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## **Problems of the preservation of historical heritage in the context of urban landscape modernisation**

**Abstract.** The relevance of the study is that in the context of accelerated modernisation of urban space in the first quarter of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, contradictions between development strategies and mechanisms for the protection of historical heritage significantly intensified, which require a scientific understanding of the applied practices and institutional models. The purpose of this study was to identify the factors that determined the success or inefficiency of programmes for the preservation of architectural monuments and the urban environment in the context of growth, investment pressure, and the transformation of regulatory regulations. The research methodology was based on a comparative analysis of legal systems, urban planning approaches, and empirical cases in three cities: Bishkek, Prague, and Rome. The results of the study demonstrated that the effectiveness of conservation strategies directly depended on a combination of the rigidity of the legal status of cultural heritage sites, the availability of economic incentives (subsidies, tax incentives, financing programmes), the level of digital support for monitoring the condition of monuments, and the degree of involvement of local communities in urban planning decisions. Institutional instability and legal dualism were recorded in Bishkek, which contributed to the reversibility of the protected status and the accelerated loss of iconic objects. Prague has shown the viability of a multi-stage conservation model based on zoning and coordination mechanisms, while Rome has demonstrated the potential of digital technologies and the integration of cultural policy with the logic of a smart city. It was concluded that the stability of the historical landscape was ensured in the presence of an integrated management model that includes three interrelated components, regulatory protection, economic feasibility, and technological adaptation. Under the conditions of urban pressure, it was the synthesis of legal, technical, and socio-cultural mechanisms that allowed not only to preserve the material layers of historical memory, but also to integrate them into the strategic development of the modern urban environment

**Keywords:** architectural authenticity; globalisation; digital monitoring; restoration; cultural identity

### **INTRODUCTION**

The relevance of preserving historical heritage in cities is determined by the fact that in the first quarter of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, it was the tangible and intangible layers of the past that served as a resource of cultural identity, a source of competitive advantages in the economy of impressions and a factor in the sustainability of the urban environment. Their loss invariably led to the erosion of social capital,

accelerated featureless dense buildings, and exacerbated environmental risks. The urbanisation of the modern period is characterised by an unprecedented rate of demographic growth, large-scale consolidation of central territories, and expansion of transport and logistics infrastructure. These processes increased the need for new residential and commercial spaces, created additional stress

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on engineering networks, stimulated vertical development and thereby transformed the silhouette of historical centres, while reducing aeration corridors. The global tourism market increased the operational burden on iconic sites, increased rental pressure, and initiated the displacement of indigenous populations from protected areas (Zatsepina & Pruss, 2023). There is an institutional complication of urban planning regulation, public-private partnership schemes, digitalisation of cadastres, and the introduction of the concept of “historical urban landscape” changed the traditional logic of protection. Insufficient law enforcement practice, the contradiction between economic interests and restoration expediency, and the fragmentation of public participation led to the fact that the legally fixed status of the monument became reversible, and the height regulations were constantly revised.

F.A. Adenaïke *et al.* (2023) analysed the causal relationships between structural transformations and the sustainability of historical centres, emphasising the importance of preliminary object typologisation and coordination between stakeholders in the modernisation process. The researchers highlighted the need for regulatory clarity in the renovation policy and the integration of heritage into the economic cycles of the city. A. Astore & L. Tricarico (2024) investigated the transformation of the San Lorenzo district in Rome, revealing the conflict between gentrification and urban policy programmes. The paper proposed an attempt at a conceptual systematisation of urban changes as a result of the interaction of cultural, institutional, and market factors. C. Bryant (2021) presented a multi-layered analysis of the processes of social belonging in modern Prague, focusing on the role of the architectural environment as a mediator between personal identity and collective memory. The study enriched the discourse of urban memory by showing how urban heritage shapes the experience of everyday life.

C. Francini & T. Rozochkina (2024) examined the application of the “historical urban landscape” approach in the context of fragile territories, demonstrating its effectiveness in integrating cultural heritage into sustainable development. The researchers insisted on interdisciplinarity and flexibility of management models, especially in conditions of institutional instability. F. Kavak & M. Soleimani (2024), using the example of the Iznik Theatre, showed how tourist and hotel functions can be combined with the preservation of archaeological sites. The study was characterised by a practice-oriented approach and an emphasis on architectural adaptation as a way to ensure accessibility while maintaining authenticity. F. Liu *et al.* (2022) applied visual analysis in the historical centre of Prague, revealing which elements of the architectural environment attract the most attention of visitors. The study confirmed the importance of visual perception in shaping the value of heritage and offered tools for planning visual corridors.

V. Orcígr (2024) analysed post-socialist Prague through the prism of hegemonic discourse, revealing how ideological attitudes transformed the urban development agenda. The study was characterised by a critical approach to

spatial planning policy and revealed the mechanisms of institutional dominance in decision-making. P. Schröder (2022) investigated the phenomenon of courtyard spaces in Central Asian cities, including Bishkek, considering them as forms of stable local self-organisation capable of resisting fragmentation of the urban structure as a result of intensive investment and construction activity. The study emphasised the importance of cultural practices of cohabitation, interpreted as an element of intangible heritage that preserves social stability in the face of increasing urban pressure. M. Vaishnavi & A. Kumar (2025) investigated the perception of the historical urban landscape by local communities and visitors, showing that the collective assessment of aesthetics and cultural significance has a direct impact on the sustainability of security solutions. The work highlighted the need to include empirical data on perception in the strategic planning of cities seeking to integrate heritage into everyday urban planning. The study confirmed that the introduction of technological tools can effectively support the preservation of cultural heritage, especially in conditions of high anthropogenic pressure.

