

YEAR-ROUND TOURISM IN ALBANIAN RIVIERA:  
CASE OF QEPARO

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CASE OF QEPARO**

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# ABSTRACT

## YEAR-ROUND TOURISM IN ALBANIAN RIVIERA: CASE OF QEPARO

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This study aims to display an approach on how to activate an almost abandoned medieval village with high touristic capacity. The case is the village of Qeparo, located in Southern Albanian Riviera; a village of Himara Region, which completes the mosaic of its rural setting. The geographical context, where the mountain and the sea live in symbiosis, is a huge potential for the touristic regional development.

While the approach is based on sustainable concepts one of the main concerns is how to reactivate and highlight the potentials of the village by preserving its authenticity. The context, the morphology of urban setting and landscape, and the street atmospheres of an empty village, compose the outline of the spatial design solutions consisting of three main cores: culture line, green line, and public space & services by defining and giving function to existing structures.

*“Yes, we want to come back one day.”* said a Qeparoian, while completing the questionnaire. The vision is to bring people back, and offer the place in a good standard to the high touristic demand. While meeting the objectives, it can be as a reference case to the surrounding villages of the region as well.

**Keywords:** Albanian Riviera, Qeparo Village, rural tourism, sustainable design, year-around tourism, architecture and identity

# ABSTRAKT

## TURIZMI PERGJATE GJITHE VITIT NE RIVIEREN SHQIPETARE: SHEMBULLI I QEPAROIT

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Ky studim ka për qëllim të përcjelli një qasje se si mund të aktivizohet një fshat mesjetar pothuajse i braktisur me një kapacitet të lartë turistik. Rasti është fshati i Qeparoit, në rivierën shqiptare jugore; një fshat i rajonit të Himarës, i cili plotëson mozaikun e kontekstit të saj rural. Pozicioni gjeografik, ku mali dhe deti jetojnë në simbiozë me njëri tjetrin, është një potencial i madh për zhvillimin turistik rajonal.

Ndërsa qasja është e bazuar në koncepte të qëndrueshme, një nga shqetësimet kryesore është si të riaktivizohet dhe të nxirren në pah potencialet e fshatit duke ruajtur origjinalitetin e tij. Konteksti, morfologjia e mjedisit urban dhe peizazhit, dhe atmosfera në rrugët e një fshati bosh, përbëjnë skemën e projektimit hapësinor të përbërë nga tre bërthama kryesore: linja kulturore, linja e gjelbër, dhe hapësira publike dhe shërbimet duke definuar dhe dhënë funksion strukturave ekzistuese.

*"Po, ne duam të kthehemi një ditë."* tha një Qeparoian, ndërsa plotësonte pyetësin. Vizioni është që njerëzit të kthehen, dhe do të ofrojnë vendin e tyre në një standard të mirë përballë kërkesës së lartë të turizmit. Ndërsa arrihen objektivat, kjo mund të jetë si një rast referimi për fshatrat përreth, gjithashtu.

**Fjalët kyçe:** Riviera Shqiptare, Fshati Qeparo, turizmi rural, dizajn i qëndrueshëm, turizmi gjatë gjithë vitit, arkitektura dhe identiteti

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Agjensia Kombetare per Planifikimin e Territorit	AKPT
World Travel and Tourism Council	WTTC
Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit GmbH	GIZ
Integrated Sustainable Development of Southern Coastal Region	ISDSCR

# **CHAPTER 1**

## **INTRODUCTION**

The tourism sector is one of the existing potentials which have a huge impact in economic, social development and environmental protection. In Albania, the main and one of the most important challenges is to be innovative and remain competitive while embracing sustainability. There are many cases in European countries which have been improving their strategies, offers and qualities in tourism industry. The way how they keep being involved in the international sphere is through generating strategies that promote the uniqueness and authenticity of the place, and other sustainable actions to preserve the environment for future development.

Despite highly frequented exotic places, or large historical cities, there are a lot of existing quaint areas which remain untapped by tourists; one of the cases is rural tourism development which is an alternative typology to be offered to the high demand of tourism. The diversification of available tourism typologies would help in extending of seasonality. Albania is a case which embraces a diverse geographical setting, a fact that leads toward a year around development of tourism.

This study will be focusing on Albanian Riviera Region, which is a strategic area for the country development. The natural settlement offers a combination of geography which is a main factor to fulfill the calendar of all seasons; it provides richness in character of existing tourism. Compared to regional development and the Mediterranean basin, Albania has the possibility to attract tourists of all categories and different age-groups.

During the summer the coast becomes one of the spots with the largest number of tourists; the sea is the gravitational point of this season.

This inquiry's main approach is to explore for means of natural resources and services among different layers, in order to provide a balance by highlighting the other existing, but unexplored, the other half of Albanian Riviera: the hinterland (the mountain side) as the opposite touristic gravity. There are village-urban settlements which can offer alternative tourism, natural tourism, medical tourism, agricultural tourism, cultural tourism (architecture, gastronomy, and crafts), religious tourism, and sports tourism. An engagement of these existing structures will produce an interconnected system.

The research comes up with a village model proposal, the case of Qeparo Village, with a long term perspective. Based in regional context analysis and impacts, the idea is to give a proposal how an Albanian Riviera village can be developed by meeting the tourist demands and being able to compete in regional level. The proposal will be generated based on two main cores: strategic proposal and spatial proposal. As mentioned above, the strategy is referring to tourism perspectives, thinking in larger context considering the Himara Region character. While, spatial development is going to elaborate the existing physical setting of the upper village of Qeparo, by means of urban and architectural interventions. Before coming to this phase, a good observation and analysis of the place, ongoing projects in Himara, as well as the case studies from the region, will be the basis for this proposal development. There are many references, such as Greece, Croatia, Italian or French Riviera cases which can serve as a guideline to the case of Qeparo. They will be examples how a touristic destination can be meeting the standards, and offer good qualities with small efforts, at the same time having a relatively large effect in country's income. Architectural proposals and spatial planning, partially going in details, could be a medium/a tool which serve to this aim.

The upper village (the old village) will be a complementary program to the New Qeparo in the coastal side: offering agricultural, cultural, historical, religious, natural, sportive and gastronomic tourism typologies. It is a case of an almost abandoned village, which has huge potentials to be generated as a touristic spot. The spatial distribution of tourist movements will be the main focus of the design; how to create a lively experience through the village. Secondly, the proposal of modular and mobile light structures is another key element which will serve to different programs and reuse of the existing spaces in the village. It increases the possibility to create that smooth transition from an inactive village, to an active one. The proposed programs and architectural atmospheres aim to preserve the identity of the village, and use it as a gathering place for people who find their desires accomplished there.

## **1.1. Architecture and Tourism**

There has existed a close linkage between architecture and tourism since ancient times, where architecture has been a tourist attraction playing an important role in this sector. It is this reciprocal relationship between tourism practice and the building contexts, which has been studied by many scholars and experts of a wide range of fields; Lasansky and McLaren bring a package of different cases spanning from Renaissance to today, examining touristic experience, representation and meaning of place within distinct cultural contexts [Lasansky and McLaren, 2004].

History and architecture are among the main components for generating a marketable image of a place. Therefore, the important role of marketing actors in representation of a context leads towards an understanding for the necessity to consider a wider group of designers, by including “backstage designers” as well.

*“As Mark Neumann (1999: 11) has noted, tourist sites are discursive spaces that involve planners, politicians, preservationists, artists, entrepreneurs and tourists. The discourses of these various groups in turn “frame and tame” sites for tourism, laying out “a culturally created spectacle” that can be consumed and experienced in different ways by different people. The study of tourism allows the intangible to become tangible, the invisible visible, and the boundaries of the discipline porous enough to include things that are not seen but tasted, heard, smelled and touched” [Lasansky and McLaren, 2004].*

Why is the authenticity of touristic experience important? *“As a result of cultural homogenization, the world is moving from being a ‘space of places’ to being ‘spaces of flows’ (Castells 1996)” [Reisinger, 2012].* Architecture, of all kinds, must be called to rescue in order to recreate symbolic meaning in the metropolitan region, marking places in the space of flows [Castells, 2004]. In this post modern society, the non-defined spaces with lack of identity and spatial continuity are not a matter of attraction; the standardization is a big threat of cultural identity. Subsequently, it is architecture that needs to take a precautionary action by re-conceptualizing the spatial design in a multidimensional sense of communication.

The architectural setting is one of the tangible assets which have a direct effect on tourist multisensory observations; it is a testimony of history and traditional lifestyle of a particular region. Preserving the locality of place, by being able to offer authentic experiences from generating culturally shaped spaces and programs, can lead towards the image the 21<sup>st</sup> century tourists are searching for. The attention to textures, temperatures, atmospheres, smells, sounds and tastes ultimately creates a very sensual understanding of place that is anything but dystopic; as such it is assuredly authentic [Lasansky and McLaren, 2004].

In designing process, except the impact of history, architecture and environment, it is important to take into consideration tourist’s personalized approach. The exchange

between the two: tourist and place, is a relationship which crystallizes the final product. Architects provide spaces and programs; meanwhile tourists have an essential role by giving their own approach to the particular space. So, there is an intermediate flexible state which allows the influence of actors, designers and tourists, making the design a continuing process by the “backstage designers” as well. Architects should keep in mind to create flexible solutions that could better adapt the needs and approaches of different people. As Piranesi’s oeuvre makes clear, there is a nuanced relationship between the construction of an architectural image, the actual site, its history and the way in which it is consumed [Lasansky and McLaren, 2004]. *“In order for the enjoyment of culture to be a unique and memorable experience, it is not sufficient for the physical environment to be highly engaging and stimulate all the senses. It is also necessary for the visitor to have an active role during the experience and, thanks to a certain degree of freedom in the interaction, be able to adapt it to his own preferences and expectations. Therefore, it is necessary not only to engage visitors, but also to make them become real partners in the processes, thus allowing them to enjoy a highly personalized and flexible experience (Cova 2003: 122)”* [World Tourism Organisation, 2015].

## **1.2. Tourism and Sustainability – Year-Around Tourism**

Tourism has been one of the most growing sectors with an extensive impact on economic, social and environmental issues. It is one of the most active industries in contributing for economical development and employment; therefore being a generative element or catalyst in less developed regions. Being an important sector, there are studied many sustainable approaches on how to extend the tourism activity throughout the year in order to make it long standing in international market.

Regarding social issues, tourism is in a circulative mode inter-dependent from economic conditions of society. The rise of incomes, cost efficient travel opportunities, the

diversity of tourism alternatives, the increase of free time availability, etc. are different factors which have influenced the movement of people. The rapid increase of tourism activity is evident in the transcendent from 261.5 million international arrivals in 1990 to 581.8 million arrivals in 2014 [World Tourism Organisation, 2015].

One of the most important contributors in destination attractiveness is the environment. Site contents, diverse landscapes, and climatic conditions, have a direct influence in spatial continuity of tourist movements. As a result, design is a tool which can lead to sustainable approaches for spatial distribution in physical means, and program distribution within a time frame. Decisions in large scales, such as the integration of the context within the region, and in smaller scales, related to spatial itineraries and atmospheres, should be visionary to preserve the environment as a touristic asset for future generations as well.

### **1.2.1. Regional Tourism**

There are always studies done in tourism sector, which serve to a better understanding of existing situation in order to undertake further steps, thinking in long terms, as well as serving as an input to countries developments. It is a fact that it has an important role in regional development because of its economic, social and environmental impact.

According to Eurostat (European statistical studies), European residents aged 15 and above, made 1.2 billion tourism trips in 2014, for personal and business purposes. German tourists remain on top for outbound trips, having more than 87 billion trips abroad (30.2% of all Europeans outbound trips), being followed by UK, France etc. These are the countries which have the highest expenditure on international travels as well.

