09. CASES
Qeparo Model for Development

Qeparo is a traditional village with an outspoken wish to remain that way. Family tourism, agriculture and a strong community are some of the characteristics you encounter when staying in the area. Another thing that stands out is the abundance of olive trees. They have played a central role in the history of the area. Some types of olive trees are unique to the area and have very good reputation. The olive tree is the basis of a design model developed from a mission in March.

Local Characteristics

Based on the interviews, site visits as well as the results from the working week we had in March 2016, we have concluded that the four common understandings on four main characteristics for Qeparo are:

- The Gateway to the southern Albanian Riviera
- Family approach (by families, for families and treated as family)
- Traditional and Historical
- Purity and authenticity

These characteristics are the existing qualities of the area and form the roots of the Qeparo region. It is sensible to build the business cases and initiatives upon these characteristics, as well as using them as references to check if things are being developed in the right direction.

Enabling Factors

To use these characteristics to their full potential there are a number of enabling factors that need to be in place. The degree to which these enabling factors are taken seriously determines how successfully an economically, socially and environmentally sustainable model can be implemented and maintained:

- Local and individual ownership.
- Trust and cooperation.
- Common goals and beliefs.
- Common agreement on and understanding of desired quality of hospitality, agro production and processing, public and private space ultimately resulting in guidelines and standards.
Pure and Authentic

Traditional and Historical

Family Approach
Case 01
Entrepreneur Association

Background

To have a common goal and to have results in a short time the association should try to take ownership of one or two projects (for example, a food festival). It is well known that villages such as Qeparo are not particularly charmed by the concept of entrepreneurs showing a great deal of energy and commitment to develop and earn, organizing and working together in official constructions such as cooperatives and associations.

This individualism has led to a lot of development that does not contribute to a coherent picture. This arises when one overlooks all that is offered (products and services). When people claim that they need a "model for development" they are reluctant to admit that what they really need is a model for trust and cooperation across borders of family or clan. What is needed is a model for an active entrepreneur association.

Benefits of Organized Entrepreneurs

By organizing themselves, entrepreneurs can create a stronger voice when interfacing with government, inhabitants, customers, and value chain partners. With this stronger position they can contribute to the development of Qeparo (or another given area) in a structured way. We believe that such an association is one of the most important enabling factors for the success of any intervention in an area such as Qeparo. Therefore the business case is not one that stands alone.

The association should be by and for entrepreneurs and thus the business case should be focused on a system of contribution by members. If any additional financing is required, the association should make sure that the government does not play too big a part so that the association remains neutral, benefiting entrepreneurs.

Already at least ten entrepreneurs have indicated the willingness to get organized and have emphasized the importance of becoming a "legal entity" in order to promote development in their area quickly. This does not stop at the perimeter of the village but also involves entrepreneurs from neighbouring villages.

“We believe that working together can really help us in our joint and individual efforts to create a better and more prosperous Qeparo.”

- Marinela Papajorgji, Restaurant owner in Qeparo
“This association could create leverage to resolve issues such as sanitation, irrigation system, coordination of works, as well as stimulating government intervention to solve these problems.”

- Fotaq Bufi, Supermarket owner and local counterpart in organization of the field mission

**Potential Project Partners**

- Local entrepreneurs (starting with most active and modern thinking)
- Municipality
- International donor organizations focused on supporting the development of sustainable private sector
- Ministry of Economic Development, Tourism, Trade & Entrepreneurship, AIDA
- MVO Nederland and Originate to bring in experience in organizing SME’s

**Next Steps**

- Identifying local ownership
- Define development process and steps
- Write outlines of organization plan
- Find private (partner contribution) and public (subsidies) finance
Case 02
Pig Farm and the Connection with Restaurants

Background

There is a constant mismatch between supply and demand when it comes to fresh produce such as meat and vegetables in areas such as Qeparo due to fluctuations in demand caused by high and low seasons in tourism.

This makes it extremely hard for producers to tune their supply. In the end it comes down to either overproduction in low season or lack of supply in high season. Food processing can be part of the answer to this predicament. A visit to a pig farm owned by Mr. Kokedima, indicated that he and others in the sector have no tradition in processing meat. At the same time Arber Togani (winner of master Chef Albania and restaurant owner in Tirana) indicated the lack of available high quality processed meats in Albania.

Potential Business Case

With relatively small investment pig holders can diversify and create new markets for their product. This specific case could serve as a showcase for others in Albania.

Success rests on individual initiative but should be discussed with micro finance organization. Possible project partners: Mr. Kokedhima, Mr. Togani, local international entrepreneurs interested in investing in quality meets. Suppliers of equipment for climate control, etc.

If done right, this case can be used as an example and replicated for other places and products. It could serve as a model for different value chains in which demand and supply can be brought together by processing food into different products.

“If Mister Kokedhima can provide high quality prosciutto in the near future I will commit to buying it. There is a great need for high quality local, processed products. This does not only concern meat but others products as well”

- Arber Togani, winner Master Chef Albania
Tourism Potential

At the same time Western customers are not used to understand the whole process behind the products on the supermarket shelf or on their plate. In Albania these value chains are still very short and potentially accessible. Tourists who value the food chain and would like to see the process of animal farming, can visit a farm and find out how it works. In contrast to the Western meet industry farming, the tourists can see an traditional, honest and sustainable way of farming and potentially also the boning.

