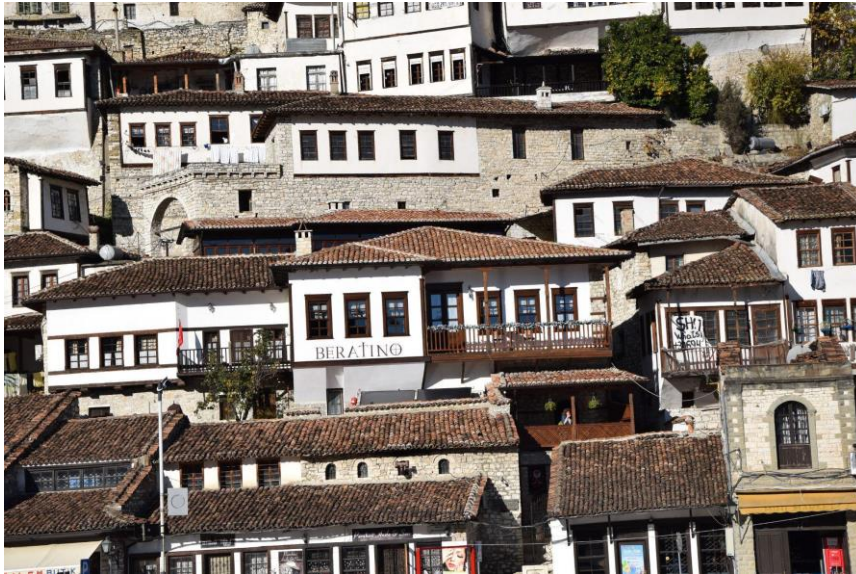


**REPORT ON THE
JOINT WHC/ICOMOS/ICCROM REACTIVE MONITORING MISSION
TO THE WORLD HERITAGE PROPERTY
“HISTORIC CENTRES OF BERAT AND GJIROKASTRA”
(Albania)
FROM 13 TO 17 DECEMBER 2021**



View of Berat, Mangalem quarter. © S.Grüssinger, 2021



View towards Gjirokastra Castle and the Nanxës valley. ©
K.Piotrowska, 2021

List of Acronyms

AADF - Albanian-American Development Foundation
ADF - Albanian Development Fund
EU-IPA - European Union Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance
GIZ - Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit
HIA - Heritage Impact Assessment
HUL - Historic Urban Landscape
IA - International Assistance
ICCROM - International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property
ICOMOS - International Council on Monuments and Sites
IMP - Integrated Management Plan
IUDC - Integrated Urban Development Concept
KfW - Kreditanstalt für Wiederaufbau
NGO - Non-governmental organisation
OG - Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention
OUV - Outstanding Universal Value
PIUTD - Project for Integrated Urban and Tourism Development
TIKA - Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency
UNESCO - United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
WHC - World Heritage Centre

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The mission team would like to express its gratitude to the Albanian authorities for their kind hospitality and for the arrangements put in place to ensure the smooth running of the mission. The programme of the mission, combining meetings with various stakeholders with on-site visits and discussions, allowed the mission team to receive information on the issues and challenges that the World Heritage property 'Historic Centres of Berat and Gjirokastra' is facing as well as the improvements and progress made in the overall state of conservation of the property.

The mission team would like to convey its special thanks to the Ministry of Culture, the National Institute for Cultural Heritage, the Regional Directorates for Cultural Heritage of Berat and Gjirokastra respectively as well as the Municipalities of both Berat and Gjirokastra, for their efforts in ensuring the success of the mission.

The mission team was privileged to be accompanied through all its meetings and visits by representatives of the Ministry of Culture and the National Institute for Cultural Heritage. Moreover, the mission team highly appreciated being accompanied by the Deputy Mayors in Berat and Gjirokastra respectively as well as representatives of the Albanian Development Fund for the site visit.

We thank moreover all representatives of the national and regional authorities, community members and representatives of NGOs, all of which contributed valuable comments and support. Our thanks go to all stakeholders for their sincere engagement and highly commendable work to safeguard the property.

Executive summary and key recommendations

The Historic Centres of Berat and Gjirokastra were inscribed on the World Heritage List in 2008 (extension of the 2005 inscription of Gjirokastra) as:

- *outstanding testimony to the diversity of urban societies in the Balkans, and to longstanding ways of life which have today almost vanished. The town planning and housing of Gjirokastra are those of a citadel town built by notable landowners whose interests were directly linked to those of the central power. Berat bears the imprint of a more independent life style, linked to its handicraft and merchant functions (criterion (iii), and*
- *outstanding testimony to various types of monument and vernacular urban housing during the Classical Ottoman period, in continuity with the various Medieval cultures which preceded it, and in a state of peaceful coexistence with a large Christian minority, particularly at Berat (criterion (iv).*

The overall integrity and authenticity of the two towns were considered satisfactory at the time of inscription on the List. The state of conservation of the property was acceptable despite the fact that the general condition of the urban fabric was variable and substantial maintenance and restoration works awaited to be undertaken.

The objectives of the joint WHC/ICOMOS/ICCROM Reactive Monitoring mission were to assess the progress made in the state of conservation of the property, to provide guidance on the development of the Integrated Management Plan, evaluate the efficacy of development controls and monitoring indicators and assess the Gjirokastra by-pass road project. The mission was requested by the extended 44th session of the World Heritage Committee in July 2021 in Decision **44 COM 7B.151** (Annex No II).

The executive summary accompanied by the key recommendations follows the Terms of Reference (Annex No I) of the mission. The report commences with the strategic recommendations referring to the general approach to protection and management of the property then moves on to key recommendations relating to defined issues. The full list of recommendations can be found in the main text after each of the particular topics or issues, and, again, in the conclusions.

Strategic recommendations:

Considerable progress has been made in improving the overall state of conservation of the entire property. Continued efforts by the State and local authorities to invest in the restoration and conservation of the historic buildings and infrastructure together with the improvement of the legal heritage protection system should be acknowledged. There are also significant investment activities which have an impact on the property's state of conservation as well as its future prospects. Considered approaches, guided by well thought through strategies and programmes, must be maintained to avoid over-development and loss of the character of Berat and Gjirokastra, component parts of the property.

1. The State Party should continue its efforts to improve the state of conservation of the property. An Integrated Management Plan, based on the values and attributes of the World Heritage property and an analysis of existing conditions and potential future developments should be developed as a matter of urgency. It should respond to key aspects of an effective management system that, according to the *Operational Guidelines* Paragraph 111, include:
 - a) a thorough shared understanding of the property, its universal, national and local values and its socio-ecological context by all stakeholders, including local communities and indigenous peoples;

- b) a respect for diversity, equity, gender equality and human rights and the use of inclusive and participatory planning and stakeholder consultation processes;
 - c) a cycle of planning, implementation, monitoring, evaluation and feedback;
 - d) an assessment of the vulnerabilities of the property to social, economic, environmental and other pressures and changes, including disasters and climate change, as well as the monitoring of the impacts of trends and proposed interventions;
 - e) the development of mechanisms for the involvement and coordination of the various activities between different partners and stakeholders;
 - f) the allocation of necessary resources;
 - g) capacity building;
 - h) an accountable, transparent description of how the management system functions.
2. The State Party should make effective use of the processes and mechanisms offered by the World Heritage system and inform the World Heritage Committee in line with Paragraph 172 of the *Operational Guidelines* about investments considered within or in the proximity of the World Heritage property that may have an impact on the property's Outstanding Universal Value in advance.
 3. In line with the *Operational Guidelines* Paragraph 118bis, Environmental Impact Assessments, Heritage Impact Assessments, and/or Strategic Environmental Assessments shall be carried out as a pre-requisite for development projects and activities that are planned for implementation within or around a World Heritage property before any decisions on their implementation are made. These assessments are important tools to assess current and potential, both negative and positive impacts of anticipated changes to the World Heritage property and its setting, and are a required element of an effective management system as stated in the *Operational Guidelines* Paragraph 110. In order to ensure the long-term safeguarding of the Outstanding Universal Value and the strengthening of heritage resilience, the State Party should make every effort to consistently apply Heritage Impact Assessment in order to assess the impacts, identify development alternatives and mitigation measures against degradation.

Key recommendations:

1. Management system

The mission team found that the national legislation is rigorous and for the most part should be sufficient to protect the World Heritage property. However, the World Heritage properties would benefit from some additional regulations and improvements that guarantee a rigorous approach to new developments and implementation of the property's management plan.

The State Party has started to develop an Integrated Management Plan for the property, as requested by the World Heritage Committee. The Albanian National Institute for Cultural Heritage identified the group of stakeholders and established a core team for coordinating the development of the Integrated Management Plan for which the State Party is benefiting from the World Heritage Fund through International Assistance. Some progress has been made regarding the implementation of the International Assistance project (IA 2932). The mission team notes that enhanced dialogue and improved cooperation will be essential in order to a) define the long-term vision for the serial property with all stakeholders, and b) ensure stakeholder ownership of the document and implementation of its actions at a local level.

Increased investment activity can be observed within boundaries of the World Heritage property and its setting. The mission team noted that the requirement for the use of Heritage Impact

Assessments in case of new developments within the property and in its setting is not consistently carried out. This may lead to uncertain results - both in the case of individual projects as well as cumulatively.

These activities are directly connected with tourism development which is seen as a major opportunity for the future of both towns. Tourism development may be beneficial but must be carefully managed to ensure there is no loss of character of the property. All precautions should be taken to avoid any negative impact on the OUV of the property, including its integrity and authenticity.

A set of monitoring indicators was developed in 2016 through workshop funded by an International Assistance project and implemented with resource persons from ICOMOS. Since 2017, the State Party of Albania has collected data and submits information regularly through the State of Conservation reports. A five-year period of data collection provides sufficient information for analysis and evaluation of the adopted monitoring system and any consequent refinements to that system. This would also provide valuable data input for the development of the Integrated Management Plan.

The mission team also assessed the inter-relations of the PIUTD, IMP and other local legislative provisions such as Law 27/2018 “On Cultural Heritage and Museums” for which recommendations are provided in this report.

Key recommendations:

1. Heritage Impact Assessments should be a legal prerequisite for development projects and directly linked into the provisions of the regulations of both Berat and Gjirokastra and, as stated in the Paragraph 118bis of the *Operational Guidelines*, heritage impact assessments (HIA) for any development project should be conducted before any decision is taken.
2. The Integrated Management Plan should be developed as soon as possible, and it must have proper legal status allowing for its effective implementation.
A long-term comprehensive development strategy for the property and its immediate setting and surrounding areas that aims to stimulate a broad resilient economic basis for the future of the property (Decision **44 COM 7B.151**, 2021) which includes tourism management should be developed. A focus should be given to enhancing synergies of the World Heritage property with the intangible and natural heritage of its wider setting. This should be linked to the Integrated Management Plan.

2. Major construction projects that form part of the Project for Integrated Urban and Tourism Development (PIUTD)

The Project for Integrated Urban and Tourism Development (PIUTD) is a multiannual framework aimed at implementing activities for urban development and improvement of infrastructure with a focus on tourism development. It is financed by the World Bank and implemented by the Albanian Development Fund. Beneficiaries of the project are four municipalities in the south of Albania, amongst them Berat and Gjirokastra. The mission team found that the project development, design and implementation is of high quality and standard bringing a range of benefits to the citizens and visitors of Berat and Gjirokastra. However, the high number of ongoing and planned investments in both towns will have a cumulative impact on the property in the future.

In Gjirokastra, the mission team assessed the PIUTD project components of the car park at Çerçiz Topulli square and the current interventions at the Castle of Gjirokastra. In Berat the mission team assessed the car park, streetscape beautification of Antipatrea Street and 20th century sector of Berat; the restoration of Selamlık Square; and the Gorica Road and car park and flood prevention.

Key recommendations:

1. Heritage Impact Assessments should be carried out for proposed projects. In the case of projects already underway an impact assessment should be also conducted, and mitigation measures should be developed for impacts that have taken place or are unavoidable.
2. A heritage impact assessment of the cumulative impacts of the PIUTD and other development projects on the OUV of the property and its setting should be conducted. In particular, the mobility plan and the Integrated Urban Upgrading of Gjirokastra currently under development should undergo a heritage impact assessment against the OUV of the property.

3. Gjirokastra bypass road

At the time of the mission team's visit approximately 50% of the groundwork for the new road, part of Gjirokastra by-pass road system, had been undertaken. However, the mission team was informed that, following the last Decision of the Committee, further construction work had been suspended and only stabilisation work (which has been necessary due to heavy rainfall) was to be undertaken. The mission team found that the new location of the new by-pass road is a significant improvement compared to the location proposed in previous plans (2015). However, the new road is still located within the boundaries of the property in a valley adjacent to the Gjirokastra Castle. The mission team concluded that the road is a physical/structural change to the cultural landscape and will have functional and visual impacts on the World Heritage property. However, the road construction is a first step of much needed transport and infrastructural improvements in this part of the city. As part of the improvements package, ground stabilisation of the slopes, and improvements to the water and sewage system will accompany construction of the road. The overall scale of the impact of the new road should be assessed as soon as possible and appropriate mitigation measures implemented, where appropriate.

Key recommendations:

1. An independent Heritage Impact Assessment should be completed as a matter of urgency and before the construction of the bypass road reaches a point where no significant mitigation would be possible. It should aim to:
 - a) identify mitigation measures to minimise the impact of the physical road infrastructure, and implement them during the subsequent construction phase, where appropriate;
 - b) quantify the impact of the bypass on the viability of communities in the upper town;
 - c) verify the technical details of the final project and develop any necessary modifications to ensure the implementation of the identified mitigation measures.
2. The bypass road should be fully reflected in the mobility plan currently under development to ensure the impacts on the OUV are taken into account.
3. A landscape study of the valley, including the historic evolution and its use over time as well as its relationship with the town morphology, should be conducted as part of the HIA or separately.

I. THE PROPERTY

The World Heritage property 'Historic Centres of Berat and Gjirokastra' was initially inscribed as 'Museum-City of Gjirokastra' on the World Heritage List in 2005 at the 29th session of the World Heritage Committee ([Decision 29 COM 8B.48](#)) and was extended to include the city of Berat at the 32nd session of the World Heritage Committee ([Decision 32 COM 8B.56](#)) in 2008. At the same time, the Committee adopted the Statement of Outstanding Value (Annex V). The renamed World Heritage property 'Historic Centres of Berat and Gjirokastra' was inscribed based on criteria (iii) and (iv) as a serial nomination.

The historic city centres of Berat and Gjirokastra, represent rare models of architectural and urban landscapes from the Ottoman period. However, the overall integrity of the two towns has been adversely affected by haphazard constructions in the late 1990s. At the time of the property's extension at the 32nd session of the World Heritage Committee, the State Party of Albania was requested to align the implementation of a Joint Management Plan to urban construction management and visitor facilities within the World Heritage property ([Decision 32 COM 8B.56](#)).

The two fortified historic centres of Berat and Gjirokastra showcase exceptional examples of remarkably well-preserved and vernacular buildings. Having been inhabited from ancient times and situated in the Balkans region of Southern Albania, the towns bear witness to the wealth and diversity of the urban and architectural heritage of the region. Berat, on one hand, has witnessed the coexistence of various religious and cultural communities down the centuries while Gjirokastra, on the other hand, features a typical series of two-story houses with turrets characteristic to Balkans, dating back to the 17th and 19th centuries.

The vernacular buildings of Berat and Gjirokastra accompanied by fortifications and characteristic buildings such as a castle, locally known as the Kala, many Byzantine churches dating back to the 13th century, several mosques built under the Ottoman period and a bazaar, together form the urban and the architectural character of the World Heritage property.

Under the criteria (iii) and (iv), Berat and Gjirokastra, in their longstanding ways of life, bear testimony to the diversity of urban societies in the Balkans region as well as to various types of monuments and vernacular housing infrastructure built during the Classical Ottoman period. Gjirokastra, built by noble landowners, reflects an influence of interests in central power. Berat bears an imprint of an independent lifestyle linked to handicraft and merchant functions.

The main attributes of the World Heritage property, as formulated during the workshop [Development of Monitoring Indicators for the World Heritage Property "Historic Centres of Gjirokastra and Berat"](#) (April 2016, guided by ICOMOS) on the identification of monitoring indicators, implemented in the framework of International Assistance, are as follows:

Berat	Gjirokastra
Examples of an architectural character typical of the Ottoman period / Ottoman architecture - tiered houses on the slopes, which are predominantly horizontal in layout, and make abundant use of the entering daylight - witness to the wealth and diversity of the urban and architectural heritage	Living historic city with monuments: a bazaar, an 18th-century mosque and two churches from the same period
Witness to the coexistence of various religious and cultural communities down the centuries	Building types adjusted to terrain - in the Drinos river valley features a series of outstanding two-story houses from the 17th

	century. Examples of an architectural character typical of the Ottoman period
Fortified historic centre - features a castle, locally known as the Kala	Traditional materials and techniques - bear witness to the wealth and diversity of the urban and architectural heritage
	Citadel and landowner 'kule' - around the ancient 13th century citadel, the town has houses with turrets (the Turkish kule) built by major landowners

Attributes as defined during the Development of Monitoring Indicators for the World Heritage Property "Historic Centres of Gjirokastra and Berat workshop on the development of monitoring indicators, April 2016.

The full Statement of Outstanding Universal Value can be consulted in Annex No V.

As noted in the Statement of Outstanding Universal Value, the two towns have been adversely affected by illegal constructions in the late 1990s. Although their overall *integrity* and *authenticity* is deemed satisfactory in the Statement of Outstanding Universal Value, there is a need to enforce a holistic preservation management plan on the World Heritage property. It is recommended with regards to the protection of the Outstanding Universal Value of the property, that the management plan should develop an active policy to manage the pressures of urban development and the need for visitor facilities within the property.

At the time of its inscription at the 29th session of the World Heritage Committee in 2005 (Decision **29 COM 8B.48**), it was identified that the property needs to counteract illegal construction and changes in the urban and landscape context dating from late 1990s. With the extension of the property at the World Heritage Committee's 32nd session, the key additional factors identified to be affecting the property have been the lack of specific monitoring indicators, a programme of archaeological excavations, firefighting arrangements and a detailed tourism development plan. The World Heritage Committee requested the implementation of the following measures (Decision **32 COM 8B.56**):

- a) An inventory of the illegal construction dating from the late 1990s, together with a plan for the removal of such illegal construction in a medium-term perspective;
- b) Specific monitoring indicators should be defined, together with the intervals of their updating;
- c) A programme of archaeological excavations should be proposed, in accordance with the international standards in force;
- d) The fire fighting arrangements in the historic urban zone should be improved;
- e) A tourism plan should be developed for Gjirokastra in order to encourage sustainable tourism.

The state of conservation of the property and the implementation of the recommended measures have been examined every alternate year since 2009 by the World Heritage Committee at its 33rd, 35th, 37th, 39th, 41st, 43rd, extended 44th sessions respectively.

The World Heritage Committee at its 35th session (Decision **35 COM 7B.82**) requested the State Party to invite a joint World Heritage Centre/ICOMOS Reactive Monitoring mission to assess the overall state of conservation of the property, progress in its management and whether the criteria for the possible inscription of the property on the List of World Heritage in Danger were met.

The Reactive Monitoring mission of November 2012 concluded that the steady progress in conservation of Berat stands in contrast with much more difficult issues in Gjirokastra, due to the lack of funds and management effectiveness, as well as legislative failings. The mission recommended various necessary measures to be implemented before the end of 2014, to prevent the emergence of serious dangers to the Outstanding Universal Value of the property.

The proposed measures were aimed towards improvement of existing state legislation and the management system, control of illegal constructions, a need for a correlation of management plan and tourism strategy with the urban development plans and to ensure adequate resources. At the following 37th session (Decision **37 COM 7B.70**), the World Heritage Committee stressed the need for the State Party to underpin the management of the property, and particularly the processes of monitoring and controlling development.

In response to a proposed rehabilitation project at Berat Castle by the State Party, the World Heritage Committee at its 39th session (Decision **39 COM 7B.75**) requested the State Party to submit a Heritage Impact Assessment before taking any decisions. The State Party was also requested to develop an overarching Integrated Management Plan (IMP) for the property. In December 2015 and November 2016, the State Party submitted reports providing information about the proposed projects such as the rehabilitation project of the Çerçiz Topulli square, the bypass road and bazaar project in Gjirokastra. The ICOMOS Technical Review of 2016 concerning the Gjirokastra bypass road project recommended the project be reconsidered. In 2017, the State Party confirmed that the project has temporarily been suspended.

During the 41st session of the World Heritage Committee (Decision **41 COM 7B.40**), the State Party was recommended to develop the IMP with an integrated urban conservation and development tool including a risk management component. The additional factors to the pre-existing ones affecting the property in 2017 were further identified as transport infrastructure and development projects within Gjirokastra (by-pass road and conversion of the bazaar into a pedestrian area). The adoption and implementation of the draft Law 27/2018 “On Cultural Heritage and Museums” was strongly encouraged by the Committee.

At its 43rd session (Decision **43 COM 7B.79**), the Committee noted the suspension of the Gjirokastra bypass project and further requested the State Party to consider the recommendations provided by the Advisory Bodies towards the Project of Integrated Urban and Tourism Development (PIUTD) and the Berat Development Vision and Integrated Urban Development Concept (IUDC).

The state of conservation of the World Heritage property ‘Historic Centres of Berat and Gjirokastra’ was last reviewed during the extended 44th session of the World Heritage Committee in July 2021 (Decision **44 COM 7B.151**). Based on the reports submitted by the State Party, the Committee acknowledged the implementation of the Law “On Cultural Heritage and Museums”. The World Heritage Committee noted the information received from the State Party of Albania about new plans for the construction of the by-pass road in Gjirokastra while further noting third-party reports that the by-pass road was already under construction. In its [Decision 44 COM 7B.151](#), **the Committee urgently requested the State Party to halt the construction of the ongoing bypass road project in Gjirokastra.**

II. SUMMARY OF THE NATIONAL MANAGEMENT SYSTEM FOR THE PRESERVATION AND MANAGEMENT OF THE WORLD HERITAGE PROPERTY

The World Heritage property ‘Historic Centres of Berat and Gjirokastra’ is legally protected under the national legislation.

Both cities of Berat and Gjirokastra were declared “Museum City” by the decision of the Council of Ministers, no. 172 of 2 June 1961, and they have since been protected under the decree 568 of 1948 on the “Conservation of rare cultural and natural monuments”. This law has subsequently been replaced by new decrees in 1973, 1994, 2003 and 2018.

On May 17, 2018, the Parliament approved the new Law 27/2018 “On Cultural Heritage and Museums” (Official Gazette No. 86, 12 June 2018), replacing the previous law “On Cultural Heritage” (2013). This law contributes to the preservation of the national memory and to the promotion of the cultural development in the territory of the Republic of Albania. It is an important legal tool for the conservation, protection, evaluation and management of national cultural landscapes in relation to the aspects and characteristics that constitute a tangible and visible representation of the national identity. The new law aims to empower cultural institutions across the country, and refers to the UNESCO conventions in the field of culture and aims to preserve, protect, evaluate and manage the national cultural heritage, including museums. This law also determines the relationship and rules for the establishment, accreditation, operation and organisation of public and private museums in the Republic of Albania. It also constitutes a step forward towards the preservation, protection, administration and exhibition of museum artefacts and collections. Under this law, several by-laws have been issued such as the by-law “On cultural immovable properties management plan extent, structure, content and development methodology”.

The World Heritage property is also subject to the ‘Regulation for the Protection, Integrated Conservation and Administration of the Historic Centre and Buffer Zone of the City of Berat’ (No. 767) and the ‘Regulation for the Protection, Integrated Conservation and Management of the Historic Centre and the Protected Area in the City of Gjirokastra’ (No. 619), adopted in 2014 and 2015 respectively. Approved by decision of the Council of Ministers, these regulations are important reference documents for the zoning, administration, protection as well as intervention criteria within the respective historic centres and buffer zone. Under these Regulations, the boundaries of the historic centres of both cities are the same as the boundaries of the World Heritage property. Restoration in the property and new construction in the buffer zones is regulated by the National Tangible Cultural Heritage Council and the respective municipalities. The Regulations are subject to upcoming revisions under the recently approved new Law “On Cultural Heritage and Museums” of 2018.

