

# *CASE STUDY ON* URBAN REHABILITATION

## NEIGHBORHOOD OF THE REGIONAL TOURISM CENTRE IN JUNIK

Prishtinë/Prishtina, 2014

Support to the Promotion of Cultural Diversity

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## Background

An on-the-job training programme for restoration and rehabilitation of architectural heritage as one of the recommendations of the CoE/EU joint programme "Ljubljana Process II: Rehabilitating our Common Heritage" and the Heritage Plan Kosovo<sup>1</sup> West.

As part of a wider community-based initiative in Junik, the case study on rehabilitation of the area in the neighborhood of Mr. Vebi Ukë Isufaj's residential stone facility ("kulla") was conceived to present good practice and offers a locally appropriate example for the western region, as well as Kosovo as a whole. The Isufaj kulla was reconstructed and adapted to be a seat of the Regional Tourism Centre in Junik in 2012. Building on this valuable contribution to the field, this area was selected as a part of cultural itineraries, a PCDK project initiative for the Summer Camp educational programme.

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The initiative will demonstrate an integrated approach to the potential of cultural and natural heritage for local economic development and social cohesion.

The study involves selecting an area in Junik town with stone structures, associated with the traditional lifestyle of its citizens and studying its history, its strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and suggesting concrete actions to work with local actors to set a working example in the area. The municipal authorities have been very supportive, providing necessary data and personnel in the development of the case study. The case study primarily refers to the local decision-makers and those owning the land and the facilities, in order to encourage them to play an active role in safeguarding the integrity of inherited environment and to develop community-based heritage planning and management mechanisms. This will guide the revitalisation of the area for a more sustainable local economic development.

*1. This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo Declaration of Independence.*

## Acknowledgement

We would like to extend our gratitude to the municipality of Junik, particularly to the mayor Mr. Agron Kuci as well as team who contributed to the development of the case study in various stages.

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# I. Junik's Traditional Residential Stone Structures

Junik was developed as a village of neighborhoods, named after the toponym of the location or by the name of the families to which the Junik inhabitants belonged by origin. Some of them, such as “Tregovishtë”, “Gacaffer” and “Berishë”, founded the main core of the village. From the late 18th to the early 20th century characteristic residential stone buildings - kullas were built in each of the neighborhoods (*Junik Preservation and Development Plan, 2007,40,52*). Today, around thirty kullas or remains of this building type still exist in Junik.

The kullas's compositional, functional and constructive characteristics contain specific elements. It is a family residential building that looks like a tower, with a rectangular base and two or three floors. The basement was used for animals sheltering while the first floor was the living premises and on the upper floor was the men's gathering room (“oda”). As opposed to the simple stone facades of the lower floors, with small square openings that are not always in symmetric position, special attention was paid to organisation and decoration of the section where the men's gathering room was located. On the outside, a gallery (dyshekllek) of stone or wood was built. Small, and usually round-arched openings of stone or wood were placed symmetrically in one zone around the gallery walls. The interior has a specific setting with the fireplace in a central position, wooden benches made along the walls and the ceiling has wood-carved decoration. Usually, a separate outdoor staircase led to the gathering room. The men's room played important role

in the social life of the village's inhabitants. Here, the most influential male representatives of the families were involved in social, political and economic decisions making, concerning both – the families and the entire village.

The kullas with ancillary structures located in their courtyards, were usually surrounded by high stone walls. This composition of living space reflects the life style of the communities destined, among other reasons, by the need of strong association between several generations of family members in troubled times. The walls were usually constructed of rubble stone set in lime mortar while the corners of the walls as well as the frames of the yards' gates were built of well dressed large stone blocks. The traditional entrance gates made of wood and decorated with wood carved ornaments, or made of metal with colorful geometric and floral design, break the “monotony” of the gray stone walls.

In the peripheral zones of the settlement, a large area of farmland was spread next to the buildings and low fencing structure of river's stones and twigs were made primarily to mark the property.



In recent years the characteristic building tradition is considered as an important cultural and economic resource by the newly (in 2007) established Junik Municipality. In that sense, many reconstruction and restoration works have been carried out. The most intensive works were undertaken on one of the kullas owned by the Hodja's family, known as “Oda e Junikut” (*Junik Preservation and Development Plan, 2007, 53-60*), located in the centre of Junik, that were recognized as the oldest and most representative residential complexes in the area.

