Sustainable Tourism Development in Gjirokastra
- A current situation analysis

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Abstract

The typical tourism planning and development process can be divided into different phases: preparation (goals and objectives), research, conclusions, recommendations, implementation, monitoring & evaluation. This thesis is a part of such a development process and position itself in the research phase with the aim to create a knowledge base (a socio-environmental map) for future sustainable development of tourism in the world heritage city of Gjirokastra in the southern part of Albania. To be able to create this socio-environmental map the authors lived two months in Gjirokastra and with a holistic approach collected, compiled and analyzed an immense amount of data. Thus this thesis is only providing the first piece in the puzzle of the bigger project: to create a sustainable tourism development plan for the city of Gjirokastra.

Gjirokastra has special conditions for tourism since it is a World Heritage site; elected in 2005 for its rare type of Ottoman stone houses which the old bazaar/old town is dominated by. The management of a World Heritage site is both a national and a global concern involving many stakeholders exhibiting different desires and requests. World heritage management and tourism destination aspirations are only two of many other issues facing the city of Gjirokastra and the nation of Albania. Like many other post-communist countries Albania is struggling between a fast economic development and the restraints of preserving heritage:
modernization vs. tradition. In Gjirokastra this is evident through the city’s division in a new and old town – each fighting for attention and resources.

The result of the thesis contains information on the tourism resources of Gjirokastra; they have been divided using the three cornerstones in sustainable tourism: economy, culture and nature. The current status and potential of each has been described and analyzed, data being collected through participant observation, analyzing written material and through interviews with visitors, local businesses and stakeholders.

The result describes a city facing many problems, due to lack of laws and regulations, creating a variety of issues both in nature, culture and economy: poverty, “brain-leakage” through migration, waste, water and pollution, unemployment, poor stakeholder collaboration, abandoned houses and traditions, bureaucracy, corruption, management issue, a lack of tourism activities and information, poor marketing and poor tourism services. Tourism development is identified as an important tool for problem solution and societal development by the stakeholders, however the planning is done indirect as the municipality’s actions are focused on the citizens and by catering to them it is considered that tourists will also benefit. This approach results in interest conflicts between the stakeholders where the municipality is focusing on improving the new town and the cultural organizations on the old town. Even though many elaborate tourism strategies already exists amongst the different stakeholders no one has so far been successfully implemented due to unclear responsibilities, action time frame issues and a lack of funds. Since there is no budget for tourism the different strategies turns into wish-lists from which money is sought. The result is a few successful short term projects funded by various different European organizations outside of Albania. The problem of restoring houses is also the following revitalization of them. The citizens of Gjirokastra want a modern life that the old houses cannot under the world heritage regulation provide. Here is where tourism is considered to be the solution – creating an attractive living and business area that will revitalize the old town. The development of this attractive tourism area is further halted by the lack of management plan causing houses to disintegrate in wait for action plans and that most of the old houses are stuck in after-communism-legal issues of ownership making them stand empty and abandoned.

There is no waste management in Gjirokastra and the effect of this is not being researched. The observation and interview result shows that there are multiple environmental problems that now accumulate, but few people react to this. Among the few were the tourists whose satisfaction level in this thesis was affected due to the waste appearance. Without laws and
restrictions on tourism, heritage and environment it is easy to turn the eyes away from carrying capacity and focus on short term solutions.

Tourism is in the meanwhile driven by private local entrepreneurship and innovation but without strategies, regulations or market research an imbalance in the tourism system is evident in the market and supply match. A bench marketing tradition or “copy & pasting” has so far resulted in restaurants, hotels, cafes and souvenir shops selling indistinguishable products and only a few other activities than sightseeing are being offered. In the visitor surveys from time to time it is apparent that tourists think Gjirokastra has great potential but the city’s problems are surfacing and affecting the level of satisfaction.

There is thus a pressing need for collaboration between the different stakeholders to create one sustainable tourism development plan, to define roles and responsibilities and action implementation. The natural and cultural resources and its potentials for tourism are huge but without these regulatory bodies tourism impacts might be irreversible negative. It is in this moment of time, before goals are decided upon, ideal that ideas of sustainability, in this case meaning that the environment’s, culture’s and economy’s interests are also taken in account and incorporated to shape the development process. This is highlighted throughout the thesis.
1. Introduction

This paper aims to describe the city of Gjirokastra, Albania with a sustainable tourism development approach. A sustainable tourism development is a dynamic task which requires numerous stakeholders, government bodies, local support, investments and enormous efforts to succeed. In this thesis sustainable tourism development has been defined as a strategy that links economic, environmental and cultural interests and concerns: “Sustainable Development is a development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” (WCED through Hall, 2008, p.20)

This paper merely tries to give tourism developers, relevant institutions, investors and the government an overview of the situation and the current problems they need to address to realize a sustainable tourism development in Gjirokastra, Albania.

1.1 Background and problem formulation

The authors of this thesis study the bachelor programme of Sustainable Development of Tourism at Halmstad University, Sweden. For the final thesis an international project was sought after to apply the knowledge gained from the bachelor degree to gain practical experience in the field of tourism planning. Through SIDA’s minor field studies (MFS) scholarship the authors were able to travel to the Albanian World Heritage City of Gjirokastra for two months to conduct a research project. Albania and Gjirokastra was chosen because there is collaboration between Gjirokastra, Halmstad University and the Swedish non-governmental organization Cultural Heritage without Borders that has an office in the city.

In an early stage of research it became clear that Gjirokastra is only one of many cities in Albania struggling between a national wanted fast economic development and the global World Heritage restrictions to preserve the cultural heritage, in this case precious historical stone buildings of a unique character. Like many other historical towns it is also a struggle between the new and old zones in the city – each competing for economic resources and attention. Tourism is identified as a tool with which the heritage, the economy and the culture can be revitalized and thus there is a vast need for resource research and urban & tourism planning. Without sustainability as a concept whilst planning the tourism impacts could create the opposite of its goals with irreversible effects on culture, nature and the economy as a result. The authors of this thesis hope to fit the wants and needs for societal development and demand of the World Heritage to be preserved together under the concept of sustainability.
1.2 Aims and Research Questions

Tourism is a system where supply relates to a market demand. It is a dynamic system; when the market demand fluctuates, the supply changes in reply and vice versa. A successful tourism development lies within the understandability of these components and the forces lying behind its fluctuations. The response action is often resource utilization prerequisite of demand preferences and environmental sustainability, the process of which is set up by using phase models as a conceptual and practical tool to visualize tourism development opportunities. The first phase is *identification of vision, mission, goals and objectives* of the development and the second phase is where *resources are a researched* to create an understanding and description of the site of chosen scale. A “socio-environmental map” is created on which recommendations and implementation strategies can be based on.

The overall purpose of this research is creating such a map of Gjirokastra through a situation analysis of the city’s current resources: *cultural, economic, environment, infrastructure and human capital*. Thus the goal is to gather both qualitative and quantitative resource data that can be analyzed and discussed whilst put in a sustainable tourism development context. To meet this goal the following questions have been formulated:

- What resources exist in Gjirokastra and what are their qualities?
- What is the market’s perception of tourism in Gjirokastra?
- How is tourism development being done and managed in Gjirokastra?
- How are the World Heritage and Tourism Development connected in Gjirokastra?
- What are the possibilities for creating Sustainable Tourism in Gjirokastra?

1.3 Limitations

*Time Limitation:* This study was conducted in Gjirokastra from 21 March – 22 May in 2014. This was before the tourism season started and was chosen to see what developments, if any, took place before the new tourism season started. Two months were the precondition from SIDA for conducting a minor field study.

*Geographical Limitation:* This research focused mainly on the World Heritage area of Gjirokastra known as the old town or old bazaar which is the main tourism zone. (See map in appendix). However all the town was considered when talking about infrastructure, marketing, economy, stakeholders etc as these issues consequences can’t be zoned off or
applies to only one part of town. The connection and relationship between the new and old town effects the tourism development and thus the thesis sometimes zoom out to speak of the region of Gjirokastra as a whole and sometimes zoom in on specific areas.

Social Limitation: This thesis has a broad area to cover, as must be when researching a whole city’s tourism possibilities. Thus a great amount of people were interviewed in the different hierarchies of the society from the regional government to the local organizations and NGOs and the local people and their businesses. Without the information from all parts of the society the goal of this thesis would have been infeasible.

1.3 Definitions of terms

Cultural Heritage "Culture is the system of values that groups of people share. These systems of values allocates different cultural footprint, tangible and intangible. Some of these cultural expressions are deemed to have special symbolic values and are thereby appointed a heritage. These can be global, national, local and/or individual (Palmqvist & Bohman, 1997) translation by Sara Grevsjö

UNESCO is the United Nations organization for education, science, culture and communication media. UNESCO's objective is to contribute to peace and security through international cooperation in these areas. Founded in 1945 it operates from its headquarters in Paris. UNESCO uses different expert advisory organization: ICROM is used for technical support considering methods and technical matters surrounding the physical conservation. ICOMOS is used for questions concerning cultural heritage. IUNC is used for questions concerning natural heritage (UNESCO, Council of Europe, 2008).

World Heritage (WH): UNESCO's World Heritage (WH) is heritage that is elected by the World Heritage Committee and judged to be of importance to all mankind: they have an outstanding universal value. This incorporates monuments, groups of buildings, sites, natural features, geological and physiographical formations, natural sites and intangible cultural heritage: oral traditions and expressions, language, performing arts, social practices, rituals, festive events, knowledge and practice concerning nature and the universe, traditional craftsmanship and instruments, objects, artifacts, cultural spaces, communities, groups and individuals associated there within (UNESCO, Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage, 1972) (UNESCO, Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage, 2003)
The World Heritage Committee: establishes the World Heritage List and is an intergovernmental committee. States suggests memorials which they believe should be included on the list (UNESCO, Council of Europe, 2008).

World Heritage Convention: The Convention Concerning Protection of the Worlds Cultural and Natural Heritage (adopted in 1972) is an international agreement on the protection of the Worlds Cultural and Natural Heritage. The Convention contains articles on obligations signatory countries have when it comes to responsibility for cultural and natural heritage through legislation so that they can be passed on to future generations (Nationalencyklopedin, 2013).

Sustainable development. Sustainable development is “development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” (WCED, 1987, p. 20). “The idea of holistic planning and strategy making that links economic, environmental and social concerns; the importance of preserving essential ecological processes; the need to protect both biodiversity and human heritage; the need for development to occur is such a way that productivity can be sustained over the long term for future generations, the concept of intergenerational equity; and a goal of achieving a better balance of fairness and opportunity between nations” WCED through (Hall, 2010)

Sustainable tourism development is the link between the goals of sustainable development and tourism-related change. Planning to promote human welfare, derived in part from the stock of economic, human and social capital and to maintain and enhance ecosystem services (Buckley, 2009)
2. Theoretical Background

2.1 Chapter Structure

This chapter is meant to give the readers an understanding of tourism and the many parts sustainable tourism planning consists of. To understand the prerequisite background of Gjirokastra’s tourism situation the history of Gjirokastra and Albania is described and the World Heritage as an organization.

2.2 The Tourism System

“Planning for tourism is more art than science” (Gunn, 2002, p.123) Still, to be able to plan for tourism its components must be understood. Tourism is a system where supply relates to a market demand. The supply is the pull factor for visiting a destination and what ultimately provides the customer satisfaction. A key in successful tourism planning is how well the supply meets the market demand. As market demand is fluctuating so is the tourism system in a dynamic response. To meet the market the supply must change or a new market is to be found. Understanding the market and anticipate its’ behavior and actions is critical in the tourism development process (Hall, 2008).

2.3 Tourism Development

As regular planning incorporates a number of stages or phases tourism planning do too. It begins with a preparation phase where wants and needs of market and national, regional and local interests are turned into a vision, mission, goals and objective statements (Hall, 2008). The selection of these statements is important as they determine the further process (Nyström & Tonell, 2012). This stage is also where the involved actors and stakeholders are identified, and thereby the capital source (Gunn, 2002). Next stage is research phase. The physical and cultural factors are researched by various methods to create an understanding and description of the area (Gunn, 2002). There is both qualitative and quantitative data to be collected. Over all a sense of socio-environmental concern in the region is to be created (Gunn, 2002). The area must also be researched by being put in a competitive analysis. Surveys are done to detect segments of interest and travel trends (both national and international) and existing products are compared to market segments (Hall 2008 & Gunn 2002). This stage is ended with a synthesis and conclusion often visualized as a SWOT analysis. The next phase is where the concepts are created. Creativity and ideation marks this phase and alternatives are
compared by using different forms of analysis: simulations, forecast-, external-, cost-benefit-, risk and sensitivity- and impact analysis (Nyström & Tonell, 2012). In the recommendations and objectives phase a physical development plan (attractions, infrastructure, services etc) together with program development (publicity, promotion, information on site etc) and policies (visitor satisfaction, resource protection, economic expansion, integration into the local environment and economy) are created and finally an action list is formed. The final step is monitoring, auditing and evaluation where the tourism impacts are monitored, analyzed and dealt with (Gunn, 2002).

