



## Research Article

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# Unveiling the Subterranean Heritage: A Case Study of the Underground City of Kukës, Albania

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## Abstract

This paper investigates the viability of conserving and repurposing Kukës' underground city, which was built as a system of civil defence tunnels during the communist era in Albania. Beneath contemporary Kukës, the underground complex, which houses administrative offices and hospitals, is an important but underutilized historical and architectural asset. This study assesses the architectural elements, historical value, and present state of the tunnels using an extensive methodology that includes expert interviews, public consultations, on-site inspections, and archival research. Results highlight the site's dual significance as a historical landmark and a possible center for innovation and tourism.

The research offers strategic proposals for reviving the tunnels to strengthen the local economy, maintain cultural identity, and increase tourist attraction, drawing on foreign case studies. By promoting the inclusion of Kukës' underground city in larger regional development projects and considering both community goals and pragmatic concerns, the article adds to the current conversations in urban planning and cultural preservation.

Sustaining and repurposing Kukës' underground city has various benefits, including enhanced cultural tourism and economic resurgence that encourage sustainable growth, the paper points out. Still, challenges like deteriorating infrastructure, security concerns, and accessibility issues must be overcome. Urban planners and politicians can apply the research's practical implications by using it to develop a model for cultural preservation that aligns with modern social and economic goals.

A sense of shared identity and legacy among the local community's members is fostered by the initiative, which has significant social implications as well. The study has some drawbacks, including the need for significant funding and the potential for opposition from groups who do not recognize the advantages of these kinds of initiatives. To summarise, this research highlights the potential of adaptive reuse to bolster the sustainability and resilience of urban

ecosystems by offering useful guidance and strategies that may be used to comparable initiatives worldwide.

**Keywords:** Subterranean constructions, Bunkerization, Revitalization, Adaptive reuse, Resilience.

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