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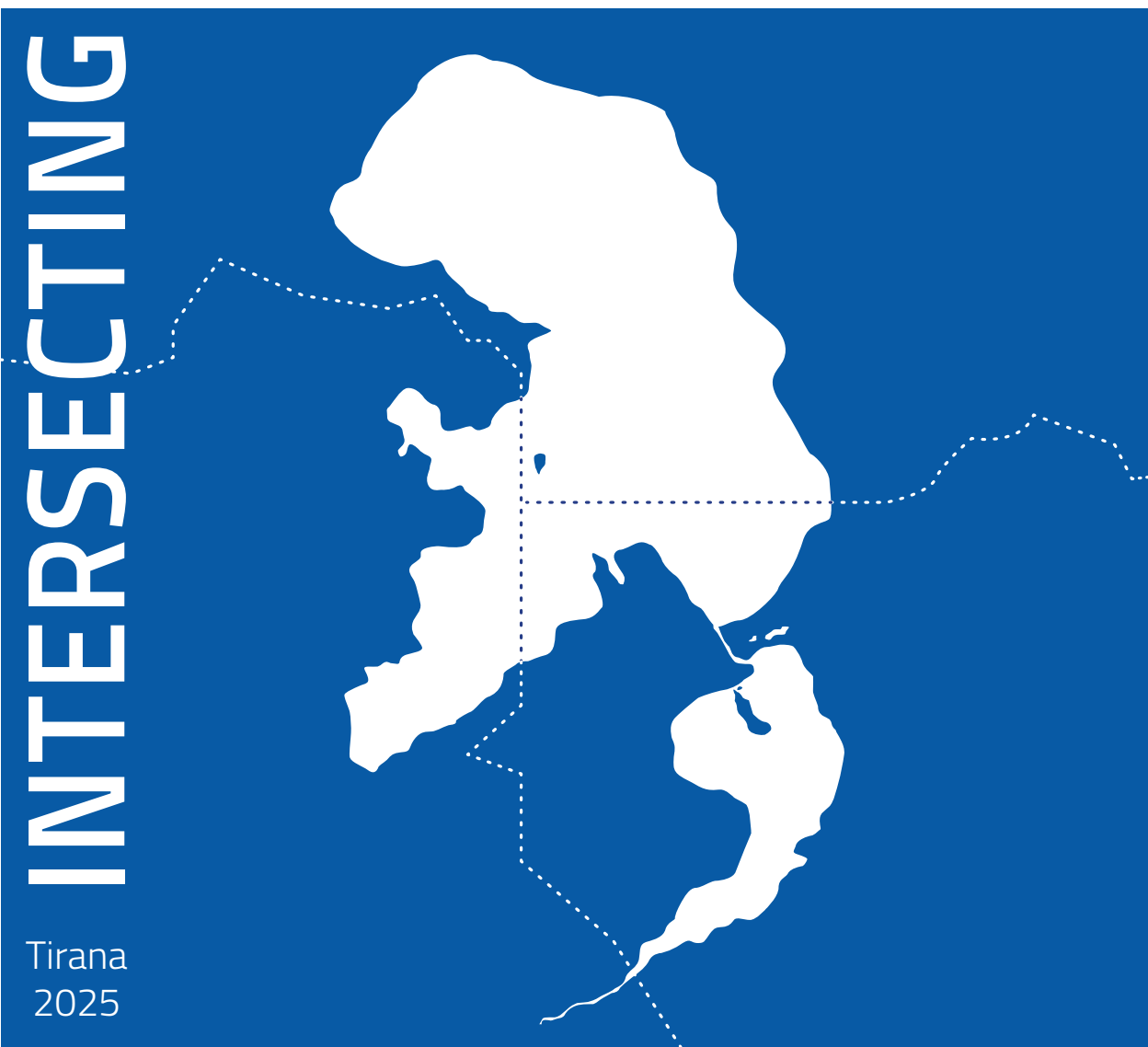
Intersecting Landscapes

Finding New Spatial Visions for the Cross-Border Region of Prespa Lakes and the case of Pustec Municipality - Albania.

A Project of the
Joint International PhD Program IDAUP

POLIS University Albania / University of Ferrara Italy

INTERSECTING



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Besnik Aliaj, Sotir Dhamo Gent Avdija and Skender Luarasi are the scientific responsible of the PhD Program workshop organized in the frame of the IDAUP - International Doctorate Program in Architecture and Urban Planning - between POLIS University of Tirana Albania, and the Department of Architecture of Ferrara University, Italy. In this publication they have also contributed in terms of contents and introduction, including interventions in some chapters, conclusions and in the elaboration of the index structure. The publication collects practical and theoretical experiences elaborated within the context of the "Scientific Research Department" and the research unit "Observatory of the Mediterranean Basin" (OMB).
The publication collects practical and theoretical concepts gathered and elaborated in structured and thematic contributes by PhD student from IDAUP Program. Chapter 3 collects the IDAUP PhD researchers' contributions, which have undergone a process of double-blind review.

List of historical publications
(2024) OMB No. 9 Re-Inventing Phoeniciae (Finiq) See here
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This double issue of the Scientific Journal of the Observatory of the Mediterranean Basin constitutes a substantial contribution to the decade-long effort by the joint doctoral program of Polis University and the University of Ferrara. The initiative has consistently pursued future scenarios of sustainable development for Albanian territory, with special focus on transnational dynamics in the southern Balkans. The output from annual doctoral workshops and related research activities has fueled a series of fourteen volumes, including single and double issues. These collectively depict the region's evolving landscape, offering insights into natural and cultural heritage, urbanization networks, landscape arrangements, local economies, and social dynamics. This latest volume examines the mountainous border area between Albania, Greece, and North Macedonia as an intersection of contemporary landscapes, incorporating multilayered cultural palimpsests and UNESCO-recognized unique ecosystems. Within an entangled web of long-stratified, cross-border dynamics, the territorial apparatus is interpreted in its versatility through sustained exchanges between domestic and international academic teams and local communities/ authorities. In this context, 'new spatial visions' are advanced through planning policies and spatial designs aimed at reconciling aspirations for multidimensional human development with the moral imperative of protecting nature. The value of the work presented here lies in the relentless, systematic pursuit of a comprehensive understanding of Albanian space within the southern Balkans. With academic rigor and proactive engagement, change is recorded and opportunities are prefigured to accompany an entire country's rapid movement toward the future.

Prof. Roberto Pasini
University of Bologna, Italy

The Prespa Lakes, one of the most special and sensitive ecosystems in Southeastern Europe and crucial to the Western Balkans, have been a meeting point of natural, cultural, and social currents for decades. At the crossroads of Greece, Albania and North Macedonia, the region combines unique biodiversity, rich historical heritage and, historically, a rare form of cross-border coexistence. This book attempts to shed light on the development potential of this complex place through the eyes of young researchers who view Prespa not only as a geographical space but also as a living laboratory of collaboration and creative thinking.

The following texts are the fruit of the intensive work of doctoral students from POLIS University in Tirana and the University of Ferrara, Italy. Corresponding works and publications are carried out every year by doctoral students from the two universities as an academic method to bring together first-year doctoral students and foster team spirit and mutual understanding. In this context, the students of this cohort visited the area, met the communities that live and work around the lakes, spoke with local organisations and experts, and toured places where nature and man co-shape the landscape. I was fortunate enough to participate in the field mission and to witness the seriousness and methodical nature of their work. This empirical contact formed the foundation for proposals that combine ecological sensitivity, sustainable tourism, the promotion of cultural heritage, and the importance of cross-border cooperation.

