The role of ex-industrial sites in the new territorial city of the Adriatic-Balkan area. The case of Durana.
The role of ex-industrial sites in the new territorial city of the Adriatic-Balkan area. The case of *Durana*¹.

Sokol Huta
## Table of Contents

### First Part
**Urban Development of Tirana**

### Chapter One
**Pre – Industrial Tirana**

1. The Byzantine city ........................................ 13
2. The Ottoman city ........................................ 18
3. The re - birth of Tirana .................................... 24
4. The development of Albanian bazars .................. 28
5. The Colonial city .......................................... 31
6. The Communist city ....................................... 37

### Chapter two
**Post – Industrial Tirana**

7. Satellite towns ........................................... 55
8. First sprawl. The fall of the Wall ...................... 61
9. Second sprawl. The events of 1997 ...................... 64
10. Third sprawl. The economic boom ..................... 67
11. Durana, the territorial city ............................. 72
## Second Part

The Birth of Durana

### Chapter Three

From Under – Urbanization to Fast Sprawl

1. The Sovietization of South - East Europe. 89
2. A Modified Christaller’s Theory. 96
4. Is Durana real? 126

### Chapter four

Durana’s Features

5. The solid - empty spaces relationship 141
6. Local food and energy production 145
7. Urban elements 147

### Chapter five

Strategic plans

8. Rethinking public space 159
9. The infrastructural system 167
10. Agricultural production 174

Is Durana still a Mediterranean city ? 211

Bibliography 219
Introduction

The city and its suburbs, traditionally distinct from each-other, are now forming new forms, like megalopolis, territorial city, city regions, or diffused cities. The more processes of urbanization begin to operate in a territory, and the more the city’s expansion becomes a complex phenomena, the more the relationship between different parts of the city is articulated and intertwined with memory and traces.

[After two centuries during which the management of the territory had known as the only recipe the Tabula rasa, is thus traced a conception which considers the territory no longer as an almost abstract operating field, but as the result of a long and slow layering that is necessary to know to be able to intervene The territory, as overhead of traces and past readings, is more like a palimpsest.] (Corboz, 1983).

The territory, though its definition remains vague, constitutes the unit of measurement and the horizon of human phenomena, the reading of which will aim to identify the traces still present of these disappeared territorial processes.

The subject of the study is the new Balkan city that is being born because of the extension of Tirana, the Albanian capital city, toward the Adriatic Sea, until joining Durres, the biggest port-city of the country. Tirana’s expansion toward Durres is the clear demonstration of the character of this new city, that we can call Durana, which acquires a territorial dimension strongly related to the Mediterranean Sea. And this common thread of the research, its Mediterranean character, assumes a quality of actuality while thinking of the what has been said by Matvejevic; “Europe was conceived over the Mediterranean” (Matvejevic, 1991), or that, according to Hegel; “The European States are really European only when they project themselves onto the Sea” (Catucci, 2006).

The re-discovery of this topic has brought back the attention of scholars on the role of the Mediterranean not only as a “Solid Sea” (Catucci, 2006) with economic potential but with a strong political role in the resolution of the European crisis. This means that urban areas, their role and the network of connections, assume today a different nature from the past. Durana, the new territorial city, is the outcome of a fast urban growth that Albania experienced after the fall of the socialist regime in 1992, which lays upon the socialist footprints,
exploiting the infrastructure of the industrial systems, dismissed after the regime fell down. The industrial settlements in Tirana were thought as satellite cities, built outside of the urban core, and connected to it by radial axis.

Now they can be considered part of the urban core because the extension of the actual city has been more than tripled. After the collapse of communism, Albania experienced a developing country model (Bideleux & Jeffries, 1998), which materialized in uncontrolled urbanization guided by free market trends, and formed the metropolitan area that hosts almost one third of the entire population of the Country.

Tirana’s palimpsest - which has its first human traces in Paleolithic times (Frasheri, 2004), decayed after Illyrians and Romans, revived during the Ottomans (Shkodra, 1994), and also was subject to important urban interventions at the beginning of the twentieth century (Adami, 1983) (Shenjatari, 2007) under Western influences (Austrian and Italian), when its first urban plans were drafted (Aliaj, et al., 2003) (Giusti, 2006) – came across an essential transformation when the city got industrialized. In fact, its industrialization didn’t only change the dimension of the capital city during the socialist regime, but laid the foundation for the city of today.

This historical development has given birth to something new in the South-East European city, which is common across the Balkans, synthesizable in the Albanian culture, which can basically be defined as an entwinement, yet more a synthesis than a mosaic, of; Byzantine – Mediterranean cultures, with Mitteleuropean – Ex-Soviet ones.

However, after the fall of the Wall, between Albania and the other ex-socialist Balkan countries, a substantial difference can be noticed as;

> [With the withdrawal of the national-communist myths and symbols, Albanians found themselves in a severe identity crises. For good or for bad, the lack of strong historical roots and the heavy abuse of the nationalist ideology by the communist, strongly influenced Albanians not to have the same experience as other Balkan countries such as Serbia or Croatia, or even the Albanians of Kosovo. If we can speak of the myth dominating the post-communist period, it is the myth of the West.] (Lubonja, 2002).

The creation of the myth of the West is also related to nature of the Albanian regime, which was the most extreme compared to those of other Eastern countries, which had opened to broad cultural, economic and political cooperation with the Western world way many years before 1990. Thus Albania experienced the passage from the centralized economic system to the Western free market economy without a cushion phase, but opening up abruptly.

Consequently, Tirana expanded in a very different way compared to other capital cities of the region. This quality has been transferred in the alteration of the territory, in the shaping of urban settlements and social models as well.

The research will be articulated in two parts; an historical critical reconstruction and a planning approach. Little studies have been done about Tirana’s urban development and few historical maps, aerial photographs, reliable statistics, or any sort of data that helps to reconstruct its urbanization, can be found about it. Thus,
historical reconstruction is *obligatory and propaedeutic* to highlight the character of the city. The time-lapse that goes from the city’s Paleolithic times to today, the first part of the research, will be subdivided in two chapters; *pre* and *post-industrial* Tirana, because of the great impact industrialization have had in the structure of the city, changing totally the way of living the city and the way of using public spaces. Before industrialization the city was developed within a *continuous* limit, which much or less divided urban from rural areas, and the urban area was gathered around a central sum of elements, (the bazar, the mosque, the Inn), which was also the crossroad of regional commercial routes. Instead, the construction of industrial satellite towns (following Soviet models) made this limit discontinuous, forming new self-sufficient satellite towns linked to the historical nucleus.

The research will focus onto two different but interrelated scales of development: *regional* and *urban*. These two scales cannot be considered separately because the city’s development is influenced by the whole organism to which it belongs; on the one hand, any change at the regional level directly affects the city; and on the other hand, the development of the city itself gives positive feedback to the whole region. Thus, historical analyses of the political, cultural and economical role and position of the *axis* Tirana-Durres, within the Region of South-East Europe, is needed, in order to make a point of the potential role this area has for the future of the Region.

The territorial city will be interpreted as composed of territorial systems, such as; ex-industrial areas, environmental, archaeological, infrastructural, and these systems correspond to the structure of the traces of this new urban form. The understanding of its palimpsest brings to a better interpretation of the cultural influences onto the city, those physically deleted and those who still exist. Any of these systems will be analyzed separately for their role, their scale, their relationship with the urban settlements, and a great attention will be given to the places where the multidimensional consciousness of its inhabitants relies - public space – and where the identitary character of the *new Mediterranean city* is expressed.

The study of the relation of three ex-industrial areas with the urban dimension will be sustained by *in loco* observation and bibliographical findings. These observations will be more specific in the case of three selected ex-industrial sites of Tirana because a planning approach will be pointed out, which will result in strategic guidelines.

However, the attitude of my research is oriented toward constructive interpretation of the “*rule*” rather than the identification / repetition of a socio-spatial “*model*”, for the addressing of the urban development of Tirana versus a *people-friendly city* which gives the maximum of importance to the public space as the principal machine able to start a regenerative process overall urban fabric.

The general *modus operandi* of the research that the 10 international architectural studios made for *Gran(d) Paris*, the initiative launched by French Ex-President Nicolas Sarkozy for “*a new global plan for the Paris metropolitan region*”, is also very interesting and will be considered as an avant-garde mode of studying contemporary metropolitan regions.

Today an urban area that is capable enough to sustain regional fluxes is needed, and the new urban settlement will have to deal with regional forces, and it will have to assume the role of the *Western Gate* of the Balkans in order to develop. Thus, the objective of the study is to define the generative principles of the city of Tirana, related to those of Durana, and to understand the dynamics of the buildup environment and
of public spaces, pointing to a new way of its planning approach. The systemic city - made of systems that cooperate, intersect, overlap and interchange - is the skeleton of the territorial city that embraces all nearby urban settlements, because the role the new city has to play within a regional context is different from before. Because of the capacity good public spaces have to guarantee city’s appropriation from citizens, the attention given to persons (significantly indicated with the expression “people-oriented approach to city planning” by Jan Gehl (Gehl, 2010)) is therefore intended for creating suitable spaces for the performance of everyday activities.

In order to make possible a triggering of a positive process that aims to enhance the quality of the system of public spaces, so the improvement of the public city, the system of former industrial areas in Tirana will be employed, thinking of them as focal points where to start this process of construction of the identity of the new territorial city, starting a domino effect of regenerative processes overall public life. Due to many issues Tirana has to confront with, these areas constitute a gold mine for the triggering of a sustainable regenerating process of the whole city, stimulating the creation of a new system of; safe, accessible, adaptable, flexible, livable, attractive, healthy and smart public spaces, intertwined with other territorial systems.

notes

1 - The name “Durana” was used for the first time in “Tirana Metropolis”, a study published in 2004 by Joachim Declerck, Elia Zenghelis, Pier Vittorio Aureli, Berlage Institute. According to their proposal; [Durana is a tool to think of the region of Durres and Tirana as one city. It is the proposal to anticipate the future development of the area and to take decisions before it is too late. Durana is both realistic and utopian, it defines a very optimistic final scenario and it describes the very basic moves necessary to activate it.] (Declerck et al. 2004). The name of Durana has now become part of the language of the scholars that study the development of the area.

2 - The following research is the outcome of a five year study on the subject, one year of master degree thesis and four years of doctoral thesis. In loco observations have been very important especially in the case of Tirana, as statistics and analysis of the status of fact are very limited or unreliable. The research have proceeded by analyzing the built from photographic and video material accompanied by conversations with local architects, planners, historians and municipal employees, here to be mentioned; Gjergji Papavasili, Koço Kaskaviqi, Jozef Zuallaert, Dorina Pojani, Giulia Maci, Adelina Greca, Elda Maci, Genc Selenica, Marco Sardella and Rossana Atena (of Atena Studio).

The research has been strengthened with multimedia and multidisciplinary archives, historical maps and photographs, plans, drawings, films, legal documents and newspapers. The focusing on spatial variables, and also on cultural, political, and economic characteristics, has permitted to examine and analyze the transition and the transformation in time, and in different sectors of the city, through a series of maps, diagrams, projections, operations of aerial archeology, modeling and other study techniques.

The inspection of brownfield sites has been made with the help of various analyzes of the surrounding areas, such as; quality of public spaces, plazas and sidewalks; percentage of public, semi-public, semi private and private spaces; analysis of public and private transport; quality of pedestrian and cycling pathways, not only from the physical point of view but also in terms of perception; social activities in public spaces; quality of street furniture and services offered; connection with the rest of city, etc. The major difficulties were found while searching for historical studies about the original elements, its development in time and the character of the Albanian city. Consequently, a great part of the work has been made to reconstruct the historical development of Tirana since the first human settlements in paleolithic times, until today.

While developing the research the author has continuously shared parts of it with other scholars in international congresses, symposiums and conferences, such as; REAL CORP, 18th International Conference on Urban Planning and Regional Development in the Information Society, May 2013, Rome (Italy); MOBALB Conference, 1st Conference on urban mobility management in Albania, October 2012, Shkodër (Albania); 48th International ISOCARP Congress - Fast Forward: Planning in a (hyper) dynamic urban context, September 2012, Perm (Russia); ISUP - International Symposium on Urban Planning, “Smart City & Urban Renewal”, August 2012, Taipei city (Taiwan); 1-ICAUD, 1st International Conference on Architecture and Urban Design, 1-ICAUD, April 2012, Tirana (Albania).
First Part
Urban Development of Tirana
Chapter One
Pre – Industrial Tirana

1. The Byzantine city

The area of Tirana has been populated since Paleolithic times (ten to thirty thousand years ago), as its suggested by tools found inside the “Shpella e Pellumbave” (Pellumbi Cave) and near Dajt Mount’s quarry (its precincts are some of the earliest regions in Albania to be inhabited), and according to archaeological findings, Tirana was founded around year zero and it was an important urban center but it was suddenly abandoned due to barbaric invasions (Frasheri, 2004).

It re-started a real urban life only after the construction of a bazaar, a mosque and a Turkish Bath in 1614, as before that year it wasn’t very developed. In fact, Marin Barleti referred to Tirana as a small village (Shkodra, 1984).

Relying on archaeological findings, the capital city was an important urban center after the Roman invasion of Illyria, and it existed until the barbaric invasions of the V-VI century, when it got abandoned. About this, in 1973, the Albanian scholar, Zija Shkodra wrote:

[The land where today lays the capital city, maintain important footprints]
of an inhabited area from a long time that seems to go back in time until the first period of the Roman invasion. The treasures found of drahma (Illyrian coin) and Roman denars of the years around year zero, fragments and materials from the ceramic works, antic graves and the remains of a very rich mosaic of a Palaeochristian church that seems to have had the name of Shen Gjon Pagezori (Shengjinit), reinforce even more the beliefs that during the Roman invasion, this inhabited area, was for sure a very important city compared to other internal Roman centers. But, as it seems, this city got hit bad during the barbaric invasions in V-VI centuries, bringing to the abandon of the city, which was forgotten for many centuries after that and never mentioned, if not in the form of a toponym strongly connected with its field, which goes changing from the III century (Theranda, Tyrkan, Tyran etc.) and until the XV century, when it was for the first time called like today.] (Shkodra, 1973, p. 290).

But why got re-born Tirana? Albanian territories have a privileged geographical position within the region of South-East Europe, as they are the land in-between from where antique commercial routes passed through to go from the Adriatic to Black Sea. Antique Albanian cities (Theranda, Dyrrachium, Apollonia, Avlona, Shkodra tc.) have been mostly founded along commercial routes or in intersections. The reasons of Tirana’s development can be traced in the reinforcement of the role of an important interregional connection, named Rruga e Arberit (Arberi Route). This route is known as the Durres - Fusha e Arberit – Mat - Diber route. It passed through the Arber’s State territories (Shenjatari, 2007), that we know included Mirdita, Mat, Cermenike, Tomadhe, Bende, Tirana, Kruja, Elbasan and two coastal pieces on both sides of Durres.

This route is known to be active since the first century but it had its full utility
only with the reinforcement of the Arber’s State. Two antique documents: the first one at the beginning of the XIII century, where Dhimitri – The Great Prince of Arber guaranty safety of travelers when passing through his territories; the second one of 1429, signed by Gjon Kastrioti and his sons, including the future national hero, Gjergj Kastrioti, demonstrate that this route has been used very much during that period. Rruga e Arberit gained maior importance in the Middle Ages because of the Republic of Venice’s interests to trade with Eastern Adriatic territories. They used to renovate it time after time bulding protecting walls and bridges in venetian style (Adami, 1983). Arberi route passed near Petralba Castle, in Gur i Bardhe, connecting it with the Castles of Stelushi, of Steigrad, of Petrela and that of Kruja. It begin in Durres, passing through Tirana’s Field, in Shkallet e Tujanit, Pazari i Urës në Klos and through Qafë Buall – Bulqizë – Vau i Drinit– Dibër – Shkup. This route was operative until 1923, when an automobile street, connecting Kruje and Burrel (not passing through the Skenderbe Mountain Range but encircling them to the north and turning back south) was constructed. After 1922, when Tirana started to grow, King Zog (the King of Albania) named the section of the “Rruga e Arberit” that started from the center of Tirana toward East, “Rruga e Dibres” (because it brought travelers to Diber – East Albania) and this is how it is called still today.

Even though it was very used, Rruga e Arberit wasn’t the most important connection between East and West, which was Via Egnatia. It was the Eastern continuation of Via Appia (which ended to Bari and Brindisi in Italy), toward the Balkans and Anatolia (Fasolo, 2005). It is described as follows by J. J. Wilkes in Talbert’s book:

_In the second century B.C. the Romans constructed a strategic route from the ancient Corinthian colonies at Apollonia and Dyrr(h)achium/

![right – Via Egnatia](image1.png)

![left – Rruga e Arberit](image2.png)

(Adami, 1983)
Epidamnos on the Adriatic to Thessalonica in order to secure their new province of Macedonia. This road, the Via Egnatia, named after an early Roman proconsul Cn. Egnatius (Collart 1976), followed a difficult course along the R. Shkumbini (Genusus) over the Candaviae mountains to Ohrid (Lychnidos) in the high Lakeland; thence, crossing several high passes, it proceeded via Herakleia and Edessa to Pella. In spite of its difficulty, it remained the major route between the southern Adriatic and the Aegean until modern international boundaries supervened.] (Talbert, 2000, p. 749)

The starting point for Eastern routes was the coastal city of Durres, and it described as follows by Santoro, S.;

[Molti nomi sono stati dati nelle varie epoche alla città oggi chiamata Durrës (Albania) e sotto il dominio veneziano Durazzo: quella che fu Dyrrachium per i Romani, era stata Epidamnos per i coloni greci che la fondarono nel 627 a.C. ma anche Dyrrachion, che forse ne costituiva un quartiere o un nucleo precedente illirico, ipoteticamente collocato dagli studiosi nella parte meridionale della collina che affaccia sul mare e sull’ampia pianura, un tempo paludosa e oggi bonificata.] (Santoro, 2008, p. 23)

She describes as follows the role of Durres:

[La colonia di Epidamnos godeva di una posizione particolarmente favorevole rispetto alle popolazioni illiriche dell’interno, nei confronti delle quali svolgeva un ruolo di intermediazione commerciale… L’ampia diffusione della monetazione di Dyrrachion fino in Dacia, dalla
fine del IV alla metà del I sec. a.C., mostra l’ampiezza della rete di commerci che da questo centro si irraggiava in epoca tardo classica ed ellenistica. La colonia, con la sua collocazione strategica, rispondeva alla necessità di controllo di tre sistemi itinerari: quello delle rotte verso gli emporia nordadriatici di Adria e Spina (Strabo. VII, 5, 10), già attivi nel VI sec. a.C. che si svolgeva risalendo lungo la costa orientale con alcuni “ponti marittimi” verso ovest (uno rappresentato dall’isola di Palagosa, un altro all’altezza del Delta del Po); quello della strada transbalcanica, che determina la fondazione contemporanea delle due colonie corinzio corciresi che ne costituivano i capolinea: Epidamnos e Potidea ed è dimostrata dalla presenza di materiali egei (Lesbo, Chio, Taso) a Epidamno; quello del collegamento transmarino con la Magna Grecia, tramite quella rottta Brindisi-Durazzo di 1000 stadi che già al tempo della fondazione della colonia rendeva particolarmente intensi i rapporti con l’altra sponda dell’Adriatico ed in particolare con i Messapi e con Taranto…. Questi tre sistemi itinerari (nordadriatico, balcanico, magnogreco) corrispondono alle tre direzioni principali di scambio culturale di questa città e ne qualificano fin dall’origine la vocazione di crocevia fra Oriente e Occidente, fra Mediterraneo e Europa continentale.) (Santoro, 2008, pp. 25-26).

