



# HERITAGE LAB REDISCOVERING THE HERITAGE OF LETNICË/LETNICA

Development  
Workshop Report

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**osce** Organization for Security and  
Co-operation in Europe  
Mission in Kosovo

**CH  
WB**  
Cultural  
Heritage without Borders  
KOSOVO





This report is a result of co-operation between the OSCE Mission in Kosovo and Cultural Heritage without Borders. The views and opinions do not necessarily reflect those of the OSCE Mission in Kosovo.

*Figure 1 – Cover image, aerial image illustration over the village of Letnicë/Letnica in southern Kosovo*

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*Figure 2 – Restoration Camp in the village of Letnicë/Letnica: visit to the site by the participants.  
Photo: OSCE/CHWB Dardan Rushiti*

# HERITAGE LAB REDISCOVERING THE HERITAGE OF LETNICË/LETNICA

## Development Workshop Report



# FOREWORD



The Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) has a longstanding commitment for the preservation and protection of cultural heritage as a means of promoting intercultural understanding. To be precise, this commitment found its origin already during the years of the CSCE, the Conference for Security and Cooperation in Europe, from which the OSCE emerged. At the 1991 Cracow Symposium on the Cultural Heritage of the CSCE Participating States, the Participating States “Reaffirm their belief that respect for cultural diversity promotes understanding and tolerance among individuals and groups.” In addition, it was agreed that “Partnerships among diverse groups at the local, regional and national level ... are valuable for ensuring the effective and representative preservation of cultural heritage.” And that this is “...conducive to the tolerance and respect for different cultures....”

*Figure 3 – Ambassador Jan Braathu, Head of OSCE Mission in Kosovo, at the closing ceremony of the Heritage Lab Workshop, 5 July 2019.  
Photo: OSCE/CHWB Dardan Rushiti*



The Cracow document has been a guide and an inspiration for the OSCE Mission in Kosovo's work in the field of cultural heritage for more than twenty years. In our Mission's work, we have sought to contribute to local partnerships through an inclusive approach towards all communities. Indeed, this is the best way to protect and preserve Kosovo's rich and diverse cultural heritage, while at the same time fostering inter-community understanding and dialogue. Protection of cultural heritage has many facets, from public awareness raising, contributing to relevant legislation, through monitoring how legislation is actually implemented, to supporting capacity building and transfer of best practices to local counterparts and institutions.

A large number of representatives of different institutions, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), as well as practitioners and students have gained new insights, skills and knowledge on how to best preserve the rich cultural heritage in Kosovo and use it as a tool for inter-community cooperation as well as sustainable cultural heritage development.

The project "Rediscovering the Heritage of Letnicë/Letnica" in 2018 and 2019 addressed several important aspects: On the one hand, it brought together students – as the future guardians of Kosovo's cultural heritage– with internationally recognised standards and techniques in heritage management and its socio-economic valorisation. On the other hand, it represented an initiative of the OSCE Mission in Kosovo to enhance the opportunities of non-majority communities.

The ethnically mixed village of Letnicë/Letnica (Viti/Vitina municipality) was selected by the Mission for the preparation of a cultural heritage development plan, which will offer an opportunity to initiate sustainable local development through mobilisation of the village's own resources by emphasising its unique cultural heritage.

The outcome of this exercise, outlined in this publication, will hopefully contribute to a more prosperous life in dignity and mutual respect among the different communities in Kosovo.

I would like to thank all participants, including the students from the University of Pristina, Cultural Heritage without Borders, the Mayor and the Municipality of Viti/Vitina, and not the least the inhabitants of the village of Letnica/Letnicë.



Jan Braathu

Head of OSCE Mission in Kosovo

Prishtinë/Priština, July 2020



# PREFACE



Figure 4 – Sali Shoshi, Executive Director of Cultural Heritage without Borders, at the closing ceremony of the Heritage Lab Workshop, 5 July 2019.

Photo: OSCE/CHwB Dardan Rushiti



The cultural and natural heritage in Kosovo is an untapped social and economic resource. Few people outside the immediate region know of the green mountains with running streams, well-preserved villages, and rich cultural heritage. Such is the case of Letnicë/Letnica, a small village located in the “Black Mountain” (Mali i Zi/Crna Gora) near the Republic of North Macedonia. It is in this village that a young girl experienced her lifelong religious calling, Anjezë Gonxhe Bojaxhiu, better known as Mother Teresa of Calcutta. Locally, Letnicë/Letnica is famous and visited for this alone, and unfortunately, the village is facing numerous challenges, including an aging community, depopulation, and physical deterioration. But there is hope.

Cultural Heritage without Borders (CHwB) with support from the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe Mission in Kosovo (OSCE) has embarked on their latest endeavor for community development and protection of cultural and religious heritage: *Reviving the legacy of Letnicë/Letnica – traces of Mother Teresa of Calcutta*. OSCE and CHwB have addressed these issues, most recently in a series of summer camps for young people held in 2018 and 2019. These camps aimed at physical interventions and strategic development planning. The result of which is also this report. It describes a preliminary development plan to ensure the survival of the remaining community along with their cultural heritage.

This report is only the first step in social and economic development, but begins to chart a path for the future of Letnicë/Letnica. The conducted investigations and provided ideas are the start of a sustainable development program that can set an example for other rural villages in Kosovo.



Sali Shoshi

Executive Director of Cultural Heritage without Borders, Kosovo



# PARTNERS

Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) has a comprehensive approach to security that encompasses politico-military, economic and environmental and human aspects. It, therefore, addresses a wide range of security-related concerns, including arms control, promotes confidence- and security-building measures, human rights, including those of non-majority communities, and strengthens democratization, policing strategies, fight against terrorism, and economic and environmental challenges.

One of the OSCE's largest field operations, the OSCE Mission in Kosovo, runs a wide array of activities in the field of human rights, democratization, and public safety. It is particularly engaged in the protection of community rights; protection of cultural and religious heritage; monitoring of judiciary; gender mainstreaming; media freedom and development; promotion of anti-discrimination mechanisms; improving youth's participation in political and public life; countering terrorism and cyber threats; providing advanced police training and support to key policing and security strategies; and support to the implementation of agreements stemming from the European Union-facilitated dialogue between Prishtinë/Priština and Belgrade. The Mission in Kosovo monitors the work of various institutions and helps strengthen legislation and policies covering the protection of human and community rights, anti-discrimination, freedom of expression, gender equality, and the fight against corruption and organized crime.

[www.osce.org/mission-in-kosovo](http://www.osce.org/mission-in-kosovo)

*Figure 5 – Conservation practical work during the workshop.*

*Photo: OSCE/CHWB Dardan Rushiti*

**Cultural Heritage without Borders (CHwB)** was founded as an independent Swedish non-governmental organization dedicated to rescuing and preserving tangible and intangible cultural heritage affected by conflict, neglect, or human and natural disasters. We see our work as a vital contribution to building democracy and supporting human rights. CHwB is neutral when it comes to conflicting parties, but not to the rights of all people to cultural heritage – now and in the future. Cultural Heritage without Borders works with cultural heritage as an active force in reconciliation, peacebuilding, and social and economic development by creating capacity, increasing awareness, and developing opportunities.

CHwB is committed to equality, non-discrimination, participation, accountability, and transparency.

OUR VISION is that everyone has the right to enjoy, have access to, and participate in cultural heritage.

OUR MISSION is to promote cultural heritage as both a right in itself and a resource. Cultural Heritage without Borders works with civil society and institutions at all levels to strengthen peacebuilding, sustainable socio-economic and democratic development, and the realization of human rights.

One recent and important project has been in co-operation with the OSCE Mission in Kosovo in the village of Letnicë/Letnica focused on preserving cultural heritage but also the social and economic development of the community.

[www.chwb.org/kosovo/](http://www.chwb.org/kosovo/)



# HERITAGE LAB

Figure 6 – The “Heritage Lab Workshop”, 24 June – 5 July 2019, gathered students from different academic fields such as architecture, cultural heritage, sociology, anthropology, and ethnology. Photo: OSCE/CHwB Dardan Rushiti

HERITAGE  
LAB

osce Organization for Security and  
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Mission #

Heritage Lab is an educational project organized by Cultural Heritage without Borders Kosovo aiming to create new opportunities for young adults from a variety of backgrounds to learn about heritage – values, significance, and conservation, including documentation and interpretation. This is accomplished through “hands-on” practical work and complementary lectures. Heritage Lab is an activity developed *in situ* so that the problems of a heritage place are assessed directly, and possible solutions for treatment, interpretation, and management are delivered simultaneously.

Heritage Lab workshops gather students from different academic fields such as architecture, cultural heritage, sociology, anthropology, and ethnology who are passionate about the cultural heritage of Kosovo. During the workshops, participants learn how to preserve and interpret cultural heritage. The Heritage Lab offers participants the opportunity to learn from lectures by international and local experts in the field of conservation, interpretation, and social and economic development. In addition to lectures, participants do practical/fieldwork through which they learn the methods of conservation of historic buildings, revitalization according to modern needs and interpretation of cultural heritage.

During October 2018 and the summer of 2019, two Heritage Lab sessions were held in the village of Letnicë/Letnica. The first session consisted of field conservation work carried out at the Mill of Frrok Dokiqi and village interpretation through storytelling and signage for visitors. The Heritage Lab in 2019 focused on continued conservation work at the Mill and on drafting of recommendations for a future rural development plan.



*Figure 7 – Refinding the Heritage of Letnicë/Letnica Heritage Lab workshop.  
Photo: OSCE/CHWB Dardan Rushiti*



# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The Heritage Lab team of Cultural Heritage without Borders, first and foremost, wishes to thank the hospitality of the community of Letnicë/Letnica. During the autumn of 2018 and the summer of 2019, dozens of camp participants and professionals descended upon the village, working, mapping, and photographing the community, buildings, and surrounding nature. The community was gracious and receiving these energetic young people and often participated in interviews.

The team must also thank OSCE Mission in Kosovo in supporting the Heritage Lab. Without their unwavering support, this worthwhile endeavor would not have been possible. Thanks to their longstanding engagement and vision in cultural heritage issues in Kosovo, they provided helpful advice concerning the most pressing needs for cultural heritage in rural areas and decided finally also on the location of the project. Moreover, the OSCE Mission in Kosovo financial support for organizing the Heritage Lab and for publishing this Report is among the most crucial contributions to this successful project.

Appreciation must also be expressed for the numerous local and international experts who traveled to this remote village to share their knowledge concerning conservation, interpretation, and development. Their generosity has enriched the education of numerous young people and has contributed toward the safeguarding of the cultural heritage in Kosovo.

Finally, the larger cultural community in Kosovo and student participants must be thanked. It is through this broad base of support that such programs as the Heritage Lab can exist. The word-of-mouth support, dissemination of information at universities, as well as the understanding of families and employers allowed for the students participants to attend; and they are the base of this program. It is only through the involvement of the next generation that the conservation efforts of today, will continue to last also in future.

Sincerely,

The Heritage Lab team of Cultural Heritage without Borders, Kosovo

HERITAGE  
LAB

*Figure 8 – The conservation work during the workshop focused on the Mill of Frrok Dokiqi.  
Photo: OSCE/CHwB Dardan Rushiti*

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report describes the results from a two-week Heritage Lab workshop on rural development in Letnicë/Letnica, Kosovo. The process of creating a rural development plan is only in its preliminary phases but has yielded some interesting and useful results. Described in the report are the key issues, their causes, and many positive aspects of the village that can be built upon for sustainable change. The report includes broad recommendations for development which fall into four general categories as per the four pillars of development: social, economic, environment, and culture.