2.4 Sustainable Tourism Development

The concept of sustainability is today a part of traditional planning and is incorporated in its different phases by examining alternative courses of action and traces their consequences. The outcome is recommendations that are not imposing but articulated with modesty. In the preparation phase it is important to include sustainability in the formations of vision, mission, goals and objective statements by considering the national, regional environmental statements and laws, environmental systems, tourism impacts etc. A top-down planning process often arouses suspicion and alternative planning models such as the communicative planning theory can help to build the relationship between problems and beliefs that planners face. The success of local participation requires that local leaders are accepted and that the goals made initially are ones those local actors can solidarize with (Buckley, 2009). Successful planning requires the views of the local community: to plan with the residents rather than for them (Aramberri, 2001). To engage the residents Peter Schofield (2010) developed three steps

1. Determine the level of resident support for the tourism development proposals
2. Identify the residents’ perceived impacts
3. Examine the key factors affecting resident attitudes (Schofield, 2010)

Thus who is involved in the decision making process is very important as this have an effect on meeting the sustainable objectives.

The research phase in a sustainable tourism process focuses on the research described in the traditional planning process: creating a sense of the environment, but the value of the place is more highlighted in sustainable planning as it involves more evaluation and option selection in terms of minimized impacts. There is thus a need for collaboration with the community to understand the value of the place: nature, systems, wealth, ideology, history, place (visual,
spatial, geographic) and aesthetics are examples of values etc. The research step also focuses on an environmental evaluation of the resources: what are the current impacts of tourism on accommodation, water, sewage, energy use, waste, transport, visitor actions: trampling, noise etc and what new ones could tourism create? Both negative and positive impacts needs to be understood (Buckley, 2009). Needless to say the aim of sustainable tourism development is to maximize positive effects while minimizing the negative impacts (Hall, 2008). Perhaps the most noticeable positive tourism impact is the revival of culture through increased societal self esteem; the revenue can boost or bring back lost or declining cultural objects and activities as well as create job opportunities, regional income growth and tax revenue. Through tourism, social empowerment can be reached through stakeholder’s collaboration. Regardless of the positive effects socio-cultural, physical and economical consequences always follow tourism. The most common negative ones are conflicting use of social space, cultural change, cultural commodification, cultural theft, forced displacement, disharmonious resident – tourist relations, wear and tear, erosion and soil compaction, vandalism, illegal trade in artifacts, pollution and litter, inflation, overinflated property (Dallen, 2011). However good globalization and free trade can be, it often opposes a threat to the national capital. In its footprints comes leakage of capital to foreign countries: sometimes as high as 90% (Honey, 2008). Globalization can also have severe effects on the local and indigenous culture as the culture may change in connection with a stronger foreign imposing culture: “McDonaldization” (Ritzer 1996 through Hall 2008). This process of homogenization and global standardization also leads to reinterpretation of the past which sometimes leads to annihilation of troublesome heritage such as class, religion and ethnicity (Hall, 2008). When the world gets bigger the vacation choices for consumers also grows. This means the tourism industry is characterized by “boom and bust” where the demand and trends turn fickle causing highly-tourism-dependable destinations to rapidly blossom and burn. An overdependence on tourism in the economy can thus be dangerous. Also a new trend in many countries is emerging where the role of the state is diminishing, causing the balance between public and private to change. “Where public agencies were once seen as an essential part of the solution to any urban crisis, they are now seen as a problem itself” (Goodwin through Hall, p. 197) The private sector does not want new and higher taxes and regulations but still demands that the government provides well trained workers, good infrastructure and well run attractions (Honey, 2008).
The next phase of synthesis and conclusions gives direct indicators to what is possible in terms of recommendations. For example what capacity issues can the findings tell us? Carrying capacity is described by Alexis Saveriades (2000) as consisting of two main components: the biophysical and the behavioral component. The biophysical viewpoint means that there is a threshold or maximum capacity after which any exceeding exploitation or misuse can cause irreparable damage to the natural ecosystem. The term behavioral refers to the decrease of quality of the experience. Saveriades also describes the importance of the perception of the tourists themselves: when they perceive that the capacity has been exceeded they lose interest and turn to find other destinations (Saveriades, 2000). This can be seen in numerous destinations around the globe where profit maximization causes destinations to be overrun by tourists that in the long run can cause multiple consequences (environmental damage, insufficient service, decline of tourists, image declination) The consequences can be either irreparable leading to abandoning the destination, or costly in terms of management and intensive marketing to revitalize the image. Carrying capacity is still a flexible term and there is no globally accepted “formula” to calculate it for tourism. In 1973 G. Young pointed out that a destination should rather focus on the amount of visitors that can be appropriately welcomed and are wanted instead of desperately persuade them to come (Young, 1973). This refers to the host community and the lengths it is willing to go to accommodate and receive tourists without becoming hostile and negatively affected by the influences of foreign visitor. Honey (2008) argues that planning for sustainable future today talks less about carrying capacity and more about behaviour control of visitors. Instead of calculating numbers it is more important to educate and control allowed behaviour, activities, equipment, and time of day/year for activities. Locally managed visitor centers are a gateway and tool to educate visitors before they enter the cultural/nature sites. This also implies the cooperation and involvement of the local community which is essential to the success of this approach (Honey, 2008).

In the concept phase tourism development ideas are tested towards the sustainable goals that have previously been set up. In the last phases of recommendations and objectives and environmental indicators are created to give signals that development is on the right track or raise the alarm if the situation worsens. This is done by creating key ratio numbers to provide a measure of resource consumption and environmental impact and contribute to the content of a situation analysis (Buckley, 2009).
2.5 (World) Heritage creation and issues of Authenticity

Ever since the convention was first audited in 1996 the amount of research considering world heritage has grown fast. The reports take different shapes depending on the many angles to approach the area: urban planning, nature management, place transformation, identity issues, economical interests in conflict, tourism and development to name some.

Owe Ronström has written several reports where he approaches different problems surrounding the construction of history on different basis, how gentrification takes place in the world heritage, ownership of the heritage etc. In the case of Visby, Sweden, Ronström describes how ICOMOS demanded a more authentic site thus followed months of restoration, transformation and “medievalification” of Visby. Here issues of the front and backside of heritage: staged authenticity, aesthetic values, evaluation process and the effects on the authenticity is discussed (Ronström, 2001). Jan Turtinen's report, The condition for the World Heritage also discusses the effects of creating global heritage from the political perspective when he questions whether the original “rescue idea” has been lost and the process is now shaped by the underlying usage of the heritage. In his thesis he calls heritage a phenomenon created in a battlefield of actors, transnational, bureaucratic diplomatic negotiations on a tension field of economic and political interests. “International organizations are bureaucracies. Bureaucracy makes projects believable and legit by giving the organization an image of being objective, neutral and universal” (Barnett and Finmore 2004, through Turtinen 2006 p.21)

To create a global framework in order to control the heritage it needs to be systemized, Turtinen describes this process as making the heritage readable: With the help of criteria and categories the reality is organized so it can be watched, sorted, designed, handled and evaluated. Jonas Grundberg also writes about how heritage is reshaped to be packed and sold as a product. He calls it “commoditization” (Grundberg, 2004).

Authenticity is closely tied to the subject of creating heritage. Since 1960 scholars have debated the term: objectivists state that authenticity is inherent in the objects and locations while constructivists claim that it is subjective. Subjective because it is based on personal connection to the site and the social luggage through which every individual visitor perceive and view the surrounding reality. Some thus believe authenticity lies within the usage of the object while others believe the material it consists of is the most important. Postmodernists
however argue that authenticity is irrelevant to most visitors as the post-tourist is cynical and suspicious. Some go further saying that no place can be truly authentic because all memories are nebulous, meaning that the past can only be imagined and not relived. Dallen points out that tourist determine what authenticity is based on their own judgment. Whichever the case be, authenticity is today used as a pull and competitive factor for tourism (Dallen, 2011). Authenticity is also used differently in marketing based on place and context: some sites claim authenticity is based on aesthetic values, evaluation of uniqueness, integrity, interaction and/or current functionality. Sometimes quality and design are more important than historical accuracy as some people do accept that the culture change over time. This is interesting as then some sites can claim authenticity based on reconstructed buildings, others on their ruined states, some on monolithic character others on different time layers. However there is a tendency to place more authentic heritage value on places that are old or very old (Dallen, 2011). Azman Ahmad (2013) takes the case of Kampong Ayer in Brunei Darussalam as an example of when authenticity demands takes control over culture. The original inhabitants are moving out because of wants of a modern lifestyle and new ones are moving in with no connection to the traditional modus Vivendi. The charm of being true Malay village is threatened and soon this authenticity loss will be noticed and affect the tourism (Ahmad, 2013). Is culture then allowed to change? In many cases a front and backstage such as in Visby is then created, the back where the “real modern life” happens and the front where authenticity requests leads to staged authenticity. This is a stage and thus idealizations of history where embarrassed truths and past mistakes can be cleaned or covered up in a societal amnesia. All heritages must be selected from a great variety and this means some are ignored becoming “disinherited” in the process (Dallen, 2011). Regina Bendix agrees when she poses the idea that heritage popularity can be traced to its uniform and unproblematic facade behind which both history and politics can hide (Bendix, 1997). Hence heritage dissonance can be spotted where conflict appears when diverging ideas of what “real”, “authentic” and “accurate” is (Dallen, 2011). Research about nationalism and ethnicity has shown that cultural heritage is a powerful resource for identity, community and knowledge with political goals in the background (Turtinen, 2006). Turtinen argues that authenticity as a term is a western cultural product connected to modernity, a way of thinking about the world that takes shape in the pursuit of the unspoiled, untouched, genuine and traditional. This can be seen in the world heritage convention where the most genuine cultural heritage and the most untouched nature are given the highest points (Turtinen, 2006). Hafstein concludes that creating lists of world heritage is both about preservation and destruction:
“Whatever is so designated is abstracted from its previous context and placed in relation to other things, sites, practices or expressions also selected into the category of heritage. It is given another value of a different and more general kind than any value they previously had” (Hafstein, 2009, p. 109)

The heritage creating process was previously a national and local matter but now a global one where international forces are creating and shaping nations views of themselves through choosing heritage for all of us– are these heritages then in the interest of the local population to preserve or a desire for a globalized world? (Anderson, 1993) Robertson also approaches the subject when he writes about the *globalization* of culture - a feeling of living in one world society. It changes the relationship between individuals, nations and humankind and the view of heritage (Robertson, 1992).

### 2.6 World Heritage Management

The world heritage management is interesting because it is different from other international agreements in that it limits the operative space for the nations; establish rights and obligations to an unusual degree. The nation is responsible for the heritages safekeeping for all eternity. This was viewed by UNECSO as the legit and only possible way to interfere nationally in a world of supreme states. However, these global policies and projects are not always implemented locally as they are sometimes “lost in translation” and national and regional groups can still manipulate the heritage for their own interests (Turtinen, 2006). The effects of management willingness can then be questioned - If the heritage is not locally recognized how will the idea of “forever safekeeping” be pursued and accepted? Is it then a sustainable heritage? (Anderson, 1993) Hugh Beach presents some interesting examples from the world heritage site of Laponia and its indigenous people where preservation is done using regulations created by outsider’s picture of what the heritage is. These ideas have become difficult to incorporate with local goals of economic growth and practical work. The many different conservation programs and ideas, contradictive policies, demands for sustainable development and untouched nature competes and contradicts the everyday work: the handling of conflicts is now a part of the everyday life. Here the question is also how much the society is allowed to develop without the world heritage stamp being lost (Beach, 2001).

The most important tool for world heritage management is described in the convention text *Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention*. More
specific guidelines have since been added through reports and meetings etc. UNESCO’s work is spread both geographical (global, international, national, regional, local) and hierarchical between desks, offices, organizations such as ICOMOS, IUCN, and ICCROM, not to mention that the heritages are spread across the globe: meetings are held everywhere. The world heritage management is a web of relations and networks in a social room as well as physical and in time (Turtinen, 2006).

Even though the day-to-day management of the heritage is left to the government of each nation, the world heritage is per definition no longer nationally owned. This means all matters concerning the protection and condition have to be reported to the secretariat to eventually be audited. This surveillance takes shape in a periodic reporting every 6th year where a document with questions about condition, potential threats, management plans etc needs to be filled. The document is then compiled to zones; Europe for example, and then the zones is presented to the committee. The usage of these reporting is both to be able to react in time to threatening situations but also to make the states realize that they are being watched: make them increase their own auditing. UNESCO is aware that this reporting is not always working, the committee realizes that the word threat itself is not an agreed upon term, it is a matter of opinion. That is why the periodic reporting is supplemented by reactive monitoring, which is the secretaries and the advisory body’s job. They research places and the outcome is recommendations that they expect the nations to follow. The world heritage is freely signed and built upon a moral imperative so the consequences for not following recommendations are as follows: The most extreme consequence is that the heritage status is lost but before such an action the site is put on a list of endangered heritage called the danger listing. This can be done without the nations consent. The danger list is meant as a reprimand, a name and shame causing negative publicity thought to help to create opposition against the nation (Turtinen, 2006).

Bottom-up, how can nations affect the world heritage work? The nations participate in meetings with their representative diplomats. Turtinen explains this staging of a role spiced with wants of readability, making a good impression and hierarchy manners. Several researchers points out that there is a specific language being used in the EU (Shore 2000, Thedvall 2006) that undermines the effectiveness of their management recommendations when being sent out. One must understand to be able to act. Turtinen describes that during a UNESCO meeting “a woman in the swizz delegation told me that this was her forth meeting and even so she still didn’t understand all that was discussed” (Turtinen 2006 p.86). Instead
backstage arenas through cocktail parties, agency- and committee meetings, receptions and exhibitions have been created where informal discussing takes places and some decisions are agreed upon. Physical acts such as press releases or through giving gifts to gain support in different contextures is also done (Turtinen, 2006).

