

Dobrila Vlahović

Ministry of Culture and Media, University
of Montenegro, Montenegro
dobrila.vlahovic@mku.gov.me
dobrila.vlahovic@gmail.com

© 2025 Dobrila Vlahović

Ethics and Responsibility in Conservation Practice: Between Authenticity, Reconstruction and Community Expectations

In the context of rapidly changing environmental, social, and cultural landscapes, conservation professionals increasingly face ethically complex decisions. These challenges go beyond the technical aspects of preserving heritage and enter the realm of value-based choices: what do we preserve, how, and for whom?

This presentation will explore the ethical dimensions of conservation and restoration within the field of architectural heritage protection. Drawing on the speaker's background as a conservator-restorer and architect specialising in built heritage, the presentation will reflect on a recent conservation case in Montenegro. The case will serve as a framework for discussing the interplay between authenticity, adaptation, and stakeholder engagement in practice.

Key questions include: (1) How do we determine the limits of acceptable intervention? (2) Can adaptive reuse be reconciled with the principle of minimal intervention? (3) How do local communities perceive 'authenticity,' and how does that shape professional responsibility?

The presentation will advocate for an integrated, human-centred approach to conservation ethics, one that acknowledges the heritage professional's role as both a technical expert and a mediator of meaning. Emphasis will be placed on interdisciplinary collaboration, community dialogue, and long-term sustainability of interventions.

Dobrila Vlahovic is a Montenegrin expert in the field of conservation and cultural heritage management, currently serving as the General Director of the Directorate for Cultural Heritage at the Ministry of Culture and Media of Montenegro. With a Master's degree in Architecture from the University of Montenegro, specialising in the protection and revitalisation of architectural heritage, and a professional background rooted in conservation and restoration, she embodies the rare synthesis of scientific expertise and public sector leadership. Her career spans over two decades of dedicated service in Montenegro's heritage institutions, including the Republic Institute for the Protection of Cultural Monuments and the Directorate for the Protection of Cultural Property. During this time, she has led and contributed to some of the most complex and nationally significant conservation projects. She holds the highest professional title in her field-Conservator Advisor-awarded for her excellence in applied conservation practices. As a seasoned academic, she teaches at the Interdisciplinary Conservation and Restoration Program of the Faculty of Fine Arts at the University of Montenegro, mentoring future professionals through the courses Management of Cultural Heritage and Protection of Cultural Heritage. She is also a prominent voice in the international heritage community, having served on national and international expert bodies, including Montenegro's National Commission for UNESCO, ICOMOS, and the Council of Europe Steering Committee for Culture, Heritage, and Landscape (CDCPP). Vlahovic has authored and co-authored numerous scholarly and professional publications on the field of cultural heritage, historical landscape integration, and cultural sustainability. Her interdisciplinary research is grounded in both field-work and policy-making, offering a holistic perspective on the protection, interpretation, and revitalisation of cultural heritage. Her current research and professional focus centres on the historic stone bridges of Montenegro, which she explores as architectural artefacts deeply embedded in the natural landscape, symbols of both cultural identity and sustainable human response to environmental challenges.

International Summer School of Museology and Heritage 2025

Research and Practices
in a Rapidly Changing World
Koper, 25 August–5 September 2025



unesco

Chair



<https://doi.org/10.26493/978-961-293-501-6.19>

26