Mostly for its geographical position and for its morphological formation, hardly attackable, the city of Durres was used as a strategic point for many Rulers who wanted to dominate the commerce between East and West, and it has been for a long time the most important Port city of Adriatic. The city’s geographical position was highly advantageous, as it was situated around a natural rocky harbor which was surrounded by inland swamps and high cliffs on the seaward side, making the city very difficult to attack from either land or sea. Thus, because of its advantageous geographical position, the city
of Durres was testimony of many wars, many Kings ruling upon it (Wilkes, 1996), and many cultures intertwined together, sometimes in harmony and sometimes in war. It was the beginning of an important urban center, the starting point of inland commercial routes toward East and maritime routes toward West.

Durres will be for a long time the Western Gate of the Balkans but from the arrival of the Ottoman Empire in the Region the interest of European States to commerce in the East diminished drastically. One of the reasons was the block of the ottomans and consequently many commercial relations between local merchants and Western ones had been braked. The main reason though was the discovery of the New World and the starting of a new European history, projected much more toward West then East. This brought to the shrinkage of many Adriatic cities, such as Venice, Durres etc.

2. The Ottoman city

Many Albanian cities had their urban development and turned into important socio-economic, cultural and administrative centers, during the XVII century. Originally their quarters laid in large areas (low density), grouped by religion, near the Middle-aged Castles mainly used as military administrative centers for Ottomans.

Exteriorly, the Albanian cities were very different from the Dalmatian and Danubian cities. These preserved their character as closed and fortified cities with high walls and bastions, where the entrance and the going out of inhabitants was possible from the gates that closed every evening and
opened when the sun raised until recently - XIX century. Instead, the Albanian cities were mostly spread out in the territory and occupied much more land than the other Balkan cities\(^1\). The definition that best fits the typical Albanian city of the era is that of Cerasi;

[Il sistema urbano ottomano non è il sistema dai grandi contrasti e dalle nette linee di demarcazione tra i vari livelli gerarchici. Vi è piuttosto sovrapposizione tra città e campagna, complessità e, se si vuole, ambiguità nelle funzioni degli insediamenti. La stessa struttura della maglia urbana concorre a stabilizzare questo aspetto ambiguo della città. Persino dal punto di vista dell’aspetto architettonico, vi è sostanziale continuità tra le varie soglie del sistema insediativo. Il tessuto residenziale con caratteri rurali e poveri è presente a tutti i livelli, come in città di ogni grandezza, dal tardo Settecento in poi, vi sono dimore signorili e monumenti che portano una stessa impronta architettonica e sociale. Un pezzo del tessuto abitativo di Salonicco è interscambiabile con pezzi anche della più piccola città di provincia. Ciò è particolarmente vero dell’Anatolia e dei Balcani occidentali (Bosnia, Kosovo, Macedonia).] (Cerasi, 1988, p. 53).

From the religious point of view, the structure of the population had changed too much respect to the previous centuries, turning to \textit{Muhamedane} (Muslims) 2/3 of the entire population. Islamization in Albania, more than in any other Country, was very fast in the urban settlements.

The Albanian cities had assumed oriental characteristics, with houses separated into quarters in relation to religion and in some cases related to ethnic addictions. Houses were within high walls, and many times they had big yards and gardens planted with trees and vegetables. The city was
penetrated by narrow cobbled streets without canals, with many branches to the right and to the left, creating *cul-de-sacs* that ended to the entrances of the houses of a *clan* or family.

Small groups of houses and quarters used to create at their center religious buildings, mainly *xhami* (mosques), *mejteps* (religious school), cemeteries, *çezme* (fountain) or *pus* (the shadoof), the furnace of the shop, as much as the public plaza for citizen’s relax, usually under the shadow of enormous and symbolic *rrap* (type of tree). Every quarter was a small reality organized independently, where citizen’s needs could be totally satisfied. (Shkodra, 1984).

*Muhamedan* (the Muslim community) had got the best living conditions and the best positions within the city, leaving to the *Christians* the most hidden and the smaller spaces\(^2\). The Muslim houses had bigger dimensions that the Christian’s one and it was collocated in bigger quarters of the city and could occupy more and more land from the gardens, fields and meadows. The *muhamedan* house had big gardens and courtyards, surrounded by blind high walls and looked like a separated villa. The muhamedan buildings (in Shkoder, Tirane, Elbasan, Gjakove, Diber, Tetove etc.) were generally framed within a labyrinth of green gardens and yards\(^3\). In a different manner were positioned the Catholic houses which laid in straight terrains, narrow, and sometimes within Castles (Elbasan, Berat etc.) where there was no place to expand. During a trip in *Lezha*, *Pellegrini* wrote:

*The Muslim quarter of Lezha is immediately distinguished from the Catholic one because its positioned better. It has shadows and it is isolated, instead, the Catholic quarter is composed of buildings positioned almost one above each-other, at the foot of a mountain, at the tip of which there reins an old and abandoned castle.* (Pellegrini,
And also Muller noticed it; “Inside the city you could see radical differences caused by religious discrimination. On the one hand there were the Muslim houses, colorful and picturesque from outside and very comfortable inside, on the other hand those of the Borghese Christians which, to avoid to make jealous the first ones, represented themselves with simple houses from outside, even though beautiful, comfortable and well equipped inside.] (Muller, 1844).

This clear distinction/separation between quarters relying on religion continued to be noticed for a very long time, in some cities. An example is Shkodra, which, when in the 70-80s of the XIX century its main street started to look like a European boulevard, as Ippen defined in 1907 “Grande rue de Scutari” (Ippen, T. (1907). Scutari und die Nordalbanische kustenebene. Sarajevo), was the border line between Muslim and the Christian side of the city. This differentiation can be noticed even in Ottoman laws before the Tanzimat (after the Tanzimat the laws provided the same rights for everybody), as Denel wrote;

[ ... norme sui limiti di altezza delle case stabiliti dai vari regolamenti del Settecento all'Ottocento e portati da 9 metri nel 1725 a 10.5 nel 1827 per le case dei mussulmani, da 7 a 9 metri per i non mussulmani ... ] (Denel, 1982).

The division of the Albanian city into different areas for different type of religion is not an Albanian characteristic but an Ottoman one. The fastest way Ottomans had to spread their domination over a population was the religion and they pressured very much over Albanian territories to turn them from Catholic to Muslim. Today in Albania there are 70% of Muslims, 20% of Orthodox, and 10% Catholics (2009 CIA World Factbook). One of the
most distinguished Albanian scholars, Vaso Pasha, a writer, poet, publicist, and Governor of Lebanon, wrote in 1878, in the same period of “Lidhja e Prizrenit”, a very critical moment for the future of Albanian territories, : "Feja e Shqipetarit eshte Shqiperia” (“The Faith of the Albanian is Albanianism”) as part of its famous poetry “O moj Shqypni, e mjera Shqypni” (“O Albania, poor Albania” - Pashko Vasa (1880). O moj Shqypni. Shkoder, Albania), a 72-verse poem, which was first published by the Czech linguist Jan Urban Jarnik in his work Zur Albanesische Sprachenkunde published in 1881 (Trencsényi & Kopeček, 2007).

Still today, Albania is globally known as one of the Countries where religions can live in harmony. The tower house was very used in that period in the Southern Albania. It was built in high places, in the distance of a rifle bullet from other houses (Shkodra, 1984), in order to have the possibility to keep under observation its terrain. Urbanism and architecture developments, for many centuries under conditions of the Ottoman rule, entered during the Albanian Renaissance (1831) in a New Era because of the influences by the New Capitalist Order and because of many new relationships Albanian cities were creating with Western urban centers. From the second half of the XIX century, the Albanian Borghese and the rich class started to built new and modern
buildings. In the new houses and çarshi (synonym of bazar) there were radical changes from the existing architectural styles, inherited in centuries. Near the houses there were built shops, manufactories, warehouses etc. as an European model. (Strausz, A. (1888). A Balkan Felsziget Macedonia, Eszak - Albania es Montenegro. Budapest). Big merchants, landowners, industrials and foreign concessionaires built with their capitals hotels and restaurants, post offices and telegraphs, city gardens and boulevards, ateliers and fabrics. But even so, the rhythm of these constructions wasn’t the same in every city.

The most favorable to development were Korça, Durres, Vlore, Shkoder and a little less Elbasan, Berat and Gjirokaster. In Vlore at the end of the XIX century got built the “Rruga e kafeneve” (the street of coffees) with tables in the sidewalk as in Paris. Durres also, had long jumped the Castle’s walls to develop in a straight strip until the mole, and it had a long street bordered on both sides by many shops and magazines as much as many hotels and new buildings with a European tendency. The development of Durres could have been noticed also from its bazar, which started to have a growing activity. The number of shops grew from 84 in 1830 to 321 in the beginning of the XX century.

Shkodra, even if it still kept its Oriental character for a long time, started to change in that period. In the same years, 70-80 of the XIX century, Shkodra, like many other Albanian cities, had the first capitalist fabrics, printings etc.

In the Middle Albania, Elbasan was the most developed one as it connected Durres, still the most important Albanian Port city, with Eastern Albanian provinces and Western Balkans. Instead, for the Southern territories, Berat and Janina were two important economical and administrative centers. Every province or city had its local Pasha, Bej, Aga, Fisnik te vjeter (Oxhak), Kapidan, or Bajraktar, that guided the area.
The conditions of a weakening of the Ottoman power and a general economic improvement, brought, from the end of the XVIII century until 1830, many Albanian cities to civil strife; a product of class contradictions created in the field of economic interests, political and religious flowering periods of towns and feudal economy in general, very well known in European medieval world. In the optics of a feudal anarchy, that exploded with fury during this period, conflicts dividing the population in various fractions from the second half of the XVIII century, appeared almost in every Albanian city. Every city, until 1830, Christian population apart, was subdivided in rival political, economical and cultural fractions, and this many times assumed a bloody scenery.

3. The re-birth of Tirana

A very important panair (fair - an open bazar) in the Central Albania was the one of the bageti (cattle) in Tirana, known with the name of “Panairi i Shen Lleshit”. This fair, which had begin at least from the second half of the XIV century, got born in a strategic point of the fertile field of Tirana, traversed by regional commercial routes of the caravans, that connected the coastal lands with the inland (Shkodra, 1973, p. 217). The birth of this fair, which afterwards brought the development of the urban life and of the commerce of agricultural and craftsmanship, was the reason for the development of the agrarian feudal economy in this crossroad of important commercial routes. The fair was organized every year in May, in the plaza near to the “Teqe e Kubatit” (Masjid of Kubat – a small mosque), of the dervishian sect of Kadiri (today behind the National Bank of Albania).
Tirana’s fertile field, cultivated with cereals and vegetables, and surrounded with vineyards and olives, traversed by caravan routes which connected the Central Albanian commercial regions with the port city of Durres, pulled the greed of the nearest feudal, Sulejman Pasha, which, with the intent to become the owner of this rich area, built for the first time in 1614, in the ambience of a small village with 10-15 houses, his house, a mosque, a public bathroom (hammam), an Inn and a bazar of 150-200 shops\(^1\), and gave birth to a new settlement which 306 years later would become the capital of Albania. When the Panairi I Shen Lleshit extended its activity from three days to a week of commerce, Tirana grew up to 500 houses and 200 shops, from 10-15 it had more than a century ago. This expansion brought to a further amplifying of relations with the region in all the Central Albania, Kosovo, Macedonia and even in the south, Janine.

Nevertheless, its expansion wasn’t linear and continuous, as it will pass through many critical moments. One of these moments was the civil war between Bargjineve and Toptanasve (two important families), which endured 60 years, ending in 1830, leaving the city in bad conditions, as Muller said:

\[…\text{the city of Tirana has 8000 inhabitants, but before the civil war of 1830 it had 13 000 inhabitants. This can be seen from the number of the houses (1000) and shops (727), most of which are almost empty. The big city, that has a sad senery, has now remained without commerce and craftsmanship…}\] (Muller, J. (1844). Albanien, Rumelien und die Osterreichisch - Montenegrinische Granze, Prague)

After 1830 Tirana started to grow economically again. Many description of the period from the first half of the XIX century to the time it became the Capital, testify the flourishing of the city’s economy. Hahn wrote in 1854;

\[1 – \text{It was described as a very big space by the ottoman voyager Evlija Celebija, who probably visited it 30 years after its foundation, (Shkodra, 1973)}\]

left – the plaza of the weekly panair (today “Scanderbeg Square”)
right – painting of the British artist E. Lear (1848), the ruins of the Turkish bath, furnace, and the Inn built in 1614
(Frasheri K. , 2004, p. 59)
[Spread out in a fertile field, cultivated very good with cereals, fruits and vegetables and with running water, and traversed in many directions by internal commercial routes, connected with the most important mole of the Country, Durres, it started to pull more and more families from the nearby villages, transforming into an agricultural, artisanal and commercial center with 8000 inhabitants and with a bazar which, in 1840, counted approximately 480 shops…The Mosques painted with different kind of colors, built with a beautiful style surrounded by poplars and cypresses, the rococo pyrgo of the town clock. All this unifies to the harmonious movement of the population which in defined days (every Thursday) fills the bazar, which gets traversed by many carts pulled by buffalos. All of this gets together in an original view that I’ve never seen it elsewhere.] (Hahn, J. G. (1854). Alnenische Studien, Viena).

H. Hektar, consular officer of France in Shkodra, in 1858 wrote about Tirana:

[Three hours away from Kruja, in the middle of a very well planted field, within which there are several rich agricultural companies, lays Tirana. The entrance of the city, when you come from Shkodra, is pleasant; to the right and left there are two beautiful mosques covered with excellent wall paintings; slightly above, a square tower with a clock on it. It’s large streets have streams of running water on both sides that brings freshness and cleans the dirt. Of all the Albanian cities, Tirana is the one that has the most an Oriental character, an easy thing to understand it when it comes to an ancient origin – as it is said that this city has more than 250 years of history.] (Hecquard, H. (1858). Histoire et description de la Haute Albanie, Paris)

In 1906 Pellegrini narrowing about Tirana wrote:

left –old view of Rruga e Dibres (Dibra street) with water line
right – common view of "rrugica" narrow street of Tirana

(Frasheri K., 2004, p.146),
(Aliaj, Lulo, & Myftiu, 2003, p. 24)
The city is charming, with a mountain view in the back, with beautiful colorful mosques, lightened by the sun, with a bazaar, all of which has small arcades surrounding it all over, with small water lines … with houses spread out within gardens] (Pellegrini, B. (1906). Verso la guerra? Il dissidio fra l’Italia e l’Austria, Roma)

During the XIX century, besides the low houses, in Tirana were built also typical big houses called Saraje (Saray) from the feudal –Borghese part of the city, the richest part. One of the earliest examples was the saraje e Toptanasve, built within the walls of the Castle. Later on, after the civil wars of the first half of the XIX century, they built other sarajes too in different areas of the city. One of the particular saraje, with great architectonic values, that still exists, was the one of Selim pashe Toptani, near to the clock tower and two beautiful mosques in the city center. This saraj had 32 rooms and it was one of the biggest constructions of Albania in that period. (Frasheri, 1964).

A combination of trade and religious architectural elements, such as the bazar, which was the intersection of regional commercial routes and the heart of the city, and mosques, minarets and clock towers, guided the expansion of Tirana and defined its physical form. As it was previously mentioned, the urban settlement’s form was of obvious religious imprint; on the one hand the clock towers and minarets of the mosques were permitted or even imposed by the Ottoman authorities, in the city center or near them, on the other hand the church bells, until recently, were built in the periphery of the city, so they couldn’t take part of the architectonic formation of the city center. Describing Tirana, Muller wrote about the Tirana house model: “Its buildings, let it be private or public, are low and small. But the minarets of the mosques, its olive trees and cypresses are much higher” (Muller, 1844).

In 1912 Tirana had 15 000 inhabitants and 700 shops in the bazaar. In many occasions the bazar spread out its shops inside the inhabited quarters, like it never happened before (the original form of the bazar provided an area dedicated to commerce, and this area was separated from the residential part of the city). Tirana’s bazar was the gathering place for many merchants far from the area. Many of them did even 10 hours of trip to sell their products.
4. The development of Albanian bazars

The passage of interregional commercial routes gave birth to fairs positioned in strategic points; crossroads, mountains etc., afterwards cities were built around them. After the Ottoman invasion the architectonic model adopted as a place to exchange goods was the bazar, which was used and implemented for many centuries giving birth and developing many urban areas. In the Balkans the bazar model found a fertile terrain to develop.

The bazar was built along a main street which ramifies in irregular smaller passages laterally, structured alongside a network of narrow streets with low shops which opened in their front side with overhanging roofs covering the exposed products (Lear, 1852). Botteghes of artisans where usually built in wood, and what’s most interesting, they were re-built in wood again after every fire attack. Only at the end of 19th century they were rebuilt with stones like Gjirokaster’s bazar (south Albania).

The shops filling the streets of the çarshi had the frames almost of the same height because of the economic equality imposed by the sistemi esnafor (esnaf system). The shops were one story buildings, especially in the small bazars (Kruje, Kavaja, Lezhe etc.) and one or two stories in bigger bazars like Shkodra, Prizren, Gjakove, Korça, Gjirokastra, Valona etc. The façades of the shops were usually opened and wide that gave the çarshi the architectonic character of a big and almost uniformed display. The shop windows usually were closed with wooden qepena, in an inclined or perpendicular position. The passant could see all the shop as the windows took to whole front side. The internal spaces were low also and had a ceiling of 3 m high only in rare cases, as but most of the time they were lower.

There were cases, like in Gjakova’s bazar, where the merchant had to stay
bowed all the time when inside the shop. As part of the bazar settlement there were also Inns of different categories, for the merchants and for the villagers that frequented often the city life. Inns were constructed by private initiatives mostly (Shkodra, 1973), as it was easy to have a permit to build it, as Ami Boue, a French visitor and scholar, wrote in 1830: “In Albania everybody could build an Inn, that’s why you can find plenty of them”

Other elements of the system of the bazar were; the bezistan (covered market for craftsmanship), medrese (teaching institution), public bathrooms / hammam, minarets, clock towers etc. These public buildings which had an economic, religious and social function used to break the repetitiveness of the city’s spaces.

Bezistans – like those in Shkoder, Prizren, Berat, Janine and Shkup – made had particular architectonic values. They were quadratic tall buildings made of stone with two big frontal doors and two lateral that closed inside many shops of rich craftsmen and haberdashers. One of the most preserved bezistans is the one of the Shkodra’s bazar. In this bazar you could see the medrese also, which was made of a principal building with the classrooms and a smaller one, separated, for the library. The kulla e sahatit (clock tower) was mainly constructed during the XVII-XVIII century, and the presence of a similar tower was often related to an improving economy of the city and the creation of craftsmen and societies. Like in other Balkan Countries the construction of clock towers was made in the most visible points of the city, in the bazar’s plaza, near the principal mosques, or in high places inside the Castle etc. The clock tower was very important for the city’s life as it organized the day work and the prayer time.

Besides its commercial function, a trading space for leisure, where merchants gathered from long distances to sell their products, it had a social function
and an institutional one.

It was a social plaza, where one would go to conclude affairs, make friendships and combine marriages and also an institution, essential to the state to mobilize the productive potential needed. Corporations (the Esnaf) were the link between the state and the individual craftsmen in the distribution of commissions, such as the collection of taxes, and therefore they hold a considerable power.