Upon their return to Tirana, the students worked intensively at POLIS University in the form of a Spatial Planning Studio. Over the course of a week, they developed, discussed, and presented their ideas, which were then elaborated, evaluated, and matured into the texts that make up this volume. This process was not only academic; it was an exercise in collaboration, critical thinking and creative exploration of the challenges and opportunities that characterise Prespa and its unsurpassed natural and social landscape.

This book aspires to contribute to the dialogue on the future of the region, offering new perspectives, pioneering proposals, and, I would dare say, innovative ones that highlight the importance of an interdisciplinary approach and international cooperation in this field. At the same time, it is a practical demonstration of the value of the educational process when it is directly linked to the place, the people, their deep and complex history and the real issues that concern them in the context of today's acute geopolitical and local challenges.

I hope that the reader will find in the following pages not only knowledge but also inspiration to continue the effort towards a sustainable, collaborative and creative future for Lakes Prespa.

Pantoleon Skayannis
Professor Emeritus UTH

Intersecting Landscapes

Finding New Spatial Visions for the Cross-Border Region of Prespa Lakes and the case of Pustec Municipality - Albania.

Issue 1

A project developed in the framework of the
International Doctorate in Architecture and Urban Planning IDAUP
POLIS University, Albania / University of Ferrara, Italy

Preface

This scientific journal publication is a research outcome of the Joint International PhD Program (Double Degree) between Polis University, Tirana Albania; and Ferrara University, Italy. For more than one decade (starting from year 2012) both universities are working together to coordinate their own research program and strategies, with a strong social responsibility dimension towards local communities and authorities especially in Albania (struggling to join EU), but also in Italy. The origin of such work stays with 2 initial document documented at https://press.universitetipolis.edu.al/omb-scientific-journal/ : i) Albania 2030, a Spatial Planning and National Development vision; and ii) The Regionalization of Albania – The Governance, Administrative and Territorial Reform that Albania needs on a Regional Level; both assisted by our research institute Co-PLAN Institute for Habitat Development.

Since than our PhD Program has selected: a region, or a municipality, or a territorial thematic strip; and has been focused to elaborate further professionally and scientifically the developmental policies, plans and designs in favor especially to local authorities and communities in need. Albania has been reducing in population due to rapid decline of demographic trends, as well as emigration of brain and young people. So the main dilemma and question mark remains how to stop such process, and encourage a development trend that gives hope to local residents to better explore in a sustainable and resilient way the rich menu of the resources in their own local/regional territory. Combined this with growing trends of tourism, energy and agriculture it can bring back life to the abandoned peripheral regions, where most of resources stays. This is also a reverse process of massive emigration towards capital region Tirana. However, there is no Albania without the amazing peripheries and regions. Since then our program has provided at least visions for 9 regional puzzles , while 2 latest are under process. This is a direct contribution to society (Third Mission of Universities) that our universities and our PhD Program is materializing every year.

This year the focus has been the cross border region of Prespa lakes, one of the most beautiful regions between Albania, Northern Macedonia and Greece. However the developmental problems are growing, and visions are missing. Especially the Albanian part appears to be disadvantaged economically due to the accumulated problems of the past. Cross border

infrastructure is problematic among Greece and Northern Macedonia. Tourism potentials are not coordinated among three countries, minimizing the benefit of local communities. This stimulates a negative culture towards environmental aspects, climate change, as they remain treated fragmented while the habitat is one. These specific two issues of the "OMB Scientific Journal" packed in one annual journal aim to document the work done during the international workshop at Polis University (including field trip to Prespa region in three countries), and then the one year independent work of students and staff with their individual research. The issue 1/2025 focuses "Policy Based Aspects";' while the issue 2/2025 concentrates on the "Project based Aspects". Hopefully it will be a reference now and in the future, when Albania and Northern Macedonia will join EU.

We must thank especially local and regional authorities, such as: the Mayor and Municipality of Prespa Albania; the representative of the Regional Cultural Heritage Office of Bitola; and deputy mayor of Florina Greece, that welcomed us in the filed and their own institutions providing a lot of hints and feedback for the process of research. Without them it would have been impossible to implement such project and publication. Special thanks goes to the "Faculty of FKZH/FR&D" and "OMB Research Unit" and "Polis-Press Unit" at "IF Innovation Factory / POLIS University" (Dr. Gent Avdija, Prof. As. Skender Luarasi, Prof. As. Llazar Kumaraku, Prof. Emeritus Pantoleon D. Skayannis, Prof. Theo Zaffagnini, Prof. Roberto Di Giulio, Sadmira Malaj, etc. and many other staff that contributed via lectures, advices or consultation and support), and University of Ferrara / IDAUP. Without them it woold have been impossible.

We hope it will be useful vision document and methodology towards local and regional authorities, to students, professionals, researchers and academic staff.

Thank you to all whom contributed!

Prof. Dr. Besnik ALIAJ
Prof. As. Dr. Sotir DHAMO

POLIS University, Tirana

Intersecting Landscapes

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Intersecting Landscapes

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Issue 2

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POLIS University, Albania / University of Ferrara, Italy

Intersecting Landscapes

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Historic Cultural Landscapes Across Political Borders Connecting Communities and Cultures - case of Prespa Lake

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Abstract - *This report shows the research undertaken by the 39th PhD cycle Cultural Heritage Landscape Group, in the framework of the Joint International PhD Program IDAUP between POLIS University and University of Ferrara. The Cross-Border Region of the Prespa Lakes and Pustec Municipality, the case study of this research, was framed as the intersection of infrastructural, environmental, cultural and habitation landscapes. Located in the southeast of Albania, Pustec Municipality borders with Greece and North Macedonia, all of three countries sharing the Prespa Lakes. The environmental richness and the wider multidimensional ecological importance of the zone led jointly the three countries to establish the Prespa Transboundary Park in 2000. Very rich also in terms of cultural heritage, this site testimonies the continuous presence of human settlements starting from the Neolithic Age and continuing today. Byzantine hermitages and examples of stone masonry vernacular architecture, are identifying cultural heritage elements of the region. Despite the richness, multiple territorial, social, and environmental problems have been identified in the site. They have led to isolation, shrinking, migration, and emigration of the local population. In response to these problems, cultural heritage was proposed as one of the four fields of inquiry of the PhD Workshop and was followed by this PhD research group. Under a shared vision of Pustec as capable of valorising the potentials and mitigating the problems, the cultural heritage landscape PhD group envisioned to enhance the cultural heritage in its broadest sense. It explored the interrelation of historic built environment with the geomorphology of the site, as potential drivers for sustainable development. Adopting a holistic multi-scale approach, the PhD research group proposed reintegration of the dispersed cultural heritage assets into a coherent landscape system as key to limit depopulation, restore continuity and enhance territorial identity of the region and particularly of Pustec Municipality.*

Keywords - Historic Landscape, Cultural Heritage, Heritage-Led planning, Geomorphology, Sustainable Development

