



CH
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Cultural
Heritage without Borders
ALBANIA

**Making a
Place for
Dialogue:
Results from
the Spaç Prison
Focus Groups**

May-June 2017



Thank you to all of the focus group participants. You have offered your time and thoughts toward the causes of remembrance and human rights.

A very special thanks goes to the three people who led tours of the sites for the focus groups: two former political prisoners—Zenel Drangu and Zivko Petrovic—as well as local resident and caretaker Gjet Gjoni.



The project “Spaç Prison: A Place for Dialogue” and the Spaç Prison focus groups are planned and conducted by:



With funding from:



Financial and organizational support was provided by our partners for the following focus groups:

History teachers



Foreign tourists



University students /
youth council





Contents

Part I: Analysis of the focus groups	4
Background to the project	4
Goal of the focus groups	4
Methodology	5
Limits of the methodolog	6
Primary findings	6
Spaç focus groups on interpretation and education	7
Spaç focus groups on building conservation, adaptive reuse and infrastructure	9
Spaç focus groups on administration, management and strategic approaches	11
Conclusions	12
Part II: Summary of discussions for each focus group	14
1. History teachers	
Summary of the focus group	14
Results of the written questionnaire	16
2. Foreign tourists	
Summary of the focus group	17
Results of the written questionnaire	20
3. Museum professionals	
Summary of the focus group	21
Results of the written questionnaire	24
4. Tour operators	
Summary of the focus group	25
Results of the written questionnaire	28
5. University students (US Embassy Youth Council)	
Summary of the focus group	29
Results of the written questionnaire	31
6. Students of CH management and archaeology	
Summary of the focus group	32
Results of the written questionnaire	35

Part I: Analysis of the focus groups

“Spaç is part of the dialogue between generations.”

*Albanian university student/US Embassy Youth Council
Spaç Focus Group 5, 29 June 2017*

BACKGROUND TO THE PROJECT

For the past several years, Cultural Heritage without Borders–Albania (CHwB-Albania) has been working with Spaç Prison. This former political prison and labor camp in mountainous north-central Albania is notorious for its harsh treatment of political prisoners during the country’s communist regime. Having gained notoriety for the inhuman working conditions of its mine, Spaç was burned into the collective memory of the country through the May 1973 revolt — in which prisoners briefly took control of the prison to demand democracy and human rights. Following the fall of the communist regime, Spaç Prison was closed and fell into decay, though a number of former prisoners have sought to keep its history alive and to preserve the site as a memorial. In 2007, the site was declared a protected ‘monument’ under Albanian law, though no investments were made to conserve or interpret the site.

CHwB-Albania began working with Spaç Prison in 2013-14, through a series of stakeholder workshops titled “Dialogues for Spaç,” funded by the International Coalition of Sites of Conscience and the Government of Sweden. These workshops were designed to jumpstart the process of turning the former prison into a modern ‘site of conscience’ and place for dialogue — a site which recognizes both the suffering and the courage of the former prisoners, while relating to contemporary issues facing Albania today. The “Dialogues for Spaç” series culminated in the production of the “Spaç Action Plan,” which is being followed

by CHwB-Albania to this day.

In 2017, CHwB-Albania conducted two additional initiatives meant to preserve and activate the site: 1) emergency structural interventions to prevent additional deterioration of the buildings; 2) conducting a series of focus group sessions with various target audiences. These sessions are in service of the larger goal of creating a detailed interpretation plan and use concept for the site, while introducing a safer and more systematic itinerary for visitors (see ‘methodology’ below).

GOAL OF THE FOCUS GROUPS

This series of focus groups for Spaç Prison practices a technique that is not used often enough in Albania, as a means of including both potential audiences and key stakeholders in the earliest phases of concept development for Spaç Prison. A number of recent memory-based projects in Albania seem to have been developed in relative isolation, suddenly revealing their finished products to the masses. In order to avoid ‘imposing’ a museum at Spaç, CHwB-Albania built on previous successful engagement with interested professionals to design a series of focus group discussions for the future of Spaç Prison.

The goal for these focus groups was to bring a cross-section of Albanian society face-to-face with the history and current situation of Spaç Prison, and then to learn from them what should be done with the place. These focus groups allowed some of Spaç Prison’s future

audiences to contribute actively towards the site's preservation, as well as raise awareness against the erasure of sites of communist persecution. Specifically, the goals of these focus groups were:

1. Evaluate the guided tour and the itinerary that was followed (quality of information, interaction, safety, interest, etc.).
2. Identify the main visitor needs at the site (various facilities, services, etc.).
3. Gather visitors' priorities, expectations and ideas in terms of the future usage of the site (possible activities, level of restoration, museum, art, etc.).

In the end, the overall aim of the focus groups and this analysis is to answer the questions:

How do people experience Spaç as it stands now? And what do they want see there in the future?

The next step in the process will be to use the results of these focus groups to inform an interpretation plan and use concept for Spaç Prison. At the same time, CHwB-Albania will work to develop a safe and effective base itinerary, in order to enable increased visitation on site. Increasing visitation and, in turn, the number of people who have a valuable experience at Spaç is an essential step toward saving the site.

METHODOLOGY

The six focus groups sessions engaged different audiences at the cross-section of 'interest' and 'influence' when it comes to working with Spaç Prison (see 'Primary Findings' below for list of focus groups). Through the 'Dialogues for Spaç' project and the following Spaç working group meetings, we had had a positive experience integrating stakeholders from many different professional and personal backgrounds, including former political prisoners, heritage

professionals, filmmakers, students, activists, local residents and representatives of local and national government. In order to expand the input into the future of Spaç Prison, we designed the focus groups to engage a cross-section of these stakeholders, as well as ones that had not been engaged previously.

Prior to the start of the activity, participants were asked to sign a consent form (available upon request), indicating that they understood and agreed to participate in the focus group. Those who decided to take part participated in a guided tour of Spaç Prison, which lasted about 1 hour and was led by either a former political prisoner or a local resident. This was followed by a focus group discussion, held at a nearby location.

Part of the experience included filling out a short questionnaire in two parts: the first part before the start of the tour, the second part immediately following the visit. The two parts of the questionnaire were designed to reflect each other, helping to gauge visitors' response to the tour of the site. (See paired before/after questions in the "results of the questionnaire" section of each focus group summary.) The questionnaires quantified the impact of the visit, in terms of personal connection, knowledge gained and the effect of living testimony.

After the visit, participants took part in a focus group session, lasting around an hour and a half. These moderated discussions provided an opportunity for more in-depth feedback. They followed a set discussion guide, which was developed to meet the above goals and varied only slightly from group to group, depending on that group's particular background and professional experience. To ensure the accuracy of the information collected during the discussions, CHwB-Albania made audio recordings of each discussion, with the full knowledge and permission of the participants.

These recordings will be used only for the internal work of CHwB-Albania in analyzing the focus group discussion.

Throughout the process, CHwB-Albania took measures to ensure the confidentiality of the discussion and the anonymity of all participants. To protect participants' identity, CHwB-Albania will not use names, initials or other forms of identification of participants in any report or publication. For this reason, the following summary and findings refer to participants only according to the focus group they participated in.

LIMITS OF THE METHODOLOGY

Several factors limited our ability to create as smooth and comprehensive a study as originally envisioned. These factors give us room to improve the process and engage in further public feedback throughout the development of Spaç Prison as a site of conscience.

The limited funding available for the focus groups affected the results in two ways. First, CHwB-Albania was unable to hire a professional focus group moderator. Moderation of the discussions was done by CHwB-Albania staff. While they lacked professional training in focus group moderation techniques, staff moderators were able to draw on their prior experience leading workshops and trainings. And their deep background knowledge of the site and CHwB-Albania's work with allowed for very focused and relevant discussions, but at the same time provided the temptation for too much staff intervention in the discussion. The second consequence of limited funding was the inability to quiet spaces for the focus group discussions. Consequently, the discussions were held in nearby restaurants and cafes, where ambient noise was at times a distraction, both for the live discussion and for the audio recording.

Until now, CHwB-Albania has conducted six focus group sessions, facing some limits in the profiles of people involved. In most cases (with the notable exception of the history teacher and tour operator groups), the individuals engaged were already a part of CHwB-Albania's contact network. While these people had not been previously consulted on Spaç Prison, they were also not drawn at random from the wider public — meaning that they may have been predisposed toward supporting CHwB-Albania's work with Spaç Prison. As the process of developing Spaç Prison unfolds, future research should engage with the wider public, including a broader array of future users of the site. In addition, as of September 2017, CHwB-Albania has been unable to realize some of the foreseen focus groups with key stakeholder groups, including: local residents, formerly persecuted persons and members of the international diplomatic corps in Albania. This does not mean that these groups will not be consulted; on the contrary, they (particularly the first two) will be essential voices to integrate in the conversation for the future of Spaç – in deeper ways than a focus group discussion.