2.7 World Heritage and Tourism

Tourism also poses the question of what role the heritage plays today. Turtinen questions whether the original rescue idea has been lost and heritage is created based on its usage, such as a tool to attract tourists (Turtinen, 2006). Hafstein sees nothing wrong with tourism because it creates economic growth, incentive for preservation and generates resources. But it is important to recognize the impacts: “folklorization” reification, commoditization, wear, tear and erosion. (Hafstein, 2009). As time passes the world heritage list has expanded and with it a global awareness, interest, recognition and appeal of these sites. As a result tourism has rapidly grown with unsurmised numbers of tourists. Tourism is recognized as both an opportunity and a challenge, it can enhance the economic growth and benefit the sites and local population when money is spent on preservation, revitalization and reinforcing the heritage. On the other hand when management and regulations are not at hand tourism can severely threaten the heritage, the economic development and the local culture. With this expanded tourism UNESCO has recognized a need for a sustainable approach for planning and managing these sites in accordance with the sites capacity, visitor needs and the local population’s needs. Thus in 2010 in the Brazil conference of the WHC the decision (34 COM 5F.2) it was decided that a new programme on world heritage and sustainable tourism was to be developed. In 2011 such a programme was created. Vision: shared responsibility between stakeholders and appropriate management. Mission is to increase the awareness, capacity and participation, a balance between conservation and visitor experience. To realize this elements and objective and action lists have been created. They talk about the anchoring of the world heritage value through the national and local societal hierarchies, the tourism sector and the visitors themselves. This is to be done by integrating sustainable tourism in the convention itself. The stakeholders are to receive tools by more policies and strategies by local framework for sustainable management. The action list incorporates action programme and implementation from 2013-2015 to the cost of 3 720 000 USD:
A. Integrate sustainable tourism principles into the mechanisms of the World Heritage Convention

B. Strengthen the enabling environment by advocating policies, strategies, frameworks and tools that support sustainable tourism as an important vehicle for protecting and managing cultural and natural heritage of Outstanding Universal Value (OUV)

C. Promote broad stakeholder engagement in the planning, development and management of sustainable tourism that follows a destination approach to heritage conservation and focuses on empowering local communities

D. Provide World Heritage stakeholders with the capacity and the tools to manage tourism efficiently, responsibly and sustainably based on the local context and needs

E. Promote quality tourism products and services that encourage responsible behaviour among all stakeholders and foster understanding and appreciation of the concept of OUV and protection of World Heritage (UNESCO, 2011)

UNESCO has sustainable tourism as a category under which they publish different specific publications, for example the Developing a sustainable tourism strategy for the Silk Roads heritage Corridor. And the current issue of the paper World Heritage from April 2014 is themed World Heritage and Sustainable tourism where the conflict between preservation and tourism impact is highlighted using different site examples: Amsterdam, Mount Fuji, Tequila in Mexico, Mount Kenya (UNESCO, World Heritage and Sustainable Tourism, 2014).

2.8 Location Background

2.8.1 Albania

Albania has since communism fell in 1991 been the stage of chaos, slow development and crisis. A violent and lawless society, anarchy, spired in 1997 as pyramid saving schemes caused the lifesavings of thousands of people being lost. In the aftermath mass emigration took place, many historic buildings were abandoned; the historic bazaar in Gjirokastra is one example. The nation is still described as Europe’s poorest country and a country driven by individual benefits, lacking state structure and public benefit visions. But there are signs of a rising Albanian society: tourism is drawing people to its shores and with it economic growth is generated (CHwB, 2011). Lonely Planet rated Albania as its number one destination of 2011 for its “whispers of azure beaches, comfortably good cuisine, heritage sites, nightlife, affordable adventures and the possibility of old-style unplanned journeys complete with open-armed locals for whom travelers are still a novelty” (LonelyPlanet, 2011).
In this stage of economic growth, the Albanian government has stated that tourism is “a key area” for economic development (CHwB, 2011).

2.8.2 Gjirokastra

Gjirokastra is situated in southern Albania on the steep hillside of Drino Valley surrounded by mountains. The history of the city is long and it has been ruled by many: from Ottoman feudal to Italian colony. Approximately 35,000 people live in Gjirokastra and the population is mixture of Albanians, Greeks, Vlachs and Roma (UNESCO, 1992). The city contains a modern and an old part (called the Old Bazaar) where the houses are connected by a network of winding white and pink striped cobbled paths. “The city of thousand steps” and “The city of stone” consists of hundreds of Ottoman-style tower houses with stone roofs, wooden balconies and whitewashed stone walls. On 15 July 2005 Gjirokastra was enrolled in the prestigious list of “world heritage” established by ICOMOS for its “rare examples of architectural character typical of the Ottoman period” (17th century) although enrolled in ICOMOS, still today ownership of the historic buildings in the city center is a challenge. During the communism era people were forces to move out and houses were given away by the government without consent, still today many buildings are abandoned and ownership being fought in court. The occupied houses are used for living and small shops, barbers, hotels, cafes and restaurants (CHwB, 2011).

A rapid urban development is happening causing both positive and negative impacts, numerous problems of socio-economic complexity (UNDP & Gjirokastra, 2011).
3. Method

3.1 Chapter Structure
This chapter explains the methods that have been used to obtain the necessary data for this research. Moreover the chapter describes and discusses the theoretical perspectives and research design that explains the outsets for the research process and analysis creation. Finally a discussion of the study’s validity and ethic perspectives is held.

3.2 Research paradigm

3.2.1 Qualitative method and quantitative method
In the study, both quantitative and qualitative research methods were applied. To evaluate the tourism services offered, analyzing printed material, the stakeholder’s approaches to tourism development, the visitor’s perception of the current tourism experience, a qualitative data collection approach was used. The result of the interviews and observations also consists of qualitative data as they are used to interpret and understand the situation. The contrary, quantitative method was used when searching for numbers to base generalization on which explains why this method was used to analyze the survey results (Carlsson, 1991)

3.2.2 Epistemological perspective
This study has been inspired by several theoretical perspectives on what knowledge is and how it is structured. Classical hermeneutics is described as a scientific perspective where the researcher observes behavior and its importance to the individuals being studied, this gives rise to interpretation and explanation "Neither I nor the other one has a monopoly on truth, what is crucial is an understanding of the other's truth and use this as the basis for new knowledge" (Birkler, 2008, p. 108) This perspective has been used to understand the relationship between the different stakeholders and in the analysis section where different sources creates a socio-environmental picture. The Life-world phenomenology perspective has also been used because it explains how knowledge is not always specific and the same for different people, but built on experiences in life, such is important to have in mind when interpreting the interview results. The concept of inter-subjective has also been used which explains that knowledge is shaped by other people in the community, a social network, which explains relationships and collaboration between stakeholders and their social network (Carlsson, 1991).
3.3 Research Design

In an inductive essay new truths are created after an empirical study (Birkler, 2008). An inductive research process is thus shaped by chain-reactions and experiences from which theory is constructed. An empirical knowledge philosophy means that the researcher believes that knowledge is created by experiences through our senses: sight, hearing, touch, taste and smell (Kristina Thorell, 2014). These perspectives were evidently the case in this study where knowledge was derived from living in the society, participant observation and interviews. “In the everyday life, observation is the best tool to gather knowledge about the world” (Thorell, 2013). The results found were used to form conclusions and a social-environmental map of the current situation for tourism in Gjirokastra.

Meanwhile, a cross-section design was used. What distinguishes a cross-sectional design is that researchers collect data from several different hierarchies in the society. Ejvegård also writes that “while interviews are best when experts will be interrogated and then strict facts called for, so fits questionnaire best when common people must be questioned and when it comes to develop the attitudes, tastes and opinions” (Ejvegård, 2003, p. 54) This was the case in this study.

3.4 Selection

The selection process of the interviewed people took a snowball-sampling shape where initial interviews with our contact persons at CHwB and their answers led us to seek out different persons, other organizations, the municipality, the university and local businesses etc. Naturally the limitations in the amount of people that could be found, reached or willing to be interview during our two months stay in Gjirokastra caused put limitations of the selection of individuals. The interviews were conducted by using different interview strategies. In an open interview questions are asked and created during the interview and the response range free and shaped by the respondent (Birkler, 2008). This was used to interview the stakeholders.

In a semi-structuralized interview the same questions are asked to the different respondents but answers are unlimited (Thorell, 2014). This was the case for the visitor interviews which were created using the former visitor surveys from 2007 as a foundation since a time-comparison was sought after. Some questions were reshaped because they were already identified in 2007 to lead to misunderstanding. The visitor survey from 2007 was created by Andrew Seidl, a professor in the department of agriculture and resource economics from
Colorado University. Both the 2007 questionnaire and 2014 interview script can be found in the appendix.

The original idea: to conduct a survey gathering 200 replies, sufficient enough to make a comparative analysis between the different previous surveys had to be abandoned due to the lack amount of visitors present during the off-season when the research took place. The survey was thus changed to become a semi-structuralized interview using the “survey” as a guide script. The guide script consisted of 3 pages with 18 questions, a mix of check-boxes and commentary fields. Twenty people were asked, because of the amount of replies the result has not an goal to conduct a full comparison to the previous surveys, instead they can be seen as a complement to our own observation of the tourist experience of visiting Gjirokastra and in particular the old Bazaar area. Their replies closely match those of 2007 and 2011 and rhymes with the picture of tourism development the stakeholders describes in 2014. So at some rate they were useful to understand the tourist gaze, experience and opinion about Gjirokastra as a destination.

The interviews were performed at Hotel Gjirokastra, Hotel Cajupi, Hostel Babameto, Sopoti Hotel and Hotel Kotoni in the old Bazaar area: 10 respondents were female, 10 were men. Keep in mind that this data is only valid for customers staying at the local hotels in Gjirokastras old town, the bazaar region. Most tourists visiting Gjirokastra only visit the city over the day which makes this data misleading for that category. One must take into consideration the amount of tourists visiting the city and distinguish them from the amount of tourists actually staying overnight in the city.

The selection of the printed material was done after consulting the stakeholders and taking their expert advices as a selection method. Due to insufficient previous research data, extensive own research had to be made, interviews and observations were the most common ones used instead of printed materials. Those had to be interpreted through qualitative content analysis, for example while analyzing the tourism strategy. Both the apparent visible, the manifested content and what lied beneath the surface (the latent content) created a meaning of the data. What the printed material claimed was thus subsequently discussed through interviews (Carlsson, 1991)

Quotes from the local people have sometimes been included throughout this thesis. These quotes are important to gather what the locals outside the tourism system have to say about living in Gjirokastra. Their selection is based on the chapter structure, were they fit in they were placed.
3.5 Data collection

The data has been collected using both primary and secondary sources. Primary sources were interviews and participative observations and secondary sources through already existing documents and books.

3.6 Data analysis

In the first phase a theoretical background study took place before arriving to Albania. Data was then continuously gathered, compiled, structured and analyzed to create an overview of the situation of the city. What was available at the moment thus creates the frame on which analysis takes place. The results of the data presented in the text in theory, results and in the analysis chapter. The interview answers have been gathered both as graphs (see the appendix) but in the result as text, because the quotes tells the story of these visitors experiences better than a graph (based on the amount of replies)

3.7 Validity

This paper has the desire to provide valid answers of scientific value. To achieve this, a various set of methods have been used to collect the data. Primary sources were sought after due to the circumstances where there is unfortunately not much researched material to be found about Gjirokastra and the secondary sources/ data was at many times believed to be biased. The sources of the printed material were often various experts and professors, whose figures were impossible to counter check as these often were the first research ever to be done in the various fields. Their level of expertise could not either be evaluated. That is why the aim of this thesis is to create a current situation analysis based on the facts (shaped by participant observation of the authors and interviews) that existed during the period of time when Gjirokastra was visited: march 2014- May 2014

Analyzing the validity of the visitor-, and stakeholder interviews gives rise to questions of authenticity. The level of honesty in the responses can always be discussed where the direct interviews represents an independent primary source, but still uncomfortable questions were sometimes needed to be answered. In this thesis the authors’ opinion is that a more straightforward approach could be sensed from the organizations, tourism operator and local businesses replies to questions while the municipality took more time and carefully shaped their replies.
As previously stated this research limitations were many as no tourism research had previously been done to this extent and many obstacles were encountered to find the right material, the right people, willing people, and objective data. Thus insufficient amount of data creates both the natural selection and is a component which affects the validity of this research. The season for the visit, off-season also affected the collection of data since the numbers of tourists were not at its peak and therefore made it more difficult to find them. The length of the interview made people unwilling to answer and thus the amount of answers are not significant enough to make assumptions of truth of the “typical visitor” to Gjirokastra but are meant to give an insight and idea to what tourists encounter and thinks about the tourism services available. To conclude: What was available at the moment thus creates the frame on which analysis takes place.

3.8 Ethical Perspective

In this thesis the authors have met a society were bureaucracy and corruption is at use and visible. Many interviews described this situation and other sensitive matters giving personal comments that describe the situation in Gjirokastra today. The participation and willingness to share and describe a troublesome situation was greatly appreciated by the authors. This contributed to shape the socio-environmental map of what is affecting the tourism development today.

In appreciation of this honesty level this thesis authors have chosen to not state the name, age or place of work of some of the interviewed stakeholders working at different to organizations to protect their integrity and avoid conflicts further haltering the development process. Instead the code Respondent is used and the transcribed interviews are kept with the authors.
4. Results

4.1 Chapter Structure

Chapter four consists of a great deal of information where the different tourism resources are presented. It begins with the tourism system components; market and supply is described. Previous market research, visitor interviews and visitor numbers are provided. The supply presentation is created through participant observation where the authors describe museums, hotels, cafés and restaurants, activities, infrastructure, availability of tourism information and websites based on experience and interviews.