[Il mercato non è solo un luogo fisico ma riassume in sé un insieme di funzioni-istituzioni come le corporazioni, come il controllo statale dei rifornimenti e dei pesi e misure. Zona distinta della città, esso è un nodo funzionale regolato da un intendente governativo e vigilato da funzionari inquadrati nell’apparato statale-militare; è sottoposto alla giurisdizione di un giudice che ha una formazione religiosa; ma il mercato gode anche di una certa autonomia statutaria perché i commercianti i gli artigiani sono inquadrati nelle corporazioni professionali e locali che eleggono dei responsabili con funzioni rappresentative e di raccordo col governo statale; i quali, a loro volta, sono sottoposti ad un altro intendente che vigila sul loro operato. Se i vakif posseggono uno o più edifici commerciali, anch’essi saranno coinvolti nella gestione. Ogni problema del mercato, dalla pulizia dello spazio pubblico alle imposte, alle forniture cittadine, è regolato da questo corpo ibrido di cittadini, ufficiali elettivi, ufficiali governativi, responsabili di istituzioni semi-private.] (Cerasi, 1988, p. 67)

The bazar could be of different shapes but it was always established along important regional commercial routes and/or at the intersection of many caravan passages. After the construction of a permanent bazar, a mosque

left – street view in Shkodra’s bazar (the beginning of the XX century)
right – the scheme of Shkodra’s bazar from XIX century to 1912
(Shkodra, 1984)
was necessary to be built for the prayers and the addition of an Inn for the travelers and houses of the merchants gave birth to a new city. The mosque worked not only as a religious building but as a place for public debates and information (the same as many other religious buildings of other religions) and that’s why they were so important for the city’s foundation.

It can be said that this important model of trade settlement, the bazar, originally imposed by the Ottoman rule, was absorbed by the Balkan’s culture because it continued to grow even after the fall of the Ottoman Empire. It continued to be more and more essential to the city life, not only for the city itself but even for nearby towns and villages.

5. The Colonial city.

After the Independence of the Country in 1912, urban development of the Albanian cities had a sprint, and western models were being adopted. Urban settlements were underdeveloped (Pietro Quaroni wrote in 1920 “L’Albania è un Paese da Anno Mille”, referring to its undeveloped cities), however the will to change and create a distance from the Ottoman past was felt in every important city.

Tirana started its westernization at the beginning of the 1920s, after it became the capital city, even though urban studies had been made before that date also. Based on the mapping of the status of fact made by Austrian professionals, the first Regulatory Urban Plans of the new capital city started to be drafted (in two decades there were five Regulatory Plans approved for Tirana) and the growing interest of European urban planners and architects
about its development was not insignificant during the two decades between
the two world wars. It is said that even Le Corbusier “…drew some preliminary
rough ideas on the town planning of Tirana, but being charged with the task
of developing the urbanistic plan of the city of Algiers (Algeria) at that time,
he declined from being involved in working for the Albanian capital.” (Aliaj, et
al., 2003, p. 51).

Austrian (arch. Kohler) and Italian architects (arch. Armando Brasini,
Florestano Fausto, Vittorio Morpurgo etc.) were commissioned to draft urban
plans and project of plazas, public buildings infrastructures.

Since the elevate number of urban plans, projects and constructions made
during that period, this paragraph will be divided by type of interventions and
not by plans. The development Tirana experienced from its first urban plan of
1923 to the fifth urban plan of 1942 is so intense that the best way to describe
it is by talking separately for the development of infrastructure, public spaces
and architecture.

*Infrastructural development* One of the first updated road traffic of Tirana
before the first urban plans was made by Austrian professionals in 1917. The
first urban plan of 1923 wasn’t very successful in terms of feasibility, but it
led to the reconstruction and the widening of the principal streets, such as;
*Rruga e Durresit, Rruga e Barrikadave, Rruga e Kavajes*, etc. The intent of
the plan was to provide an area for the city’s future expansion based on a
cardo-decumanus infrastructural system and only *correct* the existing road
network, keeping the bazar still as the center of the city and strengthening
the principal radial streets. In the Second Regulatory Plan of 1926 round
plazas from where radial streets started showed for the first time, such as the
*Sulejman Pasha Square* (today - *Avni Rustemi Square*), and the straightening
of existing roads continued to be done.
After the first two urban plans there was an upgrading ambitions for the future of Tirana, because of the birth of the first Albanian Monarchy of King Zog of Albanians in 1925. King Zog commissioned the Austrian arch. Kohler to prepare a *modern* plan for the city, and the Third Urban Plan came out in 1928. This plan reinforced even more the role of the city center and that of the principal existing radial streets and it designed the area on the other side of Lana river (south) as an area for extensive development, divided in regular private plots of 1000 and 1500 m² for villas. This part of the city will successively called “Città Giardino” (Garden City) by Italian architects. (Giusti, 2006)

The Fourth Regulatory Plan of 1929 provided a full reconstruction of the main roads by paving, widening and lining them with contemporary buildings.

The Fifth Urban Masterplan of 1942, which came after the official Italian occupation of Albania in April 7, 1939, had the intention to create a developed urban center that would be populated with Italian colonists. Its drafting was guided by a mixed group of Albanian and Italian professionals guided by arch. Gherardio Bossio and the engineer Ferdinando Poggi.

This plan provided both radial and circular street system, traversing the city with many ring roads such as the Greater Ring Road (the actual “Unaza”), the Middle Ring Road and the Smaller Ring Road, an some partial ring roads.

*The central Axis, the city center and the Lana river*

The first attempt for the project of the city center was made in 1925 by the Italian architect Armando Brasini, which, invited by the Albanian authorities of that time developed the first masterplan for the rearrangement of the capital; six ministerial buildings around a central boulevard. “The idea was that of creating a Roman isle in the city without combining it with the rest that was

This plaza was ment to be the joining point between the old and the new, oriental bazar and western boulevard, vernacular architecture and rationalist one, etc. The new city, structured along the north-south boulevard was developed in the south and west (which were almost without constructions) of the existing one as a new autonomous city.

In the same urban plan for the first time will be thought of the adjustment of the bed of Lana river, even though there were no details for its realisation, which will start only after the development of the area of the garden city, with the plan of 1942. The bed of Lana river will be systemized in the 1960s, during communism, and two streets will be build along it.

The first variant of the central plaza was a circle sector with its arc stretched toward south. This plaza was ment to be defined by clasical buildings surrounded by frontals, porticoes and colonnades. The second variant of the plaza was that of Brasini, which got inspired from the Piazza San Pietro in Rome, where the buildings of the ministries would be placed by the perimeter of the circle. This plaza continued toward south with a monumental boulevard accompanied by other administrative buildings until the place where the presidential palace was ment to be built.

None of these first two plans was ever approved because of the failure to include into them the historical objects such as the Clock Tower and the Ethem Beu’s Mosque. The third variant relied on the compositional solution of the second variant but it included only the project of a single square of 2 ha and a longitudinal shape in the direction of the boulevard. The square is surrounded by eight buildings positioned simmetrically.

The fourth and the last variant, th one that got built, was made in 1931 by
Florestano De Fausto. He provided a plan with six ministerial buildings, Tirana’s City Hall, the National Bank, which were located around the central square with a fountain and a flower garden. At the beginning the ministerial buildings were too low compared to the dimension of the plaza, thus two stories were added to them, and to increase the effect trying to emphasize their dimension, the garden between them was dug deeper to 1.5 meters. The newly built objects featured a high architectural quality and a powerful drive to look imposing, which demonstrated the power of the government of King Zog.

Nevertheless, the central plaza for the new city would have never had such a success without the thinking of the central axis that went from south to north within the existing city. The central axis is still thought as the most important urban element that have structured the city from its construction to nowadays. The first time it was mentioned by Arch. Brasini in 1925 and in the third regulatory plan it was precisely defined that the boulevard would have as a start the central bazar and would end at the future Royal Palace (the latter never got constructed), and would go perpendicularly to the adjustment of Lana river bed.

Only at the fourth regulatory plan the boulevard was brought until the actual position (at the train station), where it was thought to be built a stadium. The beginning of the works for the construction of the northern part of the boulevard started in 9.21.1929 according to a law of the Royal Government, and the works for the construction of the southern part started in 1930. This boulevard, somehow didn’t fit really well to the existing city as it was oversized for that moment. As a French architect of the time would utter his surprised remark not without irony; “I saw a boulevard without a city”. (Aliaj, et al., 2003, p. 36).

*New constructions*
Together with the drafting of urban plans, the construction of plazas and the adjustment of streets and river beds, in Tirana were built many new constructions. These new constructions mirrored completely the *wind of change* that the Albanian capital was experiencing. The new building for the National Bank of the Italian architect, Vittorio Morpurgo, built with reinforced concrete and ceramic bricks and stone slates brought from Italy, attempt to symbolize power and solidity.

The boulevard “Viale del Impero” would serve as a connecting joint between the existing center of the city that was developing around the “Scanderbeg” Square and the new political and sports center that was to be developed in the southernmost end of this boulevard. The author of this great architectonic complex is the architect Gherardo Bossio; it features a typical rational fascist architecture and includes the *Offices of the top officers* (today the building of the Council of Ministers), the *Military Headquarters* (today is the Maternity Hospital) and *Hotel Dajti*, all of which are located along the sides of the boulevard, while at the head of the boulevard is the *House of Fascio* (today the University of Politecnique of Tirana), the “*Dopolavoro*” – a recreational center which houses a theater hall, a rich library and reception halls (today “Academy of Fine Arts”) – and the “*Gioventù Littorio Albanese*” that today is the colonnaded premises housing the University Library.

The University Building, whose form is characterized by compact parallelepipeds united with each-other and which gives the impression of a fortress, evokes the reminiscences of the traditional Albanian tower, though as seen and performed in terms of modernism. “*In this complex, Bossio’s style oscillates between the memories of the glorious Roman ancient times featuring arches and colonnades, and a new born from the advantages contributed by the use of reinforced concrete*” (Aliaj, et al., 2003, p. 49).
6. The communist city.

WWII let Albania seriously damaged, many buildings were bombed and destroyed. Liberation from the German invasion the 29th of November 1944 came from the Levizja Nacional Çlirimtare (National Liberation Movement), an anti-fascist national council founded in May of the same year, after which it became the provisional government of the free state of Albania. After WWII the country became a Socialist Republic and it defined the status of the country as People’s Socialist Republic of Albania, governed by a single party, the Party of Labor of Albania, who’s First Secretary and main leader was Enver Hoxha. Under the rule of Hoxha, the socialist Soviet model was applied in Albania creating a system that followed the example of Stalin orthodoxy. This will be seen also in the urban distribution of the capital city, which followed the example of soviet urban settlements.

When it took the power, the communist regime was put in front of a small and undeveloped Tirana, a hybrid city between Islamic and Christian worlds, between European boulevards and oriental bazars, East and West, which relied its economy mostly on agriculture and craftsmanship. The bombing during WWII had destroyed many buildings and there was the need to reconstruct as fast as possible and the drafting of a new urban plan for the capital city started. This was the occasion for the new establishment to declare its will to built a new society represented by a new urban model. Reconstruction was not only supposed for the city or buildings but for the reconstruction of Albanian society as well - a brand new society, based on Marxist – Leninist lessons was about to be born. The will to make a tabula rasa, cut any physical continuity of the oriental and occidental past by demolishing mosques and bazars (of the nine mosques in Tirana only the central one, that of Ethem Beu, wasn’t turned down, and the oldest one, the
“Old Mosque”, built by Sulejman Pasha in 1614, in the foundation of the city, was already destroyed during the liberation struggle.) and a new architecture was imposed for public buildings and housing.

Nevertheless, the communist system didn’t cancel just because of ideological beliefs (if it can be defined so). The system chose carefully what to turn down and what to keep from the existing city. The strongest attack was made toward the Oriental city and less toward the colonial one. Many might have been the reasons but an obvious one could have been the underurbanization of the Oriental part of the city and its urban form and architectural style very far from the monumental one of the regime. Architecture had a front role for the new establishment, it had to express its grandeur and magnificence and the oriental city just wasn’t right for the part.

The oriental city was made of in-between spaces, was little, minute, and public space was continuous and penetrated and connected the urban settlement. These qualities were worthless for the socialism, which represented itself with big buildings, oversized open spaces and rationalist habitations for the working class. It is ironical, since the impression that the regime wanted to transmit was that of a revival of the Albanian spirit, free from Ottomans and Italians and Germans, and yet the new urban form requested by the regime was very close to the Italian colonial city. Everything needed to be big in order to impress, amaze, electrify the working class with big plazas and big buildings for the Party. Many of the state’s functions were located within the Italian buildings and many other buildings were built along the main axis and near the city center to be the location of other important national functions.

Besides the urban and architectural style, another obvious reason for why the oriental city was attacked much more than the colonial/western one is connected to the process of socialization of the country. Private property was
fought from the regime and the state had to take control over private property and over land. So, which was the easiest way to transit from a private property to a public one? Which was the best way for the state to appropriate of land? – by demolishing private property to make room for the new socialist city shaped. Italian buildings were already of public domain, so there was no need to demolish them, instead, the Old Bazar and many villas were private.

After 1945, the communist regime fought bazaars all over the country because the bazaar’s form of social life recalled the Ottoman culture and for this reason it was forcibly uprooted. The Old Bazar of Tirana was demolished to make room for the new *Palace of Culture*, which delimited the eastern side central Scanderbeg Square with a big colonnade. However, the cultural reason wasn’t the main one. The ideological reason was the fact that the bazar was fundamentally a democratic trade space, where everyone could go and sell his products where free trade and concurrence was possible. The bazar was a democratic form based on free trade and private property, a capitalist model.

Fractures with the past were made in many forms and they can be classified as;

*Religious Fracture*: Until that moment religion was the *frame* of the Albanian society, of tradition, public life, and even that of the distribution and organization of the urban settlement. The five centuries under the Ottoman Rule and under Italian colonization had strongly shaped the city’s life in base of the religion. And the new regime didn’t allowed anymore any kind of religion, neither the Muslim nor the Catholic or Orthodox. It got replaced with religion for the Party.

The regime acted aggressively toward every religious form in the country by demolishing physically religious buildings and by cancelling all the religious celebrations during the year. Accuses of antinationalism to priests were very

---

1 - After the fall of the communism free trade regained its space in the Albanian society and the bazar reappeared too but under another form. It was not the same as before communism but it was only used as a trading space and not as a social one. The social plaza was transferred in private spaces like bars and coffees where still today one would go to conclude affairs or make friendships and marriages. Today the trade role of the bazar is getting everyday more weak as shopping malls are expanding overall the territory.
common and the persecution of anybody who would be suspected to be involved with any kind of religion related thing was very common. Albania was the first country in the world to be atheist by constitution. This influenced very much in the social life of the country. Its education was based on religious meanings and its culture and tradition were based on it as much. Religious belief was transformed very fast in belief upon the Party of Labor and Enver Hoxha.

Public Space Fracture: Public space was very important to the socialist system. The new society was based on different principles and public space was where these new principles were about to be put. Public sphere had to be changed and new forms were created. Public space wasn’t the city center any more - the bazaar, or the shadow under the plane tree (a popular romantic image of public space, where men would gather, was the fresh space under plane trees). During communism the two functions of the bazaar, the social one and the commercial one, were not held in the same place anymore.

The Turkish coffee moment (which was the “place” where decisions were took, friendships were made and marriages were arranged), a long tradition, was transposed from the bazar to the balconies and verandas of the prefabricated multistory buildings, and public discussions between elderly were transposed from the bazar to the Party’s reunions. The commercial role was banned as trading was forbidden and the only way to “buy” things was to get it in small shops dispersed within the city³.

Public space had been strongly modified and it was now spontaneous; streets, sidewalks, balconies, courtyards of the new built prefabricated quarters, workplaces and parks were the new public spaces, and the big plazas were thought of to make room for military parades

Urban / Architectural and dimensional Fracture: Since private property
wasn’t allowed, vernacular architecture didn’t have sense any more. The new apartment units were gathered in tall prefabricated buildings increasing the city’s density also. The dimension of the new units erupted from the intimate and private system of traditional villas with gardens and open spaces, and enclosed them within the perimeter of quarters framed by tall buildings. The rationalism of communist buildings evoked a sense of new unified working class that had come from every part of the country. But the distinction wasn’t only between the new high density popular blocks with the low private villas, but also between the working class and the political power, the *Byro of the Party*, and this distinction was visible in the urban distribution also.

After taking the power, the dictator established a specific area for the residences of the Party Members. The area, like the rest of the system, was inspired on the Soviet example. Enver Hoxha wanted something similar to the Moscow’s Kremlin, and he called it “The Block” – a super surveyed quarter twenty-four hours a day by the army, an exclusive quarter for the houses of main Party’s members. This quarter at the beginning was thought of as an extension of the ottoman city as an *western garden city*, which initiated also the construction of some of the villas, turned to be the favorite location for the high national political class, becoming very soon a *bunker quarter*, with the highest security system of the country.  

3 - The same formula:

“*destroy and rebuild in the name of change and progress*”, was used at the end of the communist era when the democrats wanted to cancel communist traces by destroying all the manufactures and industrial fabrics. This chaos was the best scenario for the appropriation of many properties.

4 - *The houses of the members of the Party though, needed a place that could fulfill many functions; it should have had strong symbolic values, it should have been safe in case of attack, it should have been architecturally representative in order to transmit a sense of wellbeing and prosperity to the working class to perceive a sense of progression; it should have been near the city center.*
Figure next page:

fig.1 - Antique inter-regional routes passing through Albanian territories.

National and international commerce connections in the XIX century

Design based on (Shkodra, 1984)
Principal road system of Tirana at the end of XVIII century

Design based on (Frasheri K., 2004, p. 171)
The urban core of Tirana at the beginning of the XX century (to be noticed the central structure of the bazar)

Design based on  (Cerasi, 1988, p.97)
up – road traffic structures drafted by Austrians on 1917

down – in orange part of the urban plan drafted on 1923

Design based on (Aliaj, Lulo, & Myftiu, 2003)
up – part of the Urban Plan of the year 1926

down – Urban Plan of the year 1928

Design based on (Aliaj, Lulo, & Myftiu, 2003)
Up – road circular system in the Urban Masterplan of the year 1942

Down – Tirana city Urban Conditions Rules in the Urban Masterplan of 1942

Design based on (Aliaj, Lulo, & Myftiu, 2003)
from top to bottom;
- first project for the city center (Brasini, 1923)
- third variant of the city center (Austrian architect, 1931)
- fourth option of the city center (F. De Fausto, 1931)
- adjustment of the city center (Masterplan 1942)
- entrance of the square of the ministries (Brasini, 1923)
- Office of Prefecture from Scanderbeg Square (Brasini, 1923)
- gardens in Scanderbeg square finished in 1936
- hypothetic reconstruction of the city center (Masterplan, 1942) (Aliaj, Lulo, & Myftiu, 2003)
from top to bottom;
- Brasinian north-south central axis (second version, 1925)
- view of the northern part of the Boulevard Zog after inauguration in 1931
- Plan layout of Boulevard “Via del Impero” (Masterplan, 1942)
(Aliaj, Lulo, & Myftiu, 2003) (Rama, 2000)
1 – south-eastern aerial view of the city center (1930s)

2 – the former Ministry of Justice and Education

3 – Assicurazioni Generali in Via Toptani, near the Clock Tower (1930)

4 – houses of clerks in the New Tirana zone built form 1930-37

5 – Headquarters of the Parliament (1928)

6 – view from the works of the construction of the Olympic Stadium

7 – House of Fascio (today the Politekniku i Tiranes and Akademia e Arteve)

(Aliaj, Lulo, & Myftiu, 2003) (Rama, 2000)
Chapter two
Post – Industrial Tirana

7. Satellite towns

The keystones of the overturning of the Albanian society from a political, economical, social and cultural condition to a new one, the moments of fracture, and particularly those of Tirana, can be expressed with the help of a theory of the French mathematician, René Thom, the catastrophe theory, a definition of which can be as follows:

[Catastrophe theory is fundamentally concerned with the relationship between quantitative and qualitative change. It deals with the fact that a continuous process (quantitative change) can operate within a system producing no noticeable change in its form (qualitative change) until a sudden qualitative change takes place (commonly conceptualized as reaching a threshold).] (Day & Tivers, 1979).