PRIMARY FINDINGS

Between 6 May and 30 June 2017, CHwB-Albania conducted a total of six focus groups, with 49 participants (33 female, 16 male). These 6 focus groups included:

1. History teachers, 6 May
2. Foreign tourists, 21 May
3. Museum professionals, 21 June
4. Tour operators, 22 June
5. University students (diverse backgrounds) from the US Embassy Youth Council, 29 June
6. University students of cultural heritage management and archaeology, 30 June

Out of all focus group participants, 37 were

Albanian and 12 were foreign. The age breakdown of focus group participants was such that 15 of the participants were age 20-24, meaning that they would have no personal memory of the communist period. Ten (10) participants were age 30-38, meaning that they were very young when the communist regime collapsed in 1992. A further 6 participants were age 41-44 — teenagers when communism ended. And finally, 15 participants were age 50 and above, meaning that they would have been working adults as of the end of the Albanian communist regime.¹

The following overall findings are organized loosely according to the three categories of actions found within the “Spaç Action Plan:” interpretation and education; building conservation, adaptive reuse and infrastructure; and, administration, management and strategic approaches. These categories provide a helpful framework for understanding the different types of work that need to be undertaken at Spaç. And nearly everything said by the focus group participants can fit into one or more of these categories.

Spaç focus groups on interpretation and education

“Even those who always worked for the system... they were not free.”

*Albanian university student in cultural heritage management
Spaç Focus Group 6, 30 June 2017*

During the focus group discussions, interpretation and education was by far the most touched-upon area of conversation. In terms of the different points made by focus group participants, approaches to interpretation and education at Spaç Prison outnumbered the times that participants mentioned either physical conservation or administration/management of the site. This shows where focus group participants’ priorities lie, and it indicates that interpretation and education should be driving the process of developing Spaç Prison as a site of conscience.

At the core of the interpretive and educational approach to Spaç was the **key role of living testimony**, as a way of telling the story of this

site. Given that a live tour was the form of interpretation offered to participants, there is no baseline for comparing with other forms of interpretation. However, the living testimony aspect of the guided tour was very much valued by the participants. Every focus group touched on the impact of having the tour led by someone with a personal connection to the former prison.² In sharing their personal experience, these people presented “the story of suffering (...) that cannot be told in any way other than the first person.”³ This kind of experience touched an emotional chord with the participants, helping them directly feel the impact of what happened at Spaç.

Not only does this direct witness provide ‘added

¹ The ages of three of the focus group participants are unknown.

² This impact was reflected also in the answers to question 10 of the questionnaire, which asked, “How useful for understanding this site is the fact that the visit is led by a former political prisoner?” In response to this question, 43 out of 48 respondents answered “very much.”

³ Focus group with tour operators, 22 June 2017.

value' to the visit; the prevailing feeling from the focus groups was that a guide is essential for understanding the site, particularly given the lack of interpretation present there at the moment. For the group of foreign tourists, the personal connection reinforced the authenticity of the site:

"[It was] remarkable having this man whose father worked at the prison, who has spent his life becoming a witness, giving the tour. He was authentic (...) His life is bearing witness to what his family was involved in, whether by wish or not, during those years."⁴

This group felt that even if the guide had not been a political prisoner at the site, a personal connection (whether based on family or personal experience at Spaç) was important. However, focus groups were divided about how to present the many different personal stories from Spaç. While several focus groups suggested promoting the site and increasing visitation by dedicating space to focus on the famous people imprisoned in Spaç, the focus group with tour operators disagreed with this approach. They wanted to avoid "segregating" famous people from the hundreds of "anonymous and unfortunate" who also suffered in the prison and mines. Regardless of the approach, several focus groups agreed that collecting oral histories is a crucial next step for the Spaç Prison project. As both a research and an interpretation tool, an oral history project ensures that direct witness testimony is available for the site. Today, 25 years after the prison's closure, those who suffered there are beginning to age and pass away, a fact which lends urgency to documenting their stories.

When considering **contemporary interpretive topics** that might make Spaç Prison relevant to visitors today, focus group participants came up with a wide range of ideas. Some touched on the issue of modern slavery or the difficult working conditions of miners today. Others thought that Spaç should be a place to explore perceptions of human rights and equality before the law — questioning the extent to which we enjoy those rights today. Still others suggested that Spaç Prison should explore the idea that the communist period is not 'black and white'. Many times, people's relationship with the former regime does not fall neatly into the category of 'victim' or 'persecutor.' Under such a system, who was really free and who was a prisoner? What was the relationship between power and person and what are the legacies of such power relations today? As one participant noted, "Even those who always worked for the system... they were not free."⁵ Acknowledging the multivalent histories of the communist past opens up the possibility for exploring subaltern histories, such as those related to gender and sexual identity.

For all of the focus groups, the young generation of Albanians was an important target audience, meaning Spaç Prison should be **connected to schools** in several ways. The first is to include lessons about Spaç Prison and similar sites of persecution into the school curriculum. "One way of memorializing is putting relevant visits and information in the curriculum. The part about the dictatorship has been totally left out."⁶ Focus groups with both teachers and students commented that the history of communism in Albania is not taught in schools. Of course, along with introducing Spaç Prison into the curriculum, the second way to reach school-age students is to bring them on a visit to the site.

⁴ Focus group with foreign tourists, 21 May 2017.

⁵ Focus group with university students of cultural heritage management and archaeology, 30 June 2017.

⁶ Focus group with history teachers, 6 May 2017.

These visits would need to focus on the high school level, in order to reach the appropriate age group for such a troubling history. But, as one of the students from the US Embassy Youth Council said, "It is more informational than a visit to the lake with a picnic."⁷

Other important considerations, in terms of interpretation and education at Spaç Prison included:

- Interactivity, but done in a sensitive way: "I don't want it to be commercialized so that people go there and take photos, selfies... this is a total lack of respect."⁸
- Multivocality: Incorporating multiple

different perspectives and voices into the interpretation of the site.

- Well-researched historical detail: The interpretation provided on site should "be built upon the basis of true facts and lived experience and not on the basis of gossip (...) Politics should not enter at all here."⁹ Any interpretation of the site should be sure to include the names of the victims — perhaps a contentious process in its own right, given the complicated nature of the categories 'victim' and 'persecutor'.
- Access: Start thinking from now about disabled people and their access to/on the site.

Spaç focus groups on building conservation, adaptive reuse and infrastructure

"You cannot resurrect a dead organism. You can conserve it, keep it in such a state... In the end, this is the decomposition that has happened to our collective memory these 27 years."

*Albanian tour operator
Spaç Focus Group 4, 22 June 2017*

Several of the discussion questions during the focus group sessions touched upon what to do physically with Spaç Prison's buildings, landscape and infrastructure. In terms of this topic, focus group participants shared their thoughts on the facilities that would be needed for visitors (themselves or others), the infrastructural needs pertaining to access and movement on site, as well as limited restoration in support of better understanding and interpreting the site.

In general, **visitor safety** was the number one concern that should drive the first physical

interventions. In order to provide a safer visiting environment, focus group participants suggested consolidating the buildings, repairing stairs, adding handrails, cleaning the site, fencing off areas in order to better control the flow of tour groups and ensuring access to first aid in case of emergencies. Related to visitor safety were less urgent necessities for visitors, such as on-site toilets and water (given that the closest public toilets are located on the main highway 7km away), as well as a more accessible path to navigate (level walking surfaces, perhaps elevated above the terrain, easier stairs, etc.).

⁷ Focus group with university students (diverse backgrounds) from the US Embassy Youth Council, 29 June 2017.

⁸ Focus group with university students of cultural heritage management and archaeology, 30 June 2017.

⁹ Focus group with history teachers, 6 May 2017.

When considering the **physical conservation** of Spaç Prison's buildings and landscape, participants were not keen to see a full restoration of the prison. Most suggested varying levels of limited, careful restoration, perhaps conducted in stages, which focuses on the most characteristic elements of the prison, particularly the main entrance, the perimeter barbed-wire fencing, watchtowers and cells. These are the things that help people to visualize and understand the site as a prison. "Seen as it is now, it looks like those old factories from the communist time."¹⁰ Others found it more important to conserve the buildings rather than restore them, since the decay of the site is a part of its recent history and tells something about collective memory in post-communist Albania. This perception highlights the connection between conservation and interpretation at the site. Once the most urgent physical needs are met (i.e. emergency stabilization and consolidation), future conservation of Spaç Prison, should focus on enhancing the meaning of the site. "After physically preserving it, you need to continue making it more and more meaningful."¹¹ In several cases, participants also highlighted the need to carefully preserve any authentic elements remaining on site, such as the prisoner's drawings on the walls and the slogans of the Communist Party.