No less importance was given to the renewal of Mr.Vehbi Ukë Isufaj's kulla, located close to the bank of Erenik River and near to the main road to Gjakovë/Đakovica. The almost destroyed building was reconstructed in 2011. Today, the kulla is a seat of the Regional Tourism Centre and hosts numerous of cultural events organised by the cultural institutions and local non-governmental organisations.



## II. Study Area **Definition**

### scope, cadastral parcels included

The study area is marked by the Isufaj's kulla, as a dominant stone structure built probably in the 19 century next to the “Berisha” neighborhood. It includes developed and undeveloped land on the plots along the street that leads to the kulla, starting from the main road Junik-Gjakovë/Đakovica:

- On the right side of the street, CPs No.: 2037-0, 2060-0 and 2059 ; 2061-0 ; 2085-0
- Behind the kulla, CPs No.: 2087-0, 2089-0 and 9015;
- The kulla's plot and the land on its front: CPs No.: 2092-1 and 2092-2;
- On the left side of the street, CPs No.: 2094-0 ; 2093-0 ; 2033-0 and 2034-0 .

The covered area is c. 1.5 ha  
(See *Maps: No.2-5*)

## III.Study Area **Assessment**

General view of the area shows that due to uncontrolled urbanization and modern construction development, it has lost much of its original image created by characteristic stone structures dwellings and farmland that determined its rural character.

The reconstruction works undertaken on the Isufaj's kulla (CP No. 2092-1), as well as the basic urban infrastructure supplied by the Municipality of Junik along the main street that leads to the kulla (new pavement of the street, street illumination, water supply system), are significant steps that have been taken to foster the functionality of the area in conjunction with the still existing traditional built structures.

The ongoing process of arrangement and landscaping the banks of Erenik River that flows adjacent to the study area, also gives an impression that the Municipal authorities recognised the importance of well-presented and appropriately maintained environment for sustainable development.

However, a necessary extension of works on restoration, rehabilitation and revitalisation of the area are required with the aim to get more attractive features that will motivate the visitors of the Tourism Centre's historic building to enjoy in variety of services and products that might be offered by the local inhabitants.



## 1. Situation on the **right side** of the street that leads to the Tourism Centre

Remains of old stone boundary walls and partially preserved residential stone structure, as well as the new constructed buildings on the old plots along the right side of the street, indicates that the space was designed as a residential area. The facilities were sited on their plots in a way that emphasized a progression of public to private spaces. The main streetscape led to boundary stone walls with large gate entrances to the courtyards and to the residential facilities and ancillary structures used for the operation of rural economy.

Very few parts of the old structures made of stone taken from the nearby Erenik River still exist. Some of these structures are remains of ancient residential buildings – kullas that during the restoration works undertaken on the immediate environment of Isufaj's kulla were used to form stone fences (boundary walls) of the new buildings' courtyards (CPs No. 2085-0 and 2059-0). Within these walls large metal doors have been installed.

A section of the building façade (located on the CP No. 2065-0) presents the only preserved original residential stone structure located on this side of the street. At the same time, many inappropriate interventions undertaken in the past could be noticed; Cement ring beam was constructed on the lower section of the old stone wall as a foundation for the upper part/floor, whereas the upper floor was constructed using different types of blocks of brick. These “restoration” works are quite contrary and incompatible with the preserved older section of the building which was originally constructed as a two-storey kulla with very modest appearance to the street.

The still existing tradition of building boundary walls in front of the courtyards of the residential facilities could be recorded on the CP No. 2307-0, where new construction works have been recently undertaken. However, the use of new materials (“white” bricks) for construction of the walls disturbs the picturesque image of the street once formed by the carved stone walls.

Old stone structures of a former kulla's building could be seen also incorporated in the new sections of the boundary walls (CP No. 2064-0) using factory-made material that mimics the traditional method of construction recognized by the natural stone blocks set in lime mortar.

Considering this tendency of building boundary walls it could be expected that for the only open space in the area –the courtyard of the newly built and still unfinished house on the plot near (CP No. 2059-0), the same untraditional method could be applied, particularly because it is easier and cheaper way of construction today.

Many of the houses on this side of the street are new buildings. Most of them are three-storey residential facilities, and some of them are still not completely finished (the houses on CP No. 2059-0 and CP No. 2085-0).

Only one of these buildings (on the CP No. 2307-0) was recently restored to serve primarily for commercial purposes. Favorable position of this, simple two-storey building, located on the corner of the street that leads to the Tourism Centre, extended to the main road Gjakovë/Đakovica and close to the Erenik River, is probably one of the reasons for the owner's decision to invest in the new function of the building as a place for entertainment services (casino and video games).

