

Bač Cultural Landscape – Challenges on the Path to the Nomination of the Property for Inscription on the World Heritage List

ABSTRACT

From 2006, when the “Centuries of Bač” project was started, through the entry of the *Historical Site of Bač with its surroundings* on the Tentative List in 2010, until the submission of the nomination dossier of the *Bač Cultural Landscape* in 2023, an uninterrupted process of research, evaluation and improvement of the state of cultural and natural goods in the observed area was taking place. The process started by evaluating the fact that a rich and diverse cultural and natural heritage of exceptional importance for the Republic of Serbia is concentrated in a small area, which was seen as a nucleus of potential outstanding universal value. International verification arrived through the entry of the Biosphere Reserve “Bačko Podunavlje” into the UNESCO program “Man and the Biosphere” in 2017. This was followed by the Grand Prix of the European Union Prize for Cultural Heritage / Europa Nostra Award 2018 for the project and execution of the conservation of the Bač Fortress. In the period of 2019–2021 a process of intensive work was carried out on the definition of the boundaries of coverage, the characterization of the landscape, regional areas and elements, the determination of criteria for inclusion on the World Heritage List and the creation of three annexes (Management Plan, Disaster Risk Assessment and Protection and Rescue Plan). The Foundation for Managing the *Bač Cultural Landscape* was established in 2019 with the task of managing this property. The path traveled was marked by numerous challenges, which are examined in the paper through the prism of the implementation of the Convention on World Heritage.

KEYWORDS

Bač Cultural Landscape, UNESCO, nomination, Centuries of Bač, the Budapest declaration, strategic goals

INTRODUCTION

The *Bač Cultural Landscape* (hereinafter: BCL) is located in the south of the Pannonian Plain, in the Republic of Serbia, i.e., its northern part. Within Vojvodina, it is located in the extreme southwestern part of one of its three subregions – Bačka, which owes its name to the city of Bač, the central point of this region. BCL includes the terraced flatland terrain between the Danube River and the extreme southern part of the course of its tributary Mostonga River. In the last two decades, the process of research, spatial planning, conservation and use of multi-layered heritage has been intensified in the area of BCL, which gradually developed with the special involvement of the Provincial Institute for the Protection of Cultural Monuments Petrovaradin (hereinafter: PIPCM) and brought new values. It started with the care of individual cultural property of exceptional importance for the Republic of Serbia (Bač Fortress, Franciscan Monastery in Bač, Orthodox Monastery Bođani), which were in a very bad condition at the beginning of the 21st century. Work on the research, protection and improved use of these cultural properties was carried out within the project of integrative protection of the heritage of the municipality of Bač and the platform for action called “*Centuries of Bač*”, as well as a gradual shift in focus from individuals to understanding the territory as a unique cultural landscape.¹ By applying a holistic approach, cultural properties are placed in the context of the wider environment and specific local culture. What marked these processes was the observation of cultural heritage as a comprehensive value, which over time took on the contours of exceptional universal value.

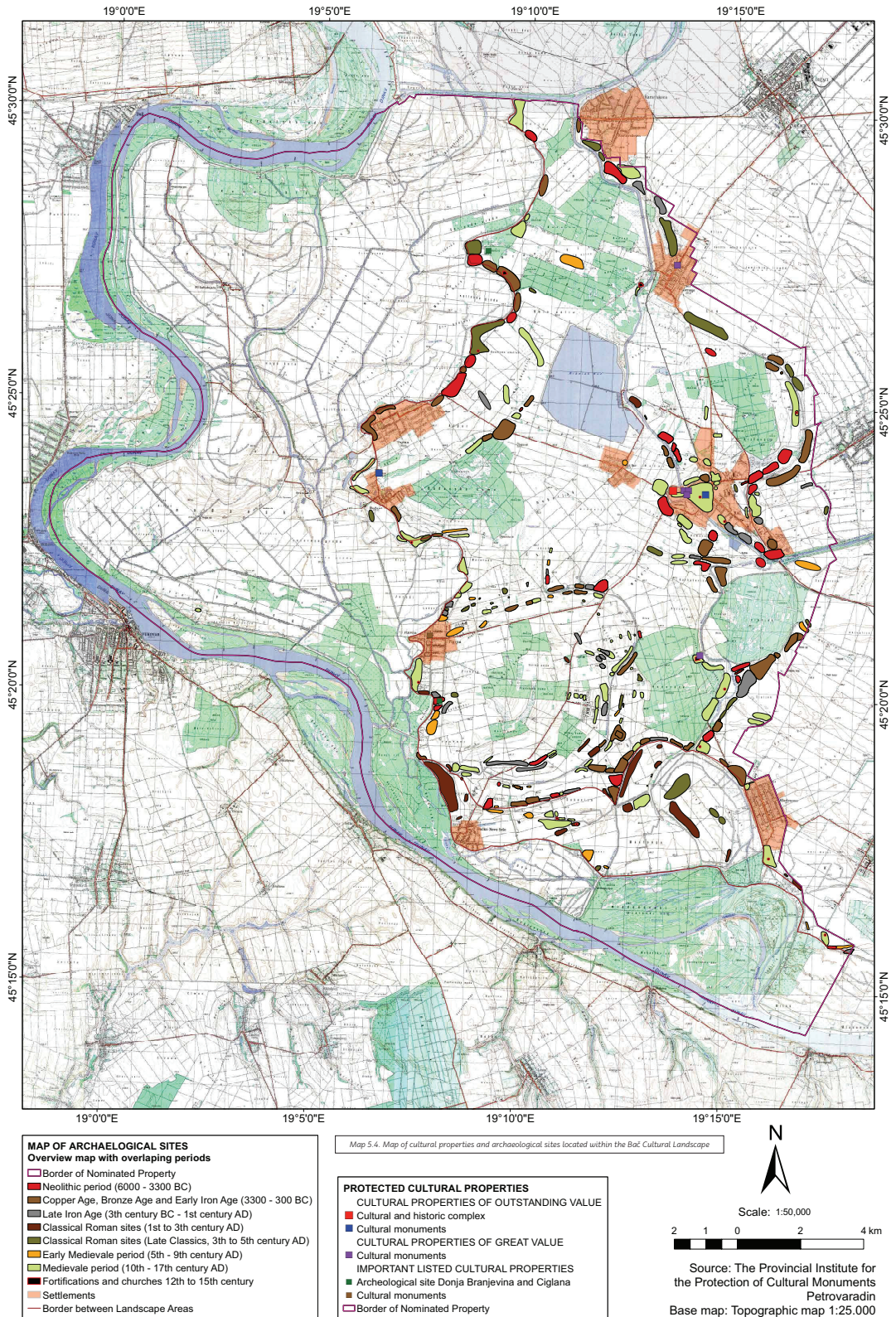
CHALLENGES OF NOMINATION FOR INSCRIPTION ON THE WORLD HERITAGE LIST

The creation of a nomination dossier has long been much more than the documents that emerge as its final result. The processes that take place on the way to the preparation of documents and the conditions that need to be created in order for the property to apply for inclusion in the prestigious World Heritage List are confirmation of the recognition and support of the values, as well as the readiness and guarantee of the signatory state of the Convention that they would be preserved. The World Heritage Committee is celebrating three decades since the adoption of the Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage (hereinafter: the Convention), in 2012, adopted the *Budapest Declaration on World Heritage*, which defined the strategic goals for the further implementation of the Convention.² It was a consequence of the awareness of the imbalance in the diversity of the List, both geographically and in terms of the typology of the listed types of properties, but also the importance of different activities in the complex process of

