

The Adaptation of the Traditional Cities to Contemporary Use Interventions in Historical Areas: The Case Study of Gjirokastra

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Abstract

This paper examines the current situation of the protected historical cities, especially the one's that are under UNESCO protection, investigate the problems related to the contemporary use and tries to define a methodology of intervention to adapt them to the current lifestyle and the requirements of modern society.

According to our preliminary investigations, it was observed that these traditional cities have difficulty in access and mostly on wheels' mobility.

Firstly, the traditional urban pattern of these cities, due to the limited width and high slope, find difficulties to adapt their structure into contemporary vehicular flows which nowadays are subject to traffic code standards. Secondly, traditional cities, because of their image preservation, are very sensitive on defining appropriate parking areas for new vehicles. The excessive car presence in the city center because of congestion, pollution, and occupation of central streets hinder tourism development in the area.

The objective of this paper is to define instruments and strategies for the contemporary development of the historical centers, by cleaning them from "modern" elements to restore their lost traditional identity. The initial hypothesis is by-passing central areas and creating several potential parking areas for vehicles nearby, in order to avoid traffic in the city center and have a clear and undisturbed image of the traditional urban environment and an immediate impact on the character and identity of the city.

This hypothesis, which will be verified through the spatial transformation of the specific case study of Gjirokastra historical city, can be adaptable in other equivalent cases. Specific interventions proposed, will be based on the theory and rules of restoration, local and UNESCO laws on urban heritage and construction standards.

KEYWORDS: Traditional urban areas, adaptation, contemporary development

1. Introduction

The traditional settlements, in particular the historical cities protected by UNESCO are nowadays undergoing into an open conflict between the effort to adapt to the demands of the contemporary society life and the need for conservation of the historical, cultural and

landscape values of the old city, in the conditions of very restricted laws of restoration and conservation imposed by UNESCO and the Institute of Cultural Heritage (IMK).

This study aims to investigate on the dichotomy of urban scale disclosed, on one hand, by the traditional culture of the pedestrian perception of the city, which fit perfectly with the narrow streets of the historical city and, on the other hand, on the contemporary needs for car access, rapid mobility and traffic flow based on the requirements of modern life.

Actually, due to the difficulty of car mobility within the historical cities, as a result of roads' width reduce, high slopes and difficult curves, there is a high concentration of the car traffic and the parking areas in the city center, in small squares or in the main entrance streets of the historic city, which are places of concentration for residents and tourists. This overlapping flows prevent pedestrian movement and the presence of social activities, which bring life to the city center.

Therefore, the release of the historic center from motoric vehicles is seen as a starting point to activate and revive the city center in terms of commercial activities, social life, tourist attraction and various social events, in order to transform it into a vibrant social place for the residents and, consequently in a reference point for tourists. This means creating a qualitative space and stimulate people to use it and increase the interest to maintain and restore the surrounding buildings, in order to use them for touristic purpose.

In the context of a medieval historic city center, characterized by narrow and curve roads, of high importance for the tourism and the history of place, the project propose of the bypass of the city center is necessary to be seen and judged in a wider context, considering as a priority strategies which resolve the access and the mobility problems in the historic center and the connections with the new neighborhoods, in order not only to return the squares and streets to the pedestrians use, but also to facilitate the movement of residents in the city by avoiding congestion on the road because of an overlapping of the car traffic and pedestrians movement.

Based on these issues, this paper will focus on the case study of Gjirokastra as a representative case, in order to propose a comprehensive methodology of interventions and strategies that can be then implemented in other historical cities.

2. The urban ensemble of Gjirokastra. Historical, architectural, cultural and urban landscape values.

The town of Gjirokastra is one of the few historical cities of the medieval period in Albania which is still inhabited in nowadays. Despite Illyrian origin, the city took his form mainly during the ottoman period in the XVI-XVII century, expanding outside the Castle along the ridges of the hills in the direction of Vjosa valley and the mountain "Mali igjerë", following the organic configuration features, typical of ottoman cities.

With the expansion of the city outside the castle walls, the Bazaar area becomes an important center and is considered also as a public space that connects all the neighborhoods. Actually, it is located at the Castle's feet, in the barycenter of the historic city. Due to the presence of smiths, embroiderers, shoemaker, coopers, sculptors with their craft activities and the exchange of local or regional goods, made the area of the bazaar the most important meeting place in the city, turning it in a sort of cultural and social "agora".