The cultural monuments in the historic centres of Berat and Gjirokastra are listed as either Category I or Category II cultural monuments, or as objects without status which form part of the cultural ensembles of the historic centres. Cultural monuments under Category I include buildings of outstanding value specifically relevant to cultural heritage that are preserved in the entirety of their architectonic and technical components. For these monuments, arrangement of volumes, exterior and interior architectonic treatment, as well as functions and layout may not be changed. Cultural monuments under Category II include buildings of outstanding, mainly exterior value, whose volumes and architectural composition is preserved.

The General Local Plans for the Municipalities of Berat and Gjirokastra respectively are the most important documents for the territorial development of both municipalities, including the World Heritage property and buffer zone. Both General Local Plans have been approved respectively in 2016 (Berat) and 2017 (Gjirokastra) and are operational. The General Local Plans refer to the respective Regulations mentioned above.

The properties are also subject to the Decision of the Council of Ministers no. 1099 dated 24/12/2020 “*On the approval of treatment methods, technical norms, criteria and models of interventions in the field of preservation of cultural assets*”.

Regarding the management of the World Heritage property, at the national level, the Historic Centres of Berat and Gjirokastra are under the responsibility of the Ministry of Culture, the Regional Directorate of National Culture, the National Institute for Cultural Heritage, and the Committee for the Coordination of the Management Plans of the Historic Centres of Berat and Gjirokastra. The Committee coordinates the work of the implementation of the Regulations and the fulfilment of the recommendations of UNESCO. At the local level, the responsibility is with the municipalities.

The State Party is currently developing an Integrated Management Plan for the entire property under the framework of International Assistance approved by the World Heritage Committee in 2018.

The Albanian folk iso-polyphony is inscribed on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity since 2008 (see <https://ich.unesco.org/en/RL/albanian-folk-iso-polyphony-00155>). The National Folk Festival in Gjirokastra, which takes place every five years since 1968, is an example of best practice in the safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage in Albania.

III. THE MISSION

The World Heritage Committee at its extended 44th session (Fuzhou/online, July 2021), requested the State Party of Albania in Decision **44 COM 7B.151** to invite a joint World Heritage Centre/ICOMOS/ICCROM Reactive Monitoring mission to the World Heritage property “Historic Centres of Berat and Gjirokastra”. The objectives of the mission were to assess the progress made in the state of conservation of the entire property, to provide guidance on the development of the IMP, evaluate the efficacy of development controls and monitoring indicators and assess the Gjirokastra by-pass project.

The mission took place from 13 to 17 December 2021 and visited both components of the serial inscription with initial meetings in Tirana.

The mission team was able to visit all construction sites of the relevant development projects under implementation, discuss with the project implementer, exchange with NGOs and representatives of civil society, and was accompanied throughout the mission by representatives of national and local authorities. Given the nature of the serial inscription of two historic centres and the limited time available not all aspects of the Terms of Reference could be met to their full extent.

The mission followed the Terms of Reference agreed with the State Party (see Annex No I). The programme of the mission was agreed with the State Party (see Annex No III) and included meetings with a range of officials and stakeholders.

IV. ASSESSMENT OF THE STATE OF CONSERVATION OF THE PROPERTY

ISSUE 1: PROGRESS IN THE STATE OF CONSERVATION OF THE ENTIRE PROPERTY

1. Maintenance and conservation works

The mission team noted that the state of conservation of the World Heritage property is improving significantly, but much still remains to be done in Berat and Gjirokastra.

There is visible progress in conservation and restoration works conducted in recent years in Berat and Gjirokastra. Despite that, the loss of the historic fabric has led the World Heritage Committee in its Decision of 2019 to recommend that the State Party “Develop mechanisms and programmes to advance the restoration and conservation of the built fabric of the property” (Decision **43 COM 7B.79**, Baku, 2019). Following that, in the 2020 and 2021 State of Conservation report, the State Party provided a list of the restoration and conservation works carried out, illustrated with before and after photographs. Although a significant amount of

quantitative information has been presented in the State of Conservation Reports, there is a lack of technical information on the works carried out that make a comprehensive assessment of the state of conservation of the historic fabric and the quality of the repair and restoration works impossible at this stage.

The towns have faced outward migration of their inhabitants for several decades. This has been highlighted in State of Conservation reports by the State Party of Albania and in the 2012 Reactive Monitoring mission report. Outward migration has a direct impact on the state of conservation of the World Heritage property and protection of its OUV. The authorities of both towns are looking for and are implementing mechanisms to encourage young people back to the towns to settle down.

The Albanian authorities also informed the mission team about the upcoming pilot programme with an initial budget of about 100.000 Euros targeting private owners of buildings within the historic centres through a call for applications. This “bonus” system aims to fund restoration and conservation work. Another project financed by the Government of Albania is the “Bonus 12 plus” programme targeting young people to bring back life to the historic centres. One of the requirements for funding under the “Bonus 12 plus” programme is to present an idea how to revitalise the buildings. These initiatives are commended since their successful implementation could support the safeguarding of the historic fabric of the World Heritage property and provide incentives for community life and business development.

Thanks to their efforts, the situation has improved markedly. An increased interest in living and developing businesses in both localities is noted. Nevertheless, the need to secure the future of many buildings through conservation and bringing back sustainable use, remains high, especially in Gjirokastra.

The majority of buildings located within boundaries of the World Heritage property belong to private owners, often shared by several individuals or families. Due to the complex historical background, the current ownership of many buildings (inheritance issues) is not legally clarified. This affects the possibility of city or state authorities to intervene and carry out essential rescue and conservation activities. In order to address the threat of losing historic fabric, it is necessary to develop and introduce legal mechanisms that would make interventions possible on dilapidated heritage buildings where ownership is unclear. There are some examples of such solutions from other countries that could be used as case studies. There are also some mechanisms being implemented like a system where the tax burden on a building increases if it remains vacant for a certain period of time. Notwithstanding the sensitivity of this particular issue, these mechanisms of state intervention should be further developed.

The State Party, both at the national and local levels, invests significant resources into safeguarding historic buildings. The mission team noted examples of investment being made by a public body into securing buildings, apparently without ensuring their continued use. In addition to rescue works, a sustainable new use or function should be a prerequisite of state investment into conservation or stabilisation work. It is important to form clear principles and priorities from the outset that build confidence in the long term and help to create relationships between the stakeholders.

Another issue noticed during the mission is the inadequacy of the waste management. In particular, the lack of a sewage collection and treatment (e.g., in some areas the sewage is discharged directly into the environment) and littering (e.g. “stream” of rubbish in Gjirokastra) are problems which significantly affect the functioning of the World Heritage property and its perception. The authorities of both cities have initiated programmes to address this but still these need to be intensified with the introduction of effective and environmentally sensitive sewage and waste management systems.

The mission team were informed about reinforcement of the historic urban zones through restoration projects and the continued efforts to demolish illegal constructions as well as progress in relation to firefighting infrastructure. Although the mission team noted that the issue of illegal constructions appears to be under control, the recent 2021 State Party's report on the state of conservation of the property noted new illegal constructions in Gjirokastra, indicating that it remains a problem in some areas and requires to be carefully monitored.

The mission team visited some buildings and sites that recently underwent conservation. It should be underlined that the mission was not able to investigate conservation works in detail due to the lack of time. It was also beyond the expertise of the mission team members. Nevertheless, here are some general observations from the visit.

The stabilisation work carried out at Gjirokastra Castle appears to have been carried out in an exemplary manner and at a high conservation level. During the site visit, the mission team did not observe any actions that could have a negative impact on the OUV of the World Heritage property. Similarly in many civic and religious buildings both in Gjirokastra and in Berat the work was carried out to a generally high standard. Some details or aspects of the conservation work can be debatable but taking into account the work as a whole, there are no concerns about the approach to conservation work and the quality of its execution. It is important that restoration works are also well documented. The documentation of the stabilisation work of Gjirokastra Castle could serve as an example.

However, the mission team noted widespread fungal growth on the upper façades of some buildings in Berat, including those subjects to conservation work by RDCH in recent years. It may be indicative of problems with water and air circulation and may have a consequent negative impact on the historic fabric of the property. The issue must be examined and addressed. This may result in the need to review the methodology used and make adaptations to the approach used for conservation work accordingly.

Another issue that was noted is the use of inappropriate modern cement on historic buildings and structures, and in new interventions in the historic areas, particularly in Berat. The use of modern cement mortar such as Portland cement, instead of lime mortar, is problematic, as the cement is typically harder than the surrounding softer stone. Inappropriate use of cement-based mortar can have an adverse impact on the stone through differential expansion and permeability characteristics. Use of concrete in construction of buildings and surfaces (roads and paths) can also have an impact on water circulation and ground stability due to very fragile geology, both in Berat and Gjirokastra.

The mission team concluded that there is visible progress in conservation and restoration works, both in public and private buildings as well as infrastructure and public spaces. Considering the amount and pace of the work done, it would be advisable to introduce periodic assessments of the work and evaluation of its impact on the historic fabric and life of the property. There are issues like migration that have an impact on the property's current state and future development. They should be addressed at the national and local levels. Maintenance of the World Heritage property requires greater attention and commitment.

Recommendations:

1. Clear rules and programmes for the prioritisation and implementation of publicly funded works should be developed and implemented, including a sustainable use or function for the building.
2. Legal mechanisms should be strengthened to allow for rescue and conservation interventions by a public body / funds where there is unclear legal status of historic buildings / structures in World Heritage properties.

3. Awareness raising to intensify pro-environmental action should be promoted, both on the infrastructural level and in terms of public activity (waste management and other issues).
4. An evaluation of the conservation works that have taken place in recent years should be carried out.
5. A programme for rescue and conservation works together with appropriate guidelines (as already recommended by the Reactive Monitoring mission in 2012) should be developed.
6. Careful documentation of conservation works during their implementation is basic good practice and is crucial to ensure future monitoring of efficacy and maintenance of conserved monuments.
7. Monitoring and investigation of causes of decay phenomena (e.g., fungal or biological growth on historic surfaces) is highly advisable to undertake measures to slow down degradation.
8. Use of inappropriate materials in conservation works should be avoided.

2. People resources and conservation skills

Maintaining technical craft skills and the transmission of knowledge and skills remain an ongoing issue. The limited availability of specialists and professionals has been noted in previous years and remains as such despite a number of measures taken by the State Party to improve the situation.

Much of the conservation work is carried out by RDCH employees from Berat and Gjirokastra respectively or supervised by them at least. In recent years, a system has been established that allows individual owners to carry out repair and restoration of their Category I or Category II monuments through licensed architects and conservators.

Albania is taking action through participation in international or externally funded initiatives aimed at developing conservation skills. An example is HELP, a scholarship/training programme co-funded by the German government and the Municipality of Berat. The mission was also informed about various initiatives instigated by the Government of Albania, such as the “Arts and Crafts” scholarship programme, the establishment of specific “labs” in schools for each municipality (Gjirokastra will have a “lab” for stone work). The Ministry of Culture is also offering specific grants to NGOs to finance new, innovative ideas for heritage protection and conservation. The Regional Centre for Conservation and Restoration of South East Europe, established in 2005 by an agreement between the Ministry of Culture and UNESCO has great potential for training and capacity building, not only in Albania but in the whole region. It currently forms a department of the National Institute for Cultural Heritage.

Moreover, especially in Gjirokastra, there are a number of NGOs actively working towards the preservation of cultural monuments, such as “Heritage without Borders” who offer and conduct training.

There is a university in Gjirokastra but not in Berat. Cities with universities can profit immensely from these establishments. Gjirokastra therefore has an opportunity to develop programmes and training that are attractive to young Albanian as well as international students who might potentially settle in the city. This would consequently lead to the further development of the city.

Young people are increasingly interested in returning to and investing in Berat and Gjirokastra. But the challenge remains to create suitable conditions for them and to encourage as many as possible to settle and invest in both cities. This is what both municipalities have as their goal to contribute to the “longstanding way of life” found in both locations.

In conclusion, training and capacity building is crucial for the sustainable future of the World Heritage property. The initiative undertaken by the State Party, both at the state and municipalities levels should be continued and even strengthened.

Recommendations:

1. Training and awareness raising programmes to keep traditional knowledge and skills alive should be developed to ensure knowledge transfer to younger generations including by, for example, establishing permanent programmes at schools/universities and through non-formal education.
2. Resources and capacities of the Regional Centre for Conservation and Restoration of South East Europe should be enhanced and a close cooperation with UNESCO and the Advisory Bodies to the World Heritage Committee should be maintained.
3. Higher-education facilities in Berat and Gjirokastra can be beneficial for fostering the long term sustainable living conditions, and the programmes and activities at the University of Gjirokastra, including those for conservation and restoration should be enhanced, and partnerships for cooperation and exchange studies should be encouraged.

ISSUE 2: MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

The mission team considers the existing national legislation is sufficient to protect the World Heritage property. However, the authorities must ensure the rigorous implementation of legislative procedures and processes. Nevertheless, the property would benefit from some additional regulations and improvements that guarantee a rational approach to new developments and their implementation. One of the main challenges remains the development of an Integrated Management Plan including an overarching long-term vision for the property which should include, amongst other things, proposals for ensuring the sustainable development of the historic centres for their inhabitants and visitor and tourism management. The management of this World Heritage property should focus on encouraging a diverse range of development to stimulate a broad and resilient economic base. The economies of both cities are growing rapidly. One of the main reasons is the primacy of tourism which is supported by international, national and local investments to create optimum conditions for its development, such as the World Bank's Project for Integrated Urban and Tourism Development (PIUTD). Further reflections by the mission team on the PIUTD can be found in the following chapters of this report.

The majority of financial resources to improve the state of conservation of the property through restoration projects, for management activities, or new development projects come from international investments, such as the Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency (TIKA), the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ), Albanian-American Development Foundation (AADF), or the European Union Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (EU-IPA). For example, in Gorica (Berat) the Kreditanstalt für Wiederaufbau (KfW) is investing in the implementation of the sewage system. The mission is of the opinion that the State Party benefitting from different financial resources should rigorously ensure compliance with the requirements under the World Heritage Convention and ensure that impact assessments for investments that may impact the Outstanding Universal Value of the property are conducted of which the findings should provide the sound basis for the decision making to preserve the attributes of the property. For further elaboration and recommendations please consult the sub-chapter on the "Inter-relation of PIUTD, IMP and other local legislative provisions such as Law 27/2018 "On Cultural Heritage and Museums" and the introductory part of the chapter "Issue 3: Major construction projects that form part of the project for Integrated Urban and Tourism Development (PIUTD)"

During the mission the authorities of both Berat and Gjirokastra underlined that they see heritage as an important strand of economic development and, equally, the development of the cities is seen as synonymous with the protection of heritage. Their inclusion in the World Heritage List is very important as it ensures national and international visibility.

In 2019, Gjirokastra was visited by 130.000 tourists, whereas the town is inhabited by 30.000 people. Berat is visited annually by 300.000-400.000 people, while there are 45.000 registered residents living in the city of Berat. Tourism can bring enormous benefits but the balance between inhabitants and visitors must be considered. It also hides a potential danger of turning the towns into tourist destinations only at the cost of losing the character of the place, as already is highlighted in the ICOMOS' Technical Review of April 2021 on the documentation submitted in the framework of the PIUTD (as annexes to the State Party's 2020 State of Conservation report) and stressed by the World Heritage Committee in the decision taken during its extended 44th session.

1. Efficacy of development controls and monitoring indicators

The lack of specific monitoring indicators was identified as a factor that affected the property since its nomination as serial World Heritage property in 2008. In its evaluation of the nomination dossier, ICOMOS considered in 2008 that "the definition of precise indicators, including the intervals at which they must be revised, has not yet been carried out." In its Decision **32 COM 8B.56** (2008), the World Heritage Committee requested therefore the State Party of Albania to define specific monitoring indicators, together with the intervals of their updating.

In 2015, in response to the reiterated requests from the World Heritage Committee to develop appropriate monitoring indicators over the years, the State Party of Albania requested technical assistance from the World Heritage Centre. In the framework of the [International Assistance project \(Nr 2821\)](#), an ICOMOS Advisory mission for the "Development of Monitoring Indicators for the World Heritage Property 'Historic Centres of Berat and Gjirokastra'", was conducted in April 2016. Two international experts provided training during a three-day workshop on the guidelines and methodology for defining and linking values to monitoring indicators and they assisted the Albanian authorities with the preparation of a focused set of monitoring indicators clearly related to the attributes of the Outstanding Universal Value of the property. The list of attributes and relevant monitoring indicators can be found in Annex No VI.

In 2018, in its state of conservation report the State Party, for the first time, used the monitoring indicators, as developed in 2016. In its state of conservation report submitted in December 2020, the State Party indicated that the current monitoring indicators are in use by Regional Directorates for Cultural Heritage (RDCH) of Berat and Gjirokastra respectively, the site administrators of the property. As part of the everyday work of the staff of the RDCHs, monitoring is done through inspections on site by the specialists and technical staff who report to the department of archaeology and architecture in the respective RDCHs before reporting to the Albanian National Institute for Cultural Heritage and Ministry of Culture of Albania.

The mission team analysed the monitoring reports submitted by the State Party in 2018 and 2020 state of conservation reports respectively and compared information provided with some observations from the visit to the property. In conclusion, there are activities of various extent and impact on the property that take place. The data collected through the use of the monitoring indicators as provided in the reports would be more informative if further detailed, especially in case of conservation projects, and accompanied by analytical conclusions. Therefore, it is difficult to comment on the effectiveness of the process carried out so far. Nevertheless, data collected and experience gained over 5 years since the beginning of the process has built a good base for further development.

The mission team concluded that it would be advisable to review the monitoring process and evaluate the adequacy of the indicators together with assessing effectiveness of the monitoring system. This exercise should take into account the cultural landscape perspective, as well as adopting a Historic Urban Landscape approach.

Therefore, it is considered important that, among others, a study is carried out which would facilitate the understanding of the cultural landscape of both towns and identify important features, crucial for preserving the character of these centres. In addition, this study would support the assessment of the planned changes now and in the future.

It is also important to monitor the impact of public development projects like those of the PIUTD on the way private investment decisions are made. Many of the PIUTD projects focus on public realm and infrastructure improvements with a view to making the area more attractive to visitors and residents alike. It is likely that these improvements that support the liveability of both Berat and Gjirokastra will themselves act as a catalyst to further private investment in the buildings of the World Heritage property. This should create more businesses and assist with the restoration, rehabilitation and reuse of vacant properties. In order to quantify the benefits of this virtuous cycle, it is necessary to collect data that demonstrates not only the link between public expenditure and subsequent private investment, but also the nature of those private investments to ensure they support the qualities of the World Heritage property.

In terms of potential future development projects in Berat, the mission team has learnt that there are early discussions about the construction of a new river crossing east of Berat that would link communities on both sides of the river. It would pass to the south of Gorica, cutting through the hills, and join up with the road that crosses the Osumi just to the west of Gorica. The General Local Plan for Berat marks the location under the Gorica Hill as one of the possible routes of a Berat bypass. At this stage, and as understood by the mission team, it is likely that this entire route would lie outside the property and buffer zone. However, there may be an impact on the setting of the property and implications for traffic movement through and within Berat. Therefore, in relation to the potential bypass in Berat, the mission strongly recommends that the State Party keep in mind the strategic recommendations included in this report. Namely, in line with the provisions of the *Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention* the State Party is invited to inform UNESCO and the Advisory Bodies as soon as a proposal for the bypass road emerges within or in proximity to the World Heritage property and to conduct a HIA before any decision is taken.

Recommendations:

1. Cultural landscape studies for both component parts of the property should be developed as a priority action under the future Integrated Management Plan.
2. The link between current public expenditure (on PIUTD projects and similar) and subsequent private investment should be carefully analysed to ensure that public investment is supporting the wider heritage objectives of the property.
3. An analysis of the ongoing monitoring of the condition of the World Heritage property, preferably using the World Heritage Resource Manual *ENHANCING OUR HERITAGE TOOLKIT 2.0, Assessing management effectiveness of World Heritage properties and other heritage places, 2022*, should be conducted.
4. Based on the outcomes of the above-recommended analysis, the current monitoring system should be reviewed and enhanced, if required (including principles for gathering, processing and use of monitoring data for the management of the property).

2. Development of an Integrated Management Plan (IMP) for the entire property

The need for an updated and Integrated Management Plan for the property has been repeatedly requested by the World Heritage Committee. Following the Reactive Monitoring

mission in 2012, the World Heritage Committee noted the findings of the mission that the two historic cities of Berat and Gjirokastra are not managed as a single property. The Committee therefore urged the State Party in its Decision **37 COM 7B.70** (2013) to “put in place as soon as possible an over-arching management structure for the property that has responsibility for monitoring and adaptation of illegal constructions and for ensuring parity of management approaches across the property”. Decision **39.COM 7B.75** (2015) requested the State Party to “Develop an overarching integrated management plan, including a risk management component with threat mitigation measures”. Decision **41 COM 7B.40** (2017) recalled “the fundamental and urgent need for an overarching Integrated Management Plan (IMP) and appropriate control mechanisms for the property and its buffer zones and beyond” and urged the State Party “to develop, as a matter of priority, an overarching IMP, including a risk management component with threat mitigation measures. The Committee further urged the State Party “to develop an integrated urban conservation and development tool, based on a detailed survey and documentation of all buildings and environmental features in the urban settlement and its wider context, using, if necessary, the approach carried by the Recommendation on the Historic Urban Landscape (2011), and ensure strong inter-institutional cooperation in particular with the entities responsible for urban planning”. In 2019, the Committee recalled its request of 2017 and further requested the State Party to “reinstate the moratorium on new constructions within the property and buffer zones and maintain it until approval of the above-mentioned tools for protection and management of Berat and Gjirokastra” It further requested the State Party to “develop mechanisms and programmes to advance the restoration and conservation of the built fabric of the property.” (Decision **43 COM 7B.79**).

In 2021, the Committee reiterated its request to the State Party that the Integrated Management Plan (IMP) be completed urgently taking on-board the previous requests of the Committee and be submitted to the World Heritage Centre for review by the Advisory Bodies before its implementation (Decision **44 COM 7B.151**).

In 2018, the World Heritage Committee (Decision **42 COM 13**) approved the State Party’s request for International Assistance to develop an Integrated Management Plan for Berat and Gjirokastra (<https://whc.unesco.org/en/intassistance/2932/>), following which a contract was entered into between UNESCO and the Albanian National Institute for Cultural Heritage, as implementer of the project.

A technical working group composed of 11 people of the National Institute for Cultural Heritage has been formed in order to gather and coordinate data and to further work on the drafting of the Integrated Management Plan. ICOMOS and ICCROM have identified two international experts to be involved in the project and their scope of work has been agreed with the State Party. A list of 24 stakeholders to be involved in the development of the Management Plan has been established and contacted by the National Institute for Cultural Heritage.

In conclusion, the mission team found that the development of an Integrated Management Plan for the entire property remains a challenge for the State Party in terms of bringing all relevant stakeholders together and working on a common vision for the long-term sustainable development, including the sustenance of the heritage values and the protection of their attributes. However, some progress has been made towards the implementation of the International Assistance request by establishing a technical working group within the Albanian National Institute for Cultural Heritage. Existing studies, baseline documents, outcomes of stakeholder consultation and assessments conducted under the PIUTD for its various components (e.g. Gjirokastra Castle), can form a valuable base for further development of the IMP.

Recommendations:

1. The implementation of the International Assistance-funded project should proceed. According to the Work Plan, the Albanian National Institute for Cultural Heritage should develop the Working package 2 on the Integrated analysis of the World Heritage property and should provide it to UNESCO and the Advisory Bodies, in particular:
 - Stakeholder consultation - Data/Information gathering
 - Assessment of Values
 - SWOT
 - Management issues
 - Condition Assessment of heritage values
 - Occupancy and ongoing uses
2. The existing Committee for Coordination for Management Plans for the Historic Centre of Berat and Gjirokastra should be enhanced and should adopt strict operational processes to ensure strategic planning of overall management issues and the involvement of all relevant stakeholders at international, national, regional and local level.
3. A long-term comprehensive development strategy for the property and its immediate setting and surrounding areas that aims to stimulate a broad resilient economic basis for the future of the property (**Decision 44 COM 7B.151**, 2021) which includes tourism management should be developed taking into account the natural and cultural (including intangible) heritage values of the area and which should inform the Integrated Management Plan. This strategy should be diversified to consider opportunities for local communities within the property and its wider setting, by including the support of ecotourism, development of bioproducts, cultural routes, hiking tours, and other sustainable outdoor activities.
4. The Integrated Management Plan should be given legal status which mandates all relevant institutions to comply with the Plan.

