

NGOs AND HERITAGE IN BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

Andrew LAWLER¹

(Cultural Heritage without Borders, Sarajevo)

Introduction

Non-governmental organizations, or NGOs, are not-for-profit organisations that can work within varied areas of specialization or focus, and on different operational scales. Funding for NGOs can be provided by governments, individuals, private companies, foundations, or a combination of all four. Furthermore, some NGOs receive no funding whatsoever, and are instead reliant entirely on the goodwill work of volunteers. This paper attempts to summarise the activities of NGOs within Bosnia and Herzegovina in relation to heritage, and to outline the scales upon which these organizations operate.

Many thousands of NGOs have been registered within Bosnia & Herzegovina since 1995 (with over 12,000 registered

in the country by the end of 2012, and just under 1,800 currently registered as active on the National level alone as of August 2014), with a range of aims; from advocacy and pressure groups to those undertaking and managing projects. However, only a small proportion of these NGOs deal with heritage, and an even smaller proportion with heritage as a primary focus, rather than a secondary interest.

In spite of only a small proportion of NGOs focusing their work upon heritage-related issues, this is still (due to the large number of NGOs registered within the country) a relatively large number. Their scale of operations can be varied – from single issue (pertaining to a particular site or group of sites), to local, regional, national and transnational and international levels. Aims of NGOs in relation to heritage can also vary considerably; while some focus on promotion and awareness raising, others focus on the recording and recognition of both tangible and intangible heritage. Furthermore, some NGOs implement projects to undertake interventions at sites with the aim of improving interpretation materials and infrastructure, or undertaking necessary conservation, restoration or reconstruction works.

Non-governmental organizations within Bosnia and Herzegovina actively collaborate with all levels of government, as well as local communities, academia and museums when executing projects. Practical projects

¹ The research for this paper was undertaken as part of the 'Discovering the Archaeologists of Europe 2014' project. Discovering the Archaeologists of Europe 2014 is a transnational project, examining archaeological employment and barriers to transnational mobility within archaeology across twenty-one European countries, and is a successor to the previous Discovering the Archaeologists of Europe project which ran from 2006-2008. It is undertaken with the support of the Lifelong Learning Programme of the European Union. This project has been funded with support from the European Commission, and is implemented within Bosnia & Herzegovina by Cultural Heritage without Borders. This article [communication] reflects the views only of the author, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.

also require collaboration with artisans and skilled craft-people. Funding for projects managed by NGOs can be obtained from a variety of sources, including donations from groups, individuals and private companies, government sources (through open calls or inclusion within an annual budget), charitable foundations, and long-term collaboration with private sector partners.

Scale of Operations

A number of heritage-related NGOs within Bosnia & Herzegovina function almost exclusively at the municipal level. Organisations in municipalities such as Kreševo¹, Konjic², Ribnik³, Kupres⁴, Sanski Most⁵ and Visoko⁶ have implemented projects to increase awareness of local heritage, with some having intensively worked to have heritage sites within their municipalities recognized as National Monuments of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and advocated for the recognition of intangible cultural heritage, for which a state-level system still remains lacking within the country. Certain NGOs work with heritage throughout the country, implementing a variety of projects relating to Bosnia and Herzegovina's cultural heritage. Furthermore, heritage-focused NGOs from other countries have implemented trans-national projects within Bosnia and Herzegovina. However, the nation's complex legal structure can act as a deterrent for

long-term trans-national activities, and it is more normal for project-specific partnerships to be formed by such organisations, as opposed to them undertaking work independently within the country.

Types of Projects Implemented

As mentioned above, the types of heritage-related projects implemented within Bosnia and Herzegovina are diverse. The case studies outlined below have been implemented in recent years, and attest to this diversity.

i) Regional Restoration Camps: The camps, organized by Cultural Heritage without Borders, an independent Swedish non-governmental organisation dedicated to rescuing and preserving tangible and intangible cultural heritage affected by conflict, neglect or human and natural disasters, have been run throughout the Western Balkans since 2005, with three having been held so far within Bosnia and Herzegovina. The primary aims of the Regional Restoration Camps are to use cultural heritage to build and foster cooperation among young professionals, as a method of creating conditions conducive to reconciliation as a precondition for peace and democracy, while at the same time preserving traditional crafts and techniques. The camps also aim to increase a notion of value and care for local heritage amongst youths. Interventions undertaken during the camps directly benefit locals as they repair culturally and historically valuable buildings using traditional materials & techniques to aid their revitalization and boost their cultural and economic value to the community.

ii) Visoko Valley Landscape Survey and Preservation Project: This project, undertaken in summer 2013 by

