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**MANAGING 'DIFFICULT' INTANGIBLE HERITAGE  
THROUGH THE APPLICATION OF THE LIVING HERITAGE APPROACH  
REFLECTIONS ON THE DOCUMENTARY FILM *SILENT WITNESS*  
ABOUT THE PRISON IN THE CITY OF TRIKALA, GREECE**

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**Η ΔΙΑΧΕΙΡΙΣΗ «ΔΥΣΚΟΛΗΣ» ΑΪΛΗΣ ΚΛΗΡΟΝΟΜΙΑΣ  
ΜΕΣΩ ΤΟΥ ΜΟΝΤΕΛΟΥ ΤΗΣ ΖΩΣΑΣ ΠΟΛΙΤΙΣΜΙΚΗΣ ΚΛΗΡΟΝΟΜΙΑΣ  
ΣΚΕΨΕΙΣ ΜΕ ΒΑΣΗ ΤΟ ΝΤΟΚΙΜΑΝΤΕΡ *ΣΙΩΠΗΛΟΣ ΜΑΡΤΥΡΑΣ*  
ΓΙΑ ΤΗ ΦΥΛΑΚΗ ΤΩΝ ΤΡΙΚΑΛΩΝ**

**Ioannis Poulios / Ιωάννης Πούλιος\***

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#### ΠΕΡΙΛΗΨΗ

Το παρόν άρθρο πραγματεύεται ζητήματα πολιτιστικής πολιτικής και εθνικής μνήμης, με έμφαση στη διαχείριση της «δύσκολης» πολιτισμικής κληρονομιάς της φυλακής των Τρικάλων και με αναφορά στο επιτόπιο μουσείο, αφιερωμένο στον συνθέτη Βασίλη Τσιτσάνη και στο ρεμπέτικο τραγούδι. Το άρθρο βασίζεται στο ντοκιμαντέρ «Σιωπηλός Μάρτυρας» του βραβευμένου σκηνοθέτη Δημήτρη Κουτσιμπασάκου. Αρχικά, περιγράφεται η φυλακή ως παράδειγμα «δύσκολης» πολιτισμικής κληρονομιάς και

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παρουσιάζεται η προσέγγιση του σκηνοθέτη. Στη συνέχεια, το άρθρο, ακολουθώντας τη δομή της ταινίας, εξετάζει τους τρόπους με τους οποίους διαφορετικές κοινωνικές ομάδες – όπως παρουσιάζονται στο ντοκιμαντέρ – διαχειρίζονται τη φυλακή: α) ομάδες που έχουν συνδεθεί με τη ζωή της φυλακής, π.χ. ποινικοί και πολιτικοί κρατούμενοι και δεσμοφύλακες και β) το κράτος και ο δήμος. Εξετάζονται οι θεωρητικές προσεγγίσεις που καθορίζουν τις συμπεριφορές των κοινωνικών αυτών ομάδων, δίνοντας έμφαση στο μοντέλο της «ζώσας πολιτισμικής κληρονομιάς» και στο «συμβατικό», «υλικοκεντρικό» μοντέλο διαχείρισης. Μέσα από την ανάλυση αυτή, αναδεικνύεται η συμβολή του ντοκιμαντέρ στη διαφύλαξη και τη διάδοση της μνήμης της φυλακής. Στο τέλος διατυπώνονται ορισμένες σκέψεις για τον ορισμό και τη διαφύλαξη της «δύσκολης» πολιτισμικής κληρονομιάς, καθώς και για τη σχέση της με τη βιώσιμη ανάπτυξη, και προτείνεται η ένταξη του ντοκιμαντέρ στην έκθεση του Μουσείου Τσιτσάνη. Το ντοκιμαντέρ χρησιμοποιήθηκε ως διδακτικό υλικό σε εκπαιδευτικές δραστηριότητες, στο πλαίσιο του ευρωπαϊκού προγράμματος i-Treasures, για την καταγραφή και τη διαφύλαξη της άυλης πολιτιστικής κληρονομιάς με τη χρήση νέων τεχνολογιών. Η χρηματοδότηση για τη συγγραφή του άρθρου προέρχεται από το πανεπιστήμιο University College London, στο πλαίσιο του παραπάνω προγράμματος.

Ο Ιωάννης Πούλιος είναι μέλος του Συνεργαζόμενου Επιστημονικού Προσωπικού του Ελληνικού Ανοικτού Πανεπιστημίου και σύμβουλος του Διεθνούς Κέντρου για τη Μελέτη της Προστασίας και της Συντήρησης των Πολιτιστικών Αγαθών (ICCROM). Υπήρξε επιστημονικός σύμβουλος της ταινίας *Σιωπηλός Μάρτυρας*. [jannispoulios@hotmail.com](mailto:jannispoulios@hotmail.com)

## ABSTRACT

The paper deals with the issues of cultural policy and national memory, with an emphasis on the management of the difficult heritage of the Prison in the city of Trikala, Greece, and with reference to an in situ museum dedicated to the composer Vassilis Tsitsanis and rebetiko music. The paper is based on the documentary film *Silent Witness* by the award-winning director Dimitris Koutsibasakos. At first, the Prison is presented as an example of difficult heritage, and the approach of the film director is outlined. Subsequently, the paper, following the structure of the film, discusses the diverse ways the Prison is managed by different groups portrayed in the film: a) by community groups associated with the life of the Prison, including criminal and political prisoners, and prison guards and administrators; and b) by the state and the local municipality. The underlying theoretical approaches that govern the attitude of these groups towards the Prison are examined, with an emphasis on the living heritage approach and the conventional, material-based approach to conservation. The

contribution of the film to the safeguarding and the dissemination of the memory of the Prison is highlighted. At the end, questions concerning the definition and safeguarding of difficult heritage and its link to local development are raised. A suggestion is made for the inclusion of the film as part of the Vassilis Tsitsanis Museum exhibition. The film has been used as teaching material in the public engagement activities conducted in the context of EU i-Treasures project “Intangible Treasures - Capturing the Intangible Cultural Heritage and Learning the Rare Know-How of Living Human Treasures”. Funding for the writing of this paper comes from University College London in the context of this project.