Introduction

Pustec Municipality is in southeast Albania, bordering with Greece (southeast) and North Macedonia (north and east). All three countries share the two-freshwater tectonic Prespa Lakes. A third lake being Lake Ohrid, is located just thirty kilometers away and is inscribed in the UNESCO World Heritage List. The Great Prespa lake is shared between Albania, Greece and North Macedonia; while the Lesser Prespa Lake between Albania and Greece. The two Prespa lakes, and the mountains surrounding them create a natural paradise rarely encountered elsewhere. The region is an example of the harmonic coexistence of human and nature and it was the first National Park to be designated in 1992 in Albania after the communist regime fall.
Aware of the wider and multidimensional ecological importance of the zone, the three countries jointly established the Prespas Transboundary Park in 2000, the first transboundary protected area in the Balkans. The National Park in Albania comprises both terrestrial and aquatic components (including Maligrad Island) and its boundaries correspond with the watershed of both Prespa lakes. The terrestrial ecosystem is dominated by the mountain massif of Mali i Thatë (Dry Mountain) which extends in North Macedonia with the Galicica Mountain range. The entire Prespa region hosts unique habitats and species that are important from both a European and a global conservation perspective.
The historic and cultural richness of the region is described in many sources (see section 2.1). According to Bunguri et al [1], the earliest

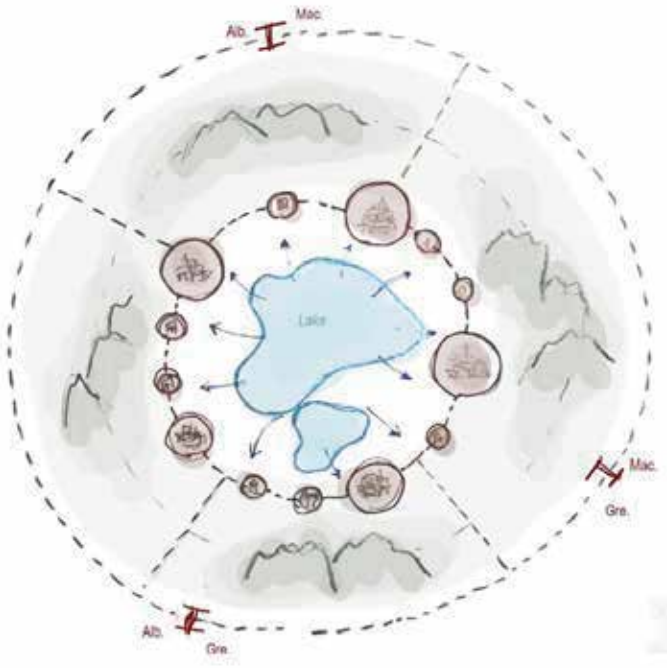


Fig. 1. Strategy. Source/ Authors

archaeological evidence of the presence of human settlements in this region dates back to the Neolithic Age. Subsequently the region hosts significant heritage assets from the Roman, Byzantine and Ottoman periods up to the early 20th century. Sources show that documented human presence emerges around 2nd century BC when Prespa region became part of the Roman Provinces. After a short period as the first seat of Czar Samuel of Bulgaria, the territory was reconquered by the Byzantine in 1018, period when the seat of the Archbishop of Ohrid was established. After the 12th century, the region passed under subsequent rules of the Despot of Epirus, Michael II Angelus and of the Emperor of Nicaea, Michael VIII Palaeologus. New political and social changes happened in 1334, when the Bishopric of Ohrid was included under the Serbian state of Stefan Dushan interrupting its traditional ties with Constantinople. It was conquered by the Ottomans in circa 1386 and the region remained under their rule for 526 years. Current national borders were redrawn in the aftermath of World War I by the Great Powers. This together with the militarization of borders during the communist regime in Albania, significantly diminished the historical cultural interactions between settlements around the lake. Even though this region is today divided between Albania, Greece and North Macedonia, it presents common points in terms of tangible and intangible heritage, which is coherent since, as mentioned in [2], the establishment of national borders dates back only to the 1926. The local populations in each of the three countries naturally include also minority communities from bordering countries.

Many sources refer to the Byzantine hermitages (cave churches) as the most outstanding cultural heritage elements of the region. Caved in steep and hardly accessible rocky shores, they are inseparable from the landscape. Together with archaeological sites, post byzantine churches and several examples of vernacular architecture from 18th – 19th and early 20th century, they compose the built heritage panorama of this region. Even in a reduced form due to shrinking population, traditional practices present since prehistory [3], such as fishing, agriculture, gardening and cattle, still survive in the area.

The natural and cultural richness of the region coexists with multiple territorial, social, and environmental problems. Isolation of the settlements, shrinking, migration and emigration of the population are some of the negative phenomena that Pustec Municipality and the region needs to cope. Cultural heritage assets seem to be dispersed across the territory as isolated points, reflecting the impact of the fragmentation of settlements.

Literature review

Presence of human settlements in the region through history

Many sources such as [3], Bunguri et al [1] etc. attest to the richness of the Prespa region in terms of archaeological evidence that confirm the presence of human settlements since prehistory. The Lake has always been the dominant element to which human life and activity was dependent. The highest number of archaeological sites date back to the Roman times . The settlement choice remains constant throughout the historic periods from prehistory up to Roman times, experiencing a drop in the transition between Roman times to late antiquity. While in prehistoric periods hill tops were preferred for location of walled settlements while using the lowlands for agricultural exploitation, during the antiquity (Hellenistic and Roman times) the interest for settling was transferred extensively to the shores of the lake. These sources refer to the prosperity of the region in terms of settlements, which maintained direct and indirect links with neighboring or even more distant cultural horizons through a variety of productive activities. Even though palafitta settlements have been registered in eastern and northern shores of the Prespas, no palafitta-type-settlements have been registered in the Albanian side which Bunguri et al [1], explains by the presence of elevated relief where people can settle protected from the water.

Cave Churches (Hermitages)

Cave churches are one of the most interesting architectural developments in the history of Christian culture. Part rock, part built, part murals, they display outstanding skills of local master builders and artists. Numerous cave churches have

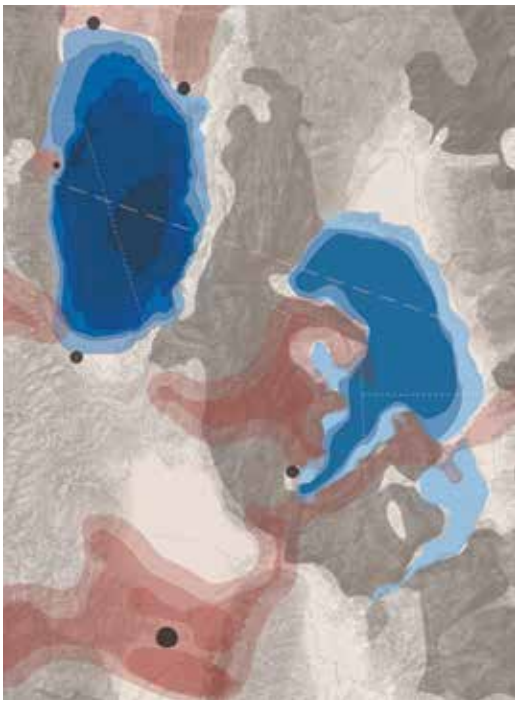


Fig. 2. Comparison of cultural heritage and geological formations in the Regional Level. Source/ Authors