There are many crucial moments during a century of Albanian nation and in this chapter will be discussed those crucial moments that occurred in Tirana from the construction of industrial areas to nowadays. So the first and maybe the most important fracture moment with be exactly the construction of the industrial sites. The first communist Regulatory Plan of the 1957 was
put in front of a small Tirana, a hybrid city between Islamic and Christian worlds, between European boulevards and oriental bazars, mostly relying its economy on agriculture and craftsmanship. This plan aimed to change totally the city by making a tabula rasa with the oriental and occidental past.

However the communist transformation wasn’t concentrated only in the capital city, since, more or less every city in Albania went through essential changes during the period. Of the development of many cities, that of Durres, the ex capital city and one of the most important cities in the past, was noticeable. The communist regime brought Durres to its original role as the biggest port city of the country; first Albanian railway constructed in 1948 connected Durres to Peqin (South Albania), and after that, a second railway of 38 km was built connecting Durres to Tirana in the years 1948-49. During this period the regime rapidly rebuilt Durres, expanded the port and established a variety of heavy industries. The construction of important infrastructures brought the connection between Durres and Tirana to a continuous increase during communism and after it. The importance of the port was summed to that of the capital city and this brought them by the end of communism at the top positions compared to the rest of the country. In fact, the highest rates of positive migration after the fall of the Wall were toward these two cities.

Industrial development of cities was planned through five-year plans and the collocation of industries within urban settlements was the most important point of the new urban plans. The first urban plan for Tirana’s development during communism was “…drawn up in 1957 and its basis consisted in a renewed development of the existing zones and creating new peripheral areas in the form of satellite towns in order to provide the labor force for the new local industry (mechanical and textile), agricultural enterprises and coal mines mainly along the main transport roadways and toward the outskirt of the city.” (Aliaj, et al., 2003, p. 52). The industrialization of the capital was
made following the soviet model of satellite towns. The original urban core was expanded along the main infrastructural arteries, railway (to Durres) and road connections; *Rruga e Durrresit, Rruga e Kavajes, Rruga e Dibres* (the principal connections toward Durres, Kavaja, Diber etc.). The city wasn’t enclosed anymore within an urbanized area, but turned into an archipelago of urban settlements, which will be the fundamental setting for the nowadays metropolis.

This archipelago (see the schematic representation) will be the future footprint that will guide the expansion of the capital city. The new industrial areas (in purple in the scheme i.) and their relative housing units nearby (in red) will act like new cells for new urban expansion during the 1990s, and the rail (in orange) and road connections (in cyan) will act like a skeleton or a network, for the future expansion. The new urban plan provided rail binaries that connected Tirana to Durres and other cities creating a network of industrial areas. The railway entered to Tirana from north, and it subdivided in three main directions, toward three principal industrial sites of the capital; *Kombinat* (number 1 in the scheme), *Valias* (2), *Allias* (3)\(^1\).

The redesign of the city was a priority for the socialist govern because it had to demonstrate the power and the strength of the new society that was about to get born. The capital, due to its national importance and visibility, was the principal location for experiments of the socialist urbanism. There was a redesign of the main streets, the riverbed of Lana river was straighten out, which followed the traces of the Italian intervention. Many mono-functional new quarters were built and the edges of the main streets like; *Rruga e Durrresit, Rruga e Kavajes, Bulevardi Zogu I Pare* etc., were defined by rationalist style buildings, repeated in series, enclosing within their 4-6 stories the old city, the oriental one that existed before communism, made of low private houses (red circle *a* in scheme ii.). Immediately outside (ring *b* in

---

1 - Nowadays, due to the closing of industrial sites, the only binaries which have resisted to transformations are those of the central train station, which will also be removed soon, as the train station will be rebuild approximately 4 km to the west. The former binaries (those connecting with the industrial sites of Kombinat and Valias) have been removed but their traces are still legible in the territory as they have been substituted with asphalted car streets.

(left – view from works of construction of the “bed” of Lana river

right - blocs of flats of habitations in the two sides of Str. of Kavaja

(Aliaj, Lulo, & Myftiu, 2003)
scheme ii.) of the main urban core the new urban plan will locate new urban and national services, such as; hospitals (the military hospital and the “Nene Tereza” hospital), sport centers (palace of sport “Asllan Rusi”) and stadiums (Selman Stermasi), prisons (Prison nr 313), state archives (“Drejtoria e arkivit te shtetit”), universities (“Faculty of Construction Engineer”) and students residences, cinematographic and radio television studios (RTSH – Radio Televizioni Shqipetar), etc. In some cases industrial areas were located nearby the road ring too, even though the majority of industry was detached from it.

If we’d need a definition of the urban distribution of the capital city of that period we would say that it was made of a central original nucleus (ring a), composed of low housing quarters defined at their borders by high rationalist buildings, all of it divided from the external band of the industrial sites (ring c) by an urban void (ring b) filled with national/urban services.

Within every one of these three parts of the city’s structure there were elements different from each-other by morphological composition, historical value and specific characteristics.

Outside of the urban core, in the middle of the countryside, along road and rail connections, there were the industrial sites, supported by new housing blocks for the necessary labor force. Housing for the new workers of the industry was basically thought of as a dormitory; small apartments, basic services in common, open spaces enclosed by prefabricated housing, green spaces nearby, public transport that connected them to the city etc. The basic philosophy of the new form of society that was being built needed social equality, thus many new apartment units for industrial workers. This became very soon the first priority for the city’s development. The need to accommodate a great number of new coming workers meant also very small
housing units.

The attention the regime gave to open spaces, plazas, streets and open spaces, as well as to historical monuments and buildings that contained important official functions was of maximum importance. The regime was represented by, and constructed in base of, as well as reinforced with, impression and sense of grandiosity the population had to have in front of spatial elements projected as the regime imagined them. Therefore, the city’s central plaza (today Sheshi Skenderbej), as well as the buildings that defined its perimeter, and the central Italian axis, together with the monumental buildings that defined it, those built during the Italian period and those built during communism, assumed an important role in the creation of a sense of nationalism, as well as that of the unlimited state’s power (translated in a sense of subordination for simple citizens). The military parades were held in the central axis to show to the world the strength of the nation in case of foreign attack.

The project for the central plaza was designed at the end of the 60s and was presented with a black and white model in 1970, and it was built approximately as it was presented. Monumentality was conceived to express the will and the power of Albania to reborn in a brand new way, away from the Oriental or Occidental past, turning down the old bazar (to make room for the Palace of Culture, built in the 50s), the Orthodox Cathedral (to make room for the fifteen story Hotel Tirana, the highest building in the Country until the 90s), the City Hall (to make room for the National Historical Museum) and many small buildings, mainly houses that were in the perimeter of the project.

Despite the grandiosity of the central plazas and the principal buildings, Albania was passing through economic troubles which affected very much the development of its capital city as well. The duality between the

(left – model of the center of the city designed on 1970)

(right – view military parades in the central Italian axis in the 1970s)

(Aliaj, Lulo, & Myftiu, 2003), (R. Sejko, 2008)
monumental city center and the decaying periphery showed immediately how Tirana was rapidly falling apart. New dormitories for the labor force were being constructed with the lowest quality and many services of new housing units were missing. The quality of constructions was modest and very soon they will be an obvious problem Tirana will have to deal with. The extremism of the Albanian communist system can be distinguished from that of the other Eastern countries because, even in conditions of extreme poverty the government was concentrated in producing bunkers and armaments to protect the country from hypothetical foreign invasions (Albania, il Paese di fronte, 2008). The industry was obsolete and food supplies were ending. Queues for basic food supplies (picture below), like; bread, milk and oil were becoming longer and longer. This economic stagnation ended with the fall of the Wall, but until then the Country was blocked, closed, isolated to the entire world, and the consequences, especially of the last part of the dictatorship will be suffered for the future decades in the hardest way.

The last Regulatory Plan made during communism was legally the basic instrument for Tirana’s development until 2012. It was approved in 1989 and calculated 317 000 inhabitants for the capital in 2005 (instead of almost a million that it really had in that year) and didn’t predict any of the future developments of capital. This plan has been substituted only lately with a regulatory plan prepared by Albanian and foreign professionals. Another urban plan was approved in 2004 but never got operative.
8. First sprawl. The fall of the Wall

Another important fractural moment that the capital city passed through was the one after 1990. This fracture was mainly political as Albania passed from an ideology to another, from the socialist form to the democratic one. This fracture brought the abrupt change of every aspect that until 1990 characterized the Albanian model, passing from a system of centralized politics and networked production to a system of networked politics and a centralized production. The passage from one political system to another brought with it the desire to totally cancel the past for moving forward. Thus identitary references were forcibly removed, rejecting history as the sole manner to look toward “contemporary futures”. This change wasn’t only political but socio-cultural as much as economical also.

This passage was brusque in Albania (compared to other former socialist countries) because of its strong dictatorship and because, especially after 1978 (after the breakup of the relations with China) Albania was defined as “the only center of true Communism” in the world. (Aliaj, et al., 2003), which means that its opening to the world in 1990 had dramatic consequences overall Albanian society. These changes brought to an emergent situation of mass migration toward the capital city and toward foreign countries. But why did migration happened in the first place? Why did Tirana had the highest rates? After the fall of communism the state control over the movement of the population within and outside the country, no longer existed. Therefore, the dynamics of migration, both internal and external, were driven exclusively by economic impulses and necessities.

However, the economic difficulties of the average Albanian family of the early 90s, influenced negatively and slowed migration. Thus, there will be two
modes to migrate at the beginning of the 90s; on the one hand, the wealthiest families will migrate abroad or toward the capital city from all the country (migration toward Tirana was for better standards of living, as well as better education and future work chances); on the other hand, the poorest families supported the migration of young males, between the age of 15-25, which had to migrate alone and sustain their families from abroad\(^2\).

In Tirana, expansion and urbanization were located around the previous urbanized areas, in continuity with them, such as the old quarters of prefabricated blocks near ex-industrial areas. The infrastructural grid that previously connected these satellite cities with the city served as a connection to the new abusive nucleus of houses.

Construction companies did exist previously in Albania, but they were property of the state. Thus, when private entrepreneurship was needed to built big housing estates there was a lack of experts of capitalist models able to deal with the private property and market trends. Only at the end of the 1990s will private companies flourish. Thus, the first wave of expansion of the city was mainly of small units that filled empty spaces with micro illegal constructions (micro compared to prefab units) happened to become the growth mode of the existing city. Public space was quickly occupied with small illegal business and volumes added to existing buildings were becoming part of the architectural language of the city. The existing city got overloaded very quickly with small volumes that utilized every cubic centimeter of space.

In conclusion, an important fracture of this first sprawl with the communist city was of a dimensional nature. Small, low and private housing spread in the territory, or as extensions / enlargements of the ground floor of the existing built for commercial use, versus the communist model of high density residential quarters, as described by Zanfi in 2009;
They (the residential prefabricated blocks built during communism) are almost illegible in the urban texture, because violently deformed not only in their bodies – additions, substitutions, closing of entrances, progressive appearance of ground floor commercial activities – but also in the adjacent areas and in the fragile open spaces surrounding the buildings. The distance between the residential blocks has been saturated by the rising of a pervasive residential-handicraft-commercial type that made the pedestrian walking very complex, and produced a problematic hyper-densiication in the relations between the private and the open space.] (Zanfi, 2009)

Moreover, since nothing was built by the state any longer, planning had changed and the rule was the self-construction. Before 1990, the precise number of inhabitants of a city was approved by its Urban Plan, and also the amount of public spaces and amenities for every person. Instead, after 1990, this rule didn’t exist and the number of inhabitants allowed was regulated by a chaotic market economy of land prices, infrastructures etc. and public space was occupied by squatters.

With the end of the communist regime, architecture and the figure of the architect passed through stiff changes too (Aliaj, et al., 2003, pp. 85-99), and this lead to the break of architectural continuity in Albania. Vernacular architecture developed and Tirana became the laboratory of many national architectural models. We can see in Tirana “shtëpi Elbasançe” (typical model of Elbasan - central Albania), “shtëpi Gjirokastrite” (model from Gjirokastër - south Albania), “shtëpi Shkodrançe” (northern model from Shkodra) etc.

Vernacular architecture filled every empty space within the existing city and consumed the territory around the city, urbanizing and creating new quarters, breaking the “borders” that once separated the city from the countryside.

expansion of Kamez area from 1995 (left) to 2009 (right)

(Aliaj, Lulo, & Myftiu, 2003), Albinfo
Interstitial space between buildings were occupied very fast and new volumes upon communist buildings were also added.

The granular expansion will affect the adjacent municipalities of Tirana also; Kamez, Dajt, Paskuqan, Kashar, Farke, and they will start growing since the beginning of the 90s, yet very slowly though. These areas reach their maximum expansion rates only after the events of 1997.


The pyramid scheme (as known in Albania), or the Ponzi scheme (as known worldwide), is an economical system based on funds or companies which attract investors by offering them very high returns.

[In a typical pyramid scheme, a fund or company attracts investors by offering them very high returns; these returns are paid to the first investors out of the funds received from those who invest later. The scheme is insolvent—liabilities exceed assets—from the day it opens for business. However, it flourishes initially, as news about the high returns spreads and more investors are drawn in. Encouraged by the high payouts, and in some cases by showcase investments and ostentatious spending by the operators, still more people are drawn in, and the scheme grows until the interest and principal due to the early investors exceeds the money paid in by new investors. To attract new investors, a scheme may raise interest rates, but the larger]
interest payments soon force it to raise rates again. Eventually, the high rates begin to arouse suspicion or the scheme finds itself unable to make interest payments. When investors try to get their money out, they discover the truth about the scheme, whose demise is swift—and usually accompanied by acts of outright theft by the operators, if they are not caught first.… Some of the Albanian companies meet this definition exactly: they were pure pyramid schemes, with no real assett.] (Jarvis, 2000)

Some Albanian companies started to operate around 1992 and continued until march 2007. After which the country went toward an almost civil war, causing more than two thousand dead, not only because of the armed riots, but also because of many incidents, tragedies and massacres between armed civilians after the opening and abandonment of military deposits, as described in The Independent of March, 04;

[It will be almost impossible for any government to reassert control over a restive, angry population, now armed to the teeth.]’ (Gumbel, 1997).

Many scholars have said that what brought the government in loss of control and to declaration of state of emergency at the beginning of March 97’ (ATA. (1997, March 2). Agjencia Telegrafike Shqiptare. www.ata.gov.al/), were the unfamiliarity of the government with financial markets, and the national formal financial system had many deficiencies, and this encouraged the development of informal markets.

In Tirana, at the end of 1996 anybody who would have been wandering around would have smelled and sounded like being in a slaughterhouse, as farmers would have been droving their animals around to the market to invest
the proceeds in the pyramid scheme, (Jarvis, 2000). “Hypnotized” people of every city all around the country sold their belongings to make money and invest it in these companies with high rates, sometimes with “…extraordinary high monthly interest rates, ranging from 8 per cent to a literally unbelievable 35 per cent…” (Vickers, 1997). Even if the events of 1997 were caused by economic mechanisms, the main consequences for the country were of social nature. The collapse of the pyramidal scheme brought to profound political and social disequilibrium and the economic aspect of that period is nothing compared to its social consequences. The Ponzi scheme created in the first half in Albania implicated one every seven families (Smirnova, 2004, p. 454) bringing heavy consequences for Albania.

The reconstruction of the events of 1997 is not the main object of this chapter, nevertheless, the main social effect of that period was the division of the country in North and South ( there happened to be a clash between the northern (Ghegs) that supported Sali Berisha and southern (Tosk) that supported the Socialist Party leadership. This division is the hardest effect to deal with even today.

The sense of insecurity in other Albanian cities brought a great number of new coming migrants to Tirana, and, because of the unsafe situation, they used to gather in groups of houses/neighborhoods of the same origin. Therefore, the sense of division, north and south, can be noticed in Tirana still today. Northern sections of the city; “Paskuqan” – “Bathore” – “Kamez” are populated mostly by migrants coming from the northern Albania (Ghegs), and “Komuna e Parisit” – “Kombinat” – “21 Dhjetori” (south and south-western quarters) are mostly inhabited by southern people (Tosks).

The frightening conditions in many other cities obligated many people from all over the country to migrate toward the capital city. The migration of after ’97
is different from that of the first part of the 1990s because it wasn’t pushed for major working opportunities or better instruction but for greater safety. Basically, there was the need to get away from very hostile and isolated territories.

Afterwards, the mass migration toward the capital city created the best setting for the birth of big construction companies to sustain the number of incoming inhabitants by building tall and high density residential complexes. This changed radically the model of Tirana’s urban growth. The density of these new residential complexes exceeded much the density of the existing city and changed the way of expansion of Tirana. Now, along with minute illegal housing were being built tall buildings too.

The distinction between the city and the countryside, clearly visible until 1997, was soon cancelled by the mass migration and expansion boom. More and more areas along the main accesses of the city were populated and brought urbanization values to the highest values. The line between urban and rural territory was no longer visible if not holding a map that differentiated legal boundaries of the city from the neighboring communes to Tirana, such as; Kamez, Paskuqan, Farke, Vaqar, which began to grow until they created, along with Tirana, a continues city.


The general political equilibrium and the economic development of the country - jointly with the Regional forces in a state of balance, after the Kosovo War
- brought to an urban revival of Tirana from 2002. State’s control began to be felt in decision making for the future of the capital city. Illegal constructions were turned down to make room for public spaces and facades of old buildings were being restored.

At this stage of the development another big fracture with the past was about to begin and it was mainly of urban nature.

Since 2002, the urbanization of Tirana didn’t happen merely as an illegal impulse anymore, or at least, less than before. Now expansion was based on a quasi-urban planning and control by the authorities. The definition of the city as we see it today started in 2002. All illegal kiosks and tall hotels, restaurants, bingos etc. built in the center of the city and along the Lana river were turned down to make room for public spaces. The remake of the gray facades promoted by the major attracted the attention of the international community. Illegal construction were not fully tolerated by the authorities and, at least the core of the new metropolis, was not flooded with shacks, kiosks, bars and cafes sheet any more. The signal of a state control was very important for the growing of legal enterprises and control of public space.

The new highway Tirana-Durres, which construction terminated in 2000, has since then assumed the guise of a commercial corridor attracting most of the national and international private investments share. The concentration of joint ventures in Durana (Tirana + Durres) much higher than the rest of the country taken all together, as showed in the graphic below, and it increased sensitively after 2001. In the same area the number of new enterprises were highly concentrated in here.

Migration also changed and reached its peak. If before it was based on safety necessities, people started moving in Tirana for a better education and more job opportunities (like at the beginning of the 1990s). The economic conditions
of the average family had improved considerably and the first generation of young males that migrated abroad at the beginning of the 90s started to turn back and invest in Tirana. The number of private companies and businesses grew significantly and the SH2 (SH2 - the highway connection between Tirana and Durres) area became the most convenient choice for investment. During the last ten years the SH2 has grown steadily and has become the favorite place where to set up a private university, a mall or a wholesale, and has led to continuous urbanization and territorial expansion of the capital along it, leading to the creation of Durana.