## Acknowledgements

Special thanks are owed to director Dimitris Koutsiabasakos, script writer Glykeria Patramani and to the entire team of colleagues who were involved in the making of *Silent Witness* consisting of: director of photography Haris Farros; editor sound designer Christos Giannakopoulos; music and sound mix Vaggelis Fampas; and graphic designer Costas Polatoglou. I would also like to thank the actors who played in the film, namely Costas Samaras, Giannis Agkoumis, Vasileios Dafos, Efi Hatzimanou, Maroula Kliafa, Alkiviadis Zampakas (1927-2015), Thanassis Athanasiou, and Spyros Kougioumtzoglou.

I acknowledge the contribution of Marilena Alivizatou from University College London, Stavroula Fotopoulou from the Ministry of Culture of Greece, and Nikos Grammalidis, Filareti Tsalakanidou and Kostas Dimitropoulos from the Centre for Research and Technology - Hellas, through their experience in the documentation and safeguarding of intangible heritage in the context of the i-Treasures project.<sup>1</sup> Thanks also to: John Carman for his insight on the management of difficult heritage; Ioanna Athanasatou for her insight on the connection between cinema and ideology and memory; Maroula Kliafa for sharing with me her knowledge of the history of the city and the Prison in Trikala; Maria Papadaki and Michalis Festas for the discussion we had on the conservation and management of Ottoman heritage; and Evi Mascha for her constructive comments on parts of an earlier draft of the paper.

On the latest developments in the living heritage approach, I would like to thank my supervisors at the International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property (ICCROM) Joe King and Gamini Wijesuriya.

Above all, I am grateful to my father Dimitrios Poulios for sharing with me his experiences, as well as his writings, on the mind-set and life-style of rebetes [those who play rebetiko music], particularly those in the region of Thessaly.

I would also like to thank the Ministry of Culture officials for allowing me access to the documents on the conservation of the Prison, and Dimitris Koutsiabasakos for allowing the publication of specific scenes from the film (Fig. 1, 5, and 6).

*Silent Witness* is used as teaching material for the needs of the i-Treasures project. Funding for the writing of the paper comes from University College London in the context of this project. The inclusion of the paper in the international on-line open-access journal of *Museumedu* is in accordance with the requirement of EU projects concerning the widest possible sharing of scientific knowledge.

The paper is dedicated to my father Dimitrios.

*“Prison is in the mind”*

Graffiti written by prisoners  
on the walls of the Prison in Trikala

## Introduction

The documentary film *Silent Witness*<sup>2</sup> by the award-winning film director Dimitris Koutsiabasakos deals with the Prison in the city of Trikala, Greece,<sup>3</sup> which closed down permanently in 2006. In the film, seven individuals –representatives of diverse community groups associated with the Prison– are depicted returning to the Prison site and describing their memories: a criminal prisoner, a prison guard, a prison administrator, an educator responsible for the running of the educational programmes for the prisoners, a writer-researcher on the prison archives, and two political prisoners. On a first level, the memories of these individuals are presented. On a second level, comments are made on controversial periods of contemporary local and national history such as the Civil War (1946-1949) and the Dictatorship (1967-1974). On a third level, a series of issues are touched upon, such as the efficiency of the prison system, the boundaries of freedom, the dignity and the inherent strength of the individual, the faith in democracy and ideals, as well as cultural policy and national memory.

The present paper deals with the issues of cultural policy and national memory, with an emphasis on the management of the difficult heritage of the Prison, and also with reference to an in situ museum dedicated to Vassilis Tsitsanis and rebetiko music. At first, the paper presents the Prison as an example of difficult heritage, and outlines the approach of the film director. Subsequently, the paper, following the structure of the film, discusses the diverse ways the Prison is managed by different groups: a) by the associated community groups; and b) by the State and the local Municipality. The underlying theoretical approaches that govern the attitude of these groups towards the Prison are examined, with an emphasis on the living heritage approach and the conventional, material-based approach to conservation. The contribution of the film to the safeguarding and the dissemination of the memory of the Prison is highlighted. Regarding the dissemination of the memory of the Prison, the film has been used as teaching material in the public engagement activities conducted in the context of i-Treasures project ‘Intangible Treasures - Capturing the Intangible Cultural Heritage and Learning the Rare Know-How of Living Human Treasures’. At the end, questions concerning the definition and safeguarding of difficult heritage and its link to local development are raised. A suggestion is made for the inclusion of the film as part of Vassilis Tsitsanis Museum exhibition.

In an attempt to examine the perspectives of the film director, of the local community groups and the State and the Municipality authorities, the research is based on a variety of sources: discussions with the director and the entire team of colleagues who were

involved in the making of the film, and a document composed by the director describing his approach; the local and national press; and documents of the Ministry of Culture on the conservation of the Prison. It is important to note that the author served as the scientific advisor for the film, which enabled him obtain first-hand knowledge of the approach and the process of the film-making, and, at the same time, contribute to this approach and process. The views expressed in the paper are the author's.