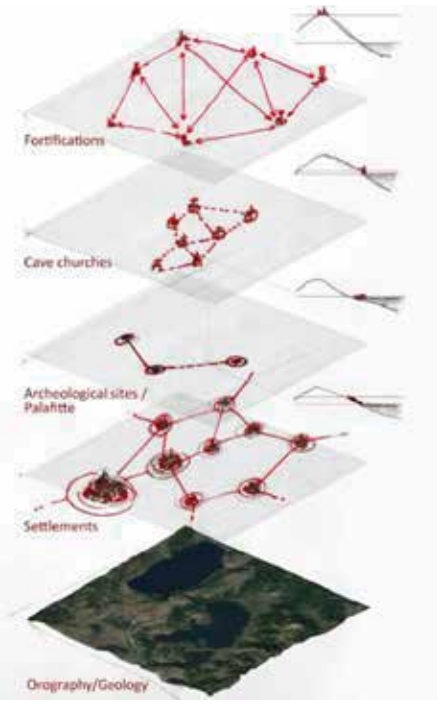


Fig. 3. Diagram showing different typologies of monuments in relation to the orography of the terrain. Source/ Authors

appeared across the Mediterranean, from Southern Italy to France and Egypt. Six churches caved in steep rock formations have been registered on the shores around Prespa Lake. Based on diverse sources (Dhamo [4], Popa [5], Thomo [6], Xhaferaj et al [7], Bushi et al [8], these hermit foundations were built by local nobles. They are in fact a combination of a chapel and a very basic housing opportunity and were built to house hermit monks who retrieved from society to be more in communion with God. Most of them have been built in the Middle Ages, although there are few that date originally back to the 9th century. During the 14th century, under the Bishopric of Ohrid, numerous nobles and monks helped in their painting, confirming the presence of byzantine art in this region. Often, these caves were unreachable, on steep rocky cliffs. When the Balkans came in the late Middle Ages under Ottoman rule and stayed so for five centuries, the cave churches continued to be used by hermits and played an important role for the continuity of the Christian religion in the region.

Being of mostly karstic formations, the region has an abundance of caves and rock shelters, however only one cave prehistoric settlement site and 6 cave churches have been registered, fact which is seen by Bunguri et al [1] as an outcome of the lack of research in this region. The monuments of Prespa are numerous but this research focuses mainly on those situated within Albanian territory, which have been included in the national list of monuments since 1971, but for many reasons, are the least well-known. Management Plan of Prespa National Park in Albania 2014-2024 as well as other studies and projects – have aimed at valorizing and integrating cultural heritage in the management concept and tourist development strategy.

Natural landscape as substratum of the built environment - Geoheritage Concept

[9] state that, in terms of Semperian Criticism, the built environment can be framed as topos, typos and tekton. "Topos refers to the place as the specific geographic, geomorphologic, and cultural context in which architecture is situated. Typos, means the type, as the recurring patterns, forms, or building archetypes that emerge over time within architectural practice. Tekton denotes the builder or craft, referring to the technical and artistic processes of construction. [9, p. 11].

Considering the above, Frampton proposed that the future development of architecture should result from the continuity of the tectonic form, concept which he builds up largely focusing more on the technique, even though he considers all Semperian elements as contributors to it. In terms of this research, it is the topos, in terms of the physical and historical environment that emerges as a powerful and sustainable element influencing the built environment through history.

The PhD research group considered that the interrelation between geomorphology and human presence is very powerful in this area. It might be, by itself, an identifying and permanent element throughout history. Built heritage was investigated in its relationship with the natural landscape and with the geomorphology of the area, which, emerged not only as a substratum that conditioned human settlement and the resulting cultural heritage, but as a natural heritage itself. This consideration of the relation between geomorphology and built environment as a heritage in itself led to the exploration of literature sources on the concepts of Geoheritage concerned with the preservation of Earth Science features. [10] explain that the term "geological heritage" first appeared during the 1st International Symposium of the Conservation of Geological Heritage in Digne, France (1991). It led to the emergence of the concept of "Geoheritage" in the Malvern International Conference (1993). "Geoheritage encompasses features of geology, at all scales that are intrinsically important sites or culturally important sites offering information into the evolution of the Earth; or into the history of science, or that can be used for research, teaching, or reference".

Learning from vernacular architecture

The interest of architects in studying pre-modern cultural expressions and techniques started in the first decade after WWII. Within the broad name "learn from vernacular architecture", it included various views and denominations such as spontaneous architecture , or the most widely

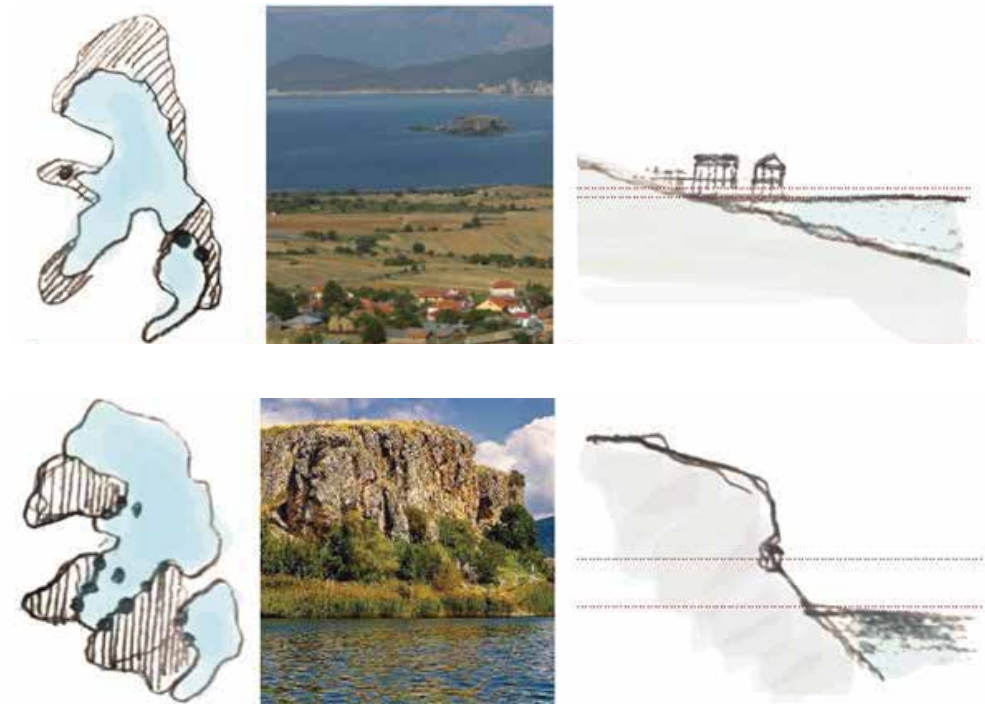


Fig. 4. Typical relationship between geomorphology, lithology and heritage. Source/ Authors

known architecture without architects . These research paths, highlighting the study of the pre-modern architecture, were vividly promoted through powerful exhibitions, which are regarded by [11] as signs of the crisis of modernist authorship approach.