In the Netherlands they have one farm that gives the meet lovers a chance to see the farm and meet the animals. You can choose to lease an animal or buy one beforehand. Eventually, the meet lovers who bought half a pig, can join the boning and get to know everything of the meet they will eat, explained by a retired butcher. Customers see the value and are willing to pay more than for the meet on the supermarket shelf.

“I would like to hear more about the possibilities for sustainable crudo from Albania”

- Jaap Frerichs of Fairmeat, Netherlands

Next Steps

- The alterations that need to be done to the facilities need to be defined. Important is to take sustainability, hygiene and animal welfare into consideration in all decisions.
- Investigate if facilities can meet Albanian or even international standards and what is needed to do so
- Make a simple business plan with cost and benefit calculation based on available market information. Price for one kilo raw pig meat has average price of 600 Lek. Price for cured ham: 1500 to 3500 Lek.
- Explore possibilities to link to space in training centre and make it into a more publicly backed initiative.
Case 03
Development of Festivals & Events

Background
Just like other places along the Riviera, Qeparo has a high number of accommodations during peak season. To prolong this high season, effort needs to be put in developing additional attractions and events to attract new national and international client groups.

Description
A Riviera Food and culture festival at the end of the summer season could stimulate additional tourism to Qeparo and help to position the region as a centre for agricultural and culinary tourism. The festival can showcase local products prepared by acknowledged chefs (national and international). Existing restaurants can be included in the festival.

Additional pop-up restaurants can be created by local artists (under the olive trees and on the rooftops) and be set up as an additional attraction. Cultural components such as music, dance and visual art can be added to enrich the event and attract a broader audience.

Potential Business Case
Besides prolonging the season and generating economic activity, creating a modern festival that attracts young Albanians with a sense of connection to culture and art as well as an interest in cuisine can contribute to a change of image for an area that suffers from an ongoing exodus of young people.

“Food and cultural events can right example is set others with other sustainable trends

- There is potential for a number of different business cases that are related. The main business case harnesses revenue generated from the event. Ticket income and sponsorship are the main sources of income as is profit from catering
- If festivals are strategically timed at the start and end of the tourism season they can extend the season.
“We would love to move back to Qeparo in the future but there is no work. Getting started with some people to organize such a festival could be a start for us to change that!”

- Dhimitrulla Bufi, originated from Qeparo

- Ownership and Cooperation between local and national players are essential for success
- Local entrepreneurs support the idea of such recurring events and understand the direct and indirect value for their community. Restaurant owners and hotel owners as well as agriculture companies have reacted positively on the idea of events in their area.

really work in Albania, if the will follow. We see the same such as juice bars.”

- Celeste Goncalves, hostel owner in Tirana

A number of individuals and organisations in Tirana have already been identified as possible contributors.

Festivals can help to diversify target groups for tourism product in Albania: culinary and cultural traveller.

Potential Project Partners

- National Restaurant Association
- Local restaurant owners, Restaurant owners and chefs in Tirana such as Master chef winner Arber Togani
- Organisations and entrepreneurs with experience with event organisation in Albania and abroad in the Netherlands, Switzerland and Germany
- NGO’s with a focus on developing entrepreneurial skills
- NGO’s with a focus on cultural development
- Ministry of Economic Development, Tourism, Trade & Entrepreneurship

Next Steps

1. Identify local parties ready for the task of organizing the festival
2. Develop a concept together with local parties
3. Identify potential financial partners
4. Find committed media partners
5. Organize (local) restaurant owners, hotel owners food producers and festival planners into a committee for the festival
6. Draw up a business plan
7. Connect with financing
Case 04
Cross Sectoral Training Centre

Background

As a result of workshops during “The Traveller and the Olive Grove” project, the need for a training facility in order to improve the quality of the available workforce was articulated by different stakeholders. At the same time, entrepreneurs have shown a need for refining entrepreneurial skills to develop and enrich their products and services to meet current and future (international) demand. Additionally, a training and community centre can function as a centre point for strategy and quality control for projects that are rolled out and safeguarding a local model for development of tourism agriculture and food processing.

Potential Business Case

Qeparo’s main income is from the tourism industry. A training centre will contribute greatly to the development of personnel for sustainable hospitality, agriculture and adjacent value chains. They will be more qualified and have better insight in business opportunities.

The business case for training can be twofold: proprietor of trainings facility can have an income by providing materials and services. Entrepreneurs and teachers providing the trainings can have additional income for their contribution. Students can pay a basic fee for joining training programs.

The long-term business case for local government is the increase in more capable entrepreneurs and employees. The program would create job opportunities, add value to specific regions and ultimately increase attractiveness for (international) tourists.

By providing training before and after the high season, specific areas will have a longer period of programmed activities. In the long run, this training instrument should help provide tourism and agriculture models that attract other tourists besides beach lovers, such as those interested in outdoor tourism, bird watching, watersports, and culinary tourism, all of which can be developed (internationally and nationally) for early (May-October) seasons.
and June) and late (August and September) season.

The training centre could target entrepreneurs active in tourism as well as adjacent agro/processing and young professionals who are currently only working in tourism areas in high season and afterwards moving to Tirana or Greece. It should service entrepreneurs not only from Qeparo but also around from other parts of the Riviera or even Albania or abroad. Developing such a training centre is not limited to Qeparo but should provide a model that can be replicated along the coast or inland.