3. Inter-relation of PIUTD, IMP and other local legislative provisions such as Law 27/2018 “On Cultural Heritage and Museums”

Interventions in the historical centres as well as on monument buildings are regulated by Law No. 27/2018 dated 17.05.2018 “On Cultural Heritage and Museums” as the primary legal framework governing the management of tangible and intangible cultural heritage in Albania. According to Article 48 of this Law, building construction permits and infrastructure permits in historic centres are preliminary approved by the National Tangible Cultural Heritage Council and then based on the territory planning and development legislation.

The “Regulation for the protection, integrated conservation and administration of Berat’s historic centre and the surrounding buffer zone” (DCM No. 767, 2014) regulates investments in the historic centre of Berat. According to the regulation, interventions in the core zone are limited to the restoration of the existing buildings, while in the buffer zone new constructions are allowed with limitation in height, density and architectural style.

Similarly, for Gjirokastra there exists the “Regulation for the protection, integrated conservation and administration of the Historic Centre and buffer zone of Gjirokastra and zoning map” (DCM No. 619, 2015).

Both regulations are based on Law No. 9048 (2003) “On Cultural Heritage” and on DCM No. 426 (2007) “On approval of the Albanian Restoration Charter”, both not in force. Given the adoption of the new Law “On Cultural Heritage and Museums” in 2018, both regulations are subject to revisions in accordance with this new law. According to the new Law it is an obligation for cultural properties to have a Management Plan, whereas Articles 45 and 46 define the scope and objectives. Management Plans are subject to approval by the minister

responsible for cultural heritage after having first solicited opinions of the National Tangible Cultural Heritage Council and the National Cultural Properties Management Council.

In case of the Gjirokastra by-pass road (not part of the PIUTD), the development is located within the boundaries of the Historical Centre and Protected Zone. The “Regulation for the protection, conservation, and administration of the Historical Centre and protected zone of Gjirokastra” that states that “there are prohibited the new constructions in the Historical Centre except the improvement of the road infrastructure, engineering network, and the above-mentioned reconstructions.” (Article 5/5). In view of the mission, the application of the legislative provision is not clear if it would allow for a new road construction located in the historic centre. Therefore, the mission team is of the opinion that the legislative procedures of approval of the road construction should be clarified by the State Party.

The above-mentioned regulations for both Berat and Gjirokastra informed the respective General Local Plans (GLP) of the municipalities, approved in 2016 (Berat) and 2017 (Gjirokastra). The visions of the GLPs are to harmonise the economic, infrastructural and spatial development with the protection of natural resources, alleviate social inequalities and promote the intellectual development of society. They are the most important documents for the territorial development of both municipalities and are reference documents for the zoning, administration, protection as well as intervention criteria within the respective historic centres and buffer zones.

One of the main challenges for the historic centres of Berat and Gjirokastra remains the high number of abandoned monuments in urgent need of safeguarding to avoid the loss of the historic fabric. The ownership for many buildings is not clarified which leads to difficulties for the authorities to intervene. Under Law no. 8561 dated 22.12.1999 on expropriation and temporary use of private property for public interest, provision exists for the State to expropriate or take private property for temporary use for purposes of a “public interest” that cannot be achieved or protected in another manner. The State must compensate for the value of land expropriated and any reduction in the value of property caused to properties bordering with the expropriated property. The mission team has been informed that the authorities are reluctant to use some aspects of existing legislation given its sensitivity due to the historic context of state controls during the communist era.

For some components of the PIUTD in some cases, intervention in privately owned properties takes place (for example restoration of walls, fences and doors of private properties located within the historic centre in Berat). This occurs where there is a close relationship between a PIUTD project and a private property. In these cases, the Albanian Development Fund as project implementer of the PIUTD stipulates an agreement with the owners based on the proposed detail design without triggering application of the expropriation law.

For the various PIUTD project components, environmental, social, and cultural heritage screenings have been developed to identify any potential impacts and possible mitigation measures. Environmental and social screenings are conducted in compliance with the World Bank’s “Environmental and Social Policy for Investment Project Financing” which sets out the requirements that the Bank must follow regarding projects it supports through Investment Project Financing. Moreover, the Environmental and Social Standards which set out the requirements for Borrowers relating to the identification and assessment of environmental and social risks and impacts associated with projects supported by the Bank through Investment Project Financing are applied. The environmental and social assessments should also consider direct, indirect and cumulative project-specific risks and impacts on cultural heritage and determine the potential risks and impacts of the proposed activities of the project on cultural heritage. Where appropriate, a Cultural Heritage Management Plan shall be developed. More information can be found on the website of the World Bank and in the [“Environmental and Social Framework”](#) document.

The World Bank classifies its projects into four Environmental Assessment categories according to the likely impacts on the environment they will have. The projects visited and assessed by the mission in December 2021 fall under “Category B”. A proposed project is classified as Category B if its potential adverse environmental impacts on human populations or environmentally important areas (including wetlands, forests, grasslands, and other natural habitats) are less adverse than those of “Category A” projects. These impacts are site-specific; few if any of them are irreversible; and in most cases, mitigation measures can be designed more readily than for “Category A” projects. “Category B” investments also require the development of site specific Environmental and Social Management Plans. In this context, the World Bank’s policy also recognizes “the importance of open and transparent engagement between the Borrower and project stakeholders as an essential element of good international practice” and emphasises that effective stakeholder engagement can significantly improve the environmental and social sustainability of projects, enhance project acceptance, and make a significant contribution to successful project design and implementation.

Besides the compliance with the World Bank’s requirements, investments under the PIUTD are subject to existing legislation in Albania. Notably, the construction sector is regulated by Law No. 107/2014 dated 31.07.2014 “On the Planning and Development of Territories” as well as a set of laws and by-laws that regulate and standardise the construction process. Moreover, the investments under the PIUTD are subject to the existing Albanian environmental protection laws, regulations and standards, and as such the main law namely Law No. 10431 dated 9 June 2011 “On Environmental Protection” under which Environmental Impact Assessments are conducted.

In conclusion, the projects implemented under the PIUTD comply with World Bank policies and the Albanian legislation. However, in the framework of the Environmental and Social assessments, the presence of all listed legally protected cultural heritage areas, such as World Heritage sites, should be determined, and subsequently in line with the Environmental and Social Standard 8 on Cultural Heritage comply with local, national, regional or international cultural heritage regulations. The mission team notes that Environmental and Social Assessments are conducted for PIUTD component parts and that they consider impacts on cultural heritage. However, for most projects the assessments conducted do not fully take into account the attributes that convey Outstanding Universal Value of the World Heritage property, a prerequisite for development projects that may might the Outstanding Universal Value of World Heritage properties under the *Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention*, ratified by Albania.

The mission is also of the opinion that the analysis and preliminary studies completed in the framework of the PIUTD provide a comprehensive basis for the elaboration of the Integrated Management Plan. Moreover, clarification should be provided under which legislative provisions the construction of the Gjirokastra bypass road is undertaken.

This chapter and the recommendations should be read in close conjunction with following chapter “Issue 3: Major construction projects that form part of the Project for Integrated Urban and Tourism Development (PIUTD)” and its recommendations.

Recommendations:

1. Heritage Impact Assessments should be a required prerequisite for development projects and directly linked into the provisions of the regulations of both Berat and Gjirokastra, with follow up of assessment conclusions should be ensured by the national legislations.
2. Heritage Impact Assessments, in line with the provisions of the *Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention*, should also be conducted for projects funded by the World Bank and/or other international financing institutions,

- either within the scope of the national legislative framework or as part of the Environment and Social Framework of the financing institutions.
3. Clarification should be provided to the UNESCO World Heritage Centre under which legislative provisions and related procedures the construction of the Gjirokastra bypass road is undertaken.
 4. The State Party should continue their efforts to explore possibilities for intervening in critical cases where historic buildings located within the World Heritage property are under threat.

ISSUE 3: MAJOR CONSTRUCTION PROJECTS THAT FORM PART OF THE PROJECT FOR INTEGRATED URBAN AND TOURISM DEVELOPMENT (PIUTD)

The Project for Integrated Urban and Tourism Development (PIUTD) is a multiannual project funded by the World Bank and implemented by the Albanian Development Fund (ADF). It covers three counties (Vlora, Berat, Gjirokastra) four municipalities (Saranda, Gjirokastra, Berat, Përmet) and finances infrastructure projects in urban centres. It aims at economic development with a strong focus on tourism and improvement of the living conditions of southern Albania.

The PIUTD carries out multi million euros projects across Berat and Gjirokastra. They operate under strict Terms of Reference and screening processes required by the World Bank. The State Party requested review from the Advisory Bodies of the proposed Terms of Reference (TOR) for the preparation of the PIUTD for both Berat and Gjirokastra. ICOMOS provided a Technical Review in June 2018. After the further development of the project, and after having organised a Stakeholder Consultation Workshop in Berat on 7 September 2018, the State Party submitted a further report on the project in October 2018, specifically relating to Berat. The draft final report entitled “Berat Development Vision and Integrated Urban Development Concept” has been reviewed by ICOMOS and a Technical Review was provided to the State Party in October 2018. ICOMOS concluded that the submitted draft final report is a well-elaborated, valuable document, which is suitable to lay the foundations for the achievement of the sustainable development goals. In order to make the document even more appropriate, ICOMOS advised the State Party that the “Berat Development Vision and Integrated Urban Development Concept” be complemented by strategic proposals and practical solutions related to the phenomenon of illegal building activities. Moreover, ICOMOS noted that the World Heritage property’s Management Plan is only mentioned a few times in the text of the report. ICOMOS therefore advised the State Party to rely further on the strength of this fundamental document, especially in relation to the continual monitoring and maintenance issues and also with regard to job creation opportunities.

In its analysis of the report on the state of conservation of the property, which informed the Committee in 2019, the World Heritage Centre and the Advisory Bodies found that the proposed Terms of Reference of the PIUTD could be accepted as a good basis for the final project. It was noted that the State Party should be encouraged, however, to take into consideration the remarks of the ICOMOS Technical Review of June 2018, in particular with regards to linking it to the Management Plan of the World Heritage property. Additionally, the World Heritage Centre and the Advisory Bodies recommended that the State Party submit the Terms of Reference of the stabilisation study and project for the Castle of Gjirokastra to the World Heritage Centre for review by the Advisory Bodies before their approval or implementation, as well as any other development proposals.

At its 43rd session in 2019, the World Heritage Committee requested the State Party to take into consideration the review and recommendations provided by the Advisory Bodies concerning the PIUTD and Berat Integrated Urban Development Concept (IUDC). Moreover, the Committee requested the State Party to keep the World Heritage Centre informed of ways through which these comments are being taken into account (**43 COM 7B.79**).

The state of conservation report submitted in December 2020 included in Annexes 3 to 8, documentation on ongoing and planned projects in the framework of PIUTD. These project proposals contained in the annexes (except Annexes 6 and 7) were reviewed by ICOMOS and a Technical Review was provided to the State Party April 2021. Further project documentation has been submitted by the State Party with the State of Conservation report in February 2022.

The ICOMOS Technical Review of April 2021 provided overall remarks on the submitted documentation stating the need for greater flexibility and local adaptation in the implementation of the contemporary aspects of the proposed elements, in order to become more specific to the World Heritage property. ICOMOS generally found it to be fit for purpose, with recommendations made to augment the designs of the proposals. In conclusion, ICOMOS found that the submitted documents that comprised the several elements of the PIUTD and Berat IUDC and those which are related to the city of Gjirokastra, were convincingly able to testify the State Party's commitment to the preservation and revitalisation of the World Heritage of these two cities.

At its extended 44th session in 2021, as per [Decision 44 COM 7B.151](#), the Committee requested the State Party of Albania to take into account the comments and recommendations provided by ICOMOS in its Technical Review of April 2021 for the PIUTD components.

Following completion of the mission, additional documentation related to various PIUTD project components in Berat (included as annexes to the State Party's State of Conservation report of 2022) and in Gjirokastra were made available to the mission team. These included, in particular, documentation related to the Mobility Plan and Detailed Design of project investments for the Integrated Urban Upgrading of Gjirokastra. The mission team positively notes that the methodology of developing the Integrated Urban Upgrading, design concept and the included comprehensive list of proposed projects took into consideration the Historic Urban Landscape approach and a wide range of stakeholders have been consulted in the process. The vision of the Integrated Urban Upgrading defines a 15-year strategy for Gjirokastra with the objective to improve the liveability in Gjirokastra and ensure the OUV of the property is sustained. The bypass road is referred to several times in the documentation but does not seem to be fully assessed or integrated since it does not form part of the overall PIUTD investment. It is important that all investments and developments are fully integrated and taken into account when further developing the vision for Gjirokastra, its mobility plan, and in the selection of priority investments. The mission team is of the view that the mobility plan and the vision of the Integrated Urban Upgrading of Gjirokastra should undergo a strategic heritage impact assessment to fully take into account its impact on the OUV of the property.

Recommendations:

1. Heritage Impact Assessments should be carried out for proposed projects. In the case of projects already underway an impact assessment should also be conducted, and mitigation measures developed for impacts that have taken place or are unavoidable.
2. A heritage impact assessment of the cumulative impacts of the PIUTD and other development projects on the OUV of the property and its setting should be conducted. In particular, the mobility plan and the Integrated Urban Upgrading of Gjirokastra currently under development should undergo a heritage impact assessment against the OUV of the property.
3. The UNESCO World Heritage Centre should engage in discussions with the World Bank and other international agencies financing development projects to include Heritage Impact Assessments as a requirement for investments located within boundaries of World Heritage properties and their settings.

1. Gjirokastra car park project at Çerçiz Topulli square

Gjirokastra underground car park at Çerçiz Topulli square is an element of wider traffic improvements planned for the city through development of a loop road system composed of existing and planned roads. The underground parking is already under construction.

The project is to create a threelevel underground car park for over 340 parking places to the north-east of the Gjirokastra Castle, in front of the Town Hall building and at the entrance to the Bazaar area that would allow for the pedestrianisation of the streets leading into the historic core of Gjirokastra and improvement of the traffic flow. The streets within the Bazaar area are already largely pedestrianised but the area around the constructed car park is heavily parked. Construction of the parking would also allow the removal or considerable reduction of on-street parking in the area.

The mission team noticed traffic difficulties in the area due to topography and spatial arrangements of the city as well as ongoing construction of the parking. The team was informed that traffic in this vicinity is a problem throughout the whole year, particularly during the tourist season.

In hand with the construction of the underground car park, the proposal transforms Çerçiz Topulli Square, which has been used for parking, into a pedestrian area and, at its entrance, a discharge and turning point for the buses. The revitalisation project, according to information submitted by the State Party in 2016, covers Çerçiz Topulli Square and, adjacent but at a lower level, Pionieri Square. Following the completion of the mission, additional detailed design information was forwarded to the team in April 2022. The designs reflect the significance of the location as the gateway to the old city and the World Heritage property and exploit the panoramic views across the town and wider countryside. As the squares are going to be the main entrance to the World Heritage property, an information point with introduction to the property's name, status, boundaries and values / World Heritage interpretation point should be sensitively designed and installed there. It should also provide information on the Berat component part.

Proposals for the underground car park were not subjected to a Heritage Impact Assessment therefore it is difficult to assess the potential impacts of its construction. Details of existing and predicted traffic arrangements and flows were not presented to the mission team. Nevertheless, the location of the underground parking seems to be well thought through and the project has evident benefits in terms of traffic reduction and its organisation within the core area of the World Heritage property. Given that the construction is already advanced it should proceed as planned. The arrangements of the square together with the traffic organisation in the immediate area should be carried out very carefully and according to standards appropriate to the World Heritage property's character.

Recommendations:

1. The construction of the underground parking can proceed in principle as planned, conditional to:
 - a) The details on the arrangement of the square, and the traffic organisation in the immediate area need to be assessed against the OUV of the property as part of the heritage impact assessment of the mobility plan and Integrated Urban Upgrading of Gjirokastra.
 - b) An information point with an introduction to the property's name, status, boundaries and values/World Heritage interpretation point should be sensitively designed and installed at Çerçiz Topulli square. It should also provide information on the Berat component part.

2. Measures to address urgent safety concerns and prevent loss of heritage structures in the Castle of Gjirokastra

The project currently under development focuses on the short-term emergency structural and geological interventions required for stabilisation of the castle with the aim of addressing water infiltration and the resulting damage to the historical fabric. In particular, the conservation work at the Gjirokastra Castle includes structural stabilisation, installation of structural members, geological interventions, selective vegetation removal, repointing of mortar, grouting of walls and underlying geology, vaults and cracks, stitching of cracks and stone replacement, installing infra-red cameras and a portable screen for viewing and understanding the lives of the resident bats, as well as execution of archaeological excavations. The project includes the installation of a new roof and moisture protection on the roof of the museum, drainage around the site, and the conservation of a number of spaces which can then be utilised for new functions. It also includes the installation of toilets, an entry desk, and a small interpretation centre at the entrance.

In its Technical Review of April 2021, ICOMOS considered that the documentation submitted by the State Party of Albania to UNESCO and the Advisory Bodies prior to the project implementation, was an excellently structured, highly detailed document on the current state, including all elements of the setting of the castle and commended the interdisciplinary approach as exemplary.

The Historic Impact Assessment conducted for the project concluded that the conservation and emergency stabilisation interventions for the castle are overwhelmingly beneficial and support the Outstanding Universal Value of the World Heritage property. According to the assessment, there would be risk to OUV if the interventions were not to be carried out in both the short and medium term given the instability of the geology and its impacts on the castle. Moreover, the OUV would be enhanced with the planned Interpretation Centre.

Prior to the project implementation, a Maintenance Plan and a Health and Safety Plan were developed. During the site visit, the mission team acknowledged the progress made in the implementation of the project and the high-quality work is commendable.

In conclusion, the project to address urgent safety concerns and prevent loss of heritage structures in the Castle of Gjirokastra is exemplary both in regard to its preparation and the preliminary studies and in its implementation. The project serves as a best practice in terms of procedure to conduct heritage impact assessments for development projects before implementation.

During the mission, the team was informed that there are plans for future investments and the development of the Gjirokastra Castle for recreational and tourism activities and that a Management Plan for these purposes is under development. This Management Plan was subsequently made available to the mission team in April 2022. The 'Gjirokastra Castle Sustainable Management and Tourism Valorization Masterplan' includes valuable baseline information and assessments of the World Heritage property in terms of management and governance and existing legislation and provides the historic context of Gjirokastra and its castle including an analysis of its historic and current use and current state of conservation and visitor management. The vision of the Management Plan identifies eleven themes that should provide the framework for the delivery of the plan during the period of 2022 to 2032. One of these objectives includes the protection of the area surrounding the Castle where inappropriate development would damage the visual, sensory or historic setting of the site. The mission team would like to underline the importance of this, in light of ongoing development projects, in particular the construction of the bypass road, adjacent to the Castle. In this respect, the inclusion of a landscape study is highly recommended (see

recommendation Nr 3 in the sub-chapter ISSUE 4: GJIROKASTRA BY-PASS ROAD PROJECT in this report). The Management Plan proposes several interventions for recreational activities, such as rehabilitation or reconstruction of existing facilities as well as the construction and renovation of existing electrical, hydraulic, mechanical or safety networks. The document acknowledges the need for HIA in accordance with Albanian laws and regulations set by the World Heritage Convention and its Operational Guidelines. It should be noted that the HIA should be submitted to the UNESCO World Heritage Centre for review by the Advisory Bodies before any final decision is taken on future developments.

The Management Plan also sets out a future governance structure for the management of the Castle. Any proposal on the management system for the Castle must be assessed and be coherent with the current and future governance system of the entire World Heritage property.

While the mission team acknowledges the high-quality and in-depth analysis included in the document, it is recommended that priority should be given to safeguarding and maintaining historic structures and the archaeological remains and its valorization and interpretation as an attribute of the OUV of the property, as well as to the above-mentioned objective of safeguarding the Castle's setting. Future touristic and recreational activities should recognise the overall vision of the entire property seeking an approach to tourism management which should be diversified to consider opportunities for local communities within the property and its wider setting, by including the support of ecotourism, development of bioproducts, cultural routes, hiking tours, and other sustainable outdoor activities.

Recommendations:

1. The Gjirokastra Castle Sustainable Management and Tourism Valorization Masterplan, developed under requirements of the World Bank regulations, should be reflected in the Integrated Management Plan for the World Heritage property.
2. Future interventions and activities should undergo full Heritage Impact Assessments before any decisions are taken that might impact OUV of the property and priority should be given to the safeguarding and maintenance of historic structures and archaeological remains.

3. Berat car park, streetscape beautification of Antipatrea Street and 20th century sector of Berat

The Berat underground car park proposal is part of the rehabilitation of Teodor Musaka Square, a place which is the focus for cultural life in Berat. It lies in the buffer zone of this component of the World Heritage property within the area of Mangalem. Teodor Musaka Square lies along new Boulevard Republika, between the Osumi River and Antipatrea Street. The proposal integrates the boulevard and the square creating a park with greenery and space for city functions. Boulevard Republika is already having a noticeable impact in terms of replacing the pre-existing bazaar and creating a very popular Xhiro strolling area.

A new library and surface greening have been integrated into the design of the new square. Beneath the new square is a single floor of car parking with a capacity of 198 vehicles accessed from both Antipatrea Street and Santa Lucia Street alongside Osumi River. The car park will take vehicles off the surrounding streets and notably out of Iliaz Vroni Square.

The ICOMOS Technical Review of April 2021 concluded the construction of the car park would have no obvious adverse impacts on the World Heritage property. The mission team can reaffirm this having seen the construction and can see the value of the off-street underground parking for locals and visitors in an area where little formal parking currently exists.

The car park will be easily accessed from the main road running through Berat and from the riverside. Once construction has been completed, the Boulevard, which is currently split by the earthworks, will be completed. The mission in December witnessed the way the Boulevard was being used by the local community - and it is clearly a successful and popular destination.

Accompanying the car park construction there will be a programme of works including 'beautification' of the streetscape and building frontages along the Antipatrea Street leading to Iliaz Vrioni Square where existing car parking will be removed and new public space created.

The beautification project has two strands: one relating to public realm improvements and one relating to interventions on building facades. The public realm improvements involve improved footways, new street lighting, better pedestrian facilities (more road crossings), and tree planting.

The interventions on the facades are based on a typology of 5 types of building - from residential to commercial to public/civic. For the most part, the nature of the work is repair, consolidation, reinstatement, repainting/limewashing, removal/relocation of visually jarring elements, depending on the age of the building.

The nature of the public realm works is modern but generally constructed using traditional materials. It is important that street furniture and lighting elements are consistent across these areas and relate to items used elsewhere in areas of change.

Iliaz Vrioni Square is located along Antipatrea Road opposite Teodor Musaka Square at the centre of administrative and cultural life in Berat. It is also known as the 'Square of Religious Coexistence' as it contains both the Lead Mosque and the Orthodox Cathedral of Saint Demetrius. Peaceful religious coexistence is reflected in the nomination of the town as a component of this World Heritage property. Removal of the parking and the public realm enhancements will reinforce this religious relationship. Improvements include the removal of parking, landscaping, creation of new pedestrian routes and paving enhancements to the surrounding streets. Alongside the beautification works this will have a positive impact on the area.

Directional signage to help pedestrians navigate their way around the city has, to date, been inconsistent and piecemeal. To address this a signage strategy has been put in place that has created a family of interpretive, directional and map-based signs that will support pedestrian movement around Berat and provide consistency with high quality signs and structures. This approach needs to be extended to cover other elements of street furniture.