In some cases, focus group participants went into detail about possible the possible **functions**

of various buildings on site. Some felt that parts of the former administrative buildings could be used to support archives or documentation facilities, including storage for any objects found on site. Other suggestions included restoring at least one cell to the way that it was when the prison was operational and using the other spaces of the prisoners for exhibitions. Participants also felt that access to the mine galleries should be preserved, since those were an integral part of the prison complex. There was even a suggestion to open an access road to the graves where former prisoners were buried, in order to raise a memorial there.

Another major point of discussion was **what to do with the road** leading to the site. At the moment, a dirt road stretches the 7 kilometers from the national highway to Spaç Prison. The mining company operating on site has greatly improved the safety and accessibility of this road over the past two years. However, it still lacks pavement and safety features, such as guard rails. During several focus groups, participants debated the merits of paving the road with asphalt or leaving it as is, in order to give people a sense of how difficult it was for prisoners and their families to get to Spaç during the communist period. Others suggested a compromise: paving the road until the prison and then leaving the final stretch from the workers' towers to the entrance gate as is.

¹⁰ Focus group with university students of cultural heritage management and archaeology, 30 June 2017.

¹¹ Focus group with foreign tourists, 21 May 2017.

Spaç focus groups on administration, management and strategic approaches

“We cannot take Spaç and bring it to Tirana. But we must take Tirana and bring it to Spaç.”

*Albanian museum professional
Spaç Focus Group 3, 21 June 2017*

Different focus groups took different approaches to how Spaç Prison should be managed and administered in the future. Some participants focused on staffing needs and priorities, while others suggested how best to promote the site or to connect it to local assets. There was broad agreement that the project **must include local people**, such as teachers from Rrëshen or local residents as guides. In order for the site to be sustainable, it must serve the surrounding community and should also be supported in some fashion by the municipality. The people of Mirdita must be the driving force in maintaining and developing Spaç Prison as a site that is connected with the region, not only something imposed on Mirdita — as the prison was during the communist regime. Reinforcing this connection with the region, Spaç should also be linked to other tourism assets in the surrounding area, in addition to international memory networks. In this way, people realize that Spaç is not the only reason to visit Mirdita, and there is both a greater ‘pull factor’ for the region and more opportunities to promote the site.

Several of the focus groups agreed that Spaç Prison **must be promoted** aggressively both nationally and internationally, as other recent projects have been. People must not be afraid of coming from Tirana to Spaç. They need to realize that, with only an hour and a half drive, “Spaç isn’t far at all from the center.”¹² After

all, the geographical distance from Tirana to Spaç is smaller than the mental distance from Tirana to Spaç. As emphasized by the museum professionals focus group, the story of Spaç loses some of its impact when told away from the site. In order to preserve that authenticity and sense of place, it is not enough to open a museum about Spaç in Tirana. “We cannot take Spaç and bring it to Tirana. But we must take Tirana and bring it to Spaç.”¹³ Some of the foreign tourists believed that it would be better to place a museum for Spaç in a major city, where people could more easily visit. However, others argued that the authentic experience is at the site, which makes the place essential. “People want authenticity. (...) Physical location is a big part of the story.”¹⁴ They felt that if the site were marketed intensively, people would go there, and bringing Albanians to the site will be key to its success in bringing foreign visitors, as well. In order to facilitate easier visitation, Spaç Prison could have set open hours, a guard that can help orient visitors on site, and perhaps a public shuttle that takes visitors between Reps/Rrëshen and Spaç.

Another consideration that would affect visitors at Spaç Prison is the pricing of an entrance fee for the site. Focus group participants acknowledged that the site cannot cover expenses on ticket fees alone, therefore advising that low, accessible pricing would be the best approach, in order to keep price

¹² Focus group with university students (diverse backgrounds) from the US Embassy Youth Council, 29 June 2017.

¹³ Focus group with museum professionals, 21 June 2017.

¹⁴ Focus group with foreign tourists, 21 May 2017

from becoming a barrier. Others felt strongly that there should be no entrance fee at all, saying, "Let's not finance oblivion by asking for payment at the entrance of such places."¹⁵ In any case, Spaç Prison would need to look to other sources of financial support, including the local and national government. For the focus group of museum professionals, efforts to engage public institutions should happen steadily but firmly. "We need to plant in people the seeds of the project."¹⁶

While there was some debate about whether the site should be managed privately or publicly, focus group participants generally agreed that there must be government involvement at some level. However, it will be incredibly important to minimize the interference of politics or, if possible, avoid it entirely. One fear was that the site might be hijacked for temporary political interests.

Regardless of whether the site is public or private, another important management aspect of operating Spaç Prison as a site of conscience is staffing. Who will be the ones making the decisions and running the site? Some focus group participants were keen to have potential staff identified now, people who would manage the site non-politically and were not emotionally connected to its history. "The decision cannot be left to those who were inside, or to those on the other side. It should be another hand, a new generation that has nothing to hide..."¹⁷ Several groups highlighted the importance of the younger generation (those born after 1990) for managing and developing Spaç Prison in a fair way. University students from the US Embassy Youth Council summed it up this way: "Our parents have a lot of complexes with that period (...) They are very subjective because they lived it themselves. They have a lot of emotion, while we are cooler."¹⁸

Conclusions

"...this gives us the strength today, in the moment that rights are being violated, not to stay silent."

*Albanian university student/US Embassy Youth Council
Spaç Focus Group 5, 29 June 2017*

Overall, the findings from the six focus groups touch on many of the most pressing issues facing the site today. Focus group participants provided rich detail in terms of how they thought the site should be interpreted and presented to visitors, emphasizing above all the crucial role of oral history and direct testimony in the process. Participants considered, in a bit less detail, priorities for conservation,

public safety and access. And they suggested administrative approaches to adopt or avoid. However, at the same time, many of Spaç's most pressing development issues were hardly discussed or lacked detail, including where to find funding for the site, what to do about the presence of a mining company at the former prison, how to identify the working 'team' for the site or the benefits and drawbacks of public

¹⁵ Focus group with history teachers, 6 May 2017.

¹⁶ Focus group with museum professionals, 21 June 2017.

¹⁷ Focus group with tour operators, 22 June 2017.

¹⁸ Focus group with university students (diverse backgrounds) from the US Embassy Youth Council, 29 June 2017.

or private management.

In the end, the focus groups were designed to help CHwB-Albania understand what they want to see at Spaç. What is Spaç for? What came out of this discussion is the importance of interpretation and education as a driving force for the site, which informs the physical and administrative approaches. Perhaps most importantly, all of the focus groups saw Spaç as a place for people to learn about and confront Albania's difficult past — a place to work through the traumas and societal complexes that are the legacies of that time. But they also saw Spaç as a place

to look toward the future. Spaç Prison is a site that can and should promote human rights and democracy, addressing contemporary issues in order to serve as a model for how to be a good citizen today. Even in the very harsh conditions of communist Albania, "there were courageous people that took the initiative to come out against that regime because their rights were not being respected. Regardless that they were in those conditions, they still believed and had hope. And this gives us the strength today, in the moment that rights are being violated, not to stay silent."¹⁹ The strength not to stay silent is perhaps the greatest legacy that Spaç can give to society today.



¹⁹ Focus group with university students (diverse backgrounds) from the US Embassy Youth Council, 29 June 2017.



Part II: Summary of discussions for each focus group

N.B. On the following pages, please find a condensed summary of the main discussion points from each of the focus groups. Direct word-for-word quotes from the focus group participants are marked as such (" "). However, the organizers have attempted to reflect the original language of the focus

group participants as closely as possible in all cases, not only in direct quotes. To aid in comprehension, discussion points have been grouped thematically within each focus group; therefore, they do not necessarily proceed chronologically.



Summary of Focus Group 1: History teachers*

When? **6 May 2017**

Who? **13 participants (11 female, 2 male)**

- Pedagogical importance of the visit to Spaç:
 - o Very few teachers know the sites of persecution, imprisonment, internment
 - o The visit completes the theoretical knowledge, concretizing it and allows teachers to give clearer explanations to their students
 - o Strand of debate with yourself, "This place is not part of my culture, so I have a problem calling this place 'cultural heritage.'"
 - o Signs reading "Caution" or "Stop" or "Ruins" that show risk, at the same time that they show the site's abandonment, may be confusing for students.
- The need to adapt school curricula and the need for a place that serves the practices followed in the field of teaching:
 - o Excursions to such sites should certainly be added to the curricula. Such a place makes students understand better: "One way of memorializing is putting relevant visits and information in the curricula. The part about the dictatorship has been totally left out."
 - o One possible function could be as a "teaching lab" with video testimonials gathered from the four corners of the country and with "on-the-spot reflection," as well as meeting with former political prisoners. Possible space for workshops.
 - o A place for events like the National History Teachers' Conference or the seminar with EUROCLIO
 - o Appropriate educational publications and supporting materials for Albanian youth, which, in comparison with foreigners, have little interest [in such sites/history]

*Because of a technical defect with the voice recorder, the reflection on the main points from the focus group with history teachers was done primarily on the basis of notes kept by support staff during the discussion.

