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**UNESCO Chair in Cultural Policy and Management**

*Master thesis:*

**“CHRONICLE IN STONE”- A CONCEPT FOR THE  
GJIROKASTRA CITY MUSEUM“**

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## **Abstract**

The purpose of this thesis is to propose a concept for the future historic museum of the city of Gjirokastra, in the south of Albania. This city, which has been nominated UNESCO world heritage, needs a point of reference for the visitors. At the same time, lack of care for the precious heritage has to be counteracted by raising awareness campaigns, which could take place in the museum.

By taking into account the roles that the museum has to fulfil, but also the concrete material and political conditions, and getting inspired by the current museological theory and examples of success in similar situations, a proposal will be made for the strategy to adopt to put in place the museum and for some guide lines of the exhibition.

The project for an historical museum in Gjirokastra exists in reality and was initiated by a local organization (Gjirokastra Conservation and Development Organization). The selection of the content and ideas of presentation were already developed but a harmonized concept is missing. Apart from the concept, the factors which created difficulties for the set up of the museum will be examined.

Firstly a description of the context will enable to understand the history of the city, the present situation and the actors involved in the creation of the new museum. The steps that were already undertaken for the realization of the project will be briefly presented.

To build on solid foundations, by starting from new museology, we will try to define what a museum really is, relying on notions such as interaction and new technologies, contemporary creation, and society museum or eco-museum.

Afterwards, the chosen examples will be the following: the stone city of Mardin, Turkey ; the visitor center in Vat Phou, Thailand ; the museum in Lowell, Massachusetts, USA ; the Musée du Pays de la Roudoule and the Maison du Visiteur, Vézelay in France. They will be presented and analysed to deduct the lessons to learn for the creation of a museum in Gjirokastra.

Then, a strategy will be proposed to lead the museum project in the best way possible. A few suggestions will be given for most suitable solutions for the Gjirokastra situation. A concept for an historical museum will be proposed, following the line of GCDO, but we will also consider other perspectives.

In the conclusion, our thoughts after the research done will be exposed, regarding the need for the museum in the actual context. In this particular case, it is not a museum but rather an independant center for interpretation for the visitors which would be necessary, which would have a small exhibition and also organize punctual events. Such a center would be easier to run, with lighter responsibilities and costs, and would meet the need that tourists have for orientation and interpretation. At the same time it would give keys for interpretation to the local citizen and would provide cultural events, which are missing in the city. A real museum could be considered in a second phase.

But first of all, we believe that the priority is in-dept work with the local community, rather than actions directed to satisfy the tourists. This will be the only solution to create a sustainable economical and cultural development in the city of Gjirokastra. Such work will enable to take decisions which will be supported by the population. In this specific case, sensibilisation to the active role that a citizen can have is necessary in order to make inhabitants aware of the part they can take in their own city life.

This thesis has been written in English (instead of French) to provide a better access to the local actors implied in the museum project. It can also serve as an introduction for readers from Western Europe to problems that countries face which are still « in transition » after the fall of communism. We hope that it will shed a light on some of the factors which prevent the establishment of museums with the same standards as the big occidental museums.

## Résumé (French)

L'objet de ce mémoire est de proposer un concept pour le futur musée historique de la ville de Gjirokastra au sud de l'Albanie. Cette ville, étant classé patrimoine mondial de l'UNESCO, a besoin d'un point de référence pour les visiteurs. En même temps une certaine négligence du précieux patrimoine a besoin d'être contrecarrée par une campagne de prise de conscience, qui peut avoir lieu au sein du musée.

En tenant compte des rôles que doit remplir le musée, mais aussi des conditions matérielles et politiques concrètes, et en s'inspirant de la théorie muséologique actuelle ainsi que d'exemples de réussites dans des situations similaires, une proposition sera faite quant à la stratégie à adopter pour la mise en place du musée et quant aux « fils rouges » de l'exposition.

Le projet d'un musée historique à Gjirokastra existe réellement, et a été initié par une organisation locale (Gjirokastra Conservation and Development Organization). La sélection du contenu et des idées de présentation ont déjà été élaborés mais il manque un concept harmonisé. Mis à part le concept, nous allons aussi simplement examiner les facteurs qui créent des difficultés pour la mise en place du musée.

Tout d'abord une description du contexte permettra de comprendre l'histoire de la ville, la situation présente et les acteurs impliqués dans le projet de création du nouveau musée. Les démarches déjà accomplies pour la réalisation du projet seront brièvement présentées.

Pour bâtir sur des fondements solides, en partant de la nouvelle muséologie, nous tenterons de définir ce qu'est un musée en s'appuyant sur les notions d'interaction et nouvelles technologies, de création contemporaine, et de musée de société ou écomusée.

Ensuite, les exemples choisis seront les suivants: la ville de pierre Mardin, Turquie ; le centre de visiteurs à Vat Phou, Thaïlande ; le musée de Lowell, Massachussetts, USA ; le Musée du Pays de la Roudoule et La Maison du Visiteur à Vézelay en France. Ils seront présentés puis analysés pour en déduire les leçons à retenir pour la création d'un musée à Gjirokastra.

Par la suite une stratégie sera proposée pour mener au mieux possible le projet du musée. Nous ferons quelques propositions quant aux solutions les plus adaptés à la situation de Gjirokastra. Nous proposerons un concept de musée historique, allant dans une lignée similaire à celle de GCDO, mais non nous permettrons aussi d'envisager d'autres perspectives.

Dans la conclusion, nous exposerons nos réflexions suite au travail de recherche accompli, quant à la nécessité de ce musée dans le contexte actuel. Dans ce cas précis, ce n'est pas un musée qui serait nécessaire mais plutôt un centre d'interprétation indépendant pour les visiteurs qui aurait une petite exposition et organiserait aussi des événements ponctuels. Un tel centre serait plus facile à gérer, avec des responsabilités et charges moins lourdes à assumer et irait à l'encontre du besoin d'orientation et d'interprétation que rencontrent les touristes. En même temps il donnerait des clefs d'interprétation au citoyen local et pourvoierait à l'offre d'événements culturels, qui manquent dans la ville. Un réel musée pourrait être envisagé dans un second temps.

Mais tout d'abord, nous pensons que la priorité est un travail en profondeur avec la communauté locale, plutôt qu'une action dirigée vers la satisfaction du touriste. Cela sera la seule solution pour créer la base d'un développement économique et culturel durable de la ville de Gjirokastra. Un tel travail permettra de prendre des décisions qui seront soutenues par la population. Dans ce cas précis, une sensibilisation au rôle actif que peut avoir le citoyen est nécessaire pour que les habitants prennent conscience du rôle qu'ils peuvent jouer dans la vie de leur propre ville.

Ce mémoire a été rédigé en anglais pour permettre une meilleure accessibilité aux personnes qui sont les plus concernés par ce mémoire, c'est-à-dire les acteurs locaux impliqués dans le projet de musée de la ville. Il pourra aussi servir d'introduction pour les lecteurs d'Europe occidentale aux problèmes que peuvent rencontrer les pays encore « en transition » après la chute du communisme. Nous espérons qu'il pourra éclaircir certains facteurs qui empêchent l'établissement de musées ayant les mêmes standards que les grands musées occidentaux.

## Introduction

During a restoration camp organized in Gjirokastra, Albania, by the organization Cultural Heritage without Borders (CHwB) I had the chance to discover the richness of the old town and became enthusiastic about contributing to the development and presentation of its treasures, especially as it seemed that these were being somehow neglected.

Gjirokastra has been a protected “museum city” for quite some time although it got listed in the UNESCO World Heritage only in 2005. However, this official status doesn’t mean that enough has happened to preserve the traditional architecture and culture of the town.

There are people and some organizations who wish to do something for Gjirokastra, but this is not that simple because the state institutions that are responsible for preservation are very bureaucratic and because there is a lack of collaboration between the different institutions and organizations. Accordingly, it is harder to agree on what has to be done and to find international funding sources.

Presently there are two museums in the old town but there is a plan to create a third one, as a central city museum about the history and the inhabitants of Gjirokastra. As a student in the field of Cultural Heritage, Cultural Tourism and Museum Management, it was an exciting proposal for me when I got the opportunity to work on the concept for this museum.

At first I saw this as a challenge to connect new museology theory with actual practice and I considered my task to be the thinking about a suitable location and presentation, using contemporary museological means, while maintaining the dialogue with the actual actors working on the project. But after some exchanges with the main organization responsible for the project, Gjirokastra Conservation and Development Organization (GCDO), I realized that it is not so much about creating a concept for the best museum according to new standards, but more about how to implement the museology theories as good as possible, in a context which is critical, with limited resources.

My approach will not be that of a consultant who examines the situation in a short period of time and then goes back home to his office to write his paper. On the contrary, I will spend all the summer in Gjirokastra to follow the activities of GCDO on the field and to try as much as

possible to get a grip on the local context. I see my new challenge as getting as close as I can to the local actors, try to connect them and work together on a feasible museum which will benefit the community as a whole.

Unfortunately GCDO has no separated team in charge for the museum project, and has to finish the museum proposal and implementation in a short amount of time, so that I have to keep a certain distance, in order not to be caught in the rush and being unable to reflect on the content. This will mean that my work will maybe not be as useful as needed because it comes in somewhat late and the conditions are precarious. However I hope that my research will be fruitful for the museum somehow.

## **Methodology**

The actual script for the museum which was presented to me seemed to be very traditional, to have too many elements, and to lack a proper location. The plan is to locate the museum in an exhibition room inside the city castle, but this space is limited, humid and cold. When I talk about a 'traditional' script I mean one where the means of presentation are traditional: a narrative museum script, illustrated by some objects or pictures, without space for questioning and interaction. I thought it would be necessary to adapt the current concept proposal to new museology standards, including interactivity and new media- and possibly also contemporary art. In this context, contemporary art means creation of new works which are a way to develop creative dialogues between the past and the current audience. They enable communication through a different mode than text or illustration. It could be good to suggest also other solutions for the location.

The theories with which I became acquainted in my master studies stipulate that interaction is a way to involve the visitor and make him active in the reflection process. Hooper-Greenhill mentions in her book *Museum and Education* the fact that 'there is an increasing awareness of the power of culture', and museums 'construct a view, present a story and produces resources for learning' (Hooper-Greenhill, 2007: 2). In the same book Hooper-Greenhill says that 'culture works to represent, reproduce and constitute self-identities and this entails a sense of social and ethical responsibility' (*ibid.*: 1) This means that the museum should not only present its particular views and provide a readymade story imposed as a product for

consumption, but it should stimulate the visitors' curiosity to do their own research and to take a standpoint.

Today there is also this view that museums should participate in current debates (Svanberg, 2010: 20) and, in the case of an historical museum, it raises the question of connecting the past with the actual situation. I would like to start from these considerations in order to create my museum concept. My project would be, as the director of the Museum of Yugoslav History in Belgrade Katarina Zivanović said (*ibid.*: 58) , to try to communicate with the “outside world” by ‘creating a context for creativity and innovation by rethinking the museum as an inclusive project, a space for public participation that incorporates different initiatives, ideas, mental and material exchanges.’ Of course in a more traditional history museum in a heritage site this idea has to be adapted, but I hope to succeed in including these innovative elements to the particular context of Gjirokastra.

In order to create a successful concept for the Gjirokastra city museum, I will have to look at other successful examples. I will examine (study case) the Maison du Visiteur in Vézelay (France) which managed to create a central place in a small location, using interactive means, in order to provide the visitors with a basic introduction and make them curious to visit the heritage sites of the town and its surroundings. I will use my observations from when I was doing a one month internship in this institution, as well as written material about the concept of the Maison du Visiteur and interviews with the concept creators of the place. I will also take the example of Mardin in Turkey, an Ottoman town from stone, slightly similar to Gjirokastra and a visitor center in the UNESCO site Vat Phou, Thailand. Inspiration will also be taken from the examples of the French Eco-museum (Musée du pays de la Roudoule), and the art museum (The Revolving Museum) based on community collaboration in the ex-industrial town Lowell, Massachusetts.

I will also conduct a few interviews with Gjirokastra locals and cultural actors, and with visiting tourists to get an idea of wishes, needs and impressions related to the creation of a new museum.

Additionally theoretical background from the museology field will be used to propose methods for presentation of the Gjirokastra history. The respondents in the interviews will have the role of helping me checking the museology theories with the reality of people's expectations of a city museum.

As people's expectations are not the only factor to take into account, I will also take into consideration material constraints, such as for example the fact that in Albania there is limited museum space available and that the 300m<sup>2</sup> available are considered to be a lot, or the fact that equipment and resources are limited.

Aside from work on the content, presentation and audience, my focus will be on the cultural policy and practices in this particular context, as the museum concept has to be anchored in reality. In the first part, called "Context", I will map the different actors and give an as accurate picture as possible of all the factors playing in the creation of the city museum.

In order not to stay an outsider in the development of the concept, I am in intensive contact with the GCDO. The summer months spent in Gjirokastra will be devoted to collaboration with GCDO, focusing on the museum issue. The thesis will be written in parallel to the practical observations collected during this time, to make sure that my concept proposal is in tune with the local situation.

As far as possible, efforts will be made to learn the Albanian language, as it is of crucial importance to understand key documents and communicate with the local actors. I believe that this 'method' is the only relevant way to be successful in international collaboration, as it has been too often the case that models have been imposed from above by the international community without taking into account cultural specificities and practices. For the interviews, I will use an Albanian speaking colleague to facilitate the communication.

In general this thesis is part of a long term personal project of involvement in developing Gjirokastra's cultural and economical potential. The thesis could be followed by a one year internship, either at GCDO to continue working on the museum and hopefully see it realized, either in another organization of the town (CHwB or UNESCO club) to contribute in a more suitable way to cultural development, if the museum turns out to be too difficult to implement in such a short time. Instead of an internship I could also set up an independent project for revitalization and creating of cultural life in the town.

The **main objective** of this thesis is to create a concept for the city museum which will on the one hand make locals proud of their city and aware of its potential and on the other hand attract tourists, make them willing to explore the surroundings. Such a museum will result in lasting interest and engagement from both sides for keeping alive the traditions and heritage of Gjirokastra. To achieve this, the community should have an active role in the shaping of

the museum programs, in order for the museum to reflect the contemporary development of this same community. On the other hand, a lot of work has to be done in the institutional field to be able to develop a sustainable project. Taking this in consideration, my thesis research will also be a modest attempt to find solutions for the various difficulties regarding cultural policy issues.

The three **main hypotheses** are:

- Gjirokastra needs a museum that provides an introduction to the history and present state of the city and its surroundings for visitors as well as for the local community, in order to be able to develop in a sustainable way through cultural tourism as a part of UNESCO Cultural World Heritage.
- A successful concept for the city museum of Gjirokastra can be created through an interactive approach with local community, museum professionals and visitors, and through the use of new technologies and contemporary creation as a mediator of ideas.
- The institutional and financial situation of the country, municipality and GCDO has to be seriously taken into account in order to be able to create a sustainable museum.

**Underlying hypotheses** are:

- An introductory museum to the city's past and present is the way to open up a large audience to the richness of a certain place and its potential for the future.
- The current audience needs to feel implicated in the story that is told to them.
- New museological approaches have to be used in order to achieve this implication.
- A traditional historical museum which doesn't raise questions/open up space for dialogue is failing to get the audience acquainted with the heritage of a certain place.

- Cultural tourism is about discovering the Other and the history through active learning and experience, which will leave traces in the mind and heart of the visitor.
- Political and economical factors can never be denied in cultural work.
- The key to success for the proper realization of a project is to have a management team which is specifically in charge of the setting-up of the project, and provides training of locals to provide a professionally qualified team that will ensure the follow up and sustainability of the project.

## **A. Context**

### **1. Gjirokastra museum city (brief history)**

Gjirokastra is an old town situated in South-Albania. The first historical reference to the settlement was in 1336, but it is assumed that there was already some kind of fortification in pre-Roman times. From the end of the 14th century the city fell in the hand of the Ottomans and this was the case until the Albanian independence in 1912. The Ottoman period had a great influence on the architecture of the town, but the natural conditions (locations on a steep hill, and local materials like lime stone) give it a particular style. The fact that rich landowners lived there, and not that much craftsmen and traders, makes the architecture different than that of Berat<sup>1</sup> for example. The independent *kulle* or fortified two storage tower houses (16th /17th century) have specific features that you find only in Gjirokastra. Apart from this, the town also has a bazaar, an 18th-century mosque and two churches of the same period.

Thanks to the fact that the city was declared “museum city” at an early stage<sup>2</sup>, the buildings have been well preserved. It was only after the fall of communism in 1992 that they became neglected, both by the state and the people.

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<sup>1</sup> Other UNESCO town in South Albania. There the houses are all side by side.

<sup>2</sup> The city was declared “museum city” in 1961 by the communist regime in order to preserve its unique heritage

However, by 2001 the Gjirokastra Conservation and Development Organization started its work (GCDO, first under the name GCO) to conserve, revitalize and promote the historic city. During a public workshop with the local community, an UNESCO representative was present and he pledged for the inscription of Gjirokastra as World Heritage. In 2005 the UNESCO nomination became reality and gave new input for preservation and transmission of heritage.

During the communist time, because the city was a “museum-city”, seven museums were created in order to show the grandeur of the town:

- Education museum (GCDO office/Obelisk location)
- Ethnographical museum (Skenduli house)
- National Liberation War museum (Hoxha house)
- Armament museum (Castle)
- Albanian Renaissance museum (Topulli house)
- Archeological Gallery (Zekate house)
- Women and Press museum (unknown location)

There was also an extended Fine Art gallery (Babameto II and whole street) at that time, which closed after the fall of communism because the houses were returned to the owners. The paintings are nowadays kept in a depot in the castle.

Today, regardless of the architectural sites, there are only two museums in the old town. The current ethnographical museum exists since 1991, in the space which has been used as National Liberation War Museum from 1966 onwards. The National Armaments Museum, created in 1977, is hosted in the citadel, in what was once the prison.

Presently, since a few years, GCDO is considering to open a museum about the history of Gjirokastra and the Drino valley where it is situated. This museum called “Chronicle in stone”<sup>3</sup> would serve as a starting point for exploration of the city and its surrounding and would be a first introduction for newcomers.

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<sup>3</sup> The famous Gjirokastra writer Ismail Kadare “donated” to the museum the name of his similarly called book about Gjirokastra.

## 2. Actual situation in Gjirokastra

At this moment the Municipality of Gjirokastra counts around 35 000 inhabitants, although a lot of them don't live on permanent base in the city. We could say that Gjirokastra starts to revive, but there is still a lot to do.

### **Cultural actors**

It is firstly important to mention the two main institutions, beside the Gjirokastra municipality itself, which manage the buildings of the historical town.

The Ministry of Tourism, Culture, Youth and Sport is managing the Citadel, but also the religious buildings and first<sup>4</sup> and second category houses<sup>5</sup>. This doesn't mean that the Ministry owns the buildings, but owners are accountable for any change they would want to make. This is true in theory, but in reality a lot of illegal and uncontrolled interventions are undertaken.

Then the Institute of Monuments, which has a Regional Directorate for the Gjirokastra prefecture<sup>6</sup> is monitoring monuments according to regulations, writing reports and creating projects. This doesn't always happen but this is another story.

The main and crucial problem is corruption and lack of investment from the institutions, especially on the level of the municipality. This is completely blocking any kind of real and sustainable development. The following organizations which we are going to mention are doing projects and interventions with external funds, but they stay small and don't have impact on the long run because of this issue.

Several local and regional organizations are settled in the city. Since 2001 the GCDO has its office in a restored house in the old center. At this moment the organization is active, through the Artisan center, to keep alive local craftsmanship, supported by several donors. In addition

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<sup>4</sup> House, from which the outside and inside have to be preserved.

<sup>5</sup> House, from which the outside has to be preserved but the inside can be adapted (to modern needs).

<sup>6</sup> In its administrative division the Gjirokastra Prefecture has 3 districts (Gjirokaster, Tepelene, Pemet), 6 municipalities (Gjirokastra, Libohova, Permeti, Kelcyre, Tepelena and MeMalliaj), 26 communes and 271 villages.

to that, the Swiss Cultural Foundation funded a training program for educating 10 persons in traditional building and crafts. This program is about to end (End of June 2011) and there is need for new funds to pursue this program. GCDO also conducted other initiatives like the creation of a Tourist Information Center and restoration works.

Following the recommendations of the GCDO and the Albanian Ministry of Tourism, Culture, Youth and Sport, and due to extensive need that the World Heritage Site of Gjirokastra had in terms of actual restoration and revitalization, the organization Cultural Heritage without Borders (CHWB) started its work in 2007. The organization has its office since 2009 in a part of the GCDO premises, and organizes restoration camps twice a year in collaboration with Polis University (since 2 years) and with the State University of Tirana (1<sup>st</sup> time in April 2011). These camps have the aim to preserve and restore the local buildings which are damaged. In 2009 the "Gjirokastra 2009-2011" project started with restoration works on two monuments, one of first and one of second category, owned by the Babameto family. Restoration camps there began in 2010. The Babameto I house is planned to be a hotel and the project for the Babameto II house is still open. Tenders have been held to find the building company who will realize the restoration and now that the selection has been done the works will start by mid-july.