Here it is important to mention also [12] who launches a third typology in addition to two typologies of architecture, the one that promoted a natural basis for design and launched by Laugier, as well as the other that promoted the productive process and the machine as basis for design (Le Corbusier). In the Vidler's 3rd typology, the city is considered as a whole, its past and present revealed in its physical structure. It is in itself and on itself a new typology that need to be analysed and studied as basis for design.

Tools and methodology

"The way a manmade environment has been structured is linked until it is identified with the historical-construction process, which can be perceived in the formation of typology: this is the physical trace of human experience left behind in each cultural context and therefore living cultural material". [9, p. 11]

Considering the millennial interlinkage of natural and cultural heritage in the site, as well as acknowledging interdependence and interplay between different scales, the PhD research group used a holistic and multi-scale approach for the analysis. Such a holistic approach is also seen in the research work of Bunguri et al [1] where they propose an archaeology of the Prespas. Adding to that, the present research focuses on the spatial dimensions of the built heritage and interrelations between nature and culture while proposing a Historic Cultural Landscape of the Prespas. The research aims to analyze elements of different layers of heritage in different scales such as regional scale, settlement scale and architectural scale.

Objectives

Integration and coherence of the whole landscape of the lake, regardless of the national borders, was the Leading Objective of the research. So our strategy as shown in *Figure 1,* is to reunify the heritage through the lake.

The secondary objectives inherent in cultural heritage are:

i. Identification and enhancement of cultural monuments.
ii. Revival of historic links and routes to improve accessibility of isolated monuments, and in particular cave churches.
iii. Preservation of the vernacular architecture, preventing uncontrolled tourism development that may lead to its excessive transformations or even its demolition.
iv. Stimulate the preservation and recovery of tradition and folklore.
v. Keeping alive traditional practices such as agriculture, livestock and fishing, avoiding their transformation in an industrial sense by enhancing handicraft products.
vi. Reverse the trend of depopulation.
vii. Develop functional services for slow experiential tourism.

These secondary objectives align with the leading objective and aim at the sustainable development of the area aimed to encouraging residents to remain, support local activities and enhance them through potential contributions from the tourism sector.

Methodology

The research methodology involves a comprehensive analysis of the Prespa Lake region. As stated above, it seems essential, to adopt a holistic approach, taking into consideration the orographic, geomorphological, geological, climatic, settlement and cultural systems, in order to be able to understand its potentials and limitations [13].

This holistic approach comprises a multi-scale analysis of (1) identification of various typologies of cultural heritage as well as (2) analysis of interrelations between natural and cultural heritage and practices.

1. The identification of cultural heritage assets in the region aimed at grouping them in terms of genre (fortifications, rock cave churches, Neolithic settlements etc...).

2. Special attention was given to the interrelation of historic values of the landscape and its natural beauty, thus defining geological outcrops, caves, submarine karst cavities, hydrology and natural landscape as geoheritage [14]. The relationship between cultural heritage with the geoheritage and the cultural practices guided a closer reading of monuments. Identified groups of monuments were typologically classified according to their geometry, geomorphological location and building materials.

Analysis

The multi-analysis includes three different scales, namely the Regional Scale, the Settlement Scale and the Architectural Scale each leading to specific proposals.

Regional Scale

The Regional scale takes into consideration the area of the three lakes, namely Ohrid lake, Great Prespa and Lesser Prespa lakes, (see Figure 2). Our decision to analyse this region as a whole, comes from the fact that cultural heritage is strongly influenced by the natural landscape and the three lakes constitute one strong natural system in this respect.

A comparison of the geology and the cultural heritage, developed in this level, resulted in a series of patches rather than point elements. The basin is divided geologically in two distinct parts: the Southwestern is characterized by limestones and dolomites, and the northeastern is dominated by granites and gneiss. This division determines the distinctive types of vegetation on each side. (Figure 2).

The diagram in Figure 3, shows how cultural heritage differ according to the orography of the terrain. In fact, starting from the lower level, that is the lake, different layers of cultural heritage can be identified in different elevations, namely the pile dwellings, the cave churches, the settlements, the village churches, and finally the fortifications. The geological and morphological conformation has strongly influenced the development of the Ohrid and Prespa region. On one hand, the presence of mountains around the lake naturally limited contact with the outside world, making obvious the isolation and seclusion of the region. This led to the development of its own distinct socio-cultural character and was an attraction for hermit religious practices in medieval times. On the other hand, the development of the settlements was conditioned not only by orography but also by geological conformation, which in the framework of this research is referred to as geoheritage. The materials found in the region also conditioned building techniques, related to stone wall textures, where readily available, or to earthen (adobe) construction in the flat clay areas [15]. Figure 4 shows the mutual

Fig. 5. Geology and sections. Source/ Authors

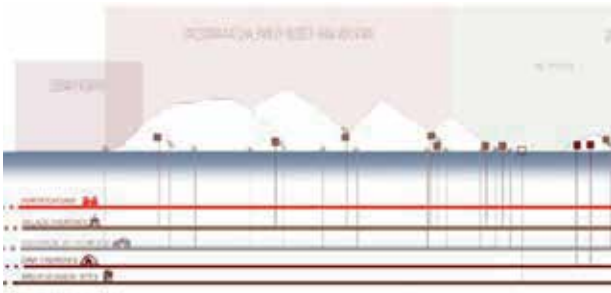


Fig. 7. Prespa Lake panorama. Source/ Authors

relationship between these aspects.

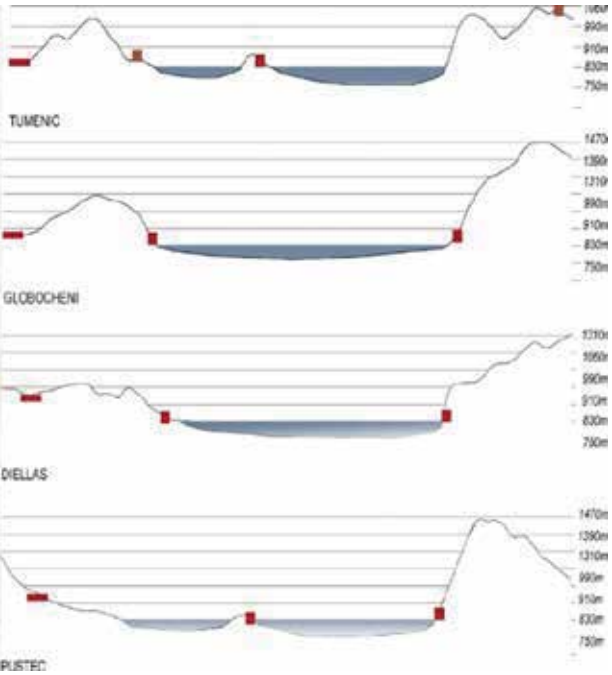
Settlement Scale

region also conditioned building techniques, related to stone wall textures, where readily available, or to Settlement scale analysis focused on the area of Great Prespa Lake alone, overlooked by the Municipality of Pustec. The geology layer analysed at this scale, as seen in Figure 5, is complemented with environmental sections that interrelate the main villages and monuments, thus to offer a reading of typical cultural heritage locations.

In Figure 6, we wanted to represent the lakeside in its entirety enabling a quick vision of the reciprocal relationship between monuments and the geography of the territory. This panorama led us to the strategy explained in Section 3.1. It also inspired us to see the lake as key element connecting the land and the monuments. Figure 7 shows the distribution in plan of main typologies of monuments, namely cave churches, village churches, archaeological sites, fortifications and natural parks .