From the architectural and spatial perspective, the Bazaar area differs a lot compared to the residential neighborhood configuration, since the commercial buildings that bound the road usually two stores high, were placed in line and escalated according to the configuration of the terrain. Usually, on the first floor were placed commercial activities, while the upper floors were used as storage of various goods, or as *karvansaraje*¹ for regional merchants. Gjirokastra Bazaar has a trident configuration, opened towards the Castle in the east and extended in the other directions, in order to structure the neighborhoods through the main axes.

The neighborhoods usually were extended along the ridges of the hills and were organically articulated in the line with the topography of the terrain through a strong connection between architecture, urban and landscape system. The harmonious combination of different variants of residential architecture created according to the orography, the ottoman urban system with narrow streets that follow the course of the terrain and the visible presence of greenery creates an ensemble of outstanding aesthetic, urban and landscape values. (img. 1)

In this regard, the use of local stones for road paving, for containing walls and roofs of buildings has created a unique atmosphere which was described by I. Kadare in his book "A chronical in stone", dedicated to Gjirokastra: «*Gjithçkanëkëtëqytetishte e vjetërdhe e gurtë, duke u nisur ngarrugëtdhe krojet e gjertekpullazet e shtëpivetëmëdhashekullore, qëishintëmbuluara me pllakaguringjyrëhiri, tëngjashme me disaluspajjigande.*»²

In this context, it is easy to understand what Christian Norberg-Schulz called *Genius Loci*³ (the spirit of place). Traditions and legends in Gjirokastra (legend of Princess Argjiro, etc) associated with the descriptions of Kadare, have put into tangible evidence the urban and architectural qualities, the existence of a collective memory sculpted by strong and fierce nature of this city which prove the extraordinary human connection with the land and space. «*Dukeruajtur me vështirësi jetën njerëzoren në gjymtyrëtdhenënlevozhgën e tijtëgurtë, qyteti shkaktonte asaj pa dashur shumëdhimbje, gervishjedhe plagë, dhekjogjëishte e natyrshmederisakysishtenjëqytetprejguridheçdoprekje e tijishte e ashpërdhe e ftohtë..*»⁴

This symbiosis between the city and the character of human life was reflected throughout the centuries and had led to the creation and persistence of the spirit of place.

In the recent years, due to drastic social, economic and technological changes, typical of the modern time, the fragile equilibrium between humans, architecture, and traditional urban landscape system was put into risk. The abandonment of the historic city, the degradation of buildings, inconsistent interventions towards the existing context, new abusive construction, as well as the chaos produced in the city as a result of the increasing number of cars and their concentration in the bazaar area has

¹An old Albanian word that means a place used as a hotel.

²(Everything in this city created throughout centuries was old and made of stone, from the streets and fountains up to the roofs of houses, which were covered with gray stone slabs, like some giant scales). Kadare I., *Kronikënëgur*, Onufri, Tiranë 2000, p.13

³cfr. Norberg-Schulz, Christian. *Genius Loci*. Rizzoli, New York 1980

⁴(Preserving the human life problems in the limbs and under his stone shell, the city inadvertently caused a lot of pain, abrasions and wounds, and it was natural since it was a city of stone and every touch of it was harsh and cold..) in, Kadare I., *Kronikënëgur*, Onufri, Tiranë 2000, p.14

decreased gradually the interest of tourists and is seen as a risk factor for such historical values that the city embody.

That's why, trying to preserve a certain balance constitutes the challenge of intervention in such contexts, that necessity the activation of urban life, as much as the conservation of the historic image which in turn can contribute in activating urban life and touristic attraction.

3. Topography and urban morphology

The city of Gjirokastra was developed starting from the Castle which is positioned on top of one of the highest hills, following longitudinally north-east southwest direction. With the extension of the military settlement outside the castle walls, the city developed as a linear central system starting from the "Neck of the Bazaar", which constitutes the new central area. Starting from the central of Bazaar, the city was articulated following the direction of the main roads that respond to the delineation of the edge of the hills forming an organic system in harmony with the topography of the terrain. These linear residential systems are alternated in correspondence of the valley with green belts, which during winter turn to torrents or streams. The interlace with the green areas is reflected also in the presence of green in the yard. This is perceived not only in the overall image of the city, where buildings seem to be floating in the green but are also perceived along the roads, where fences of stone are overcome occasionally by systems of green arising from the inside courtyards and creating a perfect integration with nature.