A Gjirokastra UNESCO club has just been founded in May 2011 by well-known artists, journalists, writers and architects from the town and its surroundings in order to promote cultural heritage values, which contribute to economical and social welfare by bringing a sense of identity, creating a dialogue between generations, providing opportunities for the present and future, and in this way increase the quality of life.

There are also some individuals who are buying houses to restore and make shops/cafes out of it but this is still a minority.

We can also mention some youth organizations in the city like the "Friends of Monuments", encouraged by GCDO in Gjirokastra high schools. Unfortunately the high school last three years and most of the pupils leave the city after to study somewhere else, so that it is hard to keep the organization stable. Some fundraising is being done by GCDO to be able to pay a coordinator to keep continuity.

Today a group of young individuals from the field of architecture, civil engineering and cultural management are planning to set up a new restoration project in collaboration with the local organizations which will follow the line of adaptive reuse<sup>7</sup> of traditional buildings in a way that will add to the economical, social and cultural life. They are collecting funds, reinforcing their network and training themselves in the field of restoration in order to start the restoration of two houses in the summer 2012. The aim is to transform these houses in a guest house/dance academy/atelier/craftsman workshop....the ideas are still open and will depend on the needs. It is important that they can both meet the demand of the local inhabitants and of the visitors. However such a project can only function if these people live for a longer time in Gjirokastra in order to understand the city and the local needs.

These developments on the level of restoration are and will be essential for the promotion of cultural tourism. However, it is crucial that collaboration takes place to coordinate the actions of the different actors.

## **Restoration**

Any restoration proposal has to be submitted both to the Ministry and to the Institute of Monuments, after having being signed by a person with a restoration license. However, 245 illegal interventions have been carried out since the late 1990s on historical monuments in Gjirokastra, because nobody bothers controlling.

As restoration was mentioned already in the previous section, because of the fact that all cultural actors are involved in a way with restoration, the focus will now be on the restoration aspect in the museum project.

The approach for the museum started from the location itself, the castle, with restoration works in a set of galleries by GCDO with the collaboration of Emin Riza, consultant, and Kreshnik Marxhani, architect. An oven was discovered and a “secret” gallery behind the wall. After the survey (photogrammetry and other) done by the Italian University of Sienna to understand the castle, it was established that the wall was not so old, so it was allowed to destroy it. However it was found out after putting down the wall that behind it were the rests of buildings, destroyed when the prison was created around 1930. After this, it was decided

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<sup>7</sup> See <http://www.wmf.org/action/become-everyday-preservationist>

not to uncover more space (behind a second wall) which could have provided more exhibition space behind the newly discovered gallery, because of the probable historical value of the wall. Beside this a great garbage collecting and devegetation operation was organized, activities that the government fails to fulfill on a regular basis.

These brief considerations make clear that any intervention in the old town of Gjirokastra requires a lot of research, permissions, and paperwork. This is also valid for the creation of the museum and its placement in space. On the other side there is a great neglect, partially due to lack of funds, which is difficult to be counteracted by restoration.

### **Policy frame**

An important problem with policy around the museum city is the bureaucracy aspect, because different institutions manage different things.

Then another crucial issue is that although strict policies exist, the responsible institutions do not verify if they are applied. This creates a difficult situation for official organizations, which are willing to carry out proper restoration but have to face complicated and long-lasting procedures, while at the same time private owners of monuments start anytime to rebuild their houses in the way they please without being restricted.

This system is not efficient because the deterioration process of the monuments goes much faster than the restoration process.

This is the reason why the museum should be a place to make aware the local population about the values of their houses and prevent them from starting construction works by themselves. This role of the museum will be treated in the next chapter.

However policy can also be a problem in the museum management. If the municipality is to manage the museum, because it is considered that they are the competent institution to do so, there is a risk that procedural aspects and lack of real engagement from their side will block the proper and fluid functioning of such a museum which aims to be in tune with its time.

## Tourism

### Existing products of the Cultural Tourism in Municipality of Gjirokastra

Municipality	Product of the Culture (Cultural Institutions and Cultural Property )	Level of Significance (1, 2, 3)	Name of the Cultural Events	Approximate number of the visitors in museum /events in 2009	Products of the Cultural Tourism
Gjirokastra	Zekate house	1	Visit of the house	12 000	Famous houses First Category
	Skenduli house	1	Guided visit	1200	Famous houses First Category
	Citadel	1	Visit of the citadel	16 000	Fortress itinerary
	Collection of arms	1	Museum of Arms	12 000	Museum
	Collection of objects of traditional life/ traditional house	1	Ethnographical museum	14 400	Museum
	Traditional dance and singing	3	International folklore festival (every 4-5y, 6 days)	10 000	Cultural Tourism Events
	Traditional crafts	3	Panair Artizaneve (Artisan fair 3days every september)	6 000	Cultural Tourism Events
<b>Total</b>				71 600*	

\*some visitors have visited several events, this number is not the total amount of visitors in 2009

To get a clearer picture from the tourism resources in Gjirokastra we will use the table above presenting products of Cultural Tourism.

Beside the tables we can mention different facilities for (cultural) tourism.

A Tourist center was opened by the GCDO office, but then its role was taken over by the TIC, run by the municipality. However, after functioning one year, it stopped working and the reasons for this are unknown. The GCDO is willing to collaborate but has no clear idea of the situation. At this moment it seems that a new person, journalist from profession, had taken over the center but it is not functioning on a regular base.

An Artisan Center is also present which sells traditional crafts and organizes trainings (1000 visitors per years). Close to this center are the workshops of a stone and a woodcarver with their shop.

There is also a tourist shop at the neck of the Bazaar with souvenirs, postcards, books etc. which provides the tourists with indications.

The house of the Gjirokastra writer Kadare is also worth mentioning. This house is in bad condition and is not open to the public, but the readers of Ismael Kadare’s books still come to see his native house from the outside. There is a plan by the ministry to make a museum out of it and the house is being renovated.

And of course, the city has various restaurants and hotels, from which four restaurants and five hotels are situated in the old town:

Hotels:	Restaurants:
<b>Cajupi</b> comfortable big hotel	<b>Cajupi</b> large restaurant, reception hall, view
<b>Kalemi</b> restored tower house, traditional atmosphere	<b>Kujtimi</b> small traditional outside restaurant
<b>Gjirokastra</b> homely hotel next to the Bazaar mosk	<b>Fantazia</b> italian kitchen with amazing view
<b>Sopoti</b> low cost hotel on Cerciz Topolli Square	<b>Kërculla</b> beautiful location and view from altitude
<b>Varos</b> traditional atmosphere	<b>Kufoi</b> traditional kitchen close to downtown

Actually this summer other small restaurants opened, or small bars started to cook dishes. It seems that services are developing.

As to the type of tourists which visit Gjirokastra we can identify three main types:

- organized groups on a round trip (mostly people above 50 years)
- adventurers/explorers on their own/duo or small group, mostly on round trip as well(frequently between 20-30 years)
- Albanians, who come for a weekend or a dinner/party

All these groups usually stay for a few hours, one day and sometimes a night.

We can also mention the fact that groups of Italians are quite frequent as it is interesting for them to go on vacation close to home at lower cost.

Then, twice a year the restoration camps organized by CHwB are bringing around 50 young people and professionals to the town, which contribute to the economy of the town and visit the cultural sites.

Last year, it is estimated that the city was visited by around 23 000 tourists, but because no proper tourist office is in function at this moment, there is no exact data to rely upon.

### **3. Why a city museum?**

#### **Who wants it?**

The GCDO initiated the idea for a museum in 2007. As even in the communist time, there had not been a history museum, the organization felt a need to use and present to the public the large amount of archive material about Gjirokastra and in that way also encourage them to value their heritage and follow UNESCO prescriptions on these sites.

A script for the museum concept was submitted to the municipality in 2010 after extensive research. The Ministry of Tourism Culture Youth and Sport, as well as the municipality are interested in this idea, as it will do well to the (international) reputation of the town, and could in the future attract more economical welfare. However they are not really investing in the idea and expect GCDO to do all the research and realization. That is why we can openly admit that GCDO has the main role in the development and implementation of the museum idea, although it has to conform itself to the institutional regulations in use.

## **Financing sources**

A publication for fundraising for the museum was issued in October 2008. It looks very attractive but the themes and objective, about which we will talk a bit later, were not developed much further until now.

The actual donors are:

- Packard Humanities Institute
- Fidelity International Trust (ex. Philanthropic Collaborative of NY)
- Headley Trust
- US Embassy in Albania

The part of the funds allotted by the Headley Trust has been obtained through personal contact of one of the board members of GCDO. Because the project was still in its beginning phase in spite of time passing, due to the wide research needed, the Trust threatened to ask back the funds, which have partially been used already. It is regrettable that these funds have been allotted without a complete project proposal but maybe the pressure will be useful to finally realize this museum.

## **Creation process**

As we mentioned previously GCDO has already restored the future space for the museum, between 2007 and 2010, and worked on illumination of the castle gallery as well as on the creation of information panels. Unfortunately when the illumination stopped working, there was nobody skilled enough to repair this. On the other side, the information panels got stolen. These two elements are very characteristic for the situation, and show that people are not trained, prepared for such set-ups. This already indicates that in the methodology followed, the museum display should not be too sophisticated or foreign to the local people.

Another example which follows this line was the presentation of the museum idea to the Gjirokastra city officials in 2010. Although some people were enthusiastic, the municipality and the ones who were supposed to manage the museum got completely scared out: “we don’t have

the money, we don't speak English, we don't know how to do this..." They considered it as a punishment that they would have to take care of this new institution.

Besides the preparation for the location, historical research was made in the following places: the Institute of Monuments of Culture, the Institute of Archaeology, the Archive of the State of Albania, the Film Archive of Albania, the State Archive of Gjirokastra, the Albanian Telegraph News Agency, the institute of Ethnography, the Institute of History of Albania, the Albanian Center for the Albanian Studies and the archive of the Public Radio television of Albania.

In the end, the research, conducted by around ten specialists (among others the members of the GCDO board, Oliver Gilkes and Daniel Renton), led to more research. Many things are unknown or unsure...Most sources say that the castle is from the 14<sup>th</sup> century. The Byzantine chronicler John Cantacuzene refers to the settlement in his 1336 chronicle. But a wall has been found in the castle dating from the 7<sup>th</sup> century. The exact date of the origin of the settlement is still uncertain and this is a problem. The origins of the name of the city have also different sources, from which none is proved.

Unfortunately, the research is in the hands of a few people. As there are many images from the archives, this research is confidential because the archives fear illegal publication if the images leak. In general we can say that the willingness of the archives to share information is often not high in Albania.

However the written research for the museum project could be made accessible in a better way. This could be done by keeping the documents in a database easily accessible for the GCDO staff and collaborators. The problem with the research is that it is not systematized yet. There are different reports in Albanian and sometimes in English but they don't cover all the issues researched which are sometimes only catalogues of objects with their photos. Now two researchers are in charge of reading all the material and compile the information, to proceed afterwards to the 'chase' for objects.

In order to prepare the museum concept, some consultations were already held. Beside the consultation with the Gjirokastra "elite", which means in fact all the political figures or persons in high positions, there was a consultation with foreign experts from the museum field.

Diana Walters, regional museum coordinator from CHwB has given some ideas in a document, as for example the creation of a “history wall”: A large glass case with different layers, simplifying the idea that archaeology is about layers of history deposited. For example - you see a flint at the bottom, followed by a roman coin, with a cigarette at the top. This would be reinforcing the point that the castle has many phases, and this could be illustrated by a cross-section of the building phases of the castle. This display case would need an accompanying panel to explain its relevance (GCDO, *The museum narrative* 2010). Christian Axt, the director of the new German History Museum was also consulted for the exhibition design<sup>8</sup>.

During the “German Cultural Week” organized by the German embassy in Albania in October 2010, two museologists from Germany were present for two public debates (in Tirana and Gjirokastra) to talk about the possible treatment of the “hot issue” of communist heritage by presenting their work in their respective museums: Peter Jahm, who completed previously the transformation of the Russian War museum in the German-Russian Museum in Berlin and was its first director, and Dr. Hans-Jörg Czech, who did voluntary work for the Kassel State Museum, participated in redesigning the Schloss Wilhelmshöhe Museum, and also worked as assistant manager and curator at the German Historical Museum in Berlin. The results were antagonistic debates: some hate it to mention communism and want to ban it, and others say it must be present at all case.

In the viewing of recorded material from the museologists’ meeting, which was attended by the Gjirokastra officials, many things become clear about the political climate in the municipality, and in general about the working climate and mentality. It was an almost absurd set-up, where firstly the Germans presented their experience of treating the subject of communism in their museum, and secondly the chaos burst out. The Gjirokastra officials all did their personal “show”, each had to say something, but no substantial interventions were made. They were just presenting themselves and what position they had, and were criticizing the fact that the German interventions had nothing to do with Gjirokastra and were too long. It was clear that there was no

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<sup>8</sup> He was willing to participate in the project but retired when he found out that there was no project manager for the museum.

climate of communication or dialogue, nor between the Germans and Gjirokastrians, neither among the Gjirokastrians themselves.

GCDO had the intention to further collaborate with Peter Jahm, as they are no trained museologists in Albania, but unfortunately this collaboration was cancelled recently, due to other obligations on the side of the museologist.

Work with a Gjirokastra high school through essay writing was carried out by an American volunteer from Peace Corps in order to find out what children thought about a future museum and what they would like to have there. The workshop functioned well and some remarks of the pupils will be mentioned later on when we will tackle the issue of audience research<sup>9</sup>.

Recently a visual proposal<sup>10</sup> was made by architecture students from Tirana in order to start the consultations. One first meeting was held with local experts. The reactions were mostly positive but the different experts all had their preferences. The specialist of Ali Pasha<sup>11</sup> was pretending that this figure was crucial for the way Gjirokastra developed to what it is now. Others disagreed as Ali Pasha was from another town, Tepelenë, or even emphasized that he was a Greek leader.<sup>12</sup> In general the three main figures of Gjirokastra are all controversial: besides Ali Pasha, the communist leader Enver Hoxha and the writer Ismael Kadare are not particularly appreciated, but they cannot be omitted either. On the other hand the figure of Cerçiz Topulli, most appreciated by Gjirokastrians, has a smaller part in the exhibition, which could not be made bigger just in order to please people. These considerations show that there is a frail balance to be sought between the different interests: stay truth to historical facts and please the local population or the specialists. Maybe there should be a vote or a compromise made.

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<sup>9</sup> Section D.2. of the thesis

<sup>10</sup> This proposal is quite theoretical and doesn't take into account specificities of the space, or even more of objects to be exhibited.

<sup>11</sup> In 1811, the city fell into the hands of Ali Pasha of Tepelenë. He enlarged the fortress and constructed a 12-km aqueduct, which brought drinking water from Sopot Mountain. He reigned until he was killed by the powers of the ottoman sultan.

<sup>12</sup> We could even wonder about the issue of the Greek minority. Should the museum talk about it and how?

Now, all have to be consulted (again): local experts, university and schools, the municipality....The consultation with the municipality will be kept for the last, as GCDO considers that it better to start bottom up, with the local population.

A Peacecorps volunteer is preparing some documents for a community meeting and consultation, but from our discussions, we realized that there is a substantial problem with this consultation, as there hasn't been any consultation before with the regular citizens, which are not in high positions, but just living in the town, working in the shops etc. about their wishes for the museum. Today the "consultation" comes a bit late as the content seems to have been already decided.

## **Expected roles of the museum**

### ***Invitation for further exploration***

The museum has to be an introduction to the city history and characteristics, but also to the surroundings of the Drino Valley, which has several archeological, religious and natural sites:

- National Archeological Park Antigoneia
- Sofratika site, with characteristic architecture partially built over the necropolis of the Roman city of Hadrianopolis (roman theater
- Goranxi prehistorical archeological site (Paleolithic/Mesolithic flint quarry, Hellenistic and Roman stone-built dwellings)
- Finiq (remains of the ancient theater, Hellenistic houses, Roman water reservoirs and the ruins of a Byzantine church)
- Kardhiq, fortress and Ottoman ruins
- Fortress of Paleokastra
- Libohova village and castle (ancient settlement prosperous in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, home of 'Beys', Ottoman aristocracy)
- Labova e Kryqit 13<sup>th</sup> century church

- Two 17<sup>th</sup> century churches, Shën Koll (Saint Nicholas) and Shën Merisë (Saint Mary) in Saraqinishta
- Churches in villages of Zervat, Derviçan, Goranxi, Jergucat... (10<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup> century)
- Monasteries in Dhuvjan (16<sup>th</sup> C.) and Sotira (13<sup>th</sup> C.)
- Teqe of Melan (today religious center for Bektashi Shia Muslims), supposed ancient Illyrian fortification from the 4<sup>th</sup> century BC
  
- Goranxi gorge
- Çajupi mountains
- Syri i kaltër (the Blue Eye), water spring, natural phenomenon close to Saranda

The museum will open up curiosity to discover some of these sites but also to discover other sites in the old town such as the Ethnographical Museum, the restored first category houses of Zekate and Skenduli, the churches and mosques, as well as the several monuments throughout the town.

This is needed because the architecture of the town with its curved paths doesn't make it easy to find your way around. Especially because tourists usually stay only around two days, it is important to stimulate them by indicating the various sites.

As Gjirokastra is a UNESCO site, there should be a modern museum worthy of this title, which interpret cleverly the fascinating history and cultural identity of the city and wider region.

### ***Museum as a community institution***

In many museums, the outdated linear theories of communication (Mairesse 2007: 62) are frequently still applying, in the sense that the expeditor of the message is considered to be active and the receptor passive. However, the contemporary communication theories include the answer of the receptor as being part of the message and signification process, and it is obvious that the reception circumstances influence the impact of the message, which the expeditor can't fully control (*ibid.*: 63). As the declaration of Calgary<sup>13</sup> stipulates, the museum is an institution which

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<sup>13</sup> A museum definition has been approved upon in during the annual conference of ICOFOM in Calgary, Canada (30<sup>th</sup> of June-6<sup>th</sup> of July 2005), and is known as the *Calgary Declaration*.

serves society. This should not be seen in paternalist way, but rather as something to be achieved through a partnership with the audience. The museum can take its knowledge not only from objects and experts but also from ordinary people (*ibid.*). This people are of course not to be considered as one compact audience, as they include different ages, groups and social classes (*ibid.*: 63-64).

This museum should not be directed only towards tourists. In the proposal for the museum script there is a first part dedicated towards the local community and their stories, as well as to modern life in the old town. We will come back on this later, but these elements are essential. The museum should also be a home for the local inhabitants, a place of resources but why not also for creation and leisure.

It is quite a dilemma how to represent the Gjirokastra population in the museum exhibition without offending them. They have for example the reputation to be stingy, or to put their boundaries in personal relationships which you cannot cross, but can you say this kind of things in the exhibition? As we said previously also, they don't like some of their famous figures, but it is a reason to omit these? The choice of a museum about the people or for the people is quite a delicate one. It is intended here to be for the people, but on the other hand this doesn't mean that it should always please them.

It is important that the exhibition relates the stories from the past with the present and the future to connect with the community and inspire them.

### ***Museum to raise awareness***

According to Elenita Roshi, the main and most urgent task of the museum is to make the local people proud of their city, because this is lacking. The beautiful Gjirokastra houses are slowly decaying and people continue to proceed to illegal interventions on their "monument houses", such as the construction of concrete balconies etc. The first step would be to make people aware that they own a treasure and should not alter it.

On the other side there is a considerable garbage problem in the town, as most people carelessly dump their garbage in the street or in some valley corners, or empty buildings. This is part of a general problem in Albania that people are not aware of ecological issues. People buy a product for its content and do not consider the packaging to be theirs. There is a huge discrepancy

between the attitude towards what is “mine” and what is not: the houses are always perfectly clean, as everything outside of the house is not considered as a place to be responsible for. In order to have Gjirokastra fulfilling the UNESCO world heritage standards, measures to counteract this problem have to be taken.

It is also often the case that people who have capital to invest and want to do it in Gjirokastra think about their private immediate interests instead of more sustainable community-based heritage interests. Usually they invest in the construction of new buildings in the new part of town for cafés etc., instead of rehabilitation of the deserted traditional buildings in the old part. This is an important issue which doesn't work in the hand of development of the historical town. There is also the problem of abandon of the city. There is a lot of space and potential, a lot of resources, from the land, but many people left to the capital or abroad.

The awareness raising of the local population for these issues can be achieved through permanent activities, events and actions, good practices presentations and invitation of experts.

### ***Museum as a mediator***

The museum could be a place to encourage anybody to get involved in reviving the economy. Tell them: “You are your city”. That if there is no work, they should create it. The museum can be a place to deposit ideas, suggestions about things to be done for Gjirokastra, and also a place to get together for the ones who would like to do something.