Architectural Scale

The analysis undertaken in the architectural scale, focuses in two macro divisions of cultural heritage: single and diffuse heritage monuments. The first case includes single monuments of declared



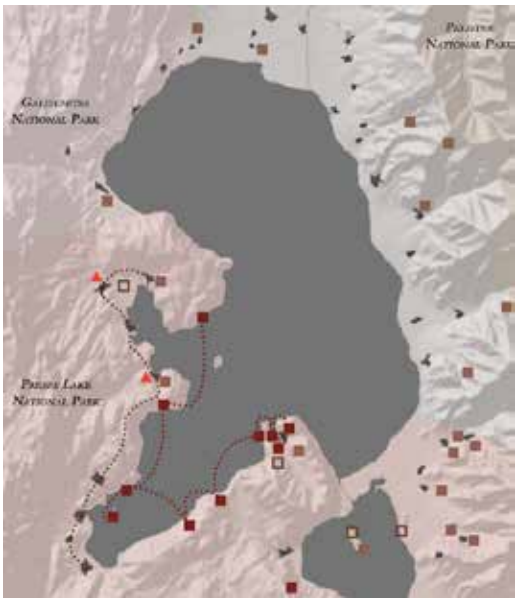
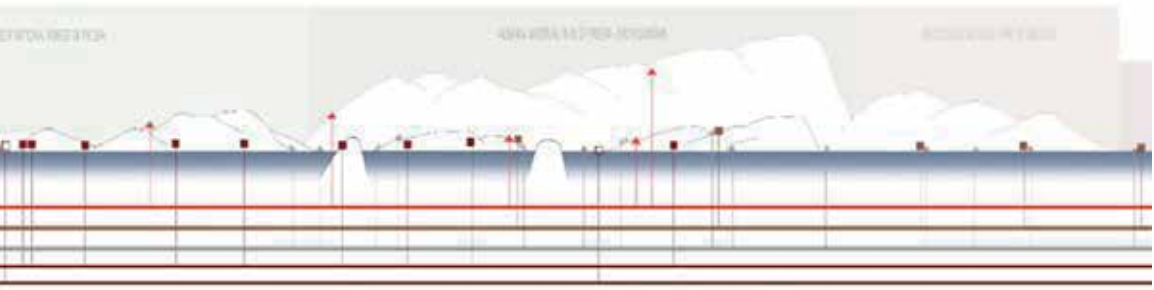


Fig. 6. Distribution of cultural monuments in plan - Settlement scale. Source/ Authors



national interest, (such as cave churches etc.) administered by regional or local authorities. It also includes specific areas of declared interest such as natural/geological monuments, managed by national or transnational authorities.

More challenging was the classification and conservation of diffuse heritage, which was divided into tangible and intangible culture. The tangible culture includes local vernacular houses which reflect Balkan 18th- 19th-century architecture. In most cases they feature (local granite or limestone) stone masonry with visible horizontal timber ties. The walls of the upper storeys with lighter internal partitions, with a timber-frame structure covered by lath or reed and plaster or filled with adobe bricks. In early 20th century buildings, stone walls contain a hidden timber frame, revealed by characteristic metal ties at the corners of the building. For buildings of the same period in the plains, the basic construction material are adobe bricks. The 19th-century houses display an extroverted rural character, while the houses of the early 20th century exhibit a more introverted, urban character. The classification of the vernacular heritage based on building materials used is shown in Figure 9.

Intangible cultural practices are seen to exist in close relation to geoheritage and the conformation of the area. Figure 9 shows also a reading of the presence of traditional practices linked (1) to the lake (fishing), (2) to the land (agriculture, livestock farming, timber harvesting), (3) to the caves (artistic presence in relation to the churches quarries), and (4) the seclusion of the region conditioned by the mountainous reliefs (permanence of traditional customs and traditions).

Conclusions and recommendations

It is essential to note that despite the ancient history of the entire Prespa Lake region, its timeline remains uninterrupted. The lake itself is not merely a monument but a thriving settlement that continues to evolve, therefore, its culture is not just an artifact but an active entity that must be nurtured. The tangible and intangible heritage of the region is deeply intertwined with the natural environment and geoheritage. Despite its historical richness and diversity, cultural heritage remains fragmented, isolated from the local community, and at times lacks maintenance and valorization. Based on the Regional Scale analysis, the area around Prespa Lake being geologically oldest, corresponds to the area that hosts some of the oldest cultural heritage, including prehistoric settlements such as fortifications in the Prespas and the palafitta-settlements including the inner land (Maliq area) and in and around lake Ohrid.

According to our strategy, each of architectural and built heritage key elements should not be viewed in