Previous studies have described in detail individual cases of conservation and adaptive use, but have left unresolved the issue of the complex interrelationship of legal, economic and technological factors that shape the stability of the historical landscape during modernisation. The purpose of the study was to identify the systemic conditions under which heritage protection could be integrated into the development of urban infrastructure. To achieve this goal, the following tasks were formulated, to analyse regulatory and legal mechanisms and their practical effectiveness in selected jurisdictions, to compare economic incentives and financing models that affect the fate of historical sites.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study was aimed at a comprehensive understanding of the mechanisms for preserving historical heritage in the context of accelerated urban transformation. The cities of Bishkek, Prague, and Rome were chosen as comparative cases. This choice was explained by the fundamental difference in the institutional protection regimes, Bishkek was characterised by a weak regulatory framework and limited resource provision. Prague demonstrated the sustainable integration of heritage policy into municipal planning, Rome was an example of a city with a multi-level protection system combining international commitments and national restoration standards. This approach allowed comparing the forms of management of the cultural landscape in conditions of different legal maturity, tourist load, and the level of involvement of civil society. The National Commission of the Kyrgyz Republic for UNESCO (2010) was used as the main source for Prague, which documented the risks of loss of authenticity due to the growing tourist load and modernisation of urban infrastructure. Publication by A. Niborski Nadel (2023) covered restoration practices in Rome, including technical approaches and regulatory aspects. The document about cultural exchange programme





between the Republic of India and the Kyrgyz Republic provided an opportunity to analyse the impact of international programmes on security policy in Kyrgyzstan, with an emphasis on the participation of TIKa and UNESCO organisations (Cultural Exchange Programme..., 2022).

The analytical method was used to decompose the regulatory framework and urban planning regulations into functional blocks, which allowed identifying the internal logic of their construction and trace the mechanism of reversibility of the protected status of objects. The method ensured the operationalisation of key research categories (security mode, adaptive use, buffer zone), so that the results acquired clear comparability criteria. The historical and genetic method was used in the reconstruction of the phased formation of the urban landscape. It allowed tracing the evolution of security institutions and the transformation of spatial structure in relation to socio-political factors. The chronological stratification of the data provided the identification of cause-time relationships between changes in demographic burden, modernisation waves and correlating legal revisions of the status of cultural heritage.

The comparative method was used to compare three cities of Bishkek, Prague, and Rome, which differ in scale, economic and legal system of heritage regulation, degree of institutionalisation of security policy, level of involvement of civil structures, and depth of stratification of the historical landscape. A systematic comparison allowed separating the universal mechanisms of interaction between modernisation and protection from context-specific manifestations. The structural and functional comparison matrix provided an opportunity to extrapolate the findings beyond the territories under study and formulate recommendations considering the wide variability of urban regimes. The programmatically implemented encoding of semantic units allowed quantifying prevailing narratives and identifying conflicts of interest between security and investment logic. The results of the content analysis ensured the stability of interpretations, minimising subjectivity when reading text sources.

The system approach served as the integration framework of the study. It allowed synthesising the results of all the above methods into a single multi-level model, where legal norms, economic incentives, technological solutions and socio-cultural practices were considered as interrelated subsystems of the urban environment. This model allowed assessing not only the direct effects of individual regulatory or engineering measures, but also their indirect impact on environmental, social, and cultural sustainability parameters. Architectural and typological analysis was used to classify historical buildings according to morphological and stylistic features, which made it possible to identify the most vulnerable groups of objects and correlate them with conservation priorities.

## RESULTS

*Heritage and urbanisation: Institutional and spatial challenges in Bishkek.* Since the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the

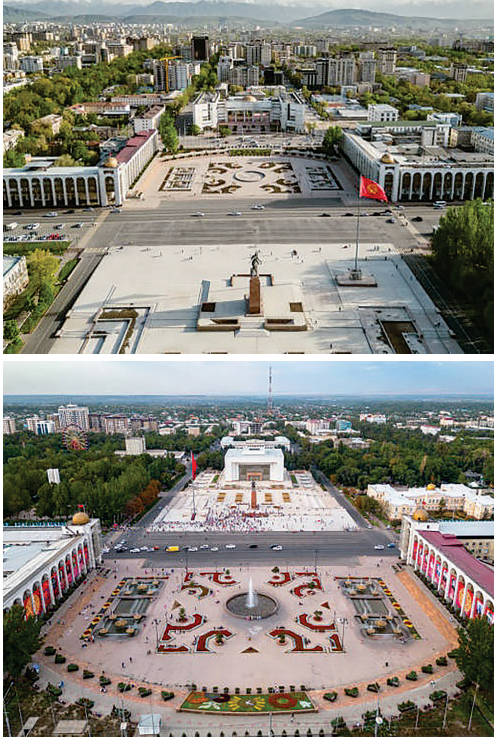
issue of preserving historical heritage in the context of urban landscape modernisation has been studied as a multi-level process in which legal norms, economic mechanisms, and spatial transformations interacted (Chen *et al.*, 2023). Demographic growth and increased building density led to an increasing need for new residential, transport, and engineering structures, which regularly came into conflict with protection regimes based on the principle of immutability of the urban planning context, in the absence of updated cadastral registers and clear regulations for changing the functional purpose of buildings, the status of a cultural heritage site became reversible, recognition of architectural buildings as technically dilapidated made it possible to deduce to remove it from protection and carry out major reconstruction (Hmood, 2022).