### ***Museum for economic revival***

The ideal would be to create a flag-ship attraction and provide a world-class museum which will boost efforts to conserve the old town around it, thereby reviving traditional building skills, creating new jobs and new economic opportunities for the citizens.

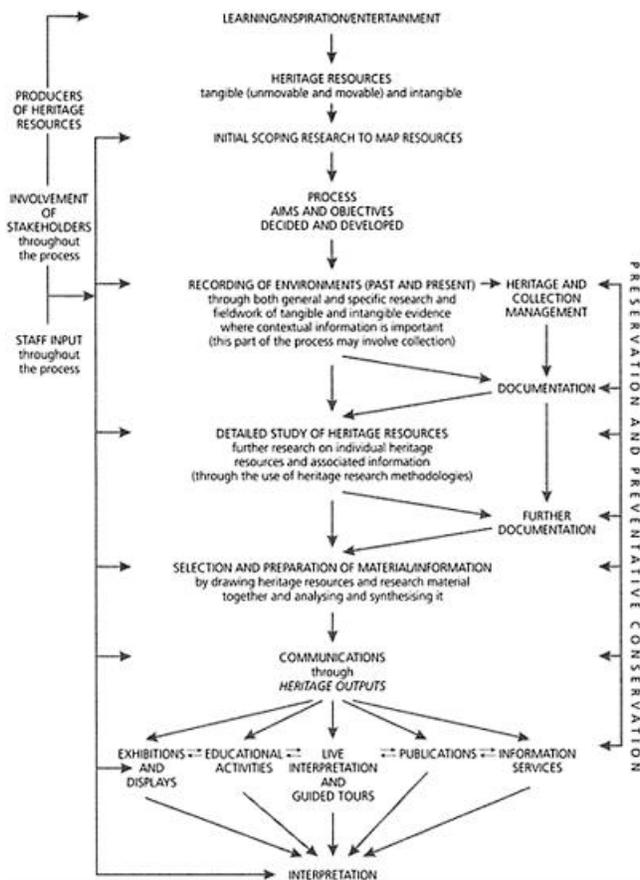
### ***Museum of questions***

In the same line as what we said in the section on a community museum, the castle museum should not try to impose certain knowledge. It should rather ask questions and make people leave full of thoughts, reflecting on their own position in the matter.

## Achievements and future plans for development

The basic idea for the museum is already established, regarding content and location. Research has mostly been done and a design proposal has been made. The consultation process is starting.

The following table can help understanding the functioning of heritage or museum work. In our work we can say that we are in the phase of Selection and Preparation of Material/Information. This has been done by specialists under GCDO's direction. Although we can regret that clear objectives (Process Aims and Objectives) were not fixed as to the extent and type of content needed, enough time has been spent on research. This phase should be finalized in order to proceed to the phase of Communication through Heritage Outputs. It is also visible on the left side of the table that stakeholders are involved throughout the process, alongside with the staff input.



(Corsane 2005: 3)

This final part of communication or meaning-making process involves a certain amount of mediation as decisions are made about:

- the selection of material and information;
- the construction of the messages to be communicated;
- the media to be used in the communication.

It is at this stage that the input from stakeholder groups (being all those that could have an interest) and communities may be most crucial, although they *must* be included throughout the overall process.

An action plan has been written in June because the museum should be opened for the new touristic season in April 2012 in order not to lose the promised funds.

It is divided in six phases:

- Research. Finalize the researches in July. Eventually adapt the museum concept if needed.
- Consultation. Confront the actual proposal with local actors in July and August.
- Design. Agree on the design, finalize it in August. Prepare the budget and finalize it by beginning of September.
- Approval from institutions. Deliver official proposal to the City Council of Gjirokastra and National Museum Council of Albania, lobby and get approval in September. Do more fundraising if needed.
- Interim phase. Make business plan. Develop ideas about future museum management and train for this purpose. Collect objects and identify needs for restoration by the end of September.
- Implementation (not yet planned)

This plan shows that there is short time and that some phases are happening at the same time, for example research and design are still going on while consultation is done. However this can be good because consultation about the work in progress will indicate if the project is on a good track. Hopefully it is, as only minor changes can be made at this stage of the process.

My work will only be able to provoke subtle changes<sup>14</sup>, but however, as it is also a theoretical paper, I will dare to propose new ideas if needed. If the action plan mentioned earlier is followed, the implementation process could be started before the end of fall.

Some persons are skeptical as to the feasibility of the action plan, considering that GCDO is engaged in several other projects, such as the Babameto house restoration with CHwB, the organization of the Artisan fair in September, alongside with all the administrative and financial tasks. However it is clear that a museum could be seen as urgent because it should waken up people's pride and willingness to engage themselves for their town, and it is hoped for that some kind of museum could start to function by the month of April.

## **B. The current city museum concept**

### **1. Content of the museum proposal<sup>15</sup>**

The museum will be settled in the castle and will share its main entrance with that of the museum of arms. The space, a set of three restored galleries, is about 300 m<sup>2</sup> and its height can go up to 6 m. The proposal as it is now has defined themes and is much concerned with the design already, that is to say with how the elements are going to be placed in the space. However there is no global concept which guides the whole, and gives coherence (except chronological order). For now, the information extracted from the various documents will be presented without extensive comments, which will be given in the second part, dealing with the analysis of the current proposal.

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<sup>14</sup> At the end of the writing process I can already say that the plan is not being followed, as we are at the end of August and the research is still not finalized.

<sup>15</sup> Taken from the following documents: GDCO, *A chronical in stone, a new museum for Gjirokastra Castle* (2008); *The Chronicle of Stone- The Castle Museum. Design/Concept: Draft I* (2010); *Muzeu Gjirokaster PI, Draft 2 concept for the Museum with plan, List of panels and objects for Museum* (2011)

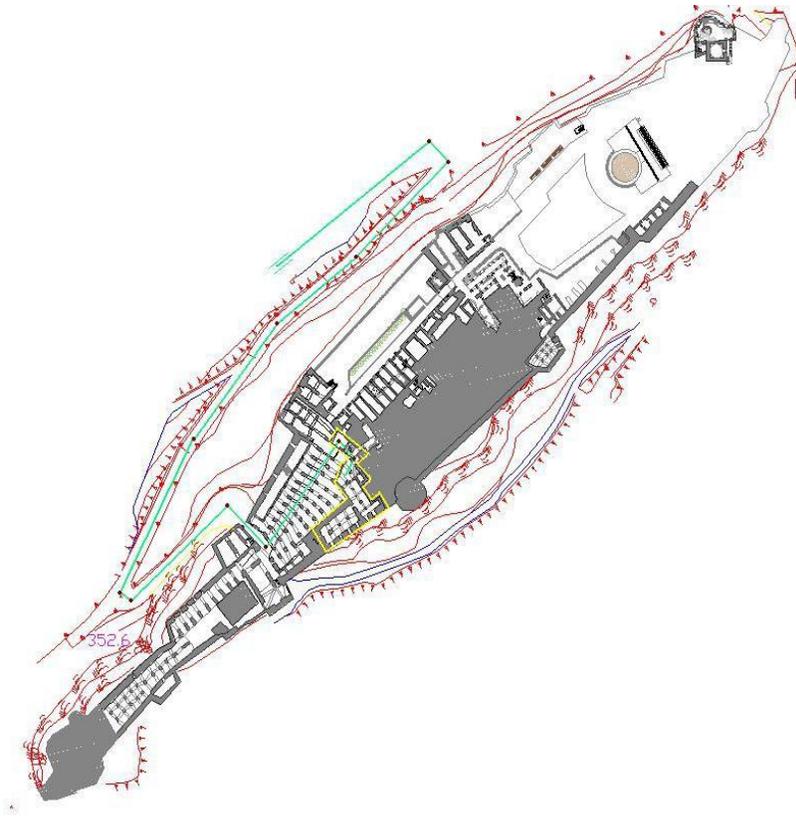
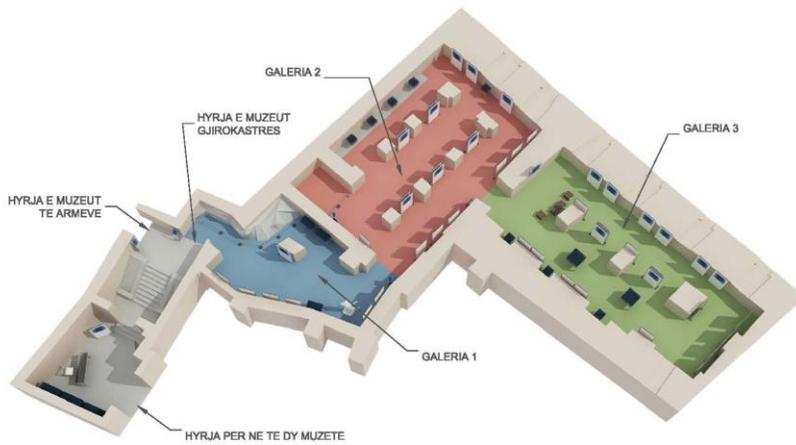


Fig. 1 Castle Map (Yellow shape is museum space). GDCO 2010.



ZONIMI FUNKSIONAL

Fig.2 Museum space, main entrance, entrance left: Museum of Arms, right: Chronical in Stone Museum (Gallery 1=Blue, 2=Red, 3=Green). GCDO 2010.

On the walls of the joint entrance to the museum of Arms and to the “Chronicle on Stone” museum, an *introduction* to the museum will be displayed, a sign with opening hours, rules and thanking plaque for the donors, and panels with photos of people from Gjirokastra accompanied by quotes/sentences on the way they perceive their town. Among them, will also be a photo and quote from Gjirokastra’s most famous writer, Ismail Kadare.

There will also be a panel for indication about the museum of Arms.

This “**Opening Foyer**” would contain a contemporary exhibition about people living in Gjirokastra now and would focus on how they relate to their own history and their own perception of what Gjirokastra means to them.

The plan in the first narrative was to use the following elements:

- large life-size photographic cut-outs of Gjirokastra persons alive today, from all life ages, with a small story about each of them, and a comment about their city
- Use of school children art
- Photographs of contemporary Gjirokastra – old meets new. Women wearing heels on the cobble streets versus old women in black carrying their heavy shopping bags.
- (Teuta, the museum curator, and her story of saving the valuable objects from the armaments museum)

It seems however that the set up in the entrance will be highly simplified, as it is just a passage with a stair case and not much can be put there.

Notes have been made about the following necessary improvements:

- Some improvement works need to be done in the walls
- Measurements of the entrance space are missing;
- the big gate needs to be mended and conserved

Then the “**Origins gallery**” and main part of the exhibition would focus on the history of the city and its surroundings through different panels. It actually includes two galleries:

## Gallery one:

*The entrance area - a vaulted space 15.2 m x 6.95 m containing a substantial outcrop of limestone.*

-a **vertical aerial photo** of Gjirokastra at the entrance

-a **big panel** about how the stone reigns in Gjiroakstra

-a **panel** with information on the geology of the Drino Valley

- a big **display case** (a glass case rather than a real fancy display case) with types of stones used in the Gjirokastra houses and in the town – black stones, white stone, pink stone etc).

-**panels** will explain the formation and features of the stones. There may also be a **screen** with a 3D animation showing the hypothesis of how the Drino Valley was a lake and then became a valley

- a **small display case** with objects from the excavations of the Damian Komata in the Castle's stage, will show the very origin of Gjirokastra. First panel will show a big aerial view of the Drino Valley where Apollon Bace's hypothesis will be presented about the consecutive development of the archaeological centers of the Drino Valley and where all the archaeological richness of the Valley will be shown.

-a **panel** on the origins of the name of Gjirokastra and the various hypotheses. (thematic panel "interrupting" the chronological flow of the museum. This panel will be hanged on the right hand side of the sculpture mentioned below)

- **sculpture** of Argjiro.

-another **panel** will be mounted which will contradict the hypothesis of Argjiro the princess as the name of the town, and will show the photocopy and the translation of the text in which Argyrokastro as a town was mentioned for the first time by John VI Kantakouzenos long before the Ottoman Invasion.

## Gallery two:

*This is a large space, 15.65 m x 6.95 m centrally divided into four bays by stone piers, with a wider, but shorter, bay at the southern end where two large windows provide lighting along its length.*

-the **oven**, discovered during the restoration works. Explanations on how it might have been used during the late medieval times. It could open a discussion about life under wars, to be discussed later in the exhibitions

-Origins of the surrounding historical sites:

The second gallery is a long and quite high, with an uninterrupted wall where a lot can be displayed if the wall is illuminated in the right way. This can be a great space to explain and display (no more than **three small display cases** based on the elevated remains – 20 cm above the floor) the archaeological sites of the Drino Valley. Three display cases will have no more than 4 or 5 archeological objects each from Antigonea, Sofratika (Hadrianopolis), Melan. If this option is not appropriate for the visitor's flow, one big display case will be located in one of the arches. These objects exist in the archives of the Institute

of Archaeology. The panels will talk about these three sites and more, Goranxi, Pepel and various pre-historic tumuli found in Erind, Kakavie etc. Timeline of the rise and fall of the various archaeological sites in the Drino Valley will be shown.

-Origins of Gjirokastra:

- Gjirokastra from Cantacuzenes' time to the beginning of the 20th century.
- A **panel** on Gjin Zenebishi and his role in Gjirokastra from the 14th century to the Turkish invasion). A **big banner** will show the coat of arms of the Gjin Zenebishi family.
- How the rest of Albania resisted the ottoman invasion for another 25 years (**map** of the Albanian principalities).
- A **display case** with a sword belonging to those times (to be found in the archive of the Museum of Arms and to be restored).
- The following subject in **panels**:

**1** – the situation of Gjirokastra in the first census of the population by the Ottomans and the growth of Gjirokastra based on the second census

**2**- the impressions of Celebia from his visit in Gjirokastra,

**3**- the changing of religion, the first signs of Christians accepting the invader's religion.

**4** - The Bektashi's presence in Gjirokastra.

**5**- The semi – autonomy of Gjirokastra. (No chance of finding objects of this historic period to be displayed.)

-Gjirokastra **time line**:

Long wall panel with the town's history (as we know it) along with photos of the most important men which created the history of Gjirokastra starting from Ali pasha, Cercis Topulli and Enver Hoxha.

-two **panels**, **one** the Bazaar of Gjirokastra (data is taken from Riza Shkodra) and **one** on the crafts of Gjirokastra in the late medieval period (18 – 19th century).

-a **display case** with the model of the Bazaar through the centuries will be shown (or a screen with a touch pad).

For the third gallery it is difficult to find a title, we will call it “**Gallery three**” for now:

### Gallery three:

*To the south lies the largest of the three spaces, 17.35 m x 8.25 m divided into four double bays by a line of substantial stone piers.*

-**1 big panel** on the role of Ali Pasha in Gjirokastra. Explanations will be given on the Castle's restoration and the building of the aqueduct. Facsimiles of the Ali Pasha's documents on Gjirokastra (to be taken from the Gennadius Library in Athens).

-**two panels** about the development of the Castle an a **big case with a model** of the Castle in three horizontal sections and big complete model (these will be handmade).

-**3 panels**, in which information about the Gjirokastra's vernacular architecture, the evolution of the Gjirokastra's house, the materials, skills required to built the houses will be explained.

-a **case with the models** (sections cut) of three houses (accompanying the panels)- Zekate, Babameto, Skenduli. This display case will have a double role: it will also contain objects explaining the life style of Gjirokastra during the 19th century. There

will be the objects found in the Babameto House (the French porcelain) and other kitchen ware (to be taken from the ethnographic museum).

-a **panel** for Cercis Topulli will have photos and historic records about its contribution to Gjirokastra. A **small case** will have his hat which is being embroidered (following the original) by one of our artisans.

-a **display case** with objects of wars in Gjirokastra during the 20th century will be displayed (guns from the Arms Museum and other minor objects, bullets, letters etc).

-a **panel** on the wars of Gjirokastra during the 20th century. Information on King Zog's times will be put here.

-a **panel** on Enver Hoxha. A **display case** will present objects of Enver Hoxha taken by the ethnographic museum of Gjirokastra or something from the Hoxha family. A number of Hoxha books will be displayed into the case.

- a **panel** on dissidents' of communism with a focus on Musine Kokalari.

- a **panel** on the most known personalities of Gjirokastra will be mounted (Cabej and others may be included in this panel).

- a **panel** explaining Kadare's life and works. Next to this will be a **display case** with all the books of Kadare, and objects donated by Kadare.

-two **short panels** with information on Gjirokastra's most known visitors, Hammond, Han, Edward Lear, Lord Byron and others.

- a **panel** on Gjirokastra during communism. Industry of the town, the university, the bunker-ization of the town will be mentioned there

- a **panel** explaining the challenge to save Gjirokastra.

- two **big screens** where visitors can watch a short movie on Gjirokastra's history (made on purpose using historical archive material) and also other short clips of about 15 minutes.

## 2. Analysis of the proposal

The previous list doesn't seem to be clearly structured although this was extracted from the latest document for consultation with the different interest groups. However the text in the leaflet for funding from 2008 has better classification, even if it is very vague and that some elements present there have been left out in the final design proposal (such as "country life" in the third gallery):

## Gallery 1. The Entrance

The theme of the opening display could be **the raw materials used in the city's construction**: raw stone, worked stone, slate and timber and **the tools of the craftsman's trade**, supplemented by giant scale satellite and topographic **images of the region to orientate** the viewer.

## Gallery 2. Regional History

A **chronological display of the history of the Drino area from earliest times using interpretive panels** and models of each of the following sites that have played an important role in the region's history.

**Sofratike-Hadrianopolis** - The city of *Hadrianopolis* was probably founded in the 2nd century AD. The principal monument is the theatre which was excavated in the 1980s.

**Labova e Kryqit** - The village of Labova is late Ottoman in date and is important for its vernacular architecture. The church of Shën Mëri (Saint Mary) is one of the oldest extant churches in the region, the present building probably being a 13th century reconstruction of a much earlier basilica.

**Goranxi Gorge** - A recently discovered multi-period archaeological site containing evidence of Mesolithic and Paleolithic occupation and tool making industries.

**Antigoneia National Archaeological Park** - Antigoneia National Archaeological Park - Founded by King Pyrrhus of Epirus in 297 BC using Greek-style architectural design. *Antigoneia* is the largest ancient settlement known in the Drino valley. A centre for trade and administration, it played a key role in valley life.

**Gjirokastra Castle** - The vast bulk of the castle has stood on the rock above the town for about a thousand years. The edifice seen today is the result of a long period of development and comprises myriad vaults, passages, tunnels and oubliettes as well as the mighty battlements with their dramatic views. The story of the castle will be explained through **phased plans and reconstructions**, and visitors will be encouraged to explore the vast monument via a newly created visitor trail. In addition to models, a series of eight locally woven banners displaying the heraldic badges of the various powers who dominated the area from ancient times could hang from the stone walls of the gallery.

## Gallery 3. A Chronicle in Stone

It is anticipated the third gallery will focus on the **social history of the city and region**.

**Town Life** - Gjirokastra is best known for its fortified stone tower houses, and the display will focus on the design, rationale and evolution of these evocative buildings and how people lived in them. Particular focus will be given to the Zekate House, one of the grandest surviving buildings.

**Country Life** - This display will look at the folk life and history of the surrounding villages and smaller settlements. Themes will include iso-polyphonic music and agricultural history.

**Religion** - This will focus on the three main religious groups - Sunni Muslim, Christian Orthodox and Bektashism (a branch of Shi'a Islam) - that co-exist in Gjirokastra and highlight the remarkable harmony that has existed between these faiths in the valley for 500 years. Special focus will be given to the mosques of the town, the Christian monasteries of the surrounding villages and the Bektashi shrines of the hinterland.

**Trade and Industry** - The display will look at trade and Gjirokastra's merchants' bazaar which has played a prominent role in the fortunes of the city. Varieties of merchandise will be exhibited along with images and testimonies of old traders. The display will also look at modern industrial production in communist and more recent times (metalworking and woodworking in particular). The display may also consider trade communications and the great trade caravans that used to traverse the mountain passes.

**War and Peace** - The Drino valley has always been highly significant geo-politically as a strategic route from the Adriatic to Constantinople and a crucial point of control in times of war. The display could touch on historic conflicts (the Romans and Macedonians) and highlight the Partisan struggle during World War II. Special emphasis would be placed on the experience of the townspeople in war.

**Travellers and Tourists: the Drino valley in art and literature** - Many famous travellers have visited the area including Çelebi, the Great Ottoman 'world traveller', Byron and other Grand Tourists such as the landscape artist, Edward Lear. This display could examine their contribution to recording and documenting the city and valley.