The contribution of the paper can be seen from different perspectives: a) a study of the connections of diverse community groups with difficult intangible heritage, and the complexities imposed on its management by the State and the Municipality authorities; b) a study of the management of difficult intangible heritage through the innovative living heritage approach; and c) a study of the role of new technologies, via cinema, in the documentation and safeguarding of intangible heritage. The paper is also linked to the most recent (December 2017) inscription of the rebetiko music on the UNESCO Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity.

Through its inclusion in the present volume of *Museumedu*, this paper attempts to disseminate the film and by extension the difficult heritage of the Prison to the academic/scientific world and to some extent to the broader public on an international level. At the same time, the link of *Museumedu* Journal to the University of Thessaly is expected to help towards the further dissemination on the local level (since the city of Trikala is in the region of Thessaly).

### **The Prison in Trikala as an example of difficult heritage**

The Prison (Picture 1) was built by the Greek State in 1896 (i.e., a few years after the liberation of the city of Trikala from the Ottoman rule in 1881) in replacement of an older prison that was constructed within the city, on the banks of Lithaios River on a piece of land owned by the 16<sup>th</sup> century Ottoman Mosque of Osman Shah Bey (Kursum) (on the Mosque, see Voyadjis 2009). In 1904, a church dedicated to Saints Constantine and Helen was built between the Prison and the Mosque, and is still in operation today. This co-existence of a mosque, a prison and a church comprise a most diverse complex in terms of functions. With the gradual expansion of the city of Trikala over the course of time, the complex was surrounded by residences, becoming thus incorporated in the city fabric. A school was later built in proximity to the Prison, enhancing the diversity of the complex.

The local administration and the local community had always been on difficult terms with the Prison. For decades, the life of the Prison was characterised by the mostly improper behaviour of the prisoners (i.e., heavy drinking, gambling and tobacco smuggling), often with the consent of the guards, by the inefficient organisation and

the lack of care on the part of the authorities, and by the prisoners' frequent escape attempts. It is not surprising to this end that in 1902, only seven years after its opening, the Prison was named "the most disgraceful and wretched prison of the country" (Minister of Justice Topanis, cited by Kliafa in the newspaper *Trikala Voice* 2014). In the 1920s, during the Greek Civil War (1946-1949) and during the Dictatorship (1967-1974), the Prison hosted not only criminal prisoners but also political, mostly leftist, prisoners.<sup>4</sup> The prisoners used to play the then popular –considered alternative, underground and even illegal– "rebetiko" music, that is, the forerunner of the contemporary popular [*laiko*] Greek music (see Vlissidis 2004; Poulios 2005). The Prison was closed down in 2006 due to the opening of a new prison on the outskirts of the city of Trikala.

After its permanent closure, the Prison became property of the Municipality of Trikala. The Municipality decided to transform the Prison buildings to a museum dedicated to Vassilis Tsitsanis and to other musicians who originated from the region of Trikala, and funding for this project was secured through EU resources (Central Archaeological Council 2011). Vassilis Tsitsanis was one of the leading Greek composers of his time and one of the founders of rebetiko and of popular/*laiko* music, with a significant contribution to the broader recognition and embracement of the rebetiko song by the mainstream society (see Alexiou 1998/2012; Loule-Theodoraki 1997). One of his most recognisable rebetiko songs was about Sakaflias, that is, a famous criminal who was kept in the prison of Trikala and was eventually assassinated by his fellow prisoners (Kliafa cited in *Sakaflias* blogspot 2012; *Trikala Zoom* journal 2015; *Mihani tou Chronou* TV series 2016).

For the transformation of the Prison into the Vassilis Tsitsanis Museum, a series of construction works had to be conducted. The construction works revealed some underlying/earlier structures, and thus the Ephorate of Antiquities, the local service for the protection of antiquities at Trikala, intervened, in order to examine the historical significance of these structures. It was shown that the latter belonged to an Ottoman Bath. The first level of the main building of the Prison complex constituted the Bath, the entrances of which were later enclosed by stones and bricks. A second level was added, while a number of secondary/supplementary buildings of the Prison complex were developed around the yard (Ephorate of Antiquities of Trikala 2015; Central Archaeological Council 2011).

The structures of the Ottoman Bath were automatically listed/protected, given that they were dated before 1832 –according to the Greek law, any structure dating before 1832 is automatically listed (Ministry of Culture 2002). However, the question was whether the Prison, which dates after 1832, would be considered of historical significance and would thus be retained, or would be removed for the sake of the Ottoman Bath. The question was brought to the Central Archaeological Council (the

ultimate heritage authority in Greece), which decided on the removal of the Prison building (Central Archaeological Council 2011) and the restoration of the Ottoman Bath (Central Archaeological Council 2011; see also Ephorate of Antiquities of Trikala 2015; and Directorate for the Conservation of Ancient and Modern Monuments 2015).



Picture 1. A view of the Prison. The Prison (in the foreground), the Church of Saints Constantine and Helen next to the Prison (on the right), and the Mosque next to the Church (in the background, on the right), within the city of Trikala. (Source: Scene of the film *Silent Witness*)

### The film and the director's approach

Koutsiabasakos started shooting the film *Silent Witness* in 2011, with the aim of documenting the memories of the Prison prior to the construction works for the transformation of the Prison into Vassilis Tsitsanis Museum. His strong interest in the subject of the Prison is also linked to his origins in the region of Trikala (personal communication with the director Dimitris Koutsiabasakos).