The "Old Bazaar" neighborhood, which was the first expansion of the castle outside the walls, due to significant sloping terrain consists of a dense network of residential one up to three floors buildings, with little free space in between, gradually escalated following the hill profile. Due to the steep terrain and the narrow road along the edge of the hill, this area is not permeable to the machines but has partial access up to a certain depth.

In contrast, the other neighborhoods that surround the Castle despite having a similar morphological logic, being located in more favorable terrains, with low density and being perfectionitis in terms of architecture, were expanded outside considering very important the external yard space, the greenery, but also the road, which due to the terrain becomes wider. In this area, there are also the most important buildings in terms of architectural value.

The physiognomy of the urban ensemble sticking/adapting to the topography of the terrain presents a variety of architectural solutions with a high level of complexity, but yet the image is perceived as a whole. The Castle and the Old Bazaar, which rise in the highest hill, constitute the dominant elements in the landmark of the city, while the surrounding neighborhoods are somehow separate and uniform, blended with the terrain. The tectonics of the city originates from the topography of the terrain, and from the logic of articulation in relation to the terrain.

In the configuration and concentration of the building mass, an important role has played the geological composition of the terrain as a result of which some areas have been more favorable for construction and others most vulnerable due to landslides terrain. Because of this, the areas are treated with greenery, in order to have good integration between the built and green area.

This characteristic of urban morphology, must not only be preserved but should be considered in the case of new intervention projects, in order not to infringe the harmony of the historical city image.

4. Mobility system in the historical city

The old city of Gjirokastra is formed by a system of radial roads that articulate the different neighborhoods and converge into the area of the “Neck of the Bazaar”. In the second half of the 20th century after building the new extension of Gjirokastra in the low part, the city center moved to the low city. However, Gjirokastra has preserved the idea of a city with two centers: one in the old town (including the Bazaar Neck and the square ÇerçizTopulli), and the other in the stadium area, in the low city. All the streets of the old town converge towards the neck of the bazaar, which is the center of the old town, then get down in the lower part to connect with the two main streets: the boulevard and the national road. The connection to the upper neighborhoods or those on the back of the castle is as well enabled by the Neck of the Bazaar. This radial system of roads, usually with one sense of movement and paved with cobblestones, aggravates traffic in the city center and TopulliÇerçiz square, which should be the most frequented, livable and recreative areas of the city. As a result of vehicular traffic, the ÇerçizTopulliSquare was turned into a large parking area losing the idea of the square, due to the overload with vehicles which is incompatible with pedestrian use. (img. 2)

Similarly to it, is also organized the public transportation. Due to the narrow streets and the considerable slope, mobility is resolved through small buses including 3 lines that connect the low city with the main neighborhoods of the old part: Dunavat, Çfarkë and Palorto using as main stop the ÇerçizTopulli square, in the old town. On one hand, the access to the center is guaranteed, but on the other hand, the center because of the traffic that occupies almost all the space available reflects a high level of risk on the roads due to overlapping of vehicles and pedestrian flows and pollution effects, which makes impossible the use of the center as public space. In these conditions, converting the central area of the old city for pedestrians and public use is of a great importance for the residents and touristic purpose.

On the other hand, given the difficulties of movement within the historic center, a wider vision regarding the reduction of traffic in the historic center is the primary, in order to envision social life activation in the historic center.

5. The historical center between traditional and renovation. Legal restrictions.

Interventions in historical areas that intend to adapt the urban environment for pedestrians use and enhance tourist's attraction, require a particular attention to aesthetic and structural aspects, and should also provide services that will facilitate the tourists' requirements and residents' daily life. That means, the modality of interventions in the historical urban ensemble is crucial for its future touristic and economic development as well as for the memory and the identity that the city embodies and represents.

The approaches to historic city centers are always faced with two different schools of thought by the experts of architecture and urban planning. On one side there are the specialists that support the fanatic preservation of the historical contexts according to the principle of restoring the object of art in his original state and on the other side there is a current which tends to introduce new elements and innovative architectural forms for a

new way of conceiving the city. Choosing one or the other school of thought remains to be studied case by case, but time has shown that both cases are used at international level. The legal framework of recommendations and instruction to be followed on one hand and the socio-economic needs for space should be combined together in order to not infringe the historical image of the city and the traditional values of the historical heritage or disrupt the balance established in the territory over time. In the process of restoration, regeneration, and conservation, the main objective should be the integration of the historical center in the everyday life. Thus, any kind of intervention should be done in accordance with the local or international regulations in order to preserve the memory, culture and the tradition of the place. The best balance between non-intervention and excessive intervention is by intervening with a minimal visual impact without competing for the existing architecture, but with a good structural and functional impact as well as in order to guarantee a good access for all.

