

The Concept of Participatory Citizenship in the Context of Utilizing the Potential of a Protected Built Environment for Sustainable Urban Development-A Case in Republic of North Macedonia, Bitola

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ABSTRACT

The increasingly clear recognition and confirmation of the inclusive nature of the protected built environment with the socio-economic and cultural development of society, confirmed by scientific research, internationally accepted documents, and real action in many countries at the national and local level, has full implications for the approach to perceptions to all stakeholders on the importance of its potential in the context of achieving the globally accepted goals of the current 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Perceiving the values of cultural heritage as a shared good of all citizens, which has the opportunity to enable sustainable urban development of the community to which they belong, requires a participatory approach to planning and utilizing the potential of a protected built environment in urban development processes.

The promotion of participatory processes, ie the cooperation between the government, the civil sector, the business entities, and the local population is the basis for the planning and implementation of the activities related to the integration of the protected built environment in achieving the goals of sustainable urban development of the community. In this text, an attempt is made to perceive and assess civic participation as an indicator for confirming the role of cultural heritage in sustainable urban development through the open opportunities and vitality of civil society in the Republic of North Macedonia, through the case in Bitola.

Keywords: *participatory processes, public awareness, public interest, cultural heritage, protected built environment, sustainable urban development.*

Introduction

The survival of the cultural identity of the city, as a pillar of sustainable urban development, is a joint responsibility of the local government and the general public and in many respects depends on their attitude towards the protected built environment. The implementation of policies at the national and local level, in terms of the legislative approach and strategic planning related to the field of research of this article, is in a direct impact with the degree and manner of implementation of the concept of increasing public interest in the values of the protected built environment as an important factor in the process of ensuring sustainable urban development and community well-being.

To initiate citizens to participate in the process of recognizing, respecting, and integrating heritage in modern life, it is necessary to define a model of democratic mechanism for citizen participation in all stages of the process of implementing the concept of protection of the built environment and sustainable urban development. This model should be initiated by civil and trade associations and supported by the public government and services responsible for the protection of cultural heritage and will aim to ensure a cyclical process of:

- increasing the ability to recognize the true values of the protected built environment, ie the overall cultural identity of the city;
- active participation of the citizens in the strategic planning of the process of protection of the built environment, especially in the context of sustainable urban development;
- joint evaluation of the results of the implemented strategic plans and actions.

These processes depend on the legal opportunities offered by each country at the national and local level and their functioning, but above all on the awareness of stakeholders about the values of cultural heritage and the importance of active civic participation in integrating cultural heritage and urban development processes. The purpose of this article is to see and assess the open opportunities and vitality of civil society in the context of using the potential of the protected built environment for sustainable local development, in the Republic of North Macedonia as an example of a developing country, ie in Bitola as a city with a built cultural identity which is faced with real problems in its development process.

1. Changes in the paradigm of cultural heritage protection and the concept of sustainable urban development

In recent decades, there have been efforts at the international, national and local levels to move cultural

heritage protection beyond its institutional framework and to engage in urban development processes, thus “changing the paradigm for heritage protection to cultural heritage management based on the area to which it belongs becomes a model for recognizing urban multifaceted functions and development agendas” (Guzman, Pereira and Colenbrader, 2018). The change in the approach to cultural heritage, visible since the World Heritage Convention (UNESCO, 1972), from its simple physical protection to an integrative approach that gives the socio-economic function of heritage in the life of the community, imposes the need for a managerial approach, which will involve all stakeholders in the handling and use of protected resources.

On the other hand, starting from the principles, commitments, and recommendations of *Agenda 21 for Culture* (UCLG, 2004), which offers the opportunity for each city to create a long-term vision of culture and cultural heritage as a pillar of its development, a range of research, international documents and good practices stand in defense of the idea of localizing the goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, placing culture and cultural heritage at the heart of local development processes. Taking into account the local characteristics (cultural identity, history, demographic and topographic characteristics, size of cities, local government, the vitality of civil society), each city must find its formula that will suit its needs and capabilities, ie to develop special tools that will ensure sustainable urban development.

2. Civic participation as an indicator for confirming the role of cultural heritage in sustainable urban development at the international level

In the last two decades, since the Australian researcher John Howkes (2001) developed the idea of placing culture as the fourth pillar of sustainable development, a series of efforts, research, and projects have been made by individuals and international organizations aiming to develop methodology and conceptual framework for assessing the participation of culture in the goals of sustainable development. Although most of the indicators and variables developed so far focus on the economic dimension of culture as “a form of socio-economic factors related to urban regeneration, wealth and job creation” (Prtti, Mkore, and Bosiswe, 2020), this research focuses on the assessment of “increasing cultural participation that can be linked to social elections and community development” (Petti, Makore and Bosiswe, 2020).

Assessing the open opportunities and vitality of civil society, expressed through cultural parks and the expression of transmitted values and skills is a good indicative dimension that will confirm the role of culture and cultural heritage in achieving the goals of the global concept of sustainable development. Having in mind the proposed thematic indicators of culture (UNESCO, 2019), of particular importance for such an assessment are:

- *Recognizing the role of the civil society sector and the local community in participating in all processes related to the development and implementation of policies and projects related to protection and promotion of cultural heritage sustainability at national and urban level (sustainable heritage management-indicator no.2 (UNESCO, 2019));*
- *Recognizing the open opportunities for civil society and cultural sector professionals for their participation in the formulation and implementation of cultural activities, as well as related policies, measures, and programs, at the national and local level-(participatory processes-indicator no.22 (UNESCO, 2019))*

The general picture of the activities for the protection and promotion of the sustainability of the cultural heritage at the national and urban level in a country is a basis for assessing the level of participation of stakeholders in these processes. This general picture should be seen through three basic components:

-existing database of registered national and international cultural heritage as well as the level of its inventory and popularization;

-activities for protection, preservation, and management of cultural heritage, including all stakeholders, in terms of the existence of an appropriate legislative-administrative framework related to the protection of cultural heritage, as well as the existence of a management plan and mechanisms for implementation of cultural heritage management plan at the national and local level.