After the beginning of the third sprawl what is interesting about Tirana, is the fact that many quarters are quite homogeneous, in a social sense. If we think about the origin of their inhabitants (from which locality of the country they come), their economical status, their social class, as much as their culture and tradition, we would think of Tirana as the back of a turtle, subdivided in distinguishable parts. The metropolitan area is composed of almost homogeneous areas which host inhabitants generally from the same part of Albania, thus, generally of the same political color (the division between North and South that happened during the events of 1997 still persists).

Undeniably, not all the quarters are that homogeneous, and we could never say that mixture has not succeeded in Tirana, nevertheless, we can say that if we would try to classify quarters in base of the above mentioned characteristics, we would define the quarters of “Komuna e Parisit” – “Kombinat” – “21 Dhjetori” (south and south-western quarters) as socialist quarters inhabited mainly from south Albanian people, and that the “Paskuqan” – “Bathore” – “Kamez” (northern Tirana) as democratic quarters which host people mainly from the north Albania.

The author conducted the study of how the political color of single Minibashki
(Mini-Municipality) of Tirana have changed during the last decade (figure below), because this differentiation of the quarters in base of the political color of their inhabitants has influenced very much the choices of Tirana’s majors during the past two decades of sprawling and consequently, it has had an important role in the development of the whole city. The discontinuity or irregularity of development for certain areas of the city when the power passed from a party to the other has brought a strong instability and has interrupted many times the city’s progress. Important metropolitan projects that a Major would have started have never been continued after him, except small projects (mostly because of political instability it took two decades to be drafted and approved the new *Regulatory Urban Plan* of Tirana). This discontinuity can be thought of as a *fracture* in the urban history of Tirana, a new one. It would be interesting to find out the results of the elections held for Tirana’s major before 2003, however the politic and economic stability of Albania came after the Kosovo War in 2002 (due to stability within the region of South East Europe at the end of the war in Kosovo). This regional stabilization brought a national economic progress. The regional stability is also reflected in stable - or at least more reliably than before – voting process, as well as gradual raising of participation in the polls. Tirana began at that period its *flourishing Era* of Edi Rama, with the first wave of demolishment of illegal constructions in the city center and along the Lana river, and several other interventions.

By the diagrams of the results of elections represented in the figure above it can be seen that, at least from 2003 until 2011, in the “*Minibashki no.5 and no.7*” (Tirana is divided into eleven Mini-Municipality) commonly known as “*Komuna e Parisit*” and “*21 Dhjetori*”, south-west and west, the *party color* of the majority of their inhabitants has been the socialist red, while on “*Minibashki no. 8 and No. 11*”, commonly known as “*Rruga Siri Kodra* “ and “*Koder Kamez*”, to the north and northwest, the majority of the party color is
the democratic blue one. Relying on the figure above, generally, the north of Tirana is inhabited mainly by people who has come from democratic areas of the country, and to the south of the city there are more people who come from socialist areas. Having a look upon Tirana’s development, we can easily realize that it’s sprawling have succeeded along infrastructural arteries, and in better conditions these infrastructural arteries were, the more intense the sprawling have been. Thus, the intensity of sprawling/expansion of an area have depended on public investments for new infrastructures. In this way, the political color of Minibashki have strongly influenced the choices of mayors regard the construction of public works, public financing, building amnesties, issuing of building permits, etc. Therefore, these choices have led to the development of the entire city, location and intensity of expansion (if a mayor improves the infrastructure of an area determines its development), the settlement pattern and quality of life etc. Lastly more than before, a new process has entered the expansion of the capital city; the replacement of the low density sprawl with high-rise buildings. The auto regulation of the market has proved that Tirana is a dynamic urban area which grows and regenerates day after day. Many already old houses (built during the first wave of sprawling) have been turned down to make space for high-rise buildings. Even today, after already twenty years of fast growth, the demand for housing haven’t stopped, on the contrary has gone higher than before. Land prices near the city center are so high that many companies choose to buy a group of one, two or even three floor houses built after 1990, turn them down and build high-rise buildings. This have started a new process of urban replacement of the already old city with the new and more dense one. So, the market has decided that there is not only a matter of turning down the old to make room for the new but to turn down everything to make room for a dense urban settlements. Quarters that ten years ago were made of low buildings are now replaced with ten to twelve story blocks.
11. Durana, the territorial city

[Globalization goes together with regionalization. If between 1840 and 1960 the main political form of globalization was nation state, presently the leading political form of globalization is regionalization.] (Pieterse, 2009).

Regionalism is an effect of globalization as the power of single states is not adequate to affront and manage global tendencies. Many states cooperate with each-other, mostly economically, forming regions (one the latest examples is EU) (Sassen, 2006). This chapter will discuss about the position and role of Tirana-Durres, often known as Durana, the Albanian territorial city within the region of South-East Europe. The relations Durana has with its own Region determines many aspects of this New Mediterranean City.

Its geographical position and its connections through highways, airlines and maritime lines with Balkan territories and Western Countries determines its role and importance within a broader regional dimension. An historical description of the development of Tirana and Durres will be helpful for a critical analyzes of the genesis of Durana.

What we see today in the area of Tirana is the result of twenty years of uncontrolled urban expansion, and the only operative Regulatory Plan legally operative until 2012, was approved in 1993.

Tirana’s urban area grows rapidly along one of the most important highways of the Country, the “Rrugë shtetërore SH2” (the National Roadway SH2), which connects the capital city with the sea city of Durres, about 35 km to the west. The fast urbanization between the two cities has been made possible
and enhanced by the growing economy of Albania and by the growing role of the two cities within the region, especially after the War in Kosovo in 2002, which brought a political stability in the Balkans. SH2 had to be enlarged and reconstructed in year 2000 because of the great demand for communication between the most active cities at the beginning of the new millennium, and this brought to a growing urban expansion along it during the last decade.

As Saskia Sassen points out, the power of single states tend to weaken because nowadays economy depends much more from metropolitan regions, which act like trade cores, than from the states (Sassen, 2006). So, the economy of a country depends on the economic strength of its metropolitan area and on its integration within a broader regional scale, as much as on the power its region has upon worldwide economic fluxes.

The trend of Tirana to expand toward Durres by ensuring access to the sea, makes the development of the infrastructural, economic and political systems of this territorial city, become a propaedeutic step for Tirana’s development too, but not only, as the character of this metropolitan area has assumed a broader role. It is this moment of change - because of the change of international forces and developments - that defines whether a city has to develop and enhance its power upon a geopolitical evolution, or it has to diminish gradually until becoming a shrinking urbanity, unable to affront exterior forces.

Nowadays Durana has become the starting point for direct lines of communication in all directions of the Country and the international expressways which goes up to Kosovo, or the “Koridori 8” and “Rruga e Arberit” etc. that go towards Macedonia and Bulgaria passing through Skopje and Sofia, up to Varna on the Black Sea.

The goal of the analysis of the region is to identify the role of Durana which...
is a piece of the mosaic of South-East Europe. The trend of Tirana to expand toward the city of Durres to the west, ensuring access to the sea, makes the analysis of the infrastructural, economic and political systems of the territorial city Tirana-Durres, become a propaedeutic step to Tirana’s analysis itself. The investigation of Albania’s role and of the international agreements to which it is part, also as the investigation of the economic relationships of Tirana-Durres with the rest of the region will explain even further the nature of this territorial city.

Every former communist country has gone through the transitional process after the fall of the Wall, but Albania, having had 45 years of extreme dictatorship, is still suffering the consequences which are most obvious respect all other ex-socialist countries. This makes Tirana the most appropriate case for studying the consequences of that period onto the urban settlement. The two scales of interpretation and analysis, the regional one and the urban one, cannot be considered separately because the city’s development is influenced by the whole organism to which it belongs. On the one hand, any change at the regional level directly affects the city. At the other hand, the development of the city itself gives positive feedback for the whole region. If a city is not able to support and to cope with a certain level of regional development, then it directly affects the entire development of the region.

The latest decision of the newly arrived mayor of Tirana to move the train station to Kashar, the northwest periphery of the current position, gives us a very clear signal on the extent of the capital. This decision confirms totally the trends of the last 20 years to create a territorial city with the western seaside city of Durres. In fact, the highway that connects the two cities is day by day assuming the role of a functional axis, charged with firms and businesses, shopping malls and private universities.
Actually, Durana has to affront many issues of environmental, social and economical nature, and the system of the brownfield areas can be an excellent opportunity for a redesign of the urban fabric, of the system of public areas and of in-between spaces, sparking a sustainable reorganization of the city that would address the historical logic of these areas, pieces of city “with strong pedestrian connections” and “transit oriented”. Taken together with the systems of public spaces, environmental and archaeological, the rethinking of these areas can contribute most effectively to the birth of a new Tirana able to respond to the territorial dimension by creating the necessary urban conditions in order not only to be able to support (the territorial dimension), but even emphasize it aiming to become Balkan’s Western Gate.
up – Urban Plan of 1957

down – panoramic view of Tirana of the 1980s

(Aliaj, Lulo, & Myftiu, 2003)
up – Urban Plan of 1989

down – Urban Plan of 1989

(Aliaj, Lulo, & Myftiu, 2003)
up - graphic joint venture concentration 2001-2012

down - graphic of new enterprises as per 2006-2011

(Salaj, 2012)
From up to down the voting result for major in Tirana and nearby areas in 2003 – 2007 – 2011

Red color – socialists

Blue color – democrats

images elaborated in base of KQZ statistics (KQZ, 2011)
Figures next pages:

fig. 1 - Contemporary inter-regional routes passing through Albanian territories or strongly connected to its development.

fig. 2 - The urban footprint of Tirana (the build-up environment and the road network) until it became the capital city in 1920 (the ottoman city), after the western (Austrian and Italian) interventions until 1942, at the beginning of its industrialization in 1965, and at the end of the communist regime. In gray its extension in 2010.

fig. 3 - The highlighting of the relationship of industrial areas with the urban extension of Tirana during communism and after the two decades of uncontrolled urban sprawl
Second Part
The Birth of Durana
Chapter Three
From Under – Urbanization to Fast Sprawl

1. The Sovietization of South - East Europe

Notwithstanding the need to cooperate in order to recover after WWII and also to confront external forces, not only the Balkans never worked together, but instead, they developed in totally different ways.

- The Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia followed the example of, and allied with, the Soviet Union after WWII but in 1948 Tito (the Yugoslavian leader) chose not to be part of the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (CoMEcon) in 1949 and in the Warsaw Pact, but also it did not take advantage of the Marshall Plan. Yugoslavia took a neutral stance in the Cold War and became a founding member of the Non-Aligned Movement and pursued one of its center-left influences that promoted a non-confrontational policy towards the U.S.

- Greece went through a long civil war from 1946-49 between communist and anti-communist forces, causing economic damage and social tensions, but after this period, for the successive three decades, it experienced a rapid

1 - At the end of the XIX century and the beginning of the XX century new states were getting born from the territories ruled from the Ottoman empire, and all the Balkan states started their foundation about from the same stage of development. The Balkans were subdivided in provinces ruled by the Ottomans and commercial routes and bazaars connected them all together. From the beginning of the XX century the new Balkan states established their autonomy and independence while being under the pressure both from West and East in order to establish their own. These pressures after the War brought also to an attempt to unify Albania, Yugoslavia, Greece and Bulgaria in a Balkan’s Confederation but it never happened.

From the end of the forties to the beginning of the 50s until the fall of the Wall Albania interrupted the relations with the confining countries.
economic growth, propelled in part by the Marshall Plan. Greece and Turkey were the first countries to receive economic aid (1947) from the Marshall Plan because they were seen as the front line of the battle against communist expansion.

-Albania, on the other hand, chose to be part of the Eastern Block. It became part of CoMEcon on 22 February 1949 and Hoxha aligned himself with the Soviet Union followed by the break with Yugoslavia after an attempt of Tito to annex Albania to Yugoslavia. Albania remained important both as a way to put pressure on Yugoslavia and also to serve as a pro-Soviet force in the Adriatic Sea, subsequently, from 1948–1960, $200 million in Soviet aid would it receive for technical and infrastructural expansion.

As a result, from the beginning of the fifties, Albania would be surrounded by countries which weren’t allies, consequently, any infrastructural development intended to be build after would remain and would consider only the territory within national borders. This is the first difference between the development of Albania during communism and every other ex-communist country of the Eastern Europe. Nevertheless, Albania’s isolation will reach the peak after the break with China in 1978, remaining without any ally in the whole world until 1990. The lack of experience in regional planning and the past total segregation in a globalizing Era, will define its slow development for the last two decades (1990-2010), especially from a regional perspective.

Isolation, which was an effect of the severity of Hoxha’s regime in Albania, brought to the other big difference between Albania and all Eastern Europe: under-urbanization.

In fact, despite the increase of people living in the cities, Albania maintained the lowest level of urbanization in Europe².

### Growth of urban population in Eastern Europe, 1950–1990

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>1950</th>
<th></th>
<th>1970</th>
<th></th>
<th>1990*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>000</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>000</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East Germany</td>
<td>13,040</td>
<td>72.0</td>
<td>12,592</td>
<td>73.8</td>
<td>15,759</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poland</td>
<td>9,605</td>
<td>39.0</td>
<td>17,088</td>
<td>52.3</td>
<td>2,310</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Czechoslovakia</td>
<td>6,354</td>
<td>51.5</td>
<td>8,942</td>
<td>62.3</td>
<td>11,836</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hungary</td>
<td>3,553</td>
<td>38.6</td>
<td>4,992</td>
<td>48.2</td>
<td>6,295</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Romania</td>
<td>3,713</td>
<td>23.4</td>
<td>8,335</td>
<td>40.9</td>
<td>11,723</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bulgaria</td>
<td>2,001</td>
<td>27.5</td>
<td>4,510</td>
<td>52.9</td>
<td>5,967</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yugoslavia</td>
<td>3,169</td>
<td>21.9</td>
<td>7,385</td>
<td>35.9</td>
<td>1,125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Albania</td>
<td>220</td>
<td>20.5</td>
<td>800</td>
<td>37.4</td>
<td>1,135</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>41,785</td>
<td>39.4</td>
<td>63,644</td>
<td>51.2</td>
<td>83,920</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: *Data refer to years 1988, 1989, or 1990.

(Hamilton, 2005, p. 84)
Three factors account for these low figures in Albania:

- **First**, there was an explicit propagandistic rural-led development programme (through books, films, journals etc.), which, despite industrialization, saw agriculture and agro industry as being a prime economy to the country’s development.

- **Second**, there was the maintenance of higher rate of natural increase of the rural population (high birth rate in rural agglomerations was also encouraged by public incentives).

- **Third**, because of constrains on rural-urban migration, the officially quoted figure for this movement in the later 80s was just 0.4% of the rural population per annum (Sjöberg, 1989, pp. 91-121).

Internal migration was planned and restricted. Free movement of the population in the country was not permitted, especially when it came to migration toward the capital city\(^3\). This very particular development will

On the contrary of almost all the other Eastern capital cities, after 1990 Tirana experienced a **positive migration balance** (except of Moscow that had small variances). This **phase shift** of the rural-to-urban migration in Tirana was totally the opposite of that of any other capital city, especially during the last decades of socialism. Tirana, as shown in the table below, experienced the fastest expansion immediately after the fall of communism. Some of the capital cities had even a decline of their population (this point will be treated furthermore in the next paragraph).

Another difference of the Albanian case with other Eastern countries is the **stage of development** when they entered communism. The countries that adopted socialism in Central and South-East Europe, weren’t at the same stage of development after WWII. For example; the Western Czechoslovakia

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Growth rate (in %) of the capital cities of Eastern European countries. To be noticed Tirana’s growth (in red) after the} \\
\text{fall of the Wall as the highest compared to the other capital cities.}
\end{align*}
\]


3 – A local anecdote of the period said that: even if Enver Hoxha himself, walks outside of the city borders, needed a visa to turn back in.
and the former East Germany had had developed already advanced industrial bases under the capitalist period of pre-war; the former Yugoslavia, Bulgaria, and Romania entered socialism as agrarian or semi-agrarian societies, and some started their socialist period as predominantly agricultural societies; Poland and Hungary started their urbanization, almost from the beginning, during the socialist industrialization (even if they had inherited strong industrial centres or agglomerations, most of their areas were backward where industry was almost entirely lacking and urbanization was sparse). The last countries are called “pure” examples from Musil (Musil, 2005, p. 30). Since Albania’s urbanization coincides almost entirely with the communist period (was mostly an agrarian Country after the fall of WWII), it can also be considered a pure example.

Thus, the imprint of urbanization/industrialization is almost all of communist stamp, which means that it followed a determined urban model. Instead, the other countries, the one that had had already an advanced development before the communist development, are not entirely defined as Soviet models.

This point is important to this research because Tirana’s industrialization will lay the imprints in the territory where the after-1990 expansion will take place, hence, it’s necessary to identify the character of the original urban model (the urban model will be explained in the next paragraph). Notwithstanding the differences that characterize every nation of Central and Eastern Europe, something very important they have in common: they are all Border-Line Countries. Their being in a perennial condition of Border – Line Countries, not only geographically speaking but even culturally, always between - East and West, Occidental and Oriental cultures, between socialism and democracy, Romans and Ottomans, Napoleons and Tsars, Austro-Hungarian, German and Russian Empires, Warsaw Pact and Nato, etc. - has, not only influenced but also, determined the development of these countries (see figure below).
These circumstances have conditioned their cultural formation, their political development, their economy and their ability to create something different using Eastern and Western ingredients, and every nation got molded with a different recipe.

For instance, some of these countries, like; Albania, Romania, Bulgaria and Ex Yugoslavia, had been under the Ottoman rule. This have influenced strongly their attitude toward Western Europe, because cultural, as much as economical, influences passed through Ottoman filters. Instead, Hungary, Czech Republic and Slovakia had a different approach to Western Europe. Hungary had been part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, thus much more European than any other socialist country (even though it had been also under the Ottoman rule for a short period), the Czech Republic and Slovakia had already had many cultural, economic and industrial exchanges with European countries.

Being a border – line country can be a risky position as many complex international forces press, push and pull over the nation state and all this might determine directly whether a country will develop or not, and if yes, in which direction and which/what political-cultural-economic system/direction?

During the socialist era, the main cause of the development or not of a border line city was determined by its geographical position, as Hamilton points it out when he writes about the moment when Nikita Khrushchev led a campaign to ensure that industrialization in the socialist countries after 1958 (embedded in the Five Year Plans of 1960–1964 in most Eastern European states, and the Seven Year Plan of 1958–1964 in the USSR) should take the form of larger-scale, efficient, specialized facilities to serve the needs of the whole CMEA (rather than just the national) market. This stimulated the introduction of policies which created “international division of
labour” within the CMEA to “share out” development amongst member states and, hence, amongst the region’s cities. In practice, this meant that while the USSR could produce the entire range of products planned for the market, the other socialist states needed to specialize on much more restricted ranges of products. Thus, urban development after 1960 in Central and Eastern Europe – except of Albania and Yugoslavia, which were not CMEA members (Yugoslavia never entered CMEA and Albania wasn’t part of it from 1961) – was shaped by this type of CMEA industrialization policy.

[Finally, the combination of commodification as a systemic process and the geography of trade integration and city interdependencies has been leading to a fundamental reversal in the “fortunes” of cities located along, in or near the border zones of Central and Eastern European states. For many reasons, under socialism, integration with the former USSR endowed cities in the eastern regions with advantages, stimulating their growth – especially in eastern Poland, Hungary, Slovakia, Romania, and Bulgaria. Although this was less apparent in the Baltic states or in East Europe (Belarus, Ukraine, Moldova), cities in the western regions of Poland, the Czech Republic, and Hungary were considered “less safe” or “more risky” for development. Since 1989, this situation has been reversed, and cities in the western regions of Central and Eastern Europe, and that are close to EU borders, are in most cases experiencing vigorous growth of their economies] (Hamilton, 2005, p. 95)

CoMEcon (or CMEA) was realized by the Soviet Union in 1949, after the so-called “moment of truth” when Stalin required Czechoslovakia, Hungary and Poland to pull out from the Paris Conference of the EU Recovery programme 1947. CoMEcon, which was created to afford the pressure of the American

---

6 – this was made possible after the Sofia Principle of August 1949, which radically weakened Intellectual Property Rights. Every country’s technology was made available to others toward the payment of a very minimal charge. There is no need to specify that the countries that were favored much from this measure were the less developed (Soviet Union, Poland, Hungary and Albania), and that it wasn’t optimal for East Germany and Czechoslovakia.

