanasi, the villages of Bozhentsi, Brashlyan Delchevo, Dolen, Architectural and Ethnographic Reserve Etara, the villages of Zheravna, Stefanovo and Shiroka Laka. The example of one of the smallest cities in Bulgaria - Melnik - was singled out. The city has a rich and long history, while it is characterized by well-preserved buildings from the Revival period, Fig. 8 a). Some of the most important houses in Melnik are Boyar's House, as one of the oldest Balkan houses, the Kordopulova House and the Pashova House, Fig. 8 b) c). Boyar's House has been renovated and restored several times since the 13<sup>th</sup> century. Kordopulova House was built in 1754 and is one of the largest houses from this period. Pashova House was built in 1815 and it currently has the function of a historical museum. All three houses are protected by law as cultural monuments (Ćurčić et al, 2019, [https://bulgariatravel.org/data/doc/ENG\\_57-ArHITEKTURNI\\_rezervati.pdf](https://bulgariatravel.org/data/doc/ENG_57-ArHITEKTURNI_rezervati.pdf)).



**Fig. 8** Historical city of Melnik: a) appearance of the town and tourist zone b) remnants of Boyar's House; c) the Kordopulova House ([https://bulgariatravel.org/data/doc/ENG\\_57-Arhitekturni\\_rezervati.pdf](https://bulgariatravel.org/data/doc/ENG_57-Arhitekturni_rezervati.pdf))

The village of Zheravna is located on the slopes of the Balkan Mountains and is one of the previously mentioned architectural reserves. As many as 172 houses in this village were declared cultural monuments in 1958, and Zheravna officially became a museum reserve. Most of the buildings in the village have been well preserved and renovated for many years, and some of the most interesting houses available to tourists are Chorbadzhi Rusi's house, the native house of the famous Bulgarian writer Yordan Yovkov and the native house of the publicist Sava Filaretov, Fig. 9. These buildings are one of those that



**Fig. 9** Zheravna village: a) Chorbadzhi Rusi's house; b) the native house of the publicist Sava Filaretov (Source: <http://www.zheravna.com/museums.php?language=en>, photo by: Nikolay Dimitrov)

survived two shock periods for this village - in 1930, when there was a mass destruction of houses for the sale of scavenged materials, as well as the Second World War. The house of Sava Filaret now serves as a museum of the History of Zheravna. The authentic appearance of the building has been preserved, as well as its interior ([https://bulgariatravel.org/data/doc/ENG\\_57-Arhitekturni\\_rezervati.pdf](https://bulgariatravel.org/data/doc/ENG_57-Arhitekturni_rezervati.pdf)).

Every summer, the National Festival of Folk Costumes is held in Zheravna, and the village itself is very popular among tourists. Numerous hotels are actually revitalized houses from the period of the Bulgarian Revival, and operate in the form of guest houses, Fig. 10.



**Fig. 10** Zheravna village-Prodanovata House: a) authentic appearance of the guest house in the Zheravna village; b) interior arranged in the image of vernacular architecture (Source: <http://www.jeravna.eu/gallery.php>)

As in the case of Serbia and Romania, there are buildings that have been neglected despite their importance as part of the cultural heritage and their potential, Fig. 11 a). This is most often the case in rural areas. Also, the sale of these buildings by the owners who inherited them is becoming more frequent. Their use for the development of rural tourism is promoted, but there is no guarantee how they will be treated by the new owners. The house of Hristo Karpachev is one such example, Fig. 11 b). It was restored several years ago and until recently served as a museum (Ćurčić et al, 2019, Metalkova, Traykova & Chardakova-Nakova, 2017).



**Fig. 11** Negative practice examples: a) Bogdan Bogdanov house, Karpachevo village, completely derelict; b) Hristo Karpachev house, offered for sale (Traykova & Chardakova-Nakova, 2017)

## 6. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Vernacular architecture is one of the most important forms of cultural heritage left by the peoples of our region. The basic features that make vernacular architecture one of the most valuable works of folk art are diversity, richness of form, and above all, a high artistic level (Findrik, 1985). The countries covered in this paper are among the few in the European continent where a large number of preserved monuments of vernacular architecture have been preserved. However, folk architecture still does not have the place that belongs to it in terms of its value.