- the mobilized support, ie the involvement in the protection and revitalization of the cultural heritage by the civil and private sector, by considering private funds or associations working in advocacy and initiating activities for presentation, promotion, and preservation of the cultural heritage, as well as the existence of programs to promote and disseminate good practices in the context of preserving and integrating heritage into modern life.

It is also very important to see how these plans are explicitly related to the role of cultural heritage in sustainable development, ie in the national and local development planning documents, as well as the inclusiveness and participation of all stakeholders in planning and undertaking such activities perceiving the outcomes of the same.

According to the observations of the proposed thematic indicators of culture (UNESCO,2019), the assessment of the participatory role of the community in the analyzed context will be possible only if evidence can be provided for:

-active participation of the community, groups, and individuals in policymaking and defining administrative measures for preservation and integration of cultural heritage in modern life;



- community involvement through the decision-making process in identifying and registering cultural goods;
- existence of a formal framework for creating and implementing a cultural heritage management plan;
- participatory participation of citizens, civic associations, and professionals in the field of culture in the system for management and management of cultural heritage;
- proof that the local community initiates and participates in the preparation of scientific, technical, and cultural studies related to the use of the potential of the cultural heritage in the context of ensuring sustainable local development;
- NGO activities in the analyzed context;
- Participation of cultural professionals, ie existence of an institutional mechanism (period meetings, commissions, etc.) which will provide a framework for dialogue between the representatives of the experts and the administrative people, especially for: policy formulation, management of the protected built environment, implementation of the plans, as well as monitoring and evaluation of the undertaken activities.

By focusing on the ability of people to value cultural heritage values, the rights of all of them to participate in the creation of community well-being as well as creative freedom and freedom of cultural expression can contribute to the overall assessment of cultural and cultural heritage capacity to stimulate the effective engagement of the local community in public life.

3. Participatory processes in the context of managing the potential of a protected built environment and its implications for sustainable urban development

The term **management system** can be explained as a "series of processes that together deliver a set of results, some of which are linked in a system to create an upward spiral of continuous improvement of the system, actions and achievements" (UNESCO/ICCROM/ICOMOS/IUCN, 2013). The establishment of a cultural heritage management system helps to protect and manage protected goods in a way that preserves its special values, providing socio-economic benefits and environmental protection, giving a constructive role to the protected built environment in providing human development and well-being, which in the long run will bring a return, increase in the value of protected goods. The foundation on which the cultural heritage management system should be based must be based on:

- identified and valorized values of the cultural heritage;
- developing an approach that will anticipate and control change, following the requirements and needs of the community, without harming the valued values;
- clear definition of the relationship of the protected built environment with sustainable urban development.

3.1. A modern approach to managing a protected built environment

The conventional approach to cultural heritage management, which was widespread in the world in the mid-twentieth century, is based on a methodology adopted by experts in charge of cultural heritage protection, mainly focused on the physical protection of goods, according to established legislation in individual countries. This approach meant: identifying, documenting, assessing the condition of protected goods and planning protective interventions, not taking into account its potential for socio-economic development of the community to which it belongs territorially. The modern value-driven managerial approach is a logical upgrade of the conventional approach, complementing the physical protection of goods with a level of integration into modern life, thus confirming the place of cultural heritage in urban development processes.

The expanded scope of cultural heritage today leads to more actors and stakeholders involved in its management, which necessitates the cooperation of security services with public authorities responsible for issues related to spatial and urban planning and socio-economic development policies. This means that "protection services cannot act independently and without reference to other stakeholders" (UNESCO/ICCROM/ICOMOS/IUCN, 2013), essentially understanding the need for a common approach to "adopting and implementing an acceptable vision and policy for management" (UNESCO/ICCROM/ICOMOS/IUCN, 2013) with a protected built environment in a broader physical, economic and social context, with all stakeholders.

Developing an innovative conceptual framework for understanding the cultural heritage management system, which applies not only to conservation professionals but also to policymakers and implementers, as well as to the community as a whole, is a complex process related to the management process itself, appropriate tools for managerial approach, as well as the development of a wide area of management capacities (UNESCO/ICCROM/ICOMOS/IUCN, 2013) which will include:

- professionals (individuals and groups that directly intervene in the protection and management of inherited goods);
- institutions (national and local services responsible for the protection and other bodies responsible for enabling the protection and management of cultural heritage);
- the community (local community, civil society, owners and users, and all other networks that have an interest in improving cultural heritage management).

From this point of view, *the managerial approach* to the protected built environment must be **inclusive** and **participatory**. Similar to the integrative approach to natural heritage management (Philips, 2003), as relevant to it, *the integrative approach to cultural heritage management* (Wijesuriya, 2008) should be interpreted in three

different ways: as a philosophy, as a process, and as the product.