## Social

- Work with the community, local leaders, and institutions to create a shared vision to support sustainable development
- Create a foundation “Letnicë/Letnica Calls” to advocate, co-ordinate, and guide development efforts
- Attract families and young couples through an outreach program and ensure that the elementary school and other social gathering places remain open and functioning
- Improve basic public services such as health care clinic and public transportation links with a limited bus service which will also improve access to health care
- Encourage expansion of social venues from small (local markets) to large (festivals) to give the community opportunities for interaction

## Economic

- Foster small-scale agricultural development through several initiatives including farm-to-market/rural-to-urban direct sales, the establishment of a co-operative, and training for farmers
- Enhance current tourism offerings as a center of religious pilgrimage
- Expand the time visitors spend in the village from 2 to 5 days
- Expand the number of religious festivals from primarily only the Feast of the Assumption to also Christmas, Easter, and other dates associated with Mother Teresa.
- Develop a licensing system or fee for vendors during festivals to create a tax base to support local development
- Create additional attractions to attract visitors on the weekends such as stream and woodland trails
- Conserve one traditional home to serve as a small bed and breakfast or hotel to retain visitors for longer

- Develop a local brand and locally developed products that can assist in the establishment of a recognizable identity
- Explore small scale manufacturing possibilities and possible reuse of the vacant textile factory for manufacturing or agricultural processing

### **Environment**

- Clean the streams, road, and paths to reduce surface litter, educate the villagers that caring for the natural environment enhances the natural beauty of the village and encourages visitation
- Develop an alternative pedestrian approach path to the village along the stream as well as additional nature trails around the village
- Create campsites situated along the path in the hills with framed vistas of the village, church, and natural environment
- Reduce the negative impact of the large asphalt parking lot at the entry to the village
- Improve key elements of infrastructure, fresh water, sewage, drainage, and rubbish collection

### **Culture**

- Conserve key elements of the vernacular architecture, significant homes, barns, and the market building
- Improve ties between the village and the Catholic Church as a major stakeholder
- Develop close ties with the upcoming project on creating a Mother Teresa trail from North Macedonia
- Build the capacity of the community to maintain and care for their cultural heritage and environment

These recommendations are made on the basis of the information collected during the two-week workshop in June/July 2019. The following chapters are more detail concerning the issues/challenges along with background information that led to these recommendations. Apart from these recommendations, additional work – involving a broad range of stakeholders and of (potential) future actors – should be done on this topic, in order to prepare a full rural development plan for Letnicě/Letnica including an action plan, which constitutes the instrument for the implementation of the development plan.



# CHAPTER I - INTRODUCTION

The small village of Letnicë/Letnica is situated in southern Kosovo in Viti/Vitina municipality. Its average age of population is over 65, agriculture is small scale and marginal, and there are few remaining inhabitants, most supported by pensions. The village suffered severely during the breakup of Yugoslavia and then during the conflict in Kosovo. Long established Kosovo Croat families, which represented the majority in the village, fled, while the textile factory, the main employer, closed down. More recently, young people have left for the nearby cities of Gjilan/Gnjilane or Prishtinë/Priština for work or education. The survival of the village remains questionable.

Although the situation seems desperate, there is hope. The village and its surroundings are idyllic. Red-tiled homes and barns are set in a mountain notch at the confluence of two running streams. A mill was recently restored, and a restaurant continues to serve traditional Croatian dishes from local produce. The village received a much-needed infusion of families from nearby North Macedonia during unrest there, and families who left have not forgotten and often return for the weekends or holidays. Other visitors also come from Prishtinë/Priština to escape the city and enjoy the mountains and rural traditions. There is also the legacy of Mother Teresa of Calcutta. It was in the church of Letnicë/Letnica that as a small girl she received inspiration. Thousands of devoted believers descend upon the village for a few days every August during the Feast of the Assumption to pay their respects, many traveling for thousands of kilometers. But it is questionable if these advantages are enough to sustain the village. Action should be taken, key structures conserved, and critically, a rural development plan created.

The precarious situation of the village of Letnicë/Letnica, along with its cultural significance as a place of religious pilgrimage, vernacular architecture, and the natural context compelled the civil society organization Cultural Heritage without Borders (CHwB) Kosovo to conduct several Heritage Lab workshops and this initial report to assist development efforts. This report is based on the information collected during a development workshop conducted over the summer of 2019 with the support of the OSCE Mission in Kosovo. From these exercises several critical issues were identified regarding the sustainability of the village, including an aging demographic, absence of an economic base, lack of essential infrastructure, and general degradation of the village's cultural heritage. The report provides a basic outline of the current situation to understand the village, its advantages and disadvantages, which lead to recommendations for a full rural development plan.

Figure 9 – Waterfall overflow from the channel powering the recently restored mill.  
Photo: Rand Eppich



## THE STORY OF LETNICË/LETNICA

Since the Middle Ages, the Karadak Mountains in the central Balkan Peninsula has been an important source of minerals, including lead, zinc, and silver<sup>1</sup>. Numerous mining centers developed, luring experienced miners from throughout the region and traders from coastal commercial centers such as Dubrovnik (Ragusa). Their legacy lives on in villages such as Shashare, (Sasari meaning Saxons), Stubëll e Epërme/Gornja Stubla, and Letnicë/Letnica. The descendants of these Saxons, Kosovo Croat, and Kosovo Albanian miners, prospered<sup>2</sup>. Their prosperity was reflected in well-built homes and churches.

Letnicë/Letnica's Catholic Church (*Te Ngriturit e Zojës së Bekuar në qiell/ Church of the Black Madonna Zoja e Cernagores*) is the most significant of these structures. The two towers of the church are immediately visible as one enters the village as the building is elevated on a hill and looms over the sleepy village. The first church was probably constructed here in the 14th century at a time when Letnicë/Letnica must have been a small, but thriving mining center.

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1. See: *Kosovo mining and mineral deposits*, <https://www.kosovo-mining.org/mineral-resources/mineral-deposits/?lang=en> (accessed 4.02.2020), see also Vukovic, M., Weinstein, A., "Kosovo mining, metallurgy, and politics: *Eight centuries of perspective*", in *Journal of the Minerals, Metals & Materials Society* 54 (5)(May 2002), pp. 21-24.
  2. Warrander, G., Knaus, V., *Kosovo* (Chesham/Bucks: Bradt Travel Guides, 2010), p. 253.



In 1584, Ottoman records show some 500 Christian families living in the area<sup>3</sup>, and with such numbers a formal place of worship was essential. It is said that three times, the Madonna appeared in Letnicë/Letnica, urging the villagers to construct a church. In 1737, archival records showed that the church underwent major repairs yet was subsequently reconstructed over a hundred years later in 1866. This building was severely damaged during an earthquake, and the construction of the present-day structure was started in 1928 and completed in 1934. Within the church is the revered 300-year-old Black Madonna (*called the Mother of God – Crnogorska*), made of blackened wood, hence its name, which according to local beliefs can help childless couples and is venerated by Catholics, Orthodox Christians, and Muslims alike. Another legend that surrounds the “Black Madonna” is its miraculous travel from its original location in Skopje across the Karadak Mountain to the church in Letnicë/Letnica and its survival during the earthquake despite the destruction of the building around it.

It was at this church that “the 1920s, a young girl named Anjezë Gonxhe Bojaxhiu went on a pilgrimage to Letnicë/Letnica... where she experienced her calling to religious life. A few years later, she embarked on a life-long journey of helping the sick and the poor around the world.”<sup>4</sup> She is better known as Mother Teresa of Calcutta and was canonized on 4 September 2016, on the anniversary of her death.

During the breakup of Yugoslavia, the small Kosovo Croat community living in Letnicë/Letnica was increasingly under threat. Subsequently, most of the Kosovo Croats fled and were encouraged by the then new Republic of Croatia to resettle to places abandoned by Serbians in Western Slavonia. Today, only a handful of Kosovo Croats remain in Letnicë/Letnica, along with several other nearby villages.

Every 14-15 August, the church hosts a two-day festival celebrating the Feast of the Assumption. This event attracts thousands of believers, including many Kosovo Croats who left Kosovo decades ago. Many of the devout walk to Letnicë/Letnica barefoot for many kilometers, and others carry stones. In addition, also many other people from abroad attend the Feast.<sup>5</sup> During the festival, the entire village becomes a campsite and picnic area, tents are erected in the garden of the church and in the surrounding fields. Those who booked well in advance can take one of the few rooms in the purpose-built guestrooms next to the church.<sup>6</sup>

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3. Ibid.

4. See: OSCE Mission in Kosovo, *Reviving the legacy of Letnicë/Letnica – traces of Mother Teresa of Calcutta* (17 July 2019), <https://www.osce.org/mission-in-kosovo/425873> (accessed 4.02.2020).

5. E.g. members of KFOR, see Smith N., *Pilgrimage to the Black Madonna*, (3 September 2009), [https://www.army.mil/article/26966/pilgrimage\\_to\\_the\\_black\\_madonna](https://www.army.mil/article/26966/pilgrimage_to_the_black_madonna) (accessed 13.02.2020).

6. Osmani, S., “Thousands visit Kosovo village”, in *Balkan Insight*, 2011, <https://balkaninsight.com/2011/09/19/thousands-revisit-kosovo-village-where-mother-teresa-heard-call/> (accessed 13.02.2020).

Figure 10 – Letnicë/Letnica's Catholic Church - Të Ngriturit e Zojës së Bekuar në qiell / Church of the Black Madonna/Zoja e Cernagores. Photo: Rand Eppich





## DEFINING DEVELOPMENT

Development used to mean exclusively economic development, industrial growth, and resource extraction. However today, the definition is much different, broader, and tends to include the social needs alongside economic ones. The United Nations emphasizes “human development” measured by life expectancy, adult literacy, access to three levels of education, as well as average income of people. The notion of human development – as defined by the Human Development Index (HDI), which was introduced by UNDP in 1991 – incorporates all aspects of individuals’ well-being, from their health status to their economic freedom.<sup>7</sup> The convergence between development and conservation has finally begun to happen. UNESCO, in the late 20th century, stated that the world is not only facing economic, social, or environmental challenges - creativity, knowledge, diversity, and beauty are the bases for a dialogue on peace and progress and these values are intrinsically connected to human development and freedoms.<sup>8</sup> The Three Pillars of Sustainable Development could not possibly reflect complexities of society. UNESCO, along with the World Summit on Sustainable Development called in its Hangzhou Declaration for the inclusion of culture as the fourth Pillar in the sustainable development model since culture ultimately shapes what is meant by development and determines how people act in the world.<sup>9</sup>

Improving the quality of life in remote communities is directly related to the survival and enhancement of their culture, built heritage and landscapes. Conservation of these places creates a spirit of home while interlinking generations, including diaspora to connect them to their past and reinforce a sense of belonging. But these unique places and their values are extremely fragile thus should be protected. Successful rural development aids in this protection and is a process that aims to improve the quality of life by helping people set their own priorities through effective and inclusive involvement, improving local capacity, social services as well as safeguarding culture. However, rural development which does not address culture, the built environment, or landscape risks endangering the community, its values, and sustainability.<sup>10</sup> This publication describes the experiences and the Heritage Lab team’s attempt to assist rural communities in safeguarding their cultural heritage and landscapes.

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7. See United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), *Human Development Index (HDI)*, <http://hdr.undp.org/en/content/human-development-index-hdi> (accessed 13.02.2020).

8. See UNESCO, *Culture: urban future; global report on culture for sustainable urban development* (Paris: UNESCO, 2016), <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000245999> (accessed 13.02.2020).

9. UNESCO, *The Hangzhou Declaration : Placing Culture at the Heart of Sustainable Development Policies. Adopted in Hangzhou, People's Republic of China, on 17 May 2013* (Paris: UNESCO, 2013), <http://www.unesco.org/new/fileadmin/MULTIMEDIA/HQ/CLT/images/FinalHangzhouDeclaration20130517.pdf> (accessed 13.02.2020).

10. Eppich, R., *Cultural Heritage, Landscape and Rural Development Good Practice, Methodology, Policy Recommendations and Guidelines for Rural Communities* (2014, INTERREG IVC, European Union and HISTCAPE project).



Figure 11 – Development is sustaining the inhabitants as well as the village.  
Photo: Rand Eppich

### Human development

The United Nations Development Programme further defines development with the added adjective, human:

*“Human Development is about expanding the richness of human life, rather than simply the richness of the economy in which human beings live. It is an approach that is focused on people and their opportunities and choices.”<sup>11</sup>*

and is outlined in three main categories:

**People:** Income growth is seen as a means to development, rather than an end in itself.

**Opportunities:** This means developing people's abilities and giving them a chance to use them.

**Choice:** It is about providing people with opportunities, not insisting that they make use of them. The process creates an environment to enable striving for one's full potential.<sup>12</sup>

### Social development

Social development is defined as a series of actions and as

*“a process of planned social change designed to promote the well-being of the population as a whole within the context of a dynamic, multifaceted development process.”<sup>13</sup>*

This form of development is important so the residents can benefit from collective positive effects of participation or “social capital” including “features of social organization, such as networks, norms, and trust that facilitate co-ordination and co-operation for mutual benefit.”<sup>14</sup>

11. United Nations Development Programme (UNDP): About Human Development: What is human development? (2018), <http://hdr.undp.org/en/humandev> (accessed 13.02.2020).