- Role of living testimony during the visits
 - The visit with a direct witness is “added value (...) The prevailing feeling is that without a guide, you cannot understand the site.”
 - The visit as a moment of gathering the courage to understand: “I come from a persecuted family (...) here I understand even better what they never told me (...) The silence must be broken (...) I would have liked to have come here earlier because we haven’t even come here as students.”
 - Today it doesn’t anymore give you the impression of a prison.
 - Integrating living testimony as much as possible into the function of the site.
- Concrete steps based on empiricism and pragmatism:
 - Guides that are prepared and specialized (professionals) to work here
 - Creation of a safe itinerary and enclosing the site with a fence
 - Installing toilets, access to water, as well as the presence of mobile phone networks
 - Inclusion of locals, such as for example teachers and specialists from Rrëshen, as well as networking with local tourism assets
 - The interventions must be supported by testimonies, documentation (“the files exist”) and objects that may have been preserved by former prisoners themselves: “To be built upon the basis of true facts and lived experience and not on the basis of gossip (...) Politics should not enter at all here...”
 - Bars, restaurants and other services come on their own in a second phase
 - Replacing the barbed wire as an element that recreates the former atmosphere
 - Opposing visions for how to treat the 7km road: to make it according to contemporary standards for greater safety vs to leave it as it is for an experience as close as possible to that of the prisoners
 - Importance of preparation and intervention in case of health emergencies or accidents, since the environment is difficult
- Possible themes, messages, techniques:
 - To take the opportunity also to speak about the copper industry, which was/is(?) very important for the area
 - Rooms of famous people, to tell their history inside the prison
 - Furnishing one of the rooms to tell about the “everyday life” of this place
 - Don’t overfill it with information and take care not to erase original elements (as in the case of the Site of Witness and Memory in Shkodër). The writing on the walls should be preserved.
 - Installation of interactive panels and complementary elements, like a website
 - Not as many photographs as objects (in comparison with Bunk’Art 1 and 2)
- Aspects of the management of Spaç:
 - Solidarity mechanism: One part of the revenue generated by the site goes to former political prisoners
 - The politics of pricing and guaranteed access for all audiences: “Let’s not finance oblivion by asking for payment at the entrance of such places...”
 - Become part of international memory networks
 - Key role of the municipality that can mobilize every local network quickly and well
 - Search for support from businesses and emigrants

Results of the written questionnaire with history teachers

6 May 2017

13 participants

Before the visit	After the visit
<p>1. How well do you feel you know the history of Spaç? (Choose one.)</p> <p>Not at all 0</p> <p>Very little 0</p> <p>A bit 7</p> <p>Well 3</p> <p>Very well 3</p>	<p>7. How useful was this visit for improving your understanding of the history of Spaç Prison? (Choose one.)</p> <p>Not at all 0</p> <p>Very little 0</p> <p>A bit 0</p> <p>Fairly 2</p> <p>Very much 11</p>
<p>2. Where have you received information about the history of Spaç? (You may choose more than one.)</p> <p>Family 6</p> <p>School 6</p> <p>Media 6</p> <p>I have not received any information. 0</p> <p>Other* 5</p>	<p>10. How useful for understanding this site is the fact that the visit is led by a former political prisoner? (Choose one.)</p> <p>Not at all 0</p> <p>Very little 0</p> <p>A bit 0</p> <p>Fairly 0</p> <p>Very much 13</p>
<p>3. How much do you feel personally connected to Spaç Prison? (Choose one.)</p> <p>Not at all connected 4</p> <p>Very little connected 3</p> <p>A bit connected 2</p> <p>Fairly connected 2</p> <p>Very connected 2</p>	<p>8. How much of an impact did the visit to Spaç Prison have on strengthening your personal connection to the site? (Choose one.)</p> <p>Not at all 0</p> <p>Very little 1</p> <p>A bit 2</p> <p>Fairly 1</p> <p>Very much 9</p>
<p>4. How likely would it be for you to visit Spaç in your free time? (Choose one.)</p> <p>Not at all 3</p> <p>Very unlikely 4</p> <p>Fairly likely 5</p> <p>Very likely 1</p> <p>I don't know 0</p>	<p>9. How likely would it be for you to visit Spaç Prison again with friends or family? (Choose one.)</p> <p>Not at all 0</p> <p>Very unlikely 0</p> <p>Fairly likely 1</p> <p>Very likely 12</p> <p>I don't know 0</p>
<p>5. What do you think should be done today with sites of persecution like Spaç? (Choose one.)</p> <p>Do nothing 0</p> <p>Preserve them 13</p> <p>Destroy them 0</p>	<p>6. What do you think should be done today with sites of persecution like Spaç? (Choose one.)</p> <p>Do nothing 0</p> <p>Preserve them 12</p> <p>Destroy them 1</p>

*Other: Internet (x2); From persecuted individuals participating in trainings that I have taken part in; My family was touched by the former communist system. My uncle was imprisoned in Spaç in 1976.; I took part in a training called "Children of Dictatorship," where a group of students from the Faculty of History made a short film about Spaç Prison.



Summary of Focus Group 2: Foreign tourists

(Fulbright alumni)

When? **21 May 2017**

Who? **11 participants (10 female, 1 male)**

- More depth/layering of information at Spaç:
 - Needs historical context and some kind of comparative analysis: Who were the major thinkers? Why was the prison built here and not somewhere else? What was going on in the world and the rest of the country at the time?
 - Would have liked more background and more statistics, more history... would have added to the personal story
- Physical needs on site:
 - Bathrooms
 - Negotiable stairs, elevated pathway above what is there (accessibility)
 - Bilingual text is very good
 - Need to determine what to reconstruct, according to what would have the most visceral impact — maybe not the kitchen, but the torture cells, yes; the kinds of things that would speak to people; the rooms with 64 people in them...
 - Need to have more material on site. If people are going to go all the way up there, they need to see more.
- The power of real life stories
 - Should ask prisoners to give their stories. Perhaps write them in a remembrance book? Those people are much older and will die soon. (Like the Shoah Project has been collecting the stories of the Holocaust.) The stories of the people who lived there would be very powerful.
 - Need to do an oral history project. Recorded testimony would be a real asset — keep it in an online repository, so that it can be accessible from other places, for other researchers
 - "I really liked our guide the first time. He was a prisoner there for 16 years, and the feeling that you got from him was so much better."
 - "The thing that struck me most was said two years ago (...) His crime was that he wanted to go the United States, and he got as far as Yugoslavia and the Yugoslavs sent him back. And therefore he spent 16 years at Spaç."
 - "The dream was to go to America. The dream was of democracy. The dream for him is to go to America. And I'm thinking about our America right now. And it just blows me away to stand up there and think about America, which we know as our country, while standing in that space."
 - "Remarkable having this man whose father worked at the prison, who has spent his life becoming a witness, giving the tour. He was authentic. It couldn't have existed as a camp without these people, without an infrastructure. That is a part of the history, too. His life is bearing witness to what his family was involved in, whether by wish or

- not wish during those years.”
- o Important for the country to recognize that communism and the communist period is not black-and-white, communist vs. anti-communist. It's more complicated than that.
 - Interpretation ideas:
 - o Any photography that shows what it looked like before it was ruined – but not too much photography — a very few photos that show people there (“It’s a little hard to visualize.”)
 - o A tour that reflects the daily patterns of the prisoners (Eastern State Penitentiary may do this), would enhance people’s ability to understand the harshness
 - o Not a fan of recreating rooms, but a few artifacts from the time — “a few things that can give people that non-verbal, visceral response” — that connect with people on an emotional level ... “What did prisoners wear? What was the cutlery they ate off? What were their meals?”
 - o Site should be open all the time so that people can come see it (not only by pre-arranged visit) — even if it’s only one small area that’s interpreted
 - o Link it into thematic history trails
 - o Needs to be included in the curriculum, perhaps with school trips
 - o Other places have been successful in creating a site that people go to, but in the process, they lost them as sites of remembrance because of the way they did it
 - o The story of the flag and the star is a discreet package that can help interpret the site, especially given the love of Albanians for their flag — playing into patriotism can be a good thing
 - o If we limit the marketing of this place to this place only, it will have limited attraction. But if you make it a symbol of social justice, then you will attract a much wider interest. – “After physically preserving it, you need to continue making it more and more meaningful.”
 - o We may think we live in a post-communism society and that camps don’t exist anymore, but they do. If there is a situation where you can make contemporary connections – then, yes. But be cautious.
 - Is Spaç the right place for a museum?
 - o A museum would be great, but it needs to be in a big city. “Not up there, because people will not go up there.” — others disagreed, feeling that a museum in a big city should be “a stepping stone to the authentic experience” of visiting the site
 - o “People want authenticity.” The authentic experience is at the site. You have to go up to the site. “Physical location is a big part of the story.”
 - o Could place a museum near the highway, to give people an understanding, in a more easily accessible space, giving them the option to go up or not – giving 360-degree virtual tours, as well
 - o First need to determine who the target audience is, and will they go to this site, or will they find it too difficult?
 - o There is a way that the museum in Tirana and the site at Spaç complement each other. Spaç needs to be promoted as a site to visit — “Would we have gone out of our way to go to Auschwitz if we hadn’t known something about Auschwitz from these other museums that are easier for us to get to?”
 - o Need to market intensively, encourage people to make the trek up there — “If the

Albanians go there, your tourists will go there.” — It is a part of Albania’s national identity and a part of the national history; therefore it should be very important for Albanians. It should be for them.