Lastly the economy, culture and environment have been given their own headings as they are the components in the concept of Sustainability. Here poverty, migration, world heritage and pollution are only some of the chapter components.

Overall a holistic perspective has been used in this result presentation to understand the current situation of the tourism development in Gjirokastra.

4.2 The tourism System Components

4.2.1 Market

4.2.1.1 Market Research

As the Albanian government has recognized that the country is a promising tourism destination (based on an increase in international arrivals) the need for tourism research and reliable data for developing tourism strategy has been realized. Especially creating a visitor profile to use when developing marketing and understanding the tourism impacts on local, regional and national economies was needed. Starting in the summer of 2007 a visitor survey was done in Gjirokastra by the Gjirokastra Foundation “Seasonal tourism survey report about important cultural and natural sites – Summer 2007“ (Albania & UNDP, 2007). 207 questionnaires were collected between the 5th June and 20 September. Again in August of 2011, 300 visitors were interviewed. The first survey concluded that the typical visitors to Gjirokastra were young well educated middle-class European adults. They mostly came independently (by car or bus) and stayed one or two days as a part of a tour including other Albanian sites (or Greek in a less prevalence). Most visitors were first time visitors and their reason for visiting was pleasure. They were satisfied with the trip however it was not likely that they would return due to the fact of a low amount of activities that were available; most of them only went to the museums and walked around in the city. Thus they did not spend a lot of money however they would have been willing to do so.
Positive factors of Gjirokastra as a tourism destination were identified as the architectural heritage, nice landscape and friendly people. Problems identified were roads, cleanliness and poor tourism information available (Albania & UNDP, 2007). In 2011 the picture was quite the same. Changes to be seen were a tendency for longer stays (1 or 2 nights). The willingness to pay had decreased likely as a result of the economic crisis. Same problems were identified (UNDP & Gjirokastra, 2011).

4.2.1.2 Visitor Interviews 2014

This visitor interview was conducted in Gjirokastra in 2014 when 20 visitors staying at hotels in the old bazaar were interviewed using a revised questionnaire script from 2007 (see appendix). Only 20 answers were enough to form some small generalizations as most visitors were travelling alone (75 percent) and staying three nights in Gjirokastra as a part of a trip around Albania (around 10 days) by bus (85 percent). The typical visitor was a well-educated older adult; 90 percent had a university degree and 85 percent were over 40 y/o (at this time of the season) The travel patterns all differed but cities in Albania that were important (going to or from) were most commonly Berat (joint UNESCO word heritage city) followed by Tirana. Also Dürres, Saranda, Dhermi, Ioannina, Korce and Permeti were mentioned as visited during this trip. It is interesting to see that no one purchased a package tour. “Are there package tours? I thought this was an almost undiscovered corner of Europe” (Woman, 45 y/o). Instead of tours the tourists prepared for the trip using lonely planet, trip adviser and other online information to guide them around. Most tourists have stated that they haven’t found or used any source of information other than what they brought with them (80 percent), but that the employees at the hotels could answer questions very well (when they did speak English). Others have used the city maps available at some hotels. As in the previous survey 7 years ago the visitors activity is mostly walking around in the town sightseeing and visiting museums. An increase in hiking could be spotted but the hiking possibilities were thought of as insufficient and the trails in bad condition even though the landscape was identified as amazing and with great potential! (Man, 52 y/o)

“You simply don’t walk around alone in the wilderness at my age – you need tour guides because I hear there are bears, wolfs and snakes around. And plus there are no trails or signs or maps at the hotels. But then again there isn’t even a tourism office here so not much can be expected” (Man 58 y/o)
Many were satisfied with their stay however it is neither likely nor unlikely according to the interviews that they will visit again. This is interesting. There were two types of tourist, the once that meant: “I’ve been there, done that” but still can recommend Gjirokastra by word-of-mouth to new visitors. Others that were not satisfied and would remember a more negative picture when returning back home: “These empty houses must be cleaned up even if they are ruins – now it looks like a dump and smells too. I want it to be pretty were I travel, it brings me peace of mind” (Woman, 41)

Among those considering another visit they often commented this following some requests: there need to be more tourism information about what you can do and more activities. Better management of the infrastructure, such as waste management and no cars or trucks in old town is also a concern for some. Heating in rooms and cables hanging from the buildings is also mentioned to disturb the eye.

“Even if it is not perfect it has a wonderful charm of not being adapted for tourists, they have everything here but you can tell the locals aren’t interested in it themselves. Hopefully that attitude won’t make them destroy it”. (Woman, 61)

Many of the tourists expressed the great potential of Gjirokastra and came with some development ideas for themselves:

“Make it into a hiking destination, it’s cheap and have a beautiful and diverse nature. Or something else, but I mean that they have potential to attract many tourist – but which ones do they want? They must create a clear image” (Man, 49)

“You could combine Gjirokastra in a Mediterranean super region – three days at the sea and five days hiking. For example Antigonea is beautiful but there has to be cafes around, a little more life somehow, at least after a day of hiking” (Woman, 32)

“I want more nightlife, live music would be great. And where can this iso-polyphony be heard?” (Man, 57)

”Language skills! Menus in English or with pictures. It is charming but hard work travelling right now, otherwise you have to have an Albanian translation book with you. They don’t sell them at the hotels” (Man, 61)

“I want to be able to swim if I am to be convinced to come back during the summer. Pools somewhere in the city please”. (Woman, 63)
4.2.1.3 Visitor numbers.
After the opening of the country in 1990, and especially after the World heritage status in 2005, Gjirokastra has experienced a rapid increase in the amount of tourists which is visualized in the graph below (UNDP & Gjirokastra, 2011).

![Graph of the number of tourists over the years 2005-2011](UNDP & Gjirokastra, 2011)

4.2.2 The Supply
4.2.2.1. Laws & Regulations
There are a number of central and local structures that function as links in the field of tourism and heritage. It is also a wide range of legislation that supports policy orientation and defines the duties and responsibilities on tourism (Tourism Strategy 2007-2013 Approved by 21.06.2006 (COM), "Inheritance Law" No. 9048, dated 07.04.2003, "Law No. 9734 On Tourism, Dated 14.05.2007, The Government of the Republic of Albania Section 8405/1998 "On protected areas) However in Gjirokastra case there is a legal vacuum, e.g. in the case of partnerships or revitalization of the historic area and problems with illegal modifications to the houses. That is why this year a new tourism law will be enforced. The law will regulate the relations between public institutions, private companies, individuals and local or foreign entities that deal with tourism. It defines the rights and obligations of participants in tourism activities in accordance with the standards and principles of sustainable tourism development (Gjirokastra, 2011)

Gjirokastra is a WH and as of such has special obligations (see theoretical background) towards UNESCO. As for their presence and power execution in Gjirokastra the interview respondents (respondent A, B, C, D) one can mention that it is not that strong. Since the city
was enrolled in the WH list recently only one periodic report has been submitted in 2008. However Albania is being more closely monitored as a whole country after decisions made by the WH committee it has to continuously submit “State of Conservation” Reports. In the report of 2012 Respondent A and B prompted UNESCO to send a representative on a Reactive Monitoring Mission. The respondents describes that a professor of architecture and functionary of ICOMOS, Eleni Maistrou, came but only stayed in town for a day having meetings/interviews with officials from the town and a list of problems were handed over from to them by CHwB. Only the Skenduli house was visited making the final reports data consist of interview material and not empirical visual inspection as was requested. However the report led to UNESCO putting more requirements on Albania in order to prevent a listing in the List of World Heritage in Danger.

“Ms. Maistrou thought that Gjirokastra is not in danger and recommended not to put it on the list. Neither the previous government nor the existing one wants to request UNESCO to put it on the list - this is a matter of national honor and a lot of politics is involved” (Respondent A, 2014)

Only if Gjirokastra is on the Heritage in Danger list can it apply for the, much sought after, funding (see theoretical background) and next year UNESCO will according to respondent A take such an decision.

“Having UNESCO on board isn't always an advantage: they have bad experts (see above) and no money. The government decided to go from donor to donor and ask for support, and now there are a lot of uncoordinated activities such as 3D-scanning of the castle by the Turks - not really a priority and serving Turkish nepotism more than Gjirokastra”(Respondent A, 2014)

With UNESCO far away Gjirokastra takes its own steps to create a heritage management plan. When Gjirokastra first applied for World Heritage Status such a plan was a requirement to get enrolled but this document is today deemed as not feasible by respondent A and C. In May 2014 CHwB, the municipality, regional depreciative of cultural monuments and advisory architects from Tirana and Gjirokastra got together to create work groups to establish a new plan. This new document will focus on the regulations concerning the technical specifications of the buildings and their surroundings (signage for example). To create such a document, management plans from all over Europe have been gathered and Regensburg Stadt representative Tanja Flemming conducted a presentation at the CHwB office presenting theirs (see appendix, conference at CHwB office). The collaboration between the stakeholders is
hard, the mayor expressing concern but stating “My hands are tied” (Flamur Bime, 2014) as the ultimate power to pass laws lies with the ministry of Culture in Tirana. The conference was the starting point to create work groups creating suggestions for the plan. The only partners missing were the locals: “We have to keep in mind for which we are doing this and meet with them because they are the ones who will do the management. Without the local people no change will come and nothing will be implemented” (respondent A, 2014) To make the owners interested in saving the heritage its usage and value must be presented, to avoid becoming a dead museum “the locals must except that the old town is an economic attractive area” (Tanja Flemming, 2014) And here is where the faith is put in tourism “Side by side heritage and tourism can make efforts to find more projects and funding. Tourism is one of the main resources for developing the country” (Zamira Rami, 2014) In Gjirokastra many of the old houses are abandoned, according to respondent C only 40 per cent are occupied in the old bazaar (40 per cent are occupied) due do ownership issues. During the communism era many houses were taken from locals as people were demanded to move around in the country. The houses were given to new owners who were forced to move etc. Legal fights have been going on in the Tirana court for years as there is no tradition of written will in Albania. Today it is word against word which contributes to the problematic ownership situation today (Fidhi, 2014) In the case of restoring the house Babameto 1, 70 claimed owners of the house needed to be found to get permission for the project. Trips were taken all over the world to find them (Respondent D, 2014). The issue is a matter of pride, the explanation given for not selling/ giving up claims on inheritance (Fidhi, 2014). From the government’s side there are today no actions for resolving this situation according to (respondent A, B, C, D and E).

4.2.2.1. Supply Research
The information in this section was gathered through observation, participant observation and interviews.

Museums: A number of museums exist in Gjirokastra: the ethnographic museum, the Skenduli house and the castle. Our gathered picture of these activities is that there is no clear definition of responsibilities or management (the municipality is in charge on paper). The entrance fee of 200LEK/ visitor (approximately 1,5 Euro) is the guide’s salary, there are no other money for running the museums. This lack of funds results in physical degradation, and
no promotion, marketing or printed information in Albanian/English and so forth. When asking the guide at the Skenduli house about the information, he said “Who shall pay for printing this brochure – me?” The deteriorating physical buildings give a sense of abandonment. In the ethnographic museum the hole in the roof is managed by buckets. There is also a communication problem with the guides not speaking English. The museums could otherwise be a great experience with their interesting and unique interiors and functions, now they are however lost in translation and poor display.

**Hotels**

There are seven hotels inside the old bazaar of various shapes and prizes. One of them is especially using the traditional patterns and materials as a profile. We stayed one night in another hotel to try out the service level. There was no information about check-out times, breakfast or wife password et c. and the employee could not speak English which caused confusion regarding many things. According to Denisa Basha (Gjirokastra Tourism Service Office) this is the case at almost all the hotels. She is currently working on hotel evaluation to create “stars” based on quality standards.

We interviewed the hotel owner of two hotels to ask questions on sustainability approach. In their words sustainability is done by preserving the local culture by offering traditional music performances traditional cooking, dancing and exhibitions. When asked why not install solar panels they were deemed “not possible because the shade from the castle” (Respondent E, 2014) “it would look bad because it is not the traditional architecture (Respondent D). Using eco labels, having a strategy for ecological footprints, water supply and waste was not done. “We only do what other hotels are doing and no one is using eco products” (Respondent E).

**Cafes and Restaurant**

The food quality is in general very good due to the fact that the country just recently started with pesticides and those have not yet accumulated in the soil, but the presentation is very bad in terms of aesthetic values. The coffee served is Turkish, cappuccino and espresso, no regular coffee exists. The interior of the cafés and restaurant is not in any particular design or style, plastic chairs with nice traditional carpets and table. Smoking is accepted indoors. The service quality is identified as an improvement area in general. GF has thus initiated a project where they will teach girls how to work in the tourism sector: service, reception skills, cleaning etc, it will be a 30 day course. The language skills create communication barriers and thus everyday misunderstandings between guests and hosts.
Activities

There are not many activities offered in Gjirokastra. “There is no entrepreneurship tradition in Albania, everyone just copies their neighbors business” (local business owner, 2014) Sightseeing in the old bazaar is the main one according to the visitor surveys. The old bazaar is easily distinguished from the new town with its cobbled streets but there is no gated “welcome” sign, there is no entering a world heritage feeling. There are also numerous ways to enter the old town but there is only one map, close to the hotel Cajupi and bus park. Inside the heritage there are signs pointing to places of interests but they only state the name and there is no interpretative signpost or sign or information on the buildings themselves. “There have always been talks but not much has been done. The municipality did put up some signs that you can see around the town but they only have titles on them, no information and they are ugly too” (Respondent D, 2014).