## 2. Situation on the **left side** of the street that leads to the Tourism Centre

The situation on the other side of the street is somewhat different. Larger part of the land is undeveloped and with no particular use. The old stone fences that marked the plots and lead to Isufaj' kulla were reconstructed during the kulla's building renovation. The manner of making these low fences by sorting smaller pieces of river stone applied on the lower part of the fence without using mortar for joints (so-called "dry walls") and by intricate wicker for the upper part of the fence, indicate that the land in this area was increasingly used for agriculture. The existing old buildings on the opposite side of this "green" space (on CPs No.: 2092-0; 2094-0; 2033-0; 2034-0) confirms this conclusion - they are long, low and simple stone structures still serving as ancillary facilities for the rural economy.

The kulla of Isufaj is the only building recognised as a cultural heritage in the area, representing the typical vernacular architecture of residential facilities of Junik. It was reconstructed in 2011. It is a three- storey building, with wooden gallery that comes out from the perimeter of the wall through the two of its facades on the highest level, and with the wooden indoor and stone outdoor staircases. Within the reconstruction project implementation the yard was landscaped and the barn was reconstructed. Simple wooden entrance gate was placed right near the kulla's building. Its height follows the level of the old boundary wall made of river stone and intricate wicker.

Only one newly built residential facility could be seen in this area (CPNo. 2094-0). It is located adjacent to the western courtyard's wall of the kulla of Isufaj. It is a two-storey house with still undecorated facade. Surrounding of the house is neglected. On this plot and directly to the yard of the kulla a makeshift wooden construction was installed taking a toll of the immediate environment of the historical building because the old stone wall that marked the plots was completely destroyed.

A vast uncultivated land on this side of the street expands all the way to the main road (CPs No. 2092-0, 2094-0, 2033-0 and 2034-0). A small plot is used as a market place where farmers from the surrounding villages present their products once a week. Such use of the land is of temporary nature and in agreement with the owner of the land. The location of the market place is convenient because it is near the main road Junik-Gjakova/Djakovica as well as at the beginning of the street leading to the Tourism Centre. However, it is not adequately organised and not secured space for conducting such activities. Improvised parking area across the main road towards the river is used particularly in the market days.



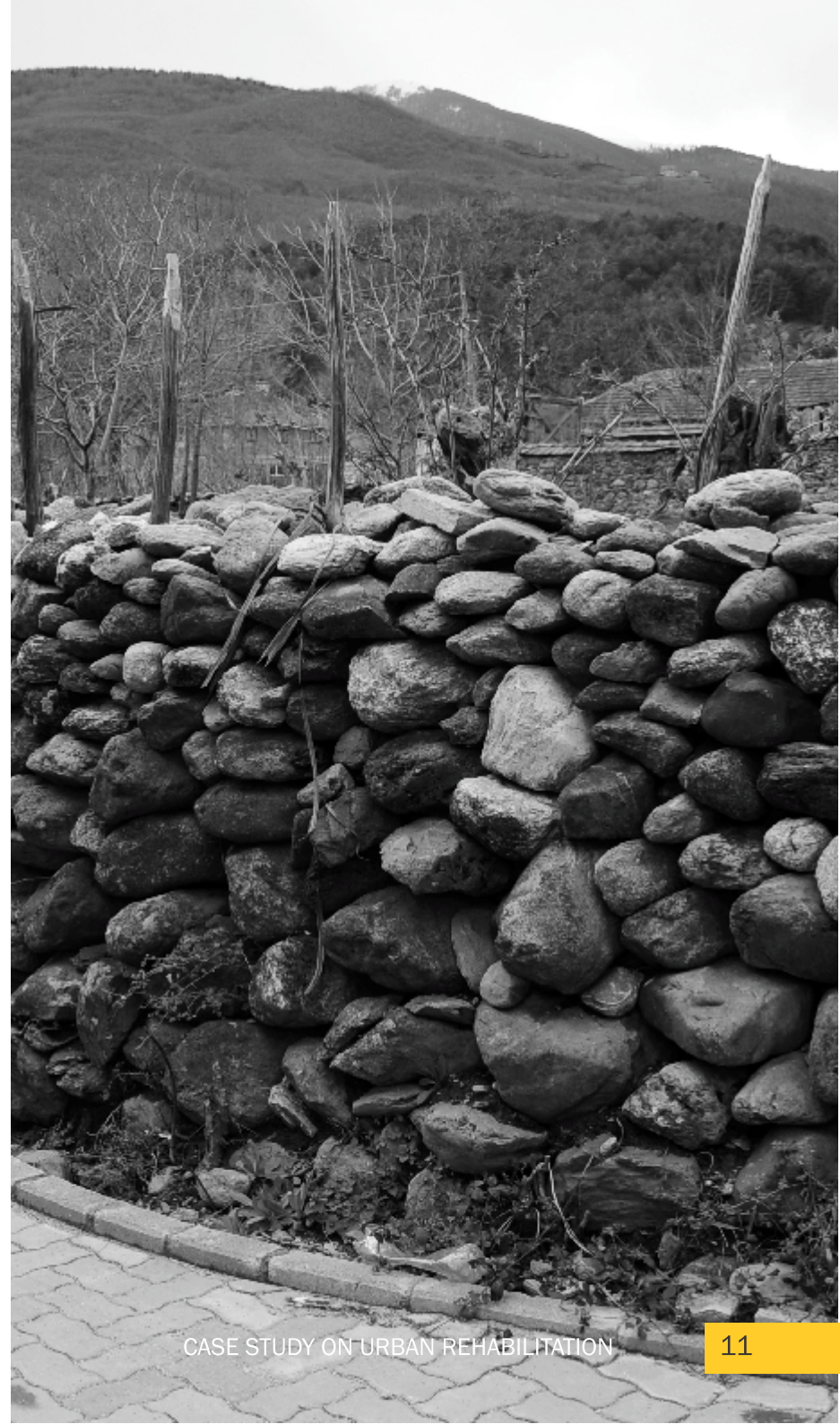
## IV. Recommendations for Restoration of the Traditional Stone Structures<sup>2</sup>