12. United Nations Development Programme (UNDP): About Human Development: What is human development? (2018), <http://hdr.undp.org/en/humandev> (accessed 13.02.2020).

13. Midgley, J., *Social Development Theory and Practice* (London: Sage, 2013) p. 13.

14. Putnam, R., “The Prosperous Community: Social Capital and Public Life.”, in: *The American Prospect* 4 (13, December 19, 2001), pp. 35–42.

Five key factors were identified for the social development of communities:<sup>15</sup>

1. A sense of place and belonging
2. Opportunities for collective activities
3. Opportunities to build social networks
4. Design that encourages interaction
5. Encouraging pro-environmental behavior

These key factors are important when proposing to improve social development and achieve them through actions. In order to do so, the current situation and breakdowns in social development should be understood.

## REASON, METHODOLOGY, STRUCTURE

The infusion of culture into development marked a significant change. The significance of culture and identity was a process

*“development is less about catching up and imitation and instead of development as an inclusive process where different worldviews are accommodated – that this emphasis on culture could be the greatest challenge in the redefinition of development.”<sup>16</sup>*

But why should the small village of Letnicë/Letnica be preserved? Only because of its culture? Why does this place warrant consideration? This question must be posed in order to justify the attention and possible resources that could be directed toward the village. The first obvious answer is that this is the place, where a young child, Mother Teresa of Calcutta, found inspiration and dedicated her life to serving others. However, the church and its compound could survive and function quite well without the village. Pilgrims would still come with or without the buildings or community surrounding the church. Many pilgrims today do not venture into the small settlement but head directly to their destination. In fact, the best-preserved structures in the village are those maintained by the Catholic Church.

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15. The Young Foundation, *Understanding neighbourliness and belonging* (2008) p. 2, <https://youngfoundation.org/publications/understanding-neighbourliness-and-belonging/> (accessed 17.02.2020).

16. Hettne, B. *Human Values and Global Governance: Studies in Development, Security and Culture, Volume* (Basingstoke: Palgrave-Macmillan, 2008), p. 697; Rojas, C., “International political economy/development otherwise”, in: *Globalizations* 4 (4)(2007), pp. 573-587.



But the loss of the village would mean the loss of the context surrounding the pilgrimage site. The church and the “Black Madonna” only exist because of the people, their beliefs, and the village. To lose the village would lessen the impact on visiting pilgrims, and they should have the opportunity to experience this place of inspiration as Mother Teresa did. Visitors must have the opportunity to talk with the villagers, eat with them, and live amongst them. The loss of the village would deprive the pilgrims from experiencing Letnicë/Letnica as a cultural landscape with spiritual values.

Beyond the religious context, should Letnicë/Letnica fail to be preserved an important multicultural aspect of Kosovo would also be lost, having in mind its exemplary peaceful coexistence among different communities through many centuries. Letnicë/Letnica is a living remnant of history in Kosovo that can become an experience for the next generation.

Finally, the village is characterized by a harmonious setting. The stone homes and barns set closely together with their red tile roofs almost touching is a delight. The nature surrounding the village also contributes to this beauty with mature growth forests in the mountains and a clear running stream. Located only an hour away from the city of Prishtinë/Priština, Letnicë/Letnica can offer urban residents an escape, a temporary reprieve from city life.

Two summer workshops in Letnicë/Letnica, divided into three teams, one working on the physical conservation, another on interpretation and research, and one exploring development, shaped the methodology. Lectures, investigations into other examples, community interviews, observations, and numerous discussions were held. A SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) analysis and description of the overall issues was conducted, as well as the description of a problem/solution tree. This report is a result of the summer workshop and is structured in three chapters: Chapter I is this introduction, Chapter II describes the village in social and economic terms and includes data collected during the Heritage Labs and an analysis including SWOT; finally, Chapter III proposes a development and action plan followed by conclusions and recommendations. An appendix contains maps, a bibliography, and information about the Heritage Lab workshop.

*Figure 12 – One of the many vernacular barns constructed of field stone and local timber that contribute to build heritage of the Letnicë/Letnica  
Photo: Rand Eppich*

# CHAPTER II - UNDERSTANDING LETNICË/LETNICA

## SOCIAL SITUATION

### Demographics

Only 32 elderly Kosovo Croats still live in the village, “many are widows or widowers, living alone in houses that are in a state of extreme disrepair, often subsistence.”<sup>17</sup> These resilient souls are the only remaining decedents of the original settlers who came to mine these remote mountains hundreds of years ago. Many of the Kosovo Croat families left during the conflict and dissolution of Yugoslavia in the 1990s and resettled elsewhere in Croatia.<sup>18</sup> So far, four Kosovo Croats have returned to Letnicë/Letnica since 1999.<sup>19</sup> They were joined in 2001 by Albanian Catholic families. “Approximately 200 ethnic Albanians from the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia occupied the vacated houses of Kosovo Croats during the 2001 conflict in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, and have remained in occupation since that date.”<sup>20</sup> According to some estimates there are approximately 200 Kosovo Albanians of different age groups currently living in the village.<sup>21</sup> It is understood through field observations and interviews that these main groups have limited interaction, thus resulting in not one but two small communities only coexisting in the same place. The arrival of Macedonian Albanians during the 2001 conflict “led to tensions with the resident Kosovo Croats and to conflicts over the occupancy of agricultural and residential property that the communities have been unable to resolve.”<sup>22</sup>

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17. OSCE Mission in Kosovo, *The Kosovo Croats of Viti/Vitina Municipality: A Vulnerable Community* (October 2011), p. 4, <https://www.osce.org/kosovo/83789?download=true> (accessed 17. February 2020).

18. Šiljković, Ž., Glamuzina, M., “Janjevo and Janjevci – from Kosovo to Zagreb”, in *Geoadria* (Zadar: University of Zadar, Department of Geography, 2004), 9/1, pp. 89-109.

19. OSCE Mission in Kosovo, *The Kosovo Croats of Viti/Vitina Municipality: A Vulnerable Community* (October 2011), p. 4.

20. OSCE Mission in Kosovo, *The Kosovo Croats of Viti/Vitina Municipality: A Vulnerable Community* (October 2011), pp. 4-5.

21. OSCE Mission in Kosovo, *Report Kosovo Communities Profiles* (Prishtinë/Priština: OMIK, 2010). This figure was difficult to verify although a number of people in the village stated this in their interviews.

22. OSCE Mission in Kosovo, *The Kosovo Croats of Viti/Vitina Municipality: A Vulnerable Community* (October 2011), p. 4.





Figure 13 – The elementary school “Mikel Tarabulluzi” remains open for a few children.

Photo: Rand Eppich

### Health care

As reported by the OSCE “access to health care services is limited due to the community's limited mobility, absence of adequate public transportation, and the long distances to the nearest health facilities”<sup>23</sup>, which are located 8 kilometers away in the neighboring municipality. In the past, the Catholic Church provided basic voluntary health services, and there was a program about ten years ago to rehabilitate the local clinic. For more serious illnesses, community members must travel to Prishtinë/Priština or further afield.<sup>24</sup> It is understood there is no traveling health services or regular clinic currently available.

### Education

According to the 2010–2020 Municipal Development Plan of Viti/Vitina (*Plani Zhvillimor Urban i Vitisë 2010-2015*)<sup>25</sup> the village of Letnicë/Letnica has 51 children. However, there is only one elementary school, “Mikel Tarabulluzi,” and it is part of the same school in Stubëll e Epërme/Gornja Stubla, a nearby village. Based on field interviews (as detailed below), conducted during the cultural heritage workshops, the school provides education only from the 1st to the 4th grades, and for older children to continue their education, they must travel to another village. The school building is located on a hill above the village and was constructed during the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia period. It is well-constructed of reinforced concrete, with only a small portion on the lower floor currently in use. There are no playground facilities. The presence of children is encouraging as this is an important aspect of rural life and social development. The continued operation of this school is critical because without it, new families cannot be encouraged to relocate to the village.

23. OSCE Mission in Kosovo, *The Kosovo Croats of Viti/Vitina Municipality: A Vulnerable Community* (October, 2011), p. 5

24. Based on interviews; a nun works as a volunteer nurse.

25. Komuna e Vitisë, *Plani Zhvillimor urbane i Vitisë (2010- 2015)*, (Viti/Vitina: Komuna e Vitisë - Drejtoria për Urbanizëm, 2010), <https://kk.rks-gov.net/viti/wpcontent/uploads/sites/32/2010/12/Plani-Zhvillimor-Urban.pdf>



## Interviews

Given the circumstances in Letnicë/Letnica, it was decided to conduct structured, yet open-ended, interviews to gather data on residents' social-economic status, methods of travel, occupation, level of education, and current living situation. Based on several initial trial interviews, the Cultural Heritage Without Borders developed a questionnaire to guide future interviews and assigned a team to undertake the interviews with the community-members.

The questionnaire consisted of these questions:

1. How many members are in your family?
2. What is the level of education in your family?
3. How many members of your family work?
4. Would you work in Letnicë/Letnica if given the chance? What would you do?
5. How do you travel outside Letnicë/Letnica?
6. Do you practice husbandry?
7. What do you need in Letnicë/Letnica?
8. Do you ever think of leaving the village?
9. Do you know anything about why Kosovo Croats immigrated in Letnicë/Letnica?

At first, the idea was to interview all residents, but due to limited time and resources, the team managed to conduct 13 formal- and 24 informal interviews. However, this process allowed the villagers to become acquainted with the project, its goal, and members. Subsequently, many informal conversations took place that allowed the team to gather additional data. These interviews, both formal and informal, guided the direction of the development plan.

A brief summary of the information obtained includes:

- The level of education, on average, is at an elementary school level
- 95% of respondents with families are working outside the village
- When asked if they would like to work in the village, most replied positively
- A majority expressed interest in agriculture work as many are already cultivating fields or practicing animal husbandry for domestic their consumption
- There is no public transport of any kind, and most rely on private transportation
- Clean drinking water, an elementary school (1st to 9th grade), and a nearby supermarket are stated as basic pressing needs
- A majority of the people interviewed would consider leaving, due to the lack of needs previously mentioned, however most would consider staying should the quality of life improve

The interview also revealed that the few remaining Kosovo Croats (unfortunately only four Kosovo Croats participated in the survey) were well informed concerning history: that 2000 of their ancestors came to the region some 800 years ago to work as miners and over time they started families, established the village, and built their church. This explains why, despite all odds, they insist on staying and invest in keeping the village alive. On the other hand, the interviews revealed that the newly arrived Kosovo Albanian families are not well informed of the history of the village. Nevertheless, a majority of both groups wish to remain in the village should the quality of life improve. Most importantly, most are willing to work toward improving the village. Unfortunately, questions concerning tourism were not included in the survey. However, the overall perception in the village is positive toward the religious festivals and that tourism should increase in order to improve the economy.

## ECONOMIC STATUS

Economic development is a set of programs that aid in the creation, retention, and expansion of jobs and the development of a stable tax base.<sup>26</sup> Over the past 20 years, there has been an increasing emphasis specifically on Local Economic Development (LED). As the name implies, it places specific importance on local economic activities to counter the impacts of globalization and build upon unique local advantages. It involves a range of activities, including planning and community involvement. According to UN- Habitat, “LED can lead to economic solutions that ‘fit’ the local areas – that is, development that builds on local assets and strengths, involves local people and builds capacity, and has greater buy-in from the community.”<sup>27</sup>

Cultural heritage has long been recognized by numerous development agencies to have a competitive advantage to be utilized for local economic development. In an event hosted by the World Bank in 2012, Joshi-Ghani stated that

*“it is important to understand how cities [or villages] attract skilled people and industries to create jobs and what role they play in economic growth. Therefore, it is very helpful to find linkages between cultural heritage assets and job creation.”<sup>28</sup>*

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26. International Economic Development Council (IEDC); *IEDC at a Glance*, <https://www.iedconline.org/web-pages/inside-iedc/iedc-at-a-glance/> (accessed 17.02.2020).

27. United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat), *Local Economic Development in Practice - A Toolkit for LED Practitioners* (Nairobi 2013), p. 1, <https://unhabitat.org/local-economic-development-in-practice> (accessed 17.02.2020).