If one would be interested in hiking or nature activities there are no informative signs about the surrounding mountains but there are some old trails to be found however they have not been prepared for tourists yet.

Availability of tourism Information

As there is no visitor center/tourism office in Gjirokastra today, guidebooks and asking the hotel personal is the only way to find out about activities. A new tourism office is being built and opened next month (June 2014) by the municipality. GF operated a tourism service until two years ago when the municipality decided to open another one. Since the town is small GF decided to close theirs. According to Respondent A and D the municipality’s “was hard to find, contained no information, the personal did not speak English and it was almost never open” (Respondent A, 2014). Respondent B explained that money was given from UNDP to restore and operate the office for two years. But the office was closed only after some months without explanation (Respondent B, 2014).

The city of Gjirokastra has no official website. A new one was developed by Connor Gary from the American Peace Corp but when presented to the mayor the yearly cost it was deemed too expensive (18 US dollars/year) and thus it was never published (Gary, 2014). An old website is run by Gjirokastra Foundation and this is getting replaced by a new one later this year by the same NGO on their own initiative: Since the municipality doesn’t do it we have to do it ourselves – what can they say? The internet is free! (Respondent D, 2014)

Today information about Gjirokastra is found in books and brochures. GF has published one book and CHwB has developed a map. A problem with the other available information is that
much of it is out of date. “They don’t put the printed date in them so they can sell them forever” (Shop owner, 2014) This results in misleading information and a picture of the case when there is no tourism management plan in use.

**Infrastructure**

In the city of Gjirokastra there are two different types of infrastructure divided between the “old town” and the “new town”. The old town which is the UNESCO world heritage site, consists of steep narrow cobbled streets where big busses and trucks can’t maneuver. The new town which is downhill from the old town is more modern with roundabouts and traffic police who oversee the flow of traffic. At the end of the main road in the new town there are daily departures of minivans that depart every hour between 8 o’clock till 12 o’clock. These minivans work as the main public transport to and out of the city and there are direct minivans to Saranda which take about 1,5 hours. There are alternative routes for getting to different destinations as Tirana for example and depending on what busses are available one can take either a minivan from Gjirokastra or the buss. They later transfer the passengers to whatever destination one is heading for. In other words there is a perfectly synchronized system and the drivers are extremely helpful according to our experiences.

There are three alternative airports for reaching Gjirokastra and depending on the choice one makes one can either land in Ioannina and the island of Korfu in Greece or the capital of Albania, Tirana. The fastest and cheapest option is Ioannina which is situated close to the Albanian border, 90 km away and takes about 1,5 hour. There are busses, minivans or taxis which are available as transport. Gjirokastra itself is 30 km from the Greek border. Corfu is another option but since it is an island one has to take the ferry to Albania before taking the bus or minivan to reach Gjirokastra. From Tirana there is a newly constructed road which takes you to Gjirokastra in about 4 hours. The main transfer points or cities from where one can take minivans or busses to Gjirokastra are Saranda, Delvina, Tepelena and Korca.

Poverty among the local people can be connected with poor infrastructure as a hinder for societal and economic growth and development. Poor infrastructure has historically among the population been blamed as the main reason for low standard of livings, the major reason for migration and hinder for foreign and domestic investments in the region. 88 per cent of the students travelled to school by foot in 2005 so even the education is affected by poor infrastructure (UNDP & Council, 2005).
To address the problems of demographic issues, agricultural shortfalls, educational perspectives, urban planning, the state of infrastructure, environmental problems and overall culture of Gjirokastra the Albanian parliament adopted the resolution of the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) in 2003 authored by United Nations, the goals are to be achieved in 2015. In the course of fulfilling the MDG Gjirokastra Regional Council wrote a strategy plan called “Gjirokastra Regional Development Strategy” in 2005, where the particular needs of the region were incorporated in the program framework of the region and has written a regional development strategy with goals that are to be reached in 2015.

4.3 Economy

4.3.1 Tourism Revenue

Agriculture is still the main force of economic development in the region of Gjirokastra, famous for its dairy products. However the growth rate of the tourism sector is higher than in any other sector. Its annual revenue is estimated by UNDP at around 23 per cent. According to forecasts from 2012 the tourism revenue has already doubled and the expectations are that tourism will become the main income. For the first time this year, tourism climbed to the top of the classification in terms of remittances from outside the local economy (UNDP & Gjirokastra, 2011).

4.3.2 Labor

Agriculture still employs most workforce in the region, livestock being the primary source of income (55 per cent) followed by crops (40 per cent). Most of the products are sold locally or to Greece. Other kinds of agriculture are underdeveloped because of lack of equipment and irrigation systems. Industry employs some work force, especially in Gina Mineral Water Factory, the “national” mineral water of Albania. Several garment factories exists in the area, creating souvenirs for the Greek market but this industry is a mostly run as Maquiladora which means that the material and equipment are mostly imported duty- free, assembled and then sent back to the country of origin. Tourism figures from 2008 states that currently 600 people are working in the sector. The forecast is that this number will have increased to 2000 people in 2020 (UNDP & Gjirokastra, 2011).
4.3.3 Poverty

Albania is still considered one of the poorest countries in Europe. The regions rugged geographical terrain, harsh climate, household sizes, lengthy distance from health centers, lack of educational facilities and urban centers is causing poverty in shape of lacking basic living standards such as food, clothing, shelter but also loss of hope, exclusions from economic and social life, inability to preserve social traditions, lack of infrastructure and low security. This effects the overall societal development (UNDP & Council, 2005). The status for the local people has its effect on sustainable tourism development, like the World Bank states: “broad improvements in human welfare will not occur unless the impoverished receive access to higher quality health, education, water, sanitation and electricity services.” (WorldBank, 2008)

4.4 Culture

4.4.1 Tourism Stakeholders

The stakeholders involved in Gjirokastra’s tourism development are many, different both in social (hierarchy and interests) and geographical (new and old time) terms. On the highest level we find the government in Tirana, the Ministry of Tourism and the ministry of Culture. Here is where old and new laws on tourism, cultural heritage and NGOs (affecting Gjirokastras tourism development) are developed and passed.

Ministry of Tourism, Culture, Youth and Sports (Ministry of Tourism)

The main role of the Ministry of Tourism is to support, protect, develop and promote tourism resources, cultural heritage, material and spiritual Albanians in accordance with the action plan and in cooperation with other institutions of central government, local government sector and civil society (Gjirokastra, 2011).

National Tourism Agency (NTA)

National Tourism Agency is a public entity under the jurisdiction of the Minister responsible for tourism. The main roles of NTA are: Perform functions related to tourism promotion and marketing, as well as other functions prescribed by law: To promote, support and facilitate the possibility of using the funds for individuals and companies involved or intending to deal with tourist activities (Gjirokastra, 2011).

Tourist Assistance Office (ZAT)

Regional Tourist Assistance Offices have been established recently (2010) in each of the 12 regions of Albania score, including Gjirokastra. They have a duty
to provide information to tourists about entry procedures, services and facilities available and information on places and objects of interest to tourists,

to receive complaints from foreign tourists or locals to hoteliers, tourist restaurant owners, tour guides, travel agents, tour operators and other tourism companies about products and services offered by them (Gjirokastra, 2011).

**Local government and its responsibilities in relation to tourism**

The ministries operate on the local scale through the municipality. And in accordance with the law their responsibility to the government is to do inventories of the tourist resources and local tourist businesses and send periodical reports (twice a year) to the minister responsible for tourism to create a national database. They also provide technical assistance, monitor and send suggestions on tourism businesses development and establishment.

For tourism development the municipality in Gjirokastra has no specific budget, resources come from donors (to specific projects) or via the government through unlimited/limited grants that are audited. The unlimited grants are to do with as the mayor, who has uncontested power, pleases. The municipality in Gjirokastra works, based on these laws and through strategy plans. The first one from 2007 National Strategy for Development and Integration” (NSDI) 2007-2013 was later called “Despite the inclusion of a group of experts with experience of this document has exceeded his expectations, reminding us once again that the planning process is difficult and often encountered” in the newest plan: “Tourism development strategy 2011-2021” The document contains vision, mission, goals and objectives and was prepared by the City of Gjirokastra, with the support of technical assistance to stakeholders, experts, NGOs, specialized institutions, private business, civil society. The vision is that “In 2021 the Municipality of Gjirokastra will be an important center for tourism and socio-economic development, a city where the community enjoys all the possibilities with a clean and healthy environment” (Municipality of Gjirokastra, 2011).

Among the objectives we find:

1 – To balance urban development and the world heritage area
2 - To harmonize economic development, tourism development and local tradition
3 – Create and attractive culture and tourism center based on the traditional cuisine, unique cultural heritage, historical and architectural city.
4 – Coexisting of cultures, generations and traditions in a society openly harmonized.

The focus points for tourism development are:

1 - Creating the necessary tourism infrastructure
2 - Development of sustainable tourism product
3 - Marketing of products (new and existing) within and outside the country.
4 - Investment in human resources and assistance (Municipality of Gjirokastra, 2011).

The municipality uses the strategy document in two ways. The first is to find funds and donors by showing them the action list in the back of the document. The second is to show the local people what is happening so they can act upon the changes. The municipality is in charge of the attractions such as the castle, the ethnographic museum and opening of a new tourism information center. For the nature and infrastructural sustainability there is another document that runs over a 24 years period “Sustainable development in the Region of Gjirokastra.

There is a strong will to attract more visitors, however other, identified by the municipality as more pressing needs, also needs funding: health, education, emigration and unemployment issues. Thus financial means are more often allocated or relocated from the old bazaar restoration to the new town improvements. There is an evident conflict between attracting new citizens by developing infrastructure and accommodation for them and catering for tourist. As until now more money has been earned in selling building permits than spending on the old by many deemed “dead old bazaar”. Causes for this reasoning strategy are identified by the small amount of tourist income due to that most visitors in Gjirokastra so far has been day trip visitors. Even if money is giving to specific projects in the old area they can be diverted elsewhere by the judgment of the municipality Respondent F explains. The auditing of the donor and government granted money is poor according to Respondent D and Respondent F. “One of the donors cried when she heard that the money was spent on the new lake project instead of the conservation of the old houses, but what could she do? It was already too late and the money spent” (Respondent D, 2014)

Following plans are not popular in Albania both Enkelada and Magdalena says. “A mistake can then be traced and forever be found in documents” (Respondent D, 2014) This was said to explain why there are so many strategy plans found that no one uses or knows about, such as the Gjirokastra Moving Forward by GF and the Gjirokastra Regional Strategy Plan by UNDP. A lot of money has been spent on developing these plans by hiring external experts and photographers. But these are lost in translation and unsure implementation responsibilities People move and the plans vanish with them. These problems with organization, cooperation, management and funding are the largest ones blocking good initiatives from other investors and affects the world heritage site Respondent D, 2014). Respondent F claims that “it is not serious work done at the municipality; it is just all talk, talk, talk” (Respondent F, 2014)
On the next step in the hierarchy we find different organizations and NGOs. The most important ones in terms of culture are: Cultural Heritage without Borders (CHwB), Gjirokastra Foundation (GF) and The Regional Directorate of Culture and Monuments (RDCM) which works with different short and long term projects in heritage preservation, revitalization and tourism. They sometimes work separate but most often in collaboration with each other since they share the same goals for Gjirokastra: that the cultural world heritage of Gjirokastra is the most important and valuable tourism and marketing resource. Restoration and revitalization is believed to increase the amount of satisfied visitors, improve the image and attractiveness of the tourism destination of Gjirokastra. The goal is to turn the current situation of day visitors to overnight guests thus minimizing the leakage of economic funds to daytrip operators from other regions and distributing this money to local shops, hotels, restaurants, cafés and activity companies. This increase of income can be used to further restore and revitalize the cultural heritage and other areas important for a sustainable city development (health, nature, education). The organization’s restoration and revitalization work is done on project basis, restoration often initiated by CHwB or RDCM and the revitalization such as creating an activity inside the building developed by GF to be passed on to private companies for example small souvenir shops selling traditional wood and stone artifacts. By doing so the sustainability of the cultural heritage is initiated and valuable tourism products/services created in its footpath. Tourism is thus recognized by all as an important asset for the long term sustainability and management of the cultural heritage. Money for these projects comes from a variety of different donors: European union, UNDP, Prince Claus Fund for culture and Development through the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Dutch Postcode Lottery, The international coalition of sites and conscience, the German Embassy (Antigonea), the The Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ), The Swizz agency for development and cooperation (the artisan center, handcraft production), The centre for International Migration and Development (CIM) (tourism and heritage) only to name some (Gjirokastra, 2011).

Respondent D explains that it is hard to be an NGO in Albania because there are no clear laws on how they should function. In other countries for example the VAT (value-added-tax) is paid back to the NGOs. “The government takes that and that is millions that the organizations should have”. (Respondent D, 2014)

The relationship and collaboration between the municipality and the organization is described by Respondent D, to halter further tourism development and affect the spirit behind initiating new projects. This was expressed in many ways when asking why tourism development was
done around the city. “Unfortunately the local government is not present and unfortunately we need them”. (Respondent C, 2014) “The mayor is not interested in the old Gjirokastra only investing in new things downtown to attract new citizens and thus votes in the next election”. (Respondent D, 2014)

The problems with collaboration show itself in many ways, there is a problem behind the development of tourism projects from the organizations side and leaving the management to a second partner.