Table 1 - Putting cultural heritage and its care in a broader context: an integrative approach to heritage management

1. PRINCIPLES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cooperative approach between all stakeholders Integration of information and resources
Keeping the resources 2. AS A PROCESS flexibility of the institutional framework	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> facilitate coordination between stakeholders respecting and linking to other planning documents public consultation
3. AS A PRODUCT legislative innovations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> legislative connection with complementary sectors legislative streamlining need for monitoring

The approach to cultural heritage management, like the WMIS itself, is in a sense "unique" in each country and should be shaped by the specific requirements of the protected built environment, cultural context, and broader socio-economic facts and the environment of the community to which it belongs. However, its efficiency and effectiveness can be achieved if such a system can stimulate interest and provide a participatory approach to all stakeholders, especially the civil society sector, ie the general public.

4. General picture of the legal options for the participatory activities of the citizens at the national and local level in the Republic of North Macedonia, ie Bitola

4.1. Existing database of registered national and international immovable cultural heritage in the Republic of North Macedonia

The Republic of North Macedonia has a rich national and internationally confirmed real estate heritage, with outstanding cultural, historical, and artistic values, which confirm the existence, continuity, and identity of all citizens living in it. The immovable cultural heritage, according to the current legislation in the Republic of North Macedonia, is recognized as individual monuments, protected units, and cultural landscapes. According to the available updated data from the Ministry of Culture, ie the National Register of Real Estate (National Register of Objects that are protected cultural heritage of the Republic of Macedonia, 2016) at the time of the survey (2020) in RNM there are about 1290 protected goods, of which about 1170 are individual monuments, and the rest are in most archeological sites, but also ambient units, rural units, memorial centers, etc. To date in RNM in 5 cities, there is special legislation for the certified protected units in them, namely in Skopje, Ohrid, Krushevo, Kratovo, and Bitola. It should be noted that Ohrid's natural and cultural-historical area is protected as a whole and is a World Cultural Heritage declared according to the UNESCO criteria.

The indicated city of Bitola, with over 45,000 inhabitants, according to the spatial plan of the Republic of North Macedonia is the center of the mesoregion towards which gravitates almost 1/4 of the total population in the Republic of Macedonia. This city has a significant <https://ijbassnet.com/>

concentration of protected cultural environment (about 15% of the total registered goods in RSM are on the territory of this city), such as protected old city core with numerous sacred and profane buildings of the different period, the monumental whole of the old bazaar, the ambient street "Shirok Sokak", the archeological Site-Heraclea, the protected natural environment, ie the national park Pelister, as well as the vicinity of Lake Prespa.

4.2. Legal options for increasing the ability to recognize the values and potential of a protected built environment in the context of sustainable urban development in RNM

The attitude of the citizens towards the protected environment, ie towards **their own cultural identity**, depends primarily on the approach and manner of public authority for developing public awareness, presenting, popularizing, and promoting the values and importance of cultural heritage for the overall sustainable urban development of the community, as well as from informing the public about the undertaken activities and the possibility for involvement in their planning and implementation. One of the main goals of the current legislation and the strategic approach to the protection of the built environment is the *dissemination of knowledge about the values and significance of cultural heritage and its role in cultural identification*.

• Developing public protection

According to the current Law on Protection of Cultural Heritage, **the development of public protection** is following the duty of public institutions in the field of upbringing, education, science, culture, and information, which in their programs and work plans are required to provide content for knowledge acquisition and construction of a proper and active attitude towards the cultural heritage and its protection.

The Directorate for Protection of Cultural Heritage, which is part of the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Macedonia, according to the same law, is obliged, among other things, to expand and encourage knowledge of national and international regulations for the protection of cultural heritage assistance and the role that assistance has played in the protection of cultural heritage. Public protection institutions

<http://dx.doi.org/10.33642/ijbass.v6n11p4>

are obliged to inform the public about the activities they undertake, as well as the opportunities for involvement of other entities in the implementation of programs and projects in the field of protection of cultural heritage that they lead.

- ***Dissemination of knowledge about the values and significance of cultural heritage***

Dissemination of knowledge about the values and significance of cultural heritage, as well as its availability to the public for cultural, scientific, and educational needs, can be ensured only by its proper presentation and popularization, which means: publishing publications on cultural heritage, access to cultural goods in a way that enables education, encouraging mutual tolerance, learning about other cultures and their diversity, development of cultural tourism, participation in international conferences where the values and significance of cultural heritage are scientifically presented and its presentation in exhibitions in Zenja and abroad.

- ***Informing the public***

Informing the public about the undertaken activities and the possibility to get involved in their planning and implementation can be achieved only by establishing a database of publicly available, continuously updated, comprehensive and accurate information on cultural heritage and its protection, through cultural heritage information system, which is a legal obligation according to Article 115 of the Law on Protection of Cultural Heritage.

4.3. Legal options for civic participation in local development processes and protection of cultural heritage in RNM

In recent decades, the efforts in conceptualizing the legal policies for creating social changes in the Republic of North Macedonia are evident, which will be encouraged by a strong civil sector, active targets, and a solid basis for good cooperation with the government. In order to achieve more accountable and socially inclusive governance at both national and local levels, there are currently legislative options that define the manner and degree of civic participation in national and local government.

Basically, the realization of civil rights at the local level is realized indirectly, through the representatives in the municipalities elected in a direct way. However, according to the Law on Local Self-Government (2002), citizens are given the opportunity to directly exercise their rights through the exercise of civic initiatives, gathering of citizens, referendum, and other means with established procedures in accordance with the law. Regarding the possibility for civic participation, the citizens have the right to propose to the municipal council to adopt certain acts or to solve certain issues within its competence in accordance with Article 26 of the Law on Local Self-Government (2002).