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- 1 Initiator, author of the concept, and project coordinator S. Vujović, project holder of PIPCM in cooperation with the municipality of Bač: S. Vujović, *How to preserve and use cultural heritage: Contribution of Centuries of Bač*. Petrovaradin: Provincial Institute for the Protection of Cultural Monuments, Novi Sad 2016.
 - 2 It was adopted on the 26th Session, in cooperation with ICOMOS, <https://whc.unesco.org/en/documents/1334> (accessed September 2023).

Fig. 1
 Map of archaeological sites and protected cultural properties

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heritage preservation. There was also concern about the increasing pressure from states to enter properties on the List. The goals were named 4C's after the initial letters of the key concepts: Credibility, Conservation, Capacity-building, and Communication. Subsequently, in 2007, at the initiative of New Zealand, the fifth C (Community) was added, and today this declaration is known as 5C.³ The challenges encountered during the project activities and the preparation and verification of the BCL nomination will be viewed precisely through the prism of the stated strategic goals in the preservation of World Heritage. Also, the team of authors who prepared the nomination dossier based their work precisely on these goals, and consequently their realization represented the most important task that had to be accomplished.

CHALLENGE 1: HOW TO CONTRIBUTE TO ENSURING THE CREDIBILITY OF THE WORLD HERITAGE LIST (CREDIBILITY)

To be clear, this is not about the credibility of the UNESCO World Heritage List (hereinafter: the List) as a whole, but also of each individual national list – more precisely, of cultural and natural properties that a country has inscribed on the List. As is well known, the state of Serbia has so far registered five cultural properties on the List and no natural properties.⁴ Among the cultural ones, various medieval monuments dominate, with only one property that stands out from that framework – the ancient archaeological site of Gamzigrad near Zaječar.⁵ Therefore, working on a completely different category of cultural property (which is closely related to the natural environment) was a logical choice that significantly contributes to the diversity and completion of the national List.

The process of creating the nomination dossier and verification of the BCL took place in two phases. In the early phase (2010–2016), access to research, conservation and use of heritage was marked by the activities of the *Centuries of Bač* project and programmes and projects that helped to solve certain problems and achieve international cooperation such as regional of the IRPP/SAAH program and the Ljubljana Process⁶ and Serbian-Italian project I.Ne.P.S.⁷ By working on individual properties and participation, a new horizon was gradually established on which it was possible to understand the values and importance, role and place of cultural properties in a wider context. A breakthrough in the direction of ignition of outstanding universal value took place at the workshop for the development of management plans for World Heritage in Belgrade in 2010, when the multiple values of

3 The document was adopted on 31st Committee meeting in New Zealand <https://whc.unesco.org/archive/2007/whc07-31com-13be.pdf> (accessed September 2023).

4 State Parties <https://whc.unesco.org/en/statesparties/rs> (accessed September 2023).

5 World Heritage List <https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/1253> (accessed September 2023).

6 IRPP/SAAH was a technical cooperation program of the Council of Europe and the European Commission for Cultural and Natural Heritage, dedicated to post-conflict and development challenges, it treated heritage in a cultural, economic and social context, while the Ljubljana Process worked on selected projects (among them monasteries in Bač and Bodani), Serbia, the Ljubljana Process 2009.

7 The project “Local development based on the evaluation of cultural heritage” – part of the I.Ne.P.S. Project, was realized in 2007–2008 and contributed to the acquisition of new experiences in the field of sustainable development and partnerships.

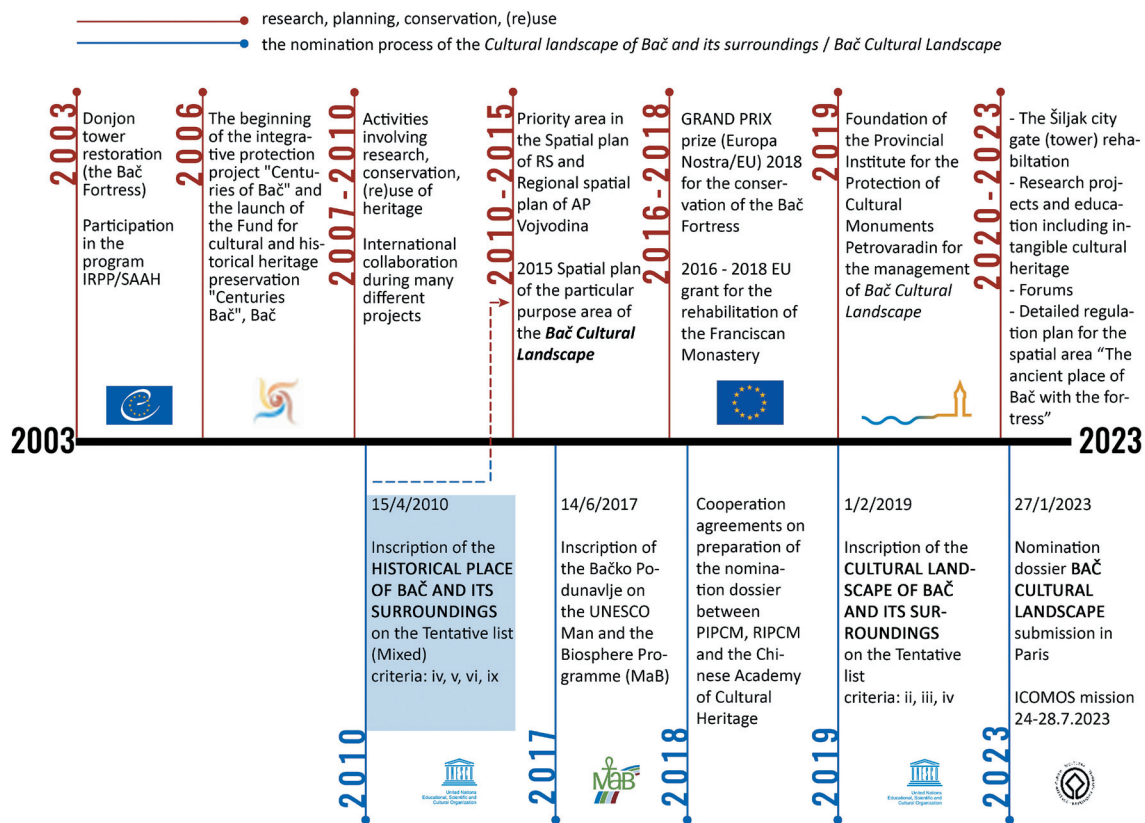


Fig. 2

Timeline with displayed activities on the preservation of heritage and on the preparation of the BCL nomination dossier