This training concept relies on the principle of public private partnership. 1. Concerning the investment in hardware (building and facilities), as well as the initial investments in software (setting up organisation and creating curriculum), the government and NGO play the largest part. 2. The private part of this value proposition lies in the exploitation of the training facility. Further research is necessary to understand if there is potential in such a model for individual entrepreneurs that are part of cooperatives to take responsibility for the exploitation and have ownership over the curriculum and training programs.
Qeparo as Pilot Location

The choice for Qeparo as a (first) location for training centre might seem arbitrary but is based on a number of observations and conclusions of the expert team connected to this project (see information on project):

- It will become the entry point for the Albanian Riviera when the road from Vlora is finished.
- It has a scale of agriculture and tourism that befits the concept of training individuals and companies of small and medium size.
- Qeparo has potential for sustainable agriculture and sustainable tourism.
- It has a potentially perfect facility in the old school based at the entrance of the village.
- Qeparo has a number of entrepreneurs that are interested in the concept of organising and developing their area in a sustainable way.
Potential Project Partners

- Embassy of the Netherlands
- Municipality of Himare.
- National operating incoming agents
- Educational institutes (local and international)
- National government and NGO's interested in capacity building
- Individual customers: entrepreneurs (young) professionals active in hospitality or adjacent sectors
- International tourism partners, tourism and agro-associations in Albania

Organisations represented by members of “The Traveller and the Olive tree” team can play a part in hardware and software design as well as provide support for the implementation of plans.

During an event at UKA, farm first contacts were established between Albanian partner organizations and the municipality to explore possibilities for a future PPP

Next Steps

1. Conduct a needs assessment
2. Draw up a concept paper about the training centre
3. Connect with potential financing partners
4. Choose a location
5. Draft a design of the training centre
6. Evaluate existing school concepts and potential school partners
Case 05
Olive Press Company

Background

There are a number of reasonably well developed oil press companies near Borsh and Qeparo that sell their oil to local olive grove owners and as bulk product to wholesalers in Tirana, other Balkan countries, and Russia. In some cases the oil is branded and sold on local and national markets. The entrepreneur in question is considering leaving the area and moving to Tirana.

The companies are not at all benefiting from tourism in the area and tourists are not made aware of possibility to buy high quality oil or even visit the factory. This does not harness the market’s full potential.

Potential Business Case

One company is situated by the road that separates the olive groves in the valley from the coast. It has a second floor where there are rooms to rent and a space that is currently unused. By combining B&B with the company, using vacant space for a store for olive oil and related products, and for creating an education center on the tradition and industry of olives in the area, more value can be added and the complex can act as a showcase for an integrated approach for tourism agriculture (and nature preservation). The development of a regional brand for tourism and agriculture products should also be considered.

The investment in a simple and artisan store above the olive press factory (and maybe covering the bare walls with plants) does not necessarily need to be a big investment and can potentially be done in collaboration with olive grove owners.
Potential Business Partners

This case is of interest to local olive grove owners as it provides them with a place to make their tradition and product visible. It is also of interest to Agencies such as GIZ and USAID for adding value to interventions that are already financed by their organizations, such as the case for the olive oil company financed by organizations such as GIZ and USAID and others at the entrance of Qeparo.

National stakeholders that can play a role are government and non-governmental organizations interested in creating individual examples of cross-sectoral integrated approach to tourism and agriculture.

International involvement can come from organizations such as Air B&B, TripAdvisor, and Eliza Was Here when a certain level of quality is reached. In the Netherlands and Switzerland, possible chain partners for local Albanian olive oil will be vetted.

Next Steps

1. The olive oil company, B&B and shop have the potential to become eye catchers when entering Qeparo along the coastal road. Therefore it should be developed into a place that fits the vision of what Qeparo has to offer. Lessons can be learnt from Home fresh shop in Himare town center. Furthermore, the model for developing Qeparo should be taken into account. Shop will be on the second floor overlooking stretch of olive trees and the sea.

2. Seeing that the building has not been built in a traditional or otherwise attractive style for visitors it can be “equipped” with a vertical garden covering the facade and thus creating a green and agri-tourism look and feel.

3. If this location is not suited, an effort should be made to find alternatives for presenting and selling olive oil and related product such as cheese planks or plates made from old olive wood.
Case 06
Eco Camping with the Olive Grove

Background
During desk research the functional zoning of Qeparo was studied and plot T3 was identified as eco-camping.

During presentation in Qeparo the validity of the zoning map was confirmed by the mayor of Himare but through a chance encounter during a field visit with one of the proprietors of the area, we found out that he wasn’t aware of this potential. He currently runs a beach-café but would be happy to expand his business. He needs guidelines and needs to cooperate with owners of different plots.

Supporting the development of an eco-camping with replication in mind can greatly contribute to sustainable tourism development along the coastline. There are examples of eco-camping sites although first inquiries show that there is still a lot to be improved before these are really ECO.

Potential Business Case
The area determined as eco-camping is currently an Olive orchard. The camping activities can be developed under the olive trees, which would add value to the camping because they shade the area and give it a natural ambiance and quality.