Since NGOs are not allowed to make revenue, they cannot run businesses so often the management is left to the municipality. “The municipality is working against us. We have initiated a lot of projects that they have rejected or destroyed afterwards” (Respondent D, 2014). Such as the new museum within the castle and the tunnel used under communism under the castle, which were prepared by GF and left to the municipality to manage. These are today closed. There are insufficient funds for the castle given to the municipality Respondent F explains and therefore management and safety issues arise and causes there to be no one at the museum who can guard the collection against theft (Respondent F, 2014) Another cause of the closed museums, Respondent D explains as the problematic past of communism, something that the locals and the municipality wishes to forget and is shown both in the tunnel and the new museum. There is interest from tourist but the area continues to be a sensitive matter for the local people and the municipality (Respondent D, 2014)

In the other museums: Skenduli House and Ethnographic museum the patterns reappear, unclear management responsibilities as the municipality is in charge on paper but in reality the management is done by the guides.

At the ground level, the ones meeting the tourists, we find the tourism services and operators. For this part two tourism operators were interviewed: Caravan Tours and a local shop owner Respondent G owns a souvenir shop in the old bazaar and thus represents a very visual tourism actor in the tourism services of Gjirokastra: the souvenir shops situated in the busy intersecting corner of old bazaar, the most photographed corner of Gjirokastra. The almost identical shops dominate this small area offering the same information and souvenirs, but also bring atmosphere and life to the old bazaar. The owners are according to Respondent G divided in two groups were very few pay tax and are run legally. This can be done because there is no legal system behind starting a business: a house can be rented and turned into a shop and then opened without being registered. There is no controlling agency demanding
taxes – tax is only demanded by those who are in the system. Respondent G points out some of the shops have been operating this way for years without anyone shutting them down or forcing them to pay. The tax administrative is difficult to understand with taxes increasing every year without any tangible improvements in its footprint. The first tax is paid to the municipality (lights for the bazaar, signage fee, street cleaning, and declaration) the second one is paid to a Directorate of Registration (health issues). Only the legal shops are inspected, usually this leads to expensive fines on unclear terms. There is a tax office in Tirana “The municipality pays bribes to keep the inspectors from Tirana away and if they come we all close down that day” (Respondent G, 2014). This way of running the business in Gjirokastra has been going on for years. The price competition between the shops is hard and for the legitimate ones it is difficult to compete with prices where no tax expenses have been added. Today no benefits of running a legal business can be seen by respondent G. The respondent is however positive to an enforcement from the government as the tax money could be spent on improvements for the Bazaar: working conditions such as one day of the week of, better lights, pavement improvements, promotion etc. But until such changes come out of the taxes the legal businesses pay she concludes “I won’t pay until everyone else does!” (Respondent G, 2014)

Caravan Tours are run by Ilir Hitaj and Kristina Fidhi, entrepreneurs who saw an opportunity and grabbed it. The tours have been running for four years, Ilir and Kristina having other projects on the side. They offer a multiple choice of tours from March to November, the business being flexible as it is small. By involving the local communities and the different cultures that they represent they offer everything from Raki tastings, cheese tastings, wild honey extraction experiences, ecological food and much more. In the article (Su, 2012) writes that rural areas play a major role in socio-economic development (Su, 2012) The initiative by Caravan tours to involve rural communities in their tours is a way of ensuring a place in the tourism market compared to other destinations. This also helps prevents high leakage by injecting some of the capital to local rural communities (Wolfgang Rid, 2014). To the outside world Albania and its tourism is still little heard of and skepticism is a common reaction when we meet first time visitors. We hope to change this image by sharing and creating another image of an unspoiled nature full of possibilities” (Illir, 2014) Caravan tours is of yet the only tour agency offering wildlife and nature tours in Gjirokastra, while others focus on the cultural heritage. To Caravan Tours the sustainability of nature is thus extremely important; their company relies on the beauty and conservation of the natural environment. As it is now
the waste that is a big concern, affecting the nature itself, the image of the destination, and the long term sustainability for caravan tours as a business.

4.4.2 Education

In the aftermath of the end of communism and the pyramid schemes chaos, public buildings were destroyed and educational ones were not spared. Today many schools in the region lack basic heating, electricity, equipment and even bathrooms (which has been effecting female enrolment). Education enrolment also depends on the education level of the household head and his or her spouse, and the costs of material for attending thus the economic status of the household. In 2005 the enrolment rate at the Albanian universities was down to 9 per cent, the lowest participation rate in Europe. The need for regenerating the educational systems is recognized as educational quality standards have and are still declining; this is linked to high unemployment rates in the region. Majority of the work force in Gjirokastra have only completed basic or less than basic education (Regional Council Administration, 2005).

Gjirokastra has a university: **Eqrem Cabej University** situated in the new town. The University offers a Bachelor in tourism with possibilities for further studies such as a Master degree. Other than Tourism the university has professors in biology, geography and economics. The university has of yet not been engaged in tourism development in Gjirokastra, the professors have done some research in flora and fauna but there is no coordination or initiative to direct this for tourism studies. As a result collaboration between the university and “the real world” of Gjirokastra has of yet not become reality even though some students were interns at the GF for a week (Mosko, 2014). *We tried having them as interns but they didn’t show up on time, didn’t do the work assigned to them or even showed any interest in learning* Respondent D, 2014) This experience has been described as a lack of interest for the local heritage from the students and also the language barrier as many of the students only speak Albanian (Basha, 2014). The interest of the students is instead to move to more modern, bigger cities such as Saranda, Durres and Tirana seeking more prestigious educations of higher value. As a result the University of Eqrem Cabej is noticing a decrease in the amount of students. The many private Universities which are being established around the country create a more competitive environment which has led to lower admission requirements to attract more students but in turn the University is losing students that have higher demands and/ or expectations. Naturally more people are moving to the bigger cities in the country because of urbanization and the possibilities (Mosko, 2014).
The effect of these education trends on tourism is the following:
- Few tourism service providers can speak English.
- A lack of driven innovators and entrepreneurs engaged in developing new tourism attractions.
- A lack of identification, preservation and management plans for many of the natural and cultural objects in and around Gjirokastra.

4.4.3 Migration

According to UNDP at least one-fifth of the population has left the country since 1990, in its footprint a high dependence on remittance is present among many households. The migration movement is also called a “brain drain” as many young well educated men and women (96 per cent of the emigrants in 2005 had secondary or higher education) are inspired by the economic status of the migrants and leave in pursuit of that status. Some villages have lost 60 per cent of their population between 18-15 y/o to a chaotic, unexpected and rapid urbanization leaving many villages with an ageing citizenry. The migration causes weakness points in the tourism system with effects on the tourism services offered when for example social dislocation affects the preservation of tradition and authenticity problems when old traditions are left for new foreign influence. Agricultural labor shortage affecting food stock, lack of innovation for further economic development and a downward regional growth have a spiral effect when employment possibilities decrease and workforce leaves (UNDP & Council, 2005).

4.5 Environment

4.5.1 Nature

The region of Gjirokastra is abundant in ecosystems due to its topography. The most common ecosystems are valleys, hills, rivers, fields, canyons, pastures and mountains and underground ecosystems. There are traces of significant human impact but the natural beauty is still of great importance. Different habitats spring out of these ecosystems which can be partially forest, partially fields and valleys with rapid change in altitude and scenery. From snow covered alpine mountain peaks to shrub covered valleys and limestone gorges one can observe two or more ecosystems in one panoramic view (Profile of Gjirokastra region, 2000). The great biodiversity in the Gjirokastra district is quite complex due to its climate, topography and overlapping of vegetation. According to the profile of the Gjirokastra region
there are 3250 vessel species of flora in Albania of which 13 per cent belong to the region of Gjirokastra (Profile of Gjirokastra region, 2000). But all this is greatly threatened due to deforestation, illegal constructions, over grazing, agriculture, poaching, pollution and the lack of knowledge. The deforestation has been going on for quite some time and heating during winter is one of the factors that cause this ecological impact. With deforestation other problems have followed like landslides and erosion which can be seen in most parts of the region and also the country. Illegal constructions are a huge problem in Albania which causes fragmentation of the landscape, destroying the image of the country and is a great threat for the cultural heritage. Most fauna have been hunted to the brink of extinction and even though there are existing laws that protects, for example the bear, there are no precautionary actions. Pollution is another severe factor affecting the region due to lacking water filtration and management (UNDP & Council, 2005).

4.5.2 Electricity
There is a severe power sector crisis in generating and distribution of electricity which has slowed down the productivity growth in Albania alongside effects in tourism. Daily power cuts are frequent and considered an acute problem in society. Many are unable to pay for the electricity since 200Lek is the standard monthly living rate for a family – average electricity bill is 1500LEK/month. This causes illegal power connections all over the city and a close down of tourism services, such as the souvenir shops, during inspection days (Demo, 2014).

4.5.3 Heating Systems
The heating system has been a long stand problem in Albania, slow to improve. In 2005 99.9 per cent of the households lacked central heating, 50 per cent were using wood – even though wood cutting is illegal and causes environmental problems for the area (UNDP & Gjirokastra, 2011).

4.5.4. Water supply and Waste Management
There were and still today exists an absence of wastewater treatment facilities, inadequate chlorination and deteriorating networks that contaminate drinking water. Few investments have been made in the water supply infrastructure since communism times. In 2005 a staggering 30 percent had no access to running water. The same problem remains today.
There are few if any signs to educate the tourists about this. Many rivers show signs of
garbage, toilet paper, plastics and more things that have been flushed or dumped. There are
environmental effects of tourism and visual effects noticeable for the tourists.
The directory of water supply management in Gjirokastra is government owned. The
management is all performed manually without the use of computers. The population of
the city is around 40000 which are all supplied with water from this directory. According to Kalo
the water supply and the way it is managed is lacking structure and needs to be greatly
improved. There is no statistic available about the amount of water that is being used by each
household or the businesses. The maximum capacity is therefore unknown. There are three
different sources of water which are Hosi spring, Tranoshishtë spring and the Buduku well
which is ground water. Hosi spring is the most frequently used and has a capacity of 110
cubic liters per second in winter time and near half that amount in summer time. The
households are being provided with water one to three hours daily which is deposited in tanks
and is used when needed. Since there is no systematic control which regulates the amount of
water given to each household one can set up several tanks and fill them up which leads to a
shortage for people living in the lower parts of the old town. These lower parts can have as
little as half an hour of daily water supply. Due to the topology and the water source the water
is being led down from the Hosi spring some 450 m.a.s.l and runs down by the force of
gravity until it reaches the lower parts of town. The capacity of the spring based on the
technology available at the moment is known. The problem that is present is the illegal uptake
of water interception which destroys the pipes and causes huge amounts of water leakage.
Due to the fact that there are no sensors controlling the water consumption there can be no
exact and credible volumes stated of how much is being lost. An approximation can be
calculated but this proves that there is an inequality among different areas and households,
based on location but mostly wealth. Another shortage problem is the interception of the
water supply coming from the Hosi spring from the nearby village of Valare which affects
the amount of water reaching the city of Gjirokastra. The need to intercept the water and make
illegal water routes shows the need of a water infrastructure which can provide the city with
equal amounts of water controlled by the directory. The directory understands this dilemma
but do not have enough resources or the infrastructure to address this problem. The system
that is used at the moment was built in the 40’s and problems with pipes are normal. The
supply of water is better in winter than summer due to the fact that there is less water
available in the springs at summer time. According to the statistics available today there are
around 20 000 visitors each year in Gjirokastra and even though all of these tourists do not
sleep here and therefore do not directly affect the water consumption this amount was used as a base amount. This amount was doubled in the question asked: How would a 40 000 increase of tourists affect the water supply of the area? Kalo Demo answered by saying: “we could never supply that amount with the infrastructure available”. In other words a sudden increase in the water demand could not be sustained and would therefore prove the whole infrastructure to be insufficient. Even if only all the existing 20 000 tourists were to sleep in Gjirokastra and therefore use the water supply it would cause a huge problem. An investment from the World Bank and cooperation from the Albanian government is planned for upgrading the infrastructure. So far all investments have been focusing on the uptake of water from the spring but the idea is that this investment will focus on the internal system of a small part of the city.

The waste water is being released directly in to the river without filtration which is affecting the water quality of the area as well as the coastline (Demo, 2014).
5. Situations Analysis and Conclusion

5.1 Chapter Structure
This chapter consists of economy, culture and nature analysis. The backbone of these three parts is the findings and current situation which is comprised of suggestions and necessities which should be fulfilled for the sake of the nation and its people.

5.2 Economy
Albania is today still considered one of Europe’s poorest countries. The village people in and around Gjirokastra suffers financial poverty more than those living within the city limits. Still poverty is considered a critical area and the empowerment of the people considered a top priority of the municipality among many others, tourism is only one area reaching for attention. It is clear to us that the municipality understands the political tool tourism can be for economic development, and their approach is working on improving the attractiveness of the city by the many infrastructural improvements. Their priority is catering to the citizens and by this the tourists will also benefit. However these priorities results in a secularization of the old and new town, the two zones competing for attention and economical resources. This struggle is also affecting the relationship and collaboration between the tourism stakeholders: the municipality favoring the new town and the heritage organizations efforts focusing on the old town. The local people still have a reluctant approach to the old town and they must be convinced that it is an economic attractive area in order for the current situation of abandoned houses to change “For Gjirokastra, you have to believe first and then the locals and private investors will be convinced”.(Tanja Flemming, 2014)

Tourism is a rapidly growing sector for all of Albania, Gjirokastra included. To us it is clear that sufficient research and regulatory bodies are missing. There is no budget for tourism development; the objectives in the tourism strategy plan can only be implemented when funds are found through government or donor grants. This makes the strategy turn into a more of a wish list than an operable document. Time set up for action is made up without consideration of the seeking for these funds, this results in the control group’s power being non-existent. Instead tourism is seen as an organism driven by locals entrepreneurship and innovation skills, “It is just to rent a house and open something” in the words of Respondent G. These tourism providers being up to 90 per cent illegal meaning no tax is being paid. The
sustainability of such a system is questionable but not surprising as the country has suffered many political and historical battles, just having opened its borders a few years ago to the outside world.