According to the European studies, the top destinations in EU (year 2014) are: Spain (260 million nights), Italy (187 million nights), France (131 million nights), UK (105 million nights), Austria, Germany, Greece, Croatia etc. According to tourism intensity, the most popular places were Mediterranean destinations: Malta, Cyprus, Croatia, etc. plus alpine and city destinations of Austria [Eurostat, 2014].

In economy sector, the ratio travel receipts to GDP was highest in: Croatia (17.2%), Malta (14.4%) and Cyprus (12.3%), confirming the importance of the tourism industry in these countries.

An important element in tourism statistics is the characteristics of tourism trips, which reflect the category of desirable tourism and the rates between the existing alternatives. The Eurostat studies (June 2015) represent that 48.9% of total tourism trips purpose is for holidays, leisure and recreation activities.

By this general overview, it is obvious that there exists a large demand of tourism and new touristic destinations to enrich the variety of places and offerings to the tourists. This regional development serves as an indicator for the cases like Albania, which are still in their early stages for having a consolidated vision and strategy. One of the cases is Croatia, a very good reference for tourism development in Balkan region, which has done a huge leap forward by increasing its service qualities, improving the infrastructure, and caring for the preservation of the identity of place, etc. For places with less economic development but with high potential of tourism activity, the sustainable approach and visionary actions can lead to create a new destination image that could meet the demands of tourists nowadays.

### **1.2.2. Tourism in Albania**

Tourism in Albania is one of the main generative elements for the financial improvement and stability. It started the first activities since 1950s till nowadays, with

relatively small rhythm of improvement; communist period was one of the main obstacles for the economical development and integrity in a world wide range. During communism Albania was less accessible for the international tourists, and its tourism was based mainly on domestic tourism activity. After 90s, Albania could be open to international tourism.

Within the last 20 years tourism sector has been gradually developing, having a higher touristic demand from international tourism. The arrivals of international tourists during 1995 were 41 000 tourists/ year. It had a decline during years 1997-2002, and then it experienced a constant increasing income [INSTAT, 2014]. According to Work Travel and Tourism Council Albania is expected to attract 3,809,000 international tourist arrivals in 2016 and a duplicated result by 2026 with 5,789,000 arrivals. These effects directly the GDP of the country, making the economy tourism based development [Work Travel and Tourism Council. 2016].

The geographic position of Albania, having a 476 km long coastline, and a mountainous range on the other side, represents the high potential of the country for a year-around tourism development. The touristic activities extend from high mountainous areas, to most exotic places along the southern coastal region with Mediterranean beaches and medieval traditional villages along the side. The dynamism of terrain offers alternatives for extreme sport lovers such as paragliding, mountain biking, hiking, canoeing, scuba diving, etc.

The challenges of the tourism industry in Albania are related with the sustainable visions. There is necessity for actions to preserve the authenticity of places, to maintain the environment and natural resources, and to have soft and physical access by improving the service infrastructure. The sensibility of the “designers” in all fields can point out the potentials of the country, consequently preserving and designing a competitive image in international domain.

### **1.2.2.1. Tourism in Albanian Riviera**

Southern Albania lies along the Ionian Sea with a coastline approximately 150 km long. The geography and settlement makes it a very attractive destination for different target groups of tourists. Mainly it is a rocky coast having on the back a high mountain range starting from Llogara till Saranda region. The sea is the main attraction; it can be the new “Beach Park” of Albania with a “pearl necklace” of attractive touristic places/locations like the castle near Porto Palermo [AKPT, 2015].

The tourism was firstly emerging after 1991 as a variable of business development. The season starts from mid-May till mid-September, with a booming of arrivals in July and August. Recently it has been experiencing a progressive development, with an activity almost totally focused in the coastline, beach tourism, while the other mountainous half (village side) is almost unwalked by tourists.

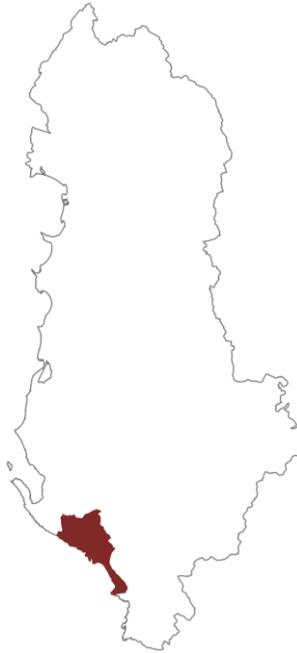
The agricultural tourism in Albania is mainly offered from rural areas, and in the case of Riviera it is an asset found in all villages. This potential has been undercover because of the lack of integrative tourism strategies and networks among these places. Inhabitants still are not open to wait tourists; they hesitate to invest because of the absence of most important service infrastructure: water supply and missing of electrical energy sometimes. Therefore, there is a lively freshness in these upper villages, where nature lovers can find themselves.

*“Small villages and localities which have been developed over recent years in tourism industry like tourism infrastructure, bed & breakfast, vacation home, hotels, bars, restaurant, etc, are located closer to the coastline, and tourism industry will give rise to economic, development, infrastructure and social development. Tourism industry will not only be during 3 months seasonal peak but also related with agro-tourism, sportive and cultural activities spread throughout the year”* [AKPT, 2015].

The challenge for having a year around tourism in Albanian Riviera is the integration of these two complementary halves, the rural and green setting with the blue coastline, to provide the neutral balance of tourism activity. To find visionary ways how to extend the season of arrivals in order to provide to the region a tourism development based economy, and assure incomes all year-around.

### **1.3. Riviera – Albania**

Riviera (*Fig.1*) is a much diversified region with a dynamic natural setting and cultural assets. There you can find the high mountains rising adjacent to the coastline, mirroring the deep Ionian Sea and creating a unique contextual atmosphere. On the hillside or hilltops there are traditional villages facing the sea and having direct access to it, generally with a fortified character and Mediterranean features. Under the shade of mountains, there is the other ponderous half of Riviera, an authentic rural setting with villages on the mountainside, hilltop or along valleys where Shushica River passes through.



*Figure 1.* Albanian Riviera [AKPT, 2014]

The high potentials of tourism in Albanian Riviera are because it has the opportunities to be open to a wide offer of tourism categories: natural, cultural, agricultural, sportive, beach, medical, religious tourism, etc. But, as mentioned above, the most bustling time is limited to summer season with beach tourism activities.

In this region there are many cultural-historical monuments, and traditional old settlements of the villages. Because of their physical setting they have a steep dwelling, sometimes stretched along the main road, sometimes positioned on the hilltop or mountainside, or following the topography of terrain. Residential areas have a very compact character due to the security issues, and because of saving more land for cultivation. As a result, the close footprints of the dwellings have created a network of windy narrow streets passing by their contours or topography lines.

Except the residential buildings, there is a series of cult-religious buildings as well. There are churches and monasteries which generally are positioned outside the village in prevalent positions. They are visiting spots which enrich the itinerary program of tourists visiting the Southern Coast.

Supplementary, there is the green network of agricultural fields throughout the region, another strong feature of it. The cultivated trees are mainly orange, mandarin, qitros, lemon, and olive. Olive somehow represents the southern region of Albania, because of its large cultivation all over the area. Outstanding is the coastline of Qeparo and Borsh village with olive cultivated welcoming fields; it highlights a different kind of atmosphere with agricultural values offered to the beach tourism sites.

Going deeper, behind the mountain line, there is a contrast landscape to the seaside region. There are big valleys, lively green and rural, still remaining wild and untouched by tourism or other economy based activities. In seaside the influence of neighbor countries, such as Greece and Italy, is evident in culinary or in the new constructed buildings, while on the way up to the mountains there exists a pure traditional life, setting and culinary which villagers still inherit it.

Consequently, the regional context is divided into coastal zone and the hinterland. Despite the diverse and contrast characters, there are traces of the interconnection among these villages. Therefore, there are large possibilities to integrate the zones to create a powerful destination image.

### **1.3.1. Hinterland and Coastal Villages Network**

The untapped wild nature, with old traditional settlements and welcoming community, still live in symbiosis in these small villages of Riviera. There are two typologies of them: the coastal hillside villages and the hinterland villages (behind the mountains).

The different geographical positions, cultural setting and economic activities they are based on makes them unique from each other.

*“The coastal villages have Mediterranean features characterized by a vernacular/self built architecture mostly by stone and usually in white color. Their layout is adapted to the landscape contours. The area is characterized by unique scenic landscape, rocky going steeply into the sea.”* [Pashako, 2015]. They share the same locality and proximity to the sea with the coastline, but they stand different and offer a different kind of atmosphere; more traditional and uninfluenced by contemporary changes.

After the fall of communism regime the phenomenon of emigration affected these villages, too. People run off for a better life in other countries around the world, leaving behind their homes and villages with almost 1/10 of the inhabitants. The villages today are characterized by a deep silence; it is only the summer season which brings back the strayed vitality of old times.

As seen in the map below (*Fig.2*), there are the coastal villages located along or closed to the main national road of the South (Palase, Gjilek, Dhermi, Ilias, Vuno, Old Himara, Old Qeparo and New Qeparo, Borsh, Piqeras, Lukove, Nivice-Buba), and the other part is spread over the area along the Shushica River valley and on the mountain side (Terbac, Vranisht, Bolene, Kallarat, Kuc, Pilur, Corraj, Fterre).

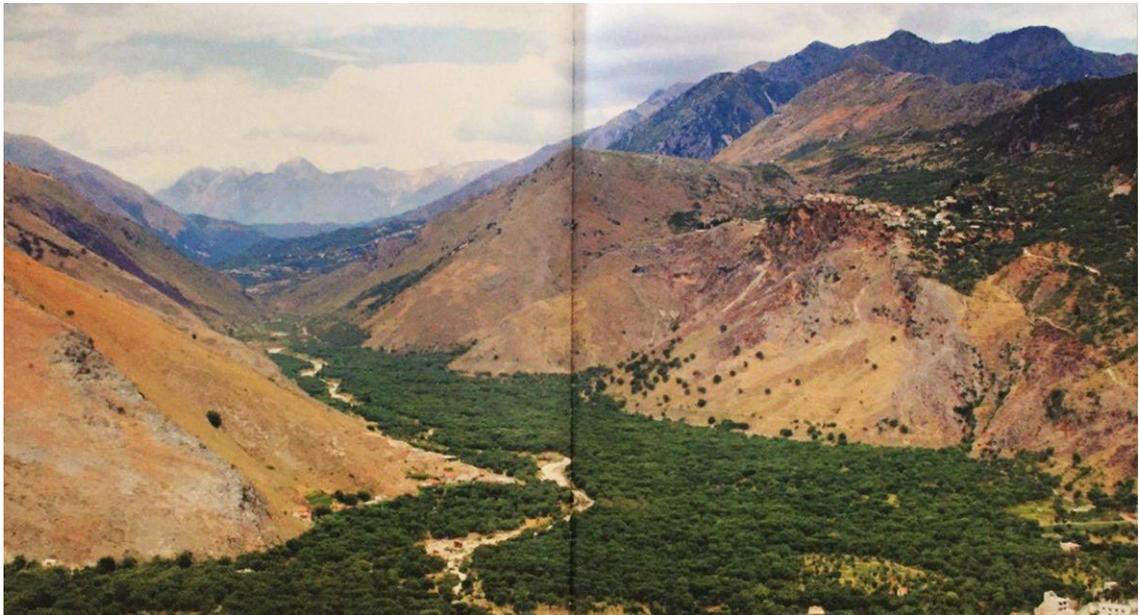


**Figure 2.** Riviera Regions' Villages - Coastal Villages and Hinterland

Looking them separately they have been hidden treasures of the South for centuries which together create a mosaic of juxtaposed supplementary nature; simultaneously a mellow and drastic temper.