It is a very small effort to maintain the camping and it could be done easily on the side. A good eco-camping will attract more adventurous travellers from outside Albania that often travel off-season. A comparable camp-sites, for example, is Lake Shkodra resort which had very high occupancy rates, even in September/October.

The site is currently subdivided in several plots, based on certain regulations. People use the plots for very small scale agriculture, mainly Olive trees. If they could reach an agreement with one entrepreneur to lease the land to him and have him exploit it as camping there would be additional profit without additional effort.

A local entrepreneur and owner of one of the plots in the zone has expressed great interest in setting up the camping. Ecovolis in Tirana, who run eco-camping sites elsewhere in the country have shown readiness to support the effort.

Well organized eco-camping will bring additional tourist to villages such as Qeparo and can prolong the season. This will certainly have economic benefits for an area: restaurants, shops, tours etc.

Albania will participate in 2006 at Germany’s International Camping fair. An implementation of this case on short time would allow the country to get credit from this event.

“There is a growing worldwide demand for what is called ‘barefoot luxury’. Eco campings sites and basic accommodation can provide in that need and create new market.”

- Gerben Hardeman, Dutch Tourism association ANVR

“Current situation of the divided Olive Grove in zone T3
Potential Partners for the Project

1. Ecovolis
2. Municipality
3. Local land owners of different olive groves
4. Risi Albania
5. URI

Next Steps

- Bring potential partners together
- Decide on ownership of plots
- Decide on ownership of camping that runs on the plots
- Agree on rent conditions
- Conduct a market scan for demand for eco-camping sites and desired level of luxury
Case 07
Sweet as Qeparo Honey

Background
When entering the southern coastal area one can not miss the bee hives that are scattered over the hills between beautiful fields of spring flowers. The honey from this area is of a very high quality because typical vegetation has very unique qualities. These unique attributes can be used far more extensively when producing packaging and distributing this beautiful product. It is currently sold mostly locally and in bulk. Only sporadically do you see branded products from a specific area. It is an under developed value chain.

Potential Business Case
This business case offers the opportunity to combine agriculture and tourism. It could potentially also extend the tourism season, since stimulating the local honey production can lead to Qeparo branding, which could support a local harvest fest event off-season. It stimulates local co-operation since the local honey producer will have to join forces with the local store, restaurants, hotels and outlet sites. The same channels can then also be used for other local quality products such as processed/conserved vegetables such as tapenade, olives, bell peppers ‘scottoria’, herb tea etc. This development can significantly increase the income of the bee-keepers by creating a higher-end market for the honey, where the honey is currently much less valued in local markets. A vibrant honey sector also contributes to maintaining local biodiversity and the landscape that bees depend on. It can be linked to regional branding and a harvest fest event.

Local bee-keepers have shown interest and expressed commitment to developing their business.
Potential Project Partners

- Local honey producer(s)
- The future entrepreneurs association
- Value chain partners such as local hotels and restaurants, Himara home grown shop as well as shops in Tirana and Sarande.
- Possible investment partners ASCU, MoA, the municipality, the NOA micro-credit scheme, and donors.

Next Steps

1. Work on proper packaging and labelling
2. Hygienic processing and compliance with (international) regulations
3. Coach producer and/or assist with market entry
4. Make basic cost-benefit calculations
5. Sample the honey for experts and potential value chain partners
6. Find seeding funds for first steps
Potential Business Case

The goal of the ‘Perfect Hectare’ is to create a model of mixed-farming for Qeparo (and around) area. The case is about growing more crops beneath the olive grove canopy, bearing in mind that the light and moisture conditions are peculiar. Some crops will not grow well under lower light conditions in terms of size and yield. Some crops also will have problems with pests and diseases due to higher moisture levels in the crop, supporting fungi. Therefore, a specific selection of crops is needed.

The hectare is a square of 100m edge, containing 196 olive trees and divided in 4 equal areas as following: 1. Lettuce and Radicchio, 2. Zucchini and Pumpkin, 3. Grass and Alfalfa, 4. Asparagus. The first 3 areas have to rotate every year while the Asparagus has a 10 years lifespan.

The rotation works as following: (see diagram)

The consequential yield of each crop is:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Species</th>
<th>Normal yield</th>
<th>Estim. under tree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lettuce</td>
<td>(70000)</td>
<td>45,500 pieces/ha</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zucchini</td>
<td>(60000)</td>
<td>39,000 kg/ha</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pumpkin</td>
<td>(16000)</td>
<td>10,400 kg/ha</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Green Asparagus</td>
<td>(5000)</td>
<td>3,250 kg/ha</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rucola</td>
<td>(7500)</td>
<td>4,875 kg/ha</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Background

The agriculture areas of Qeparo, similarly to other villages of the region, are characterized by the monoculture of the olive tree. Although the climate and soil typology allow a broader range of potential crops, there is an extremely low agrobiodiversity. Not taking advantage of the local production capacity, results in a very limited diversity in food supply, which damages both the farmers and the food outlets.

Potential Project Partners

- Municipality of Himara, farmers
- University of Tirana, Arber Togani (Master chef)
- Ministry of Agriculture
- International partners: World Bank, Alterra (agriculture), Openfabric (landscape architecture)
“I will ask neighbouring land owners if they are willing to experiment with this concept. Together we could start with a try out of mixed farming just as they do at UKA farm”

- Detjon Prenga, hotel and land owner in Qeparo

**Next Steps**

First step is to find a farmer (or more) who is/are willing to use part of their land as test site. Landscape architecture practice along side research centres will lay down a plan of the ‘perfect hectare’ in order to efficiently exploit the land and integrate it with the surrounding landscape. Research centres (Alterra, University of Tirana) will follow the 1-year process and evaluate the outcome.