For the purpose of documenting the memories of the Prison, Koutsiabasakos, in collaboration with the other members of the film-making team and especially with script writer Glykeria Patramani, followed this approach (Koutsiabasakos 2014; personal communication with the director): he explained in advance the objectives of the film to the characters/representatives of the Prison community groups (giving them the context). He then brought them to the Prison site (site visit), and asked them to give a

tour around the site following a specific, pre-determined route while he was filming them (participant observation). As he described the process,

using parallel storylines, we follow each character separately as they make their way through the prison complex, recording their spontaneous reactions to every nook and cranny and the memories they give rise to (Koutsiabasakos 2014:3).

Afterwards, he asked the characters to express their views on more specific issues, such as the efficiency of the Greek prison system and the future of the Prison (interviews with open-ended questions). Most of these questions were the same for all the characters, so that common themes of narrative were maintained, while some questions were unique to each character so that the distinctive identity and role of each character was highlighted. He then collected the entire material (of approximately 42 hours), transcribed it, and montaged it. He first montaged the material of each character so that repetitions in the narrative were avoided, and then montaged the material as a whole so that he –in cooperation with the other colleagues involved in the making of the film–developed the narrative. The characters were not shown the material during the montage process; they were invited to see the complete film at its first official screening at the 18<sup>th</sup> Thessaloniki International Documentary Festival in March 2016. Here they were also given the opportunity to discuss the experiences of their life in the Prison with the audience and further elaborate on the subject.

However, by the time the film-making team thought the shooting was coming to an end, as Koutsiabasakos (2014:3) noted, “an unexpected event helped us gain new perspective on our research”: the revelation of the underlying Ottoman structures in 2011, and the decision of the Central Archaeological Council (2011) to maintain them at the expense of the Prison. Because of these unexpected developments, Koutsiabasakos decided to continue filming so that he could include this phase of the history of the Prison as well.

The camera was present in every stage of the archaeological excavation, documenting the dramatic transformation of the building's character, giving voice to the past before it was silenced forever (Koutsiabasakos 2014:3).

Archival material, mostly old photos of the city and the Prison, was made use of, thanks to the significant contribution of the local researcher-historian Maroula Kliafa, who was also one of the characters in the film (Koutsiabasakos 2014). Koutsiabasakos decided not to include the archival material within the main body of the film, so as not to interrupt the narrative of the characters' memories, a move which allows the viewers to develop their own perspective. Instead, he presented the archival material at the end of the film so that the viewers are given the opportunity to compare in a way the

'subjective' perspective he developed during the film to the 'objective' archival material (personal communication with the director).

As Koutsiabasakos (2014) noted,

The Prison itself is treated as a stand-alone character. We shot the interior in various lighting conditions (both day and night), allowing the play between light and shadow to tell different stories, depending on the season: the Prison looked totally different in the sun, in the rain or covered in snow (Koutsiabasakos 2014:3).

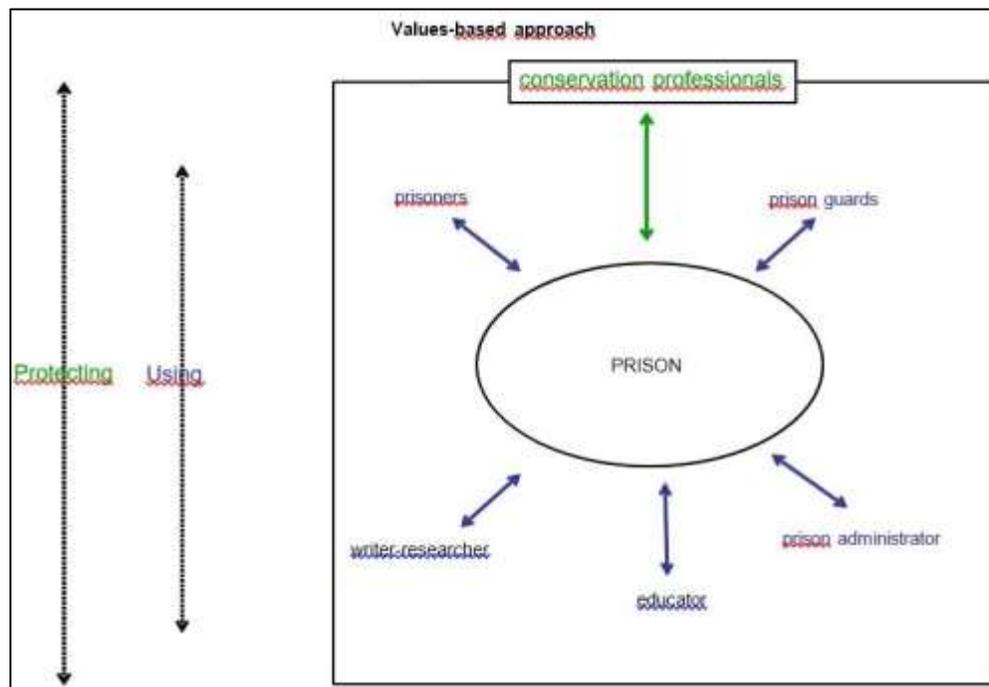
### **The management of the Prison by the community groups Application of the living heritage approach**

*Silent Witness* can be seen as consisting of two main parts. The first part depicts the seven representatives of the Prison community groups, describing their diverse memories of the Prison and their views on its significance. Specifically: The criminal prisoner describes the complexities of everyday life and the use of space in the Prison, as well as the contact with the outside world. The Prison guard refers to the prisoners' attempts to escape and the complexities faced by the guards. The Prison administrator talks about the systems of control over the prisoners, with reference to the financial archives, the criminal records and the book of testimonies of the prisoners, and to issues related to the efficiency of the prison system. The educator discusses the complexities of offering educational programmes to the prisoners and the significance of her role as an 'outsider'—not a member of the Prison personnel. The researcher-historian considers the waves of political criminals kept in the Prison, as documented in the Prison archives: first, from 1929 with the passing of a law [*"idionymon"*] by a leading politician of modern Greece, Eleftherios Venizelos, for the arrest of the then considered 'revolutionary' and 'subversive' communists, anarchists and trade unionists. And second, from 1935 with the arrests of supporters of Venizelos. The researcher-historian also points out the connection of the Prison with the development of rebetiko music, with reference to Sakaflias. The political prisoners describe the sufferings of the third and the fourth waves of political, mostly Leftist, prisoners kept in the Prison, during the Civil War (1946-1949) and the Dictatorship (1967-1974).