The preservation and revitalization of the historical centers in Albania is an immediate need and also very important is the legal oversight of the way of transformation of these centers.

During the communist period, there was an attempt to preserve the historical and cultural monuments and the historical cities as urban ensembles. The ideology of that time proclaimed the preservation of monuments and traditional urban ensembles for their significant value, even though in reality a lot of buildings, especially the religious one or whole historical areas were destroyed.⁵ During this period, new buildings were also erected within the traditional city such as in the case of Korca, Gjirokastra, Tirana, etc. In Gjirokastra new objects build inside the traditional city followed the traditional urban pattern and tried to preserve the traditional urban landscape, without competing for the traditional architecture. Some new constructions at that time were hotel Çajupi, the Municipality, the Prefecture etc. In 1961, Gjirokastra was proclaimed "museum city" for its historical significance, and in 1971, was drawn the first regulation "*On the protection, restoration, and management of the museum city of Gjirokastra*"⁶ which provided a special protection for the urban ensembles. At that time, this regulation led to the obligation to undertake minimal intervention in the historical city and in the protected traditional urban ensembles. Interventions initiated from the residents were prohibited and the only intervention that was carried out by institutions were maintenance, facade cleaning or structural reinforcements.

After a significant development that cities had underwent after the '90s and the inability of the state to control large of the urban developments, informal constructions or architectural distortions, disrupted the urban balance created over time. This phenomenon which became present in every city of Albania is well known also in the historic city of Gjirokastra.

These urban transformations are followed by social transformations and the way people live the city. By the way of moving on foot, people started to use the cars, mutating so the historic center from a pedestrian center into a mobile movement center. The old bazaar

⁵Some very important historical areas and buildings, such as churches and mosques, residential villas, etc., were destroyed in different cities.

⁶Regulation Nr. 1, MES date 12.07.1973 "*On the protection, the restoration and the management of the museum city of Gjirokastra*" (Official Gazette No. 4, 1973, Page 44)

along the street lost its important value and today it remains abandoned without function. All these phenomena lead today, after more than two decades, on the need for interventions to revitalize the historic center, in order to have a better access for pedestrians. In addition, because of the abandonment and further degradation, the necessity to undertake a restoration process of the historic buildings becomes relevant in order to preserve as much as possible the important historic and cultural value embodied in the architecture.

According to the Albanian Cultural Heritage Law N. 9048 of 2003 and some changes and additions to the decree N. 345⁷, in 2007, the monuments which have a historical value are divided into two main categories: monuments of the First Category and monuments of the Second Category.

In historical city of Gjirokastra as part of Unesco since 2005, most of the buildings belongs to one of these two categories of protection (550 houses in total), while the rest of them are part of the historical, architectural and cultural heritage complex. That means that none of these buildings can be destroyed and also *specificrules*⁸ have to be followed during the restoration process. In addition, the adaptation of the historical buildings or that of the urban ensemble in general to everyday activities, modern requirements, and their revitalization, is a very important phenomena for the preservation of the cultural value of the city. However, the re-appropriation and re-organization processes, according to the decree announced in 2015⁹, should not interfere by destroying the urban physiognomy and the relationship between buildings, outdoor areas, squares, streets, free spaces, courtyards, parks, etc., and other natural historic settings part of the landscape such as: streams and green areas surrounding it as well as geomorphological specific features.

The project proposes along the by-pass road a series of panoramic public areas close to the city center, which serve also as recreational areas and offer parking space for the central neighborhoods.

Based on the rule of law no. 9048 of the year 2003, according to which the construction of new objects is prohibited, except underground sanitation works of engineering and reconstructions of existing buildings, this project does not provide new buildings. Based

⁷Decree Nr. 345, Date 6.06.2007, Regulation of management of Gjirokastra City Museum, Administration of Gjirokastra Museum City, Declared by UNESCO "World Heritage", Article 8: Monuments of First category / Article 9: Monuments of Second category.