1 Društvo za zaštitu kulturno-povijesnih i prirodnih vrijednosti

2 Udruženje za zaštitu kulturno-historijskog nasljeđa Konjica

3 Ekološko-etnološki pokret "Dimitor" Prevoja

4 Organizacija "Kupreška visoravan"

5 Udruženje građana "Merjem"

6 Fondacija "Visoki"

Archaetypes International Research, an Italian NGO, in Visoko municipality, aimed to undertake a full literature review (with on-site verification) of all archaeological excavations undertaken within the municipality over the past 50 years. This was supplemented by a survey of around 10-12 archaeological sites in the municipality, and also local presentations and cleaning works to improve access to the sites. In previous years, the group who undertook this project had improved tourist facilities and signage at the medieval fortress of Čajangrad, one of the heritage sites upon which this project focused. The project included over 50 participants from throughout Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Western Balkans region, and elsewhere throughout Europe, many of them students and young professionals in heritage-related disciplines. The project was undertaken in cooperation with the local museum in Visoko as project partners.

iii) Registration of Historic Monuments in Kreševo: Since 2009, *Društvo za zaštitu kulturno-povijesnih i prirodnih vrijednosti (Association to Protect Cultural, Historical and Natural Values of Kreševo)* has been systematically recording the tangible and intangible heritage of Kreševo municipality. This long-running project aims to have all historic monuments and sites within Kreševo municipality recognised as National Monuments, or protected at a lower governmental level if such a site does not meet the required criteria for National Monument status. The society has also advocated for the intangible heritage of the municipality, most notably the pilgrimage to Deževica, where water from St Jakov's (St. James of the Marches) cave is used by pilgrims for ritual bathing, and bottled to take home. In spite of Bosnia and Herzegovina having ratified the UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, there is as

yet unfortunately no mechanism for the recognition of the country's intangible heritage at the State level. In total, the NGO's activities have led to the inscription of 4 monuments as National Monuments of Bosnia and Herzegovina since autumn 2011.

iv) Discovering the Archaeologists of Europe: Bosnia and Herzegovina: This trans-national project, spanning 21 European countries, aims to examine archaeological employment and barriers to transnational mobility within archaeology across Europe. Within Bosnia and Herzegovina, it furthermore aims to profile the current state of the profession and ascertain the number of archaeologists working in the country and to identify strengths and weaknesses in regard to education, training and the workplace, in order to provide data relevant to policy-makers and funding bodies in decision-making regarding the country's archaeological profession. The project has taken place during 2012-14, with similar preliminary work having been carried out in 2009-10. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, the project is overseen by Cultural Heritage without Borders.

v) Conservation Summer School in the National Museum, Sarajevo: The Conservation Summer School was hosted by Heritage without Borders (a UK-based NGO) in collaboration with Cultural Heritage without Borders and the National Museum of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The week-long school aimed to introduce students and young professionals in heritage-related disciplines to the basics of preventive conservation of artefacts in museums.

Benefits and Problems of NGO Work

There are numerous benefits and problems of working as or with NGOs within the heritage sector in Bosnia and

Herzegovina. Through long-term specialisation, NGOs have generally developed strong capacities for fundraising and project management, and have commonly forged strong relationships with different governmental institutions and administrative bodies. Forging partnerships with NGOs can also provide beneficial tax breaks for private sector companies, and can help boost their image amongst local communities. Furthermore, practical projects can improve local economies and the attractiveness of areas, resulting in the retention of young and skilled workers in areas that had previously had problems in doing so.

However, NGO work does have pitfalls. Much funding is obtained from donors, and it is often the situation that projects implemented are those which meet donor's desires, not communities' needs. One particular example in this regard is the fact that it is commonplace for project calls to favour projects focusing on 'Peace and Reconciliation'. However, as Dr. Sigrid Van der Auwera states:

[...]European funding for the restoration of cultural property in the Balkans is more easy to obtain when it is framed in the reconciliation process and when diverse communities are involved. Evaluations of the effectiveness of such an approach are, however, scarce.

(Van der Auwera 2013,140)

Furthermore, in recent years, residents of the country have become increasingly apathetic toward peace and reconciliation-driven activities, with employment seen by many as of foremost importance in the current climate. The fact that there has been little-to-no independent study of the effects of NGO-run heritage projects upon peace and reconciliation within and between

communities should be addressed in order to justify the divergence between some community members' desires and donors' wishes. The 'flooding' of the NGO sector within Bosnia and Herzegovina has also created negative views of the work of NGOs in some communities.

On a practical side, limitations placed on spending by some donors and funds can impose limitations on the hiring of consultants, sub-contractors and short-term specialists, meaning that it may not be possible to employ the most suitable person to perform a given task. Furthermore, the complexities of Bosnia and Herzegovina's heritage legislation mean that much work relies on personal connections and networking between members and employees of non-governmental organisations and employees of organs of the civil administration.



Figure 1. Signage installed at Čajanić, Visoko Municipality, by Archaetypes International Research in summer 2012. (Image Credit: Archaetypes International Research)



Figure 2. Participants restoring water mills at the Regional Restoration Camp in Jajce, 2013. (Image Credit: Cultural Heritage without Borders).



Figure 3. Students and young professionals in the Conservation Summer School in the National Museum, Sarajevo, 2011. (Image Credit: Heritage Without Borders).

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