Pursuant to Article 46 of the Law on Urban Planning (2020), in order to ensure inclusiveness, participation, and

publicity in the process of urban planning, the municipalities are obliged to establish a participatory body. This participatory body represents all different interests and interest groups in the local community and conveys the views, opinions, and needs of citizens and legal entities, monitors the planning situation by providing initiatives, directions, and suggestions for preparing planning solutions, reviews the planning programs and planning solutions in their working version. On the other hand, in accordance with Article 15 of the Law on Proclamation of the Old Town of Bitola for Cultural Heritage of Special Importance, the Cultural Heritage Management Plan is put to public debate before its adoption, and the opinions, proposals, and recommendations presented at the public debate should be considered in the final version of this plan.

4.4. The NGO sector and its role in raising public awareness of the impact of a protected built environment with sustainable urban development

The non-governmental sector, ie the non-governmental organizations, ie the NGOs, which were formed on the basis of a private initiative, in order to satisfy certain general goals, have a special role in increasing the public awareness of the cultural identity and values of the protected built environment as well as their impact on the sustainable urban development of the city, the common interests, needs and motives of the citizens, on a non-commercial, non-profit and non-partisan basis, independent of the state and with voluntary participation and participation of its members. In the last few decades, NGOs have proven to be one of the key segments for elaborating and materializing the postural and group interests of the citizens. Particularly interesting for this research are those NGOs that operate at the local level and which by their functional and structural operational definition, that arises from their basic goals, mission, and vision, ie in the field of action, are in some way related to the subject of research in this paper.

In addition to the existence of a department for cooperation in non-governmental organizations in the Government of the Republic of North Macedonia, Government Strategy for the Republic of North Macedonia for cooperation with and development of the civil sector (2018-2020) and Strategy for the cooperation of the Municipality of Bitola with the civil sector and its continuous development (2019-2022), in the research in this paper encountered a serious problem in the isolation of NGOs that have activities related to promoting the protection of cultural heritage and sustainable urban development in RNM, primarily due to the lack of a complete and updated register of NGOs at a national and local level. However, according to the Report on enabling environment for the development of civil society (Ognenovski and Trajkovska, 2018), wherein a special part is seen the information and involvement of CSOs in achieving the goals of SD, especially at the local level it is seen that key institutions in RNM are in

line with the Agenda 2030 for sustainable development, and many of the surveyed civil society organizations (63%) are familiar with the process of implementing the goals of sustainable development. This report shows that most of the civil society organizations learned about the concept of sustainable development through the campaigns of international organizations, such as UNDP, UNICEF, UNESCO, etc., emphasizing that RNM lacks activities to promote it and introduce the goals to the citizens.

According to the data from the Strategy for Cooperation of the Municipality of Bitola with the civil sector and its continuous development (2019-2022), in October 2018 in the Municipality of Bitola, according to the law, there are 590 registered civil society organizations. However, the data show that the number of active civil society organizations is much smaller, except for a few organizations that work professionally, others are highly dependent on individual grants, do not have premises, nor permanently hired persons and regular working hours. Bitola faces insufficiently institutionalized associations, with poor communication and transparency, lack of coordination, insufficient representation in the media, ie generally insufficiently pro-active civil sector with little capacity to create sustainable and inclusive projects that will affect the development of the local community and Macedonian society as a whole. The Department for Local Economic Development and the Municipality of Bitola has the primary role in coordinating and monitoring this Strategy.

5. Assessment to the vitality of the civil society in the context of the treatment of the cultural heritage and the sustainable urban development in RNM, through the case in Bitola

The assessment of the vitality of the civil society in the context of the treatment of the cultural heritage and the sustainable urban development in RNM, within this paper, was made to 120 respondents, divided into two target groups that determine the expert and public opinion in the analyzed area, in the period from 25.7 to 25.8 2020, with the help of an electronically submitted anonymous survey questionnaire. According to the identification part of the questionnaire, these are respondents, almost equally of both sexes, most of whom are in full growth of their working ability, of which almost 80% have higher education and most are living in Bitola.

In order to get a clearer picture of the attitude of the citizens towards the analyzed concept, the questions were conceptualized in 4 groups:

- issues related to the recognition of the cultural-historical values of the protected built environment in the context of the cultural identity of the city, in order to perceive the public awareness of the values of the cultural heritage and the significance of the cultural identity of the city in the context of urban development processes;

- issues related to the integration of the protected built environment in the sustainable urban development of the community, in order to understand the understanding of the respondents of the concept of integration of cultural heritage in modern life and the concept of sustainable urban development of the community;

- questions related to the problems arising from the current way of integrating the protected built environment in modern life, in order to investigate the satisfaction of the respondents from the current state of treatment of the analyzed concepts and their share in it;

- issues related to solutions for achieving the analyzed concepts, in order to perceive their vision for the directions in which in the future the activities of all actors involved in the process of integration of the protected built environment in modern life should be directed.