The priority should be given to the implementation of conservation-restoration measures for the protection of the still existing stone structures or their components.

### ***Possible actions:***

- Restoration and repairs of the stone boundary walls along the street that are of two types:
  - a) boundary walls made of a combination of dressed and undressed stone (with or without joints of lime mortar) that represent the traditional way of fencing the courtyards of the residential facilities
  - b) boundary walls made of river stones in combination of wicker for fencing the cultivated land
- Restoration of the residential facility (kulla) on the plot, CP No. 2065-0:
  - a) Cleaning, repairs and restoration of the stone blocks and joints of lime mortar;
  - b) Roof construction consolidation; replacement of damaged tiles of brick following the form of the existed ones .

2. Interventions proposed are presented on drawings/sections: A-A and B-B.



## V. Recommendations for the **New Buildings**

In the area to the left of the street leading to the Tourism Centre the construction of new buildings is in full swing. In this situation it is impossible to follow the traditional building concept but some interventions can be undertaken in order to gain well decorated and maintained environment.

### ***Possible actions:***

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- Final works on the facades of new residential buildings (plastering and coloring);
- Appropriate accesses to the private yards;
- Construction of boundary wall(s) of stone (to the street) following the traditional way of building (CP No. 2059-0)
- Setting up gates to the yards made of wood (or replacement of the existing new gates of metal construction), following the design of traditionally decorated wooden gates which still can be seen in Junik.

## VI. Recommendations for **Infrastructural Improvement** of the Area and its Revitalization

According to the results of the interviews carried out with some of the owners of newly constructed buildings or adapted old facilities, and bearing in mind that the creative activities of people make the place attractive, we suggest some commercial and cultural activities to be organised in the area.

### ***Possible actions:***

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- Tourism Centre courtyard arrangement for development of cultural performances (summer cinema/ theater performances) and children's education activities on traditional stone structures.
- Adaptation of the old two-storey facility (on the CP No. 2060-0) in a souvenir shop and cafeteria for refreshment of the visitors. At the moment the building is without function.
- Setting up a fountain (near to the shop) following the design of the old village's public fountains;



- Market area: landscaping the area to be a market place with appropriate market equipment. This place has been already used as a weekly market place where the farmers of the surrounding villages sell their products. The idea is to extend the function of the market with presenting “brand” products of the region.
- Cleaning of the irrigation channel that runs alongside the main road, i.e. it passes through the market place and across the main street and extends into the courtyard of the building on CPNo. 2037-0; Set of protective equipment across the channel.
- Installing benches and garbage bins along the street that leads to the Tourism Centre.
- Setting up information tables/ signage at the beginning of the street that leads to the Tourism Centre.
- Setting up underground electric installation/cables.
- Parking place arrangement across the market place (on the other side of the main road to Gjakova/Đakovica).