- How visitors feel on site
 - The use of systematic degradation and isolation — it’s all part of the experience of actually going there and experiencing the landscape
 - “I felt the landscape was incredibly powerful, and that the part about people was kind of an understatement by comparison (...) The cruelty of people to each other was already stated by taking people there and keeping them there for 17, 20 years and working in those conditions, clearly very, very dangerous conditions, before you even start torturing them.”
 - “To think that this existed for over 46 years. I mean, I have a lot of background when it comes to the Holocaust. A lot. I’ve studied it intensely (...) And it was heinous, and this is heinous. But the gravity of the fact that it was going on for 46 years where Hitler’s Holocaust was going on for less than 10 years. (...) So this was quite an eye-opener.”
- Mixed reactions about the presence of the mining company
 - “I hate it.”
 - Others didn’t like it either, but saw it pragmatically — “It isn’t something that we want, but people have to feed their families.”
 - The director of the mine is trying to be mindful of the history that they’re sitting next to... they’ve made the roads better... they’re there to help the economy, help the people, give jobs
 - Company should have to give a percentage of its profits for cultural preservation
 - It’s authentic. It was a mine at the time when you’re talking about imagining the prisoners marching over to work. You don’t have to make it up; it’s right there... Less ugly now? — connects to the history of the time; it’s never been a perfect history of mining and the economy in this community
 - Might make people think a bit more consciously about bigger issues



Results of the written questionnaire with foreign tourists

(Fulbright alumni)

21 May 2017

11 participants

Before the visit	After the visit
<p>1. How well do you feel you know the history of Spaç? (Choose one.)</p> <p>Not at all 0</p> <p>Very little 3</p> <p>A bit 6</p> <p>Well 2</p> <p>Very well 0</p>	<p>7. How useful was this visit for improving your understanding of the history of Spaç Prison? (Choose one.)</p> <p>Not at all 0</p> <p>Very little 0</p> <p>A bit 1</p> <p>Fairly 3</p> <p>Very much 7</p>
<p>2. Where have you received information about the history of Spaç? (You may choose more than one.)</p> <p>Family 0</p> <p>School 0</p> <p>Media 0</p> <p>I have not received any information. 0</p> <p>Other* 11</p>	<p>10. How useful for understanding this site is the fact that the visit is led by a former political prisoner? (Choose one.)</p> <p>Not at all 0</p> <p>Very little 0</p> <p>A bit 0</p> <p>Fairly 4</p> <p>Very much 6</p>
<p>3. When you were thinking about a trip to Albania, how important was it for you to learn about the country's communist past during your stay? (Choose one.)</p> <p>Not at all 1</p> <p>Very little 1</p> <p>A bit 2</p> <p>Fairly important 2</p> <p>Very important 5</p>	<p>8. How useful was this visit for giving you an overall understanding of communist Albania? (Choose one.)</p> <p>Not at all 0</p> <p>Very little 1</p> <p>A bit 4</p> <p>Fairly 2</p> <p>Very much 4</p>
<p>4. How likely are you to visit 'difficult' heritage sites like Spaç when you travel abroad? (Choose one.)</p> <p>Not at all 1</p> <p>Very unlikely 1</p> <p>Fairly likely 4</p> <p>Very likely 5</p> <p>I don't know 0</p>	<p>9. How likely is it that you will bring your friends or family to visit "difficult" heritage sites like Spaç in the future? (Choose one.)</p> <p>Not at all 1</p> <p>Very unlikely 3</p> <p>Fairly likely 2</p> <p>Very likely 5</p> <p>I don't know 0</p>
<p>5. What do you think should be done today with sites of persecution like Spaç? (Choose one.)</p> <p>Do nothing 0</p> <p>Preserve them 11</p> <p>Destroy them 0</p>	<p>6. What do you think should be done today with sites of persecution like Spaç? (Choose one.)</p> <p>Do nothing 1</p> <p>Preserve them 10</p> <p>Destroy them 0</p>

*Other: Jonathan Eaton (x4); CHwB (x4); Previous visit (x2); Brandt tourbook (x2); *The Accursed Mountains* book (x1); former prisoner (x1).



Summary of Focus Group 3: Museum professionals

When? **21 June 2017**

Who? **4 participants (1 female, 3 male)**

- Educational/interpretive needs of the site:
 - o Connection between generations
 - o Historical and emotional impact should be apparent. Should get the main points during the itinerary.
 - o Create a group of guides from former prisoners themselves — make the tour more regular, with a precise methodology — give information in a systematic way
 - o Important to put all of the names of people that were imprisoned there — “...put not only numbers, because the people that have been there were not numbers. Those people all had names.”
 - o Currently there is no itinerary without a guide. Where do you start? Where do you go? Where do you end up?
 - o Good to have panels there, but at the moment they have very little information. There should be informative panels with history (1-3 paragraphs).
 - o Very important to make a map (or a model), with numbers, etc. that identifies different parts of the prison. E.g. in Berlin, every museum of memory has a model, which describes a lot about the site. Much information about the daily experience of the prisoners also could be described electronically. Everything should be well done and with historians.
 - o A place for visitors to leave their impressions/memories of Spaç
 - o Educational program
 - o Put 500 aluminum plates or spoons, etc. into a display case... could even recreate them and sell them as souvenirs. “Everyone will want a memento from Spaç.”
- Key themes connected to Spaç Prison:
 - o Attempted escape, propaganda (the reasons that political prisoners were put in prison)
 - o Aspect of re-education, connected with brainwashing; “[In Spaç] we have an extraordinary resistance by the prisoners precisely not to allow brainwashing. And this culminates in '73 in the revolt.”
 - o The idea that prisoners knew much better than people outside of prison what was really going on
 - o Foreign languages – people in prison learned a lot of foreign languages (much more than people outside of prison), including English, Italian, French and others
 - o The importance of the Revolt of Spaç and its causes
 - o Resistance in many forms: physical, against terrible tortures, ne the inhuman working conditions, against ignorance, etc. — for this point, it is very important to gather testimonies (oral and literary)
 - o The intellectual/cultural aspect – “All of the most knowledgeable people, the ones most representative of the intellectual layers [of society] were in prison. They were

not out.” — Due to this, there was culture being generated at Spaç. “Spaç reveals/represents our national identity.” ... “Perhaps someone entered prison for an ordinary crime, but left prison with new knowledge.”

- Connection to the landscape:
 - “In that place, better to be in prison.” (in reference to the harshness of the landscape)
- Importance of living testimony:
 - Very valuable for the visit to be led by a former prisoner. It makes the experience more alive, more emotional. Very important that besides informational panels, there should be a person that gives the full experience.
 - Important to hear also the personal histories of the former prisoners that are guiding, not only about the history of the prison
 - Important to have interviews with people who have been there
 - Main persons should be identified, in order to create an archive for the histories of the prisoners
- Recommended physical interventions on site:
 - Visits at this stage don’t give you the impression of a prison. Restoration can happen in stages, starting with barbed wire, watchtowers, doors — this give immediate impact, creating a kind of contact with the site.
 - Stairs and garbage collection should be taken care of
 - Most important details are the doors/gates and part of the perimeter; with watchtowers; without any kind of beautification
 - Reconstruct very delicately, in order not to lose the identity
 - Very important to have a sign on the road saying that this prison is considered the most infamous in Albania
 - 2-3 prisoners’ cells furnished, to see how they were (bunkbeds, hay mattresses, etc.), because when you see them, it gives you another feeling.
 - Well-asphalted road (but at the same time, there is the question of ‘beautifying’ the site if we make a good road)
 - The mining company shouldn’t be there, but “After 8 years, they will leave; Spaç will remain.” — Should take advantage of whatever physical upgrades the company can offer.
 - Must definitely be a small storage for objects found at the prison
 - Surrounding villages should return the original barbed wire to Spaç
 - A library about the crimes of Enver Hoxha and with all of the works of the prisoners
 - Reconstruct a small kitchen where it was
 - All of the writings on the walls of the rooms need to be preserved. As well as the slogans on the exterior.
 - Access to the mine galleries needs to be preserved as an integral part of the prison
 - Later stage: rebuild the army outpost, along with the three barbed-wire perimeters
 - Need to know how the command, sigurimi, etc. functioned
- Practical considerations for establishing a museum at Spaç:
 - “We cannot take Spaç and bring it to Tirana. But we must take Tirana and bring it to Spaç.” — Tirana has a lot there (Bunk’Art, House of Leaves, etc.); “I do not believe that all of the evil of Albania can be read/learned there.” – Spaç is something else entirely. It’s more symbolic. “We don’t make Spaç [museum] in the name of Spaç. We