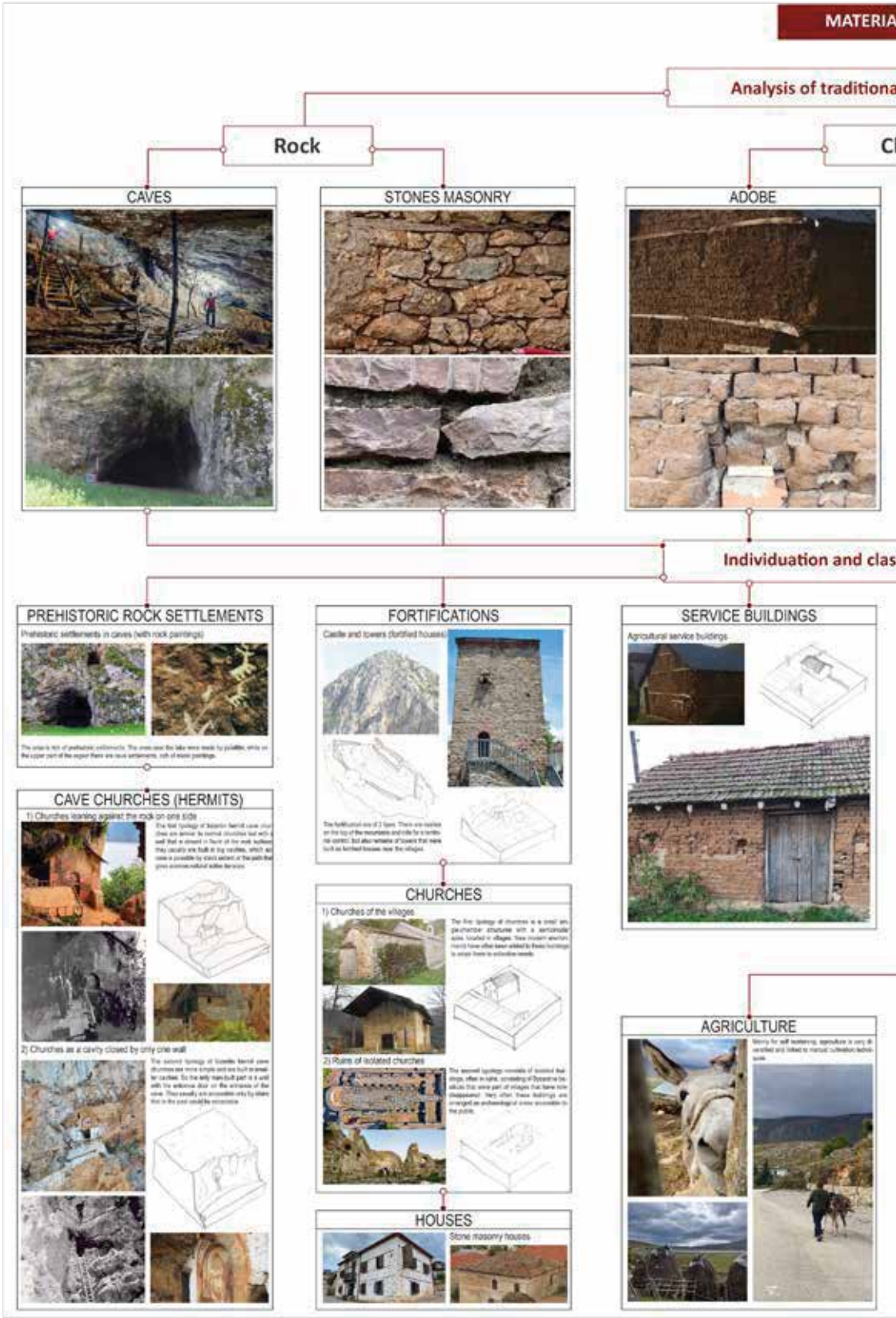
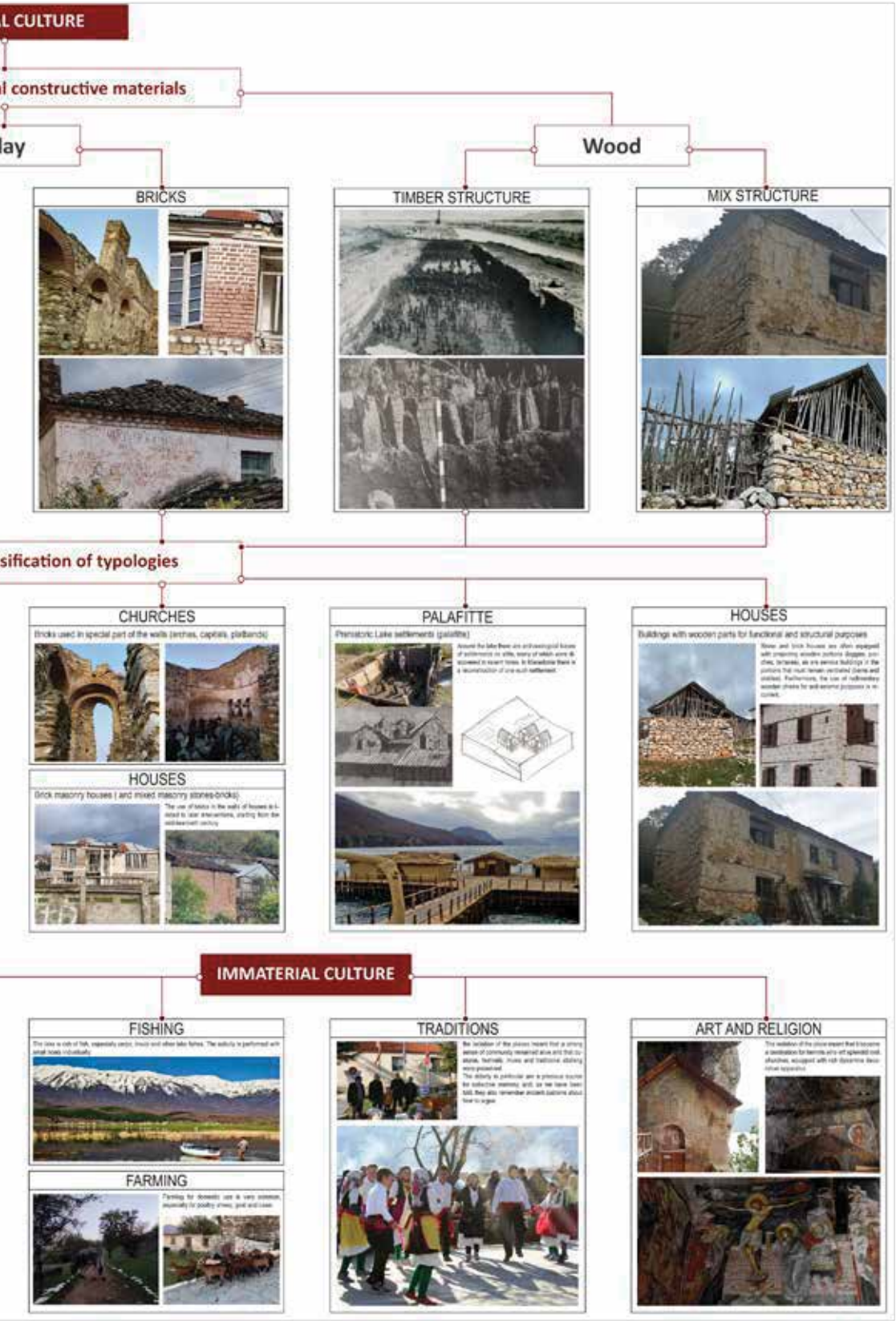


Fig. 8. Material and typological analysis. Source/ Authors


L CULTURE
l constructive materials
lay
Wood
BRICKS
TIMBER STRUCTURE
MIX STRUCTURE
sification of typologies
CHURCHES
(Bricks used in special part of the walls (arches, capitals, platbands))
HOUSES
Brick masonry houses (and mixed masonry stones-bricks)
PALAFITTE
Prehistoric Lake settlements (palafitte)
HOUSES
Buildings with wooden parts for functional and structural purposes
IMMATERIAL CULTURE
FISHING
FARMING
TRADITIONS
ART AND RELIGION