**People and Personalities** - The display could cover the influential individuals that have been raised in the region. These would include the Albanian-Ottoman governor of the area Ali Pasha of Tepelena; Eqrem Cabej, the great philologist of the Albanian language, and Enver Hoxha the communist dictator whose 50 year rule made modern Albania. A special place would be given to the Gjirokastrian, Ismail Kadare, the internationally famous writer whose work has immortalised Gjirokastra

**Voices of Gjirokastra** - Albania has a rich tradition of film-making. The communist film studio 'New Albania' produced feature films and newsreels of events throughout the country after 1945. This has been added to by an oral history project undertaken by the GCDO. A small multi-media theatre will display a continuous show of extracts of film interspersed with memories of Gjirokastra residents, poems, music and the accounts of early visitors and travellers produced both in their original languages and in Albanian translation.

Especially the third section is clearer, if we consider it to be the "social history". However, the section about religion, which is now planned in the second gallery about the "Origins of Gjirokastra" should rather be in the third one.

But I would not like to enter too much into details about the thematic content but rather consider main lines and presentation issues.

### Strong points

- Integration of the community's relationship towards the city. Their stories are being told as well and the museum want to be a mirror of its community.
- Wish to make people proud and mobilize them.
- Create a reference point for locals but also to fulfill tourist needs.

### Weak points

- Traditional organization of information in mostly chronological order.
- Weak coordination of the various topics in the proposal.
- Lack of new technologies. But as nobody is trained for this, this forms a problem for maintenance, so it is understandable.
- Space. Temperature of the galleries is low and humidity level is high, which require technical equipment for keeping the level right. It is also the case that not everybody goes to the castle, although a survey has been make which proved that most people go there three times in the year or more, this is questionable and maybe the methodology used was not effective (*GCDO Final report: Community Survey results 2010*).
- Taking collections from elsewhere when the castle is rich enough by itself (although having a museum only about the castle is not the priority, a “luxury we cannot afford” as Elenita Roshi says.)
- Not in-dept museum. (But the first version of the museum can't be extensive, it has to be allusive and point out the essential matters. Although it is simplified it will point out the rarity of Gjirokastra and what makes it like it is, in order to recall attention and show that it is a task of everybody to contribute to preservation.)
- Lack of program. Whereas Elenita Roshi argues that the program can come after, I believe that if would be better to have a program without an exhibition, rather than an exhibition without program. I consider the program to be crucial for inclusion of the local community. An impressive museum with a “wow!” factor, which would attract sudden interest and economical and social revival

such as in Bilbao is not the aim now, considering the amount of funds available.

- Education. The same can be said as above. Elenita Roshi affirms that there is the idea for example to create model of the Zekate house or the castle for children, to put together like a 3D puzzle, but that this is not the priority. I think education is not that much about developing sophisticated material, but rather about programs in school, which can be done with simple means.
- Problem with entrance fee in the castle: the castle has one, the museum of arms one (both between 1 and 2€), and the new museum would like around 3 or 4€ more. This is not very user friendly.

In general I believe that the idea should be taken from the beginning and ask the crucial questions:

-What is the need of the community and which contemporary issues are affecting the local population?

-How can the museum become a “town square” or place for community gathering, civic discourse, and civic participation?

-Why does this museum exist? What is its added value?

-Who are the potential partners in the community and how to invest (a lot of) time in collaboration?

-What “thread” from the past can be used to create positive change today?

-How did other museum-community initiatives succeed (in the Balkan) and how can we learn from it?

(Westervelt, 2010: 82)

Only after investing in finding answers to these questions an effective museum can be created. It seems that in the urgency, research has been focused on the finding of historical data for the exhibition, rather than on the examination of the social context in which the exhibition is going to take place.

After presenting some general lines in contemporary museum definitions and practices, and the examination of several study cases in chapter C., these questions will be answered as far as possible when we will try to define suitable approaches for the Gjirokastra museum in chapter D.

## C. Contemporary theory and practice

### 1. An overview of contemporary museology definitions and practices

#### *What is a museum?*

The question of the definition of what a museum is has preoccupied many specialists in the past few years.

In our attempt for a definition, which we evidently need if we want to talk about the creation of a new museum, we will focus on the discussion of the ICOFOM around the Caligary Declaration in 2005 and on the definition adopted in 2007 by ICOM during the 21st General Conference in Vienna, Austria.

We agree that the historical (relative and evolutionary) character of the museum must be taken into consideration, as it is not timeless and objective but a living reality that is in constant construction and restructuration (Mairesse 2007: 94).

If we look at the history, the term “*Muséon*” which appeared in Alexandria in the end of the 4<sup>th</sup> century BC, referred to the “temple of the nine muses”, and had the function of kind of research center. It became a place of memory and also of conservation of collections. Traditionally the museum had two functions, that of study cabinet, as described previously, and of Wunderkammer or place to marvel and be astonished by beauty or the unusual. In the western Renaissance, the concept of museum started to be theorized for encyclopedic and universal purposes. These theories formed the premises of museological reflection. Until today the museum kept more or less the two functions mentioned above, even if in the 19<sup>th</sup> century the number of museums grew and started to specialize in distinct disciplines (art, natural science, social sciences...). With the rise of these museums the educative role of the museum was reinforced by the development of pedagogical activities. However, at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> and in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, pedagogical activities for the public diminished in favor of study of the collections. Today, with the upcoming new technologies, which increase communication and information circulation, the collections can be viewed by a great number and studied independently (Mairesse 2007: 49-53). Besides this, museums started again to focus on education programs for children but also for adults, to mediate the collection and the information it contains.

The museum today has an important part to play in” non formal education” (Mairesse 2007: 91) outside of the school curricula, and is able, much better than schools or universities, to connect social themes with permanent/life-long education. The museum is a place where material culture can predominate over the written word and physically contextualize and visually interpret. (ibid.: 69) and this is something that is missing in schools. The Czech museologue Zbynek Z. Stransky defines the essence of the museal as “a specific relationship of man with reality” and he call this the *intuitive concrete documentary function* (ibid.: 96) . This type of documentation differs from the written word in books or manuals and enables the visitor to intuitively experience what is presented to him by sensorial channels.

As we would like to create a museum which is for and by the community, we also have to go back to the origins of the community museum. It is from the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century on (with the *Considérations* of Quatremère de Quincy) that people became aware of the fact that everything can be “musealized” and that museal objects can be studied and explained, even if they are left *in situ* (Mairesse 2007: 52). This meant first of all that not only elements from a distant past could be put in a museum, but secondly also that these elements could be studied on the spot and didn’t have to be decontextualized as it is usually the case when they are put in a museum.

It took however almost two centuries to come up with models for a community or eco-museum. The key figure in the creation of the eco-museums as we know them today was the French G.H. Rivière who founded the Musée d’Art et Traditions Populaires in Paris. He wanted to shift from museum as an institution to museum as a forum. In 1971 ICOM started to integrate the notion of eco-museum but this is the 1976 definition given by G.H. Rivière himself<sup>16</sup>:

An eco-museum is something that a power<sup>17</sup> and a population conceive, realize and exploit together. The power provides the experts, the facilities and resources and the population provides the living forces from all generations, the aspirations and traditions. It is a mirror where the population looks at itself, to recognize itself and find explanations. But it is also a mirror handed over to others to be better understood by them. It is a museum of Man and Nature: Man in natural surroundings, and Nature adapted to man’s use; a museum of time:

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<sup>16</sup> CRACAP informations n°2/3 on the site of the Creusot Museum

<sup>17</sup> Power meant als *pouvoir* : state or municipality, but also museum professionals.

about the past and critical analysis of it today; a museum of spaces: to stop, to wander, to conserve; a laboratory for theoretical and practical research; and a school to train specialists to face the future in a better way.

In 1991 the notion of “musées de société” appears during the conference “Musée et Société” held in Mulhouse-Ungersheim, to refer to the eco-museum. It includes the following types: folk art and tradition, ethnography, history, industry, and open air museums.

In another source<sup>18</sup>, we find a useful description of the mission of such a museum:

To gather testimonies in a particular space about modes of living and working of a community. To make known conditions of living of the man of yesterday to help the man of today to face the future and find his roots.

Or also<sup>19</sup>:

To know and conserve heritage, communicate and transmit it to animate the territory and participate in its development.

These definitions and missions mentioned above correspond to the aims that GCDO seem to have, or at least which I consider they should have in mind, for the creation of the Gjirokastra museum.

We could wonder why the museum has changed so much in history. David Fleming offers an enlightening perspective on this issue. He says that “a massive change in our attitude towards audiences, which might best be described as one of total inclusion [has taken place.](...) [M]useums began to show a greater interest in, and respect for audiences and their needs, because of two parallel and unconnected forces. Firstly, there is the ongoing democratisation of our profession. Museums are becoming institutions which are not entirely dominated by a socio-economic elite, primarily male in character. The second force underlying museums’ new focus on audiences is simple self-preservation [as the politicians have started to ask results for the funds they were allotting]. (Fleming 2005: 1)”

On the level of one of the museum disciplines, history, a big change has taken place which parallels the democratization of the museum profession:

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<sup>18</sup> Website [www.alternatives-economiques.fr](http://www.alternatives-economiques.fr)

<sup>19</sup> Website [www.culture-proximite.org](http://www.culture-proximite.org)

“In the field of human history museums for long collected the extraordinary as evidence of the past. There was in this a kind of perverted democracy because, of course, many collections, perhaps most, if not all, were assembled by an elite which wished to improve the rest of society.

Since the advent of social history in our field, museums have put much more effort into collecting the ordinary and every day, in recognition of the fact that it is this material which best represents the lives of the majority of the population. This has an academic underpinning, as well as bringing the additional benefit of enabling museums to show their relevance to people who previously were underrepresented, and perhaps therefore uninterested in museum displays. Moreover, social history curators have forged further links with audiences through their movement into contemporary collecting. (Fleming 2005: 2)”

This helps us to understand the actual preoccupations in museum. However many museum professionals are still stuck to the more traditional meaning of museums. This is certainly the case in Albania where the “democratization of the profession” as mentioned above is not yet reality. In the following definition we can see how this is reflected.

The most recent ICOM definition from 2007 stipulates that a museum is a “a non-profit, **permanent** institution in the **service of society and its development**, open to the public, which acquires, conserves, researches, communicates and exhibits the tangible and intangible heritage of humanity and its environment for the purposes of education, study and enjoyment.” The proposal made by the Caligary declaration varies slightly. It says that the museum is “an institution in the service of society that has the mission to **explore and understands the word** through research, preservation and communication, and above all through **interpretation** and exhibition (...) of world heritage.”

The fact of **permanent** could be questionable, it has a static quality which maybe doesn't correspond anymore to today's needs, as such institutions are of high cost to maintain and are not always able to adapt to changes. On the other hand, stable points of reference are needed in a world that is in constant shift.

Both definitions emphasize that the museum in the **service of society**, but don't specify in which way. This could of course be explained by the will to include various types of museums with different missions, but it seems to be very vague. However, the ICOM definition

specifies that it should serve the **development** of society in identifying, preserving and communicating the whole world heritage.

The Calgary declaration does an attempt towards a mission statement which should be to “**explore and understand the world**”. I believe it is not only about exploration and understanding, which establishes the museum as an instructor, but also about creation of social dialogue, and being a platform for discussion and exchange. That is to say that the museum can be a facilitator.

The specification as to the role of **interpretation** seems to me important to mention as it is impossible to be neutral in the information transmitted.

For our purpose it seems a lack that the definition doesn't mention the community cohesion part that we would like to elaborate upon. We could ask ourselves if the museum is a closed temple for elitist culture or a space when one finds oneself and relates to his origins. In one of the articles (Mairesse 2007: 79-83) by the museology consultant Anita Shah, we found however some interesting remarks which we could take into account, together with the definition and mission of the eco-museum mentioned above:

The museum opens the way to different cultures and societies and helps to adapt to the constantly changing environment. As an influential social institution the museum encourages multidisciplinary responsibilities. It has to ensure the values of Truth and Equality and to engage itself for the common good. There has been a growth of cultural responsibility, due to the explosion of mass communication, more free time and the increase of conscience of cultural identity versus the threat of modernization. This responsibility found an institutional concretization in museums.

Hooper-Greenhill says, in the same direction, (Hooper-Greenhill 2007: 1) that ‘culture works to represent, reproduce and constitute self-identities and this entails a sense of social and ethical responsibility.’ In the last ten years the impact of museum in community activities increased thanks to their professionalism and the growing conscience and participation of the public. People wish more and more to reexamine history, discuss about different cultures, and value human inventiveness. The museum can be a place for personal development and the stimulating of passions which are needed to live. It can also help small communities to preserve their identity and in the same part take part in global development. These functions of the museums are the ones we are aiming at in the Gjirokastra museum.

Alice Parman (2006) gives an overview of the roles that a museum can have in the community:

**-Visitor attraction**

The museum is the "front porch" of the community, welcoming visitors and giving them an overview of what's special and unique about this place.

**-Catalyst for change**

The museum exists to deliver a message that will encourage people to think differently about their relationship to others or to the world.

**-Center of creativity**

The museum engages visitors in activities where they make and do things. Visitors, rather than the museum, determine the outcomes.

**-Memory bank**

The museum displays aspects of the history of a place, person, cultural tradition, etc.

**-Storyteller**

The museum interprets the history of a place, person, cultural tradition, etc. in ways that relate the past to the present--and even to the future.

**-Attic**

The museum preserves objects and images that would otherwise have been discarded.

**-Treasure trove**

The museum preserves valuable, meaningful, and/or rare and unusual objects and images.

**-Shrine/hall of fame**

The museum honors a particular group or individual and assumes visitors have a built-in interest in this topic.

**-Exclusive club**

Although open to the public, the museum is primarily aimed at people with special interests in and knowledge of the topic.

In our case the museum can be a visitor attraction, but also a memory bank/storyteller and a catalyst of change and creative center. The collecting of valuable objects is more difficult to

achieve because of technical conditions. The function of catalyst of change is the priority in our eyes.

Except from the cultural value, the socio-economic value that comes with the settlement of a museum had been recognized by all the economical actors, and good examples have been seen in Bilbao with the Guggenheim Museum, but also with the creation of more modest museums, in Massachusetts, Roudoule (France) or Mardin (Turkey) about which we will talk in the next chapter. Fleming confirms this in the following statement:

“Today we can find plenty of acknowledgements of the value of cultural activity in urban regeneration. There is evidence that inward investors favour and remain loyal to those cities which take their culture seriously; that lively city centre cultural activities discourage crime and anti-social behaviour, and encourage the development of vacant and derelict downtown property; that culture is a vital element in a city’s drawing power; that culture is the basis on which civic pride and city identity is built; that culture projects create a legacy; that high quality design is seen as a key ingredient in urban competitiveness; that a high quality cultural offer is a basic requisite of an internationally successful city.(Fleming 2005:5)”

This is encouraging for the creation of a museum, but it has to be done in an inclusive way, that is to say including the Gjirokastra inhabitants.

## **Current practices**

In this section we will present different activities or practices that actual museums often include in their work.

### ***Space for dialogue***

The museum can gather persons or groups to exchange ideas.

In the definition of the eco-museum and in the remarks of Prof. Anita Shah, we already started to mention the notion of dialogue, or museum as a forum. Some museums organize regular discussions and debates about current issues related with the museum and the community.

Then, the museum creates a dialogue from the present to the past. This was not always the case, but today, through programs and temporary exhibitions, but also through contemporary collecting, a bridge can be established with the actual society. It can be for example by

comparing past practices with the actual ones, finding continuity, analyzing the meaning of past events for us today etc. ...

The practice of involving the public in the creation process through consultation is also a part of the dialogue activity. The Swedish Museum of National Antiquities in Stockholm, which organized an exhibition on mother Mary statues, went very far in this by holding their meeting in the exhibition space to allow the public to select the items to be put in the exhibition, and even to sit at the table during the discussions of the staff. This is quite experimental but it led to positive results, although the process might be slower and full of interruptions.

### ***Space for creation***

Contemporary creation has been used outside of art museums to make historical and other museums more accessible to the audience, (which is familiar with visual culture through the media, internet, etc.,) in order to interpret history or social situations that cannot easily be illustrated with panels and photographs. We could say that this focus on contemporary creation in museums other than contemporary museums started to become important in the last twenty years, when the museums, in their concern for audience development, started to look at disciplines such as visual communication, cultural studies, gallery and art market etc. (Cvetković 2006: 18)

The strategy of contemporary art is also perceived as a way to shift from institutional to project logic in museums (*ibid.*: 3), which enable more flexibility, especially if it is difficult to rely on the public sector, as it is in transition countries.

If we take again the example of the Mother Mary exhibition, around thirty medieval statues were shown together with modern expressions in the form of contemporary art, music, dance and new texts by an author, a priest and an art historian. The modern exhibition design also created a particular atmosphere, and it was like the *mise-en-scene* of a church, with the music specially created for contemplation. Whereas these last elements allowed to imagine the context in which the statues were originally, the creation of a dance performance or visual art work were re-interpreting the meaning of Mother Mary for us today, or the associations that could be made. This links, again, the past with the present.

Creation doesn't have to be only creation that is included in the exhibition when it is done. It can also be a process. In the exhibition Villa Sovietica curated by Alexandra Schussler in the

Ethnographic Museum of Genève in Switzerland, this last floor of the exhibition was completely dedicated to creation of new objects by the public. She was offering a reflection on the status of objects as documents of time, that in fact an object can say anything, and that the meaning is created by the interpreter. Then she also invited art school students to intervene in the exhibition by adding their creations which were specially made for the occasion and exhibited there for one day. The last element of creation was in the side program of the exhibition, where people planted flowers in the museum garden to create the portrait of Lenin, or that they went in the city with full bags to photograph them with the so-called typical attractions of the city, to disrupt the image they were supposed to give. This is as in the Mother Mary exhibition, an example of experimental practice, but it illustrates very well what is meant by new museology.

The beautiful quote that sees the “museum as a safe place for dangerous ideas” (Mairesse 2007: 64) reflects this creation part. As a stable institution, relying on history and heritage, it offers a reference point for experimentation.

### ***New media, Interactivity and re-enactment***

It is not deniable that the museum has an expert role but it should be recognized that meaning and communication are complex and interactive. The museal profession exists through the communication of signifying symbols. The professional ideals of honor, fairness and honesty are translated through language and other symbolical activities which are a means of interaction (Mairesse 2006: 45). The way of communication can be the reason for success or failure of a program (*ibid.*: 46) and therefore reflection about the presentation has to be a crucial part in creation process.

The museum should be a place for active learning, and exploration rather than always comprehension. It offers a dynamic experience and not comprehension as in a book. (*ibid.*: 65-66) It is also a place to express emotions. The use of new media and other technologies to achieve this is a current practice in museums. A dynamic experience can also be achieved through sounds, smells, the possibility to touch things and the presence of performances by artist in the exhibition space.

On the other hand, “[e]xhibition design and presentation techniques excite revulsion, especially where interactivity, or sound and lighting effects, or film, are employed, presumably because all these interpretive techniques are believed to detract from the serious

issues represented by objects (*ibid.* 2005:2). Critics fear that mere entertainment might take over from scientific objectivity.

But the museum can combine both, by providing experiences based on scientific research. Of course re-enactment or reconstruction will always be a construct, an interpretation of the actual facts, but it can't do without, as "objects rarely "speak for themselves". They can be the spark that lights the blue touch paper of wonder, awe, emotion or a host of other reactions, intellectual or visceral, but please, let's have the rest of the story too! And if parts of the story cannot be told using objects, well fine, let's find other ways of doing it!" (*ibid.* 2005: 3)

The use of computers, touch pads etc in the Gjirokastra museum could be an easy way to reconstruct an experience of the past. In many museums today, especially historical ones, an attempt is made to re-enact what happened by visual, sound and tactile experiences. Digital material can be used for games or other interactive experiences that can involve the visitor. But on the other hand the cost and maintenance of such devices are important, and if these devices cannot be functioning on the long run it could be a risk to use them. However we could use simpler requisites like sound recordings and films, and eventually have some performances.

With all this activities, of dialogue, creation and modern communication modes, the museum can achieve to be a cultural leader in community (Mairesse 2007: 64). We are going to give such examples in the following chapter.

## 2. Study cases

### **Urban regeneration and the Revolving Museum in Lowell, Massachusetts, USA<sup>20</sup>**

#### **Presentation**

In the town of Lowell, action was taken to "revitalize this nineteenth-century industrial mill city into a postindustrial urban and cultural enclave (Westervelt, 2006:31)". It was a chance that the infrastructure, that is to say the mills and other historic buildings, canals and cobblestone streets, were not destructed as in other industrial cities. These started to decay slowly but a grant from the federal state to preserve the town as a National Park and the

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<sup>20</sup> Based on Westervelt 2009: 30-43

creation of the Lowell Historic Preservation Commission by Congress turned the tide at the end of the 1970's. The past became something to be proud of and increased the positive self-identity of the inhabitants. In 2003, a report by the Urban Land Institute stated that the collaboration of city leaders, public and private leaders in business, and cultural and community organizations had been fruitful. The efforts of the civic community had made the city more attractive through the construction of cultural and sports facilities and the creation of a valuable historic area. Adaptive re-use has also made possible the transformation of old mill buildings into habitable space with added value.