After the first test-year, a system of subsidies and basic training for farmers should be organized.
Case 09
Food Processing

Background
Farmers do not cultivate outside of tourist season because of poor market(s) / market prices. Creating a product with added-value that can be stored offers income opportunities outside of season.

Potential business Case
Like honey and ham, processing and conservation of fresh produce creates added value by opening new markets that have so far not been tapped into. It stimulates local cooperation since farmers need to interact with local/regional market players such as restaurants, shops, and hotels. If they are not processing themselves, then they will also need to cooperate with a local processor or cooperate with other producers of similar products to have shared facilities for processing.

The business case offers the potential for significantly increasing the income of farmers, extending the season from only 2 months to several months. The product, with increased value in and of itself, adds value to local cuisine in restaurants, which ultimately contributes to the branding of Qeparo.

This case targets farmers, restaurants, shops, and hotels. The approach can also be used for other localities in Riviera and other tourist-dependent production areas. It contributes to agricultural and rural development and to regional branding.

Potential Project Partners
- ASCU, MoA, municipality, the NOA micro-credit scheme
- Donors with focus on development for small holders and agricultural development
- Future entrepreneur association
- Agricultural University of Tirana
- Ministry of Agriculture
- National and international food processing companies
- “The traveller team” may be involved in follow up mostly through our local/national partners, with back-stops from an international team
Next Steps

1. Find limited seeding funds (25,000 Euro per product) for feasibility study and design and sample of new packaging.
2. Make a sample batch, have local restaurants/hotels taste it, get a starter contract for first batch, if successful expand production even further.
3. Coach farmers and/or assist them with market entry
4. Make cost-benefit calculations to determine economic feasibility.
5. Maximize number of farmers involved to create economy of scale.
6. Support on cultivation of crops concerned will be required: improve yields, sustainability of system, and high and constant level of quality & quantity of produce.
7. Involve future entrepreneur Association
Case 10
New Crops, New Possibilities

Background

Company visits, interviews and workshops with local producers and customers such as supermarket owner and restaurant owners resulted in the design of the “crop demand calender” and “crop supply calender”. These calendars identify seasonal gaps between supply & demand. Some crops such as broccoli and rucola are in demand by restaurants, but are currently not cultivated by local farmers. Available soil and climate data indicates the potential for cultivating these crops.

“Combine local demand during tourist season with demand for high quality produce in bigger cities during low season to bridge the gap in the calender.”

- Arber Togani, Winner Master Chef Albania

Potential Business Case

By diversifying the available crops a number of advantages can be realized. It will improve the variety of dishes served in local restaurants based on local availability. It will provide supply for future farmers markets. It will create seasonal focus of certain crops as well as year round availability of others. In general it will contribute to a local sustainable and circular economy.

Farmers need to work closely with local/regional market players such as restaurants, shops, and hotels in order to tune in to their needs. Only then can they adjust their production and create new added value for their local business. The further development and fine tuning of the crop calendars should be an effort by all value chain partners.

During workshops and interviews suppliers and buyers have indicated their interest in a system that will provide more of a variety of locally produced crops. This calendar and the transparency of supply and demand can be developed for Qeparo but can easily be used in other places as well. It has potential to be transformed into an application for online use or even smart phones.

Initial investments are small and mainly limited to purchasing seed material. Most work is done manually, so no additional machinery is needed. Other pest & disease control agents may need to be used and purchased. Other inputs should be similar to those already used for current crops.

www.harvesttotable.com
Next Steps

- Verification of available varieties of crop suitable for local conditions.
- Coach farmers and/or assist with market contacts in new sales areas.
- Cost-benefit calculations.
- If more farmers involved --> economies of scale.
- Support on cultivation of crops concerned (improve yields, sustainability of system, and high and constant level of quality & quantity)

Potential Project Partners

- Local Farmers
- Restaurant and hotel owners
- ASCU, Ministry of agriculture, Agricultural University, municipality, NOA micro-credit scheme, donors
- Ministry of Agriculture
- Local consultants, local crop experts. Possibly “Traveller team expertise” as advisor on how to proceed.
Crop Calendars

2 bars per crop

**external bar**: current match between supply and demand

**internal bar**: potential local production

**drop of water**: extended supply by increasing irrigation (see the aqueduct business case)

* introduced crops

- extended supply

X: current supply/demand mismatch
This is one of the best cases to be used as "proof of the pudding" if an entrepreneur association would become a fact!
Case 11
Shepherd and the Water Reservoir

Potential Business Cases

The ‘Shepherd Path’ is the experience of following the herd alongside the shepherds; the experiences are two-fold:

1. The daily grazing: lasting from October to June, this is a 5 hours trek. It starts and ends at the shepherd’s downhill shed.
2. The transhumance: in June, this is when the herd moves into the mountains for the summer. It is a 2 days trek, with 2 nights of camping, where the shepherds cook traditional dishes. The track starts from the bottom of the hill, the downhill shed to the mountains.
3. In September, the transhumance goes down-hill, following the animals from the mountains to the base shed in the valley.