⁸Monuments of culture heritage part of the second category are constructions with distinguished values, mainly in their outward appearance and preserved in their external appearance, but can take place in these monuments changes in layout or internal spatial distribution. Monuments of first category are prominent buildings of special importance for the cultural heritage. They are preserved in their entirety architectural components (layout, appearance, volume) and the techniques used.

⁹On 7th July 2015, was pronounced the decree no. 619, for the "historic center" of the city of Gjirokastra and regulations for the "protection, integrated conservation and the management of the historic center and the protected area of the city of Gjirokastra." This decree was crucial for the urban pattern of Gjirokastra, which divides it into two components: 1. Historical Center which constitutes the main historical nucleus, and is the most important space for the urban and architecture values of Gjirokastra history and character and, 2. The protected Area, which stretches around the historic center but in a wider area, and has inside of it a larger number of monuments of First and Second Category, green spaces and strictly retains the urban, architectural and landscaping values.

on this, the only interventions proposed are the restorations of the existing buildings in the area because of their historical and cultural significance. A specific example is the restoration (reconstruction) of an extremely degraded object it is the former agency, in the entrance of the city which is a second category cultural monument and as a consequence can be transformed internally and will change its function. Referring to the law no. 9048 of 2003, this building and the area around can be transformed into a new gateway of the city, by becoming the building of a multistorey car parking, and the area around a public transportation station and the first panoramic stop.

6. The basic principles of urban interventions in historical centers according to the theory of restoration of Cesare Brandi and its application in the case study of Gjirokastra.

In this article, the concept of intervention in the city of Gjirokastra was seen in two perspectives. On one side the restrictions of the legal framework, as explained in the preceding paragraph and on the other, the theory of restoration based on the theoretical concepts developed by Cesare Brandi.

The basic methodology of the restoration is based on the definition of restoration conceived by Cesare Brandi in his book *Restoration Theory*, as «any kind intervention that permits a product of human activity to recover its function.»¹⁰

Based on this definition, the city can be considered, firstly, as a product of human activities, since it is the result of a consolidated culture over time, through construction activity, and secondly, as an essential presence without which humans will have no opportunity to carry out their everyday urban activity. Hence, the purpose of renovation is to restore and facilitate the integration of the city to modern life requirements by intervening in problematic issues.

Similar problems, malfunctioning of the historic urban ensemble of Gjirokastra and the lack of life in it, urged the need of intervention to re-use the historical urban space in accordance with the restoration theory. Accordingly, clearly, can be deduced that the way of intervention affects directly the dimension and the discipline of the restoration as well as the strategies to be used as main goals in order to increase the efficiency of the historical urban area.

The strategy of intervention for the restoration of an urban area is based on the second principle of the theory of restorations sustained by Brandi, aimed to «re-establish the potential unity of the work of art, as long as this is possible without producing and artistic forgery and without erasing every trace of the passage of time left on the work of art.»¹¹

Thus, the methodology of intervention in this historical context is based firstly on the recognition of the city of Gjirokastra as an artwork consisting also the combination of many architectural scale work arts. Once the settlement is considered as a *whole* and not as a *total (or sum of parts)*, the methodology of intervention should not *forgery* the artistic

¹⁰BRANDI Cesare, *Teoria del Restauro*, Piccola Biblioteca Einaudi, Torino 1977. fq. 3 “Comunemente s’intende per restauro qualsiasi intervento volto a rimettere in efficienza un prodotto dell’attività umana”

¹¹BRANDI Cesare, *Teoria del Restauro*, Piccola Biblioteca Einaudi, Torino 1977. fq. 8. “il restauro deve mirare al ristabilimento della unità potenziale dell’opera d’arte, purché ciò sia possibile senza commettere un falso artistico o un falso storico, e senza cancellare ogni traccia del passaggio dell’opera d’arte nel tempo”

image by creating a historical false. With this regard, the intervention should try to imitate it as it was the "artist" itself who created it. But, if the restorer bases his intervention on the imitation with the same "style" of the settlement, he eliminates the distance of time with the first architect, committing this way a historical forgery.

Considering what Brandi notes in his research when he sustains that even if can be found the quarry in which were taken the stones that serve to build the city, they cannot be used for restoration because it creates a historical false if the new part is not distinguished from the original.

Based on these findings, the proposed intervention for the revitalization of the city of Gjirokastra will not harm the image of the city, but will be focused on its structure, the raw material that gives form to the image. The interventions will be of course distinguishable in "style" and time and will focus in particular on the reactivation of the degraded areas, which is analogous to the intervention of "sawing" by tackling an opening / lacuna / gap in the image of a painting. It serves primarily to increase the efficiency of the settlement and secondly to increase the physical quality of the urban space by containing and restraining the degradation process.