At first sight, *Silent Witness* seems to follow the principles of the values-based approach to heritage management (Mason 2002; Mason & Avrami 2002; Demas 2002; de la Torre 2002; de la Torre et al. 2005; Labadi 2013). Different values are ascribed to the Prison by the diverse community groups of the Prison (Figure 1). Values are associated not only with the *tangible* fabric of the Prison buildings, but also with the *intangible* memories of the community groups. In the context of the values-based approach, the Prison is not self-evident, with inherent values; it is the people who ascribe values to

it, and thus define its significance. Therefore, the main aim of the conservation of the Prison is not the preservation of the place itself, but the protection of the values imputed to it by the community groups. The values-based approach tries to engage the whole range of the Prison community groups in the conservation process, assuring subjectivity and equity of diverse community groups and different values. Development potentials for the city and the region of Trikala based on the exploitation of the Prison are sought in an attempt to serve the interests of the diverse community groups equally.

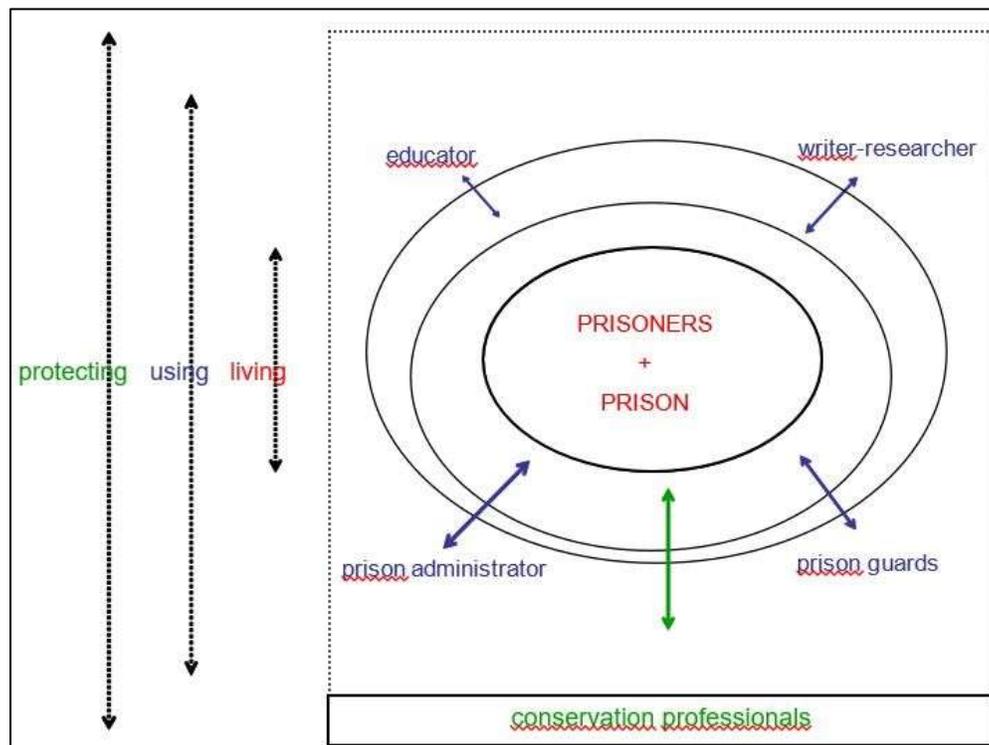
Figure 1. The values-based approach (based on Poulios 2014a)



Yet, on closer inspection, *Silent Witness* seems to be in accordance with the principles of the living heritage approach to heritage management (Wijesuriya 2000; Stovel et.al. 2005; De Caro & Wijesuriya 2012; Wijesuriya & Lee 2017; Poulios 2010; Poulios 2014a; Poulios 2014b; Poulios 2015; Poulios 2016; Kimball et.al. 2013), which could be considered –from the perspective of strategy– an innovative approach compared with the values-based one (Poulios 2014a). Emphasis is on the connection of a specific community group with the Prison – the community group that sustains the function of the Prison (continuity), and could be thus be seen as an inseparable part of the Prison, as the ‘core community’: the prisoners (Figure 2). The other community groups’ connections with the Prison are developed around the prisoners’ connection with the Prison. Examples: the administrator and the guard attempt to control the prisoners’ connection with the Prison; the educator attempts to enhance the educational value of this connection; and the researcher-historian attempts to study the archives documenting this connection. In the context of the living heritage approach, the

*intangible* memories of the Prison community groups are given priority over the *tangible* fabric of the Prison buildings (on the relationship between tangible and intangible heritage elements, see Munjeri 2004; Stovel 2004). Therefore, the aim of the conservation of the Prison is not to preserve the place itself, but safeguard the Prison within its connection with the prisoners (retaining thus its function as a prison), even if on certain occasions the fabric might be harmed. Development potentials for the city and the region are based on the prisoners' connection with the Prison (retaining thus its function as a prison).