This principle would weaken after 1968 because it became clear that it discouraged research (Hamilton, 2005).

7 – any country could opt out of any project they chose not to take part. For all operations of CoMEcon was necessary a decisions that required the unanimous ratification (because of the “Sovereign Equality” of all members) and a country could still use the VETO, but after the “Interested Party Principle” they were invited to just step aside in case of negative voting.
Marshall Plan in the Eastern Europe, was dominated by the Soviet Union which made 90% of CoMEcon’s land, the 70% of its population and the 65% of its total income. Thus, a program, that at first seemed to enhance cooperation between Eastern countries, soon would transform into a block of superpower (Russia) surrounded by its satellite countries.

Due to the technological underdevelopment of the country, one of the first moves of Stalin was that of making every country’s technology available for every state of CoMEcon (Bideleux & Jeffries, 1998).

The Soviet domination over CoMEcon countries were always dominated by the Soviet Union but in 1967 the “Interested Party Principle” came out, giving the possibility of singular states to gain a little freedom from the Soviet economic domination, but, at the same time it deprived CoMEcon of necessary power to achieve maximum economic efficiency.

In synthesis, the economic cooperation between Eastern countries, which worked out during the first period, when the intentions were those of the creation of a strong internal economy, turned to be unsuccessful because of the Soviet domination, which considered the other countries of the Block as satellite countries and not as allies. This was obvious when the call of Khrushchev in November 1962 for the formation of “a Common Single Planning Organ” was resisted by Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Poland and Romania, as they rejected the notion that they should specialize in agriculture. Thus, the production chain that connected Berlin-Warsaw-Moscow, very soon wouldn’t be much efficient. During the sixties many Eastern countries started to cooperate with Western countries. The polish invited FIAT in 1964 to invest/modernize old Soviet technology. The Soviets responded attracting FIAT to built the Togliatti new town) plant in Volga region. Romanians invited Renault to equip the new DACIA plant.

8 – [While private trade slowly limited or erased national rivalries in the EEC, state-to-state trade in CoMEcon reinforced national rivalries and resentments] (Hamilton, 2005).

9 - [The 1960s and 1970s saw substantial Western technology transfer to the "more liberal" socialist states, especially Poland and Hungary, following the path pioneered by President Tito in Yugoslavia as early as 1953 after the break-up with Stalin. This was not the case in East Germany, Czechoslovakia, or Bulgaria, which were more strongly “pro-Soviet” or “anti-Western” in their stance. Thus began a process of wider global integration of selected cities in more “liberal” socialist states in contrast to the continued greater isolation of cities in the “pro-Soviet” states, which still maintained most of their links within the CMEA, especially with cities in the USSR. And yet industry in East German cities experienced considerable modernization though “industrial espionage” of technologies evolved or located in West Germany.] (Hamilton, 2005, p. 89).
2. A Modified Christaller’s Theory

The singularity of socialist urbanization was that it adopted the centralized planning which established market prices arbitrarily\(^1\), unlike the western urbanization, which relied on free market tendencies, that influenced directly spatial forces and decision-making steps. This centralization suppressed local and regional autonomy, and most of the time weakened the relation between reality and theoretical decisions. As Claval wrote in 1998 “*central planning extended the circuits of information, harmed their quality and considerably encumbered the process of arriving at decisions*” (Claval, 1998, p. 250).

The distribution of resources, also at a regional dimension, was very high in socialist countries respect to those based on free market systems.

Even if similar planning approaches were embraced in Eastern Europe, the application of such measures were very different from case to case, and this depended mainly on the cultural and economic past as much as on international relations a country had.

The socialist territorial planning was based on a *modified Christaller’s theory*, which fundamentally tried to consider all of the territorial units as equally important for their role in the country, or at least not very different from other territorial units.

\[ \text{Therefore, the concept emphasized that the “centres” containing the basic components of the facilities with which their inhabitants and those of the hinterland zones could satisfy their rights and claims to education and health care, should be spread as evenly as possible throughout the country. … It was necessary to propose a system of urban centres and their hinterland zones in which every citizen, wherever he lived or} \]

---

1 - Working with neither meaningful exchange rates nor a market economy, Comecon countries had to look to world markets as a reference point for prices, but unlike agents acting in a market, prices tended to be stable over a period of years, rather than constantly fluctuating, which assisted central planning. Also, there was a tendency to underprice raw materials relative to the manufactured goods produced in many of the Comecon countries.\[\text{Specífica}\text{ta}\text{ fon}\text{te}\text{ no}\text{ n valida.}\]

2 - The government’s policy was to promote agriculture and local industry overall the country. Mining and agriculture largely determined the distribution of the economically active population, but in Albania the location of the natural resources did not necessarily coincide with the centers of population. (Gjonça, 2001).
worked, would share equally in modern public facilities at all levels, these being at readily accessible distances.] (Musil, 2005, p. 33).

This approach implied the decentralization of Eastern cities by equally distributing resources upon the territory\(^2\), which brought to the birth of many limits and rules that guided development.

The urban expansion of existing urban settlements was based on self-sufficient satellite cities, dormitories, connected to the original urban core. Scott made a description in 2009 of the planning intentions of the socialist urbanism;

\[\text{[Less like Le Corbusier and more like Ebenezer Howard, the Soviets tried to create self-contained new towns beyond the central city, rather than segregate residential, commercial, industrial, and cultural uses. ... The Soviet plans all show strong pedestrian connections between the home and civic institutions such as schools, hospitals and community centers. Additionally, the Soviet suburb is transit-oriented, with each new community designed with rail access. These suburbs were also planned for residential density, concentrating a critical mass of residents in a small area]}\text{ (Scott, 2009).}

Yet, even if the satellite cities were thought to be self-sufficient, lack of investments and economic difficulties often caused only a partial realization of the urban plans, that lacked on public services and good public spaces. This story is not unknown for the Albanian cities after the breakup of relationships with China in 1978 and the further total isolation, which brought to an unprecedented economic crises.

Socialist decentralization, that imposed arbitrarily fixed land prices, demolished

The countries favored from the Sofia Principle of 1949 (about Intellectual Property Rights) were the less developed (Soviet Union, Poland, Hungary and Albania) – dark grey, and the less advantageous for the most developed (East Germany and Czechoslovakia) – light grey.
every market based tendency of investment. Somehow, the prices were not imposed in base of location, and this gave almost the same price to the land in the city center and that in the periphery. Yet, the real difference between peripheral land and central one was not its price, but the permissions to build. Permission to build was very hard to get in the city center, and sometimes with very little incentives, on the contrary it was very easy to built in the periphery and to get public incentives.

This was the seed of the greatest difference between socialist and capitalist cities. It was meant to preserve the city center from overcrowding of population, and give hand to what is called under-urbanization, and distribute new urban dwellers in the satellite urban units, detached from the urban core. Instead, it started an expansive urban development which required more urbanization, and let the city center without any investment for the rest of the socialist regime.

Since permission to build was easier to get for a peripheral terrain location, respect the whole city’s structure, wasn’t important any more. Another difference between western and eastern urban cores will be the fact that, in socialist realms, city centers were abandoned from any kind of investment, and this brought them at the beginning of the 90s with a huge physical patrimony waiting for reparatory investments. The inner quarters of the city used to have a huge number of apartments in bad conditions.

Land price control made the socialist city develop in a different manner respect to the capitalist one, as it “disturbed” the “natural” curve of density, in the western sense of the word. When moving from the center to the suburbs, the socialist city had a high density in the center, which reduced in the transitional zones (mixed building dominated by obsolete large industry and other functions), and then back to the suburbs of high-density housing.
estates, which were located around industrial areas (Tosics, 2005, p. 51). Since housing prices were determined by the state, and since it was very difficult to get a permission to live in the city center, the major expansion was concentrated in the periphery, possibly near the industrial areas. Thus, while in western cities the urban density declined from the city center to the suburbs because of free economic trade market forces in housing prices, in the socialist city this was not possible. Instead, there was a system of three concentrically circles, a dense city center, a decline of the density in the transitional areas, and rise of the density in the suburbs.

Indeed, the real difference between western cities and eastern ones, is not to be searched in specific characteristics of their urban settlements but in the role decision making political and economic system had in shaping these cities. The eastern politics brought to a less socio-spatial differentiation in base of socio-economic status of the inhabitants. On the contrary the western city had a less mixed territory (Hegedüs & Tosics, 1996).

The distribution of the urban population, forced by a set of rules that followed a defined scheme, will turn out to be, not only different from the capitalistic type, but in some cases even unnatural. One of these cases was Cracow, that had more than half of the city’s population living in densities similar of New York City’s, one of the densest cities in the world and ten times bigger than Cracow (Bertaud & Buckley, 1997). According to Buckley and Bertaud, Cracow’s land use patterns and massive housing estates, wouldn’t have been situated in their present locations if market forces had governed locational decisions.

However, the control of the state over the demand and supply sides of the economy couldn’t be fully established, and could be fully maintained even less, during the ultimate decades of socialism. The history of the socialist housing model (Hegedüs and Tosics, 1996) illustrates this statement, by
showing the contrasting development tracks in different countries. An example of flop of the efficiency of state control was the case of Hungary, where, quite soon, both on the demand and on the supply side, alternative mechanisms (“cracks”) developed. In any given period, the real strength of state control was the outcome of compromises between conflicting political and economic interests, and this led to the almost total elimination of state control before the end of the 1980s in many Eastern countries, besides Albania, where, as it was said before in the previous chapter, state’s control was strict until the end.

The expansion of soviet cities was very different if we confront it with the western cities. First of all the expansion wasn’t a result of the centre-suburb migration but an external migration from other cities, toward a bigger one. Nevertheless, this migration was indirect because of the limit city growth the socialist system imposed. In all ex-Soviet countries the indirect migration toward the bigger cities couldn’t be stopped, and people employed by urban industry could only get accommodation outside urban centres, in suburban zones from where they could commute to work, and nobody could move to the city center without a permission. Due to the work offers these cities had for oncoming population, migration continued since the 50s-60s and, after 1989, with the breaking of the earlier political–administrative barriers to internal population flows, it would have continued increasingly\(^5\). Thus, we can say that the development of eastern urban settlements was somehow similar to the western model after the 60s, by bringing these metropolitan areas to an equilibrium since before the fall of the Wall.

\(^5\) - if only the number of industrial workplaces wouldn’t have decreased, and many big state-owned employers in the cities had closed down, and unemployment increased dramatically (although it was still the lowest in the largest cities).

After the fall of the Regime, Albania went through a disenchantment veiled with repudiation toward its near past, which gave birth to a general tendency of Westernization (meaning with West the countries of Western Europe and USA) (Lubonja, 2002). This sentiment, which is not specific to the Albanian case or the Mediterranean or ex-socialist countries, is a concept of Raymond Boudon according to which the nationalization of history leads to its deniel, and the more a country’s history is reinterpreted and filtered by the regime the fastest and the strongest this perverse effect will be. This was the case of Albania.

However, in Albania this was aggravated by the fact that communism left it underdeveloped compared to the neighboring countries. Consequently, the urban expansion of the main cities is erasing important historical traces as they do not represent development. Once again, as it happened during the first republic, the monarchy, communism, democracy, cities are being expanded by canceling the past in the name of progress. Only by acknowledging this temporal gap, and by knowing the evolution of the local thought, which is also the best expression of the local dynamics of urban development, the westernization tendencies will be understood and, maybe also, used to make possible an urban development that follows sustainable and people-friendly principles, without be necessarily canceling the local millenary history, and without losing sight of the need to be coherent with the local resources available, local culture, urban evolution, and the type of city that Tirana (and Durana) is, etc..

At the end of the fifties Tirana was at the peak of industrialization (the industrial area increased from 86 ha to 390 ha), and traditional buildings were
being pulled down to make place for the new socialist buildings (which is similar to what was happening in the West, where the Rationalist planning was undisputed and all avant-garde cities started to adopt urban renewal plans (demolishing old buildings to build new ones). But in Albania urban renewal plans were a way to make public the private land and to build socialist prefabricated multistorey apartment units, while in the West these plans were thought would; revitalize the city centres, stop the run of middle-class families toward the suburbs, and make public spaces more livable.

At the end of the fifties, during an introductive talk at Harvard in 1956, Jane Jacobs broke down the myth of Rationalism. She was against environmental and aesthetic waste, thus against the demolishing of American slums as “there is no new world that you make without the old world”. She fought for a pedestrian friendly city that favored walking, biking and public transit, low-rise residential buildings, short streets, mixed use buildings, and benches in the sidewalks and parks (Dreier, 2006). During her latest work she also anticipated arguments about regionalism, and in spite of her work, Jacobs’ work also gave birth to new ways of approaching the city planning, such as; smart growth, new urbanism, pedestrianism, etc., who’s exponent claim Jacobs’ approach (Dreier, 2006).

On the same period a number of parallel studies were held by; Kevin Lynch, who demonstrated through a five year study in three different cities that inhabitants understood their city by forming mental maps made of; paths, edges, districts, nodes and landmarks, and not how planners would like to be percieved. William Holly White, started in 1969 to observe human behavior in urban settings using movie cameras, to describe urban public life in an (almost) objective and measurable way, by reaching the peak with “The Social Life of Small Urban Spaces” published in 1980, after many years of observations which opened a totally new approach for urban designers in the

![Tirana, synthetic diagram of industrial activities at the beginning of the fifties (Sergi, 2008)](image_url)
Western World. The work of these authors, together with that of Christopher Alexander, Edward T. Hall, etc. lead to the birth of many movements, such as; Smart Growth (early seventies), New Urbanism (early eighties), Pedestrianism, New Pedestrianism, etc.

While all these studies were changing the Western cities (from the end of the fifties to the end of the eighties), Albanian professionals weren’t aware at all of these new concepts. Their work was almost all based on soviet and chinese modus operandi. Only few attempts were done to build advanced design buildings that followed the russian constructivist architecture. Nevertheless, during the period, the government proclaimed the highest environmental standards in terms of green areas and transportation. According to the foresights of the regulatory plans of 1959 and 1990 green areas went from 11 to 13 square meters of green space per capita. Because of many reasons (political, economic, etc.) only a few hundreds of private cars in the entire country during the communist regime. But this, paradoxically, alienated the citizens from the idea of nature as a public and collective gain (Zanfi, 2009).

After a first period of opening to the Western World from 1991-1996, the 1997 events came along, and than the Kosovo emergency in 1999. The first decade of “Westernization” didn’t permit much development for Tirana. Although, some important steps were experienced with the Breglumasi participatory process, as much as the Bathore experience and the Land Management Programe. Yet, the Western World had made some giant steps, while Albania had “lost” ten years of development, without achieving much, but still, by building the basis for the new local professional generation, which will be very active once the political and economic scenario will permit action. This scenario will change after 1999, which will begin a decade of prolific studies and important urban and architectural interventions.
In 2002 there were the first attempts to consider Tirana and Durres as one (PADCO (2002); Declerck, J., Zenghelis, E., Aureli, P. V. (2004); Landell Mills, (2007)).

The demolition of traditional buildings

After WW2 started several urban interventions to reconstruct Tirana city, which created a perfect moment for the new establishment to deny everything connected to the country’s past and to initiate a new (not only urban) history. The Old Bazar, the City Hall, the Orthodox Cathedral, and old shops, hotels, bars, traditional houses were soon torn down (Aliaj, et al., 2003).

However, according to Riza, the Old Bazaar could not be maintained because of its position in the city center, and because it wasn’t an important “indicator” of local architecture as to obstruct the city’s development. There were many other nineteenth and twentieth century buildings in it (thus, not old enough to be valuable constructions), and its streets were long and narrow. On the other hand, many traditional houses that could have been maintained, were instead carelessly demolished (he talks about 20 houses) because of a lack of knowledge about what a “monument” was among professionals (Riza, 2009).

He also reminds the demolition of many of the religious monuments of extraordinary historical and artistic value after 1967, when Hoxha proclaimed Albania an “atheist state” by institutionally forbidding the exercise of religions. Of the 214 religious monuments in state protection (before the law) 74 were removed from being protected (about 34%), thus demolished.

Industrialization

In the synthetic diagram of the industrial activities located in Tirana in the early fifties (fig.1) can be noticed how the import voice is very clear telling that importation came only from Socialist countries, while the export voice is
totally missing. Tirana in 1970 (fig. 2) was almost established as an industrial city where great industries produced manufacture goods to be distributed over the country. Raw materials came in from all parts of the country (and from abroad), and redistributed among other locations as manufactured goods. Furniture factories, glass factories, textile factories, canning factories, tractor factories and engineering workshops used to satellite the city’s original urban core (Sergi, 2008).

The Central Plaza, the Central Axis, and the outer Ring Road

In 1957 the new regulatory plan was approved. This plan’s directives were:
- to increase density of housing units in order to avoid private constructions;
- to plan the zoning by defining the industrial areas and the residential ones;
- to improve road network;
- to preserve objects of historical values by defining them as monuments;
- to use rationally the land, etc.

This plan extended the industrial area to 390 Ha, instead of 86 Ha as it was planned to extend for twenty years. (Aliaj, et al., 2003). The central plaza (today “Sheshi Skenderbej”) was very important for the regime as it needed to represent the new society and the raise of the new Albanian state. The plaza started to be shaped in 1958, with the beginning of the construction of the Palace of Culture, which was designed by Russian technicians and was terminated with the cooperation of Chinese professionals. In 1970 (fig. 3) another version of the central plaza was designed and presented for approval. This project is the nearest to the last project which got realized. The “15 Kateshi” (The Fifteen Story Building) can be seen and the “Muzeu Historik Kombetar” (National Museum of History) (Aliaj, et al., 2003).

Only at the end of the eighties the plaza was completely finished. It assumed

Tirana, probably the seventies. Study for the arrangement of “Bulevardi Deshmoret and Kombit.” From the square that now houses the Rectorate and the Faculty of Engineering of the Polytechnic University of Tirana, on the left in the drawing, and the train station, located on the right (Sergi, 2008).
a monumental size by exceeding the human scale, and the official nature and function of the buildings that defined it exasperated furthermore its official character. (Aliaj, et al., 2003)

According to Sergi, the image is probably a study made during the seventies for the rearrangement of the “Bulevardi Deshmoret e Kombit” (the South-North Central Axis) from the former “Casa del Fascio” built during the fascist occupation (today Polytechnic University of Tirana) in the south, to the train station in the north (fig. 4). The plaza of the train station was never built. (Sergi, 2008)

The outer ring road of the city, almost finished in 1965, followed the track of the Regulatory Plan of 1942, despite its ideological implications. In the same years many other infrastructural interventions were achieved. The two automobile roads that today go in parallel with the riverbed of Lana, as much as the continuation of the riverbed, were done. (Aliaj, et al., 2003)

1989 – The Regulatory Plan

A new Regulatory Plan was needed at the end of the eighties because the one of 1957 had become outdated. New housing facilities were needed because of the increasing beyond predictions of the population. The size of industrial areas had exceeded also predictions and it had become mixed with residential areas. Thus the new plan had to satisfy housing needs and provide more space for industry, which brought to the necessity to enlarge the infrastructural system and also to consider problems related to pollution. This plan also had to reassess a great part of the existing residential areas, more than half of which, were considered as inappropriately assessed. This meant that the rest of it had to be completed with service facilities which hadn’t been built until then.