Except historical components, contemporary art also contributed to the creation of a sense of identity. In 2002, the Revolving Museum (TRM) settled in Lowell. This "nomadic institution dedicated to transforming abandoned and/or under-utilized public spaces into innovative community arts projects" was founded in 1984 by the artist Jerry Beck. His goals were to foster civic dialogue through the use of art, and to engage with the community in socially and environmentally relevant issues. In Lowell the task of the museum was to recreate a sense of place. This was done through public art projects such as murals made by teens to convey positive messages, or regular exhibitions in shop windows, collaboration with local artists etc. Besides public art, revitalizing art projects were set up such as the 2004 project which consisted of a series of workshops to come up with creative ways to develop the city. One of the initiatives which rooted out of this was *Canoe Tours, Incorporated*, in which participants painted canoes and organized guided tours through the historic canals of Lowell. This project also helped to promote cleaning of the canals.

In 2007 the *ARTventures* project started, based on Beck's desire for "public art works that comment on both Lowell's storied history and on some of the major influential dynamics of 21th century American society" and on the wish to make the urban space more attractive through video projections, outdoor exhibitions, performances, and films. In these objectives, the museum collaborated with businesses and organizations in the Lowell area including the Cultural Organization of Lowell, the Greater Merrimack Valley Convention and Visitors Bureau, Lowell National Historic Park, University of Massachusetts Lowell, as well as city hospitals, schools, neighborhood associations, local businesses, and individual donors. Over one thousand local artists, scientists, community members and civic leaders participated in the creation of the *ARTventures* series. This collaboration was perceived as indispensable for authenticity and sustainability of the project.

In 2008, one neglected city park called Harmony park was “adopted” by the museum to be renovated by local artists and the members of the neighborhood. Today it is a lively public space and an annual spring festival and also Community celebration is held there.

The Lowell example has been recognized as a best practice of urban development. This community based revitalization with an extensive network of involved citizens (which was created/reinforced through art projects) was the reason for its success.

### **Lessons to learn**

In Lowell the history of the town, which was recognized to be significant for the whole country, became a factor which increased positive self-perception and pride and led to more involvement in the revitalizing process. In Gjirokastra, people are quite well aware of the historical value of their city, although the younger generation tends to know less about the history. Pride is also not missing if we look at the results of a recent survey carried out in the city (GCDO 2010, Community Survey Results). However, this self awareness doesn't lead to engagement. This can be explained by a lack of sense of responsibility and expectation that the state has to do something.

Even in the Lowell case change started from the government's side. A grant and the creation of an Historic Preservation Commission greatly contributed to improvements. In our case, a local branch of the Institute of Monuments exists, but it seems not very engaged. There is a lack of will from the national and local powers, and maybe a lack of knowledge as well, to invest in revitalization. A general action plan, known by all actors and well implemented could do a lot. Unfortunately the coordination of initiatives is lacking in Gjirokastra.

In Lowell, the community involvement was reinforced through the art projects led by the Revolving Museum. Even if in Gjirokastra, people don't have this culture of civic engagement, small and well promoted actions as the rehabilitation of the Odeon in front of the Medrese high school, or the cleaning up of the castle, coupled with an activity or game, or even small events as dancing evenings, crafts workshops etc. could make a difference. In general the opportunities for “doing something together” (except have a drink) are lacking in Gjirokastra, and giving this kind of opportunities should be a focus point of the museum if it is created.

## **The city of Mardin, South-East Turkey**

### **Presentation**

Mardin is a city similar to Gjirokastra, with characteristic ottoman architecture, a castle, and several religious monuments (9 mosques and 7 Christian churches) as there used to live a majority of Syrian and Armenian Christians before the massacres which took place in the First World War. Today Turkey wants to promote the cultural mosaic of this city that is today repopulated with Kurds and Turks. Considering the geographical conditions, we could say that the location is worse than Gjirokastra, less central and close to the desert. However, in collaboration with the municipality the city had a quick development in the last ten years and the amount of tourists increased with 40 000. The development of tourism encourages new projects. Mardin was a neglected city until recently. Now the government is investing in the restoration of monuments and street facades. There are also some private sponsors.

In October 2009 a new, private museum was opened by the rich Sabanci family. In an 19th century mansion, which originally belonged to a patriarchate, now surrounded by glass, more than 5 000 years of history are presented with rich material from prehistoric to modern times. It has archaeological and ethnographic collections. A conservation laboratory is already working to clean and consolidate objects in the collection of the museum and new artifacts which come from archaeological excavations in the locality. With master students from the technical university of Istanbul, Zeynep Ahunbay worked on the conversion of a house to become an annex to the existing museum which needs to expand. The house belonged to the government and the governor of Mardin supported the implementation of the project. They are restoring the house at the moment. It is close to the museum and will house the children's section, the library, conference room and the ethnographical part of the museum

The Red Church, main Armenian church will be restored, and some Syrian houses were restored or transformed in hotels.

The famous designer Cemil Ipekçi opened a designer workshop in the old city which is also a center for women where they learn how to design dresses and make them.

An International Contemporary Art Biennale was also held between the 4<sup>th</sup> of June and 5<sup>th</sup> of July 2010, with sixty young artists who invested the abandoned buildings of the town. It was

sponsored by the Governor of the town and by GAP (Regional Development Project of South-East Anatolia), who wish to put the city on the international map of culture as “few cities are as mysterious and beautiful.” Their secret aim is that Mardin becomes European Cultural Capital in 2023, when the republic will be celebrating its 100th birthday. A critic on the internet notes that some of the works were really remote to the locals when their culture and beliefs are considered. It seems to him like a little handicap for the event since the main intent of the organization was said to be taking the attention of locals who probably have no clue about what a biennial is. The statements on the official website of the biennale seem indeed to show concern about local impact:

[Work of arts] modify the cities in which they are located, just like museums. However, the formation of the continuity, which is supposed to create this transformation, its becoming a living organism and its integration with the actors of the city, are crucial. In short, rather than how the events can feed on the cities, what is to be considered and deliberated on are: how such events would affect the residents of Mardin in particular, how they can permeate this into their lives and what kind of an interaction they are to promote.

The event can be regarded successful only if its effect on the residents of Mardin, especially young artists of the city continues after its completion. If the event gives the residents of Mardin an opportunity to embrace it, if its continuity is sustained, if it motivates the artists of the city to create and if it contributes to the formation of an established visual culture, it can be said of the event that it has fulfilled its purpose. Otherwise, the event cannot be more than a bogus exhibition articulated in the wheels of globalization. It lives in memories as a one-time activity; remaining attached to a poem's line "a movie comes to the city".

In this case, the initiative hasn't received a follow up, probably, as the critic noticed, because of lack of inclusion of the local population.

The threat in Mardin is now that new constructions are popping up, especially as tourism develops quickly. This could destroy the heritage of Mardin if protection measures are not taken. But Mardin will probably be UNESCO World Heritage by 2014 and this could help preservation.

### **Lessons to learn**

This example is in the same time good and bad. On the one hand, thanks to huge funds of private or public sources, an almost forgotten city has risen out of its ashes and was put on the international map. Educated and creative people are starting to set up projects there. On the

other hand, the development seems to be much directed to foreign visitors. There is a risk of loss of heritage if no proper measures are taken, but even if there are taken, a “Dubrovnik effect”, where nobody lives anymore in the historical part, could be likely to happen if the local population is not included in the development. The great ambitions of the leading class, who had the intelligence to invest in culture, should go hand in hand with care for the (sustainable) development of the local community. By involving them in the revitalization process, they will be more likely to stay and develop their own initiatives. In Albania, such a good, strategic investment by the state or private actors is a rare thing. This example shows us how huge progress can be made in a short time with the help of state and private support.

## **Ecomuseum of the Roudoule, Puget-Rostang, France**

### **Presentation**

The associative Eco-museum founded in 1986 in the Puget-Rostang village is a result of an initiative started in 1963 by two brothers, when their village had only 20 inhabitants left with an average age of 66 years. Lovers of their region, these two brothers decided to come back to their childhood village and started an organization in 1966 for local revitalization and development. Twenty years after the museum was created to give back the region its memory. It didn't simply focus on a particular valley or place but took the whole area as its research object. The region is in the mountains and a specific way of living and being resulted from this geographical positioning, corresponding to the surroundings in which one was living.

The collection has 8000 objects which are witnesses of daily life and socio-economic activities of the territory.

The mission of the museum is:

- to valorise the heritage by research and presentations such as exhibitions, publications, conferences, debates and guided visit
- to transmit ancient knowledge and crafts of the region
- to foster local development on cultural, social and economic level in interaction with the lively forces of the region by organizing educative, raising awareness and animation activities
- to give advice to private and public actors in the field of valorisation of heritage

The museum created exhibitions on the medicinal practices in the mountain, or the traditional celebrations during the year to reconnect people with these forgotten practices. The example of the medicinal exhibition is also useful for the present times if we think about plants that can be used for curing.

A cycle of conferences were held about bridge construction, mural paintings of the 15<sup>th</sup> century, bell casting...and other interesting heritage and crafts of the region. People from the region attended as well as occasional visitors.

The museum became a valuable pool of competences in the field of heritage inventory, historical and ethnological research, and also in organisation of thematic animations and exhibitions.

### **Lessons to learn**

It is beautiful and encouraging to see how a personal initiative turned into a successful museum supported by the regional authorities. However it took twenty years in order to arrive at this point. Support of the authorities has also helped a lot as well as the involvement of the community. In Albania the authorities are not very engaged and there is no culture of civil society involvement. However such an example reminds us that with good will a lot is possible to be created out of nothing. If we cannot move the authorities we can at least try to create some sense of community and try to point out how much can be reached if a group of individuals put their heads together to create something beautiful and useful for the community. In the case of the Roudoule museum it managed to make the region more attractive for settlement and for tourism.

## **Maison du Visiteur in Vezelay, France**

### **Presentation**

The town of Vézelay UNESCO is World Heritage site since 1979, with a modification in 2007 (buffer zone determination).

The aims of the Maison du Visiteur, which was created by the association Presence à Vézelay in 1994, are the following:

- Introduction to the site and surroundings:

It is necessary to have an introduction (or conclusion) to the “art of seeing”:

- to understand an architecture that is centuries away from us
- to understand symbolism that cannot be unveiled without mediation
- to recognize the actuality and universality of world heritage.

- Museum as an experience and dialogue:

“The contemporary visitor is often in a hurry and deprived of keys for understanding when he faces heritage which however deeply moves him: he needs a dynamical approach which appeal to the senses rather than to the mind to enter in personal contact with the architecture. “

- Museum to raise awareness for the importance of heritage:

“Buddha’s, icons and temples have been destroyed [for ideological reasons]. Ancient crafts are being negated in favor of blind opportunism (...) The wound [of heritage] is deep because it touches the whole body of populations, leaves them behind mutilated, without shape and voice, handed over to survival and sometimes hatred.

How many years will be needed to reconstruct? How many dedicated persons to bring back to life these centers of consciousness, dreams and shared destiny? How much patience needed to restore and retransmit? (...)

[We should ask ourselves] if the valorization and animation of the most prestigious heritage sites is (...) offering to people from all layers of society a place for reflection and fraternity? Are they places to invite to change of point of view, to innovate, and promote peace?”<sup>21</sup>

A new space has been created by architects on the way to the basilica on the top of the hill, as the interpretation work could not be done in the basilica, because of the silence to be kept, or outside in the noisy street. This space is quite small but has been well designed, and has three different layers. First is the entrance or welcoming space, with a desk for the basic information. This first space has a “mysterious “door with roman symbolism that is also to be found in the basilica. It attracts the eye and the visitor wants to know what is behind. If he wants to find out, he can pay for the “visit”. Than he can himself open the door and go to the

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<sup>21</sup> Free translation from the website <http://www.vezelay-visiteur.com>

interpretation room. The second layer is this room, which has models and several reproductions to explain the architecture and sculptures and its symbols. A guide is here to explain and answer questions. Then, the third layer is a projection room with seats where a slideshow of the basilica, and the Vézelay town in different periods of the day and of the year, with different lights. This is particularly significant as the architecture of the basilica is adapted to the position of the sun during several periods in the year and this cannot be seen in a one day visit. This show with only music transmits to the visitor a sense of the atmosphere of the place. After the visitor is ready to get out and discover by himself.

### **Lessons to learn**

The good point about this initiative is the fact that it is an independent project. If we think about possibilities in Gjirokastra, this is a very good point. We have mentioned the fact that there are difficulties to work with the local authorities and insure sustainable functioning and maintenance of a museum. I have visited the actual museum of Arms in the castle and the perspectives are not very comforting. The exhibition from the 70ties seems still untouched, some artifacts are in bad shape (costumes for example) and the walls are molding. This means that no restoration or maintenance is done, except probably the basic cleaning. Then, when one looks in the corners –in this case this is through the small openings in the doors of closed prison cells- one can see a sad spectacle: old artifacts (photos, models, panels) and exhibition furniture are stored, or better, dumped, there and deteriorating slowly. Then the lady working there is very friendly but she doesn't really give keys for understanding. We would not like to imagine the new museum to become the same, but this would be very likely if the municipality was to run the museum management.

This example is not a museum, but realistically the small scale of the project corresponds more to the kind of things that can be done in Gjirokastra by an independent organization with small means. At this stage, even if collaboration with municipality can lead to results with bigger impact, we don't believe that it is possible in the Gjirokastra configuration. The maintenance required for the collections of a museum seems also to be a huge responsibility and as the future museum doesn't have a collection of its own and wants to borrow from other sites, maybe another option is more appropriate. Because the museum's aim was to be an introduction to the region and a place to raise awareness, this can be done well in a small interpretation center with a few models, a short film and a guide.

## **Visitor center, Vat Phou Bangkok, Thailand**

### **Presentation**

Since 2001, Vat Phou is part of the UNESCO World Heritage. The Champasak cultural landscape, including the Vat Phou Temple complex, is a very well-preserved landscape which is more than 1000 years old. It was created to express the Hindu vision of the relationship between nature and humanity. The Global Heritage Fund intervened in restoration works. These developments had positive effects for the local community because they were included in the works and this created new jobs.

The creation of a visitor center was felt to be necessary because ‘understanding of the significance of the archaeology of the Champasak area is crucial for the preservation of the site. Without the understanding and support of the local community, tourists and public officials, efforts to conserve the area will not be successful.’(LAO PDR 2005)

At present most people ignore the significance and extent of the unexcavated heritage.

Based on the goals of the various stakeholders, an interpretative strategy for the heritage of Vat Phou and the Champasak Cultural Landscape was formulated to:

1. enhance the understanding of the value of the Champasak cultural landscape;
2. promote cultural tourism experiences for the Laotian and international communities;
3. inform visitors about the landscape's heritage values and stimulate them;
4. use the tourist activity to raise funds for conservation activities;
5. provide opportunities for economical development for the local community through the creation of a series of locally owned micro tourism enterprises.

According to a UNESCO concept and with funding from the Asian Development Bank under the Community-Based Mekong Tourism Development Project the visitor center was set up. Unfortunately I couldn't obtain updated results, but the plan was the following in 2006:

The center will have a staff of skilled individuals who will provide necessary information on the historical and archaeological significance of the landscape, alongside with information on basic tourist facilities in the surroundings. The visitor center will house an architectural model of the Champasak landscape and thirteen information panels. An educational video will also be presented, which will provide the visitor with an overall sense of the cultural landscape using digital techniques as well as the use of a 3-D model of the Vat Phou temple.

The development of a heritage trail that introduces the visitor to the entire cultural landscape is an additional way of guiding the visitor throughout the landscape in an organized manner. Interpretive and directional signs in Lao and in English have been designed to complement the landscape.

The final element in the present interpretive strategy is a website which will provide potential visitors and tour operators with a good understanding of the landscape and its tourism potential. It will also provide information on the management plan and the interpretive strategy used.

Today the center is operating, although no evaluation material is available yet.

## **Lessons to learn**

We chose to mention briefly this example in the end, although we don't have much information on it to give an idea of what a simple visitor center can look like. It doesn't have to be very complicated. But we would like of course to point out to the fact that international donors and organizations helped in the process, from concept creation to financing and implementation. The way in which this happened was pretty much top-down, and the 'undeveloped locals' were 'educated' and put to work. Of course this kind of almost colonialist approach is not what we want for Gjirokastra. It could also never have happened in this way, as Albania is still considered to be more ahead than Thailand- and it is in the "old Continent" of Europe. However, it would be very easy to create such a visitor center, if there was bigger support from the municipality and the state, as competent people could be available for this. However, as will become clear in our concept proposal, we would like to create something a bit more sophisticated that is not focused only on archeology but also on more contemporary history.

## **D. Towards a new concept**

### **1. Suitable approaches for the Gjirokastra City Museum**

After my arrival at GCDO and several discussions I realized that many nice and beautiful concepts cannot be implemented, and even if they would, because somebody came with a lot of money and staff, the local community would not identify with this museum and it would be for outsiders.

However, there is urgency to do something, in a simple way, and not to lose more time in research although it would still be needed.

The example of the Artisan center in Gjirokastra as community institution, which organizes activities related to the local crafts can be seen as a good example of a feasible initiative. It could further develop into a research center collecting the knowledge about crafts. The case of the Musée de la Roudoule and other eco-museums shows that this can work.

However a plan for future development of an historical museum corresponding to the version proposed by GCDO and located in the castle's restored galleries will be considered first.

I believe in the importance of programs, first of all to define the museum. Maybe it would be suitable to start the museum without an exhibition, as a work in progress. Different working groups could be established, including one researcher, one communication specialist or designer, and some members for the community. They would work on the different galleries:

-The Opening Foyer: Actual/personal stories

-The Origins gallery: Telling about the origins of the surrounding sites, of the Gjirokastra settlement, of the name. On the construction materials as well, as they are part of the natural landscape.

-Social history/Gjirokastra throughout the years/Gallery of Fame... (define more clearly the guiding theme/restrict it)

During this process, there could already be events to discuss and present the ongoing research, visits could be organized to see the potential object for the exhibition...

When each group has come to a final conclusion, and after common agreement, the objects for the museum can be purchased and panels can be created etc. until the exhibition is set up.

But the work should not stop here and activities should be organized on regular base. Otherwise, it is easier just to publish a book with all the information.

## 2. Proposal of a strategy for the creation of the museum

### **Methodology**

#### Defining who you are

The first part should be:

Be yourself = Figure out who you are and who you want to be.

Focus on your mission and vision.

Develop organizational and interpretive goals. (Parman 2006)

It seems that the mission and the vision of the museum are not stated in any clear document and it is missing.

In this part, a team should also be constituted with clearly divided tasks and responsibilities. A project manager, a curator, a research team (for historical and audience research), mediators, educators, exhibition designer(s), and PR manager are key figures in such a team.

#### Mapping and analysis of the cultural and political context

At the genesis of the project should be the activity of researching the context in which the museum will be implemented, because this will define which form it has to take in order to function well. This can be done, as I have done it in the “Context” section of the thesis, through data collection, but also through observation of and attendance in the towns’ life. As an informed person or team who is educated in the field of museums, it is possible, after this mapping phase, to draw the first lines for a museum concept.

#### Audience research

We believe that it is a crucial point. Although the museum professionals have the indispensable knowledge to create the museum, they have to hear from the potential audience before giving a fixed proposal. Considering that the mission of a museum is not entertainment, (even if it might be a ‘side-effect’,) results of audience research cannot be the only criteria for decision making, as it can be the case that the things which directly please the audience are not always valuable to be presented in a museum. Audience research for a museum has not the same function as the one done during the design of a new commercial product. However it allows

not to make huge strategic mistakes and to become aware of elements or points of view which were maybe neglected. If serious needs, demands and interests from the future audience are taken into account, the museum is more likely to function well and be sustainable.

Here again we can quote Alice Parman's recommendation:

Fit in = Understand your community.

Build an active, broadly representative board.

Make evaluation a priority.

The needs can be identified, and adjustments can be made to the first draft for a proposal through:

-interviews with the local population (youth-university; craftsmen; employees in museum of arms and of ethnography; owners of shops and restaurants, door to door...)

-interviews with tourists

From there the concept can be further developed.

We should however stop for a moment to consider that this focus on audience is something quite recent, and started to appear with the decline of the focus on the objects in the museum. The Material Culture studies emphasize that artifacts and social relations are closely related and that objects in themselves don't carry a message independently. The museum creates the objects by isolating them, (that is to say by putting them in the collection and exhibiting them,) and make them seem to talk by themselves about life (Schüssler, 2009: 223). We can also quote again what we mentioned on page 27 already: that 'the museum can take its knowledge not only from objects and experts but also from ordinary people' (Mairesse 2007: 63).

We can take the example of the results of the essay-writing workshop with the Peacecorps volunteer G. S. In the fall of 2010 a workshop was held with children from Gjirokastra high schools. From their essays about the museum we can quote several elements which were recurrent (GCDO 2010):

**Qualified staff:**

“I think that's an important thing for constructing this museum will be a well-trained staff. They should be well trained in literature, foreign languages, computer skills, etc.” O.<sup>22</sup>

“There should also be a well organized team focused on generating ideas about the plan, which should be realized as soon as possible. Finally, the staff hired to work at the museum should be qualified and be fluent in foreign languages.” E.