Figure 2. The living heritage approach (based on Poullos 2014a)



### The management of the Prison in Trikala by the State and the Municipality Application of the material-based approach

The second part of *Silent Witness* is centred on the decision of the State, that is, the local Service for the Ephorate of Antiquities of Trikala and the Central Archaeological Council, to maintain the underlying Ottoman structures at the expense of the Prison, resulting in an irreversible impact on the Prison buildings and archives. The film shows the archaeologist of the local Service for the Ephorate of Antiquities of Trikala describing the significance of the Ottoman structures as a heritage monument, as well as the efforts for their maintenance.

A review of the document of the decision of the Central Archaeological Council (2011) shows the following: The Peripheral Service for the Protection of Modern Heritage and very few members of the Central Archaeological Council, on the one hand, supported the listing and by extension the protection of the Prison (specifically of the main, original building and not the later additions) as a modern heritage monument. Their key argument was that the Prison “constitutes a significant trace for the evolution of the city of Trikala in architectural and urban planning terms” (the architectural / urban planning perspective). The Ephorate of Byzantine and Post-Byzantine Antiquities of Trikala and the vast majority of the members of the Central Archaeological Council, on the other hand, were against the listing and by extension in favour of the removal of the Prison. Their key arguments were the following (cited in Central Archaeological Council 2011):

- (i) the Prison building is “not significant in architectural terms” (the architectural and archaeological perspective);
- (ii) “I would be very glad to see the Prison building vanish completely so that only the Ottoman Bath remains as an ancient structure”, in other words, the listing of the Prison building was considered to make it difficult and even impossible to reveal, protect and present the Ottoman Bath in a holistic way; yet, the Ottoman Bath is automatically listed and should therefore be given priority (the archaeological perspective);
- (iii) the Prison building is “the ugliest building” (the aesthetic perspective); and
- (iv) “I remember the prisoners even ten years ago coming out onto their balconies, and us passing by car at a distance of 5-10 meters and seeing them; it was by no means a pleasant image” (the local development perspective). The opinion against the listing and for the removal of the Prison prevailed on a majority basis.

The only intangible heritage element of the Prison that was noted during the discussion at the Central Archaeological Council was its association with Vassilis Tsitsanis, yet in a rather abstract way and eventually without taking it into consideration in the decision-making process. As a member of the Central Archaeological Council argued (cited in Central Archaeological Council 2011),

The historic interest [of the Prison building] is associated with the fact that the local musician Vassilis Tsitsanis had referred to it in one of his songs about a legendary person [Sakaflias] (Central Archaeological Council 2011:13).

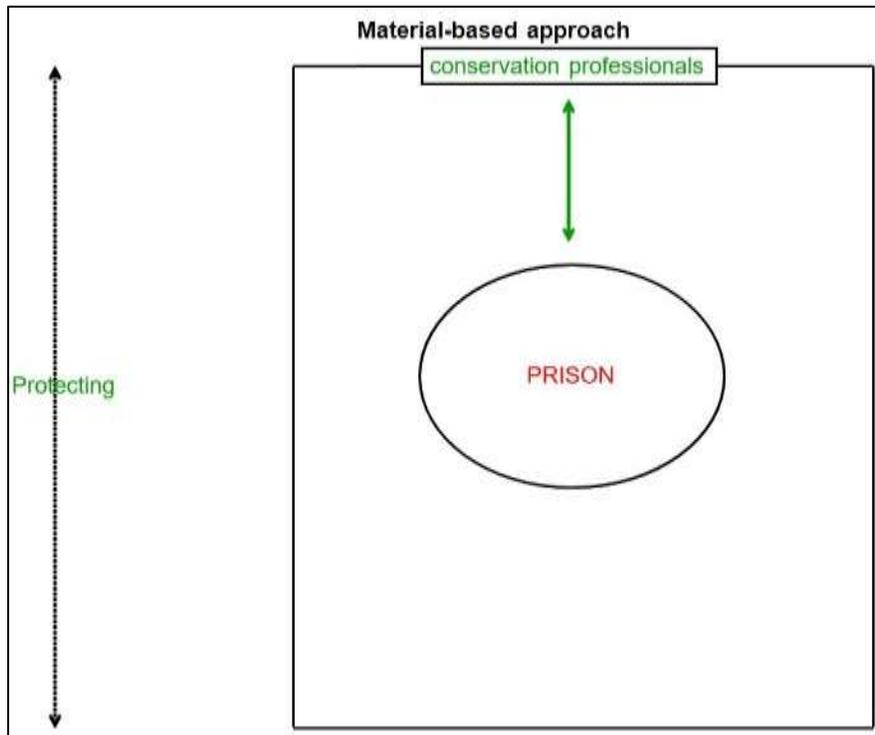
The memories of the Prison community groups and the association of the Prison with the Civil War and the Dictatorship were ignored. This fact might demonstrate the State’s lack of interest in safeguarding the prisoners’ connection –let alone the other community groups’ connections– with the Prison, after it was closed.

Yet, as the representatives of the Prison community groups claim in the film *Silent Witness*, the State did not seem to be particularly concerned with the prisoners' connection –let alone the other community groups' connections– with the Prison even when the Prison was in operation in the first place. This observation can be reinforced by a series of issues noted in the film: despite the efforts of the Prison administrators and guards, the prison system is portrayed as a rather inefficient (e.g., all prisoners kept together, with no classification that would make a distinction according to sentences, crimes, age etc.; lacking space capacity for the given number of the prisoners), unfair and in some cases even an illegal entity (e.g., detaining a female prisoner in a male prison); crimes conducted by the prisoners (e.g., rapes of fellow prisoners) remained unpunished; and the school for the prisoners, despite the efforts of the educators, is portrayed as rather ineffective (e.g., no feedback for the educational programmes; no continuation of the educational programmes; and the teaching of French, which can be of no help to the prisoners in their life and work after their release).