The part of the buffer zone between Antipatrea Street and the Osumi River consists largely of 20th century developments arranged in street blocks. The building height is generally contained to 3 to 5 storeys allowing the more important buildings (churches and mosques) to break the skyline. However, two recent developments have breached the prevailing height and stand out when viewed from the historical centre. They are the Hotel Portiko and the Hotel Merko. Notwithstanding the controls that apply to the buffer zone, there is a danger that this part of the city, flanking the new Boulevard Republika, might come under pressure for redevelopment. It represents part of the history of the town and care needs to be taken to ensure any new development reflects the OUV of the property.

In conclusion, the mission team found that the car park will be beneficial in both providing visitor parking to Berat and removing cars from more sensitive areas such as Iliaz Vrioni Square. The 'beautification' programme along Antipatrea Street and within the buffer zone will provide improvements to the buildings and an enhanced pedestrian experience along the main through route of Berat.

Recommendation:

1. This project should proceed subject to:
 - a) A strategy/policy/approach on how to treat the 20th century layer of the city should be developed and the buffer zone regulations should be reviewed accordingly, all of which should be reflected in the Integrated Management Plan under development.
 - b) The 'beautification' programme should be consistent with other public realm projects. Works to the facades should use traditional materials and techniques, and should reinforce the existing qualities of the buildings.

4. Berat: restoration of Selamlik Square

A new square is to be formed where the road through Berat (Antipatrea Street) meets the Mihal Komnena Road as it descends from the castle. The site is triangular in shape flanked on two sides by the aforementioned roads and on the third by the back of buildings that form part of the old town.

Today, two category 1 buildings are all that remain on an area that would have been as densely covered as the rest of the old town. The buildings are: the remains of the former Selamlik of the Vrioni family and the ruined remains of Pasha's Gate. Both form important components of a reimagined Selamlik Square. A primary school, Llambi Goxhomani, constructed on this site in the 1950s during the communist era has recently been demolished to create the space for the square and to allow better views into the historic core of the town.

The concept takes this important location between the medieval old town and the modern town and creates a new public space that allows a better transition between the two and introduces resting and activity space from where the old town can be appreciated.

The square will step down the hill to the junction of the roads where a bus interchange point will be created. The space will be broken up into green areas and areas of hard landscaping using traditional materials. Paving in the surrounding streets will be repaired or renewed according to their state of dilapidation. New public lighting will be provided throughout the area illuminating both the streets and the features such as trees and artefacts (e.g. Pasha's Gate). The area will be fully accessible (wheelchair).

The square will form a significant new piece of public space in Berat at a key entrance to the old town in an area that "requires urban and architectonic rearrangement" (Historic Centres of Berat and Gjirokastra. Joint Management Plan for the conservation and the development of the two historical centres, 2008, p.84) following demolitions in the communist period. As the square is going to be the main entrance to this component of the World Heritage property, an information point with introduction to the property's name, status, boundaries and values / World Heritage interpretation point should be sensitively designed and installed there. It should also provide information on the Gjirokastra component part.

The future of Pasha's Gate appears to be secured given its position in the new Square. However, the future of the other Category 1 building, the Selamlik of the Vrioni family, seems less assured. Both monuments are in private ownership and agreement needs to be reached over their maintenance. The mission team were informed that, as yet, no adaptive use for the Selamlik had been agreed.

Linked to the demolition of the school and construction of the new square is a proposal to demolish a 20th century building (the Palace of Culture) which sits south of the square between Antipatrea Street and Boulevard Republika. This building is located in the buffer zone

and is currently used as cultural space including a gallery. The mission team were not made aware of any specific replacement proposals.

This building could have a positive relationship with the new square and an adaptive use might be preferred to demolition. The building could be seen as part of the 20th century group discussed above which require a more systematic approach to be set out for their management and protection.

The construction of the square itself is not considered to have an adverse impact on the current presentation of the site although it would originally have been a densely built-up area. However, there are opportunities to reinforce the OUV especially those linked to the cultural values of Berat. The proposed use of the square should be clarified, given its key location as a gateway to the property.

Given the scale of the square and the opportunity to harness space in some of the buildings around the square - notably the Palace of Culture - it would be opportune to reflect the values of the town as a trading interchange and culinary centre. The Palace of Culture building could provide space to develop arts/culture/craft/food which could function alongside the new square (and indeed the Boulevard Republika) as an outlet for sales or performance.

Diversification of the local economy beyond tourist provision is critical to the progress of Berat. The creation of the Boulevard Republika with its role in reinforcing the Xhiro tradition has shown that the provision of facilities for the local communities is a successful model to follow. The same could be created in and around the new square with an emphasis on culture/arts/food.

The mission recalls that the ICOMOS Technical Review of April 2021 concluded the new square would not have an adverse impact on the OUV of the property but the longer-term future of the Selamlik of the Vrioni family should be ensured. The mission concluded that more thought needs to be given to the way the square will be used and the activities that take place within the square. There is an opportunity to reinforce the cultural values of the site by using the buildings around the square, in conjunction with the square itself, to showcase arts/culture/food. To this end it is suggested that any proposals to demolish the Place of Culture are reviewed until such opportunities have been assessed.

Recommendations:

1. This project should proceed subject to:
 - a) The future programming and use of this square should be included in a long-term tourism management strategy for the entire property and its immediate setting
 - b) Discussions should continue in order to ensure the future of historic monuments bordering the square, especially the Selamlik of the Vrioni family.
 - c) The proposals to demolish the Palace of Culture should be reconsidered and a strategy/policy/approach on how to treat the 20th century layer of the city should be developed. Alongside this, the buffer zone regulations should be reviewed, all of which should be reflected in the Integrated Management Plan under development.
2. An information point with an introduction to the property's name, status, boundaries and values/World Heritage interpretation point should be sensitively designed and installed at Selamlik Square. It should also provide information on the Gjirokastra component part.

5. Berat: Gorica Road and car park and flood prevention

The area of Gorica lies along the south bank of the Osumi River and ascends the north facing slopes of the river valley. It is located within the boundaries of this component of the World Heritage property and is the only part of Berat on the south side of the river. A number of foot bridges link Gorica to the rest of the town but there is only one road bridge which is located approximately 1km west of the suspension footbridge that links to the Boulevard Republika.

The road along the south side of the river links Gorica with the villages to the southeast of Berat. In this section of Gorica, it is fairly narrow with very limited parking along it. It widens slightly by the Gorica footbridge where an access track to the upper part of Gorica joins it. There are a number of shops and businesses at this point and along the Gorica road various residences and small businesses access directly onto the road.

The proposal, which is part of the Restoration of the Historic Urban Landscape of the Gorica Quarter, widens the road and provides formalised parking to the west of Gorica Bridge between the road and the river. The car park will contain 63 spaces for cars and 14 spaces for bikes and motor bikes. There will be tree planting to reflect the vegetation found along the river bank and traditional materials will be used.

The proposal also includes a 4m wide riverside walkway (adjacent to the road) and a small square at the location of the Monument to the Martyrs approximately halfway between the suspension bridge and Gorica Bridge. Improvements to the internal alleyways and boundary wall repairs of Gorica are part of the project.

The project aims to preserve urban and architectural values of the overall urban setting, create new opportunities for the development of small businesses in the historic quarter, upgrade urban public spaces, upgrade road and public space along the riverbanks, restore pedestrian walkways, facades and boundary walls (see State Party's 2020 State of Conservation report, Annex 3: Output 5.2 – Detailed design, guidelines and cost estimates for package 1, projects P01 and P03 for Berat City, P01 RESTORATION OF THE HISTORIC URBAN LANDSCAPE OF THE GORICA QUARTER, TECHNICAL REPORT).

Associated with the road improvements is a flood prevention scheme that aims to protect the properties adjacent to the road from flooding. The river has flooded several times in the last hundred years but most of the historic buildings lie above the river valley. Gorica is one of the few parts of Berat where buildings can be flooded during high water events.

For the residents of Gorica, this project will bring upgrading of the road through Gorica, improved, safer, and more formalised access along the river frontage, improvements to the boundaries of the properties adjacent to the existing road, enhanced and more organised parking and protection from flooding. A landscape plan exists for planting the area between the walkway and the river edge.

It may be the case that the road improvements result in little change to traffic distribution in the area but more information on this is required. The parking and improved access is welcomed and is unlikely to have an adverse impact on the property.

The road improvements, the new 4m wide walkway and the extension of the Martyrs Memorial square will have an impact on the existing character of the area. The square as a gathering space for Gorica residents is beneficial as there is little public space on the south side of the river and limited areas for local activities such as markets. The walkway will contain associated lighting, seating and elements of street furniture that will present a much more formalised face to the edge of Gorica than exists at present.

The introduction of a riverside walkway is likely to have a positive impact on the way Gorica is perceived. The current impression is that the Gorica quarter appears cut off from the activities

and new investments that are being made in the rest of Berat, especially the Mangalem area. For visitors, it will be easier to drive and park in Gorica and enjoy direct access to the area and beyond into the hills.

The impact of this project on the property is generally positive. The restoration and repair of the alleyways and boundary walls within Gorica is welcomed. Protection of the properties from flooding is also welcomed although more information on the impact of the barriers on the course of the river within the valley would be helpful. The biggest impact will come from the road improvement and the new walkway and public spaces.

However, the investment contained in this project needs to be seen in the context of addressing the significant conservation issue of abandoned buildings in the Gorica Quarter. It is the mission's view that this work may act as a catalyst to regenerating Gorica but careful monitoring of the buildings under pressure must be assured.

The investments in Gorica should contribute to diversify the sustainable tourism development and opportunities by making the most of the spectacular natural environment of the hills and rivers in this area. Planned improvements to the trail to Gorica castle will add to the existing hiking routes and mountain biking opportunities. It is recognised that programmes of active outdoor pursuits are well matched to the qualities and facilities of Berat. The Osumi river has played a significant role in the history of the town and makes a valuable contribution to the lives of the residents and visitors. There are also some early proposals to construct some kind of performance space within the river flood plain adjacent to the Boulevard Republika. It is anticipated that this would be linked to existing routes via new footbridges and paths. It is noted that this project idea does not form part of the PIUTD. However, the mission team discussed this potential future project during the visit to Gorica.

There is little information about the potential future development plans for the river flood plain and more is required. In 2015, ICOMOS conducted a Technical Review of the documentation provided by the Albanian authorities on the landscape development design proposal for Osumi Island. The mission team understand that the proposal under consideration in 2015 is not being further developed.

However, with limited information, the principle of bringing formalised activity into this area is questioned. The river is an environmental and ecological asset that could be promoted as part of the tourism offer. It should be done in such a way as to support and enhance its natural value, not detract from it. Informal recreation, e.g. rafting, fishing, walking, already takes place and this kind of activity should be supported and expanded.

The mission team concluded that the new road and car park are unlikely to impact on the OUV of the site but there is a need to monitor the traffic impacts. The flood prevention scheme is welcome but there is a need to understand its impact on the natural course of the river. This work could support the diversity of the tourism offer by upgrading the road and path infrastructure in Gorica. However, the mission team is of the opinion that investments in new road infrastructure, walkways and public spaces should not be progressed at the cost of ignoring the problem of abandoned buildings in Gorica, which is the least developed area of the World Heritage property. Through the upgrading of the road and other components of this project, improvement of the conditions of monument I and II buildings should be ensured. The mission team is of the opinion that the Osumi river is a valuable natural asset and it should be promoted as such. In this respect, formalised development should not be encouraged on the river bed and its immediate environs.

Recommendations:

1. The Gorica road, car park and flood prevention project should proceed subject to:

- a) Monitoring of abandoned buildings in Gorica should be carried out to assess the impact of the infrastructure scheme on their uptake and re-use.
 - b) Provision of information on the impact of the Osumi River flood prevention scheme.
2. It is noted that the Osumi River has a contribution to make to the tourism offer of Berat. Care should be taken to ensure the type of activity supports its natural appearance in the valley and the values of the river and its environment, e.g., water sports, walking, cycling. This should be reflected in the development of an appropriate tourism management strategy and form part of the Integrated Management Plan for the entire property.

ISSUE 4: GJIROKASTRA BY-PASS ROAD PROJECT

Background

The project of the Gjirokastra by-pass road is financed by the Government of Albania and implemented by the Albanian Development Fund. It does not form part of the PIUTD.

In its 2015 State of Conservation report, the State Party reported on a project for a by-pass road in the historic centre of Gjirokastra and the conversion of the bazaar into a pedestrian zone. The World Heritage Centre and the Advisory Bodies considered that the bypass road project did not seem to have been based on a thorough review of the infrastructural situation of the historic centre in Gjirokastra. Consequently, the World Heritage Committee (Decision **39 COM 7B.75**) requested the State Party to prepare a thorough study of the infrastructural situation of the historic centre of Gjirokastra prior to any decision is taken concerning the by-pass road and the conversion of the bazaar into a pedestrian area, and provide details of the project and the results of the study to the World Heritage Centre, for review by the Advisory Bodies.

In November 2015, the State Party submitted information concerning the international urban design competition including its Terms of Reference to design the bypass road for the Gjirokastra, to which ICOMOS provided comments. In January 2016, the State Party informed the World Heritage Centre of the results of the international urban design competition and the winning proposal (Architectural Bureau Atelier 4). ICOMOS conducted a Technical Review (June 2016) and agreed “with the suggestions of the Jury concerning the continuation of this project. The further detailed elaboration of the project is vital however, and of crucial importance in order to achieve an appropriate final solution as to how the realisation of the winning concept is carried out.”

In August 2016, the State Party submitted a technical report prepared by the Architectural Bureau Atelier 4 which provided information about the three alternatives for the road studied as well as a detailed analysis, with Alternative Nr 2 proposed by the authors (Atelier 4) as the best option for realisation. In September 2016, the State Party submitted to the World Heritage Centre the decisions of the National Council of Restoration to approve the design of the Bazaar restoration and the design of the bypass road as well as the removal of two houses from the list of cultural monuments of category II (House of Koço Spiri and House of Llaqi Papazisi). The State Party agreed that the ICOMOS recommendations would be reflected in the final implementation project, following the approval phase of the National Council of Restoration.

The ICOMOS Technical Review of November 2016 concluded that “some issues were identified which should be further studied and consolidated, namely: the reassessment of the planned “carrying capacity” of the bypass road, and whether it was necessary at the proposed scale”. Another issue identified was the possible visual impact of the appearance of the supporting structure of the road. ICOMOS recommended that the project consider how best to minimise the potential adverse effects of the bypass road project.

At its 41st session in 2017, the Committee requested the State Party to take into consideration the review and recommendations provided by the Advisory Bodies concerning the infrastructural projects, and in particular, with regard to the Gjirokastra by-pass road project, namely to reassess the carrying capacity and scale in order to minimise potential adverse impacts of this development project on the OUV of property (Decision **41 COM 7B.40**).

In April 2017 the State Party informed the World Heritage Centre that the bypass project was temporarily suspended until further evaluation of the needs and other possible options to regulate traffic within the property. The State Party further noted that only the preliminary design had been approved by the National Council of Restoration, and not the final project. At its 43rd session, the Committee noted that the Gjirokastra bypass project has been suspended and also requested the State Party to keep the World Heritage Centre informed on such projects (Decision **43 COM 7B.79**).

The State Party reaffirmed the suspension of the bypass road project in Gjirokastra to the World Heritage Centre in March 2019. It also indicated that a further study was being prepared to seek options for transforming the area of the Bazaar into a pedestrian area including an underground car park and new public space at Cerciz Topulli Square. This study would be carried out in the framework of the Project for Integrated Urban and Tourism Development (PIUTD) and would be carried out in conformity with the request contained in the Decision **41 COM 7B.40** of the World Heritage Committee. The State Party indicated that the assessment would take into account all related aspects, such as the transport network, the state of infrastructure, parking, etc., in order to evaluate options for transforming the historic centre into a pedestrian area and to identify the need for infrastructure development and additional transport services.

In January 2021, the State Party submitted to the World Heritage Centre a request for review by the Advisory Bodies of a redeveloped proposal for the Gjirokastra by-pass project, already approved by the National Council on Tangible Cultural Heritage. The incoming information included documentation and some technical drawings of the proposed by-pass.

The World Heritage Centre requested further information on the project in particular its connection to other proposed development projects under the framework of the PIUTD. In the meantime, third party information received by the World Heritage Centre throughout 2021 included documentation of the project suggesting it was already under construction. The transmitted design implied the project would have a potential negative impact on the OUV of the property.

In May 2021, the State Party informed the World Heritage Centre that all three projects - the underground parking, the Cerciz Topulli square and the by-pass - are united by the common vision to improve mobility across the entire property Gjirokastra, in order to benefit the local communities and the visitors. The State Party also highlighted the key aim of these projects which is to remove traffic within the core part of the historic centre open to visitors.

During the 44th session in 2021, the World Heritage Committee requested “the State Party to halt construction of the by-pass until such a time as a Reactive Monitoring mission has been able to visit the property to assess if the project has caused or will cause any damage to its Outstanding Universal Value.” (Decision **44 COM 7B.151**).

Project description/physical context

Gjirokastra is built on the eastern slope of the mountain “Mali i gjerë”. The town was built around the castle on the ridges of the hills separated by valleys with streams flowing perpendicular to the Drino Valley. The land configuration created an urban structure based on some ramifications developed alongside the main streets, which mostly follow the cliffs. The

urban fabric is branched into different “fingers” and „areas”, which start from the Castle area and the Old Bazar and slowly descend or are located on distant hills.

The town followed the topography of the terrain while maintaining its defensive character. Hills, steep slopes and valleys influence connections between the different parts of the city, creating a street / road pattern and making a strong impact on the perception of the urban space.

The Gjirokastra by-pass road, together with the Gjirokastra underground car park at Çerçiz Topulli square, are key elements of traffic improvements planned for the city through the development of a loop road system composed of existing and planned roads, and parking places. The Gjirokastra by-pass is financed by the Government of Albania and implemented by the Albanian Development Fund. The bypass road, in its current course, is a new proposal. The new route is located within the boundaries of the World Heritage property and runs up a valley to the southeast of the Gjirokastra castle following the course of the Nanxës stream. It stretches between the Nanxës Bridge and Great Dunavat Bridges and connects existing roads: Rruga Gjiri Zenebisi (and further road E853) to the northeast and Rruga Bule Naipi to the southwest (Maps can be consulted in Annex No VII).

The new road is directly linked to the road system of national importance/status. The European route E853 / SH4 national highway connects the country's second largest city of Durrës on the Adriatic Sea to Greece at the Kakavijë border crossing. In the Gjirokastra region it runs along the course of the Drino river and collects / distributes traffic from / to the roads running perpendicular to it, connecting towns located further up in the mountains. The new section, which is part of the city bypass / loop road, seems to be part of this system.

The Nanxës valley is steep and abrasive activity can be seen on the rock formations which are made up of flysch deposits of the Lower Oligocene. The relief of the slopes is wavy and fragmented due to the rock morphology, erosion, and landslide phenomena. In the winter rainy season localised flooding from overflowing streams takes place due to rain or infiltration (the mission team was shown houses with significant cracks up the walls as a result of land movement and was told this occurred especially after heavy rain).

The valley has a semi-natural appearance and is largely undeveloped. According to the information provided by the State Party there is the 100-year-old Nanxës Bridge and a concrete road bridge built next to it, the Zerzebil bridge, that connects the Manalat and Cfake neighbourhoods with the historic centre, as well as the bridge that connects the Dunavat and Manalat neighbourhoods with the historic centre. There are also two pedestrian bridges across the valley that connect the Dunavat Cfake neighbourhood with the Old Bazaar neighbourhood there. Other than some reinforcement and dam constructions. There are no structures visible in the valley. It has to be noted that parts of the valley are polluted by the discharge of litter and sewage water.

The castle towers over the valley constituting a key attribute of Gjirokastra. Unfortunately, no cultural landscape study, research or analyses of the area's historic development were made available to the mission team. The Nanxës valley and the settlements north and east of the castle (Cfake, Manalat and Dunavat neighbourhoods) remain as if 'outside of the city', also in the context of studies on the history of Gjirokastra available on-line under open access. The role of the valley in the morphology of the city needs to be clarified. Hence, the development of landscape studies could help to understand historical relationships and current conditions. It would also provide an appropriate context for assessing the impact of the newly constructed road on the value of the World Heritage property. Because of the valley's natural and cultural qualities, a landscape inventory would be essential for this purpose as well.

The road is a two-lane asphalt concrete surfaced road with accompanying pavements of a stone construction. According to the technical drawings provided, the road width will be 6 m

and it will have 3 m wide sidewalk and 2 m wide shoulder on both sides, resulting in a total road width of min. 16 m. Depending on the local topography and relative heights of the valley it will run on an embankment and in a trench, with various longitudinal gradients ranging from 6.9% to 15.5%. There will be a concrete water collector channel / canal with dimensions of approx. 5x5 m installed under the surface of the road. Other water collection and drainage system elements are also foreseen. The road construction will be accompanied by lighting columns and rest areas are also included in the design, two near the Nanxës Bridge, and one at the opposite end of the newly constructed road. The bypass road will cross an existing road adjacent to a historic bridge that is a category 1 monument. Details of the proposed intersection are not known to the mission team and should be made available.

Construction of the bypass road has commenced on this revised route and preparatory earthworks have been undertaken along approximately 50% of the route. The mission team were informed by the local authority of Gjirokastra and representatives of the contractor that **construction has been halted following the last Decision of the World Heritage Committee (Decision 44 COM 7B.151, July 2021) and only stabilisation work after heavy rainfall has been conducted since then.**

Discussion

The road will change the appearance and function of the Nanxës valley. The main change is from a natural valley to one containing a road and associated infrastructure. As the road goes along the stream course it changes the dominant direction of transportation from perpendicular to the valley to parallel along the valley.

The other issue is in relation to the castle and the impact of the new road on the existing road system. At the time of the mission further details were not known to the mission team, however a mobility study and assessment of project investments for the integrated urban upgrading in Gjirokastra under the PIUTD including a proposed mobility plan outlining several alternative options for the restriction of vehicular movements in the Historic Centre have been conducted (March 2022) and made available to the mission team in April 2022.

The mission team notes that the town authorities propose a series of investments aiming at the reduction and calming of traffic within the historic area of the town. In this context, it is very important to make sure that the bypass connects well into the existing system (enters to the existing road system and crossings), smooths the transport flow and does not result in the introduction of more traffic within the World Heritage property. The construction of the new road is designed to have an impact on the road connections and traffic circulation across and around the whole World Heritage property. The impact of the consequent changes to traffic circulation needs to be carefully assessed alongside the connection to the current road system. It is important that changes to the existing system are clearly quantified so the benefits of the by-pass can be articulated.

As roads are part of the urban layout of the city, the change made by the new road has to be assessed from this perspective. The mission team does not have enough information to clearly evaluate the historic and potential future dynamics. A cultural landscape study would help to understand the current situation and the impact of the introduced change.

The visual impact of the new road must be understood. This will depend upon the detailed nature of the physical infrastructure and its arrangements. One of the key characteristics of the city, as stated in the nomination dossier, is: "The organic relationship to the dynamic terrain of Gjirokastra makes it one of the remarkable and at the same time unique examples of natural organic coexistence with human creation." (Justification of inscription, p. 7 of the 2005 nomination dossier: La relation organique des constructions au terrain dynamique de Gjirokastra, le font un des exemples remarquables et en même temps unique de la

coexistence organique naturel avec la création humaine). This approach – organic coexistence - should be followed by any contemporary development.

Moreover, construction of a road usually brings other developments to the site and this may be the case here as well. For instance, the proposed rest areas, one of which appears to include a children's play area, are examples of it (their construction there is rather questionable).

The maintenance regime for the new road will have to manage the flow of water and debris from the slopes onto the road to ensure it remains in good condition (significant structures can be seen alongside roads in the region to prevent rocks and earth from falling onto the roads, and some are planned for the Gjirokastra by-pass road).

