

Promoting Urban Heritage Preservation through Partnerships

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Abstract: Gjirokastra town is enlightened by foreign and Albanian researchers, especially for the assets of cultural inheritance, whose values is protected even nowadays and is included in the list of Unesco World Heritage since 2005. Most of the buildings in Gjirokastra town need at most maintance, restoration and management through materials and special technics provided also through researches and investigations, in order to inherit them to future generations. This paper discusses and tests a framework of reference for "public private partnership" and especially the invested project by UNESCO, during 2008 – 2010. This concept is particularly relevant to assess whether investment in Urban Heritage Preservation respond to the impulse coming from public insitution. The explication of the official documentation, area inspections and interviews with the main actors and stakeholders, have revealed the cultural and scenery values of this town. Secondhand, the model analyses is done, based on the strategies and contemporary legislation recommended by Unesco, where difficulties of collaboration between parties are highlighted, political support and quality of project management. This study is important due to its contribution in the promotion of public and private collaboration for a constant urban development and consolidation of all-embracing policies for the local authorities, community etc.

Keywords: private, public, cooperation, constant urban development, UNESCO

1. Location and Value of Gjirokastra

The World Heritage property **Museum-City of Gjirokastra** was inscribed in the World Heritage List since in 2005 [1]. Gjirokastra fortified historic centre is remarkably well preserved, (Figure 1), and this is particularly true of their vernacular buildings. This has been continuously inhabited from ancient times till the present day. Situated in the Balkans, in Southern Albania, it bears witness to the wealth and diversity of the urban and architectural heritage of this region. Gjirokastra bears 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. Gjirokastra town was built by major landowners.



Figure 1: Gjirokastra seen from castle; (source World Heritage Site)

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. Gjirokastra bears outstanding testimony to the diversity of urban societies in the Balkans, (Figure 2 a.) and to

longstanding ways of life which have today almost vanished . Gjirokastra is well known for its history, inheritance, culture and unique character, as a treasure for whole Albania. Situated in the south of Albania, Gjirokastra town is a proof of wealth and urban architectonic heritage in this region (Figure 2 b.). Around the ancient 13th century citadel, the town has houses with turrets (the Turkish kule) which are characteristic of the Balkans region.



Figure 2: Historic Centers of Gjirokastra, Albania, Author (Above) N. Bineri, (source World Heritage Site)

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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. Gjirokastra bears 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 [2].

Referring to the urban planning point of view, this town is made up of quarters and public spaces, the main one the Bazaar side and also the Fortress which occupies the central space of this town. The type of dwelling place gives tone to Gjirokastra town, not only for the predominance in the space of this center, but also for the emphatic vertical design that spontaneously designs the silhouette of this town itself. Gjirokastra dwelling widens in volume from one floor to another, in order to adapt the rocky damaged ground, and such element brings an uneven elaboration of the floors. Such houses are mainly distinguished for the perfect bound with the ground on which they are built, functional differentiation according to the floors, accentuation of their protection characteristics and functional placement. The houses have stone block roofs tops in a perfect harmony with the rocky panorama of the area they are built. The general integrity of the town is satisfactory, even though this is negatively affected by the illegal constructions in the late 1990. Its originality is also satisfactory, but the management for the protection and maintenance should be higher, concrete and applicable and in accordance with the highest international standards. The undertaken measures for the management, coordination and implementation of policies between the public and private sector, should stimulate the Protection and Preservation of property worth, especially to the construction invasions. A lot of restoration work still remains to be done, and there is a need for more funding, as well as for some improvement in the existing legislation and management system. (e.g. the paving of the streets has been deteriorated over time, due to age, car traffic and infrastructure works. The restoration or reconstruction of the paving needs a lot of attention and more funds) Access to human capital and financial resources is critical. Being able to work within the competition dynamic is fundamental. However, both present challenges for civil society [3].

2. Main problem affecting Gjirokastra city

The overall *integrity* of Gjirokastra 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 [4].

Residents owning large properties in Gjirokastra do not, for the majority, have the financial means for their conservation or restoration. Therefore, many houses have been abandoned by their owners or inhabitants and they are subject to decay. Furthermore, some houses have more than 70 owners dispersed all over the world who cannot be identified [5].

There is also a need to motivate residents to return to their houses - in Gjirokastra - for the revival of the historic center as the continuity of life in this historic. The completion or

renewal of the city's infrastructure is also crucial to attract or keep residents, commerce and tourism. The community in Gjirokastra is not sufficiently aware about the World Heritage status. Therefore there is a need for more public information about the Outstanding Universal Value of the property and about the need to protect not only the castle and the important houses of the museum cities but the whole urban landscape [6].

3. Understanding Public Private Partnership schemes

Many restoration construction works are left to be done in Gjirokastra town, due to lack of investments, public or private ones. Under these circumstances a valuable and successful Model might be the usage of PPP schemes, the scheme of Public-Private Partnership.

