


Chapter 14


Protection and Restoration of Cultural Heritage in Cappadocia: Tourism, Sustainability, and Conflict Risks

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ABSTRACT

This chapter examines cultural heritage conservation as a multidimensional process essential for preserving both physical assets and collective memory. Using international frameworks such as the UNESCO 2030 SDGs and ICOMOS guidelines, it emphasizes participatory and sustainable strategies. Cappadocia, a UNESCO World Heritage Site since 1985, is explored as a case study due to its unique landscape and tourism pressure. To address challenges like erosion and cultural loss, the chapter introduces the Integrated Conservation Model for Cultural Heritage (CIMC), which includes seven components: legal-political compliance, local participation, sustainable tourism, education, digital transformation, financial sustainability, and monitoring.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The conservation and restoration of cultural heritage is fundamental to ensuring the historical identity, collective memory and identity continuity of a society. Cultural heritage is not only structures or objects that have survived from the past to the present; it is also a multi-layered whole that includes the lifestyles, belief systems, social relations and spatial belonging of communities (UNESCO, 2015). According to the policy documents of international organizations such as UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) and ICOMOS (International Council on Monuments and Sites), cultural heritage conservation encompasses not only the preservation of historical values, but also the economic, social and environmental contributions to the sustainable development of societies (ICOMOS, 2017; UNESCO, 2015). Within the framework of the United Nations' 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), cultural heritage has also been identified as a development tool for “safeguarding and securing the world's cultural and natural heritage”, particularly under Target 11.4 (UN, 2015). This makes it imperative to manage cultural heritage not only on the basis of conservation, but also on the basis of participatory, inclusive and innovative approaches.

UNESCO World Heritage Sites are defined as areas recognized by the international community as having universal values and therefore need to be protected; they symbolize the handling of cultural heritage with a global understanding of shared responsibility (UNESCO, 2018). The Cappadocia region in Turkey, which was included in the World Heritage List in 1985, has an important place in this context. With its geological structure, historical layers, underground cities, rock-carved churches and frescoes, Cappadocia is not only visually aesthetic, but also an example of a cultural landscape bearing the traces of multiple civilizations (UNESCO, 2023).

Cappadocia's unique geological and cultural structure attracts millions of visitors to the region every year and contributes significantly to the local economy. However, increasing touristic activities bring with them critical sustainability issues such as physical erosion, environmental pressure and cultural erosion. In particular, the rock-carved churches and wall frescoes in Göreme Open Air Museum are severely damaged due to heavy visitor traffic, presenting a worrying picture for the protection of tangible cultural heritage (ICOMOS, 2017). On the other hand, although tourism is an important source of income for local people, limited public awareness on the long-term conservation and sustainable management of cultural heritage reduces the effectiveness of conservation efforts. In this framework, the conservation of cultural heritage sites in the Cappadocia region requires a multifaceted conservation and management approach that is not limited to physical interventions but also includes social, economic and managerial dimensions. In this context, the case of Cappadocia

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