“...the staff must be organized perfectly. The tour guides have to be fluent in English and also should be hospitable and friendly with the tourists.” K.

“[There are] few architects and in Gjirokastra we don't have any good professionals. There is a great deal of corruption everywhere and contracts may go to places for the wrong reasons. This is and would be a good problem for our city to solve. Good education in our country is missing. Our generation is not so well educated and we are lacking architects and even other professions.” I.

**Quality equipment:**

A well lit and clean museum will attract more tourists. In addition, it would be more comfortable for the tourist if the museum had an excellent heating system. K.

“[There is] poverty (...) the environmental conditions are bad, and not suitable for a new museum.” I.

**Good management of resources:**

“...that everything would proceed correctly.” O.

“...efficient use of the money .The proper management of profits from visitors' admission fees may be considerable in the coming years. This factor will influence the development of our town in a positive way. “E.

“It is dirty everywhere. There are bad conditions in every place. We have a museum in our castle and it is not kept clean. I think this is a big problem that the government has to solve. The government has not employed people for this work. As I said, corruption is here. Corruption is everywhere. They employ their people even though they don't have the right skills for the work.” I.

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<sup>22</sup> The letter mentioned after each quotation is the initial of the pupil's name.

**Benefits:**

“The town hall could spend the profits of the museum in different ways such as for the re-construction of the antique houses”.

“...they (the tourists) will remember this city” K.

These remarks confirm the problems that we already identified.

Another example is the community survey carried out in 2010 by Dana Phelps. Although this survey is more oriented on the impact of GCDO, some questions are relevant for us. We already mentioned that according to this survey the castle was greatly favored among other locations, but at the same time, the locations offered to choose from didn't present possibilities for a museum. It is also the question in how far the respondents answered according to what they thought was expected from them. Two other elements however are interesting. Firstly the fact that 74% of the respondents are proud of their city, although they often can't name benefits of living there. This points out that there is something to build upon. The task now is to turn this pride into a feeling of responsibility and engagement for the city. The second fact is that although the majority of the people interviewed think that the community has an excellent to fairly good understanding of the history of the city, generally the younger tended to say the community had a less good understanding, and older generations often remarked that they felt that the younger generation didn't know about its history. This observation, as well as analysis from my personal interviews, confirms the fact that a historical museum, or at least a museum related to historical themes, is appropriate to be created in Gjirokastra. The special history of the city has to be reconnected with the realities of the actual citizens.

From my semi-structured interviews made this summer<sup>23</sup>, I cannot draw many scientifically relevant conclusions, as it was carried out on a small number of persons (14). It seems that less educated people have a traditional perception of the museum. They imagine it as a chronological time line, and would like to have all the elements reflected. I can imagine that they also refer to the types of museums they already know, as many- from the interviews in Albanian- were not able to name/imagine other types of museums. Even if there would be a chronological way of telling the history- in a long corridor opening up to a window on the city

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<sup>23</sup> The interviews, as well as remarks on methodology are to be found in the second Annex.

today- it should be done in an appealing way: having some sound recordings, why not some reconstructions by actors of particular moments...or possibilities for children to ‘play’ some scenes. If the museum would be created only according to the idea that people have about how a museum is, the museum will end up like the other museums in the city: visited by the tourists and once in their life by the locals.

In general most people think a history museum is the best type of museum for Gjirokastra. Even if persons pointed out other problems in the city (bad infrastructure, garbage, lack of green spaces...), they were not against the creation of a museum. People are all curious to see it, although many didn’t hear about the project.

The main purpose of the museum would be to tell the history of the people from Gjirokastra (“our history”) throughout out the ages.

Two respondents had the idea of a culinary museum or crafts museum. Two others mentioned modern art/creation, to also convey something about new values.

As to the location, even if people agree that the castle is the most important place in the city, half of the people think it is better to have the museum in another place, close to the bazaar, in a traditional house...to have a better spreading of things to visit, they fear complications with entrance tickets and overload by having two museums on the same spot.

In the whole, the interviews conducted gave me some inspiration for ideas presented in this thesis and confirmed some of my own opinions.. I also had the confirmation by most respondents on the lack of cultural life and, for the people more involved in tourism, also the lack of an information or visitor center.

After this audience research and consultations a definitive plan can be created and the thorough historical research can start.

### Historical research

Several specialists have been employed for historical research for the Gjirokastra museum. Since three years the research process is ongoing. We already treated this issue in the part “Creation process” on p. 21.

Ideally there should have been a clear plan for research, cut out in several phases:

**-Preliminary research** for the creation of a first draft of the concept

-After confirmation and adjustments brought to light during the consultation process, and after the set up of the definitive concept, **thorough research** can start to examine in dept the different issues or chapters which will constitute the exhibition.

This research needs more systematization in the record keeping as we already mentioned in the “Creation process”. For the different exhibition chapters, a file should be created with visual and written documents. At the same time a diary or report on the research activities conducted should be kept constantly. If different researchers work on one chapter, they should have regular meetings to share their findings and come up together after each meeting with the conclusions of all the individual research done, and with the selection of the elements which will be (potentially) used in the exhibition, regarding the established plan. In this way the research process is oriented towards the result and can be more efficient. This doesn't mean that adaptations to the initial plan cannot be made according to new or unexpected research results, but the initial plan has to be kept in mind at all times, and be modified during the process if needed, but upon approval of the whole team and with valid justification.

This would avoid having to employ and initiate new researchers in the end to systematize three years of research in which they didn't take part.

To ensure the coordination between the different chapters, the project manager should organize meetings of the different groups or of a representative of each of them. In this kind of meeting, but also in the respective “chapter” meetings, some individuals from the community can be present, to give their opinion during the process and enable the research team to keep in tune with its audience.

-**Additional research**, after the set up of the base<sup>24</sup> exhibition, in order to organize temporary exhibitions and correct, add to information of the base exhibition if new findings have been uncovered.

## **Conceptual frame**

In the establishment of the conceptual frame of the museum project we believe that three elements are crucial:

### Team interaction

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<sup>24</sup> This term, heard from the Swedish director of the National Museum of Science and Technology, Ann Follin during a discussion panel in Belgrade on the 10<sup>th</sup> February 2011, replaces the term of permanent exhibition, which alludes too much to a static, never modified display.

During the determination of a museum concept, initiated by the curator, interaction with researchers, mediators and designers is crucial in order for the concept to rely on solid research, accessible modes of communication and realistic and attractive ways of presentation.

#### Community involvement in the creation process

This has just been discussed in the methodology in the sections on mapping, audience research and especially on historical research. Involvement of the future audience will allow to determine the modes of communication which are the most suitable and effective.

In this involvement we also include the possibility to select motivated people to be trained for a future job in the museum.

#### Dialogue with the space

At all time, the exhibition space has to be taken into consideration during the creation of the display concept. An exhibition designer should be present during the meetings of the historical researchers in order to constantly remind them about the reality of the space which is at their disposal. By being present, this person can work on the design during the research process and stays connected with the researchers' team. This is much more fruitful than having the designer coming in the end and being forced to do something with the results of a long process in which he was absent. He has to report regularly about his plan for the design to the researchers, the curator and project manager, in order to discuss and adapt if necessary.

### **Communication and activities**

#### PR

The role of the PR manager starts at the same time as the creation process. As soon as the museum team is set up, the PR manager can start the communication with the audience. Through promotional material and media announcements, the news of the creation of a future museum can be made known and the future audience can be invited to join in the creation. By focusing on the fact that the new museum will be "their" museum the community members can feel more responsible and it can influence their willingness to engage in the project.

If traditional ways of promotion such as television and news papers, or even flyers cannot achieve results and "move" the people, which is very likely in a society which is not used to civic life, other alternative measures have to be taken. Small events for promotion, personal dialogue and invitations can be a solution, as well as promotion through the modern social networks such as facebook.

Of course the audience has multiple layers, and consists of different age, social and cultural groups. Older people cannot be reached in the same way as youth, and new technology communications would not be very effective for them. In their case, places where they usually meet could be spotted and conversation could be engaged, about for example the transmission of traditions and history to the younger generations, how it could be done, and following this inviting them to tell their stories for the museum. For school children we should imagine ways to encourage them to continue the 'relationship' with the museum after the obligatory school visit. This could be through a party or film night organized in the museum, or a competition to write a story or create an object at home that represents the (history of the) city, from which the results will be put in the museum/in a temporary exhibition.

It is also not deniable that the museum will have a large tourist audience during the high season. This means that PR activities should also be developed towards foreign tour operators for example. Proposal of activities (such as traditional cooking or dances, or initiation to the Albanian language) should be made that would encourage interaction with the local population.

The PR should also report to the audience on (positive) results of the community involvement process, in order to invite more people to join.

At the end, when the new exhibition is opened the people involved should be invited as "special members" to thank them for their involvement.

Of course the PR's work doesn't stop there as it is important to create fidelity for the museum. It is not reduced to an immovable exhibition which you visit once in your life- as it is the case with the Museums of Arms of Gjirokastra. In order for the PR to create this fidelity and involvement of the community, he needs of course to have something to promote. This will be developed in the two following sections, especially the last one.

### Mediators

The mediators will be present in the creation process to convey sophisticated or scientific messages into more comprehensive language. However, they also have an important role to play after the exhibition is set up. When the museum opens for the public, the mediators are the bridges between the exhibition and the community. They should know the exhibition and what led to the selection of its content very well. This can be easily done if they have been present in the creation phase. These mediators have to have some education but they don't have to be all confirmed professionals. Young and older curious locals with an open mind could be trained during the creation phase, by being with other more experienced mediators

and having some additional courses on communication science. The role of the mediators is to guide visitors through the exhibition and answer their questions. They can be a kind of guides, which are at disposal of the public. They can also lead events and program activities.

### Programming/events

In order to ensure interest of the public, the museum cannot only be a permanent exhibition. It has to be a center of cultural life, and in this case interpreter of history.

Beside temporary exhibitions on specific aspects of history, art, crafts, cuisine etc., the museum can do contemporary collecting through workshops/ train people to collect the stories of their surroundings; have artistic activities and craft/cooking/dance/music...workshops; have special activities for children; invite contemporary artists or writers to intervene in the museum; organize discussions or research groups...and many more.

This life of the museum is crucial for its survival and can contribute to amelioration of the city's wellbeing.

## **Network**

### Other sites

The museum should connect with its surrounding cultural or natural sites, in the city itself and around. Except mentioning them in the exhibition (when the Drino Valley is presented for example), there should be flyers available, and the mediators should be able to direct people to these sites. But this also means partnership. The different sites can organize activities together, present each others' artifacts, organize all-in-one tickets for a better flow etc.

### Business partners

Except state support, or grants from international donators, the museum should look at the businesses around him and see where common interests can be found. Even if business partners have sometimes their particular interests, they often have a large amount of money available. On the other hand, the partnership doesn't have to be only in money, as the museum and the local businesses can find ways to collaborate in their common wish to have a vital economy.

### 3. Concept proposal

If we have to have a history museum I would like to suggest starting from the people's stories. Of course we should also have some scientific material to accompany these stories which can be diverging from the actual facts.

A big history museum with artifacts is not to be dismissed but I don't believe it would be a good idea to create this museum now, as it is unsure how it would be managed and sustain itself after its creation.

We should tell the stories about the streets, let them being told or recorded by Gjirokastrians. Maybe it will attract people from the city to come to hear these stories. At the same time this is exciting for tourists, more than pure historical facts. This is corresponding to what B.Z.<sup>25</sup> said in her interview with me: have a museum about the people, and have beside the facts that everybody knows, also more "mysterious" things. The only problem is the "lack of privacy" that people may experience. Apparently (according to Elenita Roshi and some other persons) it is difficult to make friends with Gjirokastrians and win their trust, they are very secret about their personal stories although there are very welcoming to guests.

However, work with ethnologists or sociologists could help in finding a way to approach people. Important passages of stories could be selected, with subtitles in English for videos, or translations for recordings. Sometimes personal belonging could accompany the stories but I don't believe this is important as the conservation of such objects is a huge responsibility. Recordings can be easier and less space consuming to conserve.

I also believe that streets connect bigger historical events with the private stories, and at the same time the stories about the Gjirokastra streets are not too personal. The streets also connect the past with the present, as they still exist. For people from the new town, this might be less familiar, but the history of their streets could also be told as some are also quite old/ or can help to talk about more recent times.

This concept can be seen as an idea for an Oral history museum.

During the thesis I mentioned several times the issue of location. After the interviews conducted and some reflection I drew the following conclusions: it is true that the castle is a

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<sup>25</sup> The interviewees are mentioned only by their initials. In case of eventual diffusion of the thesis, where the annexes would be left out, it would guarantee anonymity of the respondents.

reference point or the majority, and maybe the only one for many inhabitants of the new town. But it doesn't mean that the museum should be there. On the contrary, it would be interesting to enlarge people's perception on what is important in their heritage: it is not only monumental obvious things.

It would be wonderful if the museum about the streets could be in the streets, if passing by, or touching the street's name sign, you would start to hear a story. An audio guide with map could also be a solution, or just a guide bringing people to the several locations and telling the stories. For special occasions, different inhabitants of the streets could wait for the visitors and tell their stories. This would be a way to make history alive without re-enacting it in an artificial way. Of course story telling is also a kind of re-enacting but it is based on personal memories rather than on simulation and invention.

The museum could continue the collection of stories, old and new, about the streets and organized events connected to this.

There should be a central place for meetings/information/deposal of ideas. This could be in a visitor center<sup>26</sup> if it is created.

## **Conclusions and Recommendations**

During the writing process of this thesis, I was in constant interaction with locals actors in Gjirokastra and a lot happened. A significant event is that one of the leading members of GCDO left the office because of a new job offer. This leaves the structure very unstable. Where this organization was already in crisis due to lack of careful planning and engaging too fast in too many projects (due to the constant need for funding), this change makes it more acute. In this context the museum project is in unsure position. It seems that GCDO wants to transmit the project to one of the Peace Corps volunteers, but this person doesn't have a museology background. As I plan to stay I could assist her, but after this work, I consider that the creation of a museum shouldn't happen now. On the other hand there is not real will to delegate the project, as it seems that the directing members of the organization want to control and influence the whole creation process. This makes it difficult to come with new ideas.

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<sup>26</sup> The difference with tourist information center is that the latter provides only information, leaflets etc, as the former also gives keys for interpretation of a site.

A crucial problem is that of mentality. Community involvement as in Europe or the States is less evident. There, people became fed up with consumption only and want to be engaged, to give meaning to their lives. Here people still have to go through the phase of “consuming freely”. At the same time communist times are still present and there is a general climate of mistrust. This does not help in the creation of a community-based museum.

We will come back now to the main hypotheses from p.10:

*- Gjirokastra needs a museum that provides an introduction to the history and present state of the city and its surroundings for visitors as well as for the local community, in order to be able to develop in a sustainable way through cultural tourism as a part of UNESCO Cultural World Heritage,*

We can say that it is true, but there is an important blocking factor for the well functioning of the museum. By observing the museum of Arms, we have seen that maintenance of the museum will probably not be ensured. The museum could however be created as an individual initiative, either by an organization or as a private initiative. Anyway, support of the municipality would help a lot in the procedures, as a museum is a big investment.

We would suggest a project of smaller scale to start, as a visitor center with a small exhibition (for example on the history of the streets), without collection, which also organizes events.

*-A successful concept for the city museum of Gjirokastra can be created through an interactive approach with local community, museum professionals and visitors, through the use of new technologies and contemporary creation as a mediator of ideas.*

Success of community interaction has been proved to be true in many cases as in the eco-museum of the Roudoule Region, but also in various museums in the Balkan which we haven't mentioned as for example the Batana eco-museum in Croatia, who created a museum around the Batana boat as a common reference point between the Croatian and Italian community. We think that the concept of “eco-museum” would be the most suitable if we would go for the creation of a museum in Gjirokastra, rather than that of “historical museum”. However a problem is that there is no participative culture or civil society involvement in Albania. This is heritage of the Communist years, but it could be changed by small activities to gain the populations' attention and confidence.

*-The institutional and financial situation of the country, municipality and GCDO has to be seriously taken into account in order to be able to create a sustainable museum*

We can say now that although this museum is of utmost importance for tourists, it is maybe less for local inhabitants. It doesn't seem sustainable at the moment to create a history museum with a collection to maintain if we consider the political and economical situation. Even for tourists/and local a location as the Skenduli house (private ottoman house with tour by the owner) is more authentic and personal, and so could also be a museum on the streets of Gjirokastra.

A Visitor Center to guide the newcomers is also missing; and a small scale initiative could already answer to this need. Such a center could also be the initiator for an exhibition about the Gjirokastra streets.

The **main objective** of this thesis to create a concept for a city museum which will on the one hand make locals proud of their city and aware of its potential and on the other hand attract tourists and make them willing to explore the surrounding, can be said to have been fulfilled if we consider the idea of a Visitor Center and the "Streets Exhibition". Such a museum can result in lasting interest and engagement from both sides for keeping alive the traditions and heritage of Gjirokastra. The community will have an active role in the shaping of the museum/center programs in order for it to reflect the contemporary development of this same community. This will be achieved through the collecting of past and actual stories about the Gjirokastra streets, and through the organization of small events according to wishes.

For the last verification of sustainability we will check our proposal with the questions mentioned on p. 40 (Westervelt, 2010: 82):

*-What is the need of the community and which contemporary issues are affecting the local population?*

Besides some basic needs for better water and electricity infrastructure, lack of cultural life was often mentioned. As we said before there is also a lack of civic engagement. Involvement in cultural life can be a first step to civic participation.

*-How can the museum become a "town square" or place for community gathering, civic discourse, and civic participation?*

First by simply being a center of cultural life, place which is completely missing in the city. In a second time, it can engage into community actions as garbage cleaning for example.

*-Why does this museum exist? What is its added value?*

The Visitor Center and Street Exhibition exist for several reasons which we already mentioned: Orientation in the city, being a place to gather and to collect stories... Beside a visitor attraction, and a treasure trove and memory bank, it can be a center of creativity and a catalyst for change (see p. 46).

*-Who are the potential partners in the community and how to invest (a lot of) time in collaboration?*

In this case anybody can be a partner and time investment can be done by having a place to receive people/ on the same time initiate dialogue by going to meet them where they are.

*-What "thread" from the past can be used to create positive change today?*

The histories of the Gjirokastra streets can be a starting point for sharing stories and community involvement.

*-How did other museum-community initiatives succeed (in the Balkan) and how can we learn from it?*

We saw a few examples in the study cases and we draw some conclusions. To summarize these we can say that small independent initiatives and (raising awareness for) community engagement are keys to success which could work for Gjirokastra.

The conclusions drawn from conversations and interviews with Gjirokastra inhabitants, as well as personal observations made also clear for me that the "museum city" Gjirokastra would rather need events (programs) than a permanent exhibition, especially as the city is already a museum by itself and need to become more alive. Besides the idea of an active Visitor Center and the Street Museum project, it could be appropriate if a group of young artists and cultural actors would open a cultural center with cinema, concert hall, exhibition space and auditorium. Without its tourists, open air cafes and restaurants, Gjirokastra is a sad place in the (rainy) winter and everybody who can afford it prefers to spend the winter months in Tirana. However, lively activities would cheer up the spirits and in the long run make the

city more attractive for settlement. I believe these are higher priorities than the creation of a more static institution as a museum -even if this should certainly be considered in the future-, if we want to revitalize the town, encourage people to invest and make the future generations stay and be proud of their heritage.

To finish, I would like to quote some remarks by my friend and colleague Emily Radosavjević (2011). She writes about tourism in Gjirokastra and believes in:

Approaches to tourism that accommodate and invite visitors, yet impose a degree of cultural assimilation, with the ends of cultural learning, exploration and a sustained cultural identity. Tourism that is incorporated into everyday life of the city and its processes. Tourism that complements the process of reproduction of local culture, rather than running counter to it. Rather than distinct spheres for domestic and tourist life and activity, cultural tourism is domesticated and assimilated into local life and processes.

She believes that the desired process should be ‘long-term interpersonal interaction between residents and guests, by ‘[b]lurring binaries of participants and observers, producers and consumers, etc. and working towards prolonged interaction and distribution of local knowledge.

According to her, the goal is to create sites and contexts for interaction between local residents and visiting guests in which forms of cultural knowledge can be taught and shared for the benefit of both.

Our idea of a Visitor Center and in the same time cultural center which also collects stories on the streets of the city and present them, seems to be going in this direction, and it is the best we can wish for a city with such potential as Gjirokastra.

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# Annexes

## Annex I: Photos of the Gallery



Source : GCDO 2010

## Annex II Interviews

### Interviews Gjirokastra 2011-Museum Project

List of respondents:

Although the amount of interviews was limited, an effort was made to interview different persons (in gender, age, occupation, place of living<sup>27</sup>, nationality...). The answers given will help us to get an idea of thoughts and ideas among the interested group and see if there are some common points or recurrent items.