28. World Bank, *The Economics of Uniqueness*, <http://www.worldbank.org/en/news/feature/2012/09/26/economics-uniqueness-embracing-cultural-heritage> (accessed 20.02.2020).

Given the Fest of the Assumption, the physical church, and the “Black Madonna”, along the association with Mother Teresa, this is one of the most critical aspects of LED. Unfortunately, there are no economic benefits that come to the village from these cultural assets. There is no accommodation for pilgrims, the festivals are very short, and vendors come from elsewhere. This situation should change.

## Industry

There is no manufacturing industry in Letnicë/Letnica. The textile factory, which was built in 1986, worked at full capacity manufacturing workers' uniforms and shoes until 1999. It ceased operation due to the conflict and has been closed since. In 2007, the factory was privatized<sup>29</sup> and movable assets, mostly industrial sewing machines, were transferred to an entity called “NewCo” and removed. The factory has approximately 3 hectares of property and covered manufacturing and auxiliary space of 3,200 square meters.<sup>30</sup> Today, there is little chance a small specialized textile factory would survive in the competitive apparel market. However, the factory building is in acceptable condition and could be seen as an asset and home for a new use, possibly as home for an agricultural co-operative or small milk processing center.

## Employment

Most of Kosovo Albanians in the village are not formally employed, and many work in agriculture, keeping cattle and producing limited quantities of dairy and meat products for their families' consumption.<sup>31</sup> The elderly Kosovo Croats receive pension in Kosovo, as some of them receive Serbian pensions, in one case, from Germany. There are also seven beneficiaries of the social welfare assistance scheme in Kosovo. The community also receives humanitarian assistance from the Serbian Red Cross branch in the nearby Kosovo Serb majority village of Vrbovac/Vërboc (Klokot/Klllokot municipality), and from the local Catholic Church.<sup>32</sup>

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29. “Kosovo Trust Agency Opens New Privatisation Wave”, BalkanInsight, 18.07.2007, <https://balkaninsight.com/2007/07/18/kosovo-trust-agency-opens-new-privatisation-wave/>

30. Interviews.

31. Interviews.

32. OSCE Mission in Kosovo, *The Kosovo Croats of Viti/Vitina Municipality: A Vulnerable Community* (October 2011), <https://www.osce.org/kosovo/83789?download=true> (accessed 17.02.2020).



## ENVIRONMENT AND AGRICULTURE

Letnicë/Letnica is located near the Black Mountain (Mali i Zi / Crna Gora), which is known for its refreshing nature, clean air, beautiful vistas, and flowing streams. A river with the same name as the village flows from the mountains through the small settlement and gives Letnicë/Letnica its calm and relaxing character. Unfortunately, relatively clean water is littered with plastic bags and other rubbish. There is rubbish along the roads and paths that traverse the village. This trash distracts the visitor from an otherwise idyllic rural village in a beautiful natural setting.

Agriculture in Letnicë/Letnica is developed only in certain areas at a very small scale, where the terrain is flatter, more fertile, closer to the river, and provides conditions for more productive cultivation. There are numerous private gardens growing corn, beans, and vegetables and other villagers tend cows and goats. Some farmers have tractors, but the lack of adequate equipment needed in the fields is noticeable, and most work on the small plots is done by hand, just as in centuries past. There is currently no agricultural co-operative in the village, farmer's market, or formal distribution system. The topography of the valley makes it more difficult to supply the working fields further uphill from the river with water as there is no water delivery system. It is estimated that less than 20% of the arable land is currently under cultivation.

### Infrastructure

The main road to the village is paved and in excellent condition, but the same is not true for other areas of infrastructure. Freshwater distribution, transportation, street lighting, garbage collection, and sewage are all in disrepair or non-existent. The existing freshwater supply system was financed by the community and built more than 30 years ago. But, in 2007 the public utility company, Hidromorava, assessed the pipe system and reported that it needed to be fully replaced. Until mid-2011 the municipality had stated that it had no funds to finance this work; however, in July 2011 they announced a project to partially repair portions of the primary water system in Letnicë/Letnica and Shashar/Šašare, which was completed at the end of July 2011.<sup>33</sup> From information obtained in the field, today most of the homes in the village have no running water since the main pipe was recently damaged.

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33. OSCE Mission in Kosovo, *The Kosovo Croats of Viti/Vitina Municipality: A Vulnerable Community* (October 2011), <https://www.osce.org/kosovo/83789?download=true> (accessed 17.02.2020).

There is no public transportation system to the village, and the only way to travel to this remote place is by private vehicles. Lighting is absent throughout all the streets of the village. As in many other municipalities in Kosovo, such as Viti/Vitina, garbage collection also poses a serious concern. Letnicë/Letnica Village is one of the places where this problem is more pronounced.<sup>34</sup> Finally, Letnicë/Letnica also lacks a working municipal sewerage system and instead relies on private septic tanks and seepage pits.

## CULTURE, TOURISM & FESTIVALS

Letnicë/Letnica is well-known for the church Te Ngriturit e Zojës se Bekuar në qiell / Church of the Black Madonna/ Zoja e Cernagores, which is of great significance to the Catholic believers. It must also be noted the importance of this village and its church as it was in this place where a young girl, Anjezë Gonxhe Bojaxhiu listened, heard the call of God, found inspiration, and dedicated her life to helping others; she was later known as Mother Teresa. There are four buildings which were included in the List of Monuments under temporary protection of 2018 by the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sport: The Tower of Ivan, the Tower of Josip, the Tower of Nikollë Mitës, and Frrok Dokikiqi's Mill, which was recently conserved during the Heritage Lab of 2018 by Cultural Heritage without Borders.<sup>35</sup>

There are many houses constructed of stone. These fall into five categories:

1. Ruins
2. Abandoned and poor condition
3. Semi-vacant, yet maintained and occupied during the festivals or weekends
4. Occupied by others not the legitimate owners and in deteriorating condition
5. Occupied by the owners and in generally good condition

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34. *Instituti GAP, Komuna e Vitisë: problemet kryesore dhe trendët buxhetor (GAP report)*, <http://www.komunat.institutigap.org/Files/viti/2013/Komuna%20e%20Vitisë%20-%20problemet%20kryesore%20dhe%20trendet%20buxhetore.pdf> (accessed 17.02.2020).

35. [https://www.mkrs-ks.org/repository/docs/Lista\\_e\\_Trashëgimise\\_Kulturore\\_per\\_Mbrojtje\\_te\\_Perkohshme\\_2018.pdf](https://www.mkrs-ks.org/repository/docs/Lista_e_Trashëgimise_Kulturore_per_Mbrojtje_te_Perkohshme_2018.pdf), pp. 42-43, no. 1259-1262 (accessed 20.02.2020). The List of monuments under temporary protection of 2018 was valid from 10 October 2018 until 10 October 2019.



Figure 14 – Mother Teresa of Calcutta (*Wes Phelan*)

Visiting the village, by religious pilgrims, decedents of families who have left or those simply seeking an idyllic retreat from city life provides a promising basis for Local Economic Development. The festivities begin with a mass at 11.00 hrs. on the 14th of August. This mass is held to commemorate the blessing of the current church building in 1931. Then on the evening of the 14th, there is another church service in Croatian language at 17.00 hrs., and another in Albanian one hour later at 18.00 hrs. At 19.00 hrs., the Black Madonna Statue is carried at the head of a procession that starts at the church and leads through Letnicë/Letnica village. During the night of the 14th and 15th of August, candles are lit, and people hold an all-night vigil and attempt to stay awake. The next day, at 06.00 hrs. in the morning, the day starts with an Albanian language mass, followed by a Croatian language service at 09.00 hrs. and the main mass at 11.00 hrs., in both Albanian and Croatian languages. After the mass, the Black Madonna Statue is taken for another procession through the village. During the festivities, believers try to touch the Madonna with their jewelry and hope to catch a piece of the Madonna's cloth that is cut in pieces and distributed to all attendants.<sup>36</sup> Also, every year on the last Saturday of May, the faithful celebrate the closing of the month of the Holy Mary at the church.<sup>37</sup> There are other services held on significant religious holidays such as Christmas and Easter, and a regular mass is conducted on Sundays, but these are not as popular as the large festivals.

36. Duijzings, G., *An ethnographic sketch of Letnica, The exodus of Kosovo Croats, A chronicle of ethnic unmixing, Religion and the Politics of Identity in Kosovo*. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000), p.39.

37. *Vaticannews*, *Mbyllja majit në Shenjtëroren e Zojës së Madhe në Letnicë* (30.05.2019), <https://www.vaticannews.va/sq/bota/news/2019-05/letnice-te-voja-madhe-mbyllet-muaj-maj.html> (accessed 17.02.2020).



## ANALYSIS & SWOT

During the Heritage Lab exercises, a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) analysis was conducted as a group exercise and verified with informal interviews with village participants. This was revealing not only for the known strengths such as the connection with Mother Teresa but also for the lack of basic amenities necessary to survive. It was also revealing that the community has many strengths yet fails to capitalize on them.

### Strengths

- Association with Mother Teresa as the place of her inspiration
- Diaspora in Croatia often returns and still feels a connection
- One major religious festival that attracts thousands with other smaller festivals
- Nature and the environment is largely untouched
- Buildings are attractive, authentic and the village has integrity
- Relatively close distance to the major urban area, Prishtinë/Priština
- Travel to Croatia can be made by car
- Very good roads in the village
- Strong community with children and a school

### Weaknesses

- A small divided community with many elderly members
- No infrastructure, poor lighting, no freshwater supply, limited sewage
- No economy other than subsistence agriculture and subsidies
- No store, market or retail outlets
- Little data on the social situation, culture, lack of research
- No hotel, guest house or bed-and-breakfast
- Multiple owners of abandoned properties
- No vision for the future, no concrete plans
- General surface rubbish in the stream and roadways
- No health care facility
- No public transportation infrastructure

### **Opportunities**

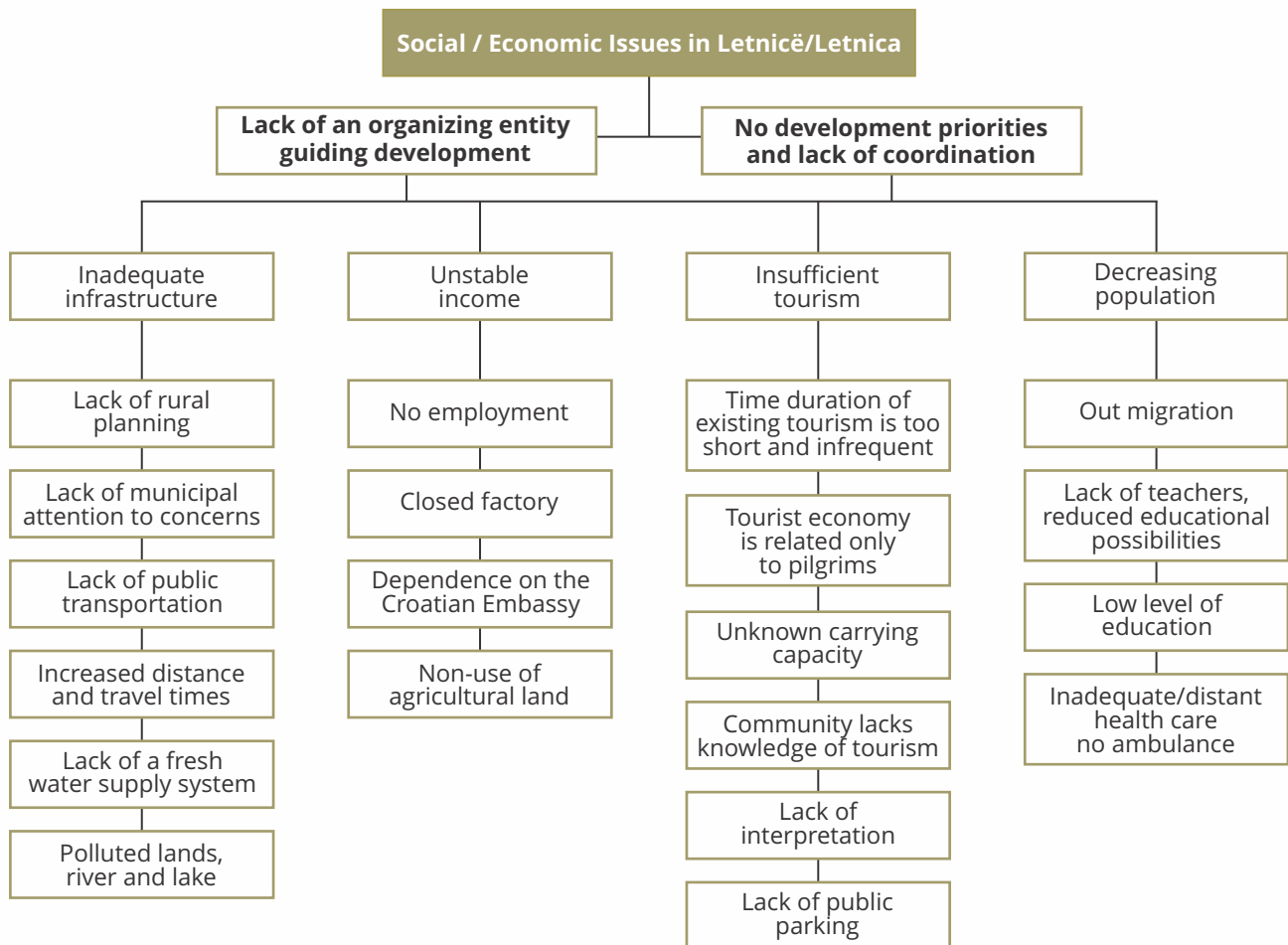
- One major festival other smaller festivals could be expanded including Christmas and Easter, also Sunday mass
- Wholesome environment and agriculture could enable a direct farmer to consumer sales
- Absentee owners could relinquish property for conservation
- Diaspora may return in greater numbers, opportunities for summer homes
- Empty textile factory can be adapted to a farmers' co-operative and possible small-scale manufacturing
- CHWB camps, support by OSCE and recent focus on the village
- Short distance to Prishtinë/Priština can encourage weekend visits