However, the financial attractiveness of the central territories stimulated the consolidation of the urban core, which increased the load on engineering networks and led to a reduction in aeration corridors, negatively affecting the microclimate and the condition of the stone material. At the international level, rulemaking was based on the concept of the “historical urban landscape”, which interpreted heritage as a stratified system, including both tangible and intangible components. The concept of adaptive reuse has been established in academic discourse, according to which outdated structures were involved in modern economic turnover without loss of authenticity (Feng, 2024). Special attention was paid to the impact of mass tourism, the increase in short-term rental space and the density of pedestrian flows contributed to accelerated erosion of cladding material, vibration effects on foundations, and the social transformation of historical neighbourhoods (Kalla & Metaxas, 2024). Mechanisms for territorial diversification of attendance were proposed, the introduction of dynamic environmental fees and the development of green infrastructure integrated into protected areas, the lack of comprehensive monitoring of the technical condition of monuments prevented timely damage prevention, while the introduction of digital models and remote monitoring systems made it possible to predict deformations and optimise the allocation of restoration resources (Rössler & Lin, 2018).

Bishkek’s historical appearance consisted of a layered overlay of the pre-revolutionary Vernon-Frunze manor quarters, the Soviet modernism of the pre-war and Brezhnev decades, and the post-socialist development of the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup>-21<sup>st</sup> centuries. In the structure of the historical buildings of the central part of the city, there are objects with symbolic and town-forming significance. These include the architectural ensemble of Ala-Too Square, which includes the State Historical Museum, the monument to Manas, and the preserved sculpture of V.I. Lenin Square, and the adjacent landscaped area with a park sculpture from the 1980s (Fig. 1). In addition, significant objects include the buildings of the printing house Erkin-Too, the Ak-Kula hippodrome, the Issyk-Kul hotel, and a complex of residential buildings from the period of Stalinist



architecture forming the spatial structure of the central quarter of the city (Li *et al.*, 2025).



**Figure 1.** Ala-Too Square

**Source:** prepared by the author based on research by G. Aitapaeva (2023)

The cultural and memorial value of these structures was determined not only by their artistic merits, but also by the function of urban “anchors of memory”. Through material markers, the city “returned” fragments of the difficult 20<sup>th</sup> century to residents, including the colonial and Soviet modernist experience, thereby becoming a platform for public conversation about its own identity. Urbanisation processes intensified after 1991, when the capital’s population increased over 250,000 people in twenty years, and the UNECE forecast for 2021 expected another 400,000 migrants by the 2040s. With a shortage of city coffers and political turbulence, the authorities consistently sold plots for multi-storey shopping malls and residential complexes, and the sanitary reserve zones provided for by the Soviet master plan were considered as potential sites for development. The lack of an updated inventory register made the procedure for revoking the monument’s status a technical formality, which was confirmed by the fate of the Erkin-Too printing house. The facility was taken out of protection in 2015 and returned at the request of the State Committee for National Security in 2021, but in fact support was reduced to preserving the facade wall, which was gradually destroyed by bad weather (Li *et al.*, 2025).

In practice, this meant that the registry became dynamic and the status reversible. An illustrative case was the building of the Kurenkeev Music School, which was

deprived of its protection index in April 2024, a decision explained by the loss of “original function and integrity”, although the expert community insisted on the possibility of revitalisation. A similar algorithm has already led to the dismantling of the Issyk-Kul hotel, the Manas Aiily complex, and the removal of the VDNH-Frunze facilities. Thus, some successful cases proved that heritage protection could be combined with modernisation. The competitive reconstruction of the State Historical Museum, completed in 2021 and opened in 2022 after a five-year closure, transformed the Soviet modernist cube into a multimedia platform, preserving the original volume and including 90 thousand objects in the exposition (Zinna, 2020). The project was implemented with funding from the budget of the Kyrgyz Republic and a grant from TIKA, and subsequent investigative journalism corruption schemes have not negated the museum value of the renovated complex, which has once again become the main tourist attraction of the capital. Another example of positive interaction between the state and traditional protection mechanisms was the Manas Ordo Mausoleum complex, a study by the World Heritage Centre documented the stable condition of 14<sup>th</sup>-century structures due to direct subordination to the government and the synthesis of official protection with local ritual practices (National Commission of the Kyrgyz Republic for UNESCO, 2010).

By the end of the 2010s, the role of the civil sector had increased in the controversy over the fate of “old Bishkek”. The Urban Initiatives Foundation implemented a collaborative design methodology. In 2022, the square was modelled and equipped, demonstrating that the involvement of local communities can form a demand for the environment, and therefore, for the preservation of historical markers that define the identity of the place. The Esimde platform, initiated by Nogoibayeva, was engaged in digitising oral histories, linking the preservation of tangible artefacts with intangible memory practices. Meanwhile, destructive scenarios continued to manifest themselves in targeted examples. The Ala-Too hotel, the Erkin-Too printing house, and the wooden bread kiosks of the 1930s stood abandoned, demonstrating the mechanism of “degradation of waiting”, the object stopped maintenance, fell into disrepair and after several winters qualified as “not subject to restoration” (Alymbaev, 2024).

Thus, in the first quarter of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the preservation of Bishkek’s historical heritage found itself at the epicentre of conflicts between investment modernisation, institutional weakness of security mechanisms, and increased civic engagement. The state declared the protection of monuments, but simultaneously initiated legal instruments for their alienation, the professional community proposed a systematic revision of the register and differentiated restoration, but faced fragmented solutions; citizens showed willingness to participate in the creation of new public spaces if they respected the historical context. The experience of reconstruction of the State Historical Museum and the Manas-Ordo Complex has shown the viability

of a model combining state control, international resources and local cultural practices. The experience of the demolition of Issyk-Kul and Naryn demonstrated the cost of lost time, when the monument was ignored until interest in the land became fatal. Taken together, these examples formed the understanding that the preserved heritage increased the cultural capital and environmental sustainability of the capital, while the lost objects were replenished only by accelerating impersonal development and increasing social distrust of urban strategies.