### **1.3.2. Qeparo Village**

Qeparo is an old coastal village in Albanian Riviera. It is part of Himara Municipality administrative unit, 14 km away from Himara. The village has an outstanding context and location in an attitude about 450 m above the sea level (*Fig.3*). Qeparo is a village where the mountain shade, the sea breeze, the sound of history and the taste of fresh products (olive) are experienced at once.



**Figure 3.** Aerial photo of Qeparo Village and Kudhes Canion (copyrights to Alket Islami, 2016)

Before, the village was located on Kastelli hill, and then the villagers shifted a little down where the old setting is still remaining, because of cold winter and lack of water resources. In 1957, the main national road of the southern coast was constructed, increasing the chances for development and trade chances among the region. In addition, the construction of water supply channel passing by the road was another reason which influenced the villagers to move and settle down to the coastline. Consequently, Qeparo was split into two parts: Old Qeparo, and New Qeparo. New Qeparo is like a basement, where all village activities and services are concentrated, leaving behind the Old village in stillness/forgotness. After the transitional period, the village faced long standing impacts regarding population and urban structure.

Many people left the village for emigration purposes, reducing the inhabitants' number to a minimum (approx. 2/3 of the total). The ones who remained back tried to develop and improve their living conditions; they built new houses and occupied spaces without any criteria. The urban sprawl appeared mainly after year 2000, when the region started to have a fast growing tourist activity as a beach holiday destination. Informal settlements are a disadvantage for the contextual potentials; they have no vernacular architecture attributes, no spatial integrity and lack of building standards. Apart from the uncontrolled urban development, the village has a unique context, with a large olive cultivated field next to the seashore, which has been an attraction for many tourists throughout the years. It gives another character to the village and contributes to spatial variations and programs as well.

A very potential, but forgotten asset is the Old Village of Qeparo, which stands on deep roots, resisting to all political, social and demographical changes. It is a testimony of a long history, embracing a deep serenity. Emigration phenomenon affected mostly this part of the village, where now live no more than 80-100 inhabitants, mainly older people. The houses are in degradation phase, abandoned and empty (*Fig.4*), and the silence dominates in each street and corner of this age-long village.



*Figure 4.* An abandoned house in Qeparo Village

Even though, the architectural asset and authenticity of the village still postures on the hilltop looking the wide blue panorama of Ionian Sea and the evergreen valley. *“The rural traditional buildings date from the eighteenth century to the mid-twentieth century. The settlements have a more ancient origin and they reflect the ottoman influence in the urban organization. The organization was made up of two zones: inhabited and economic/productive one.”* [Pashako, 2015]. The physical location and visual perception has a fortification character (*Fig.5*), with houses coming on top of each other and below the residential area there were cultivated terraces.



*Figure 5.* Aerial photo of the village (copyrights to Alket Islami, 2016)

The center of the village is the only consistent public space, where people used to gather for different purposes and activities. There is a high plane tree, and buildings of institutional functions, lastly active before 90s. The old village had a library, 2 cafe shops, and a cultural center. From the main square, there are spread the windy roads throughout the village (the main axis bring to this main gathering point).

The urban structure has a concentrated and organic character and development. The streets are narrow and dense with cobblestone pavement; they follow the topography lines or the boundaries of compacted dwellings. The buildings remain old and authentic with the typical traditional stone construction, waiting to welcome the people back and become vivid as they used to be. They have a compacted design, with small rooms and a small garden; the green gardens or division walls make the transition from one dwelling to another.

Qeparo has the potential for combining a variety of tourism typology which makes it more sustainable and attractive in tourism market. It has an easy access to the sea and among the surrounded villages. There is a hiking-trail connecting Kudhes village, which is behind the mountainous elevation, to Old Qeparo and going down to the New Village. The itinerary spreads through the national road on the south to Borsh Village, and on the

North to Porto Palermo, Pilur, and Himara. The soft infrastructure is an existing value of the zone which provides different mediums of physical approach to the village.

A wider range of tourists is increasing year by year, and the space promises for further development potentials. A first step has been undertaken by a French architect who owns a house in Old Qeparo. He renovated it and opened to the tourism activities as a B&B.

Some of the residents have started to think seriously for involving in tourism market and provide good quality services. They have been influenced from experiences abroad, in Greece, Italy, France, etc. and think to invest more in their hometown. Some of the emigrants think to come back and renovate their old houses, but still they don't have the assurance that the things will work. Nevertheless, it is a fact that the village has started to be more open to tourism alternatives, looking forward to provide good living standards and be more innovative and environmentally sensitive.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **CASE STUDIES**

#### **2.1. Introduction**

Planning for touristic destinations with historical background and rich natural values needs a very sustainable approach to preserve as much the uniqueness and all relevant resources for future development as well. The case like Albania, which is an underdevelopment country, often needs to refer to the cases with an early/old experience in the tourism sector. Convenient cases for Qeparo Village, related to the contextual character and history, are the Mediterranean villages of Greece, Italy, France or Croatia, which have a powerful tourism potential, basing a good part of their economy mainly in tourism activities. Eze Village, with the upper old village and new settlements along the coastal line of Provence, France, is a good example that demonstrates a model with an extended touristic activity throughout the year; it has a good combination of beach holidays, cultural guides and natural itineraries. A relevant reference for the interconnection/trails network is Cinque Terre of Italian Coastline, five historical villages which supplement each other by having a variety of accessibility mediums from one village to another. The spatial planning approaches and the operation of good standardized services lead to social and economical development improvements of specific regions.

### 2.1.1. Cote d'Azur – Eze Village

Eze is a small Mediterranean village located on the Provence Region of Southern French Riviera, composed of two distinct areas: Eze Village and Eze-Bord-de-mer; together they form one single administrative unit with about 3000 inhabitants [Eze Tourism Office website, 2016]. Since nowadays, it has been one of the top destinations of Mediterranean Coastal Region, having tourism based economic development and as a result, an increasing number of inhabitants as well.

One of the main touristic resources of this hilltop village is the medieval architecture of the setting; archways, narrow cobblestone streets, restored stone houses, small shaded piazzas and fountains all together integrated within the surroundings. Exploring the village offers unique experiences, where occasionally opens up to screen the panoramic view of the Mediterranean Sea (*Fig.6*), and on the other side it offers the possibility to enjoy along the way the art, crafts and local products in many small shops and boutiques [Eze Tourism Office website, 2016].



**Figure 6.** Eze Village (copyrights to Pierre, 2014)

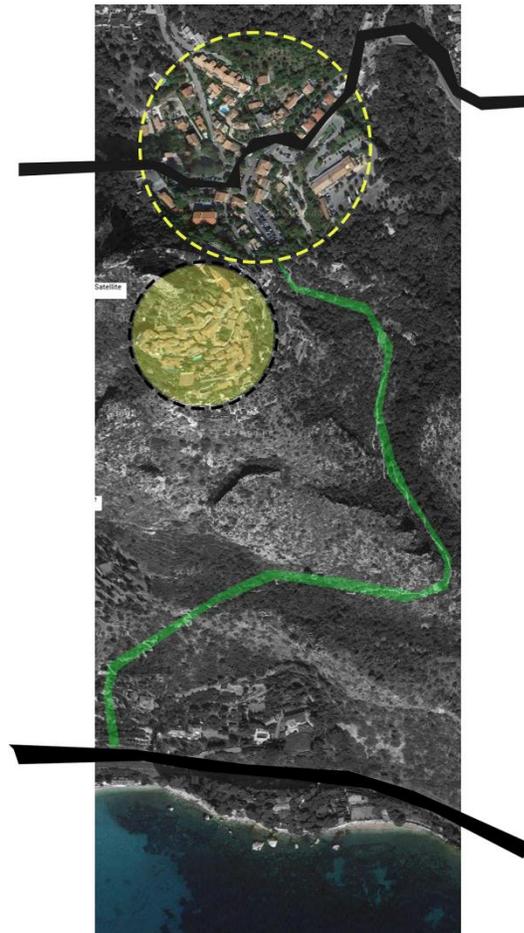
The organic urban structure makes the spatial continuity flowing and more dynamic. It invites to walk the typical narrow streets which end up with little plazas and public spaces; they serve like stops for refreshment and relaxing, offering view spots or sitting places. The navigation through the village is easier because of the bricked path and handrails used along the way.

There are details of interventions, such as material selection and implementation methods, which emphasize the sensible approach to preserve the authentic atmosphere of the setting; it is visible in the maintenance of the old buildings construction. The lights are used to transmit the feeling of textures even during a night walk. Moreover, the good lighting system makes the village feeling more secure and inviting during late hours. The color is another element which integrates perfectly with the façade background, sometimes with clambering flower or window shading covers. Furthermore, the colorful atmosphere diffuses throughout the streets with arts-crafts ateliers and shops, being an exhibiting medium for the local products of the village.



*Figure 7.* Green Terraces of Eze Village [Gail Jessen, 2014]

The positive spatial qualities, the green terraces and balconies (*Fig.7*) which tend to be integrated with the blue panorama and natural surroundings, are a potential that the terrain offers to the village settlements. Eze has an altitude up to 400 m above the sea level, positioned on a cliff, which overlooks the Mediterranean Sea [Eze Tourism Office website, 2016].



**Figure 8.** Juxtaposition of the Eze Village

On the way to the top of the village, an exotic botanic garden is built in the ruins of the castle containing a rich variety of cactus, aloe and rare plants from different places of the world. Meantime, on the way down, there is a green path (*Fig.8*) which connects the upper village with the down seaside village; for the hikers and nature lovers it is another activity offered from the steep terrain of Eze setting [Eze Tourism Office website, 2016].

Juxtaposed to the seaside, the upper village offers a richness of authentic cultural, historical and natural atmospheres; the coastal village has a more dynamic character, with the beach activities and water sports like: catamaran, kayaking and windsurfing. Thinking in terms of sustainability and long term perspectives, the physical location of both villages is a good advantage regarding the seasonality extension for tourism activities. Eze has a similar pattern to the villages of Qeparo, Old and New one. Parallel to Qeparo case, it is a physical/concrete instance to comprehend how a tourism model may be successful and longstanding in a wide international market.

### **2.1.2. Cinque Terre**

*“Cinque Terre runs along the Mediterranean coastline between Genoa and Tuscany, where the hills are softened and carved into green terraces that descend toward the water. In the thirteenth century, the citizens of the Levante Riviera transformed their rocky environment into arable land, creating nine miles (14.5 kilometers) of terraced landscape with over 1,200 miles (1,930 kilometers) of stone drywall buttresses.”* [World Monuments Fund, 2016].

These five small Roman towns of Ligurian region: Riomaggiore, Manarola, Corniglia, Vernazza and Monterosso, have a unique sculpted settlement with pastel-colored buildings, emerging from the coastal cliffs and green landscapes, adjacent to the blue panoramas of the sea. The cultural landscape is a very good example which shows the way they have been able to shape it without destroying its delicate ecology. In 1973, the Italian government marked Cinque Terre as a valuable national landscape by bestowing it with a Document of Controlled Origin (D.O.C.), and in 1997 the region was added to the UNESCO World Heritage List [World Monuments Fund, 2016].

Cinque Terre have a good urban setting despite their small land area and population. They have a concentrated urban character, where the buildings are constructed adjacently or on top of one another along the sloped and steep hills; they share a wall or a space creating interesting atmospheres. The common space is generally a recreational area, a parking lot or a circulation street, where the residents enjoy the strong sense of community because of this shared space and opportunities of interactions with the neighbors or passing by visitors.