### **Threats**

- A small community, elderly need assistance
- Families may move in search of employment; the youth will leave for education / School may close
- Subsidies from Croatia and other government sources may stop or be reduced
- Tourism, although not currently at a high level
- The poor condition of the buildings, particularly the homes and barns
- Lack of skills to conduct proper small scale conservation
- No maintenance

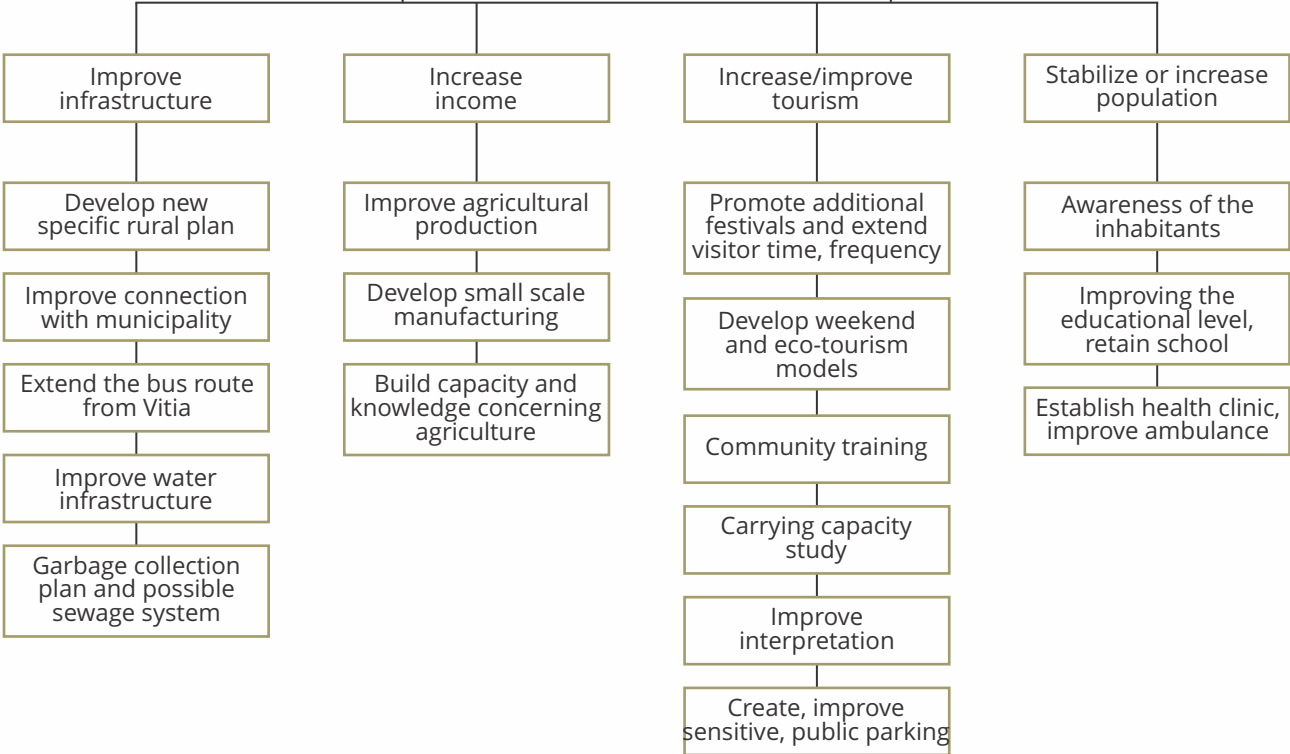
*Figure 15 – The Valley of Letnicë/Letnica in the summer of 2019. Photo: Rand Eppich*

During the Heritage Lab, a problem/solution tree exercise was conducted based on the research, interviews, observations, and discussion sessions. This type of analysis breaks down the problem into manageable elements and allows for an understanding of the interconnections and hierarchy of issues and thus allows for prioritization. The exercise began with a problem tree and was debated in small groups in a brainstorming session followed by a discussion on possible solutions. The second tree diagram, as a mirror image, contains suggested solutions to each problem. On the following pages are the results of this exercise and analysis. The results were discussed with several key stakeholders for verification and accordingly adjusted.





**Possible solutions to the Social / Economic Issues in Letnicě/Letnica**



# CHAPTER III - PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT PLAN

This chapter describes the elements for the proposed development plan of Letnicë/Letnica in reference to the four pillars of sustainable development described in Chapter I. It builds upon the previous chapters and identifies assets while taking into account the analysis of the issues and needs of the village.

These key elements for the proposed plan constitute just a preliminary framework for the final development plan and may require adjustment. The follow-up procedure can be undertaken e.g. through another Heritage Lab involving as many stakeholders as possible. The drafting of the proposed development plan addresses not only a broad range of issues, but should involve also many stakeholders, who will contribute to the implementation of the plan. While the future development plan will provide the programmatic, managerial and legislative setting, it is the action plan which will indicate the “road map” for the proper implementation of the development plan. The action plan will turn the development plan into an operational document by addressing tasks and involved actors.

## SOCIAL

The development plan must start with the social aspects of the village. Referring, once again to the key factors mentioned in Chapter I:

1. A sense of place and belonging
2. Opportunities for collective activities
3. Opportunities to build social networks
4. Design that encourages interaction
5. Encouraging pro-environmental behavior

From observations and the interviews it is clear that Letnicë/Letnica already has a sense of place for those who still live in the village, obviously as they have refused to leave. But the sense of belonging also extends to the diaspora and the religious believers. However, this does not necessarily translate into sufficient social development to preserve the community and the village. The sense of belonging is somewhat fractured, given the two distinct elements of the extant community and exacerbated by the disconnection of the church from the village. Therefore, there must be a social development program put into place that works

together with both parts of the community and engages the church. The identification of the needs and the mobilization of the stakeholders has to be achieved through a bottom-up approach. Therefore, the first proposal in this development plan is to work with the community in order to create a shared vision to support development. This could be done through a future Heritage Lab camp or another activity, such as a round table, bringing together all possible stakeholders, including authorities, representatives of the civil society, members of the religious communities, specialized groups and organizations (e.g. universities and development organizations) as well as individual experts could draft and agree on an action plan in order to formulate the next steps and also to identify the necessary financial means. The close involvement of the local residents in the identification, drafting and decision-process will result in the high and necessary “ownership” of these proposals among the habitants of Letnicë/Letnica and will ensure an efficient implementation of “their” development plan.

Currently, there are no co-ordinated efforts for social development; thus, the second critical aspect of this development plan is to create the foundation “Letnicë/Letnica Calls” so everyone has the opportunity to contribute and development can be guided locally. Such a foundation is intended to engage all members of the community to plan for the future while encouraging co-operation within the community as well as making connections to the larger region. The foundation can then seek support and funding for development as well as act as an advocate for the community's needs. Most importantly, it can provide opportunities for collective activities and facilitate social networking.

Families are essential to ensuring the future of Letnicë/Letnica. Therefore, there must be a concerted effort to retain existing families and attract new community members. The most attractive aspect is employment, and this will be addressed in the next section, but there are other aspects including providing housing, which could be accomplished through renovation of the existing historic homes, providing basic services, and maintaining the school. One of the most critical aspects of attracting families or couples is the presence of a school. Letnicë/Letnica is fortunate in that they have the presence of children in the village and a school facility that remains in operation. It is essential that this school is supported *to the last child* and even expanded with additional classes for adults, and a playground. The existing building can also host social gatherings.

Finally, there are basic social services that must be addressed. These include a functional health care clinic with a regularly scheduled visiting physician and an ambulance system to the hospital in Viti/Vitina. Public transportation links should also be improved with a dedicated bus service, which will also improve access to health care and education. An existing bus terminal is only six kilometers away, and a line can be extended which would make an impact on the community. Other basic services such as infrastructure projects will be addressed in the section on environment.



## **ECONOMY**

Even with a special emphasis on social development, the economic aspects cannot be ignored, simply because they provide the means for the community to survive and attract new families. As stated earlier in Chapter II, the current economy is based on subsistence agriculture and subsidies – this might sound like a dire situation, but fortunately, there are assets in Letnicë/Letnica upon which to build, namely agriculture, tourism, and possibly limited manufacturing. The agreement and active involvement of many different stakeholders of Letnicë/Letnica, the municipality, the ministries and of other sectors (e.g. the Catholic church of the village) on the direction chosen and the steps taken will facilitate the launching of these initiatives.

### **Agriculture**

Currently, agricultural production is limited to local consumption, unco-ordinated, and inefficient. Therefore, a plan must be created and put into place to organize efforts, increase production, and add value. This plan can start with a study of the existing agricultural production practices, identification of land available for production at a sustainable or increased yield, and, critically, training for the villagers. Such a plan could also propose a co-operative and direct farm-to-market or an organic produce program. Such programs have proven success in other rural locations and allow villagers to co-ordinate their efforts, and to sell directly to registered consumers in urban centers such as Prishtinë/Priština. These programs involve organizing current production, enable sharing of resources and equipment, promote through marketing, localized branding, and delivery mechanisms. One promising idea is to use the existing closed textile factory for the agricultural co-operative and possibly convert it into a limited dairy production center. While these are ambitious ideas, they are not unrealistic given there is ongoing agricultural production, a budding organic market, most of the villagers are keenly interested, and there is an association between Letnicë/Letnica and a wholesome natural environment in the mountains, which could be a differentiating factor.

### **Tourism**

Despite the fame of Letnicë/Letnica with its “Black Madonna” and its connection to Mother Teresa, the village benefits very little economically from the religious pilgrims. The thousands of visitors who come for the Feast of the Assumption camp on the church grounds and vendors come from neighboring villages to establish temporary kiosks for food and souvenirs. This is not necessarily the fault of the community; they just fail to take advantage of their own cultural heritage assets. In addition, there is only one major festival which is short, lasting only two days.

In order for the village to take better economic advantage of its cultural assets, several steps are necessary. The major Feast of the Assumption should be extended for longer than two days, and additional festivals should be established and promoted, such as Christmas, Easter, the date of canonization of Mother Teresa, and even her birthday. Beyond religious visitation the environmental assets of the village should be promoted as a healthy weekend getaway from nearby cities. Additional attractions should be created such as mountain pathways, trails along the river, or other events such as nature or art courses. These activities should increase demand for visitation and to fulfill supply several existing vacant homes should be renovated and converted into guest houses or bed and breakfasts. As the village is small, a carrying capacity study should be conducted in order to assess if the visitation of festivals should be promoted such as Easter or Christmas. Almost certainly in high traffic areas around the church this capacity is exceeded for the one short festival of the Black Madonna. However, reports indicate that the interior of the village is empty during this time.