- make Spaç in the name of the others.”
- o Guaranteed to become one of the most visited sites in Albania because even in its current condition, 4-5,000 people come to Spaç
 - o Need for government support — at the level that there was for House of Leaves
 - » Not in agreement that the government already has this work in hand. “We need to plant in people the seeds of the project.”
 - o In order to get finances, need to write a draft project idea that includes the minimum costs to turn Spaç into a museum — give it to the government, to donors — then make an international competition for the museum, in order to draw the attention of the government
 - o Who is the target group? What will the strategy be? Who will support it? — No museum can completely cover their expenses with entrance tickets
 - o At the moment that we create a museum in Spaç, we need to have a campaign to gather objects that people have at home.
 - o The most necessary steps: 1) Cleaning; 2) Perimeter/fencing; 3) Gathering of materials; 4) Starting up an education/promotional program
 - o Individual staff that will work at Spaç Prison should be identified starting even now, in cooperation with the Ministry of Culture
 - o Should open a special Web portal in the name of Spaç, not in the name of an association, that gives information about Spaç.
 - o Municipality of Mirdita is one possibility for managing the site



Results of the written questionnaire with museum professionals

21 June 2017 4 participants

Before the visit	After the visit
<p>1. How well do you feel you know the history of Spaç? (Choose one.)</p> <p>Not at all 0</p> <p>Very little 0</p> <p>A bit 3</p> <p>Well 1</p> <p>Very well 0</p>	<p>7. How useful was this visit for improving your understanding of the history of Spaç Prison? (Choose one.)</p> <p>Not at all 0</p> <p>Very little 0</p> <p>A bit 1</p> <p>Fairly 1</p> <p>Very much 2</p>
<p>2. Where have you received information about the history of Spaç? (You may choose more than one.)</p> <p>Family 1</p> <p>School 0</p> <p>Media 1</p> <p>I have not received any information. 0</p> <p>Other* 4</p>	<p>10. How useful for understanding this site is the fact that the visit is led by a former political prisoner? (Choose one.)</p> <p>Not at all 0</p> <p>Very little 0</p> <p>A bit 1</p> <p>Fairly 0</p> <p>Very much 3</p>
<p>3. How much do you feel personally connected to Spaç Prison? (Choose one.)</p> <p>Not at all connected 0</p> <p>Very little connected 2</p> <p>A bit connected 1</p> <p>Fairly connected 0</p> <p>Very connected 1</p>	<p>8. How much of an impact did the visit to Spaç Prison have on strengthening your personal connection to the site? (Choose one.)</p> <p>Not at all 0</p> <p>Very little 0</p> <p>A bit 1</p> <p>Fairly 2</p> <p>Very much 1</p>
<p>4. How likely would it be for you to visit Spaç in your free time? (Choose one.)</p> <p>Not at all 0</p> <p>Very unlikely 1</p> <p>Fairly likely 2</p> <p>Very likely 1</p> <p>I don't know 0</p>	<p>9. How likely would it be for you to visit Spaç Prison again with friends or family? (Choose one.)</p> <p>Not at all 0</p> <p>Very unlikely 0</p> <p>Fairly likely 0</p> <p>Very likely 4</p> <p>I don't know 0</p>
<p>5. What do you think should be done today with sites of persecution like Spaç? (Choose one.)</p> <p>Do nothing 0</p> <p>Preserve them 4</p> <p>Destroy them 0</p>	<p>6. What do you think should be done today with sites of persecution like Spaç? (Choose one.)</p> <p>Do nothing 0</p> <p>Preserve them 4</p> <p>Destroy them 0</p>

*Other: From friends of the family imprisoned in Spaç; The profession; I worked there in 1978-79; From friends like Ali Oseku, M. Velo and other writers.



Summary of Focus Group 4: Tour operators

When? **22 June 2017**

Who? **4 participants (4 male)**

- Psychological elements that should be taken into consideration when working with Spaç:
 - The geographical distance from Tirana to Spaç is smaller than the mental distance from Tirana to Spaç.
 - The need to experience such a place for oneself in order to understand the world of persecution: "When I saw the room, I understood how 54 people could have lived in such a small place, because when Zenel told me, I had difficulty understanding."
 - The need for sites that offer opportunities for interaction with visitors: "Today, the museums that we have are boring."
 - The debate is still subjective: "...Subjectivity should be avoided: people are emotionally burdened...all parties... There should be a third party, a bit cooler from the emotional point of view, that judges more correctly."
 - Who should decide on the nature of the museum? "The decision cannot be left to those who were inside, or to those on the other side. It should be another hand, a new generation that has nothing to hide... with the necessary distance/coolness. (...) the truth comes in all forms."
- Inclusion of witnesses who are still living:
 - Documentation of living testimonies, as long as there are still living witnesses
 - Witnesses (former political prisoners) can serve as mentors to the young guides so that they can express (a bit) of the emotion that characterizes suffering and persecution. Naturally, the full/authentic emotion can be conveyed only by those that have direct ties to Spaç, primarily the political prisoners.
 - Interpretation of the site should be supported by two pillars: "Factual" forms (numbers, documented testimonial evidence) mixed with "complementary" forms, such as stories from "someone that brings the thing to life"
- Landscape and surrounding social, economic and cultural context:
 - Important to think about the link between Spaç and surrounding tourism assets. Should first serve the surrounding community. Both are vital conditions for sustainable tourism.
 - Local residents are also a key resource because they have accumulated a lot of material over the years.
 - The presence of the mine and the changes that it has made to the landscape makes the visitor uncomfortable because it is a place for reflection and respect for suffering.
 - Trend of increasing tourists for this segment of tourism. This makes the connection with tour operators very necessary.
- Concrete steps based on empiricism and pragmatism:
 - The experience consists of a combination of key moments: it starts with the itinerary that follows the visitor from his/her starting point (Shkodër, Tiranë, Prizren...), to join them on site with a local resident and with a narrator that tells "the story of suffering

- (...) that cannot be told in any way other than first person.”
- o Audio guides for cases when the group doesn't have a guide
 - o Different interventions, based on historical characteristics of various elements:
 - » The kiosk where goods used to be sold can serve as a sales point for souvenirs, souvenirs with a meaning (not a “mish-mash”) such as for example barbed wire
 - » Spaces that used to be for prison/mine staff to serve as archive or for on-site documentation
 - » Spaces of the prisoners to serve as exhibitions
 - o Light, but exact, use of ‘digitals’ and not static panels. Use of smartphone applications for younger age groups.
 - o Use the machinery of marketing that was used to promote the Bunk'Arts, House of Leaves, inside and outside the country... through tour operators, the media, institutions. Specialized promotion through opinion-makers, like Lonely Planet, The Guardian, BBC, NYT... “People know about Bunk'Art before they come.”
 - o Need for networking Spaç as an institution with other similar institutions elsewhere
 - o Not to overload the site with unnecessary elements that do not belong. “The site, as it is, conveys to you that entire history... not by adding other elements that would make it messy/cluttered... Putting only real (factual) elements and good promotion are enough.”
 - o Avoid “segregating” famous people from the hundreds of “anonymous and unfortunate” that have been there and have also suffered the consequences... The cause cannot be personified and some interventions could make it look that way.
 - Safety on the visit is the primary concern:
 - o Safety on the stairways is needed (repair and placing of handrails)
 - o Equipping the upper floors with elements that can protect against falls; or close them off entirely and allow access only on the first floor (temporarily)
 - o Sense of the visit to the dormitories: to have visitors enter from one side and exit from the other in order to manage the flow of groups, which leads to reduced risk
 - o Careful cleaning of the ruins, as well as orientation and precautionary signage (which are the areas that can be visited and which are not) so that visitors have all the necessary information concerning risk
 - o Placing a fence that secures the perimeter of the prison and the visit, in order to avoid people going everywhere and potentially causing conflicts or incidents
 - o All of the concerns expressed are amplified by the difficulty of keeping tourist groups under control.
 - Interventions should not be invasive (“Disneyland”), but focused on orientation and supporting the story:
 - o One room should be made as it was before in order to help visitors understand.
 - o As well as the cafeteria, library, isolation cells and offices of the administration/officers, in order to see the differences in conditions and to multiply the possible points of view.
 - o Need for access to water and toilets
 - o Through architecture/restoration people come to understand the extremity of situations in Spaç
 - o More necessary to conserve what remains than to restore: “You cannot resurrect a

dead organism. You can conserve it, keep it in such a state... In the end, this is the decomposition that has happened to our collective memory these 27 years."