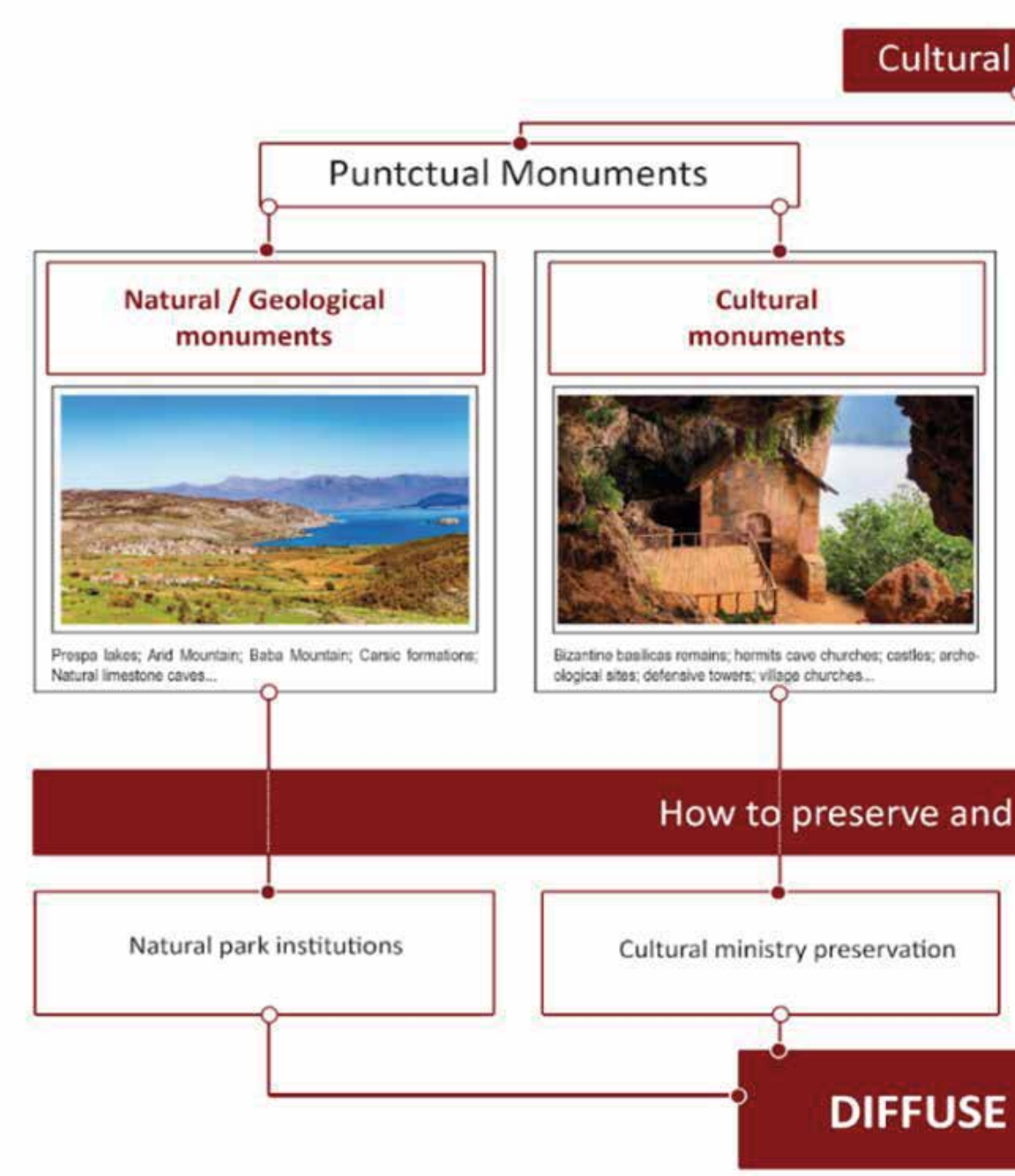


Fig. 9. Diffuse Museum Idea. Source/ Authors


Heritage
Diffuse Heritage
Material culture
Immaterial culture
Historic baic buildings, vernacular buildings, tpical typologies and contructive tecniques...
Traditional activities; local traditions, dances, habits; etnographyc and antropologyc heritage...
valorize the heritage?
Tipological catalogation of the town centers buildings and indications for the recoveri
Local demo-etno-antropological museums / traditonal festival support / cultural centers
MUSEUM

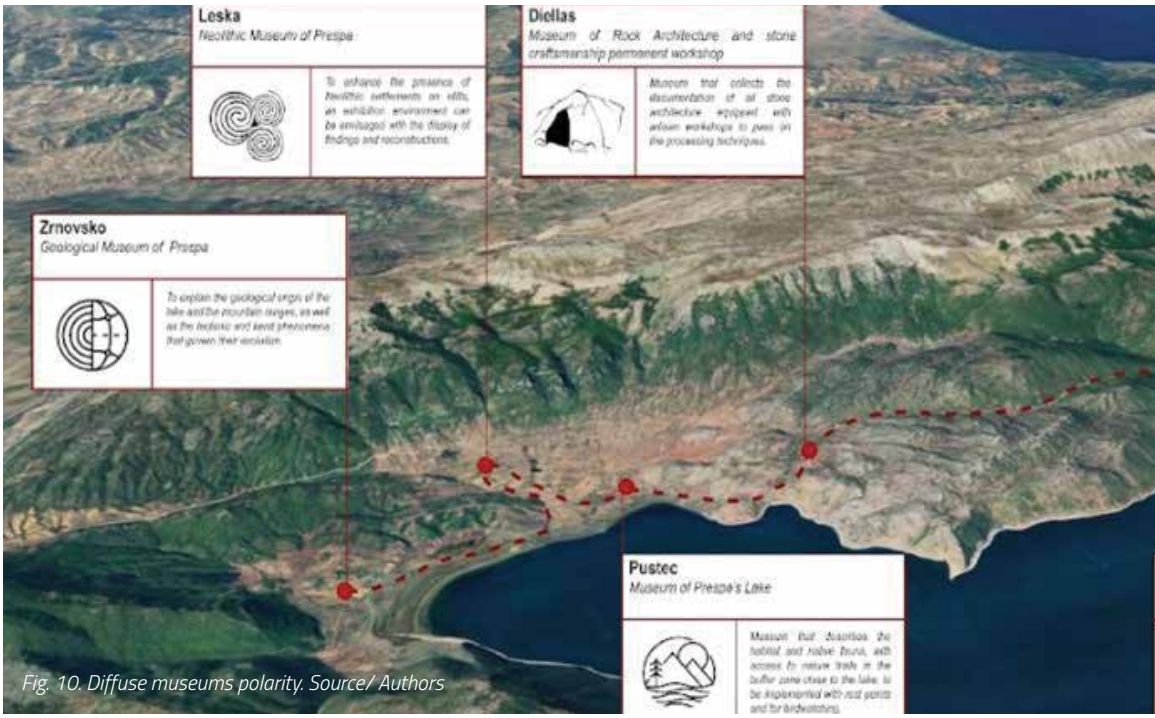


Fig. 10. Diffuse museums polarity. Source/ Authors

isolation but as interconnected parts of a system . The proposed interventions aim to achieve two primary objectives: firstly, to promote experiential tourism by linking emerging cultural sites through small-scale networks and establishing new museum systems to reinforce local identity; secondly, to safeguard tangible and intangible heritage by preserving the typological features of historic vernacular buildings and promoting cultural centers that sustain local traditions and festivals.

As concluded in the Settlement Scale Analysis, local settlements can easily create interconnections with each other, yet their individual identities are not easily perceived. Our proposal at this scale is to connect these towns not only with each other but also with the monuments that are part of the landscape, often isolated. This can be achieved through the concept of a diffuse museum, serving as an acupuncture strategy to extract and emphasize the unique identity and culture of each village while enhancing accessibility to heritage monuments. The concept of a diffuse museum encompasses all aspects of heritage. Cultural heritage should be part of an itinerary that starts from the lake, passes through cave churches, and extends into the surrounding land, connecting villages where the diffuse museum concept will operate, as illustrated in Figure 9.

In the architectural scale, there exists a parallelism between the lake and its monuments. The natural caves are not cultural monuments in themselves, but cultural sites created by human activities such as building and mural painting. Persistent human activity serves as a link between geology and archaeology. To sustain this dynamic landscape, continuous activity is crucial. Thus, we propose first that these monuments and museums could serve as points where artists from various countries can meet and engage in creative processes amidst the natural landscape. It would serve as connection to the spirit of Byzantine painters and hermits who once used these spaces for meditation and creation, ensuring the continuity of this cultural heritage. This second type of the proposed interventions, concern the enhancement of the local characteristics of each settlement and monument, and involves, the creation of museums and cultural centers, in the local villages (See Figure 10). It further involves creating clusters that unite the various emergencies with each other.

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