Most of the interviewed (9 from the 14) were people that I knew more or less in the town, to make it easier to access them and have less mistrust. This can also be seen as a weak point because I probably choose people who were more open minded than other types, who might have had different opinions.

From the persons asked, only one refused. I did not include him in the list. He was a man above 50y, working in one hotel in the bazaar. I met him by chance in a café and he wanted to see my questionnaire. After a short look he decided that it was not 'for him'.

Male under 35

1. Enea, Architecture student (22y). 10-08. In English.
2. Chris, Young creative entrepreneur (28y). 11-08. In English.
3. Semi, Pupil (17y). 15-08. In French.

Female under 35

8. Bora, Project assistant (22y). 10-08. In English.
9. Jona, Tourist shop (around 25y). 13-08. In English.
10. Anisa, Market sale assistent (20y). 24-08. In Albanian.
11. Tanja (and Daniel), tourist couple (woman mostly) Austria (29 and 32y). 25-08. In German.

Male above 35

4. Saimir, Film director (39y). 13-08. In English.
5. Pëllumb, Growcery store (55y). 24-08. In Albanian.
6. Nassip, Traditional house owner (64y). 25-08. In Albanian.
7. Manfred, Tourist/Hotel consultant Germany (76y). 25-08. In German.

Female above 35

12. Meilinda, Jewelry shop (43y). 19-08. In Albanian.
13. Donika, Market seller (55y).24-08. In Albanian.
14. Engjëllushe, Hotel owner (60y). 25-08. In Albanian.

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<sup>27</sup> By this I mean: do they live in the bazaar (historic area) or in the new town. The city is separated in different zones with different interests and perceptions. The initial plan was to interview also people from the historic area up hill, above the bazaar, but I couldn't find an assistant who had enough time to walk up there and to assist me with the Albanian interviews. I admit that this is a lack in the research. The plan would have been to interview 4 more people in the upper neighborhoods.

Only two tourists were interviewed because our focus was more on the needs of the local community.

10-08-2011

**What is your name/last name?** Enea Lici

**Your year of birth or age?** 1989

**Your profession?** Part time work in architect studio

**What are you doing in Gjirokastra?** Seeing my family, 15 days in the year

**What do you think about Gjirokastra?** It has developed many tourists come. I think the climate and the heritage is interesting for tourists. But revitalizing is needed, more vitality

**Do you think something is missing in Gjirokastra?** If yes what? Events, more things to gather people are missing

**If you could decide, what would be the first thing you would like to be created in Gjirokastra?**

I think a “zoning” has to be made, all parts of Gjirokastra are different. The bazaar is ok, is the most vital. But there could be a fair, a gathering, something with folk music

**What is your favorite place in Gjirokastra? Why?**

Viroi lake, it is a green area. This is missing in the city. But it is undeveloped there.

**Have you visited the existing museums in Gjirokastra?**

No, shame on me

**What do you think about them?**

I saw them on internet/pictures. I think they are in good condition

**As you maybe heard/or not, there is a plan to create a new museum in Gjirokastra.** I didn't know

**Do you think there are reasons to create a new museum in Gjirokastra? Which one(s)?** I think to make something bigger, to gather all parts. But this is not necessary for a small city. And it costs a lot. We can connect the (existing) museums with the houses.

**If yes, how would you imagine the new museum in Gjirokastra?**

-(free answer) Use the castle as a big museum

-**What would be inside?** The existing things of the castle, artisanal things, these ladies doing crafts

-**Which purpose would it have?** Multifunctional, for parties, discussions...

-**Where could it be?** In the castle

-**Would you go there?** Yes

-**If not, why not?**

**The plan is to have the museum in the castle. Do you think it is a good place? Why?** Yes

**The plan is to have a museum about the history of Gjirokastra. What do you think about this?**

-(free)

**-Would you prefer another kind of museum? What kind and why?** No

**-If there is a history museum, what is the most important element that you think has to be presented there?** Argjiro, and I forgot their name, the women, partisans that were killed (Bule Naipi and Persefoni Kokëdhima probably). But Argjiro more, because it is in the castle

**The future museum aims to be the 'city museum'. This means that it aims to be not only about the city but also for the city, and this means also for you.**

**How can the museum be 'for you'?** To employ me, take me in the organization, that I can be a part of it

**EXTRA:**

In the streets there should be more crafts, I saw this in a city in Greece, here it is not enough, many shops are closed or just shops for personal use.

I don't believe that this questionnaire works for everybody here, if you ask the people what they need, they will say more money etc. You have to ask people who know more, like Lejla for example (Lejla Hadzić, Balkan coordinator Cultural Heritage without Borders (CHwB)).

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10-08-2011

**What is your name/last name?** Borana Zhulati

**Your year of birth or age?** 1989

**Your profession?** Project assistant (GCDO)

**What are you doing in Gjirokastra?** Working and living

**What do you think about Gjirokastra?** It is the most fantastic place of all

**Do you think something is missing in Gjirokastra? If yes what?** That people MOVE, live noisy, not sleep all the time

**If you could decide, what would be the first thing you would like to be created in Gjirokastra?**

Create a big place for tourists to come first where Gjirokastrians give information. The tourists when they come don't know where they are going, they need a guide to help them. Like a TIC but bigger.

**What is your favorite place in Gjirokastra? Why?**

The old town. It is different, I take my ideas there, I am more creative and think better

**Have you visited the existing museums in Gjirokastra?** Yes

**What do you think about them?** They are like in communist time. Nothing new/different. More things should be put there, we are 20 years after now, we could show more. We were in transition. It was hard also. We can show how we developed, the road followed until today. It is still not total democracy. (Answer the question:) and how is life now?

**As you maybe heard/or not, there is a plan to create a new museum in Gjirokastra.**

**Do you think there are reasons to create a new museum in Gjirokastra? Which one(s)?** Yes to show more, not only museums built in communist time. Also show the other part of communism. And more parts.

**If yes, how would you imagine the new museum in Gjirokastra?**

**-(free answer)** Like a history book, step by step, like a circle, but not to be tired of, interesting, that give the desire to go again trough the circle.

**-What would be inside?** Everything, from big things ( Enver hoxha books that all have read-even if they burnt them-; guns, clothes), to show that we protect them, to details, to show what we don't know, mysterious, reason to come and tell he others about it.

**-Which purpose would it have?**

A mix, depending on what they find (in research process). But with history characteristics.

**-Where could it be?** Everywhere in the old town, in the houses, or in a new space if we don't have old space. The whole castle is like a museum, or every wall something could be shown, but then pay only one time. We already have a museum in the castle, it is too much to pay three times

**-Would you go there?** Yes

**-If not, why not?**

**The plan is to have the museum in the castle. Do you think it is a good place? Why?** Good but not the best. Find more interesting places. Separate, diversity in equal conditions (not one thing more important), not all in the castle, Zekate and Skenduli, have more places to go.

**The plan is to have a museum about the history of Gjirokastra. What do you think about this?**

**-(free) It is good.** We don't know enough, a few things we know through film or articles, but there could be more than this.

**-Would you prefer another kind of museum? What kind and why?** I don't know/haven't thought about it

**-If there is a history museum, what is the most important element that you think has to be presented there?** People's lives during the years, it is the base of everything. Showing it in a good way is already half of the work

**The future museum aims to be the 'city museum'. This means that it aims to be not only about the city but also for the city, and this means also for you.** I didn't know this

**How can the museum be 'for you'?** More visitors would come. It would be more interesting. And for me: to know more

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11-08

*Some slight modification was made in the last question (underlined), to make it clearer.*

*One questionnaire was attempted with the caretaker of Sopoti Hotel but he didn't want to participate: it is not for me he said. He made me realize that asking name, age and profession at the beginning can be a stop-factor. Also the word museum: many people do not identify with this, they think it is for the tourists...or somebody else. Maybe it is scary, or people are afraid to show their ignorance..?*

**What is your name/last name?** Christopher Hassler

**Your year of birth (or age?)** 1983

**Your profession?** Small business owner

**What are you doing in Gjirokastra?** Working in tourism, I bought my shop

**What do you think about Gjirokastra?** It is full of potential

**Do you think something is missing in Gjirokastra? If yes what?** Yes, a lot. No youth culture in the old town; the municipality is not functioning properly; not enough parks, trees...

**If you could decide, what would be the first thing you would like to be created in Gjirokastra?**

A group, horticultural society, who plants trees and plants

**What is your favorite place in Gjirokastra? Why?**

The Seven Springs, it is the only fresh water spring in town, it is a focal point for the neighborhood, it is connected with history, of the mosque that was there before

**Have you visited the existing museums in Gjirokastra?**

Yes

**What do you think about them?** They are misleading, hiding their past. Embarrassed by the history of what they were. They should be what they were (Hoxha house could still be the National Liberation War museum), but then with a view on what they were, like a double museum (interpretation of what the museum was)

**As you maybe heard/or not, there is a plan to create a new museum in Gjirokastra.**

**Do you think there are reasons to create a new museum in Gjirokastra? Which one(s)?** Yes. Gjirokastra should actually be full of museums.

**If yes, how would you imagine the new museum in Gjirokastra?**

**-(free answer)** The new museum should combine with the existing museums, have one fee for all the museums that are in the same space for a better flow . It would have the history of the valley, the origins, starting before Christ, with the Illyrians, why are they important for Albania, towards today, the UNESCO status and protection, the challenges.

**-What would be inside? Models, representations of the city (in different periods).** They did this in Butrint, different stages of different periods. Based on research of course.

**-Which purpose would it have?** Clarify history, understand why Gjirokastra is so important. Tell about the ottoman period here, Albanian could travel all over, to the middle east, Istanbul, Cairo..., highlight the contrast with the communist time, where people could not travel at all. Also tell about the King Zog period, we hardly know a thing about it. Use journals of people. Tell about the lack of water and the solutions, rainwater harvest, the environmental aspect for today.

**-Where could it be?** In the castle, or one of the houses, but castle is better.. I would imagine one museum above the carpet shop about weaving craft, and a culinary museum, with the Kashanu café maybe, he wants to make a restaurant, we can have also cooking workshop in the kitchen.

**-Would you go there?** Yes, once, or more if they change the exhibits

**-If not, why not?**

**The plan is to have the museum in the castle. Do you think it is a good place? Why?** It is (has much history there)

**The plan is to have a museum about the history of Gjirokastra. What do you think about this?**

**-(free)** It is good (cf. “what purpose would it have” above)

**-Would you prefer another kind of museum? What kind and why?** (cf. “where could it be” above). There should be all kind of museums as it is a museum city.

**-If there is a history museum, what is the most important element that you think has to be presented there?** (cf. “what purpose would it have” above)

**The future museum aims to be the ‘city museum’. This means that it aims to be not only about the city but also for the city, and this means also for you.**

**How can the museum be ‘for you’?** If it is about architecture, urban development of Gjirokastra, models, renderings etc. , if it is visually rich, I would come back.

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13-08

*I decided not to ask the first four question, first of all because I know the person a bit, and also because I considered that exact data as precise age or last name are not that important in this interview. My interviewee was busy and worked in the shop for the first part of the interview so I had to be quicker- I also forgot to ask one question in the end in the rush. In general this question about age/ profession can be aggressive as I realized before, so it is better to put it in the end. However it was a mistake not to ask what are you doing in G., as it shows the persons interpretation of what it is doing here/can show something about commitment to the city.*

**What is your name/last name?** Jona / -

**Your year of birth or age?** Betw. 22-27

**Your profession?** Sociology student/ work in souvenir shop in Gjirokastra

**What are you doing in Gjirokastra?** -

**What do you think about Gjirokastra?** It is in bad condition

**Do you think something is missing in Gjirokastra? If yes what?** Everything is missing

**If you could decide, what would be the first thing you would like to be created in Gjirokastra?**

Not create but keep (conserve) what we have here, the houses.

**What is your favorite place in Gjirokastra? Why?**

The Zekate house, it looks like the place where I was born. It hasn't changed but my house has. I used to play there also.

**Have you visited the existing museums in Gjirokastra?**

Yes all of them and several times.

**What do you think about them?** They are in bad condition. And for example in the castle they have a tour with headphones, but nobody tells about it, only if you ask.

**As you maybe heard/or not, there is a plan to create a new museum in Gjirokastra.**

**Do you think there are reasons to create a new museum in Gjirokastra? Which one(s)?** It is crazy. We already do not take care of the actual museums.

**If yes, how would you imagine the new museum in Gjirokastra?**

-(free answer) We have to know what the tourists want.

**-What would be inside?** All things from before, what was found in Antigonea (archeological objects), present different cultures, the food also.

**-Which purpose would it have?** (Present our traditions.) When tourists arrive at the Topulli square they see the statues there then they go up and see the castle ethnographic museum and Zekate...but this is not our tradition, there is also the Topulli house, the Dunavat quarter, it would be nice if all the houses are open. Also as shops, but legal –otherwise it will be like in Korca with lower prices and we will not be able to earn a living.

**-Where could it be?** The Topulli house or other houses in Dunavat could be

**-Would you go there?** Yes

**-If not, why not?**

**The plan is to have the museum in the castle. Do you think it is a good place? Why?** No. What would happen with the price?. Have a third ticket? It is better to have a new place (for the tourist to go).

**The plan is to have a museum about the history of Gjirokastra. What do you think about this?**

-(free) Why not?

**-Would you prefer another kind of museum? What kind and why?** About the food and culture, we have three interesting things here: the dresses, the music and the houses.

**-If there is a history museum, what is the most important element that you think has to be presented there? -**

**The future museum aims to be the 'city museum'. This means that it aims to be not only about the city but also for the city, and this means also for you.**

**How can the museum be 'for you'?** All museums are mine, they are here, I am proud. I would like to see something beautiful, particular, not to find wherever, things made of wood and stone.

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13-08

**What is your name/last name?** Saimir Bajo

**Your year of birth or age?** 39

**Your profession?** Film director

**What are you doing in Gjirokastra?** I began my gallery with paintings and sculpture, I want to make it more complete, give an example for a new start, to give the bazaar another perspective, be diverse, not have traditional shops everywhere. Bring culture, make people think they need to be more than consumers. Create a film festival later.

**What do you think about Gjirokastra?** It is my town, it has potential for tourism/artistic potential

**Do you think something is missing in Gjirokastra? If yes what?** A lot of things, but firstly a vision, G. is ruled for 21 y without a clear idea how to develop and conserve. It is half dead. UNESCO is a chance, but most still must be done (in restoration) even if something has been done already, it is only the facades, and the materials are ugly/poor. The UNESCO funds are spent in a strange way.

G. should be more habitable for foreigners. Bad infrastructure, no information. It is like an old ottoman city, no women, all waiters are men. It looks like a Muslim city, but it isn't.

**If you could decide, what would be the first thing you would like to be created in Gjirokastra?**

To have no cars in the bazaar

To have a concept how to develop tourism, supported by local businesses and government. And have a written plan with steps how to build infrastructure. Clear agenda. Look at models from Europe or Balkan (Slovenia, Croatia).

A media film school to cultivate journalists

**What is your favorite place in Gjirokastra? Why?**

I haven't find it yet. My home (Cfake) , it is quiet there.

**Have you visited the existing museums in Gjirokastra?**

Yes, but before.

**What do you think about them?** There are actually no museums in Gjirokastra...The museum of Arms is a museum let's say. But it should be a place where you could be amazed by things, the way of exposing/light/functioning. Be fascinated. But here it is only "half", amatorial.

**As you maybe heard/or not, there is a plan to create a new museum in Gjirokastra.**

**Do you think there are reasons to create a new museum in Gjirokastra? Which one(s)?** There should be 100 museums, every house can be a museum, have a function

**If yes, how would you imagine the new museum in Gjirokastra?,**

**-(free answer)** With European parameters, good lightening, information, structure, employees, experts..

**-What would be inside?** Can be a museum with paintings, sculptures. Have rooms with socialist realism, art before this and after, new art....

**-Which purpose would it have?** Not only show the history of Gjirokastra or history of art but also how to conserve values of the past and bring new values at the same time.

**-Where could it be?** The castle is the best, but it could be in the bazaar? The space is not a big problem, who curates is the problem.

**-Would you go there?** Yes

**-If not, why not?**

**The plan is to have the museum in the castle. Do you think it is a good place? Why?** Yes

**The plan is to have a museum about the history of Gjirokastra. What do you think about this?**

**-(free)** It is important, we are nothing without history. Our culture is one of the oldest. People are tired of missing information, of the isolation.

**-Would you prefer another kind of museum? What kind and why?** Modern art (to show new values also)

**-If there is a history museum, what is the most important element that you think has to be presented there?** Explain why Gjirokastra is called like that. / Books poetry by Kadare./ Objects from the Illyrian time to prove that we are autochtone here, old, have culture like Italy or Greece. Not only guns and fighting, but pleasant things,positive./ History of people not only of buildings, Gjirokastra is a "genius loci", place where geniuses are born.

**The future museum aims to be the 'city museum'. This means that it aims to be not only about the city but also for the city, and this means also for you**

**How can the museum be 'for you'?** By having valuable real artwork, very rare, good quality, also things of this time. Also by having a collection of foreign artists. By having an info point, a café (commercial side), nice atmosphere/green nature. By being for young and old. By having exhibitions, colonies of artists. By being complex. By having a crew with a strong personality, in tune with present times, with a vision.

15-08

**What is your name/last name?** Semi Mullai

**Your year of birth or age?** 17

**Your profession?** Student

**What are you doing in Gjirokastra?** On holiday at home (I live in France normally)

**What do you think about Gjirokastra?** It is a good city to visit

**Do you think something is missing in Gjirokastra? If yes what?** There are not enough tourists

**If you could decide, what would be the first thing you would like to be created in Gjirokastra?**

A tourist information center

**What is your favorite place in Gjirokastra? Why?** Antigonea, because I like archeology.

**Have you visited the existing museums in Gjirokastra?** I visited Skenduli, the house of Kadare before the restoration works, the castle and museums or arms. Hoxha's house no.

**What do you think about them?** They are not well maintained, their value is not put forward.

**As you maybe heard/or not, there is a plan to create a new museum in Gjirokastra.**

**Do you think there are reasons to create a new museum in Gjirokastra? Which one(s)?** It depends on the subject. But yes, Gjirokastra is losing its value and a museum can help.

**If yes, how would you imagine the new museum in Gjirokastra?,**

**-(free answer)** As a gallery of the things which represent Gjirokastra. For example in my family there was a governor 7 generations ago, we found a stamp under the foundations of our house, it could go in the museum.

**-What would be inside?** Typical, historical things.

**-Which purpose would it have?** Give the tourists information, show them what is Gjirokastra, the Skenduli house is only one side of the story.

**-Where could it be?** Not far away from the bazaar (new or old) Something easy to find.

**-Would you go there?** Yes if it is well done. Or one time just to see how it looks

**-If not, why not?**

**The plan is to have the museum in the castle. Do you think it is a good place? Why?** It depends, the castle is from old times, and it is harder to find, and if you have to pay a double ticket...

**The plan is to have a museum about the history of Gjirokastra. What do you think about this?**

**-(free)** It is good.

**-Would you prefer another kind of museum? What kind and why?** I don't know.

**-If there is a history museum, what is the most important element that you think has to be presented there?** It should be a time line going from before the Illyrians, to Zogu, to Hoxha, to today.

**The future museum aims to be the 'city museum'. This means that it aims to be not only about the city but also for the city, and this means also for you**

**How can the museum be 'for you'?** If it tells what we (Gjirokastrians) have been through/ what we have known.

EXTRA:

Idea for historical museum: have long corridor as time line, different colors for different rooms, have reconstruction of rooms in communist time, then have the first contact of Albanian with technology after the fall of communism. Then at the end have a real window opening a view to Gjirokastra, as it is now.

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*This is the first interview done in Albanian. My colleague doing the questioning and translating for me didn't do satisfactory work: He didn't ask the question in a professional, clear and neutral way. Maybe this was influenced by the fact that he knew the interviewee. Then he didn't translate completely the answers, influenced the answering process, and was going to fast, interrupting the interviewee sometimes. The interviewee herself didn't seem to be very used to reflect on things, but the interviewer didn't encourage and challenge her to do so either.*

19-8

**What is your name/last name?** Mailinda

**Your year of birth or age?** 43

**Your profession?** Jeweler

**What are you doing in Gjirokastra?** Living and working

**What do you think about Gjirokastra?** I like it, it is a museum city, it is beautiful

**Do you think something is missing in Gjirokastra? If yes what?** Cultural life

**If you could decide, what would be the first thing you would like to be created in Gjirokastra?**

A place to play for the children

**What is your favorite place in Gjirokastra? Why?** The museal pieces/parts, these are things to see and to talk about.

**Have you visited the existing museums in Gjirokastra?** Yes

**What do you think about them?** Very good.

**As you maybe heard/or not, there is a plan to create a new museum in Gjirokastra. (I didn't hear)**

**Do you think there are reasons to create a new museum in Gjirokastra? Which one(s)?** Yes. To talk more about the city. It is an old city.