The shed area in the mountains bears the potential of being developed in the interests of the shepherds and the tourists, as follows:

1. a water reservoir of 130,000L (dimensioned for a 500 sheep herd);
2. a paved gathering point with a central space for bonfire;
3. basic services to assist the campers; All (landscape) architecture elements will be realized with local materials aiming to be completely integrated with the mountain scape.
4. The potential players are the shepherds and the tourist agents who will organize the tours. Furthermore, the uphill shed area needs some spatial design, implying the need for landscape architects and architects.

Background

In our mission we visited some shepherds in the inland of Qeparo and Borsh. Having in mind some reference in the Balkans and in Italy, of tourist trails that follow the herds during the transhumance, we found immediate interest in both the shepherds and local tourist operators.

Our case study was a shepherd with a 500 sheep herd, who showed interest in bringing tourists along for, obviously, a small sum of money. We joined the shepherd in the daily grazing to understand, together with tourist operators, the level of trekking experience needed in order to frame the perfect target groups: backpackers and trekkers with medium-level experience.

What also emerged from our discussion is the need of a water reservoir in the mountains to quench the herd.
1. Find interested shepherds and start right-away with the ‘daily grazing’ experience.
2. Establish an effective and reliable communication system between tourist operators and shepherds.
3. Prepare a brochure and expand the service to the transhumance that will include food and camping overnight. Keep it simple, including the description of the services, location of the shepherds, and costs.
4. Look for funds to spatially develop the mountain shed area.
5. Improve the mountain shed with a water tank, paved gathering point, and basic services for campers.

Potential Project Partners

- Shepherds
- Outdoor Albania
- World Bank
- Openfabric (landscape architecture)
- Cityförster (architecture)

Next Steps
Case 12
Restore Terraces and Aqueduct

Background

The topic of water repeatedly came up while talking with local farmers. Although there is an abundant amount of rainfall during the year, there is nearly no rain during summer months. Locals also explained that the lack of maintenance in the terraces is normally due to the lack of water. We immediately found out about an old irrigation channel from the 40s, not in use anymore, which was used to bring water from a reservoir in Borsh to Qeparo. After the realization of a hydro power station in Borsh the water level of the reservoir decrease below the level of the channel. Furthermore, an electricity pylon was built next to the infrastructure in Qeparo, disrupting its track. As a first step, we walked along it and mapped it, stumbling into an outstanding landscape experience.

Description

The causes of the neglect of the irrigation channel need to be addressed. The water inlet at the Borsh source needs to be re-established, probably by a mechanical pump. The damage caused by the electricity pylon in Qeparo needs to be fixed. An extensive repair and maintenance plan for the primary and secondary channels is crucial for the restoration of the infrastructure, and the local community can play an active role in this initiative.

Potential Business Case

The old irrigation channel has the potential to be reactivated. The channel has terraces which can provide continuous irrigation. A surface of 161,000 sqm of terraces would need an amount of water ranging from 9,660 to 20,125 cubic meters. Solving the summer irrigation demand can foster a more intensive cultivation (mixed-farming) of the terraces and consequential better maintenance. This will result in a drastic improvement of the local landscape aesthetic and celebrate the landscapes productive qualities.

By restoring the water inlet, the channel can feed the terraces and becomes a tourist attraction as well. In fact, a very simple path can run along the infrastructure rendering it accessible, and becoming a new pedestrian connection to link Qeparo with Borsh.

Potential players should include the Municipality and the Hydro power station company on one hand, and spatial design and agriculture expertise on the other.
Next steps are the following:
1. Finding extra funds in order to develop a more advanced spatial and agricultural strategy.
2. Present the project to the main local counterparts (Himara Municipality, Hydro Power station company).
3. Seek for larger scale (national and international) subsidy sources in order to make the project feasible.

Potential Project Partners
- Main counterpart: Himara Municipality, Hydro Power station company
- Possible funding: World Bank, Southern Development Cooperation, University of Tirana
- Ministry of Agriculture
- Landscape design: Openfabric
- Agriculture: Alterra Wageningen

Next Steps

“I would love to see tourists walking in front of my garden.”
- Timolea Komehilli, Qeparo
Case 13
Accommodation Guidelines

Potential Business Case

Albania has a great potential to remain an authentic destination and offer personal and authentic hospitality which are grounded in the small scale. In order to meet the travellers expectations, the means to meet these expectations should not be by inviting large corporate hospitality multi nationals but by explaining the expectation to the local hosts preserving the local flavour, care and authenticity. Therefore a set of guidelines is needed. A set of guidelines that is relatively inexpensive to produce can be distributed and raise the level of quality for the tourist immensely.

The case consists of three parts: First, develop the guidelines. Second, develop a training course for local people working in the hospitality industry. Providing the respective information during workshops, in an e-learning course and with a small handbook/manual could make the training even more efficient. An additional manual will support this process. Third, in order to keep the quality up to standards, a mechanism should be developed to assure or audit the quality offered.

“Albania is very attractive for people who have seen the whole world. But they have also seen a lot of hotels and know what to expect.” - Nancy Tare, Our Own Expeditions.