*Urban planning policy and preservation of historical heritage in Prague.* The historical centre of Prague was formed from the 11<sup>th</sup> century, and Prague became a city in which the Romanesque foundations of Prague Castle were combined with the Gothic verticality of St. Vitus Cathedral, the Renaissance palaces of Mala Strana, the Baroque plasticity of Charles Bridge, and the Bohemian Cubism of the House of the Black Madonna (Fig. 2). In 1992, UNESCO has included 866 hectares of the Old Town, Mala Strana, Grad, Novy Gorod, and Visegrad in the World Heritage List, the organisation described Prague as “an exemplary European ensemble reflecting all the key styles of continental architecture without interruption” (Ministry of Culture of Czech Republic, 2001). This status did not negate the pressure of modernisation; the post-war population growth almost doubled, the development of mass tourism and the post-socialist transformations of the market economy required a compromise between preserving the unique historical foundation and the infrastructural demands of a modern city.



**Figure 2.** House of the Black Madonna

**Source:** prepared by the author based on research by A. Tóth *et al.* (2022)

The key monuments set the framework of the cultural identity of the capital. Prague Castle, the world’s largest medieval fortress, remained the political and symbolic centre of the country, St. Vitus Cathedral, completed only in 1929, encapsulated six centuries of building techniques, and Old Town Square with its astronomical Orla clock became the “hallmark” of the Czech Republic. The cultural

layer of modernism manifested itself in the functionalist Valetřzhni Palace, in the Dancing House of F. Gehry and V. Milunits. The Josefov Jewish quarter, rebuilt during the era of Habsburg urbanism at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, preserved the oldest functioning synagogue ensemble in Europe, and the associated memory of the Holocaust gave the area a special memorial status. The city’s heritage protection policy was formed within the framework of a dual system, the Act of the Czech National Council No. 20/1987 Sb. (1987) established the regime of state ownership of cultural property, while the International Building Code of International Code Council (2021) consolidated responsibility for preservation at the municipal level.

Nevertheless, UNESCO criticised the project for the lack of clear height parameters and visual corridors between the hills that define the silhouette of the “golden city”. In response, the Mayor’s Office established a Standing Committee on Monuments in 2023, obliging it to provide opinions on each major project in the buffer zone. The reconstruction of industrial Karlín after the devastating 2002 flood turned the ČKD factory into a complex of offices and restaurants in Corso Karlín, where the historical foundation was combined with the glass insert of the atrium. A private initiative by Leos Valka reinterpreted a 1930s factory building in the Holeszowice area, creating the DOX Center for Contemporary Art in 2008, and in 2016 the Gulliver wooden-steel airship landed on the roof, which became a symbol of the discourse between architecture and literature (Stanojević & Keković, 2019).

In Smikhov, the territory of the Staropramen brewery was turned into a quarter with creative offices, retaining malt towers as panoramic dominants, the project was funded through the European Fund for Regional Development. Government initiatives were based on the National Institute of Monuments, the largest organisation of the Ministry of Culture, which managed over a hundred palaces and castles and developed restoration standards. The “Long-term renovation strategy to support the renovation of the national stock of both public and private residential and non-residential buildings” by Ministry of Industry and Trade (2018) delineates a framework to facilitate energy-efficient renovations throughout the Czech building inventory, encompassing historical structures. It facilitates renovation initiatives for both public and private assets, and it promotes comprehensive energy renovations that honour heritage values and enhance building performance. The National Museum (2018) on Wenceslas Square, after a five-year renovation, opened on October 28, 2018, connecting the historic Joseph Schultz building and the former Federal Assembly House with a glass underpass, an example of the equal coexistence of the Neo-Renaissance monument and the brutalist inserts of the 1970s.

The World Monuments Fund included the historical centre of Prague in the watch list for 2002 and 2010, emphasising the risk of losing the “authenticity of the panorama” in the absence of strict height regulation. The European Union has funded the digitalisation of archives, the



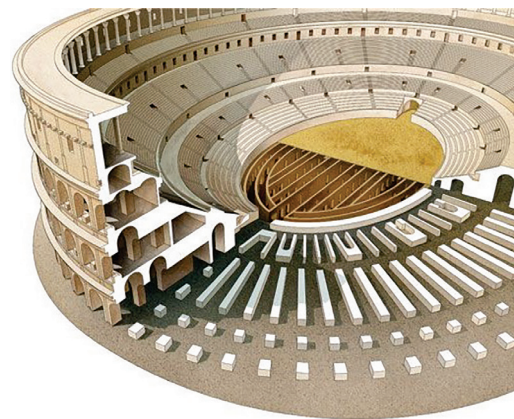
restoration of Charles University frescoes, and pilot energy efficiency projects in historic buildings in the country. Nevertheless, the modernisation pressure remained palpable. Prague Airport registered 14.8 million passengers in 2019, with 80% of visitors concentrated in the “golden kilometre” between Charles Bridge and Old Town Square. The city responded by diversifying its flows. In 2024, they launched the Beyond the Old Town project, subsidising excursions to Visegrad and Trosky Castle, and tightened the rules for short-term rentals, reducing the number of available Airbnb apartments by 12%. Post-industrial territories remained the frontier for the integration of heritage into the new landscape. The plan for the reconstruction of the Zhizhkovsky Freight station provided for 50 thousand m<sup>2</sup> of housing, schools, the National Film Archive and cultural spaces in a historic brick volume in 1936. The mayor’s office acquired the complex for CZK 1.43 billion, obliging the developer to preserve the characteristic “jagged” silhouette of the platforms (Prague unveils ambitious..., 2024).