- Need for a memorial element:
 - Placing a plaque with the names of all the prisoners
 - Need for a date that marks the day of victims of persecution (could be a week or a month, such as May)
 - Putting a visit to Spaç in the school curricula
- The final 7km segment of the road before Spaç should be considered important: the treatment of the road as a part of the whole concept can be interpreted in various ways:
 - To be rebuilt, fulfilling all of today's safety standards;
 - To be left as is but add safety elements, as well as protection against rain
 - The road could also remain 'spartan' up to a point, in order to favor one type of adventure tour (using 4x4s).

Other interesting quotes

- "Today, if we take an 18-year-old, and tell him that Zenel was 20 years in prison because he wanted to leave [the country], when he (the 18-year-old) today moves to Europe without a visa...he will think "What is this guy saying?"
- "We as a society are avoiding the horror (...) that happened. It's reality... why would you ignore it?"
- "That place is a generator of art, literature, suffering, love, hypocrisy, espionage, rottenness... all of this should be told there."



Results of the written questionnaire with tour operators

22 June 2017 4 participants

Before the visit	After the visit
<p>1. How well do you feel you know the history of Spaç? (Choose one.)</p> <p>Not at all 0</p> <p>Very little 3</p> <p>A bit 1</p> <p>Well 0</p> <p>Very well 0</p>	<p>7. How useful was this visit for improving your understanding of the history of Spaç Prison? (Choose one.)</p> <p>Not at all 0</p> <p>Very little 0</p> <p>A bit 0</p> <p>Fairly 2</p> <p>Very much 2</p>
<p>2. Where have you received information about the history of Spaç? (You may choose more than one.)</p> <p>Family 0</p> <p>School 0</p> <p>Media 2</p> <p>I have not received any information. 0</p> <p>Other* 2</p>	<p>10. How useful for understanding this site is the fact that the visit is led by a former political prisoner? (Choose one.)</p> <p>Not at all 0</p> <p>Very little 0</p> <p>A bit 0</p> <p>Fairly 0</p> <p>Very much 4</p>
<p>3. How much do you feel personally connected to Spaç Prison? (Choose one.)</p> <p>Not at all connected 2</p> <p>Very little connected 1</p> <p>A bit connected 1</p> <p>Fairly connected 0</p> <p>Very connected 0</p>	<p>8. How much of an impact did the visit to Spaç Prison have on strengthening your personal connection to the site? (Choose one.)</p> <p>Not at all 0</p> <p>Very little 0</p> <p>A bit 2</p> <p>Fairly 2</p> <p>Very much 0</p>
<p>4. How likely would it be for you to visit Spaç in your free time? (Choose one.)</p> <p>Not at all 0</p> <p>Very unlikely 2</p> <p>Fairly likely 0</p> <p>Very likely 2</p> <p>I don't know 0</p>	<p>9. How likely would it be for you to visit Spaç Prison again with friends or family? (Choose one.)</p> <p>Not at all 0</p> <p>Very unlikely 0</p> <p>Fairly likely 0</p> <p>Very likely 3</p> <p>I don't know 1</p>
<p>5. What do you think should be done today with sites of persecution like Spaç? (Choose one.)</p> <p>Do nothing 0</p> <p>Preserve them 4</p> <p>Destroy them 0</p>	<p>6. What do you think should be done today with sites of persecution like Spaç? (Choose one.)</p> <p>Do nothing 0</p> <p>Preserve them 4</p> <p>Destroy them 0</p>

*Other: People; Those who are knowledgeable.



Summary of Focus Group 5: US Embassy Youth Council (university students)

When? **29 June 2017**

Who? **10 participants (6 female, 4 male)**

- Interpretation/conservation needs on site:
 - Something needs to be done about the writings inside the rooms. They should be documented. – Placing furniture in the rooms, to create an idea of how it was
 - Good to have the personal stories of former prisoners, especially at the cells
 - Several rooms that show different situations (themes); in one room, drawings of all the maltreatment that happened
 - The slogans are very interesting
 - More information about the function of the buildings
 - A brochure that visitors can bring with them and read from time to time back at home — could also be in the form of an app, a good way to draw foreign tourists
 - Photos and/or names of all the people that suffered there
 - Photos of how the prison was
 - A book with the stories of all the prisoners
 - An explanation about the people that died and were buried there — a kind of identification-memorial
 - Until now, Bunk'Art 1/2 and House of Leaves are very clear and nicely done. They are very tangible. It would be good for Spaç to be like that.
 - Need to learn more about the categories of prisoners — have to understand better the differences in their conditions
- Facilities and physical interventions needed:
 - Infrastructure, particularly a paved road and safer stairs
 - Partial restoration, but not a lot and not so that it transforms the site; keep whatever remains as it is, preserve it
 - Restoration primarily for safety reasons; visitor safety is a big concern
 - Build a road to access the site of the graves of the political prisoners who died at the prison
- Considerations for promotion and access to the site:
 - Good to establish public transportation, something organized; one of the greatest difficulties is how to get there
 - School excursions; “it is more informational than a visit to the lake with a picnic” — Communism is hardly touched upon in school. History lessons stop at the history of King Zog or the agrarian reforms... “This period of history is not considered.”
 - Make a documentary, in order to get people more familiar with the site
 - Include Spaç in tourist guidebooks; promote it; organize tours with different agencies
 - Dedicated open hours, during which there would be someone there, an office
 - To be a guard there that also can engage with visitors and orient them

- o Information about Spaç could be placed at the National History Museum and other places with a relevant theme, which can serve as an advertisement to visit Spaç
- o "Spaç isn't far at all from the center." ... you could visit the house of Enver Hoxha and Spaç within the same day
- The young generation offers a new take on Spaç / communist history and how it relates to today:
 - o "Our parents have a lot of complexes with that period (...) They are very subjective because they lived it themselves. They have a lot of emotion, while we are cooler." — This is why it's almost in ruins, because they have a lot of complexes. For the same reason, they have destroyed the Pyramid... Because they say that it's connected with Enver Hoxha.
 - o Still important to collect the stories of the older generation.
 - o What can the young generation do to remove this complex? "We want know the history."
 - o "Spaç is part of the dialogue between generations."
 - o Should be a place to focus on: the 'unpunishability' of the people that were there; modern slavery; people's perceptions of human rights; the idea that people today are equal before the law (and to question how much we have those things in our society today); "It's very late, but better late than never."
 - o Why are we in the condition that we are today?" – because of the consequences of what happened at that time. The difficult economic situation, etc. ... This social, economic, cultural backwardness, in terms of mentality, has come from the communist legacy. — Perhaps because of this former history, "People are still afraid of confronting the state." This fear is something that may be passed down from generation to generation.
 - o Violations of human rights happened at that time in a very harsh and open way, but there are things that still continue today in a different way. We should say to people, 'If your rights are violated, you have to say something and defend your rights.'
 - o Even in very harsh conditions, "there were courageous people that took the initiative to come out against that regime because their rights were not being respected. Regardless that they were in those conditions, they still believed and had hope. And this gives us the strength today, in the moment that rights are being violated, not to stay silent." — we can take this as an example today



Results of the written questionnaire with US Embassy

Youth Council (uni. students) 29 June 2017 10 participants

Before the visit	After the visit
<p>1. How well do you feel you know the history of Spaç? (Choose one.)</p> <p>Not at all 2</p> <p>Very little 2</p> <p>A bit 2</p> <p>Well 4</p> <p>Very well 0</p>	<p>7. How useful was this visit for improving your understanding of the history of Spaç Prison? (Choose one.)</p> <p>Not at all 0</p> <p>Very little 0</p> <p>A bit 0</p> <p>Fairly 0</p> <p>Very much 10</p>
<p>2. Where have you received information about the history of Spaç? (You may choose more than one.)</p> <p>Family 3</p> <p>School 3</p> <p>Media 8</p> <p>I have not received any information. 0</p> <p>Other* 1</p>	<p>10. How useful for understanding this site is the fact that the visit is led by a former political prisoner? (Choose one.)</p> <p>Not at all 0</p> <p>Very little 0</p> <p>A bit 0</p> <p>Fairly 0</p> <p>Very much 10</p>
<p>3. How much do you feel personally connected to Spaç Prison? (Choose one.)</p> <p>Not at all connected 5</p> <p>Very little connected 5</p> <p>A bit connected 0</p> <p>Fairly connected 0</p> <p>Very connected 0</p>	<p>8. How much of an impact did the visit to Spaç Prison have on strengthening your personal connection to the site? (Choose one.)</p> <p>Not at all 0</p> <p>Very little 0</p> <p>A bit 0</p> <p>Fairly 5</p> <p>Very much 5</p>
<p>4. How likely would it be for you to visit Spaç in your free time? (Choose one.)</p> <p>Not at all 3</p> <p>Very unlikely 3</p> <p>Fairly likely 2</p> <p>Very likely 2</p> <p>I don't know 0</p>	<p>9. How likely would it be for you to visit Spaç Prison again with friends or family? (Choose one.)</p> <p>Not at all 0</p> <p>Very unlikely 1</p> <p>Fairly likely 3</p> <p>Very likely 6</p> <p>I don't know 0</p>
<p>5. What do you think should be done today with sites of persecution like Spaç? (Choose one.)</p> <p>Do nothing 0</p> <p>Preserve them 10</p> <p>Destroy them 0</p>	<p>6. What do you think should be done today with sites of persecution like Spaç? (Choose one.)</p> <p>Do nothing 0</p> <p>Preserve them 10</p> <p>Destroy them 0</p>

*Other: People; Those who are knowledgeable.