**Figure 9.** Cinque Terre trail map (Cinque Terre website, 2016)

The colorful details and backgrounds, the historic stairway streets, the intimacy being away from urbanized commercial cities, and the possibility the terrain offers to explore from one town to another are very powerful motives for touristic attractions. Cinque Terre’s network of coastal paths is a potential that offers a coastal panorama meanwhile experiencing the five villages from one to another (Fig.9). The most main trail is the connecting one between 5 villages known as the “Blue Trail” (Sentiero Azzuro). On the other side, there are other ways to approach the villages: by train or by boat. The variety

of accessibility mediums created different alternatives to experience and approach the villages, at the same time the high possibility to meet the demands of different target groups.

## **2.2. Ongoing Projects**

There have been many studies, investments and implementations in the coastal area. The villages have displayed the possibility to have B&B's, as there is one implemented case in Qeparo. It is conceivable and imaginable to see such renovations and offers in these picturesque villages like Vuno, Old Himara or other villages along.

The attraction of tourists is not the main goal; it could be easily achieved by a good marketing strategy. The vision consists on attracting them by offering the context as an authentic asset with a variety of activities and services meeting the international standards. The services consist on infrastructure (physical access, water supply, and electrical energy), accommodation (B&B, guesthouse, hotels and hostels), consumption (restaurant, market, ateliers, etc) and public spaces (green areas, sitting benches, fountains, etc).

There are many governmental initiatives to cooperate with national and international experts to plan strategies for prosperity and economical development of the Southern Coastal Region. There have been implemented projects for conservation and restoration of some houses and roofs from “World Bank” funds, roads and vehicular infrastructure, promenades and village centers.

Ongoing projects for the Riviera Region, mainly for the case of Qeparo, consist on sustainable approaches for improving the capacity and services of the zone to assure a good position in the market, and moreover providing a better life quality for the community. “Integrated Sustainable Development of the Southern Coastal Region”

implemented by GIZ, “The Traveler and Olive Grove” a pilot project and workshop in Qeparo Village implemented by Embassy of Netherlands, and “World Bank” fund for renovation of the New Qeparo houses are the recent projects which are still working on the area.

### **2.2.1. “Southern Coastal Development Region” by GIZ**

“Integrated Sustainable Development of Southern Coastal Region” is a project Funded by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development and implemented by the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit GmbH (GIZ), which supports the sustainable economic development in coastal regions as well as creation of visions and strategies for rural populations. The context extends mainly in the municipalities of Vlora, Himara and Konispol.

The project, in collaboration with key actors and instruments in national and international level, contributes in drafting of tourism strategies and at the same time to the elaboration of spatial development plan for the coastal region. Moreover, it supports the business models of rural tourism such as guesthouse accommodation and services, mountain biking and hiking trails, culture tours, and local products development.

The piloting models for sustainable tourism consist on having final designed and implemented products, and branding and marketing strategies. The project has been engaging the local stakeholders as well, in order to serve to the sustainable visions of the project and be more efficient in long terms.

### **2.2.2. The Traveler and Olive Grove – The Netherlands**

Cityförster and CSR Netherlands, having studies and extensive contact with stakeholders in Albania, brought together an international team of specialists and local key actors from government and the different fields to work together on:

*An integrated oncoming to agricultural and tourism development on the level of “area, value chain and individual company.”*

The project aim is to support the development of a sustainable year round local economy, through strategies for establishing a pilot project through the merging different sector’s work.

The main purpose is to create insight among potent stakeholders on potential for sustainable options to mass tourism based on worst and best practices overseas and in Albania. Moreover this mission's outcome will be the understanding of possibilities and practical implications of implementing a viable tourism strategy in a specific locality (pilot area), working on progress of agro tourism in a narrow sense, by thinking widely, also on the level of accommodation, by linking agro production, infrastructural planning, spatial design (*Fig.10*), and tourism to highlight the interdependency likewise the potential to create added value for all three sectors.



## **CHAPTER 3**

### **MATERIALS AND METHODS**

#### **3.1. Materials**

The materials used for this study were mainly maps, statistics, and governmental reports on existing situation and future visions, as well as personal observations and experiences within the region. Supplementary was the research on the case studies and ongoing projects, which correlate with the final proposal and serve as a guideline.

The very first basic materials referred to the context analysis were the produced maps taken from ARCH 402 archive (2015). Moreover, in a larger context, there were detailed reports for the whole region in Ministry of Urban Development website: Integrated Cross Sectorial Plan, AKPT (NTPA); they served to understand better the context in regional level. Going parallel, there was needed the tourism statistic in regional and country level, to reinforce the existing situation and future demands.

Additional and very relevant materials were also the ones gathered from ongoing projects which cover the study zone of the thesis: Integrated Sustainable Development of Southern Coastal Region (ISDSCR) implemented by GIZ (hiking trails, mountain biking trails, reports on Himara villages, forums for B&Bs and Tourist Information Office, etc), “Traveler and the Olive Grove” by the Netherlands Embassy in Albania, as well as Atelier Albania Summer School book “Farmers with a View”.

Finally, supporting all the materials gathered from other studies and works, the personal observation was expended in two site visits (March, and June 2016). There were done many interviews with local people, and at the same time gathered some physical and visual experience of the terrain and village setting.

### **3.2. Methods**

This study is based on a detailed analysis of the area. It considers geographical position, historical background, natural and cultural assets, and future development strategies. The first information was settled since the 2015 studio class of ARCH 402; the maps, and the historical information of the zone. The second step was a first site trip in some of the coastal villages: Palase, Qeparo, and Lukove.

An internship experience in ISDSCR project of GIZ, led to a better understanding of the context; there were done many forums in the Southern Coastal Region. The reports of international and national experts were a very supportive guideline for an understanding of the history, and critics of recent developments in the region of Himara.

The participation in the workshop of “Traveler and the Olive Grove” project of Qeparo was a basis for developing further ideas on what could be improved in Old Qeparo spatial planning. There were discussions with the project developers (architect, landscape designer, and business model developer) for having their critical opinion regarding Qeparo and Albanian Riviera.

Meanwhile, the theoretical references such as “Architecture and Tourism” by Lasansky and McLaren, “Space of Flows, Space of Places” of Castells, etc. were a literature basis for supporting a more scientific approach on urban strategies and tourism development.

Before concluding to the final proposal, a second trip on site was done to understand and catch the details of the old village of Qeparo in the first days of summer season. There was gathered many information from interviews of local people, which helped to understand more of the historical background, the urban shifts during the years, and the abandonment phenomenon, and also knowing more about the everyday life of Qeparoians.

Qualitative information was also the old editions of Cultural Monuments publications in Albania, Emin Riza studies in the Southern Coast village's architecture. They were the more detailed and touchable part of the Riviera villages, with historical backgrounds, and drawings of plans, sections and views of some of the buildings/houses.

The research process was diverse and intense, and all the information was valid for each certain aspect of the village development.

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **PROJECT PROPOSAL**

#### **4.1. Introduction**

The aim of this study for Albanian Riviera is to find solutions how tourism season can be extended through architectural means/tools. It is focused in Himara Region/Municipality which has a tourism based economic development. Thinking in regional level there can be proposed strategies and necessary precautions, but for a specific/concrete development there should be implemented a real model in order to raise the awareness of people of their local potentials, and give a reason to believe for future development possibilities. The case study will be Qeparo Village which will be like a catalizator for other villages' further development as well.

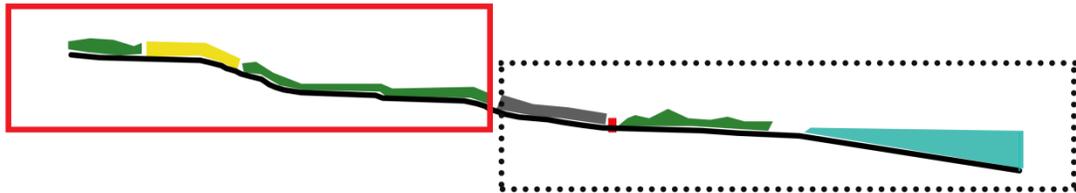
The approach has a sustainable character: it derives a better social and economical life quality by engaging local people in an active tourism market, it aims to preserve the tradition and local assets, and finally, it is environmentally sensitive by taking in consideration natural assets. The combination of different fields, architecture, agriculture, tourism, entrepreneurship/economy and social development, provides an integrated development which leads to more effective and long perspective products/outcomes.

The most important phase of the project is analysis: analysis of geographical location and natural assets, urban morphology, community life/social activity, and implemented

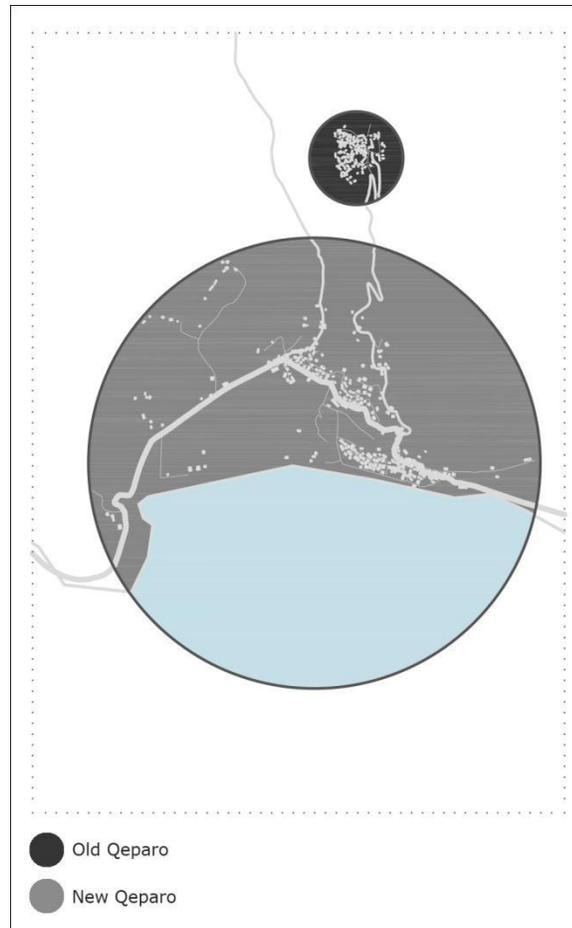
and ongoing projects. A well understanding of the real situation and current proposals makes a good foundation for the project proposal. It consists of two main cores: strategy and spatial design. The idea is to reactivate every possible unit and corner of the village, and create a visionary and applicable transition from a non active village, to an active one.

## 4.2. Qeparo Analysis

Qeparo is a potential asset of Albanian Riviera, as many researchers and experts refer to it as “the gate” of Riviera. Throughout this study, there are mentioned the geographical potentials of this village, cultural and natural resources, and possible interventions that occurred till nowadays. The composition of two villages (*Fig.11-12*) with different character, situated in a rural area along the coastline, is an asset in itself that has been a special attraction for different tourists and entrepreneurs.