Similarly, the Landscape 2024 festival demonstrated the potential of abandoned railway lands for temporary park installations and art pavilions, emphasising the role of creative industries in the regeneration of voids (Fodor, 2024). The limited urban budget required multi-level financing. In 2014-2023, the National Institute of Monuments has raised more than CZK 6 billion through European funds, directing them to the restoration of the Church of St Anežka Česká, the strengthening of the Charles Bridge’s foundation and the digital scanning of the Visegrad complex. Municipal and national programs in the Czech Republic have subsidised significant amounts of the costs of renovating historic building facades, frequently covering between 40% and 75% of eligible expenses (Ministry of Industry and Trade, 2024).

In general, the experience of Prague in the first quarter of the 21<sup>st</sup> century demonstrated that heritage preservation has become not a static “open-air museum”, but a dynamic strategy in which government regulation, private investment, and international mechanisms interacted on a platform of integrated planning. The success of the revitalisation of Karlin, Golesovice, and Smikhov, the reconstruction of the National Museum and strict height restrictions in the buffer zone proved the viability of the model of “embedding” modernity in the historical context. The disputes over the skyscrapers on the Pankratsky Plateau, rising rental pressure and the risks of tourism promotion showed how fragile the balance between development and security is. The preserved heritage increased the cultural capital and economic attractiveness of the city, while the loss of authenticity threatened to erode the unique image of Prague in the global consciousness.

*The historical heritage of Rome in the context of urban transformation.* The historical landscape of Rome developed as a kind of “paleontological section” of Western civilisation, from the republican temples in the Forum to the multi-level palaces of the Medici era and the modernist interventions of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. UNESCO, which included

the centre of Rome and the enclaves of the Holy See in the World Heritage List in 1980, qualified the combination of ancient, Christian and Baroque topography as “unique spatial evidence of cultural continuity” (UNESCO World Heritage Site..., n.d.). By 2025, the protected area was 1,430 hectares, and the buffer zone was about 10,000 hectares more, but the protected status did not eliminate the stress caused by tourism, infrastructural modernisation, and demand for luxury real estate. The monumental matrix of the city included iconic objects of world culture. The Colosseum, which ended with the 2013-2023 restoration cycle with the construction of a retractable wooden podium, once again presented the antique look to the viewer (Fig. 3).



**Figure 3.** Reconstruction of the Colosseum

**Source:** prepared by the author based on research by C. Marshall (2021)

The Pantheon remained the world’s largest non-reinforced concrete dome structure, and its experimental management model, which allowed for an entrance fee from 2023, set a precedent for financing conservation through the tourist flow. The Romanum Forum and Palatine, united in the Parco Archeologico del Colosseo, implemented a digital twin for monitoring microcracks and sediments. The Baroque ensemble of the Fontana di Trevi was under pressure from crowds of millions. In 2024, Mayor Roberto Gualtieri proposed a pilot fee of EUR 1-2 for the right to enter the observation platform, arguing that it was necessary to regulate the flow and restoration costs. Modernisation challenges were manifested primarily in the tourist load. After the pandemic recession of 2020, the city received 15 million guests in 2022 (an increase of 176% by 2021), and by August 2023 recorded 13 million arrivals, predicting an absolute record. Estimates by the Lazio Department of Tourism showed that there were five times more tourists than permanent residents inside the GRA ring road, and the over-density of visits was associated with the “crowding out effect” – an increase in rental rates and the replacement of housing stock with short-term accommodation. Urban projects generated the paradox of “archaeological delay”; the construction of the third metro line C, launched





in 2006, was repeatedly halted due to the discovery of Hadrian's temples, Praetorian barracks, and a late Antique theatre – each find increased the budget and deadlines (Celeski-Grapow & Ricotta, 2020).

Urban planning policy has found a systemic response necessary. “The Management Plan for the historical centre 2024–2030”, approved by the City Council and coordinated with UNESCO, set four goals, conservation, sustainability, communication, and improvement of the quality of the urban environment (UNESCO World Heritage Site..., n.d.). The document prescribed integrating the assessment of visual corridors into the permit procedure, and the new volumes should not disrupt the panoramic discourse of the seven hills. The plan allowed for the reconversion of the monastery complexes into university dormitories and creative hubs.

The Metropolitan Archdiocese continued the programme of adaptive use of small churches of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, transferring them from the status of rare places of worship to full-fledged socio-cultural centres of suburban areas. This “ethical reprogramming of the sacred space” compensated for the shortage of libraries, halls for clubs and non-formal education facilities on the periphery, while preserving liturgical elements, that is, it demonstrated that the security regime could be combined with the transformation of functions if the intervention was reversible and visually declared (Khader & Fusco, 2022). The Italian legal framework enshrines the principle of preserving cultural heritage as material patrimony through Legislative Decree of Italy No. 42 (2004), which consolidates and governs the protection, conservation, and enhancement of monuments, historic sites, and cultural assets throughout Italy. Any relocation or restoration intervention in an artefact older than seventy years required coordination with the relevant ministry. Formally, this tightened the bureaucracy, but in practice it provided a transparent chain of responsibility and allowed the development of a digital registry, which by 2024 included more than 260 thousand objects.

Cooperation with international experts has strengthened the technological side of conservation. Specialists were trained at annual courses in restoration sciences, where methods of non-contact laser diagnostics and injection of lime-nano solutions into microcracks of frescoes were practiced. These technologies were first tested on the pilot sites of the Sistine Chapel, which allowed stabilising the colour layer without the traditional removal of ancient coating varnishes (Magar *et al.*, 2022). Experts remotely monitored fluctuations in temperature and humidity inside the monuments using sensor networks that transmit data to the city's metrics storage centre, an approach that became part of the concept of a “smart” security perimeter. Large religious complexes were switching to a new content model. The facade restoration of the Great Synagogue, completed in 2024, combined traditional masonry with composite reinforcement elements, which ensured minimal interference with the historical foundation and increased earthquake resistance (Niborski Nadel, 2023).