For local vendors to take advantage of visitors, one idea is to establish a certification program, “made in Letnicě/Letnica,” as well as a fee or licensing system on all incoming vendors, which will flow to a conservation revolving fund to sustain the village. Finally, residents should be provided with information to guide visitors so that they can know and appreciate Letnicě/Letnica better.

### Small-scale manufacturing

The last aspect is to conduct a pilot exercise in creating products made or grown in Letnicě/Letnica. This could be organic vegetables, meat, yogurt, and other milk products, which could be sold in the village or further afield. This would increase production and add value to commodities. One idea briefly explored during the workshop was the production of candles to sell to the tourists or pilgrims. Such simple products leverage the place and help in creating a Letnicě/Letnica brand that cannot be easily replicated.



Figure 16 – Abandoned vernacular homes could be adapted into guest houses. Photo: Rand Eppich



*Figure 17 – Many well-tended gardens could be expanded to serve the Croatian restaurant  
Photo: Rand Eppich*



*Figure 18 – The recently conserved mill is attracting interest and weekend visitors.  
Photo: Rand Eppich*



*Figure 19 – The vehicular approach to the village does not provide a welcoming environment.  
Photo: Rand Eppich*



## ENVIRONMENT

Letnicë/Letnica is located in a beautiful natural environment. The village is nestled within a notch between the mountains with a stream running year-round through the village. In the summer the hills are verdant green, and in autumn the leaves change to red and golden brown. There is a small path that follows the stream, winding through the village and disappearing into the mountains. In the flat areas there are well-tended vegetable gardens surrounded by walls and fields for cattle. However, like religious festivals, the community fails to fully appreciate this asset or benefit. Therefore several actions regarding the environment should be taken.

The villagers must be made aware that they are the stewards of the environment and that their actions, however small, impact their surroundings. This awareness-raising effort could take the form of future CHwB Heritage Lab camps, led by OSCE Mission in Kosovo, or another entity. An additional effort of such camps could be to clean the stream of litter and reduce surface litter on the roads within the village. In this regard specified rubbish collection points or bins should be reestablished, kept clean, emptied frequently, and a designated tipping location identified and established. Such actions would be noticed and make Letnicë/Letnica more pleasant for the community and visitors alike.

Beyond the immediate village, there are only a few paths to enjoy the environment. One such identified path could be along the river, and another should be developed into the hills. A path away from the village could be designed to take advantage of the change in elevation to look back upon the village. Specific campsites could also be identified and developed outside the village to disperse the pilgrims across a broader area and increase capacity.



Figure 20 – The rural local economy is based on subsistence agriculture and subsidies. Photo: Rand Eppich

These campsites could be situated within the hills with views back to the church and village. The approach to the village is framed by the Catholic Church and at the bottom of the hill, a large asphalt parking lot. It is understood this is for cars and vendors. The vendors would be better dispersed into the village, and this freed up space to make this large parking lot more beautiful.

The final aspect related to environmental development concerns infrastructure to support a clean and healthy environment. It is necessary to resolve the freshwater supply problem as well as the sewage system. A special study should be undertaken specifically on this point.

Landscape, together with the village contributes to the formation of local cultures and is a basic component of cultural heritage contributing to human well-being and European Identity<sup>38</sup>. Cultural landscapes, vernacular architecture, and communities are living repositories that should be used to increase our knowledge of history, art, culture, climate, adaptation, innovation, agricultural and sustainability.

## CULTURE

The last pillar of the development plan is the tangible and intangible cultural heritage of the village. Also in this regard, in a forthcoming activity through the above-mentioned “round table” the appropriate stakeholders have to be identified. Furthermore, their involvement and commitment have to be addressed in the action plan, which constitutes the key for successful implementation of the development plan. As frequently mentioned, Letnicë/Letnica has many advantages in this regard, from the impressive church with the Black Madonna to the connection with Mother Teresa. In this respect, Letnicë/Letnica would benefit from the inclusion of the village on the planned Mother Teresa Trail, which follows the Saint's early life. An additional step is to involve the Catholic Church in this process and strengthen ties with the village. Unfortunately, the priests and nuns were unable to meet and work with the Heritage Lab team. But there are also other less obvious aspects to cultural heritage. The tangible aspects include the simple but honest vernacular architecture of the houses and mill, the stone walls around the fields, and numerous weathered barns all roofed with red clay tiles. The intangible aspects include the stories of the inhabitants and the one restaurant in town that serves traditional Croatian dishes using only local organic ingredients.

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<sup>38</sup>. Preamble of the European Landscape Convention (Council of Europe, 2000).



The second aspect of cultural development should be an in-depth mapping of the cultural resources, their vulnerabilities, and how they can be conserved and utilized. This includes identifying owners and obtaining their co-operation for a conservation project and contacting potential donors and investors. This has already begun as part of the Heritage Lab project. The next step is the identification of one traditional home to undergo conservation to serve as a guest house for weekend visitors or religious pilgrims. CHwB, through the Heritage Lab, has already set a good example through the conservation of the mill.

Finally, the community should be involved in the maintenance and care of their own cultural heritage. In doing so Letnicë/Letnica could leverage their existing cultural resources to benefit the community.

*Figure 21 – The path along the mountain stream is an unutilized and underappreciated resource. The cool climate offers welcome relief for people from Prishtinë/Priština. Photo: Rand Eppich*





Visitation at Easter is non-existent. This should be promoted

Greater weekend visitation should be promoted

Encourage visitation for longer than 3 days to an entire week

Christmas visitation should also be encouraged

Figure 22 – Diagram of festivals and visitors to Letnicë/Letnica. Existing major festivals should be expanded beyond two days, and other festivals, such as Christmas and Easter should be promoted

# CONCLUSIONS

Unless something is done in the next years, the village of Letnicë/Letnica will not survive another two decades. In time, the few remaining Kosovo Croats will pass away, the descendants of the diaspora will lose their connection to this place, and the Kosovo Albanian youth will move away searching for education, employment, and urban opportunities. The village without its community will fall away stone by stone. The church, its Black Madonna inside, and the major religious festival will undoubtedly survive – but for the future pilgrims and other visitors the experience will become poorer without the village and community that built the church. The village, with its small stone houses and barns, provides the context giving the church its sense of scale and purpose. Without the village the church will seem small in comparison to the mountains.

The Heritage Lab workshops conducted by Cultural Heritage without Borders and also supported by OSCE Mission in Kosovo is only a beginning, and had had in focus this small village. This attention is necessary, because for the village to survive there should be a sustained effort involving other organizations, institutions, and people all in co-operation. The field research and ideas presented in this report are also only just a beginning and should be further developed and followed.

This report describes the workshop concerning rural development and the participants' efforts to collect data and generate ideas. Additional workshops should be held to build on these ideas and describe in greater detail the issues and better formulate a rural development plan.

Finally, Letnicë/Letnica will always be under threat given its remote location and small size. But it does have many major cultural and natural advantages, and these are the assets that just may save this small but significant village, but this requires vigilance. Work cannot cease.

# APPENDIX

## MAPS - REGIONAL

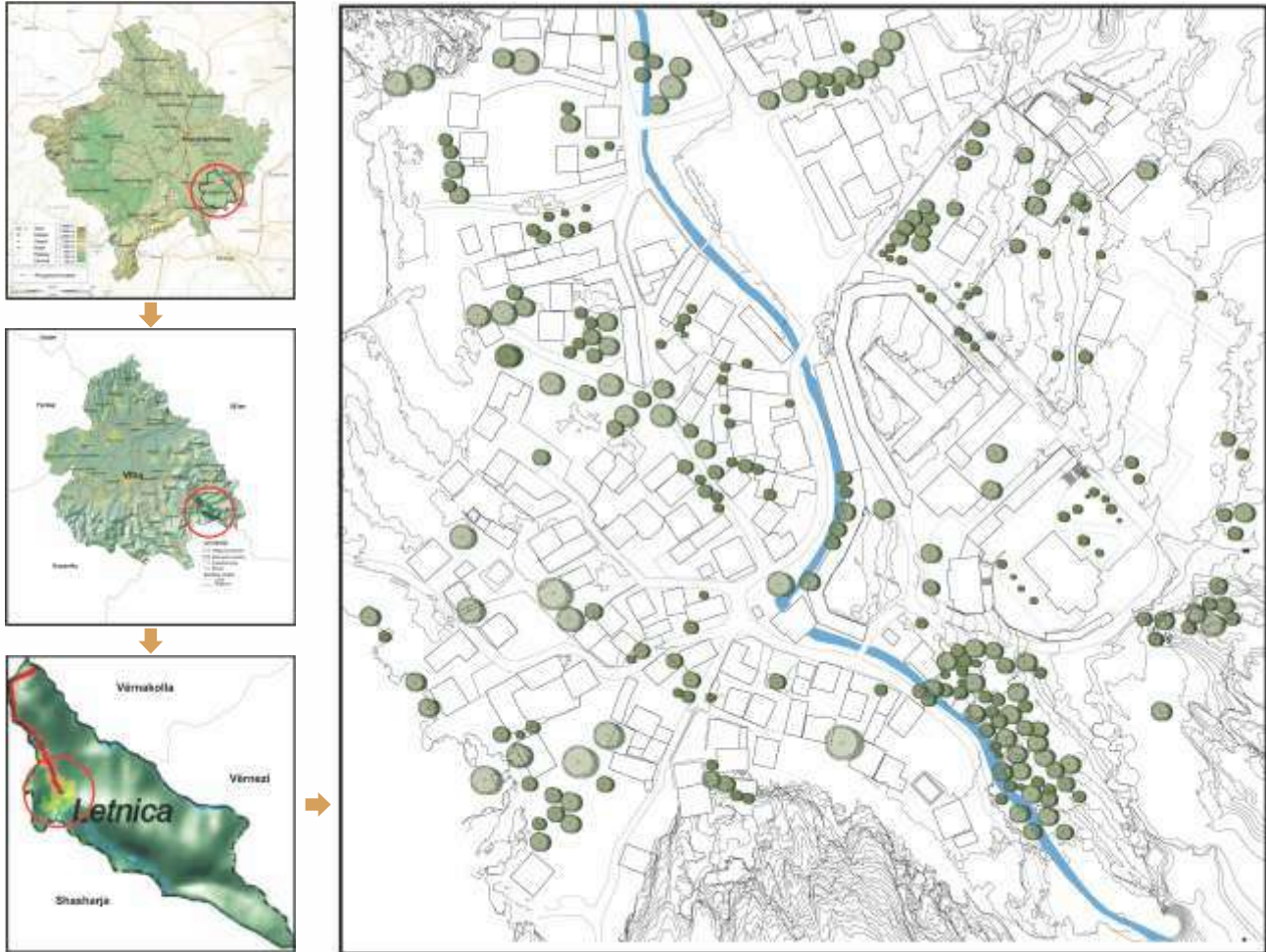


Figure 23 – Map showing the location of the region within Kosovo and village of Letnicë/Letnica with its relationship to major cities. The green circles on the map of the village on the right side indicate existing mature trees. (Rexhie Mushica, 2019).



## CONTEXT

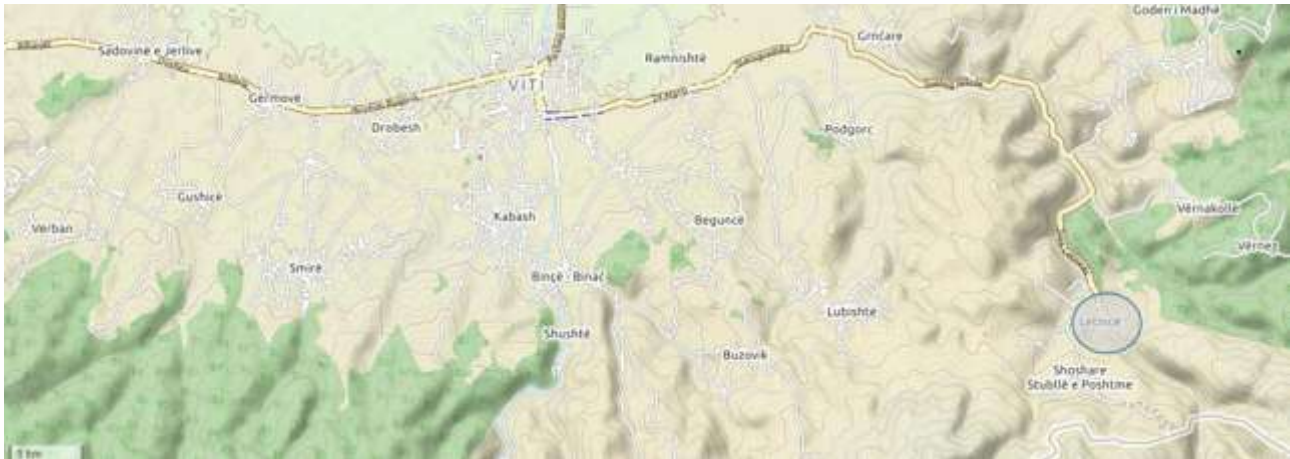


Figure 24 – Openstreet Map showing the location of Letnicë/Letnica, topography, nearest major town, Viti/Vitina, and the proximity of the border (Openstreet Map, 2019).