Background

There is a large gap in the market between the needs of travellers for authentic, affordable, but quality accommodation and the existing offering in Albania. Especially high value travellers with basic requirements, as simple as a functioning shower and a healthy breakfast are required to seek refuge to big chains and 5-star hotels. However, they are actually looking for carefully maintained small scale accommodations (6 to 12 persons).

According to several owners of local accommodations, they don’t have access to the necessary knowledge how to professionally run their business and to which standards they have to adhere to.
Potential Project Partners

- International hospitality schools, Ministry of Economic Development, Tourism, Trade & Entrepreneurship
- GIZ, Municipality Himara, Albanian Tour operators such as Our own Expedition and outdoor Albania
- Best practices B&B owners
- Local Architects with relevant experience and vision
- For tips AirBnB.com and Wander.al

Next Steps

- Research basic hospitality standards, data on best practises, documentation the status quo, develop a questionnaire for guests, and look into innovative ways of coaching (see for example AirBnB’s assistance to their hosts).
- Secure micro loans for investments such as furniture and house textiles.
- Identify beneficiary organisation, attract funding for content development and training, and establish distribution channels.
- Decide on mechanism to audit/maintain the standards.
Old Town Centre as One Big Hotel

Background

Travellers like to see the old ‘charm’ of the village and its buildings. During our visit to Kudhes we discovered that a number of buildings were renovated through a ‘roofs and façades program of the Fund for Regional Development (Fondi i Zhvillimit të Rajoneve). The funds cannot be used for the inside of the houses which are meant to be programmed and renovated by the owners. Through the project 20 houses, an assembly hall, a bar, and the village square were renovated.

An example of a best practice in Greece is Aristi Mountain Resort and Villas. This gathering of beautifully renovated traditiona houses is part of a little village and now serves as one hotel. We see a potentially similar concept for Kudhes.

Aristi Resort

Potential Business Case

Renovating the old houses’ interiors and developing a management model similar to Aristi, would offer travellers the authenticity and a small scale look and feel of the old village, while providing the high level of services and amenities of a big scale resort.

Aristi resort is highly ranked, fully booked and provides prices of €100 per night! It has even been the winner of “World Luxury Hotel Awards” and has been included in “National Geographic Unique Lodges of The World”. Because of its quality, this kind of promotion is possible which contributes to a higher value and opens doors to potential tourists who are interested in such authentic and unique places.

Next to converting a house into a hotel, one could also think of additional uses such as a small museum or craft stores.

Potential Project Partners

• Locally: owners of individual houses.
• National: Fund for Regional Development (Fondi i Zhvillimit të Rajoneve) has a complete list of owners through the roofs & façades project, Ministry of Tourism for Development of Pilot, Ministry of Agriculture or larger banks for higher profile approach.
• Internationally: investors and/or donors.
Next Steps

1. A model needs to be developed for fair earnings: how can it be ensured that the owners earn a decent percentage? The model should also include guidelines on "how to let your house".
2. In addition, people need to be found who are interested in taking the responsibility of being the coordinator of the "Hotel" or resort.
3. Find a group of house owners willing to apply a model like this to their property.
4. Contacting owners of the potential houses and ask for their willingness and ability to invest.
5. Two potential avenues exist:
   - Low profile: find person that manages 3 to 4 units as separate airbnb's or brings together owners to equip their houses and put them online.
   - High profile: Find an (international) investor that is willing to develop the property into a resort comparable to Arísti.

The low and high profile could follow up on each other.
Case 15
Guidelines for Traditional Building and Public Places

Background

There is a big contrast between traditional and new buildings in villages such as Qeparo. Although new buildings are starting to become dominate, it is the presence of traditional buildings that makes Qeparo and surrounding villages authentic and attractive for international tourists.

Some of the new buildings are very colourful and use non-regional materials: this disturbs the authenticity of the traditional buildings and therefore the authenticity of Qeparo. Some of the new buildings are very big which disturbs the view of beautiful buildings such as the ancient monastery on the hill at the entry of the village.

The Case

To keep Qeparo’s value high and to encourage the development of international tourism, Qeparo should cherish its identity. The traditional buildings should not be in the shadows of the new buildings.

The municipality of Himara could develop and implement new and more strict building codes and guidelines which refer to traditional building style and materials. Regarding, for instance, the types of balconies, colours, roof tiles etc. Strong and unambiguous statements should be made about the use of material and the design of the building envelope. Additionally, guidelines for urban planning needs to be taken into account so that individual benefits do not overrule the public interest.

Potential Project Partners

- NGO’s with a focus on beautification, traditional building and cultural heritage
- Municipality of Himara
- National planning agency and Atelier Albania
- Local community
Next Steps

- The Guidelines on building can be worked out as a first project in the future training facility/community centre in cooperation with national and international knowledge partners.
- By involving community, companies and local government this project can be a test case for a public private partnership.
- Communicate in order to replicate. Each village or area potentially has its own specific guidelines.
Overview Qeparo’s Reshaping Public Space
Case 16
Reshaping Public Space

Background

Moving around Qeparo, one experiences the national road that passes through the village centre. Vehicles drive fast and they park on the side of the road, often even on the road itself. This results in Qeparo not having enough public space and the space that does exist is unsafe for pedestrians. Other things that stand out are the lack of facilities for children such as playgrounds. Where there could be public space there are walls or storage for fire wood. This has an affect on liveability, atmosphere and economy all year round, in large part because young families with children move away. It is not a good place for their children to grow up.