5.1. Implications of the research findings in the context of public awareness and public interest in the analyzed concepts

The perception of public awareness and the public interest of the respondents about the analyzed concepts has been done in several contexts, as follows:

- public awareness of the cultural-historical values of the cultural heritage and the significance of the cultural identity of the city;

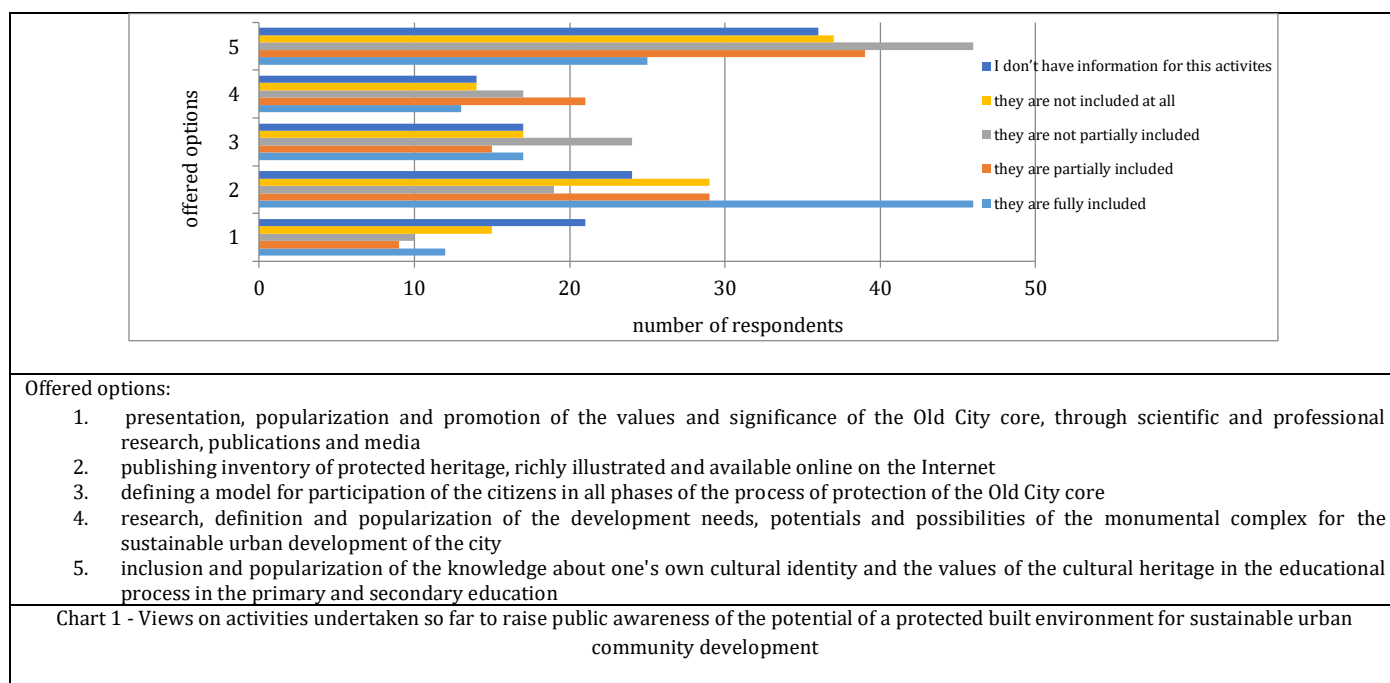
- public awareness of the potential of a protected built environment in the context of ensuring sustainable urban development of the community; and

- public awareness of the need for inclusiveness and participation of the civil society sector in the planning, implementation, and evaluation of activities related to the integration of protected built environment in sustainable urban development processes.

Exploring the experience of the cultural heritage and cultural identity of the city, among the respondents from all target groups, it can be concluded that all stakeholders have a good basis to see the values of the protected built environment and openness to deepen their awareness of these values.

In general, the respondents showed that they recognize the cultural-historical values of the protected built environment and their context in their own cultural identity, but the use of its potential in the context of sustainable urban development requires undertaking a series of related activities, primarily to increase public awareness of "potential" of this non-renewable resource. At the time of research in this paper, such activities are still not sufficiently involved in urban development processes, which can be concluded from the fact that most respondents have no information at all to undertake any activities that will increase awareness of such a resource potential. The chart below summarizes the results of the respondents' answers to the question related to the public

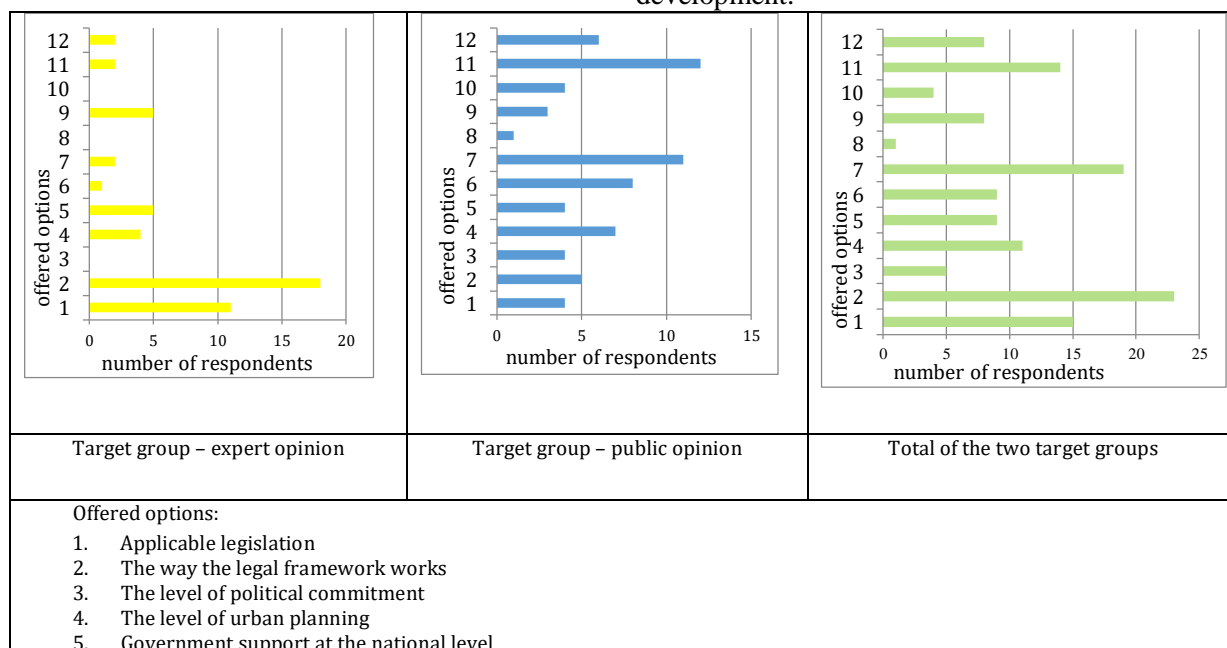
awareness of the values of the protected built environment for sustainable urban development:



Observing the attitudes and opinions of the respondents about sustainable urban development, determining the place of the protected built environment in its context led to the conclusion that most of the respondents (49% of the total number of respondents) associate the importance of sustainable urban development with the sustainable economic development of the community, and then with the preservation of the cultural identity of the city (37.5%), equally not realizing the sufficient connection of sustainable social development and environmental protection with the "well-

being of citizens", as a basis for the concept of sustainable development.

Most of the respondents (64.2%), from both basic target groups equally, believe that the integration of cultural heritage in the urban development of the community, in part, in some areas is moving in the right direction. However, as can be seen from the graphs below, the two target groups had very different views on the underlying issues arising from the slow and still inadequate integration of the protected built environment into the community's sustainable urban development.



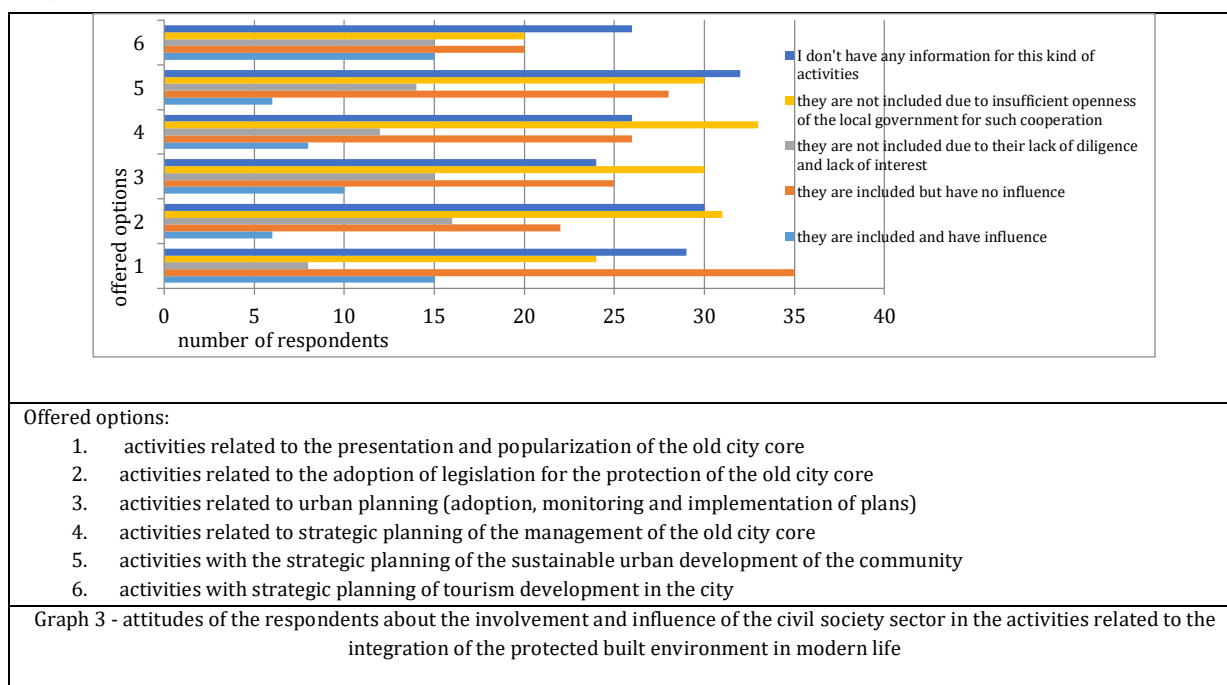
6. Local government support
7. The attitude of the professionals towards the preservation of the values of the real cultural heritage
8. Level of involvement of the civil society sector
9. The attitude of the owners and users of the space towards the preservation of the values of the real cultural heritage
10. Lack of financial measures
11. The level of public awareness
12. Did not answer the question

Chart 2 - views on perceived problems that cause slow and inadequate integration of the protected built environment in modern life

According to the two basic target groups, the preservation of the built heritage in Bitola can be most ensured by **proper management of the entire build heritage**, and not only by the protection and preservation of individual protected goods. However, many of them believe that the inadequate integration of cultural heritage in modern life stems from the level of public awareness of its potential for urban development processes, noting that very **few respondents see the involvement of civil society in this process as a problem**.

5.2. Implications from the research findings in the context of citizen participation in the context of achieving the analyzed concepts

Aiming at civil society, the answer to the question of whether the civil society sector is sufficiently involved and whether it has an impact on activities related to the integration of cultural heritage in urban development processes in Bitola is very important, especially for perceiving its inclusion and participation in managing the potential of the protected built environment. The graph below shows the views of the respondents regarding the involvement and influence of the civil society sector in the activities related to the integration of the protected built environment in modern life.