Figure 25 – Orthophoto of Letnicë/Letnica, factory is not shown on the map as is approximately 2 kilometers north (Kosovo Mapping Agency, 2017) N.T.S.





Figure 26 – Orthophoto and topographic maps of the village produced during the Heritage Lab with drone photography and photogrammetry 0 \_\_\_\_\_ 50m  
(CAD elaborated by Kaltrina Ajdini Orthophoto A. Almagro/R. Eppich, 2019).



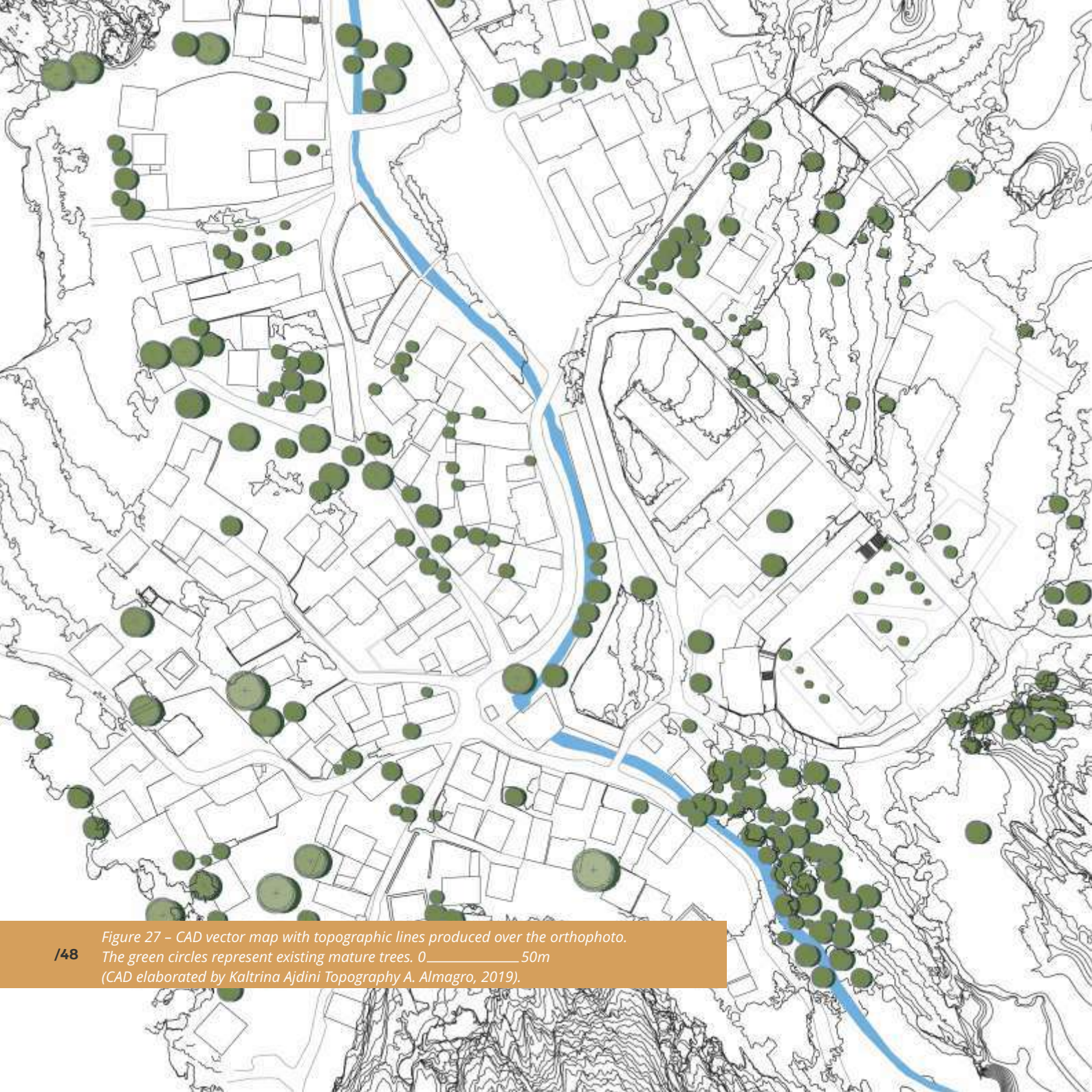
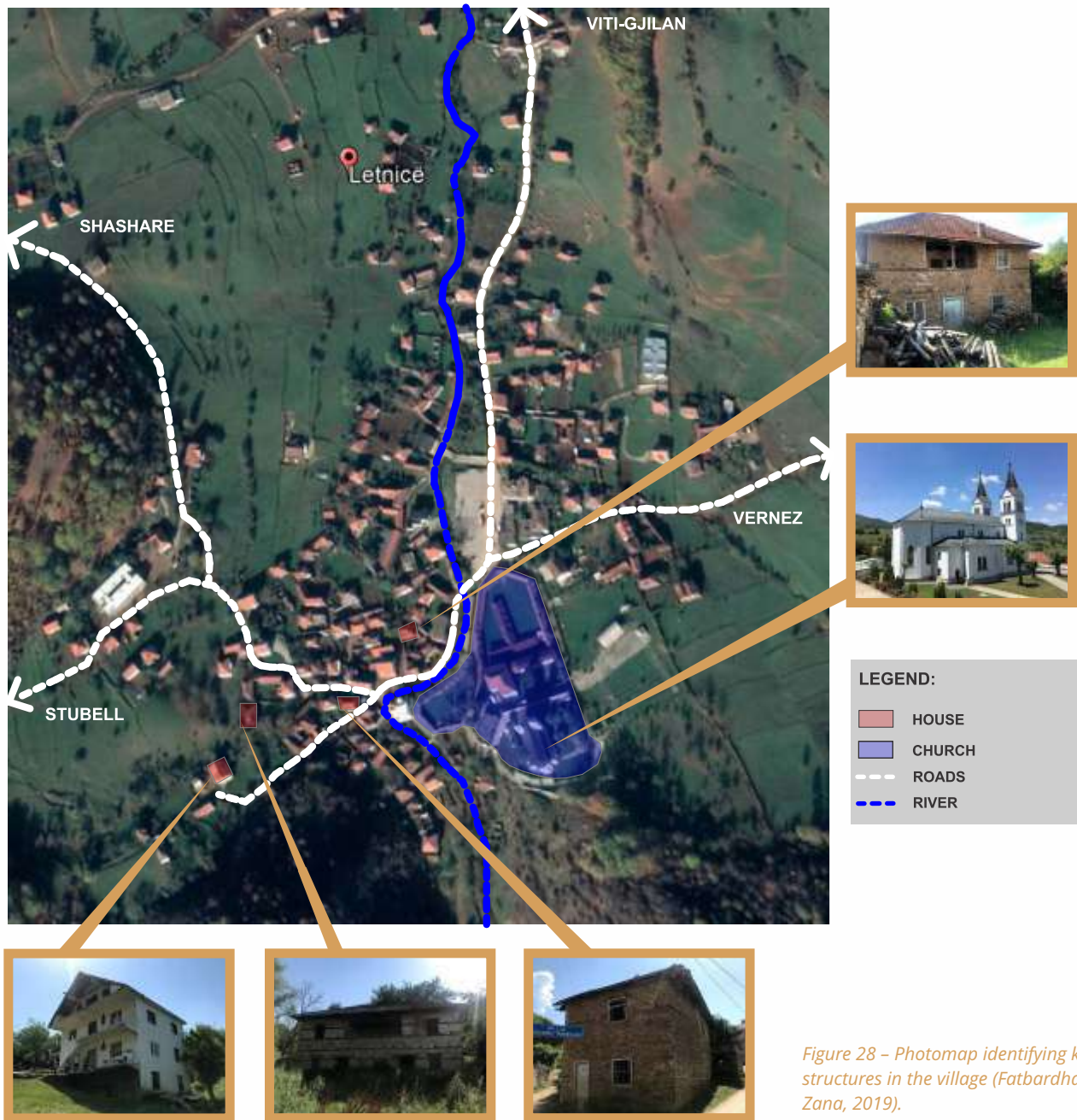


Figure 27 - CAD vector map with topographic lines produced over the orthophoto. The green circles represent existing mature trees. 0 \_\_\_\_\_ 50m (CAD elaborated by Kaltrina Ajdini Topography A. Almagro, 2019).







*Figure 29 – The preparation of the Development Plan of Letnicë/Letnica was based on a thorough study of the wider setting of the village and of the surrounding cultural landscape. Photo: OSCE/CHwB Dardan Rushiti*