## VII. Conclusions

All the activities proposed in the case study are with the predisposition to achieve the following objectives:

**Effective protection and appropriate presentation of the characteristic traditional stone structures that still exist in the designated area**

At the very beginning of this process active participation of the owners and/or occupants of the facilities is fundamental. Together with the Municipal authorities they should be encouraged and supported in rebuilding integrated approach in safeguarding and maintaining the common heritage. Technical support of the Regional Centre for Cultural Heritage in Pejë/Peć is also required to ensure that the necessary measures are undertaken in accordance with the standards and practices in conservation process.

**Building attractive environment for development of cultural and economic activities.**

The proposed activities for revitalisation of the area could be amended or modified, depending on the willingness of the owners/occupants of the facilities or the land as well as on the support of the Municipal authorities and expressed interest of other stakeholders (business sector, NGOs, cultural and educational institutions, Diaspora', etc.). Once the preconditions for rehabilitation of the designated area are ensured on the basis of consensus of all the interested parties, the activities on conservation/restoration of old stone structures and arrangement of the urban area could

start simultaneously with development of management and business plans.

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## Selected Sources

- Integrated Conservation Projects in Junik Municipality, CHwB, Report Series 18/2011
- Plani Zhvillimor Urban (PZHU) Juniku 2023+, Hartat, Qershor 2009
- Junik Preservation and Development Plan – Draft Report made by Dr. Christine E. Cohlert, CHwB in cooperation with the Pilot Municipality Unit of Junik, June 2007
- Juniku 2011-2023 - Mirësevini në Kullat e Junikut! Freskohuni me ujë e Erenikut! Pushoni në Moronicë! Ngjithëni në Gjeravicë!, Punëtorja e Vizionimit, Ohër 2007 (Plani Zhvillimor Komunal i Junikut 2011-2023)