During the same period, the basilica outside the Aurelian walls received a modern geothermal heating system, which reduced energy costs by almost a third and became the first example of integrating renewable sources into a high-security facility. The concept of “selective trusting” has become stronger in the professional community, suggesting the limitations and visual readability of any modern supplement (Iudova-Romanova, 2025). The illustration was a glass elevator built into the arcade of the Colosseum, the new design did not disguise itself as antique marble, but emphasised the time gap, while allowing wheelchair users to climb to the upper tier of the amphitheatre. In this way, the ethical transparency of the intervention was implemented – the principle according to which the modern stratum is obliged to demonstrate its own era. The hotel industry in Rome receives considerable economic advantage from its closeness to cultural landmarks, significantly enhancing the city's tourism-related value (Joint Research Centre, 2025). This progress is accompanied by obstacles, escalating housing costs associated with the proliferation of short-term visitor accommodations, which have led to the eviction of certain permanent residents. The growing number of tourist buses and shuttles puts pressure on aged urban infrastructure, such as basalt slab pavements, potentially accelerating their deterioration and creating concerns regarding sustainable tourism management.

The municipality responded by quoting souvenir trade licenses and restricting single-use plastic in the protected area, while distributing tourist flows through the development of the “small ring” routes, which included lesser-known but no less significant monuments. Despite the successes, infrastructure projects continued to experience difficulties. The construction of the new metro line was delayed due to archaeological finds, each stop required rescue excavations, and sometimes the integration of open fragments into the design of the station. These delays raised the issue of commensurate costs and public benefits, but demonstrated the city's commitment to the principle of “archaeology first”. Collectively, the described processes showed that the sustainable development of the historical centre depended on a balance between regulatory rigidity, innovative technologies, and the economy of impressions. Digital monitoring, selective restoration, and social reprofiling of religious buildings strengthened cultural capital, but required constant revision of regulations and flexible adaptation to changing visitor flows (Karyy *et al.*, 2025). Rome confirmed that its preserved authenticity, enhanced by openness and inclusivity, not only maintained its status as an “eternal city”, but also served as a resource for sustainable urban development in the face of increasing external pressure. Table 1 is a comparison of the historical heritage preservation policies of Bishkek, Prague, and Rome. It underscores the disparities in institutional methodologies, legal regulatory frameworks, civil society participation, and the use of modern technology in the conservation of cultural assets among these cities.

**Table 1.** Comparative analysis of historical heritage preservation policies in Bishkek, Prague, and Rome

Aspect	Bishkek	Prague	Rome
Institutional approach	An unstable regulatory framework, limited resources	Deep institutionalisation of heritage protection	Integration of cultural policy with smart city approach
Legal regulation mechanisms	Lack of updated inventory, reversibility of protection status	National legislation, UNESCO World Heritage obligations	Principle of material patrimonialism, strict regulations for objects older than 70 years
Civil society participation	Increased by the late 2010s, limited public control	Active involvement through state programmes and public initiatives	Limited, but evolving, with the adaptive reuse of religious buildings
Use of innovative technologies	Minimal use, limited by legal and technical resources	Active use of European funds for restoration and digitalisation	Digital twins, sensor networks, nanomaterials in restoration
Revitalisation and development	Fragmented, dependent on external grants and volunteer initiatives	Systematic, part of sustainable development strategy	Integrated with tourism and infrastructure development, balancing authenticity
Tourism pressure	Increasing urbanisation, tourist attractions at risk	High, but managed through diversified tourist routes	High, with efforts to reduce impact through regulation of short-term rentals and tourist flow diversification

**Source:** prepared by the author based on research by J. Xia *et al.* (2024)

A comparison of the three cases showed that the key factor in the sustainability of the protection of historical heritage was the degree of institutional integration of security policy into the overall urban development strategy. In Bishkek, legal dualism and institutional weakness combined with high investment pressure contributed to the erosion of the historical environment and a decrease in public confidence in modernisation policies. In Prague, the institutionalisation of protection, the existence of clear procedures for public participation and the use of multi-level financing allowed maintaining a balance between the development and protection of historical identity. In Rome, the sustainability of conservation was ensured by a combination of strict regulatory regulation, the introduction of digital monitoring technologies and selective restoration programmes, but infrastructure projects periodically faced challenges from archaeological finds and mass tourism.

Thus, differences in conservation policies were explained not only by economic or cultural contexts, but also by the quality of administrative procedures, the level of civil society involvement, and the ability of government institutions to integrate innovative approaches into conservation practices. Bishkek demonstrated the need to consolidate security legislation and strengthen public control. Prague was a successful example of strategic planning and comprehensive protection of the historical environment. Rome illustrated the possibilities of technological adaptation of security activities to the modern challenges of globalisation and mass tourism while preserving the principle of historical continuity.

## DISCUSSION

The study revealed differences in institutional approaches to the preservation of historical heritage in Bishkek, Prague, and Rome. In Bishkek, the main problems were the lack of an updated registry, legal instability, and investment pressure, which contributed to the loss of cultural sites through the mechanism of “degradation of expectations”. Despite some successful projects, it was not possible to form a systematic approach to security. In Prague,

heritage protection was based on a multi-level legislative framework, international commitments, and the active use of European funds. The revitalisation of post-industrial areas and strict regulation of the urban environment ensured a balance between development and preservation of authenticity (Chernyshev *et al.*, 2020; Demessie & Yakovets, 2025). In Rome, strict regulatory regulations were combined with the introduction of digital monitoring and innovative restoration technologies, but mass tourism and archaeological finds slowed down infrastructure projects. In all three cases, the sustainability of conservation depended on the degree of integration of conservation policy into urban planning and on the availability of mechanisms for public participation.