(© S. Vujović)



Fig. 3

Interior of the Church – the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary, view of the vaults with frescoes by Hristofor Žefarović

(© N. Marković)

heritage and the results of *Centuries of Bač*, partner projects and international cooperation were presented.⁸ At that time, the position was taken that there are enough arguments to supplement the Tentative List of the Republic of Serbia with a potential property, which was originally called the *Historical place of Bač and its surroundings*. In relation to the inscribed properties and other heritage on the Tentative List, it had a strong point in cultural diversity, intercultural dialogue, long continuity of life in the covered area and the specificity of the soil in combination with the abundance of river flows.⁹ In accordance with the knowledge and research of the cultural and natural heritage at the time, it was decided that this property should be treated as a mixed heritage, and potential registration would refer to criteria *iv*, *v*, *vi* and *ix*. It should be pointed out that at this stage no previous detailed research in the field of comparative analysis was carried out. Although the document for the Tentative List had its shortcomings, the selection and inclusion of cultural and natural heritage among potential World Properties led to a number of good outcomes for the further development of the heritage and the nomination process. The area of Bač, Bođani, Plavna and Karadorđevo was first classified in the Spatial Plan of the Republic of Serbia (2010–2020) among priority cultural areas and as such was further elaborated in the Regional Plan of AP Vojvodina, the plan that prescribed the development of the Spatial Purpose Plan Area (SPASP) for the *Bač Cultural Landscape*, the first of its kind in Serbia.¹⁰

In the second phase (2017–2023), the Ministry of Culture started providing support for the preparation of the nomination dossier.¹¹ An important verification of the value of natural heritage and community participation came with the entry of the Biosphere Reserve “Bačko Podunavlje” into the UNESCO program “Man and the Biosphere” (MaB) in 2017, since within its borders in the southern part was the Cultural Area of Bač, as it was previously defined in SPASP Bač two years earlier.¹² The year 2018 followed, during which cooperation with the Academy for Cultural Heritage of China was achieved, as well as the intensification of the cooperation of the Provincial institute with the Republic Institute for the Protection of Cultural Monuments (hereinafter: RIPCM), during which there were significant developments. For the final determination of the character of *Bač Cultural Landscape*, the most significant year is 2019, when the property was officially re-qualified from mixed to cultural property in the category of cultural landscape named *Bač Cultural Landscape and its surroundings*.¹³ In the same year, the draft nomination, in

8 The workshop was held on January 14, 2010 and led by Dr. Todor Krstev, Ikomos expert from Bulgaria, and Bač was presented by Slavica Vujović PhD.

9 Then the Manasija Monastery, Smederevo Fortress, Negotinska Pivnice and the Caričin Grad, Iustiniana Prima archaeological site, were also included in the List, which was the result of dealing with these properties within the IRPP/SAAH program and work on the Preliminary Lists.

10 Spatial plan of the special purpose area Bač Cultural Landscape <http://www.rapp.gov.rs/sr-Latn-CS/zasticena-ituristicka-podrucja/cid294-83213/prostorni-plan-podrucjaposebne-namene-kulturnog-predela-bac> (accessed August 2023).

11 “Centuries of Bač” were implemented over three five-year periods (2006–2020) and each of them acted locally and globally – solving a detail and combining it into a whole. The third period (2016–2020) was marked by intensive popularization of values and international verification.

12 Biosphere Reserve “Bačko Podunavlje” 2018 (accessed August 2023).

13 Since January 2nd 2019 it is located on <https://whc.unesco.org/en/tentativelists/6386/> (accessed August 2023).



Fig. 4

Presentation of remains of the medieval ossuary chapel and Islamic tomb

(© S. Vujović)



Fig. 5

The Centuries of Bač logo with elements

(© N. Kustudić)

consultation with the Working Group, was sent for an early technical evaluation to the World Heritage Centre in Paris. From the reply, it could be concluded that the document must be refined. During the assessment of the character of the landscape, the influence of natural factors and their combination, which determined the uniqueness of the area of BCL, was additionally analyzed.

It is a unique area on the border of the Pannonian flatland, where an endless, fertile, loess plain meets a terrain formed by the Danube flow. Here, the landscape area terraces slope mildly towards the river. Those small elevation differences, less than 10 meters, create a dynamic and diverse terrain, which was important for those who arrived to settle there and who took advantage of a variety of natural conditions, adapting them to their own needs. Three distinctive areas featuring landscape elements were identified: the Danube swamps with the Vajiš, Živa and Berava (small rivers, featuring seven landscape elements); Bačko Novo Selo with agricultural backcountry (small featuring three elements); and the Danube terrace with Bač and Mostonga (featuring eight landscape elements). BCL special values and attributes are defined: Communication route, Border area; Exchange of cultural values; Rural character; Cultivated land-use; Water management; Density of archeological heritage; Fortification heritage; Religious heritage and Cultural diversity.

In accordance with the methodology, there were determined Criteria under which inscription is proposed: *ii* (BCL preserves a clear testimony of the interchange of cultural models over several millenniums, two-way flow of ideas); *iii* (over 350 archeological findings are known today; living in a geo-cultural region) and *v* (way of land use; BCL is the area where the meandering Danube cut in one of its banks, filling its former river bed on the other, depositing materials carried by its waters). In the Statement of Integrity it was pointed out that integrity of the area is based on geologic, hydrologic, geomorphologic, ecologic, regional and trans-cultural historic characteristics. And when speaking about Statement of Authenticity it was stated that BCL evolved over time through the activities of humans that influenced the environment, but it still largely keeps its authentic shape.

A great deal of effort was also put into making the maps, which followed strict rules defined by the Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention, UNESCO 2019. The Material produced during the multidisciplinary work is a valuable result of the nomination process (fig. 1).

In addition to the nomination dossier, the Management Plan and two more annexes were prepared: Disaster Risk Assessment and Protection and Rescue Plan. These documents required new, specialized knowledge and skills and active cooperation in their preparation. The nomination document with annexes was submitted to the World Heritage Centre for the first time on January 28, 2022, since the process of its verification has been ongoing. During the technical evaluation, deficiencies were observed, which required the refinement of the maps, so that the refined version of the nomination dossier was submitted on January 27, 2023.