From the answers summarized in the graphs below it can be concluded that regarding all the offered activities, all respondents either **did not have information about the existence of such activities** or believe that **they are not involved in these activities due to the reluctance of the local government for such cooperation and if involved, their decisions have no bearing**.

In terms of the **inclusiveness and participation** of the civil society sector, field research has shown that there are civil society activities related to the integration of cultural heritage in the sustainable urban development of the city. Part of the respondents, namely 34 respondents (22 from t.g.1 and 12

from t.g.2), ie 28.3% of the total number of respondents stated that they were part of the organization of such activities, and 33 respondents (13 of t.g.1 and 20 of t.g.2) stated that they were engaged as collaborators in them. Unfortunately, as many as 55% of the total number of respondents (20 from t.1 and 46 from t.2), stated that they have no information about such activities at all.

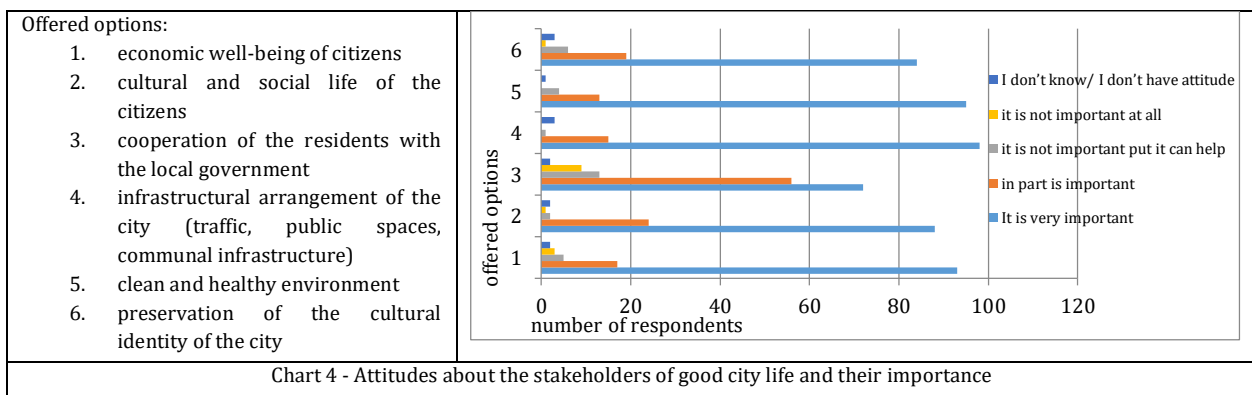
Those respondents who stated that they are members of NGOs, most often establish formal cooperation with the local government for joint application of project activities related to public calls from national and international programs in the analyzed area, as well as by initiating related activities,

at least in participation in the processes of creating local policies related to the protection of cultural heritage and sustainable urban development of the city.

These respondents emphasize that at the moment, **the main challenges that affect the active work of NGOs are:**

- inadequate professional capacity to undertake activities;
 - lack of human resources for the implementation of activities;
 - the openness of the local government for cooperation;
- as well as:
- lack of financial support for regular work;
 - lack of basic technical skills for planning activities, especially in applying to public calls;
 - the openness of the citizens and other civil society organizations for cooperation is also important but not crucial to their work.

The respondents from the two basic target groups equally, in the first place in importance for good city life, but the infrastructural arrangement of the city, and immediately behind it the clean and healthy environment. The economic well-being of the citizens is in the third place, followed by the preservation of the cultural identity and the cultural-social life of the citizens. At the bottom of the importance of this list is the cooperation of the residents with the local government. This shows that the citizens (taking into account the respondents from the two basic target groups) **do not sufficiently recognize the importance of participatory processes in creating sustainable local development policies and their role in achieving community welfare.**



The most important deciding factor that will provide a sustainable city perspective, according to the respondents from the two main target groups (57% of the respondents) is the creativity and ability of the local government to adapt to the new needs and requirements of the community. Putting the unique character and specifics of the city (21% of respondents), as well as the cooperation between citizens and local government (18% of respondents) far below the list of these decisive factors, once again confirms **the insufficient perception of the need for integrative and participatory approach, as a decisive factor in providing a sustainable urban perspective.**

It is concluded that most of the respondents have a negative attitude or no information at all about **activities that are to increase public awareness of the potential of the protected built environment for the sustainable urban development of the community, especially in terms of:**

- defining a model for the participation of the citizens in all phases of the process of protection of the Old City core;
- publishing an inventory of protected heritage, richly illustrated and available online on the Internet;
- research, definition, and popularization of the development needs, potentials, and possibilities of the monumental unit for the sustainable urban development of the city;

- inclusion and popularization of the knowledge about one's own cultural identity and the values of the cultural heritage in the educational process in primary and secondary education;
- presentation, popularization, and promotion of the values and significance of the Old City core, through scientific and professional research, publications, and media.

Regarding the activities related to the integration of cultural heritage with modern life, especially in the field of:

- presentation and popularization of the old city core;
- strategic planning of the sustainable urban development of the community;
- strategic planning of the management of the old city core;
- urban planning (adoption, monitoring, and implementation of plans);
- the adoption of the legislation for the protection of the old city core;
- strategic planning of the development of tourism in the city;

Many respondents, who stated that they are involved in such activities, believe that they do not influence decision-making. On the other hand, a good part of the other respondents associates their **inactivity with the lack of openness of the local government for such cooperation**, and much less with their lack of diligence and lack of interest.