As far as the Municipality of Trikala is concerned, its decision to transform the former Prison into the Vassilis Tsitsanis Museum could be seen as an attempt to seek an alternative way of branding the city and the region of Trikala and developing local, national and international tourism (*Naftemporiki* newspaper 2014), besides more established ways of branding based, for example, on the nearby UNESCO World Heritage Site of Meteora (see Poulios 2014b).

The State and the Municipality tend to follow the material-based approach –or the so-called 'conventional' approach, also referred to as 'authorised heritage discourse' (Smith 2006: 299; see also Poulios 2014a). Extreme focus is on the preservation of the *material/fabric* of the Prison, while the *intangible* memories of the Prison community groups are ignored. The material-based approach is an expert-driven approach: the exclusive responsibility over the definition and conservation of the Prison is in the hands of the authorities (mostly state-appointed), in other words, the conservation professionals and the political officials, while the Prison community groups are not taken into account (Figure 3). In the context of the material-based approach, the significance of the Prison, namely defined in archaeological/historic and aesthetic terms, is seen as inherent in the fabric. The aim of the conservation of the Prison is to preserve its building, seen as belonging to the past, from the Prison community groups' connections of the present that are considered to be harmful, and to transmit it to future generations. The development of the region and the city are sought exclusively in accordance with the interests of the authorities and are based on the protection and exploitation of the fabric of the Prison.

Figure 3. The material-based approach (based on Poulios 2014a)



### The management of the Prison in Trikala by the State and the Municipality vs. the Prison community groups: the material-based approach vs. the living heritage approach

At the end of the *Silent Witness*, the representatives of the Prison community groups, as Koutsiabasakos (2014) characteristically noted, “return to the ‘scene of the crime’, wandering around the ruins of the Ottoman Bath [...] in a tragic attempt to trace their own past” (Koutsiabasakos 2014:3).

The film shows that, despite the feelings and the efforts of the representatives of the Prison community groups for the safeguarding of the Prison, the State and the Municipality succeeded in implementing their decision: the removal of the Prison buildings and archives, and the formation of the Vassilis Tsitsanis Museum. The view expressed by some of the Prison community groups that a part of the original Prison building could have been retained intact as part of the Vassilis Tsitsanis Museum (Kliafa cited in *TrikalaIn* journal 2011; Kliafa cited in *Trikala Voice* newspaper 2014) was not taken into account. Even the museological study for the Vassilis Tsitsanis Museum does not include the history of the Prison in its narrative. The result may be summarised as follows:

Upon the completion of the [construction] works, a timeless and multicultural space will be opened to the public: a purely archaeological site built on an architectural and historical foundation on the ground floor and on the upper floor a space, which will resonate with the creative spirit of the musical composers of Trikala. These two areas will comprise two separate spaces, with improved accessibility and will contribute to tourism promotion of the city and to local development (*Naftemporiki* newspaper 2014).

*Silent Witness* ends with the depiction of the demolition of the Prison buildings and archives in connection with the Sepulchral procession taking place at the neighbouring church of Saints Constantine and Helen on a Good Friday (Picture 2) –suggesting a symbolic parallelism between the Passion and Death of Christ and the demolition/‘death’ of the Prison.



Picture 2. The Sepulchral Procession taking place at the church of Saints Constantine and Helen passes outside the Prison. (Scene of the film *Silent Witness*)

The final scene of the film depicts the representatives of the Prison community groups illuminated by the light that enters the Prison under demolition (Picture 3) –implying a symbolic parallelism between the Resurrection of Christ, that is, the Victory of Christ against Death, and the prevalence/victory of the memory of the Prison. To this end, the original title of the film in Greek “Siopilos Martyras” means not only ‘silent witness’ but also ‘silent martyr’ – implying the Prison’s passion/‘death’ as well as its ultimate victory.



Picture 3. The final scene of the film: the representatives of the Prison community groups illuminated by the light that enters the Prison under demolition. (Source: scene of *Silent Witness*)

In this way, *Silent Witness* implies that despite the impact on *tangible* buildings and archives of the Prison, it is the *intangible* memory of the Prison that prevails at the end. The film itself contributes to this prevalence of the memory of the Prison through its contribution to its documentation and safeguarding, as well as its dissemination.

Regarding the dissemination of memory in particular, the mobility of the film as a mass medium, thanks to its capacity to be shown on different locations/cinemas, on TV and also through the web, helps significantly towards accessing a wide range of audiences such as schools, universities, museums and the broader public –hence the strong educational value of the film. A characteristic example to this end was the use of the film as reading material in the context of i-Treasures project “Intangible Treasures – Capturing the Intangible Cultural Heritage and Learning the Rare Know-How of Living Human Treasures”.

The i-Treasures project makes use of new technologies in heritage education and transmission by going beyond the digitisation of expressions of intangible heritage purely for archival purposes, aiming at not simply the documentation but, in fact, the further/continual creation of heritage<sup>5</sup> (Pozzi, Dagnino, Poulios & Alivizatou 2017). Abstracts of *Silent Witness* were shown at a series of public engagement activities conducted in the context of the project, namely: (i) the pilot cross-disciplinary MA programme ‘New Technology Applications for Education’ at the University of Thessaloniki, Greece (April-June 2016); and (ii) the training workshop that was

organized in the city of Thessaloniki in collaboration with the Folklife and Ethnological Museum of Macedonia in Thessaloniki and with the participation of heritage professionals from museums and heritage institutions, local NGOs and local administrations and communities (September 2016). These courses focused on the application of ethnographic methods in the documentation and safeguarding of intangible heritage, such as those applied by the film director, that is, the site visit, the participant observation, and the interviews.