The path to the cultural landscape as a category that is missing in national frameworks, and at the same time represents an important (sub)category at the global level, was



Fig. 6

The BCL logo

(FMB)



Fig. 7

Meeting with representatives of the local community at the Educational Center in Bač as part of the ICOMOS expert mission, 27. July 2023.

(© S. Vujović)

accompanied by a series of activities, which intertwined with each other (fig. 2). In the case of BCL, this interweaving brought new qualities that would be discussed further.

Conclusion 1: By dealing with the nomination of the BCL, the Republic of Serbia saw an opportunity to offer a heritage that is missing and for which it did not have appropriate national legislation, at the same time offering for the first time property from the territory of Autonomous Province of Vojvodina. Opportunities were used for networking and verification of approaches and results, both with existing institutions within Serbia and beyond its borders, all with the aim of expanding cooperation. In this, the participation of our country in international support and cooperation programs, and especially the Ministry of Culture, as the carrier of activities, was of great importance.

CHALLENGE 2: HOW TO ACHIEVE EFFECTIVE AND SUSTAINABLE CONSERVATION

Saving the Donjon tower of the Bač Fortress and creating a framework for effective and sustainable conservation formed the nucleus from which the *Centuries of Bač* project was born. In addition to the Bač Fortress, in the field of technical protection, the most attention was devoted to the preservation and improvement of the Orthodox monastery Bođani and the Franciscan monastery in Bač.

The Bač fortress is a water town/burg, a spatial cultural-historical entity consisting of a fortified castle with a barbican and Varoš gate (Šiljak-Spike) built from the 14th to 16th century and a number of houses from 18th to 20th century on the site of the former suburb with Calvary. Since the blasting at the beginning of the 18th century, the medieval structures of the fortified castle have been treated as architectural-archaeological remains (ruins). The partial reconstruction of the Donjon tower was started in the 60^s of the 20th century. For the last two decades, in almost uninterrupted continuity, work has been carried out on the (re)conservation and restoration of masonry structures, based on previous archaeological, architectural and research in the field of materials, respecting the conservation principle of minimal interventions.¹⁴ The approach and quality of the Bač Fortress conservation project received international verification in 2018. In the explanation of the Europa Nostra Award, multidisciplinary, a holistic approach, the achieved partnership, the European dimensions of the project and belonging to the Danube region were highlighted. Careful conservation of the ruin was rated as a special value.

Complex interventions were carried out on the area of the BLC and on the endangered, unique wall painting. The conservation of the frescoes began in 2013 as part of the Italian-Serbian project "Course of Conservation and Restoration of Wall Paintings in the Bođani Monastery and the Franciscan Monastery in Bač", which was implemented in co-organization of the High Institute for Conservation and Restoration from Rome (Istituto Superiore per la Conservazione ed il Restauro), of the Central Institute for Conservation from Belgrade and PIPCM. This was a unique opportunity to improve the way of working and to apply the highest standards of contemporary wall painting conservation, both

14 N. Folić Kurtović, *Principle of minimal intervention in the protection of architectural heritage*, *Modern Conservation* 8–9 (2021) 53–64.

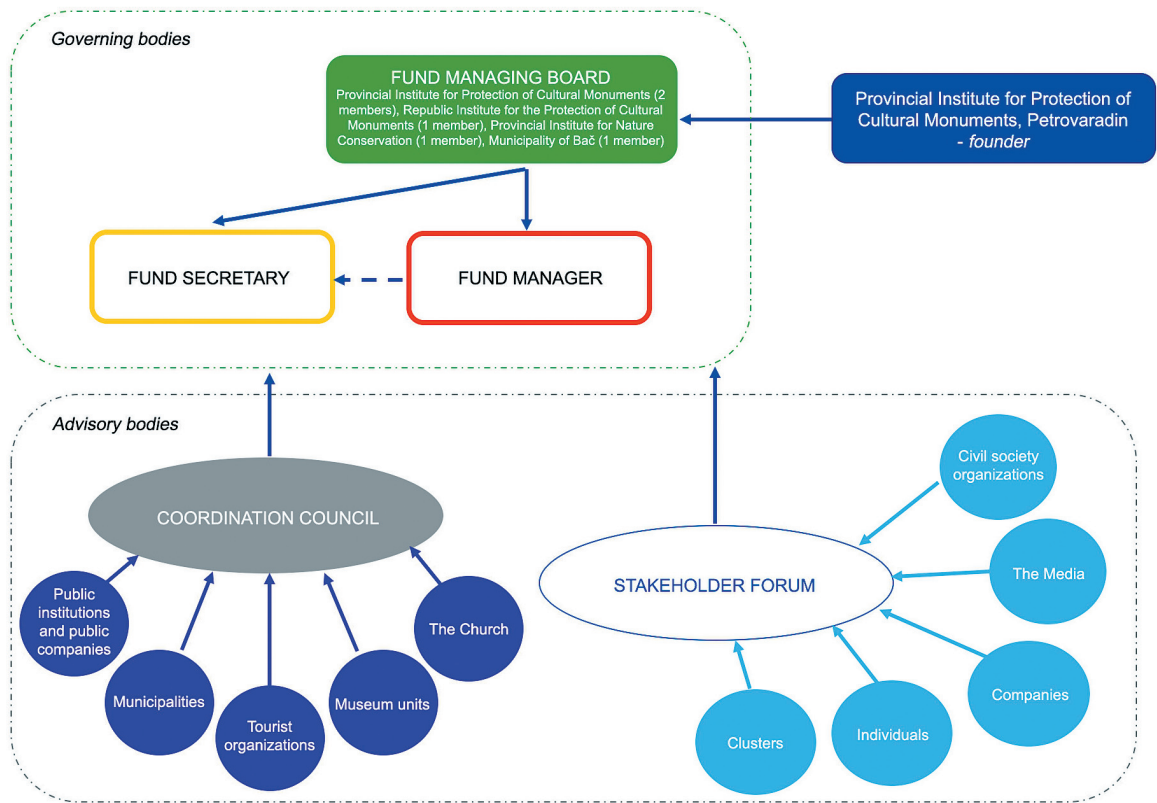


Fig. 8

The structure of the PIPCM Foundation for Managing BCL

(© K. Živanović)



Fig. 9

Mosaic – integrity of values of the Bač Cultural Landscape

(© S. Zeković)

theoretically and practically.¹⁵ In the period of 2014–2023 based on the established principles, PIPCM conservators completed the conservation of the frescoes by Hristofor Žefarović from 1737 in the narthex, nave, dome and altar of the Catholicon of Bođani (fig. 3).