G. Foster & R. Saleh (2021) demonstrated that the inclusion of cultural heritage sites in circular urban plans reduced the carbon footprint, increased the resource autonomy of neighbourhoods, and served as a catalyst for the “green” growth of the construction industry. The researchers identified an institutionally consistent three-tier model of “inventory, life cycle assessment, modular reconfiguration,” which minimised the risks of loss of authenticity. The study revealed that even with similar protocols in place in post-socialist agglomerations, the fragmentation of competencies between municipal departments and private entrepreneurs remained a key barrier. The analysis showed that the lack of a single financial instrument slowed down eco-renovation, while, according to G. Foster & R. Saleh, circular funds, and tax incentives accelerated adoption. When comparing, it was found that the method of G. Foster & R. Saleh relied on a high maturity of civic engagement, whereas in the cities studied, similar practices were still at the experimental pilot stage. In addition, G. Foster & R. Saleh considered cultural heritage as an element of a “closed” material cycle, while the study involved a broader socio-cultural continuum that included intangible assets. This confirmed that the sustainability of restoration projects was determined not only by environmental metrics, but also by the degree of institutional coordination of management regimes.





The approach by T.-S. Kim (2024) was based on the analysis of the visual environment as a communicative structure of signage, facades, and language codes were considered as elements of public representation of identity. This approach was based on the assumption that visual conflict arises from a discrepancy between the new cultural content and the established symbolic order of the city. In contrast, the conducted research was based on an administrative and functional approach. Visual transformations are not considered as autonomous cultural utterances, but as the product of a certain mode of coordination. Where there is a mechanism for prior coordination with residents and regulatory authorities, facade changes take place without conflict, regardless of their symbolic saturation. Thus, the difference between T.-S. Kim and the present study consists not only in the interpretation of the visual changes themselves, but also in analytical optics, the first model focuses on signs, the second on procedures. The question of the permissibility of changes is not solved at the level of symbolic content, but at the level of institutional manageability. Hence the discrepancy in conclusions, if in the interpretation of T.-S. Kim, new visual codes were in conflict with the historically established semiotic structure of the city, so within the framework of this study they were considered as a manageable part of institutional adaptation.

Spatial alienation, which occurs at the junction of tourist expectations and local experience, was treated in the study by M. Šnorbert (2022) mainly in terms of visual dissonance. The researcher considered Prague Castle and the surrounding territories as zones of symbolic overload, where representative images replicated by media and digital tourism platforms came into conflict with the everyday environment. According to this interpretation, conflict is defined as a discrepancy between the external symbolic projection and the internal perception of a place by residents. However, the results of the study suggest a different model of causality. Spatial conflict manifests itself not as a consequence of excessive visualisation, but as a result of the functional transformation of the urban environment – first of all, the transition from long-term residence to short-term rental. This indicates the importance of a regulatory framework that can shift the regulatory vector from symbolic measures (for example, visual corridors) to functional space management. There is also a different approach to identifying entities capable of stabilising the urban environment. In the model by M. Šnorbert, the main regulator is the state authorities, in particular, the structures related to the protocol management of historical heritage. The study highlighted the active role of non-governmental actors – initiative associations and non-profit organisations that are able to interfere in planning processes and ensure a contour of coordination of interests between residents, entrepreneurs and municipal authorities. Thus, the difference between approaches was determined not only by the level of analysis (visual or operational), but also by assumptions about how urban conflicts were formed

and regulated. Model by M. Šnorbert proceeded from a representative logic, where the image had an independent impact, while this work pointed to the need to consider the infrastructural and regulatory conditions in which such an image arises and is perceived. As a result, strategic regulation should include not only control over visual perception, but also tools aimed at managing functional flows and sustainable spatial load distribution.

In the context of a post-Soviet city, collective memory functioned not as a closed system, but as a set of diverse practices in which administrative, local, and international actors intersected (Ivashko *et al.*, 2020; Dzyba & Savelev, 2023). The study showed that the policy regarding monuments in Bishkek did not have a centralised source and did not follow a single regulatory logic. Memorial sites, including Ala-Too Square and the Manas Ordo complex, were preserved, reconstructed, or interpreted depending on the balance between government initiatives, public demands, and external sources of support. Such an institutional structure assumed a stable coexistence of competing forms of memory. It was in this multiplicity of subjects and forms that the specifics of the city's memorial policy were contained; no one level had monopoly power over the interpretation of the past.

B. Soukupová (2020) proposed a typology of “wars” for public space, classifying conflicts by duration, material costs and number of actors. The Prague study revealed the dominance of slow conflict cycles with rare bursts of escalation. The researcher interpreted the public square as an arena of struggle between commercialisation, memorialisation, and civic activism. The study noted that negotiation models prevailed in the squares of Bishkek, in which situational coalitions of historians and residents made it possible to reach a compromise before an open conflict. The comparison showed that B. Soukupová gave priority to the symbolic capital of the place, while this study revealed the crucial role of tax-equity mechanisms and flexible urban planning expertise. It was also established that the methodology of territorial diversification of attendance (disclosed in the study through the Beyond the Old Town project Prague) can be adapted to Bishkek to redistribute flows between Ala-Too and peripheral monuments. The conducted research has documented that the implementation of projects for the preservation of historical heritage in Bishkek depended primarily on administrative predictability, regulatory certainty, and the availability of functionally justified modes of use of buildings. Successful examples, such as the reconstruction of the State Historical Museum, have demonstrated that the sustainability of monuments was ensured not by visual authenticity, but by a legally established law enforcement status, access to stable financing and public legitimisation of the project.