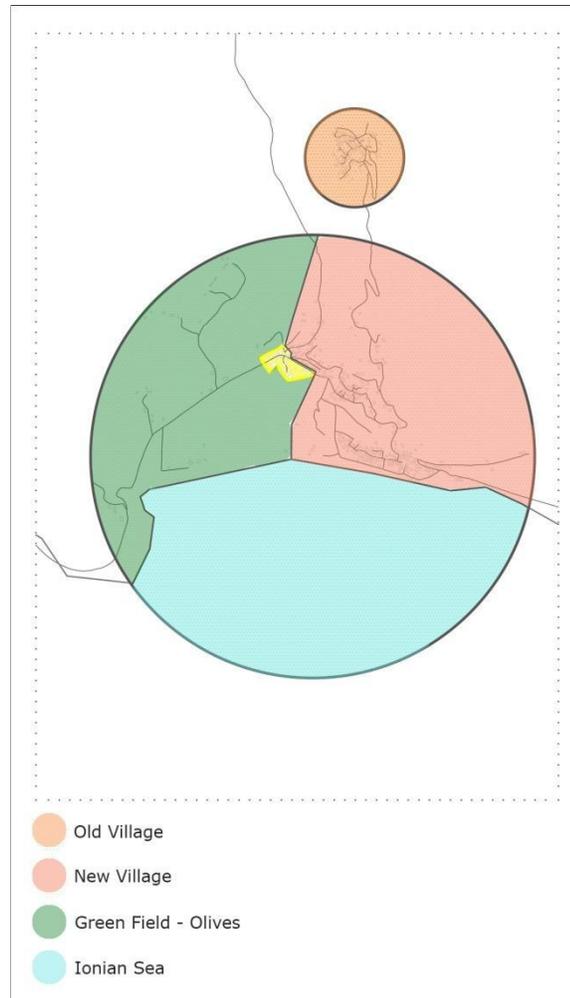


*Figure 11.* Section of Qeparo – Upper and New Qeparo



**Figure 12.** Old Qeparo and New Qeparo - Figure-Ground

As a coastal village, Qeparo has a highly active tourism during summer period, starting from the end of May till mid-September. The activities, accommodations and services are located in the New Qeparo settlement which has a direct access to the sea (*Fig.13*). This is because the population of the village is concentrated along the main road down to the coastline. Qeparoi-ans settled there after 1950's for a better development and integration with the economic activities of the Southern Region. After 90's informal settlements spread over the area, being a disadvantage to the coastal village character, by enlarging the footprint of built areas on this wild and pristine nature and going controversy to environmental sensitiveness.



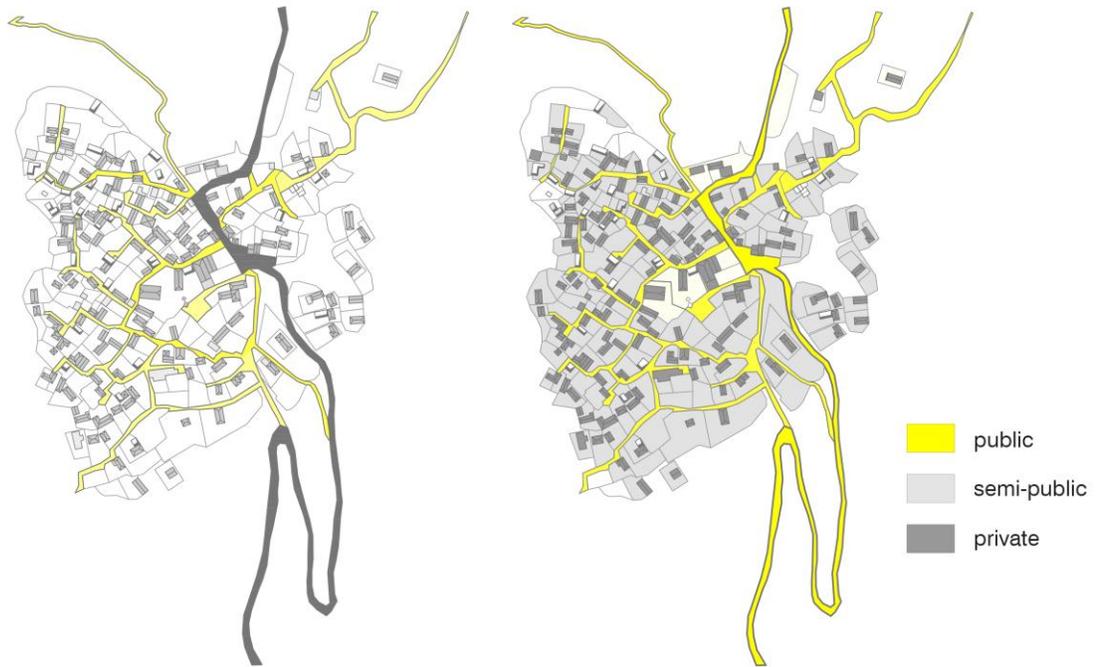
**Figure 13.** Qeparo Land-use Diagram

In contrast, there stands solely crowned the Old Village of Qeparo. It is a pure historical settlement, with architectural, cultural and natural values. Compacted stone house, the cobblestone curvy roads, olives and green terraces, and the wide beautiful panoramic view it offers from above, are 5 minutes away from New Qeparo. Even though it is close in time frequency, it stands in forgottness with a silent atmosphere in each corner of it. There are a few houses lived by old people, and only in summer you can hear the sounds of children running along the village streets; it is the only season when emigrants come to have holidays back in their hometown.

In the map below (*Fig.14*) the figure ground highlights the organic spatial quality of the village, which makes authentic and non-monotonic. The arched paths and stone houses, where many Albanian films have been played, offer a museal atmosphere. The only gathering place of the village is its center, where currently there is the only caffe which opens during summer season.

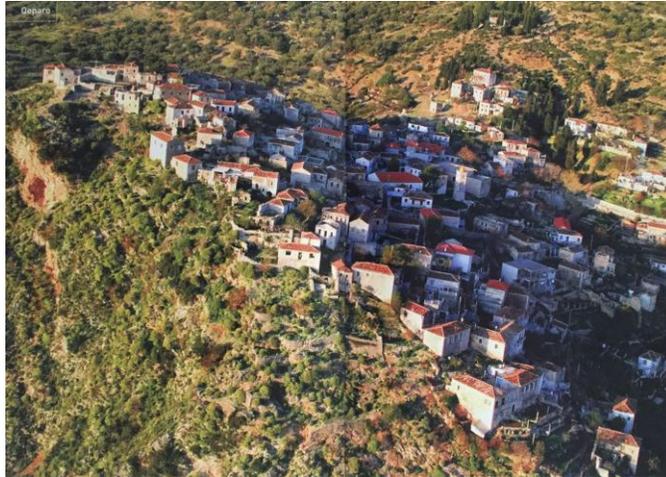


**Figure 14.** Old Qeparo, existing buildings and parcels

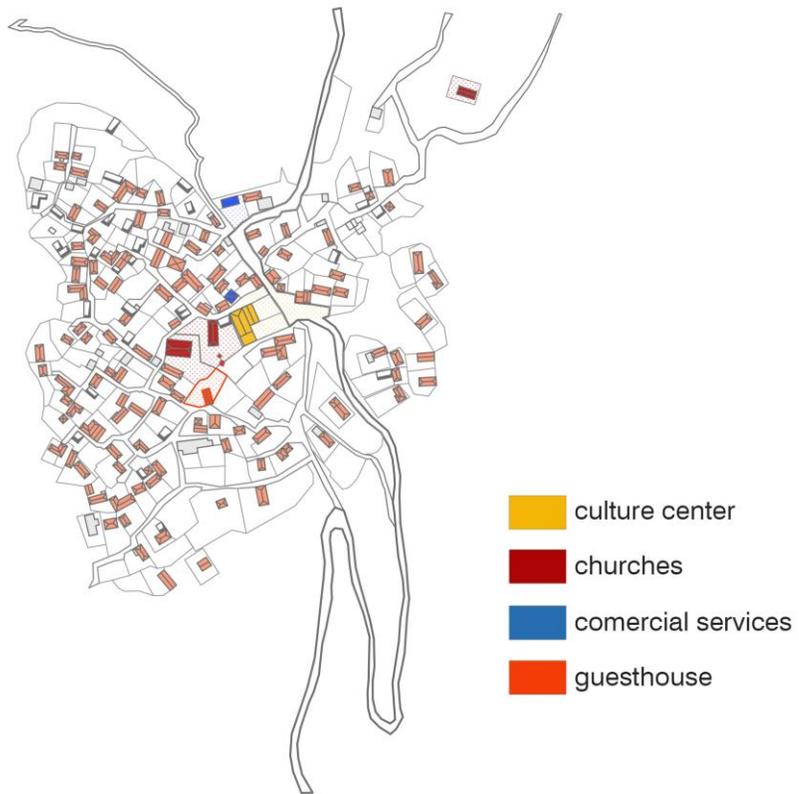


**Figure 15.** Old Qeparo, road network and hierarchy of privacy

Although different, they are complementary assets that should be integrated to create a completed competitive image in tourism market. Qeparo has the potentials to offer beach tourism, agricultural tourism, natural and sportive tourism, cultural tourism, and religious tourism as well. Possessing all these potentials is a contradiction to the poor reality of tourism activity calendar. The problem is that the village is not offering relevant services and spaces for tourists to gather and stay longer, therefore spend more money. There have been many curious tourists, who have reached the old village, and loved to stay longer in that wild settlement. The lack of public spaces (*Fig.15-17*), main services, and guiding signs has leded them to find the way back down the village, confined only with some photographs.

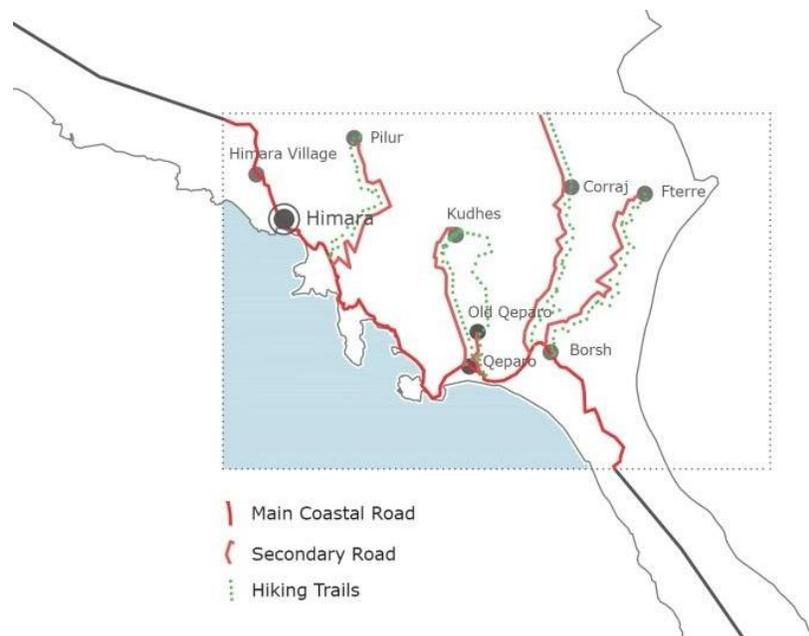


**Figure 16.** Old Qeparo on the hillside (copyrights to Alket Islami, 2016)



**Figure 17.** Landuse, Qeparo Village

As mentioned in Chapter 2, the ongoing projects are trying to activate step by step the potentials of the village. The GIZ project, ISDSCR, has been doing many trainings and evaluations for hiking trails, mountain biking trails, guesthouses and tourist information offices. They have an integrated and sustainable approach, which has been beneficial to the region, but still has to fulfill the next coming steps. Currently they have approved the green connections between the villages, to enrich the accessibility medium for different target groups. As seen in the map below (Fig.18), in Qeparo there is a hiking and mountain biking trail which connects Kudhes to Old Qeparo, and continues down to the main coastal bypass. This promotes sport activities, an added value to the village.



**Figure 18.** Accessibility of Qeparo with surrounding villages

In collaboration with this project, the Summer Academy of Atelier Albania published a new perspective for the villages to be involved in tourism. In “Farmers with a View” there are different proposals for possible activities that can integrate the village into a lively atmosphere. Furthermore, they have proposed possible guesthouses, particularly

the case of Qeparo (*Fig.19*), to engage the local people in an exchange relationship with the tourists.