## HISTORIC MAPS

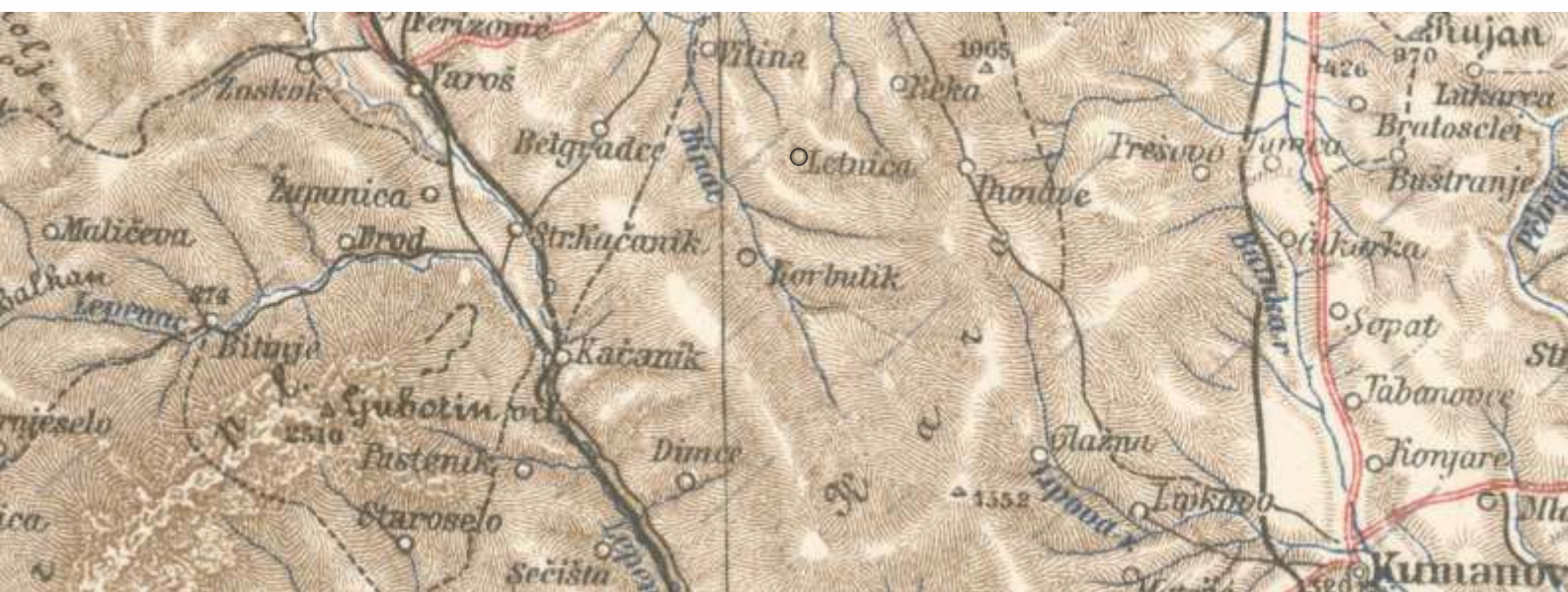
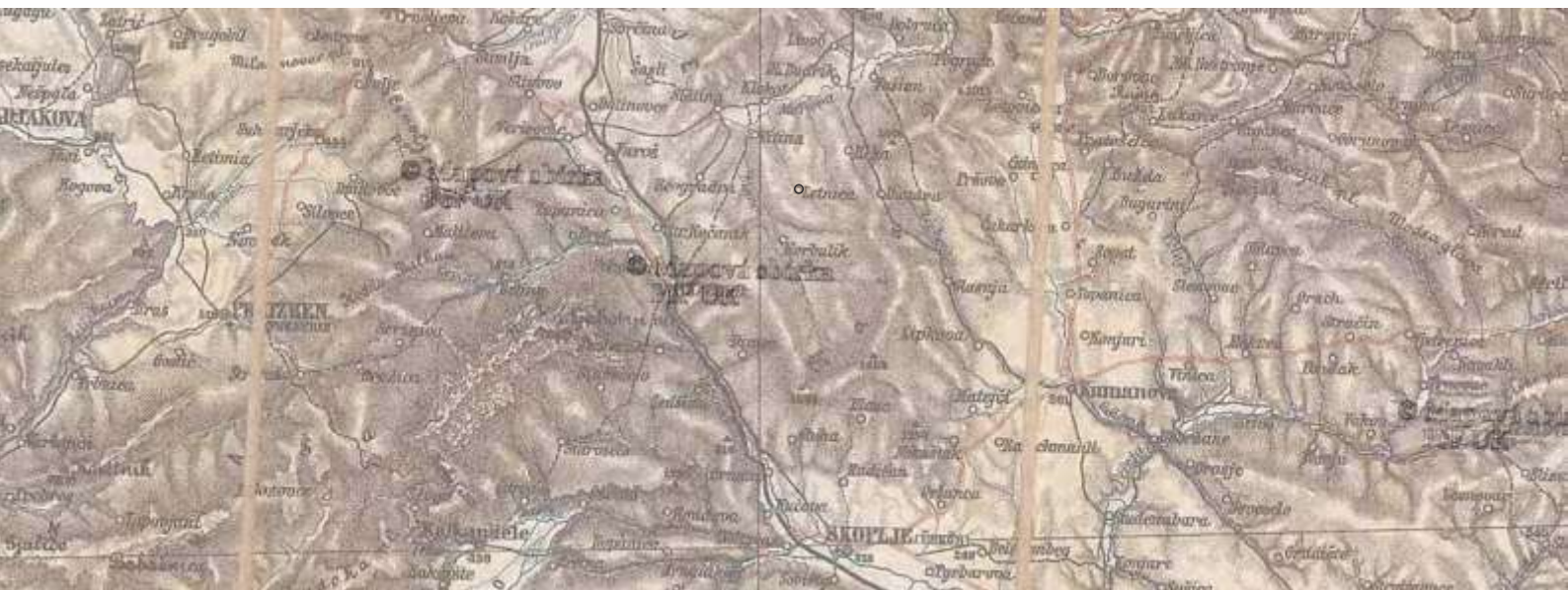




Figure 30 – Historic map detail from 1885 showing the location of Letnicë/Letnica. While the village was not on the main trading routes between the mountains, nevertheless the mention of the village in this early map indicates its importance. Other important cities are shown including Prizren and Skopje: Köprülü, Prishtinë/Priština, Scutari. In: K. k. militär-geographisches Institut (military-geographic Institute, Vienna), scale 1:750 000, dated 1885, [http://digitool.is.cuni.cz/R/?func=dbin-jump-full&object\\_id=1127442&silolibra](http://digitool.is.cuni.cz/R/?func=dbin-jump-full&object_id=1127442&silolibra).

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Figure 31 – Historic map (“Übersichtskarte von Mittel-Europa” - General Map of Central Europe, german transl.), detail from 1916 showing the location of Letnicë/Letnica. This map is dated to just be for a young Anjezë Gonxhe Bojaxhiu visited the village and demonstrates the remoteness of the location: In: Virtualní mapová sbírka Chartae-Antiquae.cz [online]. Zdiby: Výzkumný ústav geodetický, topografický a kartografický, v.v.i. [cit. 2019-11-23]. Dostupné z: <http://chartae-antiquae.cz/en/maps/46757>.

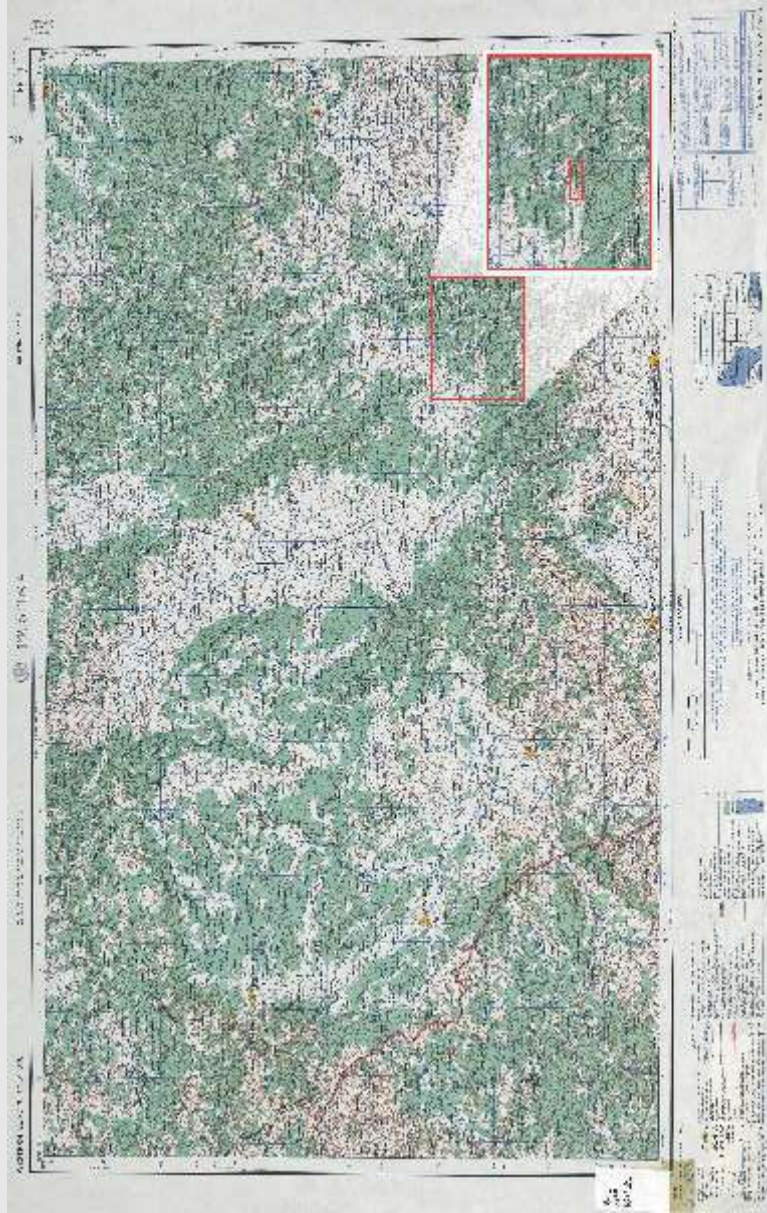


Figure 32 – Historic map detail from 1959 showing the village and its context (US Army Corp of Engineers, Army Map Services).

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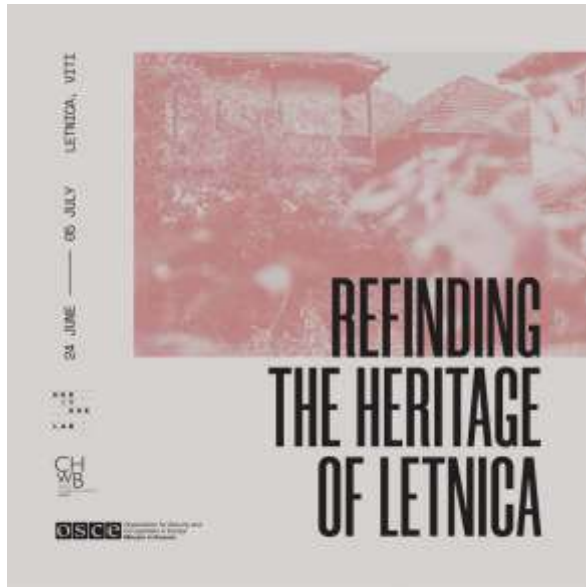
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## HERITAGE LAB WORKSHOP PROGRAM 2019



This development plan has been prepared and drafted during a “Heritage Lab Workshop” which took place in the village of Letnicë/Letnica from 24 June to 4 July 2019. The program consisted of key conservation, development, and tourism lectures every morning with practical exercises in the afternoon. 20 students, divided into two teams, participated in the Heritage Lab Workshop. One group focused on physical conservation efforts at the mill, while the other worked on developing ideas and mapping for development.

*Figure 33 – The Heritage Lab announcement*



*Figure 34 – The Heritage Lab Workshop combined practical field work in conservation, international expertise with local knowledge obtained through interviews. Photo: OSCE/CHwB Dardan Rushiti*





*Figure 35 – The restoration of Frrok Dokic's Mill represents one of the most visible results of the workshop which lasted almost two weeks in June / July 2019. Photo: OSCE/CHWB Dardan Rushiti*



## AUTHOR

*Figure 36 – Rand Eppich lecturing during the Heritage Lab workshop. Photo: OSCE/CHwB Dardan Rushiti*

**Rand Eppich**, is a conservation architect and believes that the protection of our natural and built historic environment is essential because it has a profound impact on the quality of our lives and shapes our identities. He has spent the last 30 years working toward its protection in more than 20 countries on projects ranging from conservation and the creation of architectural drawings and specifications to management in rural and economic development. His latest assignments have been in Georgia with Blue Shield on the Getty Foundation's Keeping it Modern initiative, in Suriname for management planning, and in Cyprus for the UNDP as Team Leader on the conservation of Famagusta's fortifications: For Tecnalia Foundation he directed the EU HISTCAPE project for identifying good practice for rural landscape conservation and development. He holds a Bachelor's in Architecture (focus on historic preservation), a Master's in Architecture + Urban Design from the University of California Los Angeles, an MBA from UCLA, and is currently completing his PhD on social economic development utilizing cultural heritage. Rand spent 13 years at the Getty Conservation Institute as Senior Project Manager and has lectured at the British Museum, KU Leuven, Penn, UCLA, METU and most recently at the University of Navarra. He is an executive board member of CIPA ICOMOS and Europa Nostra.

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**Kaltrina Thaçi**, Cultural Heritage Expert. Kaltrina is a Conservation Architect, working at CHwB since January 2012. Kaltrina graduated at the University of Prishtina, in the Faculty of Civil Engineering and Architecture in 2009. She completed the postgraduate studies in 2011 at Kingston University London, Faculty of Art, Design and Architecture and was awarded MSc with merit in Historic Building Conservation. Prior to working at CHwB, Kaltrina was a freelance architect with 7 years of experience in architectural design and worked at the Ministry of Environment and Spatial Planning at the permits sector. At CHwB, Kaltrina was engaged in drafting the conservation, interpretation and management plans for Vushtrri Castle, Hammam and Prizren Castle. In addition to that, she was the project manager for the Conservation Plan of Vushtrri Historic Center, Prince Claus Fund emergency intervention projects and as a co-ordinator of the Emergency Program implemented in 50 buildings in Kosovo. Lately, she has also been engaged in interpreting heritage sites and museum collections.

**Edona Rugova**, is a project assistant at Cultural Heritage without Borders in Kosovo. She managed the Heritage Lab in Letnicë/Letnica during the summer of 2019 and co-ordinated all activities. She has also been an assistant art curator, a freelance translator and draftsman for the Archaeological Institute of Kosovo. She holds a Bachelor of Fine Arts and Master of Fine Arts degrees from the University of Prishtinë/Priština.





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*Figure 37 – The drafting of the Development Plan requires a wide horizon and a broad picture.  
Photo: OSCE/CHwB Dardan Rushiti*







# HERITAGE LAB REDISCOVERING THE HERITAGE OF LETNICË/LETNICA

Development  
Workshop Report

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