Also in this plan the road system remained ring-radial based on the previous
plan. A new ring was added to the city in order to embrace the new settlements expected to be built. This ring-road is also part of the last Regulatory Plan of Tirana (2012) and parts of it has been realized in the 2000s (the western part of it, and the southern part is being built). It was thought as a new limit for the city’s expansion (today it is included in the urban fabric) that would be used for the heavy traffic (fig. 5). The radial roads were meant to be continued until they reached the outer ring-road. Also new radial roads were created (for example the “Don Bosco” street). The plan was guided by zoning parcels and it provided an expansion of the city by more than two times bigger (from 1540 ha to 3238 ha). (Aliaj, et al., 2003). [A government that proclaimed the highest environmental standards in terms of green areas and transportation – from 11 to 13 square meters of green space per capita according to the foresights of the regulatory plans of 1959 and 1990] (Zanfi, 2008)

__________________________A Third-World developing model___________________________

After the fall of the Wall not all the capital cities of the Eastern Europe started their democratic development from the same stage of development and nor did they adopted the same developing model. Tirana is one of the most unique case of eastern cities, as during the two decades to come it would experience fast urban growth rates much higher than the rest of the Eastern world. This was to be caused by two factors combined together; free trade model adopted after the fall of the dictatorship, and the underdevelopment of Albania at the beginning of the nineties. Consequently, Tirana, started the capitalist period as a third world developing model. As described by Tosics, Albanian cities went through a quick transition;

[From the socialist into an unregulated “third world” city-development model. Very limited formal capital investments, but substantial population investments into the illegal or unofficial commercial and housing market,
decreasing and quickly differentiating official population incomes. Total dissolution of all previous types of public control, quick and total privatization of housing to sitting tenants, no new type of public control over the land market, planning, and building process. The outcome is the parallel process of densification and sprawl in urban areas in a quick, unregulated development.] (Tosics, 2005, p. 73).

Besides the third world developing model, Tirana's expansion will also be veiled with the character of the Mediterranean informal squatting, which has been analyzed by Vittorio Gargiulo and Luca Salvati in “Ad hoc urban sprawl in the Mediterranean city. Dispersing a compact tradition?” (Gargiulo & Salvati, 2010), or by Federico Zani (Zani, 2008), and described by Leontidou, as; [Spontaneous, in the sense that they are not the result of any systematic educational activity on the part of an already conscious leading group, but have been formed through everyday experience illuminated by common sense.] (Leontidou, 1990, p. 43). After 1990 Tirana will go through fundamental changes, which would triplicate its size in extension and population. The urbanization rate of the country - until 1990 one of lowest in Europe - was strongly controlled by the regime with its underdevelopment politics, which blocked any urban tendency and promoted the countryside. By 1990 only 35% of the population lived in urban areas (lower than that of EU countries and lower also that the average percentage of the developing countries, 37%), and mostly of them concentrated in the Western districts. By the time, the triangle Durres-Tirana-Elbasan resulted as the area with the biggest socio-economic potential, becoming very attractive for the rural population. This increased also the need for infrastructure and services (Aliaj, 1998).

1991 The process of privatization

In 1991 the political system changed from centralized (based on public representation of selected economic indicators, 1990-2005 of Albania (Bideleux & Jeffries, 2006, p. 43).
ownership), to a decentralized (based on private ownership). The previous small public enterprises, such as; shops, bars, cafés, restaurants, etc. were soon after auctioned off, preferably to their current operator-occupants, and from mid-1991 to January 1992 almost three-quarters of retail trade and small-scale services were in private hands. Instead, large-scale industry was distributed by means of free distribution of shares via investment funds, but this process was very slow. Besides, many of these large state enterprises were broken up and some were partly closed down (Bideleux & Jeffries, 2006, p. 43). The privatization of medium and large enterprises was a slower process and it mostly took place after the approval of a mass-privatization programme in the early 1995, which permitted the privatization through auctions of 400 medium and large enterprises.

In 1993 an enterprise-restructuring agency was set up to deal with 32 firms and it was relatively successful as, by restructuring them, it reduced employment from 50 thousand to 7 thousand at the end of 1995 (Bideleux & Jeffries, 2006, p. 51). With the fall of the regime all the agricultural system based on cooperatives experienced “a virtual collapse”. To escape this condition the Bui Government restructured the whole agricultural sector, by privatizing the land. The Land Law of 22 July 1991 assigned about 80% of all arable land as to be distributed by local committees to members of those the Party free of charge at the rate of 0.1 hectares per family member. Although the process of distribution of land had to start by June 1992, by that time almost 77% of the cultivated land was already privatized, and 90% by the end of 1992. The sale and purchase of the land, as much as its inherit, would be possible only after five years (Bideleux & Jeffries, 2006, p. 43).

\[ \text{First opening to the West: Migration, Food Aid, translation of planning laws} \]

At the beginning of the opening of the country to the western world a great part of the working force migrated abroad (nearly 400,000 people, 18% of
the national workforce in 1995, worked abroad) and worked mostly illegally. Remittances from Albanians working abroad rose from virtually zero in 1991 to more than 450 million US dollars in 1996.

Besides these incoming the country benefited from generous food aid and other assistance coming especially from Italy (the country mostly affected by Albanian migration) which partly attempted to stem these outflows. Only in 1991-92 food aid amounted to more than 600 million US dollars, 63% of Albania’s GDP (Bideleux & Jeffries, 2006, p. 51).

With the opening of the country to foreign investors there was an immediate need to give the possibility to foreign enterprises to know the country’s legislation. At the beginning of the 1990s many translations of the Albanian Law on City Planning had been done, but none of them were satisfactory as often they were done by non-professionals, or at least by someone not familiar with legislation or urban planning. Thus, the copy of legislation that many international aid agencies possessed by the time was of poor quality. A series of better quality translations were done in 1994 near the Land Tenure Center University of Wisconsin-Madison by Harvey, M. Jacobs and William Craig in 1997 (Jacobs & Craig, 1997).

1995 **The Breglumasi Program. A best practice.**

After a first part of chaotic urban expansion and a blackout of the role of professional figures within the process, a series of studies started to affront the issue of fast and uncontrolled growth, and implement developing projects of community based urban planning/management. A good example and one of the first of the kind in Albania, was formulated in 1994 for the “Breglumasi neighborhood” (almost 550 households). This program selected the Italian volunteers of VIS (Volontariato Internazionale per Io Sviluppo), and a Dutch program manager from COV/PSO (Centrum Ontmoeting der Volkeren). The main goals of the program were; the development of a legal neighborhood,

- (left) view of road in construction in Bathore based Community

- (right) maintainance of children playground

(Aliaj, et al., 2003).
the development of social activities, the startup of a kindergarten, the stimulation of employment and income generation, developing of a social housing program, promotion of democratization, and “institution building”. The last point was the most important one to support the aim of the program; assistance to community based initiatives.

A great number of initiatives were promoted, such as; the Breglumasi Association, the women’s committee, and the youth group, a monthly bulletin “Fjala Jone”. In 1995 a social center and a kindergarten were set up in the heart of the neighborhood. One room in the social center was furnished as a consulting room for an authorized family doctor, whom itself was a resident of Breglumasi. A parents committee is involved in the school, too. The most important activity of the women’s committee is the production and sale of needlework, and they use 10% of their proceeds as a fund for other activities, like joint trips or loans within the groups. A major problem was the illegality of all buildings, as the area was defined for industrial use. Thus, the need to change the destination of the quarter into residential area was persistent.

For that purpose urban designs were made and submitted for approval. The registration of households was also undertaken on the eve of elections in 1996 by municipal staff. The second action was the involvement and preparation of implementation for the improvement of the neighborhood. In close cooperation with the local CBO are already widened and improved four kilometers existing road, as well as an irrigation channel, too. Numerous conversations with residents are undertaken to find ways how every house gets connection to the main roads, and how the electricity and water system can be improved.

[The Breglumasi Program” promoted cooperation between the residents of the quarter, in order to give them self-confidence and a sense of

The city of Tirana in 1998, and the potential areas for the implementation of the Urban Land Management Project (Sergi, 2008).
reality towards expectations about the possibilities of the authorities to improve their situation. This is a difficult process that develops up and down. It is considered as a success reinforcement, reorganization and rotation of the leadership of “Breglumasi Association” in 1997. As result, the membership rate of the CBO increased. The core members are young promising professionals from the fields of civil engineering, planning, architecture, management, economy, social sciences, environment, etc. The team gained sufficient experience to transform officially last year in a legal non-governmental organization (NGO).] (Aliaj, 1998).

This model was selected as “one of the best world practices” by the UNCHS “Habitat II” Program of 1998. (co-Plan, 2003)

The case of Bathore and Urban Land Management Programme

The first model experimented in “Breglumas” served as small scale example and prepared the group of professionals for an intervention upon a larger scale, this time in the biggest neighborhood with illegal buildings in the country. Bathore (Kamez Municipality) covered 250 hectares in 1997 (400 ha in 2003 and 30,000 inhabitants). The intervention in this area brought to the opening and graveling of 6 km of road, the building of a community center, three health centers, a kindergarten and playgrounds for children, giving special attention to the business community and NGOs who acted in that area. The two cases (Breglumas and Bathore) were included in a project financed by the Albanian Government and World Bank, which ensured basic infrastructures. While cooperating with other actors/projects, similar projects were also developed in other Albanian cities such as; Peshkopi, Shkodra, Korça, Elbasan, Ballsh and Kruja.

The “Bathore” experience was promoted in the time by Co-Plan in other
countries of the region and, according to Co-Plan, a successful application of the model took place in Kosovo and some modest experiences were held in Egypt and Ethiopia. In Kosovo they worked in the difficult area of Mitrovica, trying to design an integrated local development vision. The team of Co-Plan had worked as a moderator and trainer between the offices of local government of the Serb and Albanian population under the authority of UNMIK. Their work was done at a central level to reform the urban planning legislation based on participation concepts. The team of Co-Plan also co-founded the CSDnet (Balkan Network of Civil Society for Housing and Urban Development in Southeastern Europe) in 1999, “with the purpose of exchanging experiences and lobbing in favor of inclusion and participation of citizens in the process of urban development” (fig. 3) (co-Plan, 2003) (Aliaj, et al., 2003). In 1998 started the Urban Land Management Programme, which was financed by a World Bank loan to design a development vision for the “Grand Tirana” ensuring strategic infrastructures in the most depressive areas that have deficiency in infrastructure and public services. (co-Plan, 2003) (Sergi, 2008) (picture form sergi pg.178)

**The convenience of informality**

According to Aliaj, until 1998 the number of inhabitants of the capital city grew with an average of 7% per year, of which 5% only by migration. This had brought to the urbanization of around 200 hectares being built every year, and most of them illegally, in areas that lack basic facilities, infrastructure and services (it is estimated that actually (in 1998, when the article was wrote) 50% of Tirana’s population have poor access or no infrastructure/services at all). The illegally settled newcomers use existing networks and services by attaching illegal and uncontrolled connections, and this deteriorated furthermore the existing infrastructures. Until that moment the state was unable to cope with the increasing phenomenon of informal development, and this mostly because the economic pressure was very height. In 1998 it

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Housing approach</th>
<th>Government</th>
<th>Real Estates</th>
<th>Private</th>
<th>S &amp; S</th>
<th>Informal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Average size of house (m²)</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>120 (plot)</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Price per unit (Dollars)</td>
<td>15,000 - 20,000</td>
<td>20,000 - 50,000</td>
<td>40,000 - 80,000</td>
<td>9,600</td>
<td>5,000 - 10,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Price per m² (Dollars per square meter)</td>
<td>150 - 200</td>
<td>200 - 500</td>
<td>400 - 800</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>50 - 100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Costs per square meter of housing options in Tirana in 1999 (Aliaj, 2002).
was much more convenient economically to build illegally than any other form of purchasing an immobile. Then, the price for the construction of an informal house varied from 50-100 US dollars per meter square, while for houses built from the state varied from 200-250, and for legally private 300-800 and real estate from 300-400 US dollars per meter square. Therefore, the illegal construction was much worthy than the rest of the choices, pushing the new settlers for more and more illegal housing rather than legal ones (Aliaj, 1998).

2000 Demolition of illegal constructions, the “Color Plan” and the Kompas project.
In 2000 (the year after becoming the Major of Tirana) Edi Rama started a program of demolishing the illegal constructions (fig.4) along Lana river (these buildings were demolished by the business community, sparing to the Municipality two Million US dollars), and in the “Youth Park” in the city center. In 2001 he launched the “Clean and Green” project UN Development Programme to deal with the consequences of the pollution of Lana river, creating this way green spaces, and reducing unemployment involving public participation, and making him win the “Poverty Eradication Award” from the UN in 2001. (Swift, 2012)

This was only the first important measure that he did to change the image of the Albanian capital, attracting the public opinion, of the institutions and of the Western press. After the demolishing it came the rehabilitating and the painting of the façades of the buildings along the main boulevards, the widening and the illuminating of main axes, the renovation of the historical complex of Ministries, etc. That period was also the first impulse of involvement of the inhabitants and communities in the process of improving the city. (Arie, 2003)

While speaking about the demolishing process, Rama described as follows:
[In the central park, they were all protected, very protected by different politicians. When we had to destroy these buildings we didn’t make any
allowances and when people realized that no-one would be forgiven they were all happy to leave. We have not made any differentiation, which would have been very dangerous.] (Howden, 2002).

A series of interventions (including the demolition of illegal constructions) started to take place in the city in 2000 aiming to change the face of the city. The color plan started with the coloring of the façade of a building along “Rruga e Durresit”, after interventions of restoration had started in the Italian buildings of the ministries. As the major stated in 2002 about it [The main challenge, he says, has been to persuade people that change is possible] (Howden, 2002). The intervention to the façades of the grey buildings along the main boulevards were painted in multi-color rainbow type, evocative of the pop art painting, as a signal for the bright future of the city, was often criticized as a “boulevardisation” to impress the international community. (Howden, 2002).

The coloring, also accompanied by the installation of street lights, continued for several years after working on one street after the other, and with the occasion of the second edition of Tirana Biennale curated by Hans Ulrich Obrist and Anri Sala (Albanian artist), which represented the work of 120 artists worldwide, a number of internationally established artists were engaged to express their ambition for social change through their works in the façades. The communist living blocks were soon turned into unique works of contemporary art, attracting the attention of the international arena.

After the intervention to the façades about 80 per cent of the Albanian approved the facelift. While the major was attacked for he’s great importance to cosmetic changes where the majority of the population still don’t have drinking water, he replies that a social, economic and political renaissance is needed in order to change the image of the country internationally, and

(Sergi, 2008)
this can be achieved by cheering Albania up with this type of gestures. (Arie, 2003).

The “Kompas” project (2000-2003) was financed by the Dutch Government to enable Co-Plan and SNV/NOVIB to replicate the projects of “Breglumas” and “Bathore” in other 35 community based projects in other five municipalities of the country (Fier, Korçe, Peshkopi, Kruje, Rreshen) with a local contribution of not less than 50% of the amount of the intervention. (co-Plan, 2003) (Sergi, 2008) (picture from sergi pg 182-183). In those years, Co-Plan also initiated a debate upon a local and national level about urban planning / management, dealing with issues about urban development in the country as well as to promote partnerships in problem solving. The periodical “The city built by people” was published, and TV debates in local and national TV stations, urban forums, and open debates were organized also. (co-Plan, 2003)

In an article published in “Gazeta Tema” in 2001, Emin Riza, an Albanian scholar about traditional architecture and monuments since communism, points out how the sensibility toward historical monuments in Albania has vanished after the fall of communism. He says that today there are 1134 protected monuments of the first category and 1080 of the second, including in these numbers archaeological centres and urban settlements also. Until 1990, 1360 architectural monuments were submitted to restoration interventions, which were of high professional profile in the methods used as much as from a practical-organizational point of view. The quality of the interventions was also internationally complimented as the testimony of the UNESCO professional, Dr. Andrash Roman, sent to observe the protected cities of Berat and Gjirokaster.

After 1990 the awareness about monuments disappeared and the governments...
that came after did nothing, unless they had to avoid the law about monument protection. In the last ten years, damages on monuments because of the lack of restoration interventions have brought to an alarming situation (Riza, 2001). In the article “Arkitektura populllore ne rrezik” (traditional architecture in danger) published in the daily journal “Gazeta Shqipetare” in 2010 by Emin Riza, was denounced the condition of the traditional and historical monuments in the Country. He wrote that of about four hundred monuments of the first category in Albania, two hundred of them are in the cities and the rest in the countryside. The difference, he notes, between those in the city and those in the countryside is that the amount of damage in the first is known, but for the monuments of the countryside this information lacks totally.(Riza, 2010)

The Urban Development Strategic Plan of the Greater Tirana Area 2002

The Strategic Plan for Greater Tirana (fig 12), related to the ULMP programme of 1998, proposed a strong development strategy based basically on the change of scale of the city considering its expansion by 2017. It defined the urban area as extended toward north-west, almost doubling the size of the existing city, circled by a green belt that reached the airport area, and all of it was part of a greater administrative border which included the airport area and other territories in the north, west and south.

The plan wasn’t a regulatory plan but served as a vision for guidance and coordination of the development at regional level, and this vision will thereafter be translated into regulatory plans drawn up by local government agencies (Aliaj, et al., 2003). The plan, based on land use principles and future activities, detected; the residential areas (subdivided in medium-high, medium-low and low density); the urban, district and local services; the principal areas for new investments; the green areas with limited building coefficients, regional parks and river parks; the developing areas around the airport; the water treatment plants and the area for controlled discharge of waste, etc.

Administrative and spatial structure of Tirana-Durres Region, 2002
(image from the Regulatory Plan 2012)
The plan for the improvement of the infrastructure system aggregated the streets into three categories related to the phase of construction. It proposes two new ring roads (not concentric), one in north and one concentric with the existing ring road, which were basically thought as limits of the built area. In the plan Vora, the nearest location to the airport along Tirana-Durres highway, and the airport were designed as important zones for business activities and economic growth (Aliaj, et al., 2003). The plan for the central area of the city was also designed detecting the first and second level commercial networks, industrial and commercial activities, plazas, sport structures, green areas, cemetery, height limits for the area, primary and secondary viability, administrative border, parking lots, metropolitan ferry lines, etc. The system of public transport was studied carefully also. The network of Metrorail stations followed the rail lines built during the Italian and the communist period. A number of surface metro stations were proposed along the south-north Italian axis, and also toward Kamza and the Airport.

The central train station was repositioned in the north of the axis, near Tirana river (the last urban plan of 2012 moved it furthermore toward west along the existing rail line). The strategic plan also proposed a whole new structure for its accomplishment (table page 194 sergi). (Sergi, 2008) as well as a range of legal improvements.

2002 Economic and Political Upturn

In 2002 Albania’s economy started to grow intensely besides the large and growing trade deficits, which were covered mostly by the remittances of the 500,000 Albanians working abroad, reaching 500 million of US dollars in 2002 and 700 million in 2004 (13-14 per cent of the GDP). Also the foreign debt was reduced from 32 per cent of the GDP in 1999 to 22 per cent of the GDP in 2004. Foreign aid donors provided 300 million dollars annually. Furthermore, a new tax law to increase tax revenues was introduced in 1999.
(until that moment tax incomes were the lowest in EU, only 13 per cent of the GDP) reaching the 20 per cent of the GDP, taxes weren’t applied equally to all enterprises, and this made the informal sector grow. However the unhealthy tax regime encouraged Albanian and foreign entrepreneurs and investors to remain in Albania.