The main goal of this proposal is manifested in the selection of four actually degraded key areas, which not only display an inconsistent image with the historical / cultural context, but appear also as chaotic urban space, in contrast with the character of the urban landscape and thus hinder the traditional image of the city as a unique work of architecture. (img. 3)

These four areas are the neck of Bazaar, the square of "Çerçiz Topulli", the lower part of Fantasia hill, the square in front of the former agency building and the square just below the castle entrance. Their transformation in service and activity nodes, not only inhibits the degradation impact but enables new uses and activities which can influence the overall center regeneration.

The efficient intervention of any work produced by man must first decide in the spotlight the work itself. The initial objective of such intervention is the displacement of the work in time, to feature its integrity. Hence, it exists a direct and imminent relationship between work and restoration.

According to Brandi's written, «it is the work of art that conditions the restoration and not vice versa.»¹²

Thus, we can deduce that the man-made work that needs to be restored, is placed in a prior position respect to the restoration process itself and the last one must be an instrument for restoring its efficiency without changing its configuration. So what is required to restore in an urban settlement is the material on which it is made, not its image. This constitutes also the first axiom of Brandi theory: «Only the material form of the work of art is restored.»¹³

But, in the historical cities, the image is not separated from the raw material, on a contrary appears through it. In this regard, it should be noted that drastic interventions change the image of the settlement and its identity as sculptured over time.

For these reasons, the interventions in historical centers should be minimal in terms of quantity and yet provide a high impact in the city. Accordingly, the project of the bypass of

¹²BRANDI Cesare, Teoria del Restauro, Piccola Biblioteca Einaudi, Torino 1977.

¹³BRANDI Cesare, Teoria del Restauro, Piccola Biblioteca Einaudi, Torino 1977.

Gjirokastra aims firstly not to demolish any building in the city, resolving the continuity of the road with the addition of two new segments with a total length of 1.2 km outside the dense residential area, with minimal impact on the traditional city image. (img. 4)

Except for the infrastructure project, minimal interventions will be concentrated in the four above mentioned areas such as the design of the central square "Çerçiz Topulli". In this case, the proposed project does not touch volumetric quantities (in fact the surrounded objects remain the same) but consist mainly in changing the asphalt paving into a quadratic pattern made of traditional stones. In order to avoid the creation of a historical forgery, the difference in time is guaranteed by the particular pattern typology and the interval of the stones placement. The conceptual idea of the square Çerçiz Topullirises above the aim of creating an "urban room" limiting the square on the opposite side of the hotel. A series of trees and columns that will serve as a support for electricity ropes or different lights in various occasions can create an enclosure urban space above and in front of Cajupi Hotel. Other minimal interventions are proposed in the small available spaces along the by-pass. Some of them are transformed into parking areas for cars, remodeling the pavement in order to accomplish the new function and placing rows of trees in order to integrate them with the traditional landscape and avoid that the parking area, because of the often visible position, to interfere with the image of the city. (img. 7)

The used strategies to increase the efficiency of the settlement included also providing more consistent services that incite touristic attraction. These services are mostly oriented to emphasize the originality of the city, enabling its competitiveness at the international level and also promote the local culture, products, heritage, specific traditions and customs, by building up a local "legend" which works as a magnetic pole to attract the interest and the curiosity of the people coming from outside.

This "legend" is evident also in the physical space of the city and its particular local character, at a point to be transformed into a symbol upon which is built up the identity of the society. At this point, the local "legend" becomes a cornerstone upon which is built the idea of "place" according to the concept expressed by *Marc Auge*.¹⁴

The intervention strategies in the urban context of the city of Gjirokastra were designed recalling one of the main principles of restoration that can guarantee the authenticity of the artwork or of the settlement in this case, which states that «*Integration should be always easily distinguished but not necessary for this reason the whole as a unity can lack*».

Thus, the integration proposed in Gjirokastra project is based on the use of local materials and mainly on the use of the stone. The interventions will not be invasive and as Brandi states, «*Any restoration interventions, should not prevent any future restoration but, rather, facilitate them.*»¹⁵

In the case of the Gjirokastra project, Brandi's assertion is expressed through minimal interventions, often superficial, but that deeply affect the urban structure and enables chain interventions that can be considered as an antipode of development that aims to improve the social and spatial quality of space.