Nevertheless, if the land consolidation and new water management and sewage infrastructure is implemented, these associated benefits will deliver significant improvement to the lives and sustainability of the surrounding communities, especially of Dunavat and Cfaka which are located in the higher northern and western parts of Gjirokastra, outside and within boundaries of the World Heritage property. Outward migration, especially from the remoter parts of the property, is a key concern and improved connectivity with the centre of the town and with goods and services as well as employment opportunities, will have a beneficial impact in retaining the communities in their existing location. There will also be a potential positive impact on the environment and its condition as the current discharge of sewage may also impact the stability of the slopes, as well as being unsightly.

The mission team notes that no heritage impact assessment has been conducted prior to the start of the construction of the road to assess the full impact of its construction on the attributes that convey Outstanding Universal Value of the property. There has not been a heritage impact assessment conducted for the plan / strategy / vision of transport / traffic improvement either. The impact of the changes to traffic needs to be understood as well.

Bearing in mind the project implementation phase and the very fragile geology of the area and its impact on the stability of buildings, the castle included, consideration should be given to carrying out risk management factor analysis for the Gjirokastra component part of the World Heritage property.

The construction of the bypass in the current location seems to have considerable support from the local population. The mission team met with representatives of local government and institutions, NGOs and individual inhabitants. They all expressed their support for the construction of the bypass confirming that the proposal was consulted with them.

In conclusion:

- Given the information set out to the mission team and visit to the site it would appear that the new route is an improvement over the previously proposed route in terms of its functionality.
- The new road has an impact on the Outstanding Universal Value of the property, both negative and positive, current and potential.
- The lack of a HIA is a serious omission in the decision-making process. It lowers the possibility of mitigating the negative impact of the project on the OUV of the property.
- The impact of the road and its accompanying infrastructure on the OUV of the property still requires it to be properly assessed and mitigation measures need to be implemented where appropriate. The impact on the cultural landscape of the valley and the town should be studied and evaluated. Another aspect that should be carefully looked at is the impact of the new road on the traffic circulation within the World Heritage property and its setting.

Recommendations:

1. An independent Heritage Impact Assessment should be completed as a matter of urgency and before the construction of the bypass road reaches a point where no significant mitigation would be possible. It should aim to:
 - a) identify mitigation measures to minimise the impact of the physical road infrastructure, and implement them during the subsequent construction phase, where appropriate;
 - b) quantify the impact of the bypass on the viability of communities in the upper town;
 - c) verify the technical details of the final project and develop any necessary modifications to ensure the implementation of the identified mitigation measures.
2. The bypass road should be fully reflected in the mobility plan currently under development to ensure the impacts on the OUV are taken into account.
3. A landscape study of the Nanxës valley, including the historic evolution and its use over time as well as its relationship with the town morphology, should be conducted as part of the HIA or separately.
4. A maintenance/management plan for the road and associated infrastructure should be developed and implemented.

V. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The World Heritage property 'Historic Centres of Berat and Gjirokastra' is subject to several ongoing and planned large-scale development projects, financed by international and national donors. The national and local authorities see their heritage as the main asset to develop the region and a great deal of effort goes into preserving the urban fabric and cultural values of the property, with a strong focus on tourism. An enhanced dialogue and improved cooperation between all stakeholders will be essential in order to define the long-term vision for the serial property. In this respect, the development of an Integrated Management Plan for the entire property remains the most pressing challenge for the State Party although it is recognised that efforts have been made towards its realisation. It is important to ensure stakeholder ownership of the future Management Plan and the implementation of its actions at a local level, while respecting the specific characteristics and values of each component part of the property. Given the high number of development projects, the mission team is of the opinion that cultural landscape studies for both component parts of the property should be developed as a priority action under the future Integrated Management Plan. Moreover, after a five-year period of data collection through the monitoring indicators (developed in 2016) there should be sufficient information for analysis and evaluation of the adopted monitoring system and adopting any consequent refinements to that system. This exercise should consider the Historic Urban Landscape approach and be correlated with the development of the Integrated Management Plan.

The investments under the PIUTD comply with the World Bank policy requirements and the existing Albanian legislation. However, it is noted that the development projects are not subject to full heritage impact assessments prior to their implementation, as required under the provisions of the *Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention*. In this context, it is of utmost importance that for any development project that might impact OUV shall be conducted a full Heritage Impact Assessment before any decision is taken. The mission has been informed that the regulations for both historic centres are currently subject to revisions and in this respect, it is advisable to directly link Heritage Impact Assessment procedures with the regulations and make them a required prerequisite for development projects and directly linked into the provisions of the regulations of both Berat

and Gjirokastra. Moreover, the mission advises the State Party to conduct a study and assessment of the cumulative impacts on the entire property of the PIUTD and other development projects located within or in the setting of the property. The assessment against the OUV is of particular importance for the mobility plan and the Integrated Urban Upgrading of Gjirokastra currently under development. The results should contribute to the development and revision of the Management Plan for the entire property.

The mission team visited various construction sites in both historic centres, in particular the bypass road located in a valley adjacent to the castle in Gjirokastra. The new road appears to be an improvement over the previously proposed route (2015) in terms of its potential impact on the property. However, no Heritage Impact Assessment has been conducted prior to the construction of the road. The impact of the road and its accompanying infrastructure on the Outstanding Universal Value requires it to be properly assessed and mitigation measures need to be implemented where appropriate. In this context, the impact of the changes to traffic needs to be understood. A mobility assessment for Gjirokastra as well as a vision for the Integrated Urban Upgrading as part of the wider PIUTD investments for Gjirokastra has been conducted which refers to the future bypass road. The mission is of the opinion that it is essential that the bypass road is fully reflected in the mobility plan currently under development to ensure the impacts on the OUV are taken into account. The associated land stabilisation in the valley may bring significant benefits to the World Heritage property and to those communities currently suffering from landslips especially the area of Cfaka. However, more information is needed to understand the extent of stabilisation that can be achieved bearing in mind the geology/rock structure, weathering and human impact to date. It is recognised that the associated water and sewage management will bring further benefits to the communities on either side of the valley and its general appearance and hygiene. The route delivers significantly augmented car access to the town centre for the communities of Dunavat and Cfaka located higher up in the town, both within and outside the boundaries of the World Heritage property. This aims to support programmes designed to keep those communities viable: an ex-post assessment of the efficacy of this strategy with regard to the resident communities would be desirable.

The mission acknowledges that the state of conservation of the World Heritage property is systematically improving. There is visible progress in conservation and restoration works, both in public and private buildings as well as infrastructure and public spaces. However, the need to secure the future of many buildings through conservation and bringing back sustainable uses, remains high. Issues such as outward migration continue to have an impact on the property's current state and future development. Maintenance of the World Heritage property requires ongoing attention and commitment and considering the amount and pace of the work done, it would be advisable to introduce periodic assessments of the work and evaluation of its impact on the historic fabric and life of the property.

Training and capacity building is crucial for the sustainable future of the World Heritage property. The initiatives undertaken by the State Party, both at the state and municipalities levels should be continued and strengthened.

On completion of the mission, the State Party was asked to submit additional information and documentation (see Annex No IX).

Full list of recommendations:

Strategic recommendations:

Considerable progress has been made in improving the overall state of conservation of the entire property. Continued efforts by the State and local authorities to invest in the restoration and conservation of the historic buildings and infrastructure together with the improvement of the legal heritage protection system should be acknowledged. There are also significant investment activities which have an impact on the property's state of conservation as well as its future prospects. Considered approaches, guided by well thought through strategies and programmes, must be maintained to avoid over-development and loss of the character of Berat and Gjirokastra, component parts of the property.

1. The State Party should continue its efforts to improve the state of conservation of the property. An Integrated Management Plan, based on the values and attributes of the World Heritage property and an analysis of existing conditions and potential future developments should be developed as a matter of urgency. It should respond to key aspects of an effective management system that, according to the *Operational Guidelines* Paragraph 111, include:
 - a) a thorough shared understanding of the property, its universal, national and local values and its socio-ecological context by all stakeholders, including local communities and indigenous peoples;
 - b) a respect for diversity, equity, gender equality and human rights and the use of inclusive and participatory planning and stakeholder consultation processes;
 - c) a cycle of planning, implementation, monitoring, evaluation and feedback;
 - d) an assessment of the vulnerabilities of the property to social, economic, environmental and other pressures and changes, including disasters and climate change, as well as the monitoring of the impacts of trends and proposed interventions;
 - e) the development of mechanisms for the involvement and coordination of the various activities between different partners and stakeholders;
 - f) the allocation of necessary resources;
 - g) capacity building;
 - h) an accountable, transparent description of how the management system functions.
2. The State Party should make effective use of the processes and mechanisms offered by the World Heritage system and inform the World Heritage Committee in line with Paragraph 172 of the *Operational Guidelines* about investments considered within or in the proximity of the World Heritage property that may have an impact on the property's Outstanding Universal Value in advance.
3. In line with the *Operational Guidelines* Paragraph 118bis, Environmental Impact Assessments, Heritage Impact Assessments, and/or Strategic Environmental Assessments shall be carried out as a pre-requisite for development projects and activities that are planned for implementation within or around a World Heritage property before any decisions on their implementation are made. These assessments are important tools to assess current and potential, both negative and positive impacts of anticipated changes to the World Heritage property and its setting, and are a required element of an effective management system as stated in the *Operational Guidelines* Paragraph 110. In order to ensure the long-term safeguarding of the Outstanding Universal Value and the strengthening of heritage resilience, the State Party should make every effort to consistently apply Heritage Impact Assessment in order to assess the impacts, identify development alternatives and mitigation measures against degradation.

ISSUE 1: PROGRESS IN THE STATE OF CONSERVATION OF THE ENTIRE PROPERTY

1. Maintenance and conservation works

1. Clear rules and programmes for the prioritisation and implementation of publicly funded works should be developed and implemented, including a sustainable use or function for the building.
2. Legal mechanisms should be strengthened to allow for rescue and conservation interventions by a public body / funds where there is unclear legal status of historic buildings / structures in World Heritage properties.
3. Awareness raising to intensify pro-environmental action should be promoted, both on the infrastructural level and in terms of public activity (waste management and other issues).
4. An evaluation of the conservation works that have taken place in recent years should be carried out.
5. A programme for rescue and conservation works together with appropriate guidelines (as already recommended by the Reactive Monitoring mission in 2012) should be developed.
6. Careful documentation of conservation works during their implementation is basic good practice and is crucial to ensure future monitoring of efficacy and maintenance of conserved monuments.
7. Monitoring and investigation of causes of decay phenomena (e.g., fungal or biological growth on historic surfaces) is highly advisable to undertake measures to slow down degradation.
8. Use of inappropriate materials in conservation works should be avoided.

2. People resources and conservation skills

1. Training and awareness raising programmes to keep traditional knowledge and skills alive should be developed to ensure knowledge transfer to younger generations including by, for example, establishing permanent programmes at schools/universities and through non-formal education.
2. Resources and capacities of the Regional Centre for Conservation and Restoration of South East Europe should be enhanced and a close cooperation with UNESCO and the Advisory Bodies to the World Heritage Committee should be maintained.
3. Higher-education facilities in Berat and Gjirokastra can be beneficial for fostering the long term sustainable living conditions, and the programmes and activities at the University of Gjirokastra, including those for conservation and restoration should be enhanced, and partnerships for cooperation and exchange studies should be encouraged.

ISSUE 2: MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

1. Efficacy of development controls and monitoring indicators

1. Cultural landscape studies for both component parts of the property should be developed as a priority action under the future Integrated Management Plan.
2. The link between current public expenditure (on PIUTD projects and similar) and subsequent private investment should be carefully analysed to ensure that public investment is supporting the wider heritage objectives of the property.
3. An analysis of the ongoing monitoring of the condition of the World Heritage property, preferably using the World Heritage Resource Manual *ENHANCING OUR HERITAGE TOOLKIT 2.0, Assessing management effectiveness of World Heritage properties and other heritage places*, 2022, should be conducted.

4. Based on the outcomes of the above-recommended analysis, the current monitoring system should be reviewed and enhanced, if required (including principles for gathering, processing and use of monitoring data for the management of the property).

2. Development of an Integrated Management Plan (IMP) for the entire property

1. The implementation of the International Assistance-funded project should proceed. According to the Work Plan, the Albanian National Institute for Cultural Heritage should develop the Working package 2 on the Integrated analysis of the World Heritage property and should provide it to UNESCO and the Advisory Bodies, in particular:
 - Stakeholder consultation - Data/Information gathering
 - Assessment of Values
 - SWOT
 - Management issues
 - Condition Assessment of heritage values
 - Occupancy and ongoing uses
2. The existing Committee for Coordination for Management Plans for the Historic Centre of Berat and Gjirokastra should be enhanced and should adopt strict operational processes to ensure strategic planning of overall management issues and the involvement of all relevant stakeholders at international, national, regional and local level.
3. A long-term comprehensive development strategy for the property and its immediate setting and surrounding areas that aims to stimulate a broad resilient economic basis for the future of the property (Decision **44 COM 7B.151**, 2021) which includes tourism management should be developed taking into account the natural and cultural (including intangible) heritage values of the area and which should inform the Integrated Management Plan. This strategy should be diversified to consider opportunities for local communities within the property and its wider setting, by including the support of ecotourism, development of bioproducts, cultural routes, hiking tours, and other sustainable outdoor activities.
4. The Integrated Management Plan should be given legal status which mandates all relevant institutions to comply with the Plan.

3. Inter-relation of PIUTD, IMP and other legislative provisions such as Law 27/2018 “On Cultural Heritage and Museums”

1. Heritage Impact Assessments should be a required prerequisite for development projects and directly linked into the provisions of the regulations of both Berat and Gjirokastra, with follow up of assessment conclusions should be ensured by the national legislations.
2. Heritage Impact Assessments, in line with the provisions of the *Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention*, should also be conducted for projects funded by the World Bank and/or other international financing institutions, either within the scope of the national legislative framework or as part of the Environment and Social Framework of the financing institutions.
3. Clarification should be provided to the UNESCO World Heritage Centre under which legislative provisions and related procedures the construction of the Gjirokastra bypass road is undertaken.
4. The State Party should continue their efforts to explore possibilities for intervening in critical cases where historic buildings located within the World Heritage property are under threat.

ISSUE 3: MAJOR CONSTRUCTION PROJECTS THAT FORM PART OF THE PROJECT FOR INTEGRATED URBAN and Tourism DEVELOPMENT (PIUTD)

1. Heritage Impact Assessments should be carried out for proposed projects. In the case of projects already underway an impact assessment should also be conducted, and mitigation measures developed for impacts that have taken place or are unavoidable.
2. A heritage impact assessment of the cumulative impacts of the PIUTD and other development projects on the OUV of the property and its setting should be conducted. In particular, the mobility plan and the Integrated Urban Upgrading of Gjirokastra currently under development should undergo a heritage impact assessment against the OUV of the property.
3. The UNESCO World Heritage Centre should engage in discussions with the World Bank and other international agencies financing development projects to include Heritage Impact Assessments as a requirement for investments located within boundaries of World Heritage properties and their settings.

1. Gjirokastra car park project at Çerçiz Topulli square

1. The construction of the underground parking can proceed in principle as planned, conditional to:
 - a) The details on the arrangements of the square, and the traffic organisation in the immediate area need to be assessed against the OUV of the property as part of the heritage impact assessment of the mobility plan and Integrated Urban Upgrading of Gjirokastra.
 - b) An information point with an introduction to the property's name, status, boundaries and values/World Heritage interpretation point should be sensitively designed and installed at Çerçiz Topulli square. It should also provide information on the Berat component part.

2. Gjirokastra Castle

1. The Gjirokastra Castle Sustainable Management and Tourism Valorization Masterplan, developed under requirements of the World Bank regulations, should be reflected in the Integrated Management Plan for the World Heritage property.
2. Future interventions and activities should undergo full Heritage Impact Assessments before any decisions are taken that might impact OUV of the property and priority should be given to the safeguarding and maintenance of historic structures and archaeological remains.

3. Berat car park, streetscape beautification of Antipatrea St and 20th century sector of Berat

1. This project should proceed subject to:
 - a) A strategy/policy/approach on how to treat the 20th century layer of the city should be developed and the buffer zone regulations should be reviewed accordingly, all of which should be reflected in the Integrated Management Plan under development.
 - b) The 'beautification' programme should be consistent with other public realm projects. Works to the facades should use traditional materials and techniques, and should reinforce the existing qualities of the buildings.

4. Berat: restoration of Selamlik Square

1. This project should proceed subject to:
 - a) The future programming and use of this square should be included in a long-term tourism management strategy for the entire property and its immediate setting
 - b) Discussions should continue in order to ensure the future of historic monuments bordering the square, especially the Selamlik of the Vrioni family.
 - c) The proposals to demolish the Palace of Culture should be reconsidered and a strategy/policy/approach on how to treat the 20th century layer of the city should be developed. Alongside this, the buffer zone regulations should be reviewed, all of which should be reflected in the Integrated Management Plan under development.
2. An information point with an introduction to the property's name, status, boundaries and values/World Heritage interpretation point should be sensitively designed and installed at Selamlik Square. It should also provide information on the Gjirokastra component part.

5. Berat: Gorica Road and car park and flood prevention

1. The Gorica road, car park and flood prevention project should proceed subject to:
 - a) Monitoring of abandoned buildings in Gorica should be carried out to assess the impact of the infrastructure scheme on their uptake and re-use.
 - b) Provision of information on the impact of the Osumi River flood prevention scheme.
2. It is noted that the Osumi River has a contribution to make to the tourism offer of Berat. Care should be taken to ensure the type of activity supports its natural appearance in the valley and the values of the river and its environment, e.g., water sports, walking, cycling. This should be reflected in the development of an appropriate tourism management strategy and form part of the Integrated Management Plan for the entire property.

ISSUE 4: GJIROKASTRA BYPASS ROAD

1. An independent Heritage Impact Assessment should be completed as a matter of urgency and before the construction of the bypass road reaches a point where no significant mitigation would be possible. It should aim to:
 - a) identify mitigation measures to minimise the impact of the physical road infrastructure, and implement them during the subsequent construction phase, where appropriate;
 - b) quantify the impact of the bypass on the viability of communities in the upper town;
 - c) verify the technical details of the final project and develop any necessary modifications to ensure the implementation of the identified mitigation measures.
2. The bypass road should be fully reflected in the mobility plan currently under development to ensure the impacts on the OUV are taken into account.
3. A landscape study of the Nanxës valley, including the historic evolution and its use over time as well as its relationship with the town morphology, should be conducted as part of the HIA or separately.
4. A maintenance/management plan for the road and associated infrastructure should be developed and implemented.

VI. ANNEXES

Annex I: Terms of reference (ToR) of the mission

TERMS OF REFERENCE

Joint World Heritage Centre/ICOMOS/ICCROM Reactive Monitoring mission to 'Historic Centres of Berat and Gjirokastra' (Albania)

13-17 December 2021

The World Heritage Committee in **Decision 44 COM 7B.151** requested the State Party of Albania to invite a joint World Heritage Centre/ICOMOS/ICCROM Reactive Monitoring mission to the property 'Historic Centres of Berat and Gjirokastra' to assess the progress made in the state of conservation of the entire property, provide guidance on the development of the Integrated Management Plan (IMP), evaluate the efficacy of development controls and monitoring indicators, and assess the Gjirokastra by-pass road project.

Objectives of the Reactive Monitoring mission

The mission should review, assess and report on the following key issues:

1. Confirm the progress and/or suspension of the construction of the by-pass project in Gjirokastra, report on any implementation already undertaken and identify the range of impacts both potential and current, on the Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) of the property;
2. Report on all major construction projects in the property, its buffer zone and its setting, whether proposed, approved or contracted, the processes under which they are assessed and approved that form part of the Project for Integrated Urban Development (PIUTD) and consider the range of their individual and cumulative potential impacts on OUV;
3. Review and evaluate the progress made and engage in discussion to further provide assistance on the development of the Integrated Management Plan (IMP) for the property and its components in light of the approved International Assistance request (Nr 2932);
4. Consider how the PIUTD, IMP and other local legislative provisions such as Law 27/2018 "On Cultural Heritage and Museums" inter-relate and support each other;
5. Evaluate the efficacy of development controls and monitoring indicators;
6. Assess the progress made on the overall state of conservation of the entire property since the last report to the World Heritage Committee, in line with Paragraph 173 of the *Operational Guidelines*. Identify the possible impacts of current and future developments regardless of their location, which have the potential to individually and/or collectively impact the OUV, including integrity, protection and management, of the property.

Modalities

The State Party should ensure that the mission team can carry out a comprehensive inspection of all parts of the property and visit building sites of projects in the property, its buffer zones and settings that may have the potential to impact significantly on the property.

To enable the mission's preparation, the State Party should, as soon as possible, provide the World Heritage Centre, ICOMOS and ICCROM with any relevant updates, including documents, legislation, policies and bylaws (translated where necessary and including specific information on monitoring indicators and development controls), and updated maps that have not been transmitted to the World Heritage Centre in the past or have become available since the latest state of conservation report submitted by the State Party in December 2020. Additional information may be requested during the mission as required.

The mission team should hold working meetings and consultations with the Albanian authorities at national and local levels and all other relevant stakeholders, including the representatives of the local community and NGOs, facilitated by the State Party.

Based on the results of the above-mentioned assessment and discussions with the State Party representatives and stakeholders, and where relevant, other information and technical advice, the mission team should propose recommendations to the State Party and the World Heritage Committee to safeguard the OUV of the property and its supporting attributes, to improve the property's conservation and management, and to facilitate the development and finalization of the Integrated Management Plan. It should be noted that recommendations will be provided in the mission report and not during the mission.

The mission team should prepare a concise mission report in English or French on the findings and recommendations following the site visit, for review by the World Heritage Committee at its 45th session. The mission report should be made available to the State Party of Albania to comment on potential factual errors prior to its finalization.

Annex II: Decision of the World Heritage Committee requesting the mission to be carried out

Decision: 44 COM 7B.151

Historic Centres of Berat and Gjirokastra (Albania) (C 569bis)

The World Heritage Committee,

1. Having examined Document WHC/21/44.COM/7B,
2. Recalling Decision **43 COM 7B.79**, adopted at its 43rd session (Baku, 2019),
3. Notes the implementation of the Law “On Cultural Heritage and Museums” and subsequent development of by-laws to create various cultural heritage councils to strengthen and improve the conservation and management of the property, the restoration and maintenance work undertaken during 2019 and 2020 to the built fabric of the property, and the implementation of the monitoring indicators and establishment of a system for building approvals in the management of the property and its buffer zones;
4. Welcomes the submission of the various project proposals of the Project for Integrated Urban Development (PIUTD)-component, apart from the by-pass road for Gjirokastra and, noting that the PIUTD project has tourism development as central aim, requests the State Party to:
 1. take into account the comments and recommendations provided by ICOMOS to improve the projects presented in Annexes 3, 4, 5, 8 and 9 of its state of conservation report, for the further development of the project proposals and before their implementation,
 2. await further review by the Advisory Bodies of the projects presented in the Annexes 6 and 7 of its state of conservation report before taking any further decisions about their implementation;
 3. diversify its development plans, to stimulate a broad resilient economic basis for the future of the property;
5. Reiterates its request to the State Party that the Integrated Management Plan (IMP) be completed urgently taking on-board the previous requests of the Committee and be submitted to the World Heritage Centre for review by the Advisory Bodies before its implementation;
6. Also notes the information received from the State Party in line with Paragraph 172 of the *Operational Guidelines* about new plans for a by-pass road in Gjirokastra and further notes third party reports that this by-pass road is already under construction, and therefore urgently requests the State Party to halt construction of the by-pass until such a time as a Reactive Monitoring mission has been able to visit the property to assess if the project has caused or will cause any damage to its Outstanding Universal Value;
7. Further requests the State Party to invite a joint World Heritage Centre/ICOMOS/ICCROM Reactive Monitoring mission to the property to assess progress made in the state of conservation of the entire property, provide guidance on the development of the IMP, evaluate the efficacy of development controls and monitoring indicators, and assess the Gjirokastra by-pass project;
8. Encourages the State Party to continue providing the World Heritage Centre any development proposals before their official approval, in line with Paragraph 172 of the *Operational Guidelines*, for review by the Advisory Bodies;
9. Finally requests the State Party to submit to the World Heritage Centre, by **1 February 2022**, an updated report on the state of conservation of the property and the implementation of the above, for examination by the World Heritage Committee at its 45th session.