Through skillful conservation interventions, the visitor was able to read the layering and changes that took place during their duration. The authenticity of the historical structures is presented with the aim of preserving the form, materials and techniques. At the Franciscan monastery in Bač, the elevations of the foundations and original floors of the medieval church with the bell tower, data on several sufferings and renovations/additions, the stages of painting the church and the south wall and buttresses, where a small interpretive point of the location of the fresco from the end of the 12th or beginning of the 13th century.¹⁶ Interventions were made visible, such as those on correction or closing of openings, the use of exteriors during construction, as well as the revival of old communications, an attempt was made to contribute to the understanding of the complexity of this property, but at the same time, the life of the Franciscan community. The presentation of layers was supplemented in 2023 with the formation of an archaeological corner in front of the western wing of the monastery. The remains of the medieval ossuary chapel and Islamic tombs are preserved and presented here, which testify to the change of cults and the processes of religious conversion¹⁷ (fig. 4).

The treatment of the material was also important for the conservation procedure in which high standards are respected.¹⁸ The establishment of the Laboratory for Testing Materials in Cultural Heritage at the Faculty of Technology of the University of Novi Sad in 2015 and the scientific project HEROMAT (2011–2015) enabled the application of non-destructive tests on several cultural properties at BCL, including the design and production of new materials for conservation.¹⁹ Conservation and restoration were presented to the public through short documentary films, exhibitions and forums, which accompanied them, giving an opportunity to engage in dialogue on these important and current topics.

Conclusion 2: In the field of effective conservation, results were achieved that testify to an active attitude towards finding and using opportunities to improve methods

15 D. Cavezzali, *The Restoration of the Mural Paintings in the Orthodox Monastery of Bođani and the Franciscan Monastery of Bač in Serbia*, in *European Cathedrals - The Pictorial Heritage*. Fourth International Conference dedicated to the Cathedrals of Europe (Pisa 17–18 October 2014), 167–177. Pisa: Opera della Primaziale Pisana, 2015.

16 A fresco with a scene of the Crucifixion of Christ with the Virgin Mary, painted on the southern buttress of the sanctuary, which was subsequently hidden by a brick wall, was found in 2011. The archaeological excavations provided valuable data, which were used in the presentation. The conservation of the fresco was done in 2013 as part of the aforementioned international course.

17 N. Stanojević, *Bač; archaeology = Castrum Bachiense*. Novi Sad 2019.

18 S. Vujović, et al. *Pozzolan mortars for the conservation treatment of old masonry: Case study – Bač Fortress*. *Gradevinar* 65 (8) (2013) 721–729.

19 Co-founders of the Laboratory are the Provincial Institute and the Matica Srpska Gallery. The Faculty of Technology coordinated the project HEROMAT (*Development of advanced compatible materials and techniques and their application for the protection, conservation and restoration of cultural heritage property*) with 10 partners from 5 countries, in the programme. PIPCM was the leading partner for the dissemination of the results. One of the results of the cooperation is the creation of an elective subject at the Faculty of Technology, Materials in Cultural Heritage.

and follow modern trends. In order to improve efficiency, it is necessary to pay more attention to preventive conservation, but also to constant equipping and training of conservators and craftsmen.

CHALLENGE 3: HOW TO ENSURE CAPACITIES (HUMAN, LEGAL AND FINANCIAL) FOR NOMINATION PREPARATION AND UNDERSTANDING AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE WORLD HERITAGE CONVENTION (CAPACITY BUILDING)

Lack of capacity was another key problem that led to the initiation of the *Centuries of Bač* project. At the very beginning of the project, human, legal and financial capacities were lacking. In the early phase, since 2006, activities were initiated and realized by the PIPCM, including significant support from provincial institutions - the Provincial Institute for Nature Protection, the Museum of Vojvodina and the Provincial Institute for Urban Planning, as well as the University of Novi Sad. In 2006, the Municipality of Bač established the Fund for the Preservation of Cultural and Historical Heritage *Centuries of Bač*. The lack of knowledge, experience and financial resources was solved by participating in international projects and through project financing at competitions, both at the national and provincial level. The document for the Tentative List was prepared in cooperation with the PIPCM and the RIPCM. Knowledge and skills gained through project activities and previous experience in the implementation of the Convention were used.

In 2017, the work on drafting the nomination was entrusted to the PIPCM. Thanks to the results of numerous activities, as well as cooperation with the RIPCM, responsible for the implementation of the Convention on World Heritage, at the beginning of 2019, re-qualification was done from a mixed to a *Bač Cultural Landscape with its surroundings*, with prior consultation with representatives of the IUCN and WWF.

In further elaboration of the support model for the creation of the nomination dossier, the Ministry of Culture formed a Working Group to monitor the creation of the nomination dossier for the *Bač Cultural Landscape* and its surroundings in April 2019. The group had a multisectoral character, which included republican and provincial institutions and bodies, representatives of all three municipalities (on whose territory the BCL is located), as well as representatives of the National Committee of ICOMOS, in order to ensure support for the work and document quality control. Further trans-disciplinary connections followed. The basis of the value of the BCL with its surroundings was increasingly found in the specificity of natural features; the multiple impact of water on life in this plain, flooded and border area; in the long and uninterrupted tradition of agriculture, animal husbandry, hunting and fishing, which began in the early Neolithic; as well as in cultural diversity, as a consequence of the constant movement and interaction of the population. In this reading of the mutual influence of nature and humans on this part of the Danube, there is the key to understanding its peculiarity and exceptionality/uniqueness. During the work on the nomination in the period 2018–2019 cooperation with the China World Heritage Centre was also achieved. The exchange of experiences and dialogue was held at a round table in Novi

Sad, during lectures and several visits to the BCL, and the importance of the study visit to the cultural landscapes that are inscribed on the World Heritage List in China is especially highlighted.²⁰

In the preparation of the BCL nomination dossier fifteen leading researchers, twenty two expert associates participated. Only during 2021 (which was marked by a ban on gatherings due to the COVID 19 epidemic) more than 20 meetings of the wider team were held where certain topics and aspects of the nomination were discussed and agreed upon.²¹

The legal and financial capacity, which are also mentioned in this goal, were resolved with the support of the Ministry of Culture, which initiated the establishment of the Foundation of the Provincial Institute for the Protection of Cultural Monuments Petrovaradin for Managing of the *Bač Cultural Landscape* (hereinafter: FMB). The Ministry of Culture, through the FMB, with the active support of the PIPCM and the Provincial Government, financed the preparation of the nomination dossier and three annexes.

Conclusion 3: The lack of capacity in various activities that are necessary for the successful implementation of the nomination process was visible. The lack of human capacity was solved by networking and joint work of experts from different institutions, for which there are no suitable conditions only in institutes for the protection of cultural monuments, whose priority is the protection of immovable cultural heritage. The Ministry of Culture, aware of the complexity of dealing with the cultural landscape, formed a large Working Group composed of experts of various profiles, but the lack of knowledge about the category of property being nominated, as well as the registration procedure itself, was obvious.