In order for a proper system we believe a tourism budget should be constructed with feasible projects and granted funds to begin with. If the tourism keeps increasing and the housing inheritance is solved maybe the migration “brain-leak” could also be halted. With a mix of well educated young adults and a tourism demand to back up the system we believe new interesting tourism products could be developed and tourism can then finally be the tool for economic development as well as sought after.

To conclude we want to raise a warning finger of consequences that can appear if sustainability is not considered in the strategies:

- The dependency of tourism. In many developing countries much of the other businesses are abandoned by the attractiveness of earning “fast money” from tourism. One must be remembering the tourism systems never ending fluctuations in demand and the destination curve. Tourists come to visit a country and if there is nothing to see but tourism services they will travel elsewhere. The other services and industries doesn’t or shouldn’t be shut down, instead tourism can be seen as an additive in a diverse economy.

- Market trends must be researched in order to lie one step ahead of market fluctuations.

- Promotion and marketing is needed to attract more visitors if an increase of visitor numbers is wanted. Firstly an image needs to be developed of the town that can be effectively marketed. There are many possibilities of creating a diverse destination but then more attractions needs to be developed. With these elements in place Gjirokastra could pull visitors from the coastal areas to visit them.

5.3 Culture

When speaking about something as complex as culture one has to keep in mind the many aspects of it. What is more of a challenge is to identify the value that attract certain visitors and use that as a strategy when developing different activities for tourists. In other words the visitor’s perception of Gjirokastra, their feedback must be accounted for and used as a backbone for further tourism developments. Maybe they are all interested in gastronomy, the political history and the architecture for example? If these attributes have been identified as collective cultural interest for visitors then that is the cultural strategy that the region has to
primarily focus on. This does not mean that one should not provide other cultural experiences but it does emphasize the focus point. There are therefore certain points that should be taken into consideration.

1. Do an inventory of the cultural attractions the region has to offer as well as the zones they belong to but also identifying the specific individuals whom can provide these intercultural relations.
2. Do extensive research about what the visitors or tourists have in common regarding cultural interests and what they expected to find or experience in cultural terms prior to arrival.
3. Identify the expectations of the tourists and derive these expectations to the cultural inventory that has been conducted and compose them so that they match.
4. When these points are fulfilled one can create a cultural strategy plan for the region which will also be a marketing tool for destination branding and imaging.
5. The final approach will be to involve other aspects of culture which also represents the region to mediate the diversity of options which will attract a bigger range of clients.

For this to be possible or even realistic the University has to conduct research in cooperation with different cultural institutes like CHwB or The Gjirokastra Foundation. By giving practical assignments to the students in geography, biology, tourism, marketing and economics these goals can be achieved and then implemented when attracting tourists and also help entrepreneurs with the crucial information they need to conduct professional businesses in the region. This would of course also give the students an insight of their own culture and provide a sense of pride which hopefully would be communicated and spread to others in the community.

The collaboration between the stakeholders needs to be improved. The conference at the CHwB office was only a starting point, but with an agreed upon management plan for the cultural heritage in place much could be resolved and energy derived to other projects. Future tourism activities could be shaped and inspired by its framing regulations and a comprehensive image of the old town could then emerge. Hopefully when the management plan is in use the legal inheritance matter could be approached and suggestions to its solution worked upon. There are today many cultural activities that tourists seek after but are not provided for as seen in the visitor survey and their comments. Many of the respondents shared many ideas for development and saw the potential for it. We believe these ideas are not
implemented because of the locals approach to their own culture. Many times we heard “Are tourists interested in that? Really??” The long isolation of Albania has resulted in a rapid movement and desire to fit in amongst the developed countries of Europe. The locals must through activities, such as the festival in Regensburg, understand that they possess a unique world heritage stage to show their heritage on. Globalization and in its path MacDonaldization imposes strong threats by their seductive character.

“When communism fell I remember they began to sell Coca cola cans at the store. I bought several every day and decorated all the shelves in my room with them thinking I’d never drink anything else again. To me Coca Cola meant freedom” (Elmar Aliko, 2014)

Sustainable tourism isn’t about enforcing rights and wrongs on the local community. It is about implementing new ideas to be discussed through understanding the local people, the match between their needs and wants of a modern lifestyle with the tourism desires of a historical experience. This is already physically possible with the world heritage zone inside of which the historical non-invasive intangible activities can be created. There is thus space for both a modern and a traditional society in Gjirokastra. Gjirokastra are lucky that they have a natural cultural attraction with their large historical part, much different from the once small coastal towns that were completely transformed and reshaped without any regulations. In comparison to those cities Gjirokastra offers a completely different tourism experience.

The markets appreciation and interest, as seen in the visitor surveys, can hopefully mean that the self- esteem and approach to traditional culture changes and increases as tourism’s economical profits are understood.

5.4 Environment

Since one of the obvious strengths of the region is its landscape and nature, it makes it a matter of national importance that preservation and protection of these remaining habitats do come true. Laws and regulations are not enough to ensure the future of the ecological heritage of Albania. Because of old habits and the mentality among its inhabitants much greater efforts are needed if there are to be any significant socio- cultural changes which can make the population understand the huge importance of the biological ecosystem. In many cases the locals understands the significance of nature but lack the knowledge of how fragile the ecosystem can be. The impacts that pollution, littering and exploitation bring about are not commonly comprehended among the majority of the world population.
Although this is one of the major problems, one cannot deny the role the state has to play in this dilemma. When sufficient infrastructure such as energy, water and waste management are not provided for, the population don’t have a choice but to take action causing them to provide for themselves (intercepting power and water for example).

“I am running a hotel business. I can’t only have water for one hour every day. The municipality refuses me to pay for more water so we pay our neighbors instead” (Woman, 45 y/o)

If these necessities are not provided for by the government then naturally one cannot point accusing fingers and blame the locals and their actions. It is the legal obligation of a nation to provide “these basics of life” for its people so that the people do have an honest choice. So before we can even utter the words of a different lifestyle and how the majority of people don’t seem to care about nature we have to ask ourselves if the people have been given a choice in the first place?

Continually, these are suggesting steps that Albania should to go through so that the natural heritage of the nation and what it represents can be passed on to future generations.
1. Provide its population with a functioning and affordable energy, water and waste infrastructure.
2. To mediate and educate the population of the importance of basic ecological processes and about its flora and fauna.
3. To mediate and educate the population of the importance of an altering behavior when it comes to littering and its impacts on hygiene and the environment.
4. To create a functioning government body with underlying institutes controlled by professionals that will govern and monitor these different steps.
5. Lastly to have frequent research and development conducted in these fields.

One can question the importance of these suggestions due to the funds it requires to fulfill these goals but one also have to take into consideration how necessary they are. Without clean water, clean air and vegetation life cannot be sustained and when certain thresholds have been exceeded there is no turning back. When referring to a small nation such as Albania this would have consequences of enormous proportions.

Within the concept of sustainable environment there is another important issue to address. Carrying capacity. Any effort of resolving environmental problems must also take this issue into consideration. Otherwise the efforts can all be in vein if the establishment does not take
action against the maximum threshold of visitors which can be sustained in the old town. There is a maximum capacity albeit unknown. This carrying capacity has to be well looked into for the sake of a sustainable development. If Gjirokastra plans to broaden its activity range to also take place in the surrounding mountain areas, the carrying capacity of those areas must be researched. Generally there are today two management techniques to decrease the tourism impacts in nature. Either by hardening the environment through fences and prepared trails or changing the behavior of the visitors. Thus more control on allowed behavior, activities, equipment, and time of day/year for activities is today equally as important as focusing on numbers. 50 well educated tourists can make less damage than ten uneducated once. This is why we embrace the idea of a visitor center with high spirits. Here the capacities and status of the natural surroundings can be explained and allowed behavior taught. Other important factors leading to a long term sustainability of tourism that the developers at the municipality have to keep in mind are:

1. Is the infrastructure capable of receiving the amount of visitors preset by the maximum carrying capacity?
2. Is the water supply and management capable of providing primarily the local community of their daily demand plus secondarily that of the visitors without affecting the local community?
3. Is the waste management efficient in the way they dispose of the waste and how they convert that waste into renewable energy or recycling?
4. Is the energy supply and management adequate for providing primarily the local community of their daily demand plus secondarily that of the visitors without affecting the local community?
5. Are the laws and regulations well addressed and monitored as well as well communicated to the investors and the community for the esthetics of the region to be preserved and protected from exploitation?

As G. Young pointed out, a destination should rather focus on the amount of visitors that can be appropriately welcomed and are wanted instead of desperately persuade them to come (Young, 1973). This is a way of assuring the economic growth of a region in the long run instead of focusing on today without any concern about tomorrow and what problems might arrive. By preparing for the inevitable one can protect and reinforce the economic, socio-cultural and environmental successes in the region. These plans for developing these five factors should be focused on the old town around the bazaar area primarily because that is
where most of the visitors are expected to live and be. By narrowing down the city of Gjirokastra into zones one can implement this assessment plan step by step or zone by zone. Next step would be to implement the same development strategy for another zone where these visitors are expected to visit. By focusing on the different zones and simultaneously develop the tourism activities and facilities in these particular zones the carrying capacity will gradually be sustained and only then can economic diversification and sustainability be obtained. By involving different so called zones one can involve the local communities in these different zones as a strategy for preventing economic leakage, offer a more valuable experience for the tourists and distribute the wealth across the region which also is a way of protecting the unique tourism brand the region has to offer. By involving for example rural areas and the competency that specific community has to offer the money earned from foreign visitors are more equally distributed and are more likely to be invested in the community itself rather than being brought out of the country in the form of economic leakage. This also prevents other destinations from copying or bench marketing the image of the destination because when rural areas and the unique setting those areas contain are intertwined with the other factors a destination has to offer that brings new dimensions to the destination which can’t easily be implemented in other areas. When many local communities and competencies of rural areas are combined in the surroundings of a destination the holistic value of that destination will become unique and more economically and socio- culturally sustainable as well.
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**Unprinted Sources**


**Interviews**


Demo, K., 2014. *Hydrological Specialist working for the dircotry of water and waste management in Gjirokastra* [Interview] (13 05 2014).

Appendix


(http://whc.unesco.org/uploads/nominations/569bis.pdf)
1. Conference at the CHwB Office on the 10th May 2014 considering new regulations for the world heritage. Special guest and opening presentation of Regensburg Stadt's management plan: World Heritage: Old Town Museum or attractive area to live? Tanja Flemming - Regensburg Stadt

Flamur Bime – Mayor
- The mayor expressed concern for the heritage preservation. No more building permits are to be given without consulting the heritage regulations. But the ultimate power to change and create new regulations lies with the ministry of Culture in Tirana which is in charge of legislation and regulations. “My hands are tied”

Zamira Rami – from the municipality
- Tourism is one of the main resources for developing the country. Side by side heritage and tourism can make efforts to find more projects and funding. There are many projects going which is good, there are a lot of interested donors. “The most important things is that we are all together here and we can do things together”.

Odise Kote – Vice Mayor
- Regulation is useful, simple and practical to protect the identity of the city. But what is it? Can it be considered Greek or Turkish perhaps? We have this extreme diversity that causes a need for a legal regulation based on ethnology. Therefore when creating new standards for architectural we need experts in architecture, history, ethnography, the ministry of culture and ministry of tourism plus the municipality if these ideas are going to be accepted in the parliament. “There is not enough or scientific research data today, what we have is not efficient. That’s why need a scientific group because in the end of the day science will restore the identity”.

Stephan Doemke – CHwB representative and in charge of creating a management plan for Gjirokastras world heritage management
- Already in Tanjas presentation it is clear how much help we need. So many things this network of knowledgeable people in this room can do. We only miss one important actor; the local people, the owners. We have to keep in mind for whom we are doing this and meet with them cause they are the once who will do the management. “Without the local people no change will come, nothing will be implemented”.

Tanja Flemming
- There is great potential in Gjirokastra, compared to the Regensburg the city has a much better condition you are already a world heritage! Flensburg was very poor and was not given its WH status until the restoration had taken part. World Heritage is increasing all over the world and this Gjirokastra can use for further improvements. But to avoid to becoming a dead museum part – the locals must except that the old town is an economic attractive area. “For Gjirokastra, you have to believe first and then the locals and then private investors will be convinced”.
- In Regensburg we changed the image of the old town thanks to some locals and politicians to start with and then the rest could be turned to believe that old not was synonym with bad. A successful festival changed many minds, the locals learned that their town were unique. Through the “citizens festival” the old town became a living room for them. This takes place every two years and is very popular. Through the festival and restoration taking place at the same time the old town was brought to life, meeting the local needs and modern requests. This is the first step of corporation and activation– to listen to them. And they need to realize that restoration will bring them money in return. In Regensburg there is a public meeting every week where locals can meet with architects that discuss. If people want to put up a sign for example they need to go there to apply.

Elena Mamani – CHwB architectural responsibility
- The problem is that the law is completely different in Germany. For Gjirokastra we need something else. We cannot provide regulations document because the government needs to do that – we are not such an organization. “Unfortunately the local government is not present and unfortunately we need them”.

Stephan Doemke

- We need activities to gain interest and increase the awareness from the stakeholders for example with a bazaar festival. People should get acquainted to the idea that something is happening. Our primary focus must lie on technical regulations and resource identification. To implement these ideas we need the municipality people and identify the stakeholders.