The tax rate was reduced from 25 to 23 per cent in 2005, aiming to reach the 20 per cent in 2006. The abolition of tariffs on exports of industrial and farm products to the EU (with the exception of fish products and wine) in 2000 by the EU foreign ministers, granting duty-free access to 95 per cent of imports from Albania, Bosnia, Croatia, Macedonia and Montenegro, helped furthermore this economic growth of the country in that period. (Bideleux & Jeffries, 2006, p. 66)

First elements for a New Regulatory Plan 2002

The first Urban Regulatory Plan for Tirana after the fall of communism was approved only in 2012 (even though it hasn’t become yet a hundred per cent active) but many studies have been made before it since the end of the nineties by local and foreign scholars. In 2002 in Tirana the debate about the emergent need of having a plan was concretely launched by the architect and urban planner Besnik Alija through an article in “Gazeta Shekulli”, and moreover in other public debates and publishing as much.

What Alija had in mind was subdivided in four “Action Plans”, based also in the studies for the Strategic Plan of the same year. A great attention was put for; the area of the city center, which should be put under a severe control against new constructions defining building coefficients, heights, volumes, materials and timeline of the building process; for buildings with particular historical and architectonic values, which should be maintained, renovated and protected; the starting of initiatives of international competitions, implementation of

Assonometric views of the Urban Design of the City Center international competition won by AS.Architecture-Studio.
programs of preservation of historical buildings (such as the program “Kthim ne Identitet” (return to identity) that was applied to the Castle of the city and “Ura e Tabakeve”).

The central south-north Italian axis should continue toward the northern hills of Paskuqani and Kamza, as it is the shortest way to connect the city with the Rinas Airport. The municipality should use a development strategy for the densification of the space along the railway with tertiary buildings including also the building of infrastructures. He suggests to create mixed structures in cooperation between private and public figures as it has been adopted in London and Paris. The main infrastructural axis, especially the ring roads and the radial roads, should be widened, and the urban spaces around the lakes and rivers should be improved. The section of the new outer ring road that connects “Rruga e Durresit” with “Rruga e Kavajes” would lighten the traffic that actually enters the city center, and also the eastern section of the same ring road would ease traffic in the peripheral areas of the city.

The planning, improvement of infrastructures with conditions, of the illegal constructions in some pilot areas of the city would be the first step toward a better legislation, which would also help to generate developing strategies for the city. This uneasy process from the social and political point of view would be fundamental for the integration of the new inhabitants, reduction of social issues, criminality and unemployment. It would encourage investments on the quality of infrastructures also by the inhabitants themselves, and it would also determine which are the buildings that cannot be legalized, thus to be definitively turned down, and which can be legalized under conditions. Above all this process needs a political and administrative maturity to make important economic decisions, such as selling or letting of land.

The Regulatory Plan should be, above all, a list of urban laws, a clear and
functional document to guide the city’s development. This brings unavoidably to the full reformation of the actual urban legislation, which must evolve together with the development of the city (Aliaj, 2002).

**Regional Development Study of the Tirana-Durres Region (GTZ)**

In February, 2002 the German Technical Cooperation (GTZ), in cooperation with local professionals, proposed a study for the Tirana-Durres Region. The vision of this study was expressed in; 1) taking into account that the Tirana-Durres Region is characterized by a number of strengths and weaknesses; 2) regarding demography and social situation, economic structure and development, spatial development and land use, transportation, communal technical infrastructure, social infrastructure, natural conditions and environment, rural development, and the overall framework and institutions, 3) the vision of the region is a wise growth and a sustainable development facilitating the Tirana - Durres Region to become an integrated city-region in the core of Albania as well as a part and a partner of Europe.

And more specifically: 1) In the Tirana - Durres Region, growth shall continue. However, it shall be wisely managed in future. The rapid regional development of the region shall be guided by an integrated development concept and regulated within a well established land-use planning and management system; 2) sustainable development shall be the main overall guideline for development. This requires that economic, social and ecological considerations shall be well balanced in regional development, and that any development shall safeguard that future generations have the same development options like the generations living today; 3) the Tirana-Durres Region shall form an integrated city region. This requires a close cooperation between the central government and local institutions, as well as municipalities and the municipalities in the region based on mutual respect.

[Image: Zhvillimi i korridoreve rrugore në Tiranë, JICA 2012 (image from the Regulatory Plan 2012)]
Moreover, partnerships between the public and the private sectors shall be fostered; 4) The Tirana-Durres Region is not only located in the core of Albania but it also plays the decisive role in the overall economic and social development of the whole country. Therefore, the development of the region is closely inter-related and inter-connected with the development of the whole society and economy and it requires further government attention; 5) The Tirana-Durres Region shall continue to be reliable partner in Europe. European standards and procedures in regional development shall therefore be applied as far as possible.

**2004 Urban Design of the City Center (AS Architecture-Studio)**

An international competition was launched in 2003 for the urban design of the city center. This competition was won by the French studio “Architecture Studio). In their project new approaches were introduced to follow up the growth and modernization of the city. Its objective was to give to the city a clearer north-south direction, expand the green areas and improve the infrastructural system. The plan proposed the building of nine stories tall buildings (as the most important directive of the major was to build under nine story of height), except for the city centre where they proposed high building for the public administration. The plan also provided big areas of pedestrianisation and underground parking lots. The main axis of the city will be crossed by an ecological tram and the city will be circled by three ring-roads that will ease traffic. Also the plan provided three new locations for religious buildings (a orthodox cathedral, a church and a mosque).

**2005 A study for public transport**

In an article published in “Gazeta Korrieri” in 2005 Aliaj states that, according to statistics, the inhabitants of Tirana travel about 14 km / day (one hour and forty minutes a day), and only 28 per cent of them uses private automobiles, which reaches a 37 per cent in cases of mobility for pleasure. The greatest part...
of the population moves by foot, bicycle or public transport mostly because of the economical low level, as with the future economic growth expected, also the number of private automobiles is expected to grow, as much as pollution.

According to Aliaj, in 2005 in Tirana circulated still automobiles produced in the seventies. Based on interviews about 46 per cent of the automobiles have been produced in the eighties, 45 per cent in the nineties, and 72 per cent uses diesel and only 18 per cent uses unleaded petrol.

Moreover, about 60 per cent of the interrogated are on behalf of pedestrian areas in the city and 94 per cent are in favor of preferential lanes for public transport, emergencies and taxies, and 73 per cent are in favor of bike lanes in the city.

Some of the recommendations of the interviewed were about; alternative public transport such as trams, systems of measurement of pollution in the city, surveillance cameras in the principal crossroads, bigger cooperation with the media for the sensitization of inhabitants about public issues, full transparency of the work of “The Urban Planning Department” (Aliaj, 2005).

According to “Projekt-Raporti Përfundimtar” (Final Draft-Report) of the “Vleresim strategjik mjedisor i Planit Rregullues te Tiranes” (Strategic Environmental Assessment of the Regulatory Plan of Tirana) (2012); In 2008 the Municipality of Tirana, with the support of the World Bank, began compiling a Regulatory Plan for the Municipality of Tirana. This plan was conceived as a physical plan, despite several attempts to build on the action. The draft Plan, launched in 2008, faced a legal handicap. It is built on data and analysis of Tirana, but extends beyond the boundaries of his own municipality defining territorial development of the nearby municipalities (Farka, Dajt, Kashar

---

**Urban Regulatory Plan of swiss studio**

According to “Projekt-Raporti Përfundimtar” (Final Draft-Report) of the “Vleresim strategjik mjedisor i Planit Rregullues te Tiranes” (Strategic Environmental Assessment of the Regulatory Plan of Tirana) (2012); In 2008 the Municipality of Tirana, with the support of the World Bank, began compiling a Regulatory Plan for the Municipality of Tirana. This plan was conceived as a physical plan, despite several attempts to build on the action. The draft Plan, launched in 2008, faced a legal handicap. It is built on data and analysis of Tirana, but extends beyond the boundaries of his own municipality defining territorial development of the nearby municipalities (Farka, Dajt, Kashar

---

“Paskuqani Park” and the ecological corridor of “Tirana” river (Tirana Northern Boulevard - River Project, Grimshaw Architects, 2012).

(image from the Regulatory Plan 2012)
Paskuqan and Kamza. But in fact does not take into account the existing development in these territories and moreover has not gone through a consultation with the local administration. From the perspective of the road network the project plan launched by 2008 is not ambitious. It almost doesn’t suggest changes in the road network at all, albeit it has a good analysis of traffic and transportation issues. It emphasizes Tirana’s ring road, but the rest of the network does not suggest any substantial interference. The plan states in its report in favor of polycentric development model, but this choice does not rely strongly on its graphical solutions.

**Grimshaw project**

Grimshaw Architects was one of two finalists selected in a competition for the master plan of central Tirana, Albania. The competition brief called for a comprehensive strategy that built upon the international identity of the city – particularly its waterways and the major boulevard running between them. It also called for an integration of transportation links – a city-wide transformation to streamline the infrastructure and bring vitality into the experience of the city. The desires for the city and the results of the proposal are geared toward building upon the community and lifestyle of Albania. The climate is perfect for outdoor activities, so the first strategy that Grimshaw touched upon was to make the experience of the city on the level of landscape and its waterways. The entry proposes a riverwalk that takes advantage of geography of Tirana. It also proposes a vast system of urban living rooms that latch onto the central boulevard and spiral out, pixelating the city with gardens and parks. The strategy then includes a formalization of the city’s street systems, creating a hierarchy that works within the scale of the neighborhoods that are also introduced in the proposal. The neighborhoods are dotted with nodes of program that provides a social infrastructure for the growth and sustainability of each. Neighborhoods are defined by the incorporation of nature into the city streets.

*fig 20 - (left) The five ring road network proposed; (right) Proposals for possible tram lines in Tirana (source: Tirana Northern Boulevard and River Project, Grimshaw Architects, 2012).*

*(image from the Regulatory Plan 2012)*
along with the distinguishing features of the architecture. The irregularity and differentiation of the buildings suggest that Grimshaw has considered how the city would be experienced visually and how points of interest will define the various neighborhoods. The strategy is also incorporating the existing informal settlements and plugging them into the vision of the city.

Sustainable transportation is also an asset to the design, bringing economic growth with high quality transportation options. The competition site covers only part of Tirana with the focus being placed on reconnecting it to the rest of the city.

---

**Urban Regulatory Plan**

The vision: A city developed according to a sustainable territorial model, equipped with modern engineering infrastructure, integrating the natural and the urban environment and to ensure high quality of life and public health. The strategic objectives are: to achieve a rapid, sustainable and balanced territorial development; to revaluate the urban and natural landscapes through an integrated spatial planning; to promote appropriate actions to protect, restore and enhance the quality of cultural heritage; to develop urban transport infrastructure; to promote and develop the different systems of public transport; to improve the parking system; to create an intermodal terminal; to preserve natural resources from pollution and degradations, and to promote environmental values; to close the existing landfill solid urban waste; to build a new designated place for solid waste and improve the system of dangerous waste management; to preserve and develop green spaces within the city; to increase suburban green spaces; to retrain the two natural corridors that traverse the structure of the city (Lana and Tirana rivers); to rehabilitate the contaminated soils at all the hot spots identified within the territory, to eliminate threats to public health and biodiversity; to develop the water municipal infrastructure based on EU standards.

- (left) The network of bicycle lanes proposed
- (right) Main green areas proposed for Tirana.

(image from the Regulatory Plan 2012)
3. Is Durana real?¹

There is a change in progress nowadays, which is not only economic, political, environmental, social or cultural, instead, it is a systemic change affecting society as a whole. There is something that we all can perceive in our everyday lives but we cannot explain. We can see that something very big is changing but we cannot tell what it is, neither can we tell how it’s going to be.

This section is fundamental to explain the reasons of why it is necessary to sustain the birth, and eventually the development, of a territorial city in the Western Balkans (or in the Eastern Adriatic?), why it is necessary to consider this metropolitan area as part of the Mediterranean Basin and not just Albania, and why when thinking of globalisation it is propaedeutic to think of urban size.

These issues will be guided by the work of worldwide scholars in philosophy, sociology and economics, such as; Emanuele Severino, Jürgen Habermas, Paul Krugman ², and also by the work of the ten international planning studios called by the French President Nikolas Sarkozy in 2007 for the “Grand Paris” initiative to create a “new comprehensive development project for Greater Paris”.

According to Severino the Eastern society is not becoming like the Western society as many thought after the fall of the wall, but instead, it is transforming to be something else, and the Western society is experiencing a transitional moment that will lead to the birth of something else as much. So it is not correct to think of the Western world as a step of development because it is also evolving toward something different from today (Severino, 2007). Habermas calls for the creation of collective identities and cosmopolitan

---

¹ – since Durana is there already, the real question would be if we will ever see it.

² – Severino is one of the most important Italian philosophers, Habermas is a German sociologist and philosopher, Krugman is an American economist.
solidarity and to avoid protectionist closure and territorial traps (related to rightist and nationalist feelings that are increasing within Europe) (Habermas, 2001). Krugman introduces us to the *New Trade Theory* and *New Economic Geography*. He basically says that the urban population will be soon concentrated in a few locations because of the relation between the number of inhabitants and the wage and wealth of the population. The concentration of the population and the growth of urban settlements tends to happen in regions where there is already concentrated a large number of inhabitants because of *economies of scale*. These economic regions will produce more and will be more advantageous for profit than smaller ones and thus, they will attract even more population, ending up with a scenario where production is concentrated only in a limited number of sites (Krugman, 1999). The work of the ten architectural studios called from Sarkozy to transform the French capital city into a global city will be considered as a “manual” for the contemporary planning approach of the new urban settlement.

The big “*wind of change*” which signed the fall of communism and the affirmation of the capitalism as the “*winning system*” seems to be not over yet. On the contrary, the feeling is getting more and more persistent. This feeling could be related to what *Emanuele Severino* announced already in 1993 as the *decline of capitalism*³, anticipating the actual discourse.

The confusion derived from the transition has brought to the raise of nationalist feelings, mixed with rightist extremists. This tension is strong in the Adriatic basin, which for Severino is the place where two types of civilization are clashing⁴. Nevertheless, it should be told, that these two worlds, the Christian and the Islamic world, apart from clashing, are at the same side of the conflict and both of them are fighting against modernism. When communism felt down, it was thought that the Eastern world would go toward the Western model of society⁵, as the Western society was thought as a *step* (meaning a stage
of development), and nobody thought that the Western society is changing too. And this is the font of the actual crises, the changes that democracy, capitalism and Christianity are passing through (Severino, 2007).

He continues with the comparison of the Western world to somebody who sees somebody else with a friendly - smiley face coming toward him. He seems to prepare himself to stop in front of this coming person to say hi and converse with him, but the coming person continues his walk, he passes near to him but goes away without stopping. As a matter of fact he was going beyond, even if he had to pass near to who retained that he was going toward him. That person is the soviet society. It’s getting everyday more like the Occidental society, it gets every day more closer to it so it could go elsewhere (Severino, 1993; nuova ediz., ivi, 2007).

Starting from Severino’s interpretation for the future of ex-socialist countries, a question about the Balkan countries (here we should not include Greece as it had a substantially different past) comes up naturally: Where are the Balkan countries going?

All these questions depend on another concept of Severino, the connection between purpose and action. During the “Incontri Riminensi” 6 - talking about the decline of capitalism, he posits that 7 nowadays forces, such as; capitalism, democracy, Christianism, Islamism etc. are conflicting because each of them wants to indicate the purpose that societies need to accomplish. The clash between these forces is determined by the fact that the purpose that stands within every one of them needs to prevail upon the other forces. Purpose defines action (Severino, 2009).

Following the indications of Severino, other fundamental questions come up: What is the purpose of the Balkan countries? Is it to cooperate with Europe and not to be a burden but a part of it? Is it to let behind local nationalisms
and move toward a collective identity? Is it to build a protectionist closure or to open up? Is it to build a cosmopolitan solidarity, or to fall into "territorial gaps"? Is it to realize that globalization is not just economic anymore and that constitutional patriotism would ease transition?

For the last questions, in the book of Jürgen Habermas “The Postnational Constellation”, he, who is a supporter of a deeper unification of the European Union, calls for an opening to the global market. He says 8 that in front of an actual globalizing world the actions of nation-states are every day more limited, and a protectionist closure of the domestic economies would be very expensive, and a return to demand-oriented economic policy would be worthless because “in a globalized economy, ‘Keynesianism in one’s own country’ just won’t work anymore”. Actually we testify many tendencies (even within EU) of national closure (see the comeback of the extreme rightist in Greece, as much as in many other EU countries, during the elections of 2012) to protect and preserve “their populations from the undesired social and political consequences of a transnational economy”, but, the only thing nation-states can do is to realize the structural transformation of the world economic system and to increase their international competitiveness, as their capacity for action is nothing compared to global forces (Habermas, 2001, p. 70).

Globalisation is not just economic anymore and we are introduced every day more to another perspective, a globalized one that makes the actual society more and more interdependent. This accelerated and intense communicative links in an increasingly economically, culturally, and ecologically interconnected world shrink temporal and spatial distances. Hence, territorial traps should be avoided realizing that other borders (defined by international military or economic blocks like NATO, EOC etc.) - “which are just as important for national interests as the nation-state’s borders themselves” (Habermas, ... devono. realizzare. La lotta sta in questo, nel far prevalere lo scopo che sta in ognuna di queste forze. ... Lo scopo definisce un’azione(questo Aristotele lo sapeva molto bene). La capacità dello scopo di definire l’azione vale, sia che l’azione sia semplice, sia che l’azione sia complessa. Un’intrapresa industriale è un’azione complessa, il sistema capitalistico europeo è un’azione ancora più complessa, l’azione del sistema capitalistico mondiale è ancora più complessa. ] (Severino, 2009).

8 - [ In a context of a global economy, nation-states can only increase the international competitiveness of their ‘position’ by imposing self-restrictions on the formative powers of the state itself. And this justifies the sort of dismantling policies that end up damaging social cohesion and social stability as such. ... It boils down to two theses: First, the economic problems besetting affluent societies can be explained by a structural transformation of the world economic system, a transformation characterized by the term ‘globalization’. Second, this transformation so radically reduces nation-states’ capacity for action that the options remaining open to them are not sufficient to shield their populations from the undesired social and political consequences of a ...
... transnational economy. The nation-state has fewer and fewer options open to it. Two of these options are now completely ruled out: protectionism, and the return to a demand-oriented economic policy. Insofar, as the movement of capital can be controlled at all, the costs of a protectionist closure of domestic economies would quickly become intolerably high under the conditions of a global economy.” (Habermas, 2001, p. 18-19).

According to Habermas;

[By expanding the parameters for the implementation of human rights and democracy, the nation-state made possible a new, more abstract form of social integration beyond the borders of ancestry and dialect. Today we are faced with the task of carrying on this process with a further abstractive step. A process of democratic will-formation that can cross national borders needs a unified context, and this requires the development of a European public sphere and a common European political culture.] (Habermas, 2001, p. 18-19).

As Habermas points out - “collective identities are made, not found” -, and electoral campaigns based on nationalist feelings only (which is actually happening) are not what is needed for the future of the Balkans. The “fear” of the Balkan people when globalization is felt as penetrating its millenary cultural shell is comprehensible. About this concern of change Habermas brings to our attention a study of a densely populated area in West of London, near Heathrow airport, ethnically mixed suburbs, where new cultural differences emerged. Habermas points out that; [ The latest anthropological developments have come to concentrate on the constructive impulses and the multitude of innovative responses that the lure of the global has provoked in local contexts.] (Habermas, 2001, p. 75).