7. Integration of the residential areas.

¹⁴AUGE' Marc, *Non Places – An Introduction to Supermodernity*, Verso, London 1995.

¹⁵Brandi, Cesare and Giuseppe Basile. *Theory Of Restoration*. Roma: Istituto centrale per il restauro, 2005, pg. 54

An important aspect that this project has to deal with is considering this organic settlement as a whole, which means more than the simple sum of parts. This is exactly what Cesare Brandi states in his theory of Restoration, referring to an object of art. Based on this statement, the project for the city of Gjirokastra, once that intended to transform the ÇerçizTopulli square and the "Neck of the Bazaar" street in a pedestrian area, was the creation of a bypass that reconnects all the neighborhoods (*mëhalla*) that lose the convergence with the Bazaar once it can be transformed into a pedestrian area. Thus, the role of the bypass is that of connecting all the neighborhoods by creating an urban system that overcomes the center freeing it from the vehicular flow. (img. 5)

The idea of this by-pass project for the city of Gjirokastra is the creation of an "organic loop", that runs close to the center. This truck will pass through some existing roads, but also new segments are proposed, in order to complete the ring, which will connect all fragmented neighborhoods. The bypass of the city center will enable the creation of a pedestrian area starting from the "ÇerçizTopulli" square, going along the Bazaar roads and the whole area around it.

The "Organic Loop" has two alternatives of car traffic circulation. The one passes through Dunavat area, and the second alternative passes through Cfarkearea. The circulation is supposed to form a ring with a one-way sense of movement which starts from the new city on "GjinZenebisi" street. Throughout this ring, there will be other access for the cars at various points inside the old city. The two road transepts added in the project are from the area of the former agency to the old area near the hammam and other transept passes after the castle area following the morphology of the terrain, in order to be able to intervene as little as possible in the natural landscape. The creation of the infrastructure for the traffic circulation, bypassing the old center, is a good solution to connect the old neighborhoods around the old bazaar, and also to have a better connection between the old and the new city without passing all the car traffic throughout the historical center. (img. 6)

The existing road trucks of the bypass have a reduced width and according to present norms they can only be used with a one-way sense of movement. In order to impact as little as possible, the existing natural and historical landscape, the proposed sections are supposed to maintain the same width, continuing the one-way road and reserving a special place for pedestrians.

Only the two new segments proposed outside the residential area will enable a two-way circulation and provide a sidewalk for pedestrians. This one is also connected to existing paths in the city, used by citizens, in order to arrive in a short time to their destinations.

The ring project, which is named the "organic loop", fits to the shape of the terrain and follows its lines without infringing the landscape, creating harmony between the natural elements and architectural one, conform to the rules of interventions in the historical sites. The new road infrastructure project sought to have a minimal impact on the traditional urban landscape and yet guaranteeing a great impact on tourism development, urban vitality, mobility and economic development.

8. Conclusions

At the end of this project, after building a conceptual model represented by the historical center of Gjirokastra we arrived at the conclusion that the implementation of the

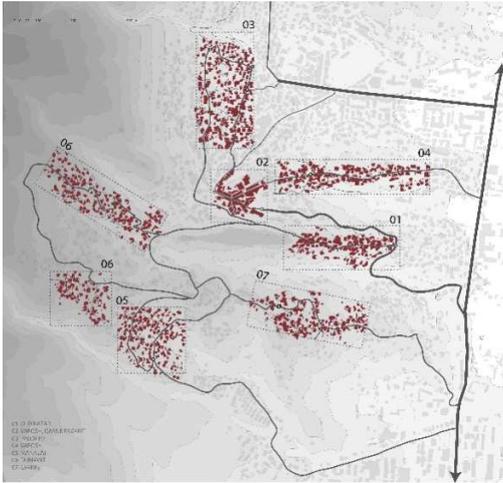
proposed strategies can trigger the regeneration of a city. The strategies described above can function as conceptual ideas to be implemented in analogous urban contexts.

The first strategy is the by-pass of car movement from the historical areas and their conversion to pedestrian use. The second strategy is referred to interventions that intend to transform and revitalize degraded areas in order to preserve a coherent urban image. A third strategy intends to strengthen activities and services congruent with the historical area, with the aim of empowering a symbolic conception of the city as "a legend". This is seen as a strong component of tradition and local identity and can contribute also in making the city much more competitive at the global level. In conclusion, these strategies should be implemented by respecting the legal framework of building and restoration.