Annex III: Itinerary and programme of the mission as implemented

Joint WHC/ICOMOS/ICCROM Reactive Monitoring mission to the World Heritage property “*Historic Centres of Berat and Gjirokastra*”, Albania

12/13.12.2021 – 18.12.2021

Mission requested by: State Party of Albania, following Decision 44 COM 7B.151 of the World Heritage Committee

Aim of the mission: Assess the progress made in the state of conservation of the entire property, provide guidance on the development of the Integrated Management Plan (IMP), evaluate the efficacy of development controls and monitoring indicators, and assess the Gjirokastra by-pass road project.

The mission shall also review the PIUTD project elements located in the property components, their buffer zones and their settings.

The Mission’s experts will be continuously accompanied by two representatives of the Ministry of Culture and the National Institute of Cultural Heritage. Names and details as follow:

Ms. Sonila Kora, Head of Unit, MoC

Ms. Marsela Plyku Demaj, Head of Department, NICH

MISSION PROGRAMME

Day 1&2 (12-13 December 2021)

Arrival in Tirana as per scheduled flight option

Hotel accommodation.

Receipt of documents to be consulted.

Day 3 (14 December 2021)

9:30 Meeting with representatives of the Ministry of Culture and National Institute of Cultural Heritage:

Mrs. Meri Kumbe, Deputy Minister, MoC

Mrs. Kozeta Angjeliu, Director, MoC

Mrs. Rudina Zoto, Director General, NICH, National Focal Point for UNESCO/World Heritage Convention

Venue: Ministry of Culture

Presentation of national legislation and management system with regard to the property, including updates on progress made in the development of the Integrated Management Plan (45 min)

Overview of all projects proposed, approved or contracted under the Project on Integrated Urban and Tourism Development (PIUTD) in Berat and Gjirokastra, including the visualization of their locations on maps, and follow up on the recommendations provided in the ICOMOS Technical Review of April 2021 (45 min)

12:00 Meeting with representatives of the Ministry for Europe and Foreign affairs, National Commission for UNESCO -Mr. Sokol Gjoka, MEFA, Secretary General, National Commission for UNESCO

Venue: Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs

13:00 Lunch

14:00 Departure for Berat

17:30 Meeting with Mr. Ervin Demo, Mayor of Berat

Venue: Municipality of Berat

20:00 Dinner

Day 4 (15 December 2021)

9.00 - 13.30 Visit in the historic centre of Berat and buffer zone

Introduction by Mr. Lucjano Bojaxhi, Deputy Mayor

Mr. Eugen Kallfani, Director, Regional Directorate of Cultural Heritage, Berat

14:00 Lunch break

15:30 – 18:00 Meetings with regional institutions, local stakeholders and representatives of civil society and NGO-s

Venue: Municipality of Berat

20:00 Dinner

Day 5 (16 December 2021)

08:00 Departure for Gjirokastra

11:00 Meeting with Mr. Flamur Golemi, Mayor of Gjirokastra.

Venue: Municipality of Gjirokastra

12:30 Hotel Accommodation

13:00 Lunch break

14.00 Visit in the historic centre of Gjirokastra and especially situation of works in Cerciz Topulli Square and By-Pass.

Introduction by Ms. Jorida Muho, Deputy Mayor

Ms. Pezana Rexha, Director, Regional Directorate of Cultural Heritage, Gjirokastra

18.00 Meetings with regional institutions and local stakeholders

Venue: Municipality of Gjirokastra

20.30 Dinner

Day 6 (17 December 2021)

9.00 Meeting with representatives of civil society and NGO-s

10.00 Visits in the historic centre of Gjirokastra

(including some time for PCR or antigen testing in Gjirokastra or Tirana)

Early afternoon Departure for Tirana

End of the Mission

18:30 Hotel Accommodation

Day 7 (18 December 2021)

Transfer to Tirana International Airport.

Annex IV: Composition of mission team

Ms Stefanie Grüssinger, UNESCO World Heritage Centre

Mr William Garrett, ICOMOS

Ms Katarzyna Piotrowska, PhD, ICCROM

Annex V: Statement of Outstanding Universal Value of the property

Brief synthesis

Berat and Gjirokastra are inscribed as rare examples of an architectural character typical of the Ottoman period. Located in central Albania, Berat bears witness to the coexistence of various religious and cultural communities down the centuries. It features a castle, locally known as the Kala, most of which was built in the 13th century, although its origins date back to the 4th century BC. The citadel area numbers many Byzantine churches, mainly from the 13th century, as well as several mosques built under the Ottoman era which began in 1417. Gjirokastra, in the Drinos river valley in southern Albania, features a series of outstanding two-story houses which were developed in the 17th century. The town also retains a bazaar, an 18th-century mosque and two churches of the same period.

Outstanding Universal Value

These two fortified historic centres are remarkably well preserved, and this is particularly true of their vernacular buildings. They have been continuously inhabited from ancient times down to the present day. Situated in the Balkans, in Southern Albania, and close to each other, they bear witness to the wealth and diversity of the urban and architectural heritage of this region.

Berat and Gjirokastra bear witness to a way of life which has been influenced over a long period by the traditions of Islam during the Ottoman period, while at the same time incorporating more ancient influences. This way of life has respected Orthodox Christian traditions which have thus been able to continue their spiritual and cultural development, particularly at Berat.

Gjirokastra was built by major landowners. Around the ancient 13th century citadel, the town has houses with turrets (the Turkish *kule*) which are characteristic of the Balkans region. Gjirokastra contains several remarkable examples of houses of this type, which date from the 17th century, but also more elaborate examples dating from the early 19th century.

Berat bears witness to a town which was fortified but open, and was over a long period inhabited by craftsmen and merchants. Its urban centre reflects a vernacular housing tradition of the Balkans, examples of which date mainly from the late 18th and the 19th centuries. This tradition has been adapted to suit the town's life styles, with tiered houses on the slopes, which are predominantly horizontal in layout, and make abundant use of the entering daylight.

Criterion (iii): Berat and Gjirokastra bear outstanding testimony to the diversity of urban societies in the Balkans, and to longstanding ways of life which have today almost vanished. The town planning and housing of Gjirokastra are those of a citadel town built by notable landowners whose interests were directly linked to those of the central power. Berat bears the imprint of a more independent life style, linked to its handicraft and merchant functions.

Criterion (iv): Together, the two towns of Gjirokastra and Berat bear outstanding testimony to various types of monument and vernacular urban housing during the Classical Ottoman period, in continuity with the various Medieval cultures which preceded it, and in a state of peaceful coexistence with a large Christian minority, particularly at Berat.

The overall integrity of the two towns is satisfactory, although this was adversely affected by illegal constructions in the late 1990s. Authenticity is also satisfactory, but preservation management must be stepped up and carefully enforced, in accordance with the highest international standards.

The management plan measures and the recently established coordination authority responsible for implementing the plan should encourage an active policy of preservation and conservation of the property's Outstanding Universal Value, particularly as regards urban construction management and visitor facilities.

Annex VI: Monitoring Indicators

Historic Centre of Berat

Attributes:

1. Examples of an architectural character typical of the Ottoman period / Ottoman architecture - tiered houses on the slopes, which are predominantly horizontal in layout, and make abundant use of the entering daylight - witness to the wealth and diversity of the urban and architectural heritage

Indicators and frequency of control / monitoring

	Indicator	Frequency
BI.1.1	Coverage with infrastructure facilities - percentage of coverage with hydrants in the historic centre	yearly
BI.1.2	Statistical data on / changes in the ownership	yearly
BI.1.3	Number of illegal constructions	6 months
BI.1.4	Number of abandoned houses	yearly
BI.1.5	Number of buildings receiving continual maintenance	yearly
BI.1.6	Number of owners/users receiving public funding for restoration and / or for maintenance	yearly
BI.1.7	Statistical data on demographic changes	every two years
BI.1.8	Statistical data on tourism (visitor numbers, seasonality – day visitors, organised buses, individual; ¹ visitors spending one or more night on site, etc.)	yearly
BI.1.9	Statistical data on traffic (number of locally owned vehicles, number of visitors' vehicles, number of parking places)	yearly
BI.1.10	Statistical data on natural catastrophes (fire, flood, earthquake, rock fall) – visualised on a map of the WH property	yearly

¹ To identify the right indicators concerning tourism; a more in-depth and detailed study is needed.

2. Witness to the coexistence of various religious and cultural communities down the centuries

	Indicator	Frequency
Bl.2.1	Number of reported (inter-religion) incidents	yearly
Bl.2.2	Number of common (shared) religious/cultural programs	yearly
Bl.2.3	Number of buildings receiving continual maintenance	yearly
Bl.2.4	Number of abandoned religious properties	yearly
Bl.1.8	Statistical data on tourism (visitors number, seasonality)	yearly

3. Fortified historic centre - features a castle, locally known as the Kala

	Indicator	Frequency
Bl.3.1	Number of events in the castle area	yearly
Bl.1.2	Statistical data on / changes in the ownership	yearly
Bl.1.3	Number of illegal constructions	6 months
Bl.1.4	Number of abandoned houses	yearly
Bl.1.5	Number of buildings receiving continual maintenance	yearly
Bl.1.6	Number of owners/users receiving public funding for restoration and / or for maintenance	yearly
Bl.1.7	Statistical data on demographic changes	every two years

BI.1.8	Statistical data on tourism (visitors number, seasonality)	yearly
BI.1.9	Statistical data on traffic (number of locally owned vehicles, number of visitors' vehicles, number of parking places)	yearly
BI.1.10	Statistical data on natural catastrophes (fire, flood, earthquake, rock fall) – visualised on a map of the WH property	yearly

Historic Centre of Gjirokastra

Attributes:

1. Living historic city with monuments: a bazaar, an 18th-century mosque and two churches from the same period

	Indicator	Frequency
GI.1.1	Coverage with infrastructure facilities	yearly
GI.1.2	Statistical data on / changes in the ownership	yearly
GI.1.3	Number of illegal constructions	6 months
GI.1.4	Number of abandoned houses	yearly
GI.1.5	Number of buildings receiving continual maintenance	yearly
GI.1.6	Number of owners/users receiving public funding for restoration and / or for maintenance	yearly
GI.1.7	Statistical data on demographic changes	every two years
GI.1.8	Statistical data on tourism (visitors number, seasonality)	yearly
GI.1.9	Statistical data on traffic (number of locally owned vehicles, number of visitors' vehicles, number of parking places)	yearly

Gl.1.10	Statistical data on craftsman (number, qualification, training etc.)	yearly
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2. Building types adjusted to terrain - in the Drinos river valley features a series of outstanding two-story houses from the 17th century. Examples of an architectural character typical of the Ottoman period

	Indicator	Frequency
Gl.1.1	Coverage with infrastructure facilities	yearly
Gl.1.2	Statistical data on / changes in the ownership	yearly
Gl.1.3	Number of illegal constructions	6 months
Gl.1.4	Number of abandoned houses	yearly
Gl.1.5	Number of buildings receiving continual maintenance	yearly
Gl.1.6	Number of owners/users receiving public funding for restoration and / or for maintenance	yearly
Gl.1.7	Statistical data on demographic changes	every two years
Gl.1.8	Statistical data on tourism (visitors number, seasonality)	yearly
Gl.1.9	Statistical data on traffic (number of locally owned vehicles, number of visitors' vehicles, number of parking places)	yearly
Gl.1.10	Statistical data on craftsman (number, qualification, training etc.)	yearly

3. Traditional materials and techniques - bear witness to the wealth and diversity of the urban and architectural heritage

	Indicator	Frequency
Gl.3.1	Number of actions, events, programs (and their participants) organised to enhance understanding and appreciation of cultural heritage values and the	yearly

	importance of traditional craftsmanship connected to this heritage	
Gl. 3.2	Number of recognised / awarded craftsman and costumers	yearly
Gl.1.2	Statistical data on / changes in the ownership	6 months
Gl.1.3	Number of illegal constructions	6 months
Gl.1.4	Number of abandoned houses	yearly
Gl.1.5	Number of buildings receiving continual maintenance	yearly
Gl.1.6	Number of owners/users receiving public funding for restoration and / or for maintenance	yearly
Gl.1.7	Statistical data on demographic changes	every two years
Gl.1.10	Statistical data on craftsman (number, qualification, training etc.)	yearly

4. Citadel and landowner 'kule' - around the ancient 13th century citadel, the town has houses with turrets (the Turkish kule) built by major landowners

	Indicator	Frequency
Gl.2.4	Number of good practices – “kule” type buildings in good shape and having sustainable and sustaining function	yearly
Gl.1.1	Coverage with infrastructure facilities	yearly
Gl.1.2	Statistical data on / changes in the ownership	yearly
Gl.1.3	Number of illegal constructions	6 months
Gl.1.4	Number of abandoned houses	yearly
Gl.1.5	Number of buildings receiving continual maintenance	yearly

Gl.1.6	Number of owners/users receiving public funding for restoration and / or for maintenance	yearly
Gl.1.7	Statistical data on demographic changes	every two years
Gl.1.8	Statistical data on tourism (visitors number, seasonality)	yearly
Gl.1.9	Statistical data on traffic (number of locally owned vehicles, number of visitors' vehicles, number of parking places)	yearly

Performance indicators the overarching issues – Berat and Gjirokastra together

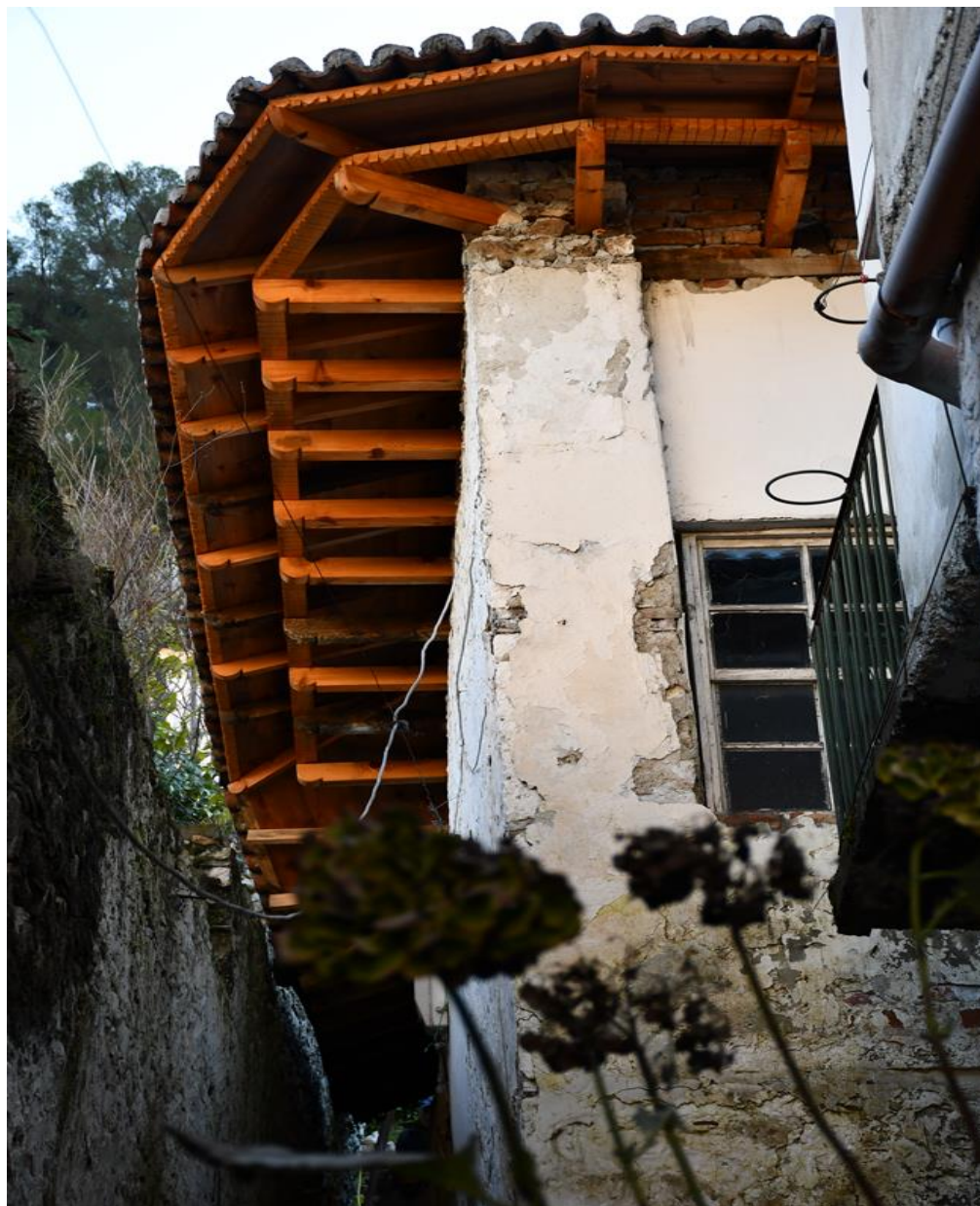
	Indicator	Frequency
O.1	Level of the preservation of the typological characteristics so far maintained in each property – <i>number in categories: complete /almost complete / satisfactory / partial/ fractional/ insufficient</i>	6 months
O.2	Level of the state of conservation of the buildings and open areas – <i>number in categories: very high risk/at risk/vulnerable/low risk / no risk</i>	6 months
O.3	Identification of the original and current uses of the buildings and spaces – <i>registration of changes in quantity (figures)</i>	6 months
O.4	Level /capacity of the public and private services and their compatibility with the building typology and the urban context – <i>number in categories: very good/good/satisfactory/ acceptable/ need to improve</i>	yearly

O.5	Level of accessibility and management of private, commercial and public traffic, also considering tourism and emergencies such as fire, as well as parking of private vehicles, trucks and busses – <i>number in categories: very good/good/satisfactory/ acceptable/ need to improve</i>	yearly
O.6	Level-adequacy of human resource / capacity – <i>number of skilled persons, number of persons participated in training and awareness raising events, activities</i>	yearly
O.7	Level of the organizations' capacity (surveyed by organisations to be monitored) – <i>number of personnel, qualification of personnel, cooperation activity – number of actions-events realised in cooperation with relevant bodies</i>	yearly
O.8	Level of adequacy and efficiency of the legal framework - <i>number of problematic "cases"</i> - <i>identification of typical challenges</i>	yearly
O.9	Level and adequacy of funding-financial sources – <i>statistical data of used financial sources, percentage of public support etc. - evaluation in categories: very good/good/satisfactory/ acceptable/ need to improve</i>	yearly
O.10	Community participation rate	yearly

	<p>– number of community events, training and awareness raising programs, number of NGOs and their membership</p>	
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Annex VII: Photographs and other graphical material (including maps) required to illustrate issues

ISSUE 1: PROGRESS IN THE STATE OF CONSERVATION OF THE ENTIRE PROPERTY



Recent renovation of roof, Berat. © K.Piotrowska, 2021



Gjirokastra: abandoned houses. © S.Grüssinger, 2021



Berat: details of common fungal overgrowth visible on the façades. © K.Piotrowska, 2021



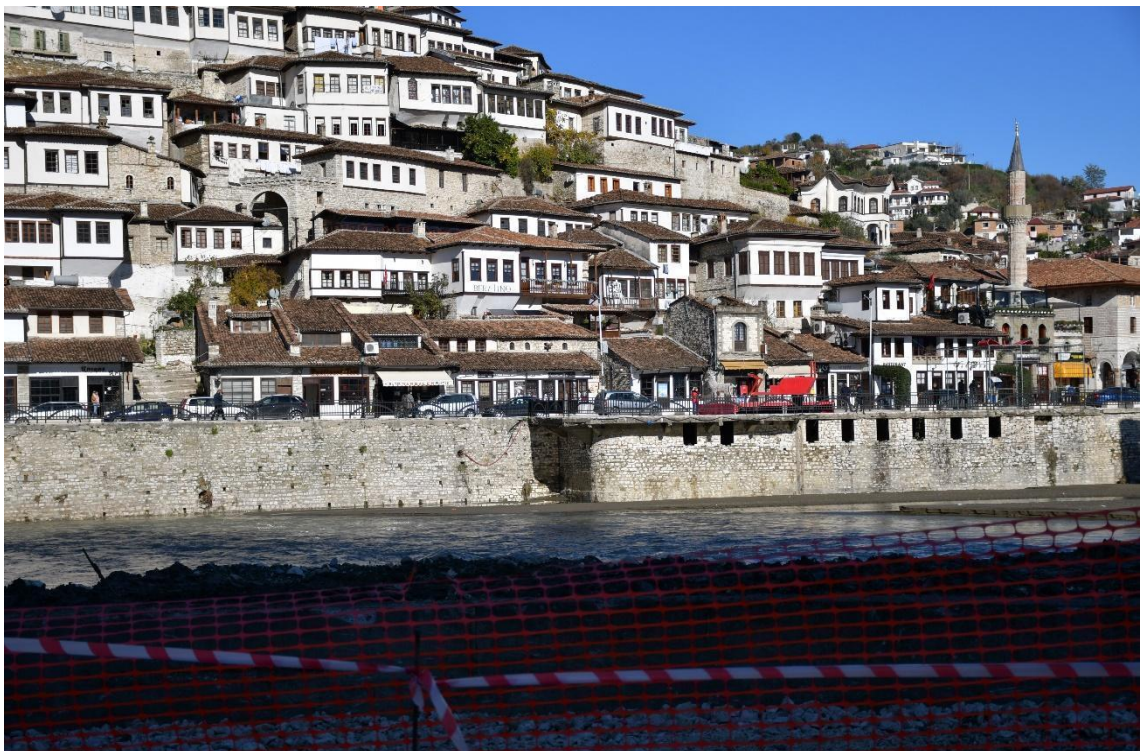
Berat: example of use concrete in renovation of historic buildings. © K.Piotrowska, 2021



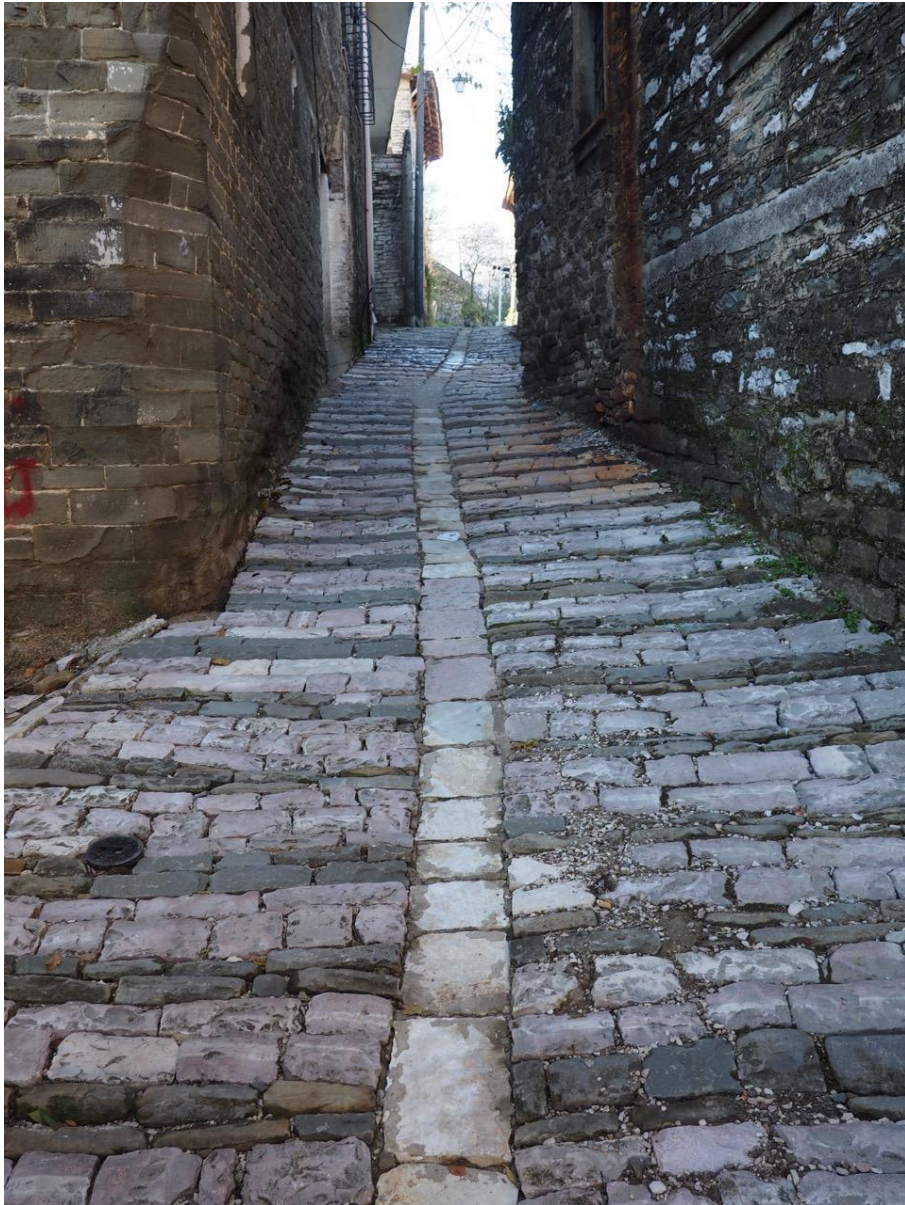
Gjirokastra: example of recent conservation and adaptation works. © K.Piotrowska, 2021