# Appendixes

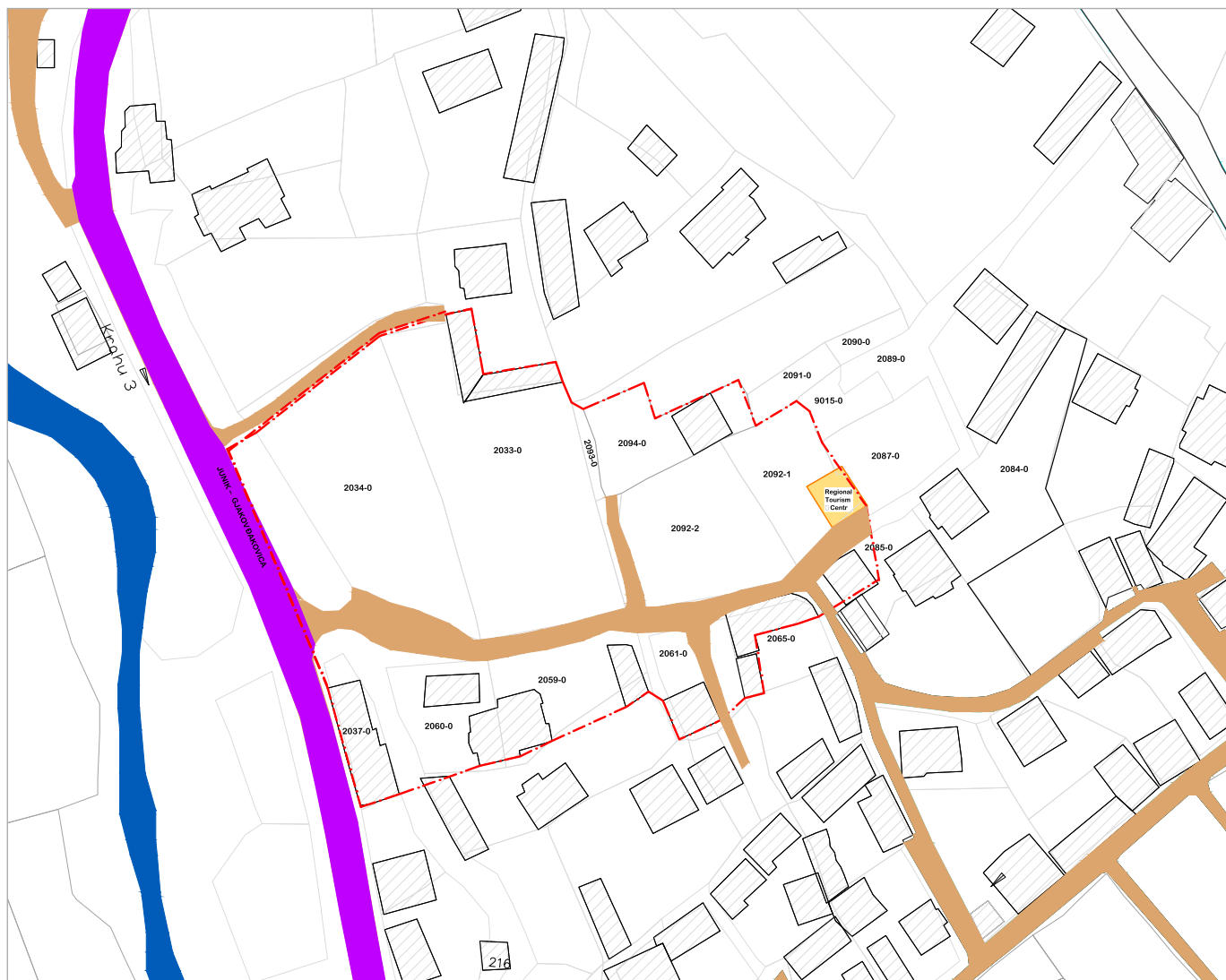


## Maps



Case Study on Urban Rehabilitation  
Neighborhood of the Regional Tourism Centre

**ORTHO PHOTO 2003**



## STUDY AREA

- Road Junik - Gjakovë/Đakovica
- Ereniku/Erenik river

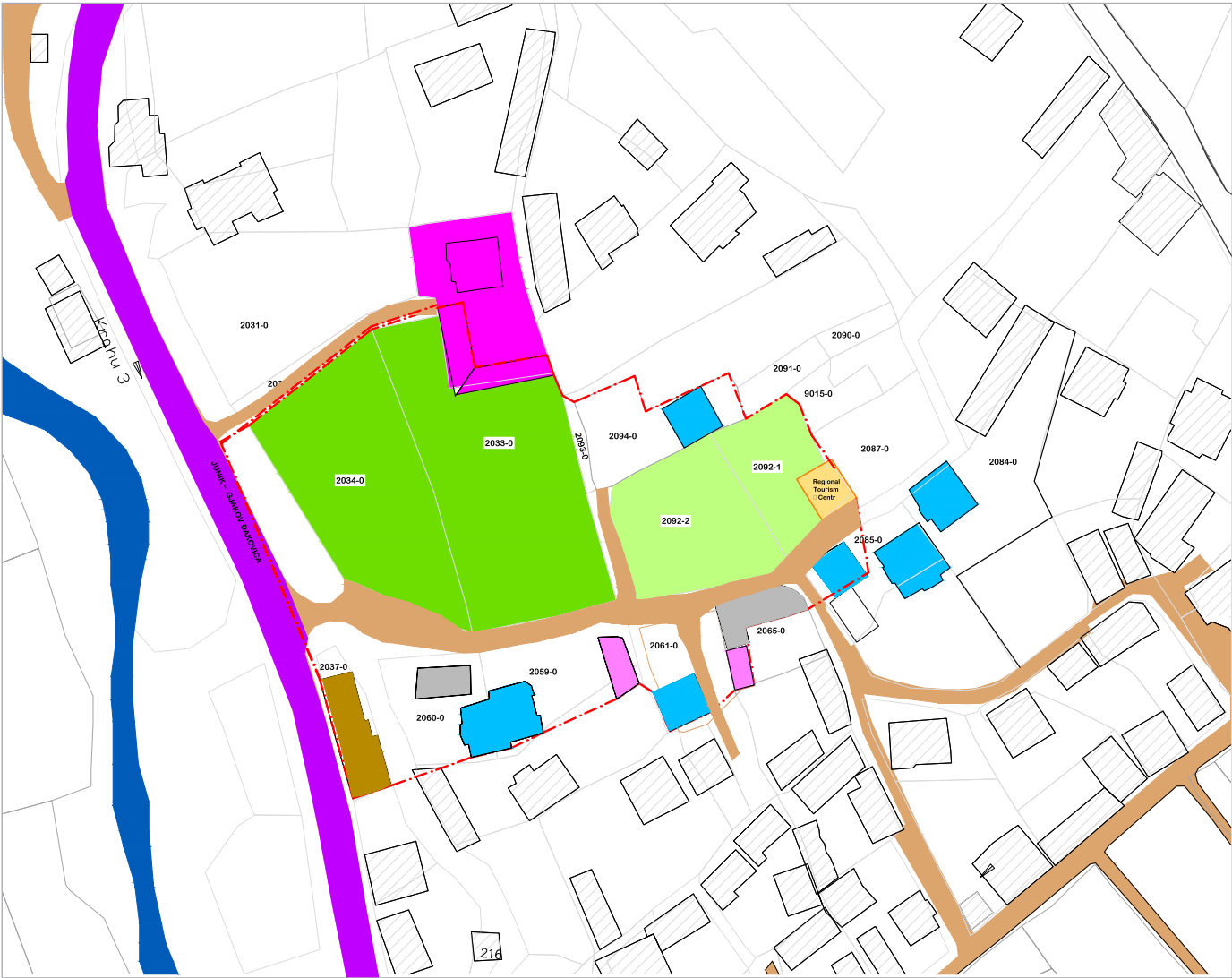




Case Study on Urban Rehabilitation

**LEVELS**

- One storied building
- Two storied building
- Three storied building



Case Study on Urban Rehabilitation

**FUNCTION**

- Commercial/entertainment
- without function
- Residential
- Economic premises
- Green spaces
- Courtyard of the Regional Tourism Centre