*Figure 19.* Guesthouses - Old Qeparo [AASA, 2015]

On the other hand, “The Traveler and Olive Grove” is an outcome of different expertise to design a good model of Qeparo. They mainly concentrate in the New Village, where they propose to be the base centre of relevant touristic and community services, with other recreational programs around. They consider the shepherd guide, the eco-camping possibility under the olive trees along the coast, the agricultural products and small business models. They propose to convert the existing school to a Hospitality/Tourism School, which will be a strong potential for the local youth especially.

Thinking in overall, there is much potential, and all the experts come with long term perspectives on developing the Village. But still the Old Village is remaining on “the

hilltop”, away and partially integrated, but mainly it stands like a “museum village” where you can have a walk around and then go back down the coast.

### **4.3. Project Proposal**

The project proposal is elaborated in two cores:

1. Strategy
2. Spatial Design

The analysis and the existing situation were an important basis to decide the direction of the project proposal. The coastal village is an existing gravitational point which has been the only known developing force of Qeparo. The opposite gravity which is still remaining undercover, the Old Qeparo, needs to be concretely/seriously considered to create a year round balance.

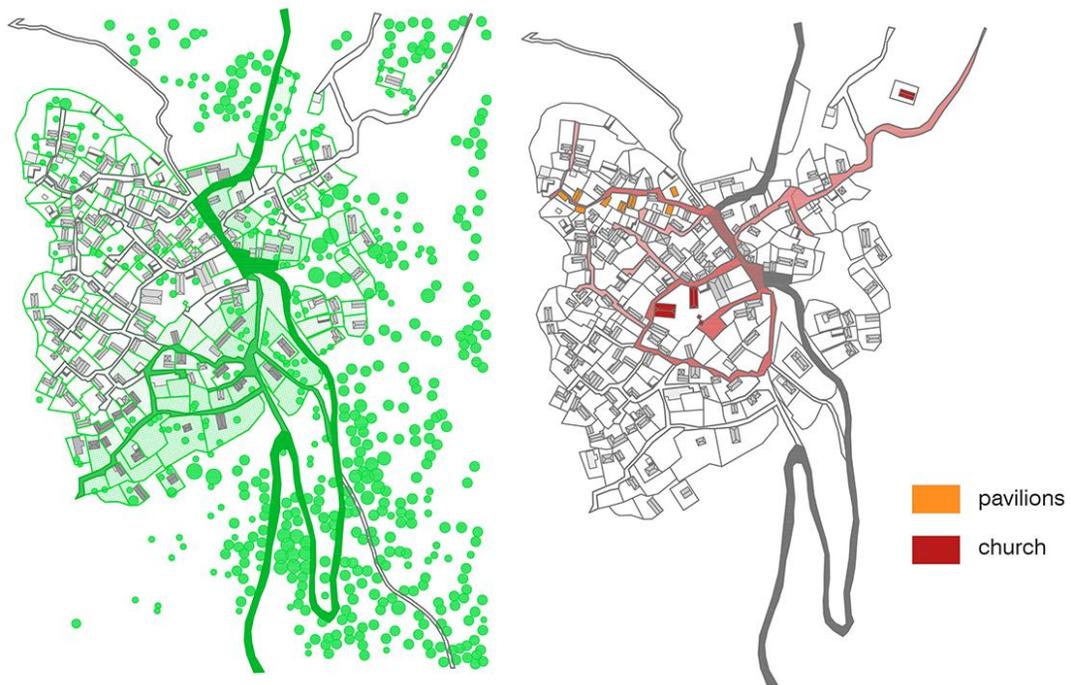
The category of programmatic and spatial design is divided into public setting and private setting. To bring an abandoned village into tourism market the development of both public and private spaces should go in parallel. In the case of Qeparo, the private sector has been particularly studied and analyzed, such as guesthouse proposals. The problem which still keeps the village “away” and non-lively is the lack of a public space network and an activity calendar. There are possible guesthouses (active houses of local people) which can be opened to the tourists who want to spend a night up in the village. The crucial point is to bring out the potentials of the village and offer them a program they would stay for.

The public spaces are like breathing spots which make the village easily perceptible and enrich the navigating experience. They offer the possibility to stop and crystallize a memory or a moment, to frame a view, to participate in community life or in a specific

activity. Additionally, these need to be elaborated and integrated with certain activities/programs along the way to provide a diverse experience throughout the village.

#### 4.3.1. Green Line, Culture Line, and Village Center

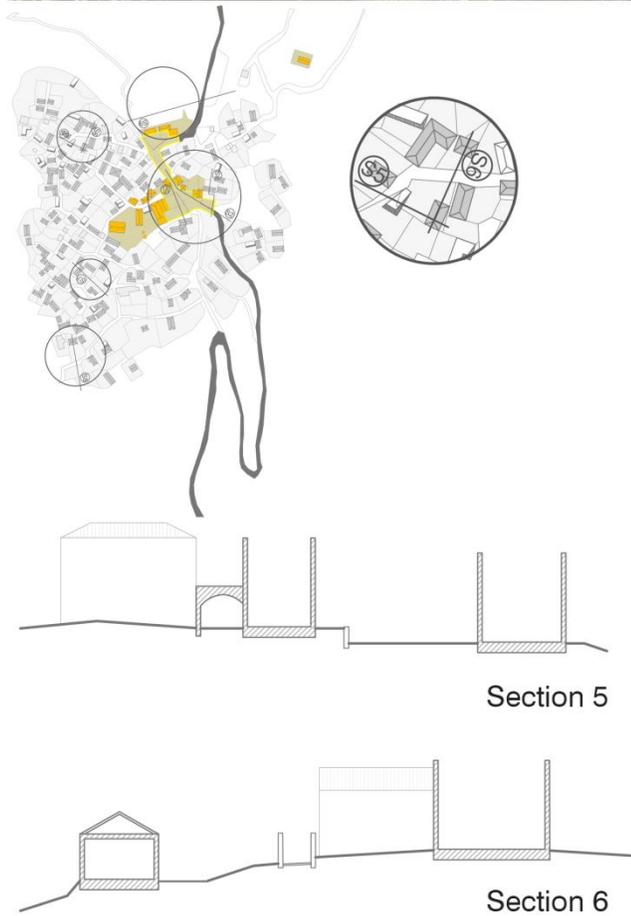
The conceptual design of public routes is going after the basis of the existing context. The village doesn't offer only traditional old buildings and a beautiful cultural atmosphere; it has a colorful and vivid landscape which expands the possibilities of activity programs. The proposal brings out a village of two approaches: the green path and the historical/cultural path (*Fig.20*).



**Figure 20.** Green Line and Culture Line, Proposal (Old Qeparo)

The historical zone is an internal space of the village which invites to experience the compact village, with narrow roads, archway paths (*Fig.21*), local ateliers and artistic products, and opening spots with the Ionian panorama. On the other side, the green path

offers a complementary program itinerary, mainly focused in experiencing the other potential of a rural setting: the farming life and agricultural products, such as olive or lemon. Because of the steep terrain it offers the possibility to have some green gardening terraces which can easily be accessed by tourists who want to taste them closely (*Fig.22-26*).

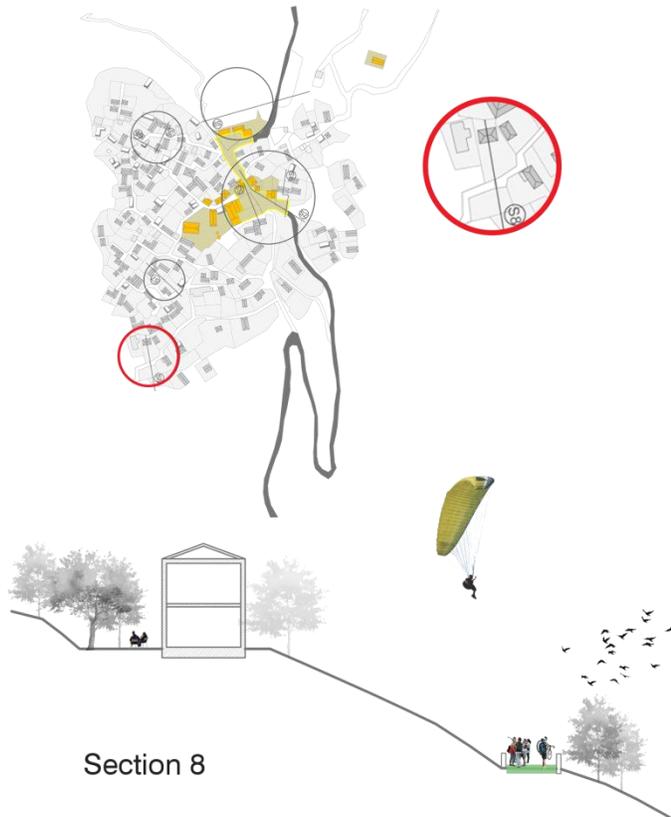


*Figure 21.* Culture line partial sections (archway path), existing situation (Old Qeparo)



Section 8

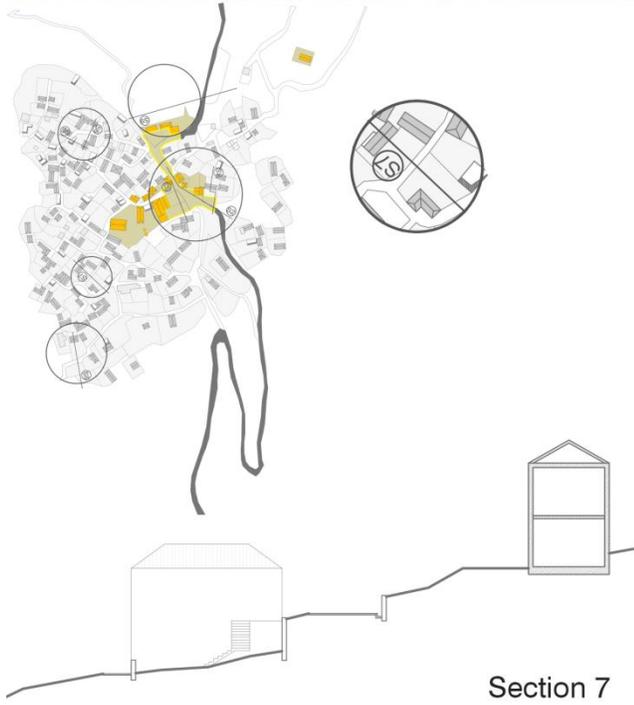
**Figure 22.** Green line partial section, existing situation (Old Qeparo)



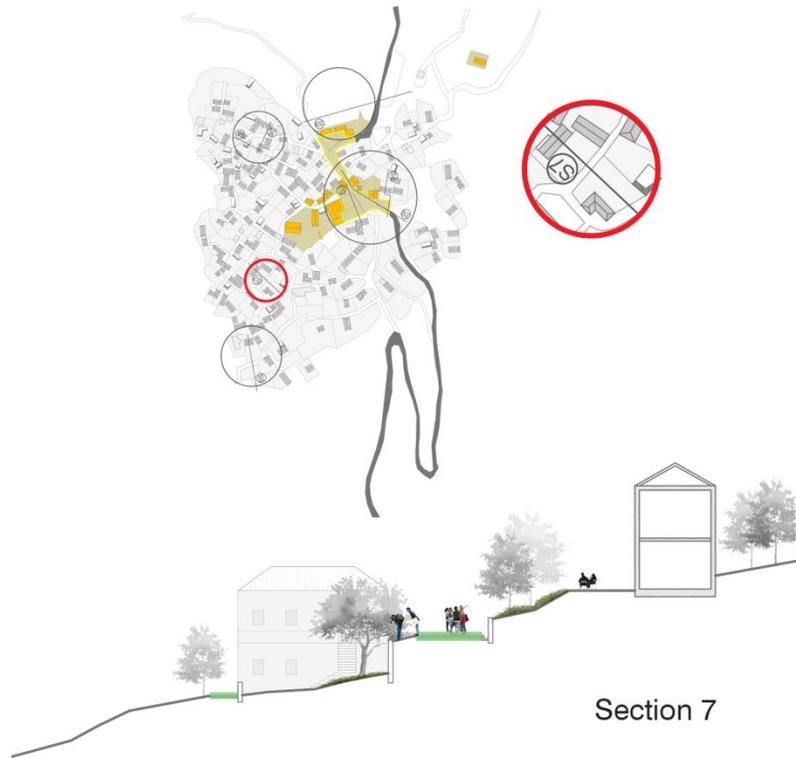
**Figure 23.** Green line partial section, proposed (Old Qeparo)