Gjirokastra: bazaar area, recently transformed into a pedestrian area including the renovation of buildings, cobblestone streets, and implementation of sewage and wastewater system. © W.Garrett, 2021

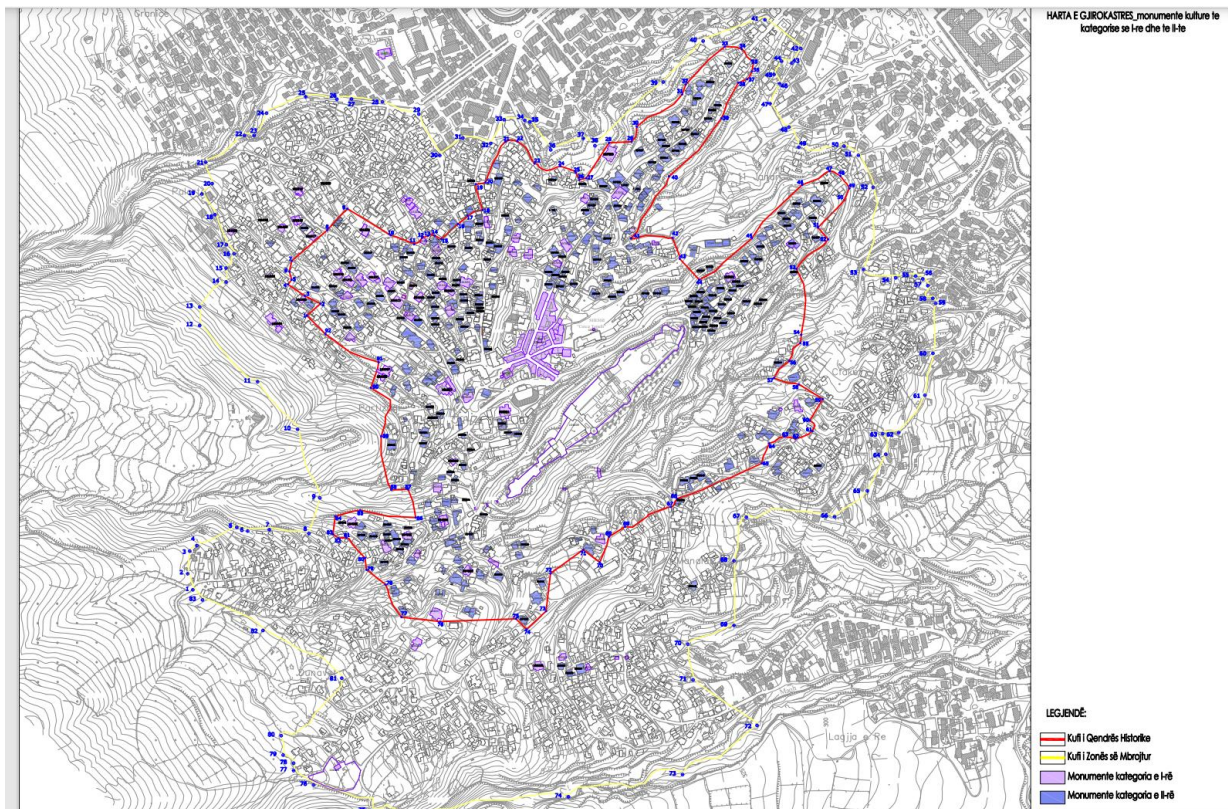


Berat: view from Gorica towards Mangalam, illustrating the recently conducted renovations of buildings and its façades. © W.Garrett, 2021

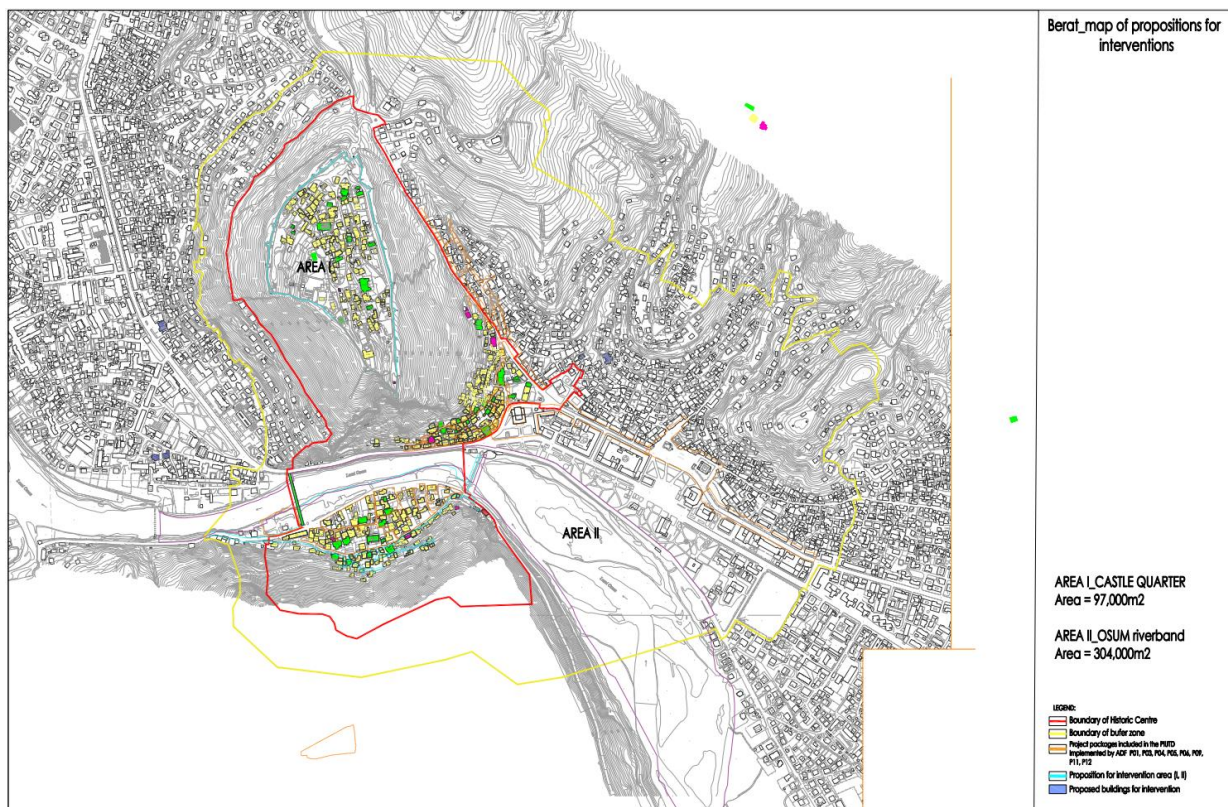


Gjirokastra: cobblestone restoration. © W.Garrett, 2021

ISSUE 2: MANAGEMENT SYSTEM



Map of Gjirokastra including the boundaries of the property and the illustration of the category I and II protected monuments.

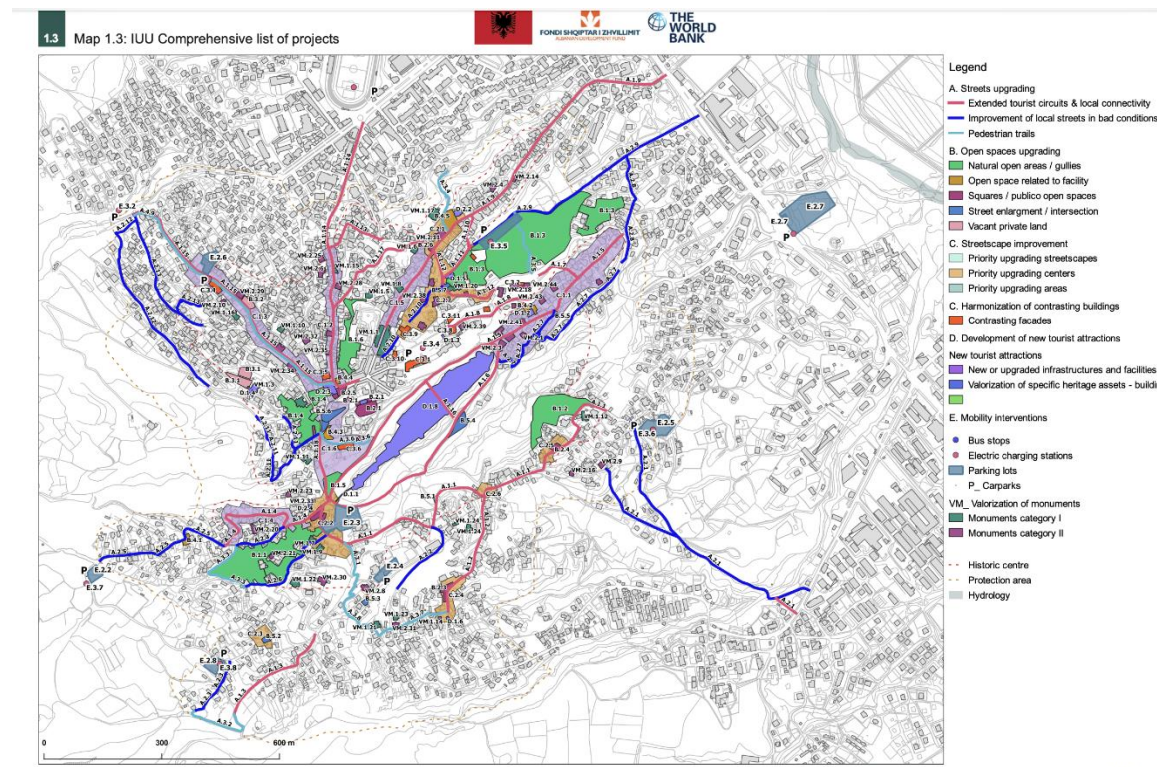
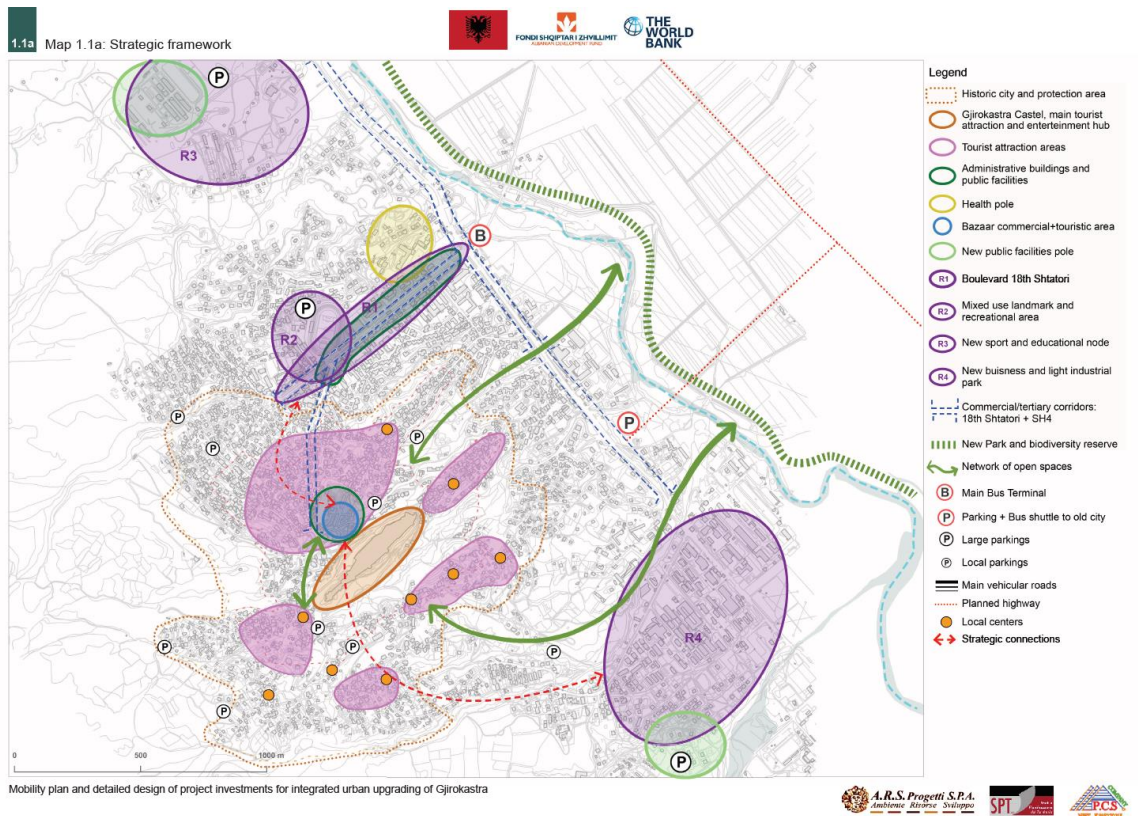


Map of Berat including the boundaries of the property and the illustration of the category I and II protected monuments.



Example of signage / interpretation of cultural and historical assets, as seen in Berat.
© S.Grüssinger, 2021

ISSUE 3: MAJOR CONSTRUCTION PROJECTS THAT FORM PART OF THE PROJECT FOR INTEGRATED URBAN AND TOURISM DEVELOPMENT (PIUTD)



Strategic framework, and Comprehensive list of projects, Mobility Plan and design of project investments for integrated urban upgrading of Gjirokastra, source: D2.3 / D2.4 IUU Vision, Design Concept and Overall Investment Program + Annex, March 2022

1. Gjirokastra car park project at Çerçiz Topulli square



© K.Piotrowska, 2021





Design details of the Gjirokastra car park project at Çerçiz Topulli square, source: “Technical Relation of the Project: Revitalisation of the Ceriz Topulli Square, Gjirokastra”, provided by the State Party in April 2022.

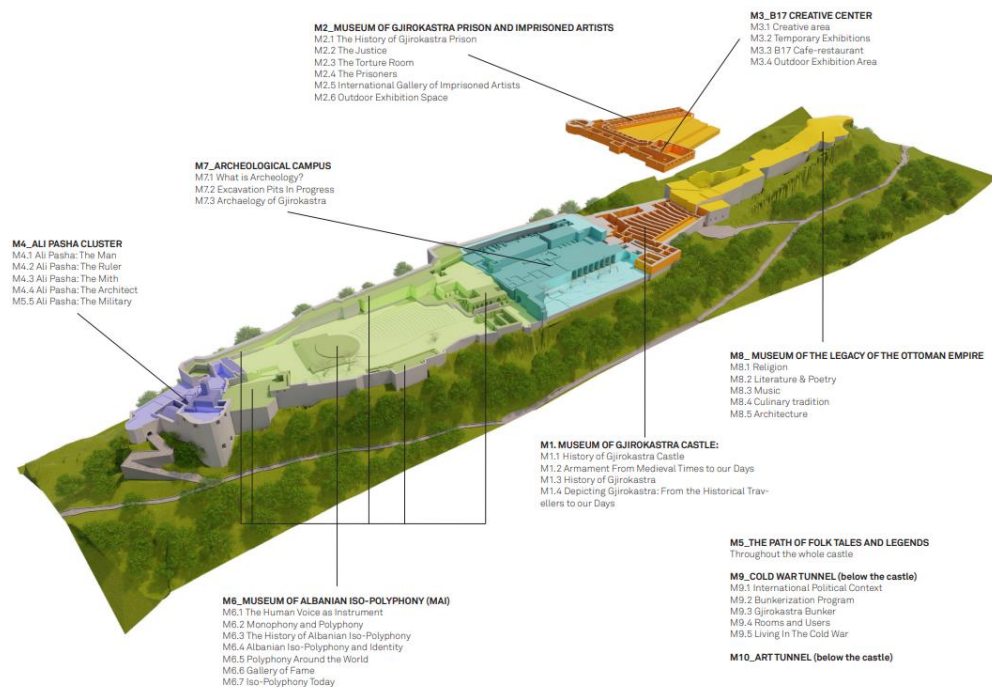
2. Measures to address urgent safety concerns and prevent loss of heritage structures in the Castle of Gjirokastra



© K.Piotrowska, 2021



Castle of Gjirokastra: example of “historic” and current reinforcement of the rock, monitoring (?) and stone fall preventive structures under installation. © K.Piotrowska, 2021



The Gjirokastra Castle system of museums

Gjirokastra Castle system of museums, Source: Gjirokastra Castle Sustainable Management and Tourism Valorization Masterplan, casanova+hernandez architects, MetroPOLIS I.t.d / GYK I.t.d, 2022

3. Berat car park, streetscape beautification of Antipatrea St and 20th century sector of Berat



Construction of car park in Berat, © K.Piotrowska, 2021



View towards Hotel Portika and Merko Hotel, located in the buffer zone in Berat, adjacent to the historic centre. © S.Grüssinger, 2021



View of towards Berat car park, located in the buffer zone and illustration of the 20th century layer of the city. © S.Grüssinger, 2021



Berat: newly created square at the entrance to the property flanked by comparable in scale - Palace of Culture and hotel Portika. © W.Garrett, 2021

4. Berat: restoration of Selamlik Square



Current situation of square, after demolition of school. © K.Piotrowska, 2021



Design plans, as illustrated in 'Detailed design, P06_Selamlleku square', page 1 (Annex 7 of State of Conservation report, 2021)

5. Berat: Gorica Road and car park and flood prevention



Berat: Area of proposed car park adjacent to road in Gorica and flood prevention.
© W.Garrett, 2021



Gorica quarter, including the road construction and car park as seen from Berat castle. © W.Garrett, 2021



© S.Grüssinger, 2021



Preliminary design plans, source: 'BERAT | PRELIMINARY DESIGNS FOR SELECTED INVESTMENT PROJECTS | P01 RESTORATION OF THE HISTORIC URBAN LANDSCAPE OF THE GORICA QUARTER | TECHNICAL REPORT', page 15 (Annex 3 of State of Conservation report, 2020)

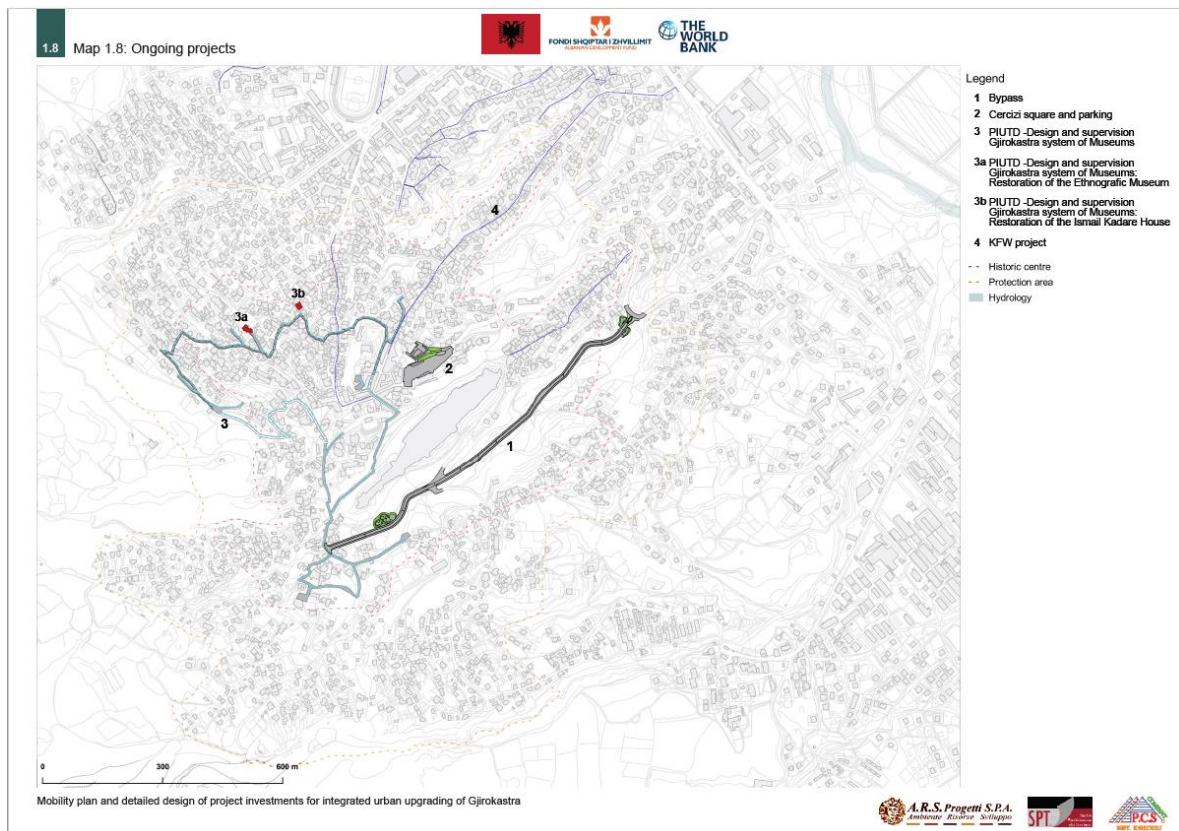


View from the castle towards Osumi River in Berat and location of potential future recreational area. © S.Grüssinger, 2021

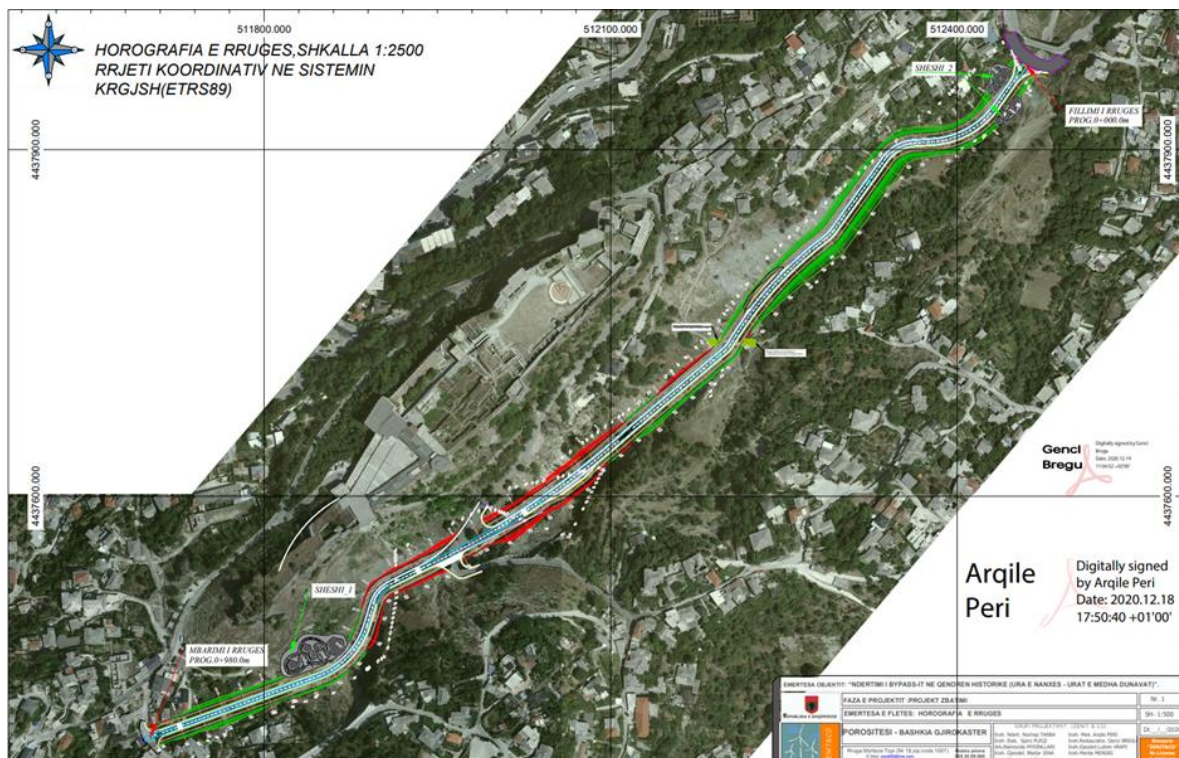


Fishing at Osumi River. © W.Garrett, 2021

ISSUE 4: GJIROKASTRA BYPASS ROAD



Ongoing projects including the bypass road project, Mobility Plan and design of project investments for integrated urban upgrading of Gjirokastra, source: D2.1 Urban and Mobility Assessment + Annex, March 2022