## Drawings/Sections

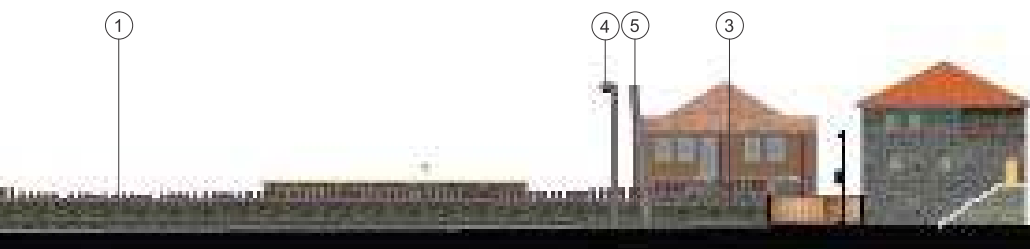




**SECTION “A-A”**



**SIDE VIEW**



Situation - August, 2013

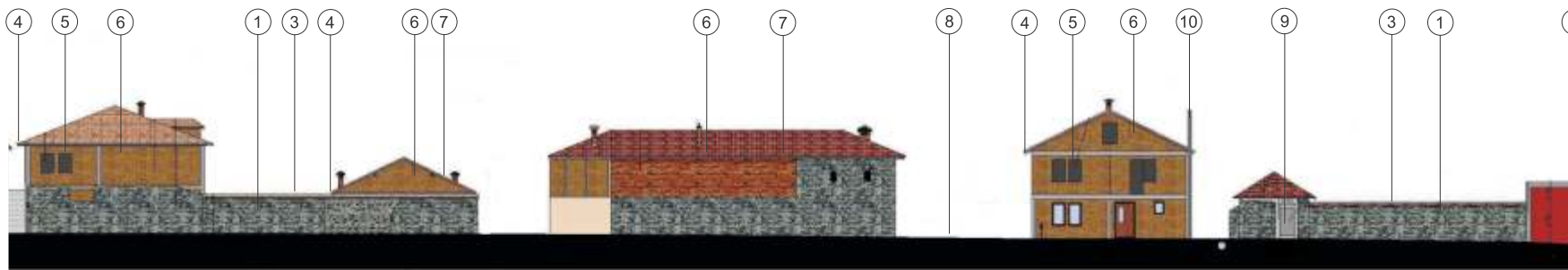


Situation - August, 2013



## MAIN INTERVENTIONS PROPOSED

- 1 Reinforcement, repairs and restoration of fence made of river stone and intricate wicker
- 2 Repairs of the wooden roof structure & replacement of the damaged roof tiles
- 3 Plastering and painting of the facade
- 4 Removal of the existing metal poles and setting up underground electric installation
- 5 Setting up gutters