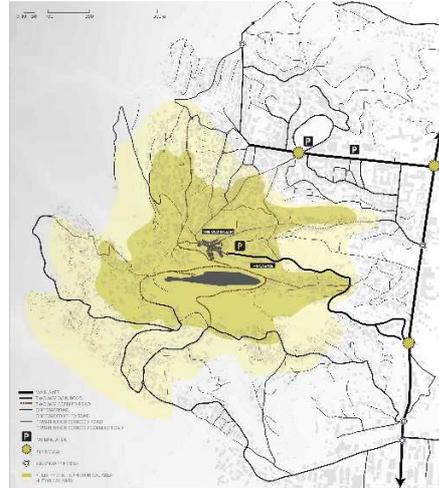
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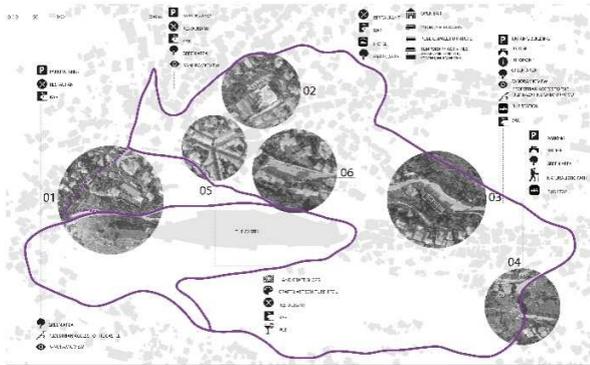
Images inside the text



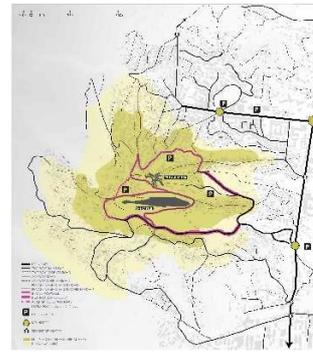
Img.1.Urban Morphology



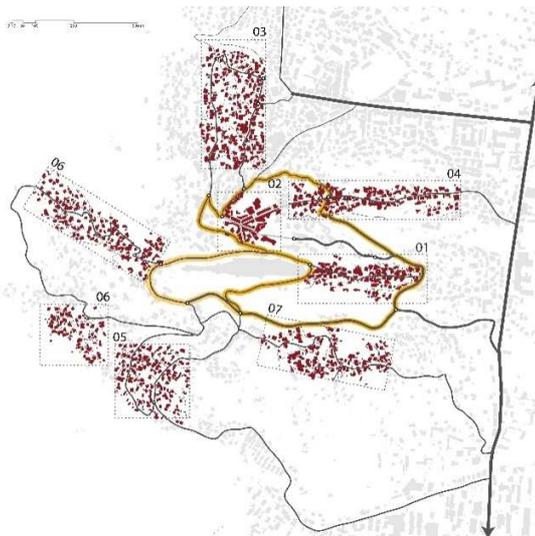
Img. 2.Existing road infrastructure



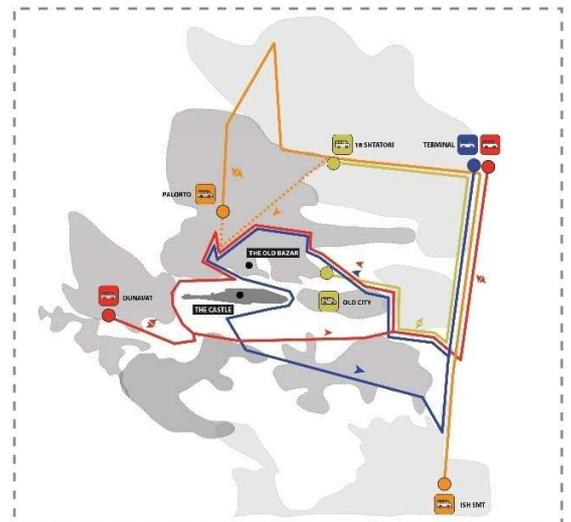
Img.3. Main intervention areas



Img.4.Bypass road proposed



Img.5.Urban Morphology and the proposed ring



Img.6.Proposed scheme of public transportation



Img.7.The project for “ÇerçizTopulli” Square