CHALLENGE 4: HOW TO RAISE AWARENESS OF THE IMPORTANCE OF BCL AS A POTENTIAL WORLD HERITAGE SITE (COMMUNICATION)

From the beginning, the project *Centuries of Bač* paid considerable attention to communication with the public. The guiding idea of this project was presented through its visual identity. Five elements symbolise impact of lifeless, abiotic factors – climatic conditions, geomorphology and hydrology – on the development of human

20 Cooperation with the Academy for Cultural Heritage of China was implemented within the framework of the Memorandum of Understanding, Exchanges and Cooperation in the Field of Cultural Heritage between the Republic of Serbia and the People's Republic of China. At the China-CIEZ Cultural Heritage Forum held in Belgrade in 2017, the Chinese expressed their interest in World Heritage management and new approaches to conservation. On the results of the cooperation on the BCL nomination, see: Joint research on the nomination 2019.

21 The work was carried out by a three-member team of co-authors of the BCL nomination, consisting of: Slavica Vujović, PhD, coordinator of the preparation of the nomination document, Vladimir Džamić, editor of the nomination dossier, and Višnja Kisić, PhD, responsible for the preparation of the BCL Management Plan and parts of the nomination related to management. In addition to the author's team, the greatest contribution to the nomination process was made by prof. Mladen Jovanović, PhD, geographer, MSc Vladimir Pihler, spatial planner, Jadranka Delić, PhD, mammalogist.

community and the importance of land cultivation as a change that occurred in its understanding of life and the world, but all as a whole of a cosmic model driven by spirituality.²²

The heritage preserved in the territory of the Municipality of Bač and its values as a potential cultural landscape were presented for the first time at the international conference “Cultural landscape – a modern approach to the protection of cultural and natural heritage in the Balkans” in 2007.²³ From then until the submission of the 2022/2023 nomination dossier a whole series of activities were carried out, with which this specific space (a cultural landscape) was presented to the scientific and professional public and at the same time brought closer to the local community (fig. 5).

For communication with the public, the living world printed promotional material, as well as information and modern communication technologies were used. The first graphic representation of the wider territory with recorded key cultural property called “Ancient Bač with its surroundings” was made in 2010 in the form of an illustrative guide and a panoramic map.²⁴ In 2013, an educational poster was made for the general public, primarily children and young people, on which, in addition to the landscape area and elements, the European Convention on the Landscape was presented. The expert public was informed about the first spatial plan of this kind in Serbia and the applied methodology in 2014 at the round table “Cultural landscape – an opportunity for economic development based on cultural and natural heritage”, held in Bač.²⁵ At the international conference “Preservation and improvement of historic cities” (Sremski Karlovci 2016) the results of the work in the Bač region were presented, as well as the experiences that were transferred to the development of the SPASP Sremski Karlovci.²⁶ At the same time, the topic of the *Bač Cultural Landscape* gets its place in the book “Cultural Heritage, How to Preserve and Use” and at the exhibition of the same name in the Matica Srpska Gallery in Novi Sad in 2016 and in the Gallery of the Central Military Club in Belgrade in 2017, where forums dedicated to this topic were also held.²⁷ During 2018, communication with the international community was strengthened.

22 Graphic design by Zdravko Rajčetić, based on the idea and preliminary design by Slavica Vujović.

23 S. Vujović, Razvojni projekat integrativne zaštite nasleđa opštine Bač „Vekovi Bača 2006–2010, kao primer savremenog pristupa zaštiti kulturnog i prirodnog nasleđa, u: *Kulturni pejzaž-savremeni pristup zaštiti kulturnog i prirodnog nasleđa na Balkanu. Zbornik radova I konferencije o integrativnoj zaštiti*. Beograd 2008, 287–296.

24 In the preparation of this first guide, which was also published in English, a design standard was established, which Aleksandar Stanojlović would follow in the preparation of propaganda material, with the fact that this guide experienced numerous editions and additions and became recognizable in the offer of this type of material.

25 This meeting, held in the Educational Centre “Centuries of Bač”, brought together representatives of the two ministries responsible for the implementation of the European Landscape Convention, representatives of the Republic Agency for Spatial Planning, from two provincial secretariats, the Institute for the Protection of Cultural and Natural Monuments and local communities.

26 V. Pihler et al. *Landscape as a modern medium of spatial development planning*, Third International Conference Preservation and Improvement of Historic Cities, Sremski Karlovci 12–13. May 2016.

27 D. Đukanović, *How to preserve and use cultural heritage*. *Modern Conservation* 8–9 (2016) 323–324.

All subsequent invitations to participate in events and conferences were used to draw attention to the nomination of BCL for inclusion in the World Heritage List, to which various activities at the Bač Fortress made a multiple contribution.²⁸

The year 2019 stands out for the *Bač Cultural Landscape* as several important activities to raise awareness about the importance of BCL took place. The nominated property was presented in the Academy of Cultural Heritage of China in Beijing during a study visit, but also in Mengxi, the seat of the provincial administration, the initiator of the Cultural Landscape of Honghe Hani Rice Terraces nomination. The film “Bač Cultural landscape with its surroundings” was made, which is available on the YouTube platform with translations in Serbian, English and Chinese...²⁹ From 2020, the newly founded Foundation for Managing the *Bač Cultural Landscape* would take care of communication, according to the model of the time. Publishing activities, production of promotional material, video production, (co)organization of expert meetings and education were launched. A new visual identity was created and it represents the interaction of humans and nature. Moreover, it points to the importance of the Danube and its river terraces for the life span and duration in these areas (fig. 6).

In the period 2020–2023, the forums “Sustainable Heritage” and “Living Heritage” and educational programs were held in cooperation with the Museum Unit “Centuries of Bač” and the school “Vuk Karadžić” from Bač. FMB is the publisher of the *Bač Cultural Landscape* Management Plan. Another in a series of guides with a recognizable design “*Bač Cultural Landscape – protection, preservation, use*” was prepared which is designed as an invitation to cooperation, but also an educational tool to learn important information about this potential future World Property. A cross-section of activities from the treatment of individual cultural properties to the cultural landscape was also made.³⁰

The year in which the nomination dossier was submitted was marked by several expert visits to the BCL, which were significant as an opportunity to exchange opinions. Of particular importance was the visit of the National Committee of ICOMOS Serbia, for which special material was prepared. Impressions of the landscape were also shared with members of Europa Nostra, who chose BCL as a study visit within the “Belgrade Heritage Forum” programme.

We note that there was always media interest in the nomination of the BCL on one hand, and on the other, there was always a willingness to respond to journalistic requests. The national public service Radio Television of Serbia (RTS) started the series “Fortresses on the Danube” in 2019 with a show about the Bač Fortress, placing this water burg in the

28 It was a consequence of the awarding of the Europa Nostra Award. Invitations to participate in conferences in Venice (Italy), Dubrovnik (Croatia), Novi Sad, lectures and presentations in Belgrade and Novi Sad, Sremski Karlovci... testify to the great interest of the public.