*Figure 24.* Green Line, Collage (Old Qeparo)



**Figure 25.** Green line partial section, existing situation (Old Qeparo)

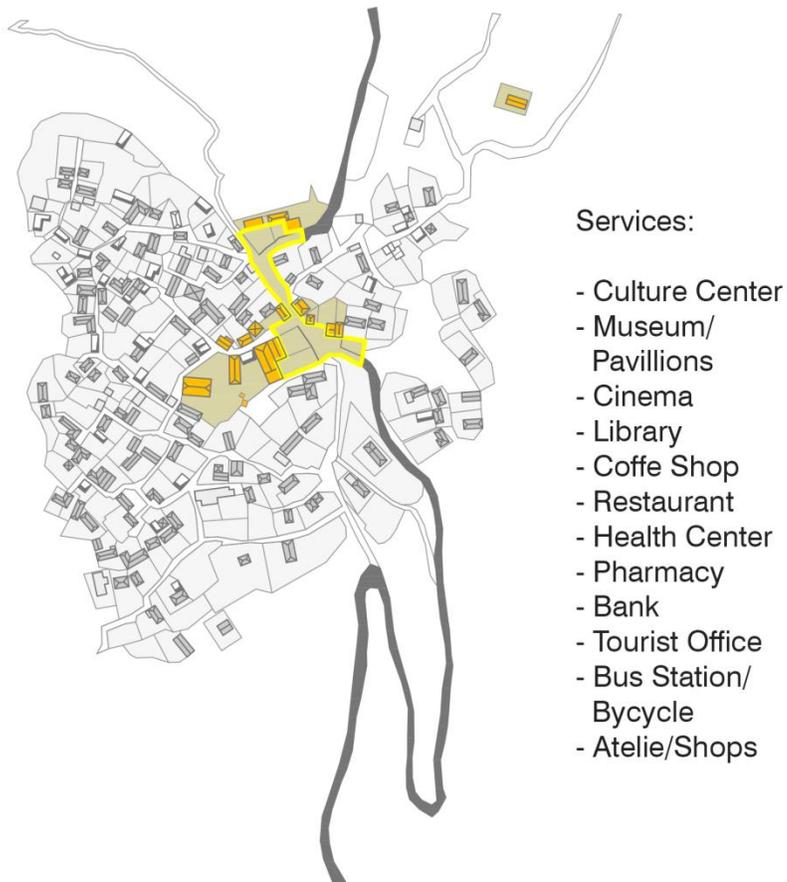


**Figure 26.** Green line partial section, proposed (Old Qeparo)

The offer and activities make people stay, and this is another essential issue. Despite the possible guesthouses which have been proposed by AASA, there is a need to extend te capacity for people visiting the Old Qeparo. Some of the units which remain empty can

be converted into a hostel for tourists. This is because there are different categories of tourists, and it is a necessity to provide some privacy of accommodation (not to be in touch with a local family). On the other hand, the hostels and hotels can offer other quality of services: conference room/meeting room which can serve to different workshops or meetings that can be held in a touristic village (it extends the range of activities not just for touristic purposes), restaurants and shops.

Behind what a private hotel can offer, there is a need of other services in the village (*Fig.27-30*): a medical room (a nurse or a doctor), a pharmacy, a bank automatic, a small info point (informing for transport hours, hiking trails, activity calendar, and the current offers for accommodation-existing empty rooms), at least two cafes and restaurants, a small library and a cinema, and other programs (showrooms, ateliers, shops, pavilions) which serve to the activities of the village.



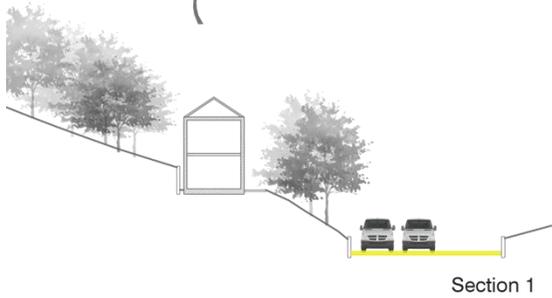
**Figure 27.** Services and Public Spaces, Proposal (Old Qeparo)



**Figure 28.** Services and Public Units, Proposal (Old Qeparo)



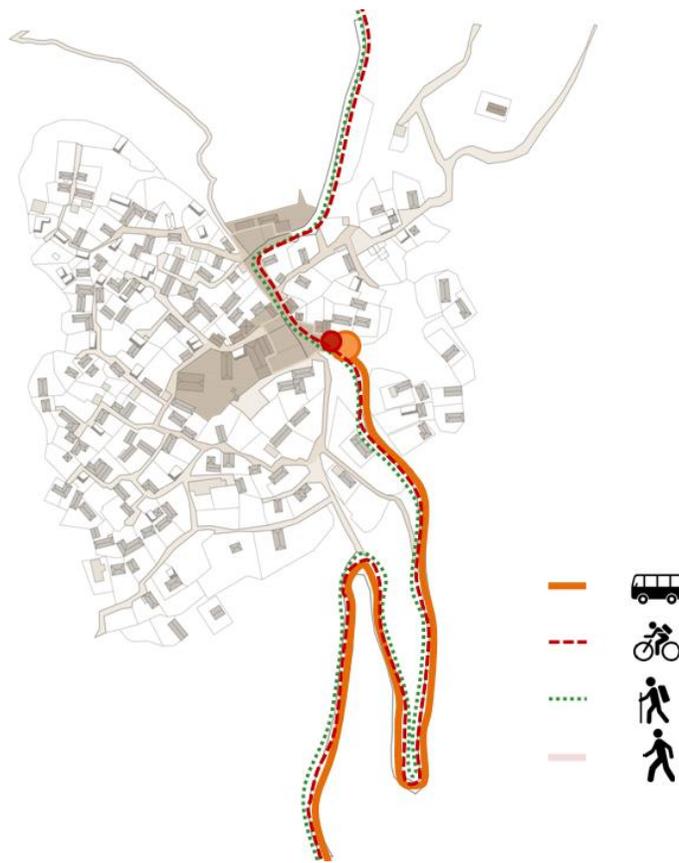
**Figure 29.** Village Center Section



**Figure 30.** Village Center Section, Proposal

#### 4.3.1.1. Accessibility

Accessibility within the village is another key element which affect the preservation its monumental character. The proposal goes for ecological approaches, by keeping the village pedestrian, and offering a public transportation bus line and a small parking lot (suiting the demands) at the entrance of the village (*Fig.31*).



*Figure 31.* Accessibility proposal, Old Qeparo

Another favor of the geographical position of the village are the paths which end up with a panoramic view of the Ionian Sea and the olive fields (*Fig.32*). The context itself

provides the possibility to have some console structures like balconies (Fig.33), as an additional value to the touristic routes of Qeparo. People can gather, can have a view, and some photographic scenes on the hill top.



*Figure 32.* Dead ending paths with a view, Old Qeparo

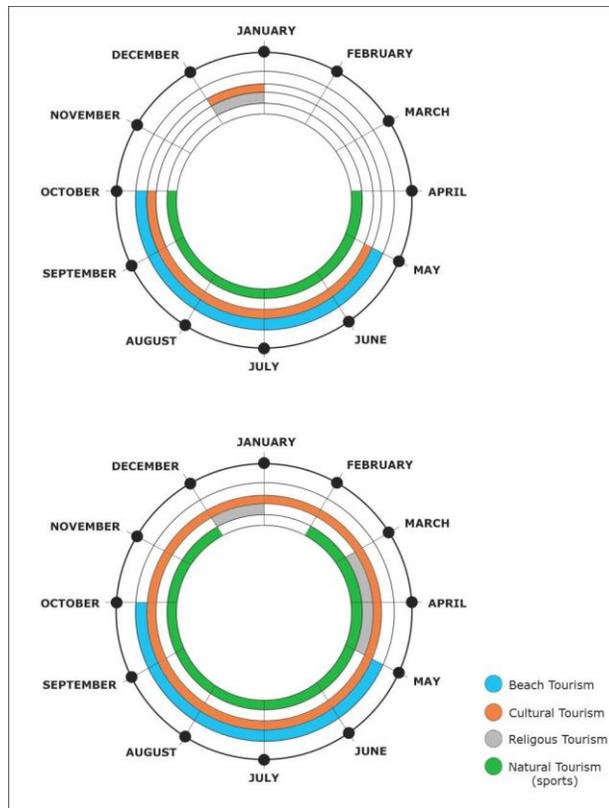


*Figure 33.* Dead ending paths proposal, Collage

#### **4.3.2. Year Round Activity Calendar**

After having a clear idea how the village will function in terms of spatial network/design, the next step, and one of the most important steps for having a competitive destination, is the activity calendar. The existing situation of the village

tourism activity (old and new village together) and the proposed seasonal extension is shown in the graphs below (Fig.34-35):



**Figure 34.** Tourism Activity - Year Round Graph, Qeparo

Proposed activities:

### 1. Film Festival (March-April)

There have been filming old Albanian films in some of the houses of Qeparo. This can be a value that can serve as a catalizator to have a “National Film Festival” in Qeparo. During a one month period, there can be screened different films in these houses (they will function like museal houses which can serve as pavilions), and open cinema in the village center. The activities can be enriched with theatres and other cinematographic documentaries. This will bring a large group of tourists, not only from Albania, but from

Kosovo, Macedonia or other countries. During this activity, there can be held some forums, conferences, and competitions for the film products in Albania or other participating countries.

### **1. Cultural Week (October)**

The Cultural Week consists on a fair of traditional textile works and handcrafts. It can be supplemented by other local traditional products such as polyphony songs, traditional cookings, etc.

### **2. Lemon Day (each Saturday in autumn)**

Lemon Day will be an activity that will continue each Saturday for the whole Autumn Period. During this activity people can participate in collecting lemons, or watching how the ladies prepare “gliko” and other local products with this fruit (they can buy or taste them).

### **3. Olive Harvesting Week (October-November)**

Olive Harvesting Week can be an additional activity which aims a total engagement of the tourists with local people. Mainly the target group may be students of Agriculture University, other high school students as well or other natural lovers.