PPPs in urban development can be best defined as a true partnership of public officials and private developers who "have development ambitions that they could not complete alone" [7].

In this form of public authorities and private sector cooperation (private companies such as construction companies, private banks, investment companies, etc) the scope usually is to accomplish a public project/construction by funding and/or operating on the basis of a partnership in which the financial risks of the public sector should be reduced. PPPs are mainly driven by limitations in public funds to cover investment needs and by efforts to increase the quality and efficiency of public services [8].

Financial Constraints from central government and lack of the local government financial resources that results from narrow scope of taxation, low tariffs, low collection rates, and the minority of appropriate financial instruments, act as constraint for promoting urban regeneration projects, in combination with respecting the principle of sustainability, mainly in social infrastructure and services in Albania. PPP investments are influenced by a hierarchy of legal regimes adopted from Guidelines for Successful PPPs [9].

A good cooperation between the stakeholders and local authorities is an urgent issue for such historical assets. With reference to the Government decision stated that: all local institutions which are connected to objects of cultural heritage are under the responsibility of the Institute of Culture Monuments. [10]. This decision gives to the Institute of Culture Monuments (ICM) the right to propose a new organizational structure, especially for the scheme application and contracts where the public and private sector do collaborate.

ICM, The Institute of Culture Monuments may serve as an "expertise body" by having full Authority for negotiations with the private contractor, such as: Investment/Financial, Design/Implementation, Operating and Maintenance of public sector assets, or to provide the necessary or desirable service in order to contribute in the performance of historical assets of the town. [11]

4. Foreign practices in the promotion of cultural heritage through partnership

The analysis and experience of the following survey, attempts to help us to reveal some conclusions for the application of partnership schemes and different types of partnership. This illustrated example is part of the list of protection by UNESCO. Partnerships in local, national or international levels are often of an institutional character, where competences of different levels of public administration are joined to the best of administrative process strengthening. The legal obstacles often derive from the way how the Heritage is perceived by the institutions and by the society in general. A case of taking in consideration is the Bergen Case in Norway (Figure 4).

The Heritage Management Office in Bergen has developed a tool to integrate cultural heritage values with the urban planning process. Using a series of Geographic Information System (GIS) maps, the historical framework for prospective development of a given urban district is summarized in four categories defining the major aspects of urban historical character: early topography, settlement structure, communication lines and special features and objects listed as historical landmarks.



Figure 4: Bergen Norway, Unesco, D.Roger

Thematic maps based on these four categories are elaborated for each master plan and become components of the basic planning tools used by the Department of Urban Development for new development schemes. The Maps are available on the Department's computer network, along with recommendations from the Heritage Management Office on the handling of various topics. Details on the draft plans are then discussed and Heritage Management plays an active part in the planning process. From start to finish. In this way, Heritage Management and Urban development are integrated, ensuring better preservation of the city's historic identity through these efforts, documentation of the historic district has been enriched, forming the basis for three sets of maps. The first of these is a set of thematic maps organized under the four headings of the heritage analysis, but at a higher level of detail than the master plan maps. Next, a set of

comparative maps support discussion of basic information by juxtaposing various heritage elements. Finally, a set of summary maps present conclusions and other findings of the documentation efforts [12]. The presented case shows the necessity to develop the development instruments in Albania and specially in Gjirokastra town: existing legal instruments and management schemes of urban assessment heritage when they are not yet developed well and insufficient to address the conflict between needs for a stable urban development and protection of town panorama.

5. Findings

Some important aspects may be highlighted for Gjirokastra case.

- One of the main concerns of initiative is the connection between "The Urban Development" and "Strategies for the Panorama Preservation" and "strengthening of culture role" for a urban historical development of this town. This connection is essential for the set up of an effective rule. Giving solution to this issue, are needed "The negotiations between the public interests" and "Urban Developers", and on the other side "the upgrowth of awareness of a steady national community".
- The second issue deals with the existence of an "Approved Urban Plan". The laws and rules are often tough against a property, without taking in consideration its value, failing to provide the bases for the preservation of its values.
- In third place, we notice how some projects are capable to integrate urban, environmental and social-economic factors by studying even the poorest segments of the population.

The connectivity between "The Historical Heritage Preservation", "Property Assessment" and "Urban Development" must be combined. *përgjithshëm* të Planifikimit Urban. Relationships between short-term, midterm and long-term projects are another issue connected to the general Process of Urban Planning.

In the end, another important issue is "The Reliability" of a partnership. The latter is supported on the relationships between the institutions, groups of interests and other operative stakeholders. The reliable partnerships are the product of a social interaction that requires a precise execution of the main principal "The Common Heritage and Responsibility" [13].