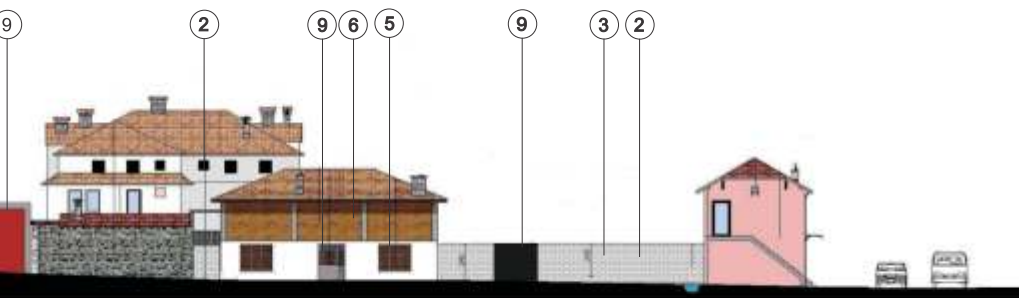


**SECTION “B-B”**



**SIDE VIEW**

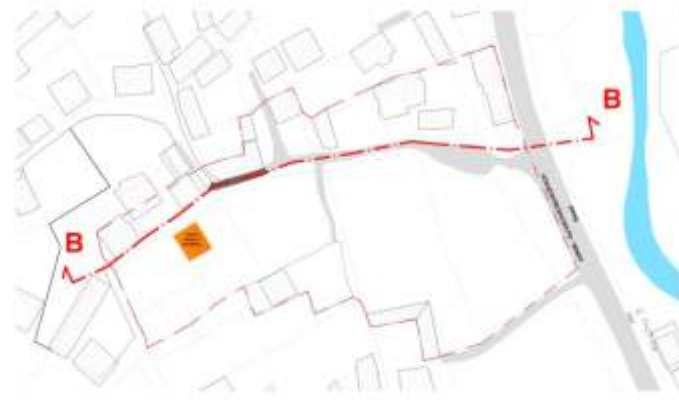




Situation - August, 2013



Situation - August, 2013



## MAIN INTERVENTIONS PROPOSED

- 1 Reinforcement, repairs and restoration of the stone walls with joints of lime mortar
- 2 Replacement of the existing wall with wall of stone
- 3 Covering the wall structure with the roof tiles
- 4 Setting up gutters
- 5 Replacement of the windows metal frames with wooden frames/setting up windows with wooden frames
- 6 Plastering and painting the facades
- 7 Repairs of the wooden roof structure & replacement of the damaged roof tiles
- 8 Construction of a stone wall on a traditional manner
- 9 Replacement of the metal door with a wooden entrance door
- 10 Removal of the metal poles and setting up underground electric installations



Kulla of Mr. Vehbi Uke Isufaj - Regional Tourism Centre, western view





## Photos



Wooden gallery (Dysheklëlëk), southern view



Entrance area





Reconstructed boundary wall located south of the kulla



Wall built of river stone and wicker





Pathway to the ancillary structures



New pavement of the street with concrete slabs





Partially preserved traditional kulla



Traditional boundary wall made of stone set in lime mortar





## Rehabilitation Actions Animation



Public fountain

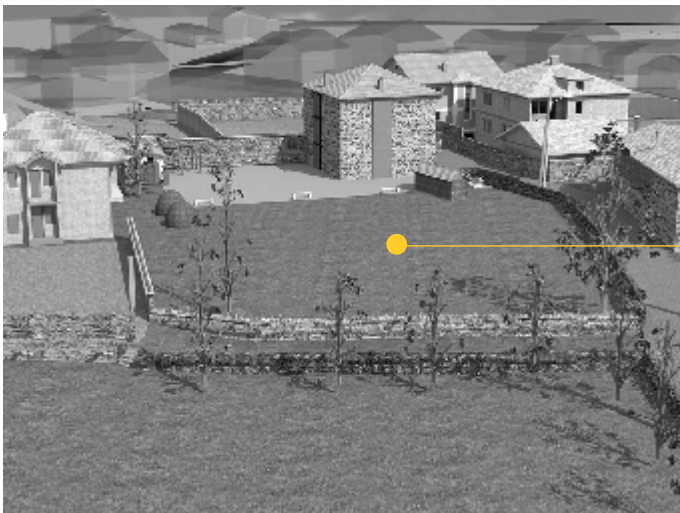


Souvenir shop





Market area



Courtyard of the Regional Tourism Centre











**Disc/ Junik 3D animation**



## Support to the Promotion of Cultural Diversity

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