Luckily, the land use plan for Qeparo and the region suggest the construction of a by-pass road which would reduce traffic in the town. This only tackles part of the challenge. Reshaping the public space will require a plan that fits the model for development of Qeparo so it will look and feel like a gateway to the Riviera, offer barefoot luxury tourism, have a family atmosphere, and radiate tradition and history.

Potential Business Case

The albanian government is currently investing in public spaces at the main tourist attractions such as waterfronts etc. but we believe that an investment into the actual village is even more important.

If Qeparo wants to become the new gateway to the Riviera, this entrance should also be marked and given an "entrance hall", a place to arrive and orient oneself. Making this entrance take the form of a main square, would not only be more efficient for tourists, but also enhance the social cohesion of the locals. Around this entrance hall/square basic services could be located such as an outdoor centre and a tourist information point.

A planned by-pass road would allow to turn the entire section of national road passing through Qeparo into a pedestrian road. Doing so, all three squares of Queparo could be redesigned.

To avoid cars being parked on the road, more parking areas or plots should be realized, especially for high season. To avoid a desolated feel off-season, the parking spaces need to be designed as a flexible green space.
Small Square

Potential Place for Small Square
“Our children have no place to go to when they want to be outside, no sidewalks, no playground. Just the beach.”

- Local Entrepreneur
Potential Project Partners

- Major of Himara municipality, surrounding café’s and businesses
- URI, Albanian development fund
- Fondi i Zhvillimit të Rajoneve
- International donors with a focus on infrastructure and beautification
- American Albanian Development Foundation
- National Planning Agency and Atelier Alb
- Cityförster and Openfabric

Next Steps

Prepare conceptual design with cost estimate and financing. Also, discuss the possibilities for reducing traffic with National Road Authority.
Case 17
New Road Profiles

Background

One of the unique experiences visitors take home from Albania is the omni-presence of sheep, goats and cows on the road. It is proof of the pure and simple rural culture in Albania and gives a sense of travelling back in time. It is worth preserving as a unique feature of the country.

It does also create potentially dangerous situations, especially on curvy roads, at night, and when drivers are maintaining a high speed. Local stakeholders have indicated that dangerous roads form an important challenge for them in providing a safe environment for themselves and for visitors.

The municipality now penalizes farmers for letting the cattle walk on the roads even though there are no significant accidents caused by animals.

A Possible Solution

It is not uncommon for example in Switzerland, a highly developed country with a strong sense of safety, to also have cows on the roads. It is a sensible, double use of infrastructure, adding also a certain romantic atmosphere.

However, it needs to be thought through and the safety and maintenance aspects need to be covered.

It is possible the roads could contain a segment that is multifunctional and can serve cyclists and pedestrians as well as cattle. A cattle path instead of a bike-path.

Another possibility could be to limit the access of cattle to certain times of the day.
Potential Project Partners

- Municipality maintaining and cleaning roads, giving permissions for passage of animals.
- National regulation for road safety, signage. Insurance companies.
- Countries with similar issues and their own solutions can be consulted on the topic.

Next Steps

1. Investigate current status of measures for road safety.
2. Compare with policy of countries like Switzerland and Italy.
3. Create pilot area -road or village- where possible new approach can be tested.
Case 18
Outdoor and Tourism Center

Background

It is virtually impossible for visitors to reserve accommodation upfront online and there is no central place in Qeparo to make reservations on site. Furthermore, there is no central point for collecting information on activities (hiking, walking, tours, water sports, etc.) in the area.

Local entrepreneurs have already initiated the first steps in creating a tourist information point. A space has been allocated at the main village square and people have committed themselves to running the service all year round.

Potential Business Case

Tourists need a place where they get all the necessary information about tourism offers, a place where they can centrally book all relevant services for tourists and rent materials like bikes, donkeys, water sport equipment and also purchase souvenirs.

The new central place of Qeparo could be the hub that highlights all activities that Qeparo and its hinterland has to offer. Therefore the centre could be a starting point of the exploration of Qeparo and the surrounding by providing an outdoor (activities) and tourism centre. Both with an offline and online presence. By doing so, the number of tourists will grow, tourism season will be extended, and locals could benefit from increased profit.
We believe that an online and offline centre is imperative for the success of tourists coming to the region. Moreover, the tourism centre connects accommodation, existing and new activities (such as those mentioned in this report) and will serve as a spider in the web, so to speak, for the economic growth of Qeparo and its region.

In summer 2016, a group of locals will start a tourism information centre. This initiative should be supported and be used as a base for further development of tourism services in Qeparo.

Potential Project Partners

Locally:
- Owner of the new centre square
- Fotaq
- Municipality to provide upper floor of the existing school building

Nationally:
- Outdoor Albania

Internationally:
- Sawadee

Next Steps

1. Fund a local tourist association
2. Develop a business plan, operation concepts for an outdoor and tourism centre
3. Generate necessary funds
4. Find local people who would like to operate the outdoor and tourism centre (possibly run by the entrepreneurs organisation)
This report has been prepared in collaboration of CITYFÖRSTER, MVO Nederland and:

If you have any questions or remarks, please do not hesitate to contact us:

martin@cityfoerster.net
+31624738041