**If yes, how would you imagine the new museum in Gjirokastra?.**

-(free answer) I don't know I 'm not an historian. One museum for the history of the city.

-**What would be inside?** About the war

-**Which purpose would it have?** Show the history of the city to tourists and Albanians.

-**Where could it be?** In the museal part

-**Would you go there?** Yes

-**If not, why not?**

**The plan is to have the museum in the castle. Do you think it is a good place? Why?** Ideal place.

**The plan is to have a museum about the history of Gjirokastra. What do you think about this?**

-(free) Let it happen.

-**Would you prefer another kind of museum? What kind and why?** No. *(She had no idea about other types of museums, the interviewer suggested art...)*

-**If there is a history museum, what is the most important element that you think has to be presented there?** Democracy, the time after communism.

**The future museum aims to be the 'city museum'. This means that it aims to be not only about the city but also for the city, and this means also for you**

**How can the museum be 'for you'?** If it talks about my times, the one I am living in, about today.

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*The following 3 interviews were done with another colleague. She was more correct in her work but I realized that she was suggesting answers, especially in the last two interviews. This was done in the good intention to help the interviewee, but it certainly might have influenced them. I have to give her more instructions about neutrality for further questionnaires.*

24-08

**What is your name/last name?** Pëllumb

**Your year of birth or age?** 55

**Your profession?** Before officer, now work in grocery store

**What are you doing in Gjirokastra?** *(My colleague felt that this question was not necessary. As others also remarked this it might be irrelevant for the purpose of the interview. This was just a way to get some extra information about the persons bounds to the city, but is not very effective)*

**What do you think about Gjirokastra?** There is no good infrastructure. The state did not work on it. There are a lot of constructions without permission. The city loses her beauty, especially the historical part.

**Do you think something is missing in Gjirokastra? If yes what?** No work/plan on the urbanism is done. And public toilets are missing.

**If you could decide, what would be the first thing you would like to be created in Gjirokastra?**

Good water networks, a lot of money is spend, we pay, but no result. Same for electricity networks. Some parts of the city-new town- are economically all right but it is still not so good. The hospital is also bad.

**What is your favorite place in Gjirokastra? Why?** Viroi lake, Kerculla restaurant, the castle, the swimming pool, the water at Këlcyra. Nice places to go out.

**Have you visited the existing museums in Gjirokastra?** Yes

**What do you think about them?** They are in a bad state, they were better before.

**As you maybe heard/or not, there is a plan to create a new museum in Gjirokastra.** (I didn't hear)

**Do you think there are reasons to create a new museum in Gjirokastra? Which one(s)?** Yes. Gjirokastra has many tourists from the Balkan coming to see things.

**If yes, how would you imagine the new museum in Gjirokastra?.**

-(free answer) About Archeology.

-**What would be inside?** The history of Albania and the city, the origin. Antique things.

-**Which purpose would it have?** Tell the history and culture, what people did before us.

-**Where could it be?** In the historical part

-**Would you go there?** Yes      -**If not, why not?**

**The plan is to have the museum in the castle. Do you think it is a good place? Why?** Yes. It is a strategical point, always visited. You have a full view on the surroundings

**The plan is to have a museum about the history of Gjirokastra. What do you think about this?**

-(free) Positive

-**Would you prefer another kind of museum? What kind and why?** I don't know.

-**If there is a history museum, what is the most important element that you think has to be presented there?** The period with Italy, King Zog, until now.

**The future museum aims to be the 'city museum'. This means that it aims to be not only about the city but also for the city, and this means also for you.**

**How can the museum be 'for you'?** If it tells our history

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24-08

**What is your name/last name?** Anisa

**Your year of birth or age?** 20

**Your profession?** Work at the market here

**What are you doing in Gjirokastra?** Living and working

**What do you think about Gjirokastra?** It is special, but it is not doing its best

**Do you think something is missing in Gjirokastra? If yes what?** Infrastructure and cultural life

**If you could decide, what would be the first thing you would like to be created in Gjirokastra?**  
Question forgotten by the interviewer.

**What is your favorite place in Gjirokastra?**

**Why? Have you visited the existing museums in Gjirokastra?** Only the museum in the castle

**What do you think about them?** It is ok

**As you maybe heard/or not, there is a plan to create a new museum in Gjirokastra.** (I didn't hear)

**Do you think there are reasons to create a new museum in Gjirokastra? Which one(s)?** Yes. It is a UNESCO city

**If yes, how would you imagine the new museum in Gjirokastra? Here upon hesitation of the interviewee the interviewer started to suggest: an historical museum...**

-(free answer) historical. It is the only way to tell our values.

-**What would be inside?** From the origin of the name of Gjirokastra until now.

-**Which purpose would it have?** For the tourists. And for people here, many also don't know.

-**Where could it be?** In the historical part

-**Would you go there?** Yes

-**If not, why not?**

**The plan is to have the museum in the castle. Do you think it is a good place? Why?** Good, it is the most visited

**The plan is to have a museum about the history of Gjirokastra. What do you think about this?**

-(free) Good

-**Would you prefer another kind of museum? What kind and why (not asked)?** Ethnographic.

-**If there is a history museum, what is the most important element that you think has to be presented there?** The origins. Many people don't know

**The future museum aims to be the ‘city museum’. This means that it aims to be not only about the city but also for the city, and this means also for you**

**How can the museum be ‘for you’?** If it tells about the history of Gjirokastra, concentrates on all periods.

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*In these questionnaires many suggestions were made by the interviewer. I also didn't get the whole of the conversation translated, which was also about the hard life nowadays etc.*

24-08

**What is your name/last name?** Donika

**Your year of birth or age?** 55

**Your profession?** Sell on the market here

**What are you doing in Gjirokastra?** I live in the periphery, I have my family here.

**What do you think about Gjirokastra?** It is ok but it could be better.

**Do you think something is missing in Gjirokastra? If yes what?** For me I would say a good place for a market is missing, like a bazaar. Otherwise the electricity

**If you could decide, what would be the first thing you would like to be created in Gjirokastra?** Question again forgotten, maybe need to make this question and the last in one? Or change this one in: what is the priority to be done in Gjirokastra.

**What is your favorite place in Gjirokastra? Why?** The Castle, Viroj (suggested by interviewer), Kerculla, Antigonea...

**Have you visited the existing museums in Gjirokastra?** Lately no. Before I went when I was young, to the castle, the festival...now I don't have time.

**What do you think about them?** They are organized I think.

**As you maybe heard/or not, there is a plan to create a new museum in Gjirokastra. (I didn't hear, maybe it was on television but I didn't listen)**

**Do you think there are reasons to create a new museum in Gjirokastra? Which one(s)?** Yes. It is necessary that our values are transmitted.

**If yes, how would you imagine the new museum in Gjirokastra?**

**-(free answer)** About the history (suggested answer by interviewer)

**-What would be inside?** Things of historical value

**-Which purpose would it have?** For the tourists but also people here

**-Where could it be?** Closer would be better (in new part)

**-Would you go there?** Yes? As I would also visit a concert for example

**-If not, why not?**

**The plan is to have the museum in the castle. Do you think it is a good place? Why?** It is ok, Has an old history

**The plan is to have a museum about the history of Gjirokastra. What do you think about this?**

**-(free)** Is is good that children learn. That my nephew learns about our history

**-Would you prefer another kind of museum? What kind and why?** No. *(She asked if the museum of Arms was still there. I said yes and it didn't change at all. She said it was good that the museum was still there.)*

**-If there is a history museum, what is the most important element that you think has to be presented there?** About the people that contributed to our history, the 'militante' (Cerciz Topulli), Kadare, Argjiro... (not the partisans)

**The future museum aims to be the 'city museum'. This means that it aims to be not only about the city but also for the city, and this means also for you**

**How can the museum be 'for you'?** If it is on our traditions and heritage

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*The two following interviews were made, assisted by a man from Gjirokastra. It went well, although it is frustrating not to understand all the side conversation that was not translated to me and can contain a lot of information. Luckily my Albanian starts to be better and I could pick up some elements by myself. Interesting is that other persons were curious about the interview, sometimes started to mingle in the discussion.*

25-08

**What is your name/last name?** Nasip Skenduli

**Your year of birth or age?** 64

**Your profession?** With pension

**What are you doing in Gjirokastra?** I maintain the house (Skenduli house, traditional ottoman architecture), also for the tourists.

**What do you think about Gjirokastra?** I feel pain when I think about Gjirokastra. The characteristic houses are falling apart. Measures to preserve/save this historical buildings are missing.

**Do you think something is missing in Gjirokastra? If yes what?** There is a lack of interest for keeping the values and the houses. Also lack of public lightening and lack of infrastructure to orient the tourists. Also I miss this old tradition of cleaning the houses and streets, the woman used to repaint with lime their front facades.

**If you could decide, what would be the first thing you would like to be created in Gjirokastra?**

Urgent measures to restore the cultural heritage.

**What is your favorite place in Gjirokastra? Why?** Gjirokastra is very special, if you go to a high point, you can see 360° around, at the Fantazia restaurant, Kerculla and the castle, maybe the castle is the best, because of the point of view again.

**Have you visited the existing museums in Gjirokastra?** In the past not now (1996)

**What do you think about them?** It is good work to expose our traditions and costumes

**As you maybe heard/or not, there is a plan to create a new museum in Gjirokastra. (I didn't hear)**

**Do you think there are reasons to create a new museum in Gjirokastra? Which one(s)?** I don't think it is necessary, there is the castle, the houses, rich architectural value... Why build another. The house of Kadare which is been restored now is too new for example, it doesn't have the same history.

**The plan is to have the museum in the castle. Do you think it is a good place? Why?** It is a good place but there is already the museum of arms. It should not be overloaded, but spread out in the city, not focus on one monument, see the atmosphere, have a walk.

**The plan is to have a museum about the history of Gjirokastra. What do you think about this?**

-(free) It is necessary, history is the memory of the nation.

-Would you prefer another kind of museum? What kind and why? No. There is all already (costumes, arms..)

-If there is a history museum, what is the most important element that you think has to be presented there? History of the people of Gjirokastra, of the city. We should not have a communist museum with one side but mention people based on their contributions for the city, not for their political value.

**The future museum aims to be the 'city museum'. This means that it aims to be not only about the city but also for the city, and this means also for you**

**How can the museum be 'for you'?** It is good if we can know the real history, the real value of Gjirokastra (not only the communist story

*Because the respondent said a museum for history was necessary, we came back on the omitted questions:*

**[If yes,] how would you imagine the new museum in Gjirokastra?.**

**-What would be inside?** I don't know, I am not an architect or a painter, but show optimistic colors.

**-Which purpose would it have?** To expose the life and the dynamic during the centuries

**-Where could it be?**

**-Would you go there?** With pleasure

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25-08

**What is your name/last name?** Engjëllushe

**Your year of birth or age?** 60

**Your profession?** Owner of hotel Gjirokastra

**What are you doing in Gjirokastra?** I work here in the hotel, for the tourists.

**What do you think about Gjirokastra?** I am sorry about Gjirokastra. All people left. They should come and contribute. The state also makes zero efforts. We made a proposition to the municipality to put a green space in front of our hotel, with a few benches, we said we can help to install everything, but we didn't have an answer yet.

**Do you think something is missing in Gjirokastra? If yes what?** A lot is missing. The state care that Gjirokastra needs. Some NGO's try but it is not enough. Maybe there is not enough money? But I don't see work. In the past all was in place.

**If you could decide, what would be the first thing you would like to be created in Gjirokastra?**

Good garbage cleaning of the city. Create green space also.

**What is your favorite place in Gjirokastra? Why?** The Bazaar, the area here is the most beautiful. We should focus on this area to maintain it. It is not only who think it is the most beautiful area.

**Have you visited the existing museums in Gjirokastra?** Yes.

**What do you think about them?** I visited the castle, it is nice but needs a lot of work. And I don't like that there are two tickets. There are a lot of stories in Gjirokastra, and there is a lot to be done. The ethnographic museum and Zeate are ok. But Zekate should not be turned in a hotel, I also don't agree for Babameto as a hotel, then people cannot visit it anymore. It is a first category monument, the cultural heritage law says that the state has to take care for it. In the past there were strict laws.

**As you maybe heard/or not, there is a plan to create a new museum in Gjirokastra. (I didn't hear)**

**Do you think there are reasons to create a new museum in Gjirokastra? Which one(s)?** Yes, many reasons. We have a lot of traditions, history and stories, we have been through wars. In small boring cities have a museum so there should be more here. Gjirokastra used to be the center of the south. There are some good small initiatives: In the Dunavat neighborhood a man has collected old objects and exposes it in his house. I saw also on television that an old teacher collects old photos of Gjirokastra and about the history of education.

**If yes, how would you imagine the new museum in Gjirokastra?**

-(free answer) Telling the whole story, before and after the 2. WW.

-**What would be inside?** Explanation on the tradition of building the city, how they did it. And then the things that were collected by the people I just talked about. A lot of people have collected things.

-**Which purpose would it have?** For all the tourists that come. They ask us in the hotel. The Tourist Info Center doesn't work.

-**Where could it be?** In the Bazaar, in a first category house, (near to) Skendulati for example.

-**Would you go there?** Of course. But I'd like so many things to be done. Concerts also, not only a museum.

-**If not, why not?**

**The plan is to have the museum in the castle. Do you think it is a good place? Why?** Again in the castle, always...maybe there is space, but it is already "overpopulated". It is normal because it is the most important, but...

**The plan is to have a museum about the history of Gjirokastra. What do you think about this?**

-(free) I agree

-**Would you prefer another kind of museum? What kind and why?** Let's do this first and then we'll see. It is strange that we don't already have one history museum

-**If there is a history museum, what is the most important element that you think has to be presented there?** Show that clever and educated people are from Gjirokastra, more brains

**The future museum aims to be the 'city museum'. This means that it aims to be not only about the city but also for the city, and this means also for you**

**How can the museum be 'for you'?** Of course it will be for me. It is very good (like this)

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24-08

**What is your name/last name?** Manfred Bohm

**Your year of birth or age?** 76

**Your profession?** Hotelier. I had an hotel with 140 employees. And I am Gastronom also.

**What are you doing in Gjirokastra?** I have to make a proposal for the use of the Babameto I and II buildings, something with tourism.

**What do you think about Gjirokastra?** I am enthusiast. There is a symbiosis between fascinating landscape and 12th/13th century buildings. It is a pity that the government is not able to ensure that the laws for preservation of the houses are followed.

**Do you think something is missing in Gjirokastra? If yes what?** There is no efficient tourist center. It is a pity that this place is not “marketed” well.

**If you could decide, what would be the first thing you would like to be created in Gjirokastra?** An active tourist center, there is enough substance to promote. I would also try to restore the buildings and make the authorities follow the law.

**What is your favorite place in Gjirokastra? Why?** The Hoxha museum (=Ethnographic) gave me the best impression. It was completely provided with furniture.

**Have you visited the existing museums in Gjirokastra?** No only the Hoxha museum.

**What do you think about them?** I was impressed. I don't have anything to do with oriental culture and this was my first contact, something new.

**As you maybe heard/or not, there is a plan to create a new museum in Gjirokastra.** (I didn't hear)

**Do you think there are reasons to create a new museum in Gjirokastra? Which one(s)?** Yes absolutely, one that is showing everything and not different places.

**If yes, how would you imagine the new museum in Gjirokastra?.**

**-(free answer)** Influenced by traditions, no modern museum. Nobody would come here for that, London or Paris can do that much better.

**-What would be inside?** Things that were created in the region, the things that people have experienced.

**-Which purpose would it have?** Transmit the way of living of the region.

**-Where could it be?** No idea. Not in the down town. In the old town, where the tourists are. On the way to Cajupi and the Bazaar. In the direction of the castle but not that high.

**-Would you go there?** If I was here for two days yes.

**-If not, why not?**

**The plan is to have the museum in the castle. Do you think it is a good place? Why?** I don't know the number of visitor for the castle, how many percent of them go there. I am shocked that they didn't protect the plane there and that they let it decay like this. I think for its importance and its aura the castle is good, it is seen the first, is a highlight. But at the same time Gjirokastra is not the castle. The city is a much more important document.

**The plan is to have a museum about the history of Gjirokastra. What do you think about this?**

**-(free)** There is nothing else (than history)

**-Would you prefer another kind of museum? What kind and why?** No

**-If there is a history museum, what is the most important element that you think has to be presented there?** I don't know....

**The future museum aims to be the 'city museum'. This means that it aims to be not only about the city but also for the city, and this means also for you**

**How can the museum be 'for you'?** The question was asked but for tourists it is a bit strange because any way a museum in a visited town like Gjirokastra is something for them. The respondent was not able to answer.

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26-08

**What is your name/last name?** Tanja and Daniel

**Your year of birth or age?** 29 and 32

**Your profession?** Sociologist/ Active in Development aid

**What are you doing in Gjirokastra?** On vacation. We started from Corfu, are going from Saranda to Berat. We were at the seaside but wanted to see something new, friends told us about Gjirokastra.

**What do you think about Gjirokastra?** It is beautiful, old, has a lot of history. But it is also very much like the countryside. It is an interesting mix between old and new together.

**Do you think something is missing in Gjirokastra? If yes what?** We don't know yet, just arrived, We say the information card at the beginning and it was clear enough. Maybe I could say, up town the indicating panels are not pointing in the right direction.

**If you could decide, what would be the first thing you would like to be created in Gjirokastra?**

Probably better conservation, and garbage cleaning.

**What is your favorite place in Gjirokastra? Why?** We don't know yet but now, for us, this place where we ended up after the castle, with sheep walking around (Dunavat). It was surprising and nice as in the countryside.

**Have you visited the existing museums in Gjirokastra?** Only the castle. We have heard about the Ethnographic museum.

**What do you think about them?** For the castle, the walls are well kept, but inside, this modern podium, the canons, it is a bit surprising, and too little information is given about the castle, only the period from the 20<sup>th</sup> century on is mentioned.

**As you maybe heard/or not, there is a plan to create a new museum in Gjirokastra. (I didn't hear)**

**Do you think there are reasons to create a new museum in Gjirokastra? Which one(s)?** We don't know yet the offer, but we think there should be something about History and traditions, they should be conserved and communicate in a better way.

**If yes, how would you imagine the new museum in Gjirokastra?** Gjirokastra is the houses, it should be emphasized. I (Daniel) am also curious about the new times, the 90ties, and also communism. But it is hardly treated.

-(free answer) About the history (suggested answer by interviewer)

-**What would be inside?** Things of historical value

-**Which purpose would it have?** Enlightenment, it is not only houses but also culture.

-**Where could it be?** In the old city

-**Would you go there?** Yes

-**If not, why not?,**

**The plan is to have the museum in the castle. Do you think it is a good place? Why?** Yes, but I would not like to pay to times entrance like in the castle.

**The plan is to have a museum about the history of Gjirokastra. What do you think about this?**

-(free) It is good because there is none. Only about the first and second world wars, nothing more.

-**Would you prefer another kind of museum? What kind and why?** Not only tradition, also something new, meetings, a podium for young artists, something in collaboration with the local universities.

-**If there is a history museum, what is the most important element that you think has to be presented there?** The last 50 years until today, with video installations, people that tell their stories. And also about Ali Pasha, there was hardly anything.

**The future museum aims to be the ‘city museum’. This means that it aims to be not only about the city but also for the city, and this means also for you**

**How can the museum be ‘for you’?** If it gives me the possibility to understand: guided tour, language that I understand.

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## Vita



The author of this work, Myriam Simon, born in Paris on the 3th of October 1985, has a background in languages (English, German, Dutch and Serbian), which she studied at bachelor level. She is to complete her master studies in the field of cultural management, in which she focused on Museology and Cultural Heritage. She has done several internships as an assistant in cultural centers (Art, Culture and Communication in Pâlis, France; French Institute in Amsterdam; and Rex Cultural Center in Belgrade) and in heritage sites (Maison du Visiteur Vézelay, France and presently in Gjirokastra World Heritage town, Albania). In the context of this master thesis she is collaborating with the local NGO Gjirokastra Development and Conservation Organisation (GCDO) and also with other cultural actors of the town. After the completion of her studies she will remain in Gjirokastra to work on the development of cultural life in this city, be it through a museum, through the organization of cultural events or education and artistic programs, or through intensive exchanges with the local population.

### EDUCATION

2010-2011 **Univerzitet Umetnosti Beograd.** MA 2 Cultural Policy and Management

2009-2010 **Université Paris IV-Sorbonne.** MA 1 CIMER (Intercultural Communication & Museology in Europe in Reconstruction) with Serbian optional course

2006-2009 **Université Paris IV-Sorbonne.** BA in Dutch with Serbian optional course

2008-2009 **Universiteit van Amsterdam.** Dutch Language and Culture (Erasmus exchange)

2005-2008 **Institut Catholique de Paris.** BA in English and German Language and Culture

2004-2005 Training period in several cultural associations in France

2003-2004 **Educatieve Faculteit van Amsterdam.** English teacher training

1997-2003 **Montessori Lyceum Amsterdam/IVKO.** A Levels in the Netherlands