The findings of the study indicate that the respondents to some extent are aware of the impact of the two analyzed concepts - protection of cultural heritage and sustainable development, but still do not see the need for an integrative and participatory approach in creating urban development processes and achieving goals of sustainable urban development and the potential of cultural heritage in its context.

6. Proposed measures to increase the integration and participation of the citizens

Considering the analysis of the theoretical basis and the implications of the field research below, in this text, measures are proposed that will help to find a way to understand the importance of an inclusive and participatory approach of all actors in the process of developing and implementing policies, programs and initiatives related to the analyzed concepts, as well as increasing the interest of the citizens for their participation in the process of development and implementation of policies related to the use of the potential of the protected built environment in the context of sustainable urban development of the community. These measures are divided into three groups:

• *Measures to improve the presentation and popularization of the values of the protected built environment*

Despite the great degree of research, popularization, and presentation of the analyzed protected built environment, taking into account the current socio-economic and physical conditions of the whole, there is a need for new, more complex, and comparative research on development needs, potentials, and opportunities for sustainability the monumental whole. For that purpose, it is necessary to find a way to use all possible tools that will provide stimulation of professional and scientific research, primarily by organizing this type of seminars and conferences, nationally and internationally, which will be timely and continuously praised. Initiatives for the implementation of such measures should be taken, primarily the institutions responsible for the protection of immovable heritage and spatial planning, relevant higher education institutions, trade associations, and NGOs, taking advantage of the opportunities offered by international programs and projects in the field.

Given the high level of current and expected new standards and non-standard forms of presenting the cultural-historical and ambient values of the old city core of Bitola, it is necessary to establish an electronic system for categorization by form and continuous monitoring of the overall elements that contribute to its popularization. Such a system will provide more comprehensive access to the documents, data, and information needed for its future presentation and popularization, which will increase its impact on sustainable development.

• *Measures to increase public awareness of the values and potential of a protected built environment / improve public information and education*

Taking measures to increase public awareness of the need to preserve the architectural heritage and awareness of its potential for community welfare, is the best solution to overcome the problems caused by the insufficient public interest in civic participation in sustainable urban development processes and cultural heritage in their context. These measures would provide:

- increasing the ability to recognize the true values of the architectural heritage;
- active participation of the citizens in the strategic planning of the revitalization process;
- opportunity to stimulate the citizens for financing in the construction heritage.

To draw the attention of the local government and the general public to the values of the architectural heritage as their common property, it is necessary to publish the inventory for the protected heritage, richly illustrated, published, and available online on the Internet. Also, to initiate the citizens to participate in the process of recognition, respect, and integration of heritage in modern life, it is necessary to define a model of democratic mechanism for citizen participation in all stages of the protection process by organizing workshops, surveys, focus group discussions, public debates, classical meetings, exhibitions, newsletters, etc., as a possible solution that will provide a mechanism for partner decision-making, transparency, and access to information.

• *Measures to improve the mutual coordination of all participants in the process of protection of cultural heritage and its context with sustainable urban development*

Such measures require the promotion of cooperation between the government, volunteer organizations, private companies, and the local population by creating a methodology for managing the protected built environment in the context of sustainable development. This implies the establishment of an independent institutional form, which will be responsible for the preparation, implementation, continuous monitoring of the management plan of the protected built environment, coordinating all stakeholders in the process of its sustainable development, of course under the auspices of national and local protection services and the local government.

Conclusion

In the context of international trends for recognition of culture and cultural heritage as an equal factor of sustainable development at national and even more local level, in RNM it is necessary to provide a conceptual framework and methodological tool for assessing their contribution in the context of fulfilling 2030 goals of the Sustainable Development Agenda. Considering inclusiveness and participation as one of the main dimensions on which the

internationally proposed indicators for achieving the goals of sustainable development and the potential of cultural heritage in their context focus, evaluating the success of such a concept will largely depend on the assessment of the open society and professionals from the cultural sector for their participation in the formulation and implementation of cultural activities, as well as related policies, measures, and programs, at the national and local level.

Assessing the role of the civil society sector and the local community in participating in all processes related to the development and implementation of policies and projects related to the protected built environment and its context with sustainable urban development, means continuous monitoring and production of evidence that will primarily confirm:

- active participation of the community, groups, and individuals in policymaking and defining administrative measures for preservation and integration of cultural heritage in modern life;
- community involvement through the decision-making process in identifying and registering cultural goods;
- existence of a formal framework for creating and implementing a cultural heritage management plan;
- participatory participation of citizens, civic associations, and professionals in the field of culture in the system for management and management of cultural heritage;

- the initiatives and the participation of the local community in the preparation of scientific, technical, and cultural studies related to the use of the potential of the cultural heritage in the context of ensuring sustainable local development;

- NGO activities in the analyzed context;
- participation of cultural professionals, ie the existence of an institutional mechanism (periodic meetings, committees, etc.) that will provide a framework for dialogue between representatives of experts and administrators, especially for: policy formulation, management of the protected environment, implementation of plans, as and monitoring and evaluating the activities undertaken.

The way we use, preserve, and protect our cultural heritage is crucial to the intended development of a high-quality built environment. That is why we urgently need a new, adaptable approach to shaping the built environment, based on cultural identity and the modern needs and requirements of the community, capable of ensuring economic development, social cohesion, and environmental protection, promoting civic awareness and an integrative and participatory approach to all stakeholders.

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