The current state of vernacular architecture in Serbia, Romania and Bulgaria can be better understood through the previously presented examples and a brief case study. It is noticeable that a significant number of buildings has been qualitatively renovated and revitalized in an adequate manner. However, it can be concluded that there is still a problem in the approach to the architectural heritage. This includes not only the problem of attitudes of official institutions, but also of the citizens themselves. The examples of bad practice covered by the study prove that there are numerous problems related to legal property relations, inadequate use and attempts at restoration by non-professionals. Unfortunately, over the years, a large number of buildings were demolished in due to dilapidation, but also for other reasons. This can happen in a certain period to some buildings covered by this study, if there are no positive changes. "With the disappearance of these houses and the dismantling of valuable spaces, not only the form and grace of the past disappear, the architectural essence disappears" (Živković, 2011). Therefore, educating citizens about the importance of cultural heritage must be further developed. Furthermore, it can be said that these problems occur most often in rural areas and areas where it is more difficult to control the actions of individuals on a daily basis.

In everyday life in Serbia, there is a gap between the theory and desires of members of the professional community which deals with the protection and preservation of immovable cultural heritage on the one hand, and the daily practices of a large number of Serbian citizens on the other" (Vukanović, 2014) The wishes of experts are based on theoretical postulates of protection, i.e. to preserve the original appearance and function of the building. However the practice in the daily life of ordinary people poses a number of challenges to achieve this "because monuments are demolished, houses are dismantled, rearranged and changed according to the personal interests and interests of people living in or near the building" (Vukanović, 2014).

Based on the above examples, it can be seen that many successful actions have been carried out with the aim of reactivating the buildings, and they have been assigned different functions. This is very important because while working on the protection of architectural monuments, it is important to provide a long-term solution for one building by choosing the appropriate new function. Most often, these are cultural institutions such as museums, archives, memorial houses, then cultural centers and galleries, catering facilities and the like, but also apartments. Also, more and more work is being done on the use of traditional architecture in terms of tourism development, such as open-air museums, ethno villages with accommodation units or architectural reserves (Ćurčić et al, 2019). Furthermore, we must not forget the use of appropriate methods of renovation, because each facility must be approached in a special way and all aspects must be considered.

The previously mentioned problem of educating the population is being successfully solved in some parts of these countries, most often through projects, education programs and workshops for the renovation of traditional rural houses. Through such organized activities, participants gain knowledge about traditional methods of construction, adequate access to cultural monuments, and how to protect and restore them. However, mass interest and participation of citizens is necessary, in order to raise awareness of the importance of this problem, and in order for the programs themselves to give positive results. Activities aimed at preserving the legacy of the past that convey historical and artistic messages must, therefore, be raised to the level of primary tasks of a community (Ćurčić et al, 2019, Milić, 1998).

The paper briefly presents the current state of preservation and approach to the architectural heritage in Serbia and the surrounding area through the analysis of basic concepts and methods of preservation, and through a case study. It is noticeable that there is a growing awareness of the importance of vernacular architecture, and it is more and more is invested in its renewal. However, much remains to be done and special attention must be paid to active protection in several areas. The full capacity of what the modern way of life provides must be used to protect the values that we leave behind us.

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## **PRISTUP GRADITELJSKOM NASLEĐU I NJEGOVO OČUVANJE U SRBIJI I OKRUŽENJU**

*Kulturna baština ili kulturno nasleđe predstavlja jedinstvenu i nezamenjivu kulturnu vrednost jednog naroda. Očuvanje i zaštita kulturne baštine predstavlja bitnu moralnu ulogu celokupnog savremenog društva. U radu je posebno izdvojen pojam narodnog graditeljstva i tradicionalne kuće kao značajan deo graditeljskog nasleđa. Kroz studiju slučaja obuhvaćeni su primeri tradicionalnih kuća u Srbiji, Rumuniji i Bugarskoj. Detaljnije je sagledano trenutno stanje objekata, njihova namena, stepen očuvanosti, kao i primenjene metode zaštite. Analizom primera pozitivne i negativne prakse izvedeni su zaključci o aktivnom pristupu graditeljskom nasleđu ovih zemalja. Cilj ovog rada jeste sagledavanje pristupa očuvanju narodnog graditeljstva i odnosa navedenih država prema ovom obliku kulturnog nasleđa. Metode korišćene u radu su analiza, sinteza, komparativna analiza, metoda modelovanja i studija slučaja.*

**Ključne reči:** *graditeljsko nasleđe, tradicionalna kuća, metode očuvanja, aktivni pristup, narodno graditeljstvo*