Location of the Gjirokastra bypass road, information package transmitted by the State Party of Albania to UNESCO on 20 January 2021



© K.Piotrowska, 2021



Littering and garbage. © K.Piotrowska, 2021



Bridge, category I monument. © K.Piotrowska, 2021



© S.Grüssinger, 2021

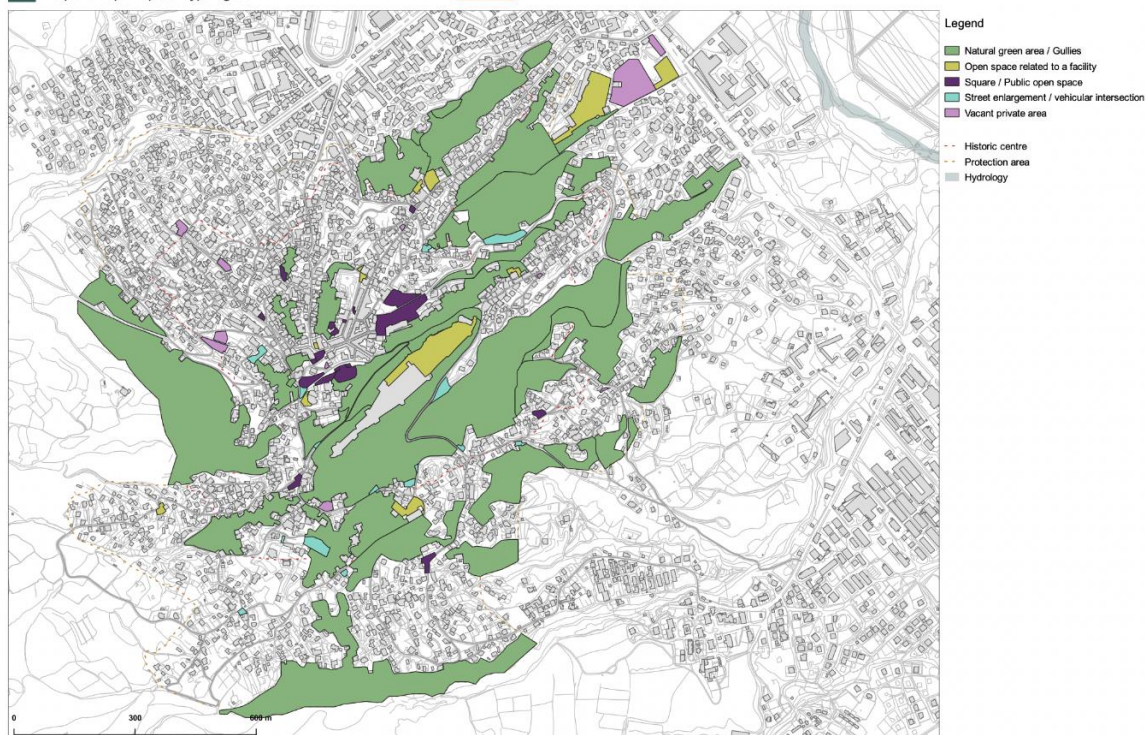


© W.Garrett, 2021



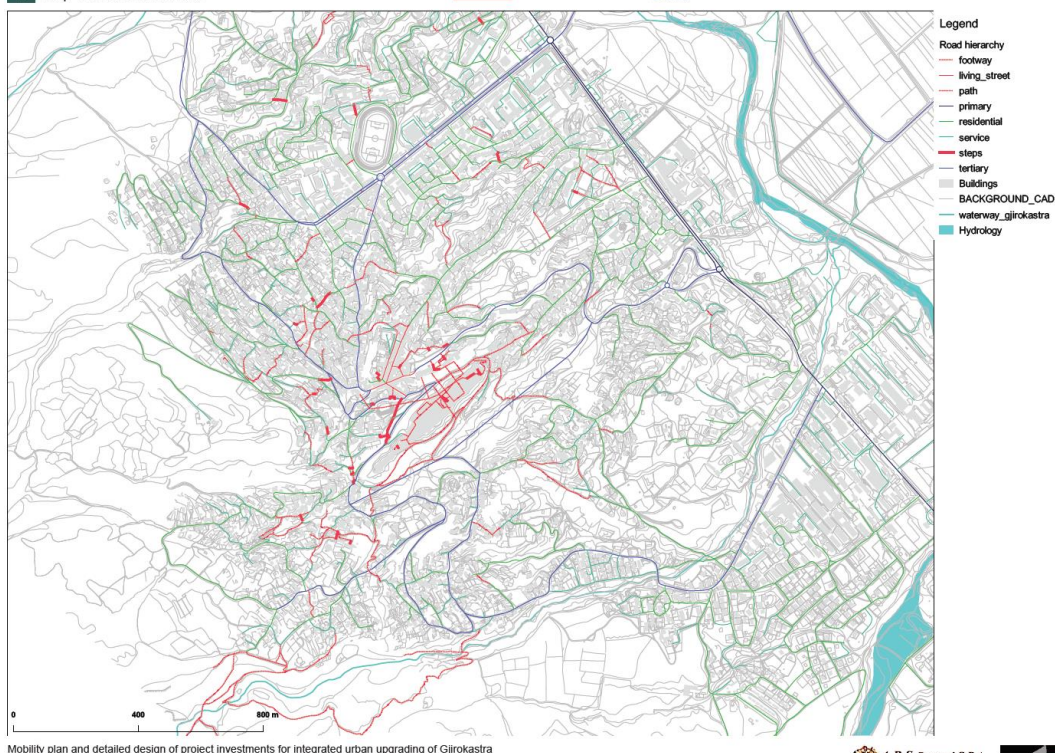
© K.Piotrowska, 2021

3.3 Map 3.3: Open space Typologies

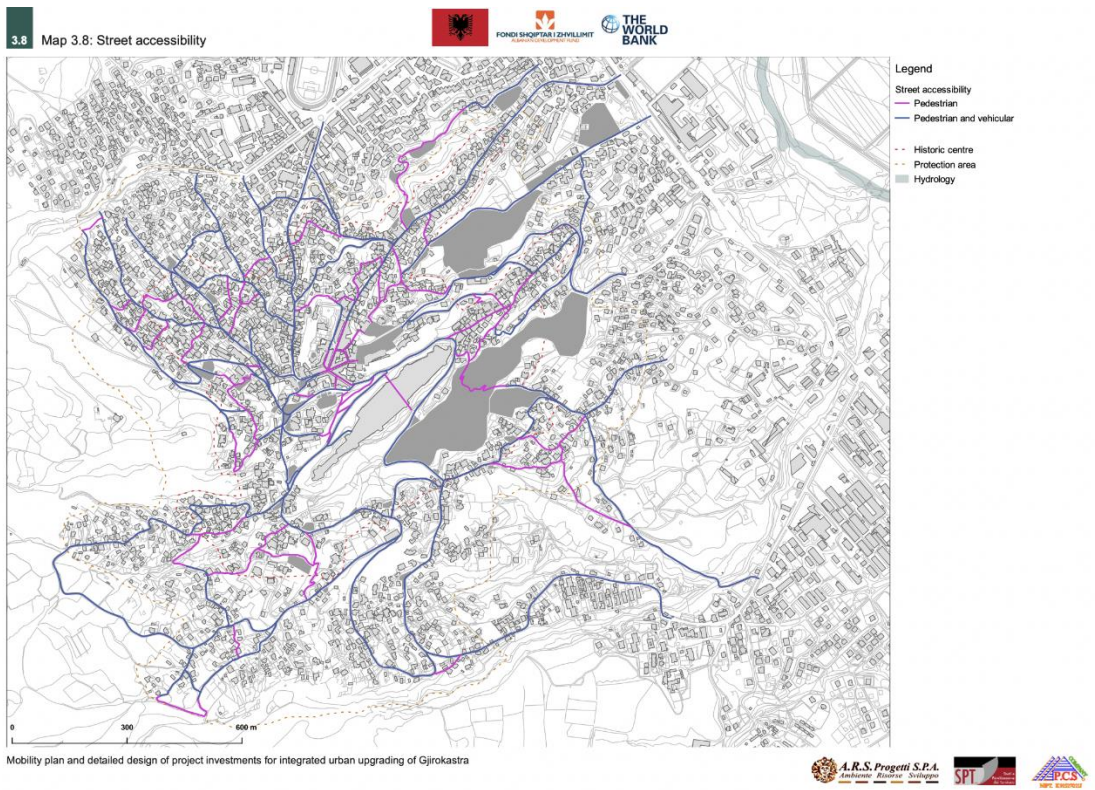


Open space typologies, Mobility Plan and design of project investments for integrated urban upgrading of Gjirokastra, source: D2.1 Urban and Mobility Assessment + Annex, March 2022

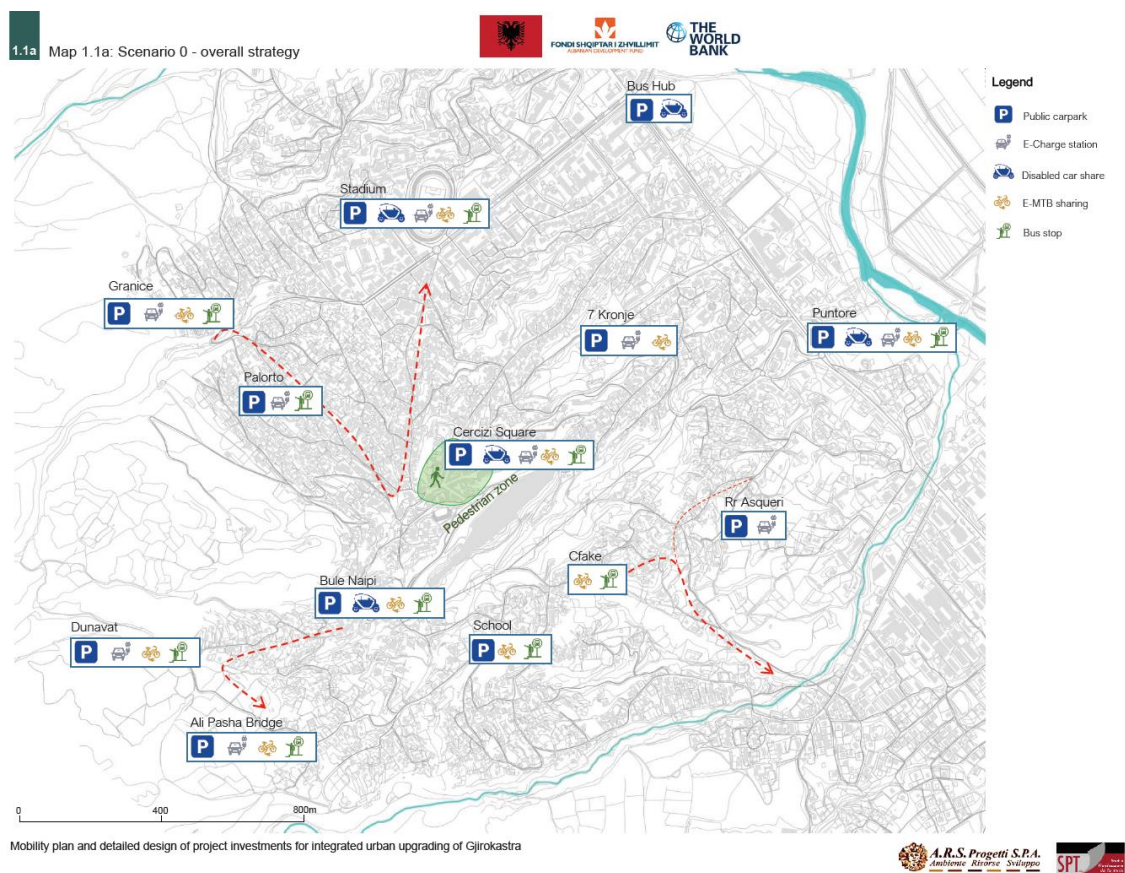
4.1 Map 4.1: Current network



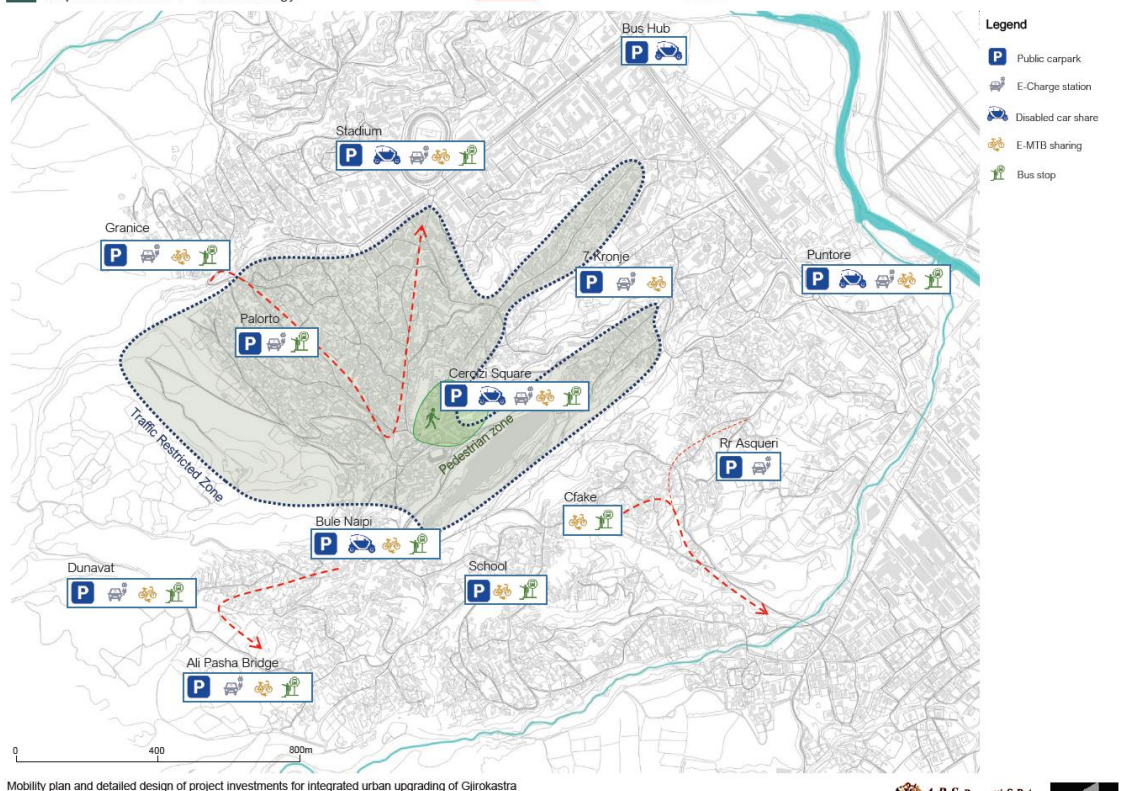
Current network, Mobility Plan and design of project investments for integrated urban upgrading of Gjirokastra, source: D2.1 Urban and Mobility Assessment + Annex, March 2022



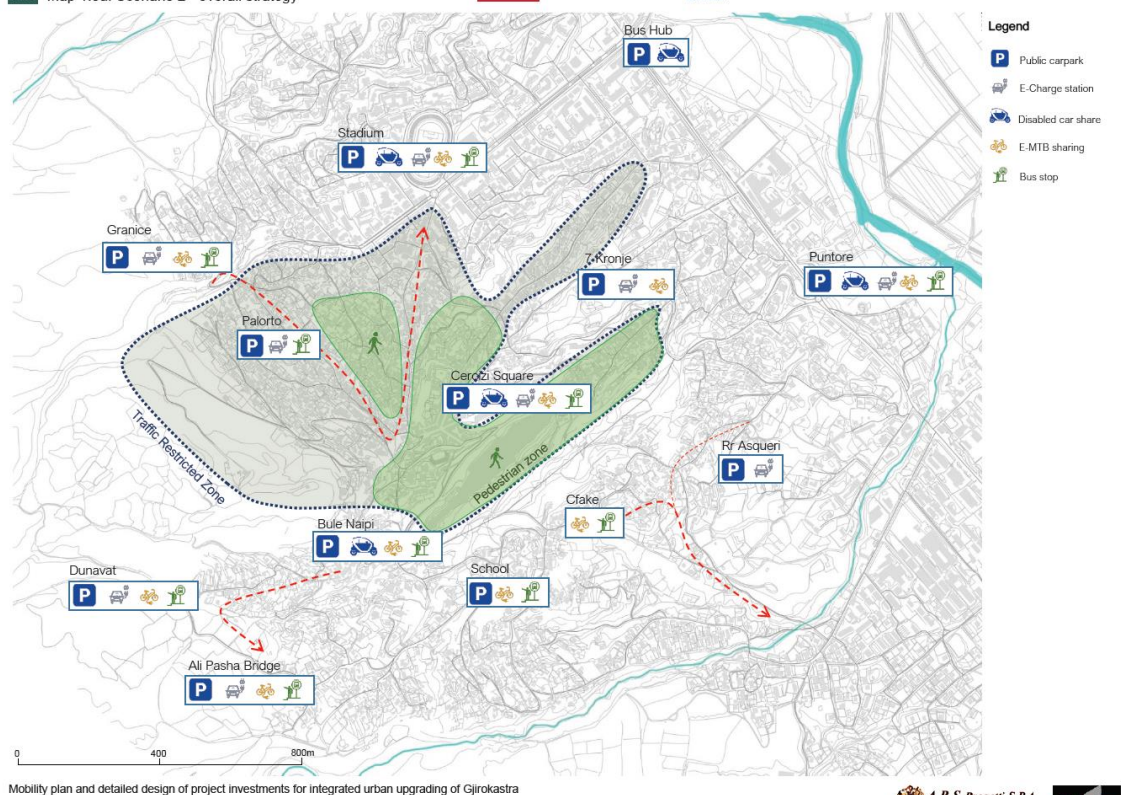
Street accessibility, Mobility Plan and design of project investments for integrated urban upgrading of Gjirokastra, source: D2.1 Urban and Mobility Assessment + Annex, March 2022



1.2a Map 1.2a: Scenario 1 - overall strategy



1.3a Map 1.3a: Scenario 2 - overall strategy



3 scenarios for pedestrianization of the historic centre of Gjirokastra, Mobility Plan and design of project investments for integrated urban upgrading of Gjirokastra, source: source: D2.1 Urban and Mobility Assessment + Annex, March 2022

Annex VIII: List of key documents which have informed the mission

Regulation on the Protection, Integrated Conservation and Administration of the Historic Centre and buffer zone of the city of Berat

Regulation for the Protection, Integrated Conservation and Administration of the Historic Centre and the protected area in the city of Gjirokastra

Law 27/2018 “On Cultural Heritage and Museums”

State of Conservation report submitted by the State Party of Albania, February 2021, in particular reading the PIUTD:

- Annex 3: Output 5.2 – Detailed design, guidelines and cost estimates for package 1, projects P01 and P03 for Berat City
- Annex 4: Task 3: Preliminary Concept Design / Priorities Identification, Design or prioritized measures to address safety concerns and prevent loss of heritage structures in the Castle of Gjirokastra
- Annex 5: Task 4: Preliminary Concept Design / Priorities – selected investment in Berat
- Annex 6: Construction of parking area and additional supporting areas in Berat, project from the Municipality of Berat
- Annex 7: Project Design for the revitalization of Çerçiz Topulli square and underground parking area in the old Bazaar of Gjirokastra
- Annex 8: Project “Gjirokastra Museums System”
- Annex 9: Project design and supervision of the “Gjirokastra Museums System”, Municipality of Gjirokastra, Concept design – funded by the ADF

State of Conservation report submitted by the State Party of Albania, February 2022, in particular regarding the PIUTD:

- Annex 3: P01_Restoration of Urban Landscape_Gorica
- Annex 5: P04_Creation of a car parking near Gorica bridge
- Annex 6: P05_Mangalem
- Annex 7: P06_Selamlleku square
- Annex 8: P12_Urban upgrading_Iljaz vrioni Square

Historic Centres of Berat and Gjirokastra. Joint Management Plan for the conservation and the development of the two historical centres, 2008

Consulted documentation, received by the State Party on 22 April 2022:

Management Plan of the Historic Center and Buffer Zone of Berat, SusCult project, 2011-2021

Gjirokastra Castle Sustainable Management and Tourism Valorization Masterplan, casanova+hernandez architects, MetroPOLIS I.t.d / GYK I.t.d, 2022

Project for the Integrated Urban and Tourism Development Mobility Plan and Detailed Design of Project Investments for Integrated Urban Upgrading of Gjirokastra, D2.1 Urban and Mobility Assessment + Annex, March 2022

Project for the Integrated Urban and Tourism Development Mobility Plan and Detailed Design of Project Investments for Integrated Urban Upgrading of Gjirokastra, D2.2 Sustainable Mobility Plan + Annex, March 2022

Project for the Integrated Urban and Tourism Development Mobility Plan and Detailed Design of Project Investments for Integrated Urban Upgrading of Gjirokastra, D2.3 / D2.4 IUU Vision, Design Concept and Overall Investment Program + Annex, March 2022

Annex IX: List of documents requested following the mission

Gjirokastra:

- Bypass road: EIA and any other impact assessment undertaken, and technical project and visualisations
- Hydrological study for the valley / bypass course
- Geological study of the valley
- Information on current situation of movement of traffic within and around the historic centre
- Historic evidence: references to historic use of the valley as a transport route (historic study, iconography, etc.)
- Reference documents: historic evidence of roads in the region which have been constructed along streams (historic study, pictures and maps)
- Projects connected with bypass road construction: sewage and water management, access improvement to upper parts of the city, stabilisation of slopes
- Map with exact location of the bypass road including the exact borders of the World Heritage property
- Project plan, sections and visualisation (e.g. video) of underground parking
- Guidelines for renovation / beautification (new and historic if exist)
- City Development Plan
- Management Plan Gjirokastra Castle

Berat:

- Project documentation and visualization of road in Gorica including new parking area (Osumi river)
- EIA on the riverbank reinforcement and road construction including environmental studies on the wider river area
- Documentation and project plan description for future developments of the area of the road in Gorica (e.g. planned demolition of front line of buildings dating from communist area)
- Visualization of square where the underground car park is located (buffer zone) including information on the future plans for adjacent smaller square across the street
- Information and/or documentation of the situation of the square before school was constructed
- Information on beautification of the street between the new square and the square with the church and mosque
- Information on treatment of the square with the church and mosque after the parking has been removed
- Signage guidelines for Berat
- Management Plan for Berat of 2014
- Information on plan on the potential bypass in Berat (tunnel option, backside of the castle option)
- City Development Plan

For both components:

- Maps for both Berat and Gjirokastra including categorisation of monuments cat. I and II (monument's passport) and buildings without status
- Mobility/traffic studies for both Berat and Gjirokastra
- Updated and current data related to monitoring – implementation of monitoring indicators, data and its analyses (outcomes of monitoring)