This configuration was opposed to those models in which the main focus was on architectural integrity and visual conformity. In particular, in the study by K. van Knippenberg & B. Boonstra (2022) called the aesthetic



consistency of objects with the surrounding buildings and the active participation of residents in maintaining the visual identity of the area the main condition for the successful restoration of the historical environment in Warsaw. These parameters were accompanied by combined financing measures, including municipal subsidies and micro grants. However, architectural integration was not a leading criterion in Bishkek. In the absence of targeted subsidies and insufficient regulatory framework, preference was given to preserving the functional significance of buildings. Historical objects involved in active use proved to be more stable regardless of their visual transformation. Thus, the main support mechanism was not stylistic conservation, but ensuring continued operation within acceptable legal and sanitary standards. In addition, the degree of participation of the local population in the restoration and reconstruction processes also differed. In the Warsaw case, the involvement of residents was organised and supported, whereas in Bishkek, citizen participation was limited to individual initiatives and was not institutionalised. This reduced the possibility of horizontal coordination and called into question the sustainability of projects without direct government or international donor support. Unlike the model proposed by K. van Knippenberg & B. Boonstra, a study on Bishkek has shown that successful renovation does not necessarily require preserving the architectural appearance. It is possible if there are legal guarantees, stable regulations for land use and mechanisms for the inclusion of citizens at the decision-making level, even if significant external changes are allowed. Aesthetic continuity may be significant, but it is not a determining condition for the sustainability of an object in an institutionally unstable environment.

## CONCLUSIONS

The study emphasised significant obstacles in safeguarding historical treasures in Bishkek amid increasing urbanisation. A significant problem was the absence of a current inventory of cultural monuments, resulting in the reversible designation of protected places. Numerous structures lost their protected status owing to assertions of deterioration or outdated functionality. Accelerated urban densification diminished sanitary zones, heightened engineering stresses, and degraded the microclimate, hence worsening the maintenance of monuments. Successful conservation initiatives, like the State Historical Museum and Manas Ordo Complex, exemplify the efficacy of integrating

governmental backing, international collaboration, and reverence for native memory practices.

Conversely, Prague exhibited enhanced institutional stability and a holistic strategy for cultural protection. The city integrated historical landscape preservation into urban development by employing a multi-tiered security system, explicit height limitations, and visual corridors. Prague received European money for restoration and digitisation initiatives, while civic engagement and collaborative design bolstered public legitimacy in the transformation of the urban landscape. Despite tourism demands, Prague preserved a balance between expansion and originality through transparent planning and urban oversight.

Rome's circumstances presented more intricate issues owing to its elevated monument density. Strict legal constraints, encompassing the notion of material patrimonialism, provided substantial protection for cultural sites exceeding 70 years of age. Technological advancements, like digital twins, sensor networks, and nanomaterials, improved conservation initiatives. Nonetheless, the city faced challenges in infrastructure improvements owing to archaeological findings and the expansion of tourists. Efforts to diversify tourist itineraries and regulate short-term rentals have been beneficial. Yet, the difficulty of reconciling the preservation of authenticity with economic sustainability persists.

Promising areas of further research include the development of digital registers of monuments, the analysis of the impact of investment projects on the loss of heritage, and the creation of models for integrating green infrastructure into protected areas. It is also necessary to investigate the mechanisms of participatory planning in post-Soviet cities. The limitations of the study were the lack of full access to the internal documentation of government agencies, the changing regulatory framework in the course of research, and insufficient availability of long-term data on the technical condition of monuments, which limited the depth of empirical analysis.

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## CONFLICT OF INTEREST

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## **Проблеми збереження історичної спадщини в умовах модернізації міського ландшафту**

**Анотація.** Актуальність дослідження полягає в тому, що в умовах прискореної модернізації міського простору в першій чверті XXI століття істотно загострилися протиріччя між стратегіями розвитку і механізмами охорони історичної спадщини, що вимагає наукового осмислення застосовуваних практик та інституціональних моделей. Метою цієї роботи було виявлення чинників, що визначали успішність або неефективність програм збереження пам'яток архітектури та містобудівного середовища в умовах зростання, інвестиційного тиску і трансформації нормативно-правових регламентів. Методологія дослідження спиралася на порівняльний аналіз правових систем, містобудівних підходів і емпіричних кейсів у трьох містах: Бішкеку, Празі та Римі. Результати дослідження продемонстрували, що ефективність охоронних стратегій безпосередньо залежала від поєднання жорсткості правового статусу об'єктів культурної спадщини, наявності економічних стимулів (субсидій, податкових пільг, програм фінансування), рівня цифрової підтримки моніторингу стану пам'яток, а також ступеня залученості місцевих громад в ухвалення містобудівних рішень. У Бішкеку фіксувалася інституційна нестабільність і правовий дуалізм, що сприяло оборотності охоронного статусу і прискореній втраті знакових об'єктів. Прага показала життєздатність багатоступеневої моделі охорони, заснованої на зонуванні та узгоджувальних механізмах, тоді як Рим продемонстрував потенціал цифрових технологій та інтеграції культурної політики з логікою «розумного міста». Зроблено висновок про те, що стійкість історичного ландшафту забезпечувалася за наявності комплексної моделі управління, що включала три взаємопов'язані компоненти: нормативний захист, економічну доцільність і технологічну адаптацію. В умовах урбанізаційного тиску саме синтез правових, технічних і соціокультурних механізмів давав змогу не тільки зберігати матеріальні шари історичної пам'яті, а й інтегрувати їх у стратегічний розвиток сучасного міського середовища

**Ключові слова:** архітектурна автентичність; глобалізація; цифровий моніторинг; реставрація; культурна ідентичність