6. The new initiatives of the partnership in Albania

Albania is facing difficulties in the adaption of partnership, mainly as a consequence of "legal obstacles". One of the alternative for a better managing of the actual situation, comes the use of partnership between public and private identity. The Law and its interpretation for PPP (public private partnership) in Albania, which orientates the public authorities to negotiate with the private authorities, is missing. *The below case in developed in Gjirokastra, illustrates it the best.* The project is a Unesco investment with the full support of the Albanian government, which is implemented in 2008-2010 by designers of the Institute of Culture Monuments. The project is supervised by ICM and

implemented by a private Albanian company. What differentiates the application of a PPP scheme from this case is that: in the PPP schemes, all the contractual parts (project, implementation, supervision, financing, maintenance and operation) are included in a single contract developed by a private entity, which is the MAIN RESPONSABLE FOR THE PROJECT; instead in this case many stakeholders are involved. (Figure 5,6,7; Table 1, 2, 3)



Figure 5: CENE Building , Source ICM

Table 1: Data's – CENE Building

“CENE” BUILDING	
Type of monument	Monument of first category
Type of intervention	Restoration
Date of intervention	2008 - 2010
Investment value	80.000 euro
Actors	Investor : UNESCO Designer team - IMK* Supervisor : ICM Contractor : Gener Plan, Alb Comp. Beneficiary : ICM. Community



Figure 6: Babameto Building , Cabej, Source ICM

Table 2: Data's – Cabej Building

“Babameto, Cabej” BUILDING	
Type of monument	Monument of first category
Type of intervention	Restoration
Date of intervention	2008 - 2010
Invest.value	70.000 euro
Actors	Investor : UNESCO Designer team,SU - ICM Contractor : Gener Plan, Alb Beneficiary : ICM,Community



Figura 7: Bazzar, Source ICM

Table 3: Data's – BAZZAR

“Bazzar” – Trade center	
Hotel Kashu, Ex City committee, Ex consulate, Middle of Pazar, mosque, Object N.T.A.N	
Type of monument	Monument of first /second category
Type of intervention	Restoration
Date of intervention	2008 - 2010
Investment value	12.000 euro 4.000 euro 9.000 euro 8.000 euro 5.000 euro
Actors	Investor : UNESCO Designer team - IMK Supervisor : IMK Contractor : Gener Plan, Alb Comp. Beneficiary : IMK. Community

PPP scheme facilitates not only the public financing difficulties, but also avoids the possible failures of the collaboration between different stakeholders and serious hazards of management towards proper architectonic worth of this town. Usually the contractual terms of these schemes last 25-30 on the average.

Thus, “The Law for the cultural heritage” whom the project is referred to, is very common and insufficient for the protection of the architectonic treasures of the town. There is no detailed law/rule that may orientate the relevant institutions, whether being local or central, this concludes on the poor quality of project implementation. Only by applying the Public-Private Partnership scheme may be facilitated not only the financial difficulties, but also could be avoided the possible failures of collaboration between the stakeholders.

Some of the schemes are:

- (D)BOT- (Design) Build (Finance) Operate (Transfer)
- (D)BOOT- (Design) Build Operate Own Transfer
- DBFO (T)- Design Build Finance Operate (Transfer), Availability Payments Model
- (D)BOOT- (Design) Build Operate Own, Transfer

DBLOT - Design Build Lease Operate, Transfer
DBROT - Design Build Rent Operate, Transfer, Contracting Model [14].

7. Conclusion

Some important aspects may be highlighted.

- Awareness of local bodies for the importance of the application of PPP schemes, in order to avoid the serious hazards of management towards the proper architectonic worth of the town.
- All-embracing policies should be harmonized better to meet the expected results.
- Awareness of local community for the status of worldwide heritage.
- The responsible bodies should inspect all the local institutions. A certain body may prepare the appropriate strategies to provide and protect the historical panorama of the town.
- Lack of a body / inspection system for the avoidance of no permit constructions.
- The necessity of a Urban Planning for the Revitalization of Gjirokastra town.
- A special center for information interchange should be provided, for the development of contract standards and detailed legal solutions.
- A media campaign must initiate by explaining the idea and advantages of PPP system in the genuine architectonic buildings.
- The transparency must be the main principle of the scheme application for the better management of the project.
- Decoding of a specific procedure based on the negative and positive experiences of PPP.
- Preparation of a detailed database with mistakes/methods that should be avoided in this process
- The analyses noted that the local bodies do not seem sufficiently aware of the importance and the primacy of the Management Plan.
- There is also a lack of awareness about the need to directly link all levels of planning.

As mentioned before strategic policies should be harmonized at different hierarchical levels and integrated to yield the best expected results. There is a need to ensure the primacy of the Management Plan, especially in Gjirokastra, and this should be a task of the Responsible Local Authority which should inspect all the local bodies

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Author Profile



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