## Conclusions

*Silent Witness* deals with the definition and safeguarding of a series of examples of difficult heritage:

a) *The Ottoman Bath*. In the 1890s, the State / heritage authorities did not consider the structures of the Ottoman Bath to be of historical significance, and allowed for the construction of the Prison. At that time, it was difficult for Ottoman structures to be considered heritage, mostly for political reasons linked to the then rather recent Greek Revolution against the Ottomans and to the relations between the Greek and the Turkish states. Today, the State heritage authorities tend to increasingly recognize the historical significance of the Ottoman structures and aim at revealing, protecting and presenting the Ottoman structures in a holistic way, with a future ambition of forming an archaeological park that would unify all the Ottoman structures of the area embracing the Mosque and the Bath and also with the opening of a café in the area (*Trikala Voice* newspaper 2016), in search of an alternative way of branding the city and the region of Trikala based on its Ottoman past. This fact may demonstrate that the political conditions have largely changed in favour of the protection and promotion of the Ottoman heritage (see Stefanidou 2009).

b) *Rebetiko Music*. In the 1960s, the Municipality of Trikala, with the consent of the State heritage authorities, allowed the demolition of the house and the shop of Vassilis Tsitsanis in the city of Trikala (despite the opposition of his family), in favour of the construction of large blocks of flats, in the context of a rather unrestricted expansion of the fabric of the cities in the name of local development. At that time, rebetiko music was still considered underground and even illegal and thus its safeguarding was beyond discussion (see Georgiadis 1993). Today, the Municipality of Trikala has decided to dedicate a museum to Vassilis Tsitsanis out of respect for rebetiko music, as an alternative way of branding the city and the region of Trikala. Today, the historical significance of rebetiko music is increasingly being recognised: rebetiko is included in the Ministry of Culture List of Intangible Cultural Heritage (Ministry of Culture Intangible Heritage 2016) and also in the UNESCO Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity (UNESCO Intangible Heritage 2017).

c) *The Prison*. Nowadays, the State heritage authorities do not recognise the historical significance of the Prison and decided to remove the Prison buildings and archives. This decision shows that the protection of a prison that is associated with controversial periods of local and national history is still largely avoided (see also Athanassatou 1999). Furthermore, by allowing the demolition of the Prison that was linked to the development of rebetiko music and to the Tsitsanis' song about Sakaflias and by failing to consider alternate locations/buildings in the city of Trikala for the formation of the Museum, the Municipality with the consent of the State heritage authorities has chosen to distance itself from the ostensibly 'unsafe' aspect of rebetiko music that is associated with the Prison, the behaviour of the prisoners and the problems caused to the local community and administration, and to retain only the so-called 'safer' view of rebetiko music associated with the songs and the figure of Vassilis Tsitsanis.

The review of these examples of difficult heritage seems to suggest that the State and the Municipality, following the material-based approach with the experts retaining exclusive power and not involving the community, have distanced themselves from the difficult, seemingly 'unsafe' present (i.e., the Prison) and sought heritage protection and local development models in the presumably 'safer', more distant or more recent past (i.e., the Ottoman structures and rebetiko music, respectively). By not focusing on the memories of the Prison, the current museological study for the Vassilis Tsitsanis Museum reflects this approach. The result is that the State and the Municipality tend to become anchored to the continually changing political circumstances and, despite their opposite intentions and efforts, end up contributing to the demolition and the negligence rather than the safeguarding of heritage elements over the course of time.

In contradiction, by following the living heritage approach, which encourages the empowerment of the community on the basis of the function of the Prison, *Silent Witness* suggests an alternate model towards heritage management and local development centred on the difficult present. To this end, a change in the museological study for the Vassilis Tsitsanis Museum is suggested so that it focuses on the memories of the Prison by showing abstracts of the *Silent Witness* as part of its exhibition.<sup>6</sup> The suggested change is expected to enhance the visitors' understanding of the history and the memories of the Prison in connection to rebetiko music and to Vassilis Tsitsanis. In this way, the Museum exhibition will not only include a significant part of the modern history of the place that hosts it but also embrace the very reason (i.e., the Prison) that its subject matter developed (i.e., the rebetiko music in Trikala). It is tempting to argue that this suggestion may be seen as the least possible on the part of the State and the Municipality to make up for the loss of the Prison building and archive.

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## Notes

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<sup>1</sup> The EU i-Treasures project can be found at: <http://i-treasures.eu> (retrieved 5/9/2016).

<sup>2</sup> The film is currently competing in national and international documentary film festivals starting from the 18<sup>th</sup> Thessaloniki International Documentary Festival in March 2016. The trailer of the film can be found at: <https://vimeo.com/175177470> (retrieved 5/9/2016).

<sup>3</sup> Trikala is a city of approximately 80,000 inhabitants, located approximately 330 km north-west of Athens.

<sup>4</sup> The celebration for the 97<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Communist Party of Greece (KKE) in the yard of the Prison in July 2016 should be seen in this context (ERT TV news 2016).

<sup>5</sup> See <http://www.i-treasures.eu> (retrieved 5/9/2016).

<sup>6</sup> On the complexities of including intangible heritage elements in museum exhibitions, see Alivizatou 2012.