Summary of Focus Group 6: Students of cultural heritage management and archaeology

When? **30 June 2017**

Who? **7 participants (5 female, 2 male)**

- Importance of narrative from/visit with former political prisoners in Spaç:
 - Information directly from someone that has been in Spaç is necessary, complementing existing information
 - The existing panels help with understanding. Also, the subjective thoughts of the guide... their interweaving is effective. Every personal story is new information.
 - "When he was giving us the tour, I was surprised by his calmness. His emotional state seemed very calm (...) the serenity with which he told the events was enviable..." This is contrary to other personalities of the Spaç world that we see more often in the media (voices of the small, the marginalized).
 - The story in first person and being neutral aids reflection, "and you really feel the impact of what happened to these people inside here." It also creates the possibility for other people to tell their histories (multiple voices).
 - "Spontaneity, he said what came to his mind (...) makes you come a bit closer to his story, to feel more friendly with him."
- Feelings, atmosphere:
 - Today, in other museum sites from the communist time, the 'trendy' spirit prevails, where you go and take photos with old things. "Spaç should be completely the opposite case from the past that you enjoy with a photo, but it should give you that feeling... that you come out a bit shaken (...) He that comes here comes to experience drama (...)"
 - Not all the atmosphere should be gloomy, but should combine different emotional registers "so that not all the experience is in the form of trauma"
- Practical interventions:
 - Safety is first, consolidation of the buildings, recreation of some spaces in order to give an idea of what was there... "if we return it to how it was... I don't see any benefit..."
 - Recreation of some of the spaces – as well as situations where the visitor is subjected to one of these "dehumanizing" processes, such as surveillance. "Seen as it is now, it looks like those old factories from the communist time (...)"
 - Recreation of the entrances and barbed wire... to recreate the experience of that time. "At least those born after the '90s – and have not seen such places in Albanian films, but with what they have seen from foreign films – they can create an idea about how this country was."
 - Recreation of the yard where the prisoners went outside because "that hour of air was synonymous with freedom for them"
 - Addition of some orientation signage in order to understand where the prison starts

- o and ends, the clear direction of the visit, etc.
 - o The rooms, dorms with 50 other people in a room, where a comparison can be made between conditions at that time and today
 - o Conveniences, such as toilets
 - o Paving the road for ease of visitation/access. In the current condition, one can go even with a small car. Also possible for the visitor to get a bit of the feeling of the past and how the prisoners used to go there... for this purpose, a small segment of the road could be left as is near the entrance...
- 'Cross-cutting' elements that should be part of the narrative:
 - o Harshness of the place where Spaç is located.
 - o The element of omnipresent surveillance (whether in the characteristics of the buildings or towards the people themselves)
 - o Trying to create an individual feeling for the visitor, either by presenting the subject in a very direct way or by helping the visitor understand through subtleties and wise solutions.
 - o To tell how those people lived? What they wore? What they were fed, etc...
 - o Furnishings, objects, items, with which the former prison could be equipped:
 - » Gathering them from former prisoners, who are found today in all of Albania
 - » Furnishings that were in the prison at that time, not just as decoration: "I do not want it to be commercialized so that people go there and take photos, selfies... this is a total lack of respect."
 - o Different levels of information for those that want to go deeper or those that consume information only in the moment
- Interaction:
 - o A museum is the best function. If it's a museum, it's also educational. Start with visits from high schoolers, not immediately from children (for whom the history may be a bit heavy...)
 - o Place a panel where visitors express what they feel after the visit
 - o Highlight art that these prisoners made during their time in prison (for example, listening to songs that they made... not necessarily original but those that tell what happened)
 - o Acting troupes that act out specific moments, to evoke the feeling or interpret specific moments from real life inside the prison
 - o Ideal place for alternative concerts (punk, rock) because the feeling of revolution among Albanian youth is tepid
 - o Events for freedom of speech, democracy, for the "irony" of what this prison once represented.
- Inclusion and experimentation:
 - o To think even now about disabled people (such as panels that also have Braille)
 - o May try to address the stories of famous figures at first, in order to get immediate public impact
 - o Artistic installations, for example, about the perimeter and means of escape. One installation idea with clothes on barbed wire...
 - o Enriching the experience by playing with the senses: light effects, sounds (such as installing a siren)

- o The objects that will be there should have an explanation, a well-defined narrative...
- o Be careful with the commercial side, because this is not a place just to sell tickets... Public or private management of it also causes a lot of debate. To be managed by Mirdita Municipality, in order to serve as a strong lever for tourism, for increasing revenues.
- o Minimize the interference of politics or avoid it entirely. Don't use the site for temporary interests.
- o Combination of the museum and the natural elements surrounding it (connection with the context) – "museum not only there inside but also around"
- o Creation of a solidarity fund from the possible profits of Spaç that goes toward educating youth about these issues.
- Themes:
 - o Contemporary themes of mines/miners that continue to work in scandalous working conditions
 - o Not only speak about Spaç, but also about other prisons of that time
 - o Speak also about the guards as those who were 'in the middle'. Their history should be told, the history of everyone, not only of the prisoners. Who was really free and how was a prisoner? "Even those who always worked for the system, they were not free (...)"
 - o Issues of sexuality and gender identity during and after communism
 - o Power and the person: the use of power by whoever has it in hand
 - o Leave room in the concept also for the period of decay from the '90s to now. "(...) the total rejection that makes a society bad... instead of facing it, [society] chooses the easier road, which is forgetting (...)"



Results of the written questionnaire with students of

heritage mgmt / archaeology

30 June 2017

7 participants

Before the visit	After the visit
<p>1. How well do you feel you know the history of Spaç? (Choose one.)</p> <p>Not at all 1</p> <p>Very little 2</p> <p>A bit 4</p> <p>Well 0</p> <p>Very well 0</p>	<p>7. How useful was this visit for improving your understanding of the history of Spaç Prison? (Choose one.)</p> <p>Not at all 0</p> <p>Very little 0</p> <p>A bit 0</p> <p>Fairly 4</p> <p>Very much 3</p>
<p>2. Where have you received information about the history of Spaç? (You may choose more than one.)</p> <p>Family 3</p> <p>School 0</p> <p>Media 4</p> <p>I have not received any information. 1</p> <p>Other* 0</p>	<p>10. How useful for understanding this site is the fact that the visit is led by a former political prisoner? (Choose one.)</p> <p>Not at all 0</p> <p>Very little 0</p> <p>A bit 0</p> <p>Fairly 0</p> <p>Very much 7</p>
<p>3. How much do you feel personally connected to Spaç Prison? (Choose one.)</p> <p>Not at all connected 4</p> <p>Very little connected 1</p> <p>A bit connected 2</p> <p>Fairly connected 0</p> <p>Very connected 0</p>	<p>8. How much of an impact did the visit to Spaç Prison have on strengthening your personal connection to the site? (Choose one.)</p> <p>Not at all 0</p> <p>Very little 1</p> <p>A bit 2</p> <p>Fairly 3</p> <p>Very much 1</p>
<p>4. How likely would it be for you to visit Spaç in your free time? (Choose one.)</p> <p>Not at all 2</p> <p>Very unlikely 1</p> <p>Fairly likely 1</p> <p>Very likely 2</p> <p>I don't know 1</p>	<p>9. How likely would it be for you to visit Spaç Prison again with friends or family? (Choose one.)</p> <p>Not at all 0</p> <p>Very unlikely 0</p> <p>Fairly likely 0</p> <p>Very likely 5</p> <p>I don't know 2</p>
<p>5. What do you think should be done today with sites of persecution like Spaç? (Choose one.)</p> <p>Do nothing 0</p> <p>Preserve them 7</p> <p>Destroy them 0</p>	<p>6. What do you think should be done today with sites of persecution like Spaç? (Choose one.)</p> <p>Do nothing 0</p> <p>Preserve them 7</p> <p>Destroy them 0</p>

End of report.