### **4. Southern Cuisine Fair (one week in March and September)**

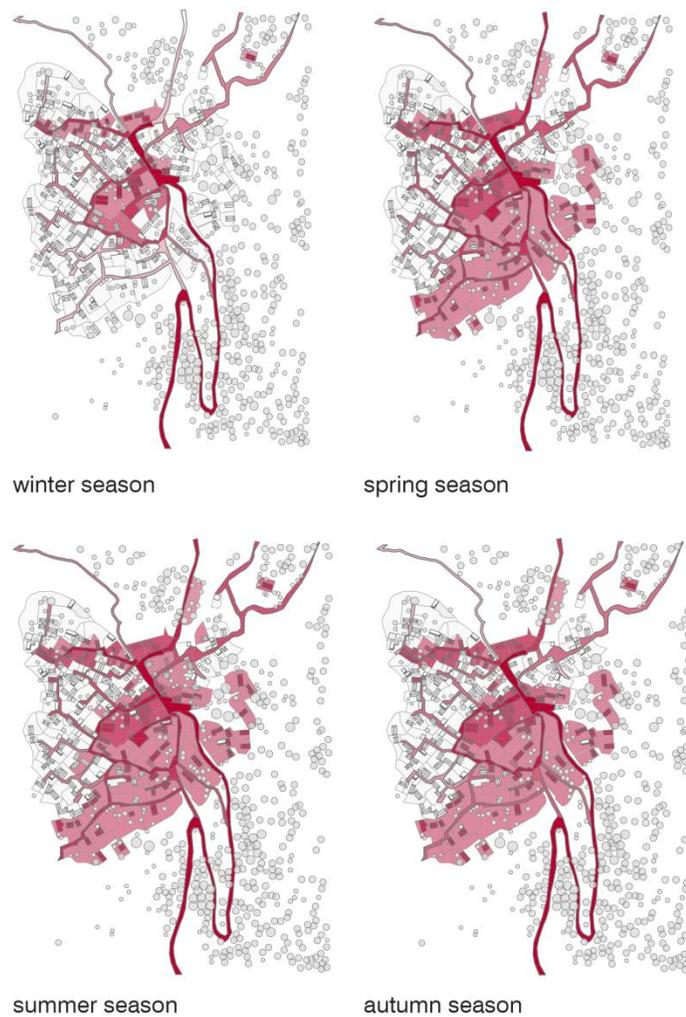
It can be a fair of one week in two different seasons. The reason is to offer people the seasonal cuisine products. During the fair there can be other alternated workshops and forums regarding the traditional cuisine; it will be a way to transmit the tradition to the future generations and a possibility for local people to promote their restaurants and cooking.

### **5. “Sherebel and Olive” products (1 week in May)**

An activity with medical and cosmetic products is another program that can be added to the calendar. It promotes local products made with sherebel and olive. The success of it would be another stimulant for local people engagement in small businesses.

## 6. Architectural and Tourism Workshops (June)

June can be the month of workshops such as Architecture and Tourism ones. There can be restoration workshops, rural tourism workshops, cultural tourism workshops, etc. They can be alternated in different weeks.



**Figure 35.** Year round activity distribution (Old Qeparo)

The aim of the calendar is not organizing all possible activities that can be held in Qeparo. It is considering even other villages of the region, and this program can be an

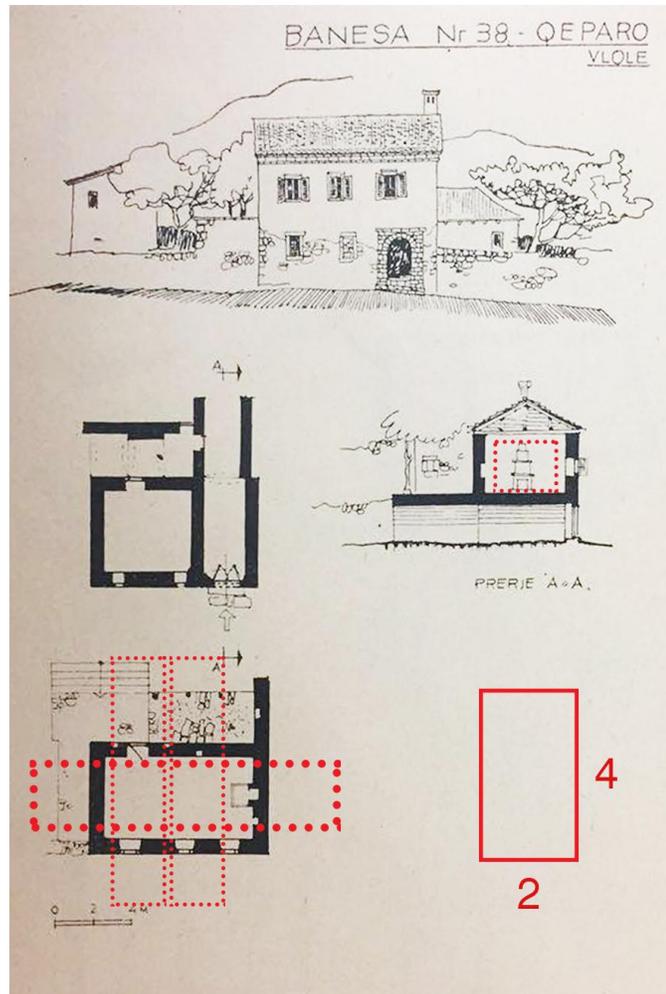
authentic and supplementary one; to experience those kinds of activities that fit to the character of the village and can be easily organized.

### 4.3.3. Mobile Structure Proposal

Additionally, and not less important, is the proposal of a mobile structure which can be flexible to different usage throughout the village. It is:

- **Cost efficient** (recycling, reuse, light structure)
- **Time efficient** (transport and implementation)
- **Flexibility** (adaptable to the village structures and different programs)
- **Mobility** (modular: steel structure, wooden panels)

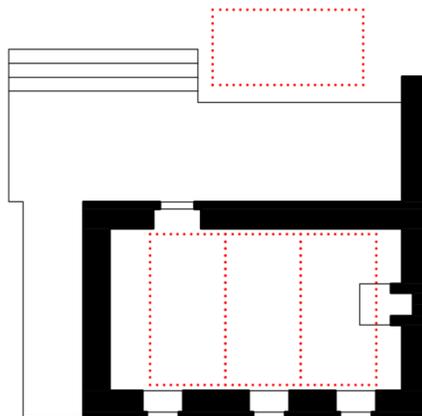
The module of the structure is flexible, and it is derived from existing house elevations (*Fig.36*). Since Qeparo is a monument, to preserve the existing outermost layer of the ruins or empty houses, it is proposed a minimum offset from the wall, and the certain activities can be held within the structure. The structure can be used for guest houses, for pavilions along the culture path (*Fig.37*), for different service units in the village center, for shading, or other facilities as well.



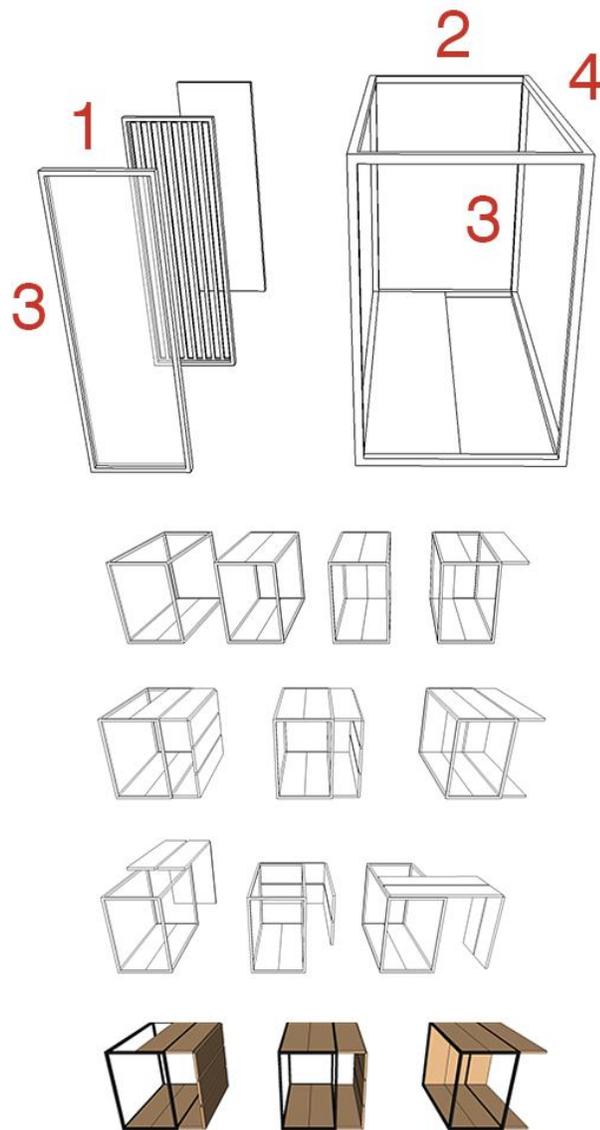
**Figure 36.** Old building drawings of Qeparo [Emin Riza, 1984], module size references for mobile structure proposal



*Figure 37.* Structure projections



*Figure 38.* Structure usage (re-using empty structures)



**Figure 39.** Mobile Structure design proposals

The design concept is directly related to the term ‘mobile structure’ or ‘flexible structure’. The modularity of the structure elements: steel structure (2x4x3 m) , and wooden panels (opaque, semi-opaque, transparent) make possible a wider range of combinations (*Fig.39*) which can fit to specific programs and needs. The idea is to use it as a single structure, and as a combination of two or more structures.

This concept is a solution fulfills the needs of different programs in the village, consequently offering the transitional activation of Old Qeparo. It can be used in the surrounding villages as long as it serves to the demand of the contexts.

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **CONCLUSIONS**

The Region of Himara is one of the biggest assets in country level regarding tourism sector. The integrated development and sustainable approaches for creating a network of rural tourism destinations can be a promising direction for its local economy and social development. The combination of seaside (beach tourism) and mountains (natural tourism) with a lot of historical and cultural backgrounds is a fortune/resource that is not easily found. A disadvantage but at the same time a value in itself are human resources. The old population dominates the region, which is less offered and willing for active tourism, but the positive aspect of this situation is the emigrated youth. They have gained very good experiences and visions in countries like Greece, Italy or France which have a historical tradition in tourism, and this is a potential they can use in local investments.

The challenge is to activate the villages, to have specific competitive programs, to attract tourists and bring the people back to the villages. Other international, governmental, and local projects have tried to deal with the existing problems of the zone. They have come up with proposals on how to connect the villages, how to develop guesthouse-accommodation network, how to create small business models, and what services should be provided for the villages to be offering a good standard.

In large scale, this inquiry consists on emphasizing the strongest points of the villages, create an identity and improve the physical and programmatic network, so they complement each other and make Himara a competitive destination in tourism market.

While studying all villages it is difficult to propose everything for each of them, and a model case is a way to show up how all these strategies and designs come to a final product.

The case of Qeparo is a “continuation” proposal based on other ongoing projects. It has a proposal approach elaborated on two main pillars: strategy and spatial design. The strategy considers the long term perspective by being visionary and competitive in tourism sector, by offering good standards and services, extending the touristic season throughout the year, and bringing the people back to the village. On the other side, the spatial design is like the physical implementation which goes complementary to the strategy; it aims to improve the access and dynamism of the experience throughout the village, and to give and preserve an identity.

It is important to re-emphasize the period on which this proposal consists on: a transitional period from one non active village, to an active one. Subtopics of the proposal aim to fully realize that transition by having an activity calendar, identified accessibility lines, identified land use, as well as a concept of mobile light structures to execute and fulfill the demand for proposed activities in the village.

The proposal reaches till a certain point of development, and it is open to further development of the village; a phase closer to an active touristic village. It can be expanded more in restoration studies and projects, in tourism strategies and branding of the zone, etc. Spatial planning, design, restoration and architecture are one of the most important/necessary tools which can easily lead to more innovative/creative solutions for touristic opportunities. The overlapping and the co-operation with other fields like agriculture, landscape, business model development, tourism, and marketing drive to more sustainable proposals. It is needed to amplify the proper infrastructure so that to be competitive in regional level and serve as a real case model.

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