You are invited to participate in a research study about tourism in Gjirokastra by completing a short survey form that will take approximately 5-10 minutes. This study is a part of a bachelor thesis in the program Sustainable Development of Tourism at Halmstad University in Sweden. The aim of this survey is to research Gjirokastra’s current tourism situation as a foundation for future development ideas.

1. How long is your trip? ___days in Albania ___nights in Gjirokastra ___full days in Gjirokastra

2. What is the main purpose of your visit to Albania?
   a. □ Business/commerce □ Pleasure/Tourism □ Visit friends or family □ Other_____
   b. If you are here for pleasure/tourism - what made you choose Albania?
      □ word-of-mouth/ recommendations from friends/family
      □ ads in news paper/online/TV/travel store (please specify) __________________________
      □ other (please specify) _______________________________________________________
   c. b. If you are here for pleasure/tourism - what made you visit Gjirokastra?
      □ word-of-mouth/ recommendations from friends/ family
      □ ads in news paper/online/TV/travel store (please specify) __________________________
      □ other (please specify) _______________________________________________________

3. How did you arrive in Albania? (check one box)
   □ Airplane □ Ship □ Bus □ Organized Bus □ Owned car □ Rented car □ Motorcycle

4. How did you arrive in Gjirokastra? (check one box)
   □ Bus □ Organized Bus □ Taxi □ Owned Car □ Rented Car □ Other (please specify)_____

5. In which city did you spend the night prior to your arrival in Gjirokastra and where are you going next? Coming from________________ Going to_____________________

6. How are you traveling? (check one box)
   □ alone □ family □ other__________________________

7. Did you purchase a package tour?
   a. □ yes □ no
   b. If yes, where did you buy it? □ In Albania □ Online □ At home/physical tourism agency
   c. Can you please write the name of the tour operator?____________________
   d. What was the total per person cost of your package? ________________euro/person

8. What sources of tourism information on Gjirokastra did you consult prior to your arrival?
   □ Online information (please specify) _____________________________________________
   □ Guide books (please specify) _________________________________________________
   □ Relatives/Friends
   □ Other (please specify) _______________________________________________________

9. What sources of tourism information have you found and used in Gjirokastra?
   □ None other than I brought with me
   □ maps (please specify) _______________________________________________________
   □ guidebook (please specify) __________________________________________________
   □ signage
   □ tour guide
   □ other (please specify) _______________________________________________________

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10. What is the quality of tourism information available in Gjirokastra?

Very good | Good | Ok | Bad | Very bad
----------|------|----|-----|--------
5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1

11. Please check the activities that you participated in during your visit in Gjirokastra
- Horseback riding
- Hiking/walking
- Sightseeing
- Bicycling/Mt.Biking
- Picnicking
- Cultural event
- Museum
- Guided tour
- Other ___________________________

12. In what type of lodging have you spent the night in Gjirokastra?
- Hotel, Bed& Breakfast, Hostel etc (please specify the name) ___________________________
- Family owned private residence

13. Please specify your experience of the accommodation rating from 5 (very good) - 1 (very bad)
   a. availability/accessibility (to contact, opening hours, booking ease, website information) 5 4 3 2 1
   b. location (surroundings, close to attractions, easy to locate the place) 5 4 3 2 1
   c. staff (quality of service, treatment, language skills, and helpfulness) 5 4 3 2 1
   d. facilities (room furnishing/ decoration, design, cleanliness) 5 4 3 2 1
   e. information (welcome letter, tourism information) 5 4 3 2 1

14. Please indicate the level of satisfaction with your visit to Gjirokastra (circle one)
   - completely satisfied 5
   - satisfied 4
   - Neutral 3
   - not satisfied 2
   - not at all satisfied 1

15. Based on this trip, how likely are you to do the following?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Very likely</th>
<th>Likely</th>
<th>Neither likely nor unlikely</th>
<th>Unlikely</th>
<th>Very unlikely</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. Visit Gjirokastra again?</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Recommend friends to visit?</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

16. What would Gjirokastra need to improve for you to be completely satisfied with your visit?
17. Please rate the importance of the following attributes in your vacation experience AND your assessment of the current quality of these attributes in Gjirokastra

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Importance when traveling</th>
<th>Quality in Gjirokastra</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Very high</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>high</td>
<td>Neutral</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>low</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>very low</td>
<td>Very low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Climate</td>
<td>5 4 3 2 1</td>
<td>5 4 3 2 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scenic landscape</td>
<td>5 4 3 2 1</td>
<td>5 4 3 2 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outdoor recreation</td>
<td>5 4 3 2 1</td>
<td>5 4 3 2 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flora and Fauna</td>
<td>5 4 3 2 1</td>
<td>5 4 3 2 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interesting Architecture</td>
<td>5 4 3 2 1</td>
<td>5 4 3 2 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Historic atmosphere</td>
<td>5 4 3 2 1</td>
<td>5 4 3 2 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local art/music/dance</td>
<td>5 4 3 2 1</td>
<td>5 4 3 2 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friendly people</td>
<td>5 4 3 2 1</td>
<td>5 4 3 2 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Entertainment/nightlife</td>
<td>5 4 3 2 1</td>
<td>5 4 3 2 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guide Services</td>
<td>5 4 3 2 1</td>
<td>5 4 3 2 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General affordability</td>
<td>5 4 3 2 1</td>
<td>5 4 3 2 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of crowds/unexploited</td>
<td>5 4 3 2 1</td>
<td>5 4 3 2 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food and dining</td>
<td>5 4 3 2 1</td>
<td>5 4 3 2 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accommodation</td>
<td>5 4 3 2 1</td>
<td>5 4 3 2 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information availability</td>
<td>5 4 3 2 1</td>
<td>5 4 3 2 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communications (internet, telephone)</td>
<td>5 4 3 2 1</td>
<td>5 4 3 2 1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
18. Please tell us something about yourself:

1. What is your place of residence? City________________________ Country_________________________
2. What is your nationality of birth? __________________________________________________________________
3. Your gender?  □ Female  □ Male
4. Your age?             ___Years
5. Your highest level of education completed?  □ Primary □ High School □ University □ Other
6. How often do you travel abroad (per year)?____________________________
7. What ways of travelling do your usually prefer?  
   Backpacking, Charter/Package Tours  Biking/Hiking/Camping Cruise ship Road trips  Other____
8. State you three previously visited countries
   1________________________ 2________________________ 3________________________

Thank you for your time! If you have any questions about this survey please do not hesitate to contact us. *Sara Grevsjo: saragr11@student.hh.se Mehran Noorzaei: mehnoo11@student.hh.se*
4. Visitor Survey results

1. How long your trip?
The mean value stated that tourists stayed around 10 days in Albania and around 3 nights in Gjirokastra.

2. What is the main purpose of your visit?
a) Pleasure and tourism (90 per cent)

3. How did you arrive in Albania?
The majority (80 per cent) arrived by airplane followed by bus mostly from a neighboring country. Visitors coming with buses from neighboring countries does only account for the tourists this survey is focused on, the overnighters that is and NOT any other kind of tourists.

4. How did you arrive in Gjirokastra?
Most tourists arrived to Gjirokastra by bus (85 per cent).

5. In which city did you spend the night prior to your arrival in Gjirokastra and where are you going next?
Most people were either coming from or going to Berat (40 per cent) followed by coming from Tirana (25 per cent) and going to Ioannina or Greece (35 per cent). But most importantly the cities mostly mentioned are, Berat, Ioannina, Tirana, Korce, Saranda, Permeti and Dhermi.

Would a more in depth survey be conducted one could identify the most common routes which are connected to Gjirokastra and why. Maybe some of these routes have good information and promotion about Gjirokastra or maybe it is somehow connected to the city from which the tourists come. One such city could be Berat, since Gjirokastra and Berat both are a UNESCO world heritage site that could be the connection between the two locations and would explain why many of the visitors already have been there before arriving to Gjirokastra or in other cases why they are going there after their stay in Gjirokastra.

6. How are you travelling?
Most people seem to travel to the region alone (75 per cent), but others travelled with family or friends (25 per cent). Keep in mind that these claims can differ depending on the season and period of time. In other words if Albania promotes themselves more and conduct more intensive marketing these claims can quickly be changed.

7. Did you purchase a package tour?
No one seem to have purchased a packaged tour. This is also due to the fact that there hardly exists any packaged tours. The packaged tours that do exist are independent of the hotels and therefore the hotel customers are most likely unaware of their existence.

8. What sources of tourism information on Gjirokastra did you consult prior to your arrival?
The majority have stated that online information and guide books have been used (80 per cent). Trip advisor and Lonely planet are also mentioned but keep in mind that online information also can be Google search.

9. What sources of tourism information have you found and used in Gjirokastra?
Most tourists have stated that they haven’t found or used any source of information other than what they brought with them (80 per cent). Others have used the city maps available at some hotels (20 per cent). This is a big problem which makes the local economy suffer. The busloads of tourists that do visit the region are foreign companies which do not support the local economy and leads to economic leakage. The tourists do no stay for long since there are no activities offered or no information available to attract them.

10. What is the quality of tourism information available in Gjirokastra?
From a scale of 1 (very bad) to 5 (very good) the mean value obtained from the survey states that the quality of tourism information in Gjirokastra is about 3 which according to the
tourists is OK. This mean value is likely to be much lower if more data could be collected since there are hardly no tourism information available in Gjirokastra.

11. **Please check the activities that you participated in during your visit in Gjirokastra!**

![Most common tourism activities]

The hiking trails are insufficient and in bad condition even though the landscape is amazing and has great potential. The lack of governance and organization is very clear and most projects or initiatives are being developed due to private interests. Do note that not all subjects have answered this question.

12. **In what type of lodging have you spent the night in Gjirokastra?**

The information received in this question is not valid and would therefore be misleading. There are only hotels in Gjirokastra with one exception which is a hostel. Since most of our interviews were conducted in cooperation with the hotels or the hostel it would make the answer obvious, were they stayed and what kind of lodging it is.

13. **Please specify your experience of the accommodation? (1 being very bad and 5 being very good)**
   a) **Availability/ Accessibility** had a mean value of 3
   b) **Location** had a mean value of 4
   c) **Staff** had a mean value of 4
   d) **Facilities** had a mean value of 3
   e) **Information** had a mean value of 2

   The overall rating is good, specially the location and the staff which seem to be very satisfactory. What could be mentioned is that some of the hotels are not aware of what authenticity is.

14. **Please indicate the level of satisfaction with your visit to Gjirokastra**

   80 per cent of the visitors stated that they were satisfied (with 1 being not at all satisfied and 5 being completely satisfied)

15. **Based on this trip, how likely are you to do the following?** (1 being very unlikely and 5 being very likely)
   a) **Visit Gjirokastra again?**
   The average value of 3 states that it’s neither likely nor unlikely. These results could change if activities were created and the basic infrastructure would have the capacity to receive more tourists without affecting the local communities living standards.
   b) **Recommend friends to visit?**
   The average value of 4 states that it is more than likely.

16. **What would Gjirokastra need to improve for you to be completely satisfied?**
Something that most visitors react on is the lack of information and tourism activities. Better management of the infrastructure such as waste management and no cars or trucks in old town is also a concern for some. Heating in rooms and cables hanging from the buildings is also mentioned.

17. Please rate the importance of the following attributes in your vacation experience AND your assessment of the current quality of these attributes in Gjirokastra

![Importance and quality](image)

This data is very modest and is not sufficient to draw any conclusions but they do give a basic overview of the situation of the region and where the different improvements are needed. They also confirm our observations about the great potential of the landscape, the importance of laws and regulation to protect the flora and fauna, how valuable the cultural heritage is, the strength of its hospitable people, the quality of the food products, lack of entertainment, the poor infrastructure (roads, transport, energy, water and waste) and the insufficient information.

18. Tell us something about yourself?

1. What is your place of residence? City, Country
   Insufficient data to find any pattern or similarities.

2. What is your nationality of birth?
   Insufficient data to find any pattern or similarities.

3. Your gender?
   Gender doesn’t seem to be an important factor that decides what visitors come to the region (about 50 per cent woman and 50 per cent men).

4. Your age?
   Age does seem to be of great importance and the majority seem to be above 40 years old (85 per cent). This need to be greatly improved to decide whether this is what the region needs or if one should adapt the tourism for younger people as well.

5. Your highest level of education completed?
   Education also seem to be of great importance with the majority of visitors completed university (90 per cent).

6. How often do you travel abroad?
   According to the data gathered all visitors (100 per cent) seem to be travelling at least once a year or more, so one can draw the conclusion that the visitors coming to Gjirokastra are frequent travelers or retired with a lot of spare time. However the quantity of the data is insufficient to be certain of such conclusion but worth the attention. This could be very helpful when marketing the region and nation.

7. What ways of travelling do you usually prefer?
Backpackers seem to find Gjirokastra attractive and should therefore be adapted to their needs. A more in depth survey is needed in this field to be able to determine exactly what kind of tourists come to the region and how they can be satisfied.

8. **State the three previously visited countries**

According to the data gathered it seems like people visit Albania while visiting other countries in the region like Macedonia, Montenegro, Bosnia, Greece and Italy, although there is not enough data available to support this claim. There also seem to be a travel pattern connected with similar destinations. These are not the regular mass tourists who only travel to top destinations obviously. Many destinations these tourists have been to seem to have similarities with Albania in the sense that it’s not such a common travel destination but once again there is not enough data to make such a claim for certain.

- The interview are available when authors are contacted

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