29 The production of short films was introduced as a consequence of the good experience of preparing a promotional film for the needs of *Heritage Excellence Fair* in Berlin in June 2018. This, as well as the film about the cultural landscape, was made by Miroslav Stajić and Aleksandar Zec.

30 Vujović, S., *From a cultural monument to a cultural landscape – a holistic approach and experiences of Centuries of Bač*, Građa XXXIV (2021) 201–219.

context of BCL.³¹ The public was given the opportunity to supplement their knowledge through the film “Eco Perspectives: Bač Cultural Landscape”, produced by RTS as well. Radio Television of Vojvodina also made a big contribution with regular reporting on many activities. Among the printed media, “Dnevnik” from Novi Sad stood out.

Activities are promoted and monitored through the Foundation’s website (*www.fub.rs*) and social networks, with the fact that the Instagram profile is designed to have an educational character as well (*@fub.rs*).

Conclusion 4: Raising, or deepening awareness of the values of the cultural landscape, as a new type of cultural property and the values and uniqueness of the *Bač Cultural Landscape*, took place gradually with the expansion of the network of actors and users. All this helped BCL to gradually become more widely known and seen as a potential World Heritage Site.

CHALLENGE 5: HOW TO IMPROVE THE ROLE OF COMMUNITIES IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE WORLD HERITAGE CONVENTION (COMMUNITY)

The determination of the project *Centuries of Bač* to deal with heritage in the territory of the local community – the Municipality of Bač is expressed in the very name of the project, together with the emphasis on the aspect of development and integration of heritage into the life of the community. This project, a platform, was realized through three five-year periods – phases, ending in 2020. The first phase is particularly important for the participation of the local community, at the beginning of which in 2006 the Municipality of Bač formed the Fund for the Preservation of Cultural and Historical Heritage “Centuries of Bač”, Bač. The APV Provincial Secretariat for Education and Culture recognized the importance of this project and financed its activities through the Fund, especially intensively in the first three years. This is the period when various associations are founded that nurture intangible cultural heritage, implement creative programs, especially within the “European Heritage Days” manifestation, and prepare promotional material.³² All this effort created a suitable environment for international cooperation. The inclusion of Bač on the Tentative List in 2010 opened up the possibility of the municipality of Bač participating in the project of the UNESCO volunteer camp “I care for...”³³

The potential World Heritage status also contributed to Bač being chosen as a place for the implementation of various projects, with participation programs of local

31 The author of the series is Svetlana Ilić, she received a certificate of appreciation from the Association of Conservators of Serbia for supporting the popularization of cultural heritage

32 For the needs of the program of this manifestation, a three-year animation project was realized with an artistic and stage performance at the Bač Fortress. This manifestation has been celebrated in Bač since 2003 and persistently gathers around the program of the Ethno Assembly, the Ethno Market, and the spiritual music concert.

33 This project, led by Adriatic GreenNet, dealt in the period 2011–2015 with the promotion of Agenda 21 and helped to define cultural policies in small municipalities with a rich cultural and natural heritage. Volunteers were regularly introduced to the values of the heritage of Bač and its surroundings, and in addition to Bač, places from Italy, Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina were involved, which achieved meaningful cooperation.

self-government and the population. The activities of the “Summer School of Architecture” project started in 2010, which was based on the tradition of informal education of the Faculty of Architecture in Belgrade, are particularly noteworthy. The results of cooperation have been preserved from oblivion and contribute to the treatment of cultural heritage.³⁴ Cooperation with the UNESCO Department from Belgrade was achieved, and in 2023 the course “Cultural policies and management” was implemented (fig. 7).

The expected increase in the activities and participation of the local community was slowed down by various social circumstances and to some extent by the fact that the Municipality of Bač does not have the capacity to participate and gradually take over the tasks of cultural heritage preservation. The share of the provincial budget in financing the “Centuries of Bač” Fund program decreased over time, but there were also such advances as the construction of the Educational Center “Centuries of Bač”, which is located in the suburbs of the Bač Fortress. Due to changes in the legal regulations, the Fund had to be closed down in 2017. It was decided to use this circumstance to form the Museum Unit “Centuries of Bač” as part of the “Vuk Karadžić” National Library in Bač in 2018, whose headquarters are located in the Educational Centre.

With the intensification of work on the preparation of the nomination dossier and the presence of this topic in the public, more and more work was done on the participation model of the local community. With the extension of the borders of the BCL to the two neighbouring municipalities – Bačka Palanka and Odžaci, the work with the communities became even more coordinated. The solution was found in the establishment of the Foundation for Managing of the *Bač Cultural Landscape*. In addition to the Fund Managing Board, as a governing body there are also two advisory bodies, one of which should ensure the holistic coordination of all public actors responsible for managing various aspects of the BCL (Coordinating Council), while the other should enable the broad participation of civil, private and public actors interested in BCL protection processes (Forum of stakeholders). For community participation, the Forum of Stakeholders is of particular importance, whose role is to provide a mechanism for the inclusion of the widest possible range of local stakeholders and for the representation of local interests. Bačko Novo Selo and Deronje stand out among the settlements in terms of initiatives and activities (fig. 8).

In Bač, the conditions are being created for the establishment of a community centre in the building of the old orphanage from 1884, which was assessed by the PIPCM Bač as suitable for receiving visitors and a place for gathering and dealing with cultural heritage. In the next phase, at the bottom of the same plot, the construction of the Community Museum is planned.

Conclusion 5: Working with the local community brought good results, especially in the BCL nomination process, because the local population, in addition to being interested, also showed willingness to help in various aspects of the process itself. A bond of mutual trust was created between local actors and experts of various profiles engaged in heritage preservation, which was built over a long period of time. The local community recognized

34 *Urbana regeneracija zaštićenih ambijentalnih celina u kontekstu održivog razvoja – Podgrade Tvrđave Bač*, Belgrade 2011.

the values of BCL and was among the first to accept and understand the specifics of the space it lives on, which was the first indicator that the evaluation and categorization of this space was carried out in the correct way. The following are activities to improve local participation in activities to preserve tangible, intangible and natural heritage, which should necessarily ensure the economic development of communities. Such activities are provided for in the *Bač Cultural Landscape* Management Plan, and the guide, which is distributed to the residents, invites them to act together (fig. 9).

CONCLUSION

The path taken to nominate the *Bač Cultural Landscape* for inclusion on the World Heritage List was marked by numerous challenges that were observed in the paper through the prism of five strategic goals, summarizing the results of the nomination process and the *Centuries of Bač* project.

An unequivocal effort was made for the Republic of Serbia to offer a new category of cultural properties, which is missing not only at the national level, but also on the World Heritage List – especially the lowland areas of the Danube region, as a cultural link between Asia and Europe. The experience gained from working at BCL is certainly very valuable. There remains hope that the introduction of the cultural landscape in the Law on Cultural Heritage (“Official Gazette of RS”, no. 129/2021 from 28.12.2021) and protection studies for complex properties such as the cultural landscape in the Law on Planning and Construction (“Official Gazette of RS” no. 72/09 ... 62/23) is a systematic way of dealing with cultural landscapes in Serbia. In the case of BCL, the openness to trans-disciplinary action compensated for the lack of specialized education related to the cultural landscape. When the lack of human resources for dealing with the cultural landscape is added to the dimension of dealing with this category as a World Heritage – the situation becomes even more complicated. Even without new categories, the lack of human capacity is the most serious obstacle for the future of new inscriptions of Serbia on the World Heritage List, just as it was in the past, because the nomination of the BCL is the first independent nomination of the Republic of Serbia for inscription on the List after 2007.

The work on the BCL nomination also pointed to the problem of managing such a complex property with a large number of different participants. The national legislation has not yet recognized the obligation to manage immovable cultural properties, nor the preparation and verification of the Management Plan. The plan made for the BCL showed the distinct professional diversity of the participants and provided that the coordination is led by the Foundation for the management of this property. There remains the question of the functioning of the Foundation, which must increasingly focus on the preservation of exceptional universal value and the monitoring of its preservation.

The work on the nomination of BCL for inclusion on the World Heritage List also showed certain weaknesses in the system of protection of immovable cultural properties in Serbia. Institutes for the protection of cultural monuments, as pillars of that system, are primarily focused on conservation (which we have seen is only one of the strategic goals), and the most powerful mechanism for preservation is considered to be

the technical protection measures issued by the Institutes for individual cultural properties. Research work is deeply undervalued, and work with the community gives the desired result only in individual cases. There are advances in the presentation of cultural heritage, but they are also often burdened by a dominant presentation of the personal merits of an institution or an individual. The resources available to the entire system for the protection of immovable cultural properties in Serbia are decreasing year by year, and the reduction of human resources in quantitative and qualitative terms is the most worrying. The work on the nomination of BCL showed that it is necessary to strive for the achievement of all strategic goals (5C') from the *Budapest Declaration* and only in a balanced way where no goal would be subordinated to another. If the entire protection system were to accept such a methodological approach in the work on the protection and preservation of cultural heritage in Serbia, it would be far more effective than the inclusion of an individual property on the World Heritage List.

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СЛАВИЦА В. ВУЈОВИЋ

Покрајински завод за заштиту споменика културе Петроварадин

КУЛТУРНИ ПРЕДЕО БАЧА – ИЗАЗОВИ НА ПУТУ НОМИНАЦИЈЕ ДОБРА ЗА УПИС НА ЛИСТУ СВЕТСКОГ НАСЛЕЂА

Културни предео Бача (даље КПБ) налази се на југу Панонске низије, на простору Републике Србије, односно њене северне аутономне покрајине Војводине. У оквиру Војводине смештен је на крајњем југозападном делу једне од њене три субрегије, Бачке, која своје име дугује управо граду Бачу, централној тачки овог предела. КПБ обухвата терасасте равничарски терен између Дунава и крајњег јужног дела тока притоке Мостонге. На простору КПБ у последње две деценије (од 2003) интензиван је процес истраживања, просторног планирања, конзервације и коришћења вишеслојног наслеђа, који предводи Покрајински завод за заштиту споменика културе Петроварадин. Започет је бригом о појединачним културним добрима од изузетног значаја за Републику Србију (Тврђава Бач, Фрањевачки самостан у Бачу, православни манастир Бођани). Овај процес анализирамо путем пет стратешких циљева за примену Конвенције о светском наслеђу, који су утврђени у Будимпештанској декларацији, познати као 5C' (Credibility, Conservation, Capacity building, Communication, Community).

Опредељење Републике Србије да номинује културни предео, као добро које је у тесној вези са природним окружењем и које одликује културна разноликост, носило је јасну поруку о доприносу употпуњавању националне Листе са недостајућим

категоријама и атрибутима. Процес номиновања КПБ, започет је 2010. године када је „Историјско место Бач са окружењем“ уврштено на Прелиминарну листу у категорији мешовитог наслеђа. Потенцијално добро је 2019. преиначено из мешовитог у културни предео и до званичне предаје номинационог досијеа у Центар за Светско наслеђе 2023. године, дефинисане су границе КПБ у складу са карактеризацијом предела (три предеона подручја).

На пољу ефикасне конзервације посебно место припада пројекту конзервације Тврђаве Бач, воденог града грађеног у периоду 14–16. века и рушеног почетком 18. века. Пројекат је добио Гран при награду Европске уније за културно наслеђе Европа Ностре у 2018. години. У образложењу награде је брижљива конзервација руине оцењена као посебна вредност. На простору КПБ изведене су комплексне интервенције и на угроженом, јединственом зидног сликарству Христофора Жефаровића у манастиру Бођани.

Недостатак људских капацитета решен је умрежавањем и заједничким радом стручњака из различитих институција. Министарство културе Републике Србије је, свесно сложености бављења културним пределом, формирало велику Радну групу састављену од стручњака различитих профила, али је очигледан био недостатак знања о категорији добра које се номинује, као и о самој процедури уписа.

Подизање, или продубљивање свести о вредностима културног предела, као нове врсте културног добра и о јединствености Културног предела Бача одвијало се постепено уз упорно ширење стечених сазнања и мреже актера и корисника. Рађено је на визуелном идентитету, пропагандном материјалу, јавним презентацијама и предавањима, изложбама, објављивању књига, радова... Све ово је помогло да КПБ буде присутан у јавности и постепено постане шире познат и виђен као потенцијално светско наслеђе.

Заједница је укључена у пројекат „Векови Бача“ кроз активности фонда, потом Музејске јединице „Векови Бача“ и од 2019. године Фондацију Покрајинског завода за заштиту споменика културе Петроварадин за управљање КПБ. Створена је веза узајамног поверења између локалних актера и стручњака различитих профила ангажованих на пословима очувања наслеђа, која је грађена у дужем периоду. Локална заједница је препознала вредности КПБ и међу првима прихватила и разумела специфичности простора на коме живи, што је био први показатељ да је вредновање и категоризација овог простора изведена на исправан начин.

Рад на изради номинационог досијеа КПБ је указао на проблем управљања комплексним добром са већим бројем различитих учесника. Још увек законодавство у Србији није увело обавезу управљања непокретним културним добрима, нити израду и верификацију Плана управљања.

Искуство у остварењу свих стратешких циљева (5С') заснива се искључиво на уравнотеженом приступу у којем ниједан циљ не би требало да буде подређен другом. Уколико би читав систем заштите прихватио такав методолошки приступ у раду на заштити и очувању културног наслеђа у Србији, то би било делотворније од уписа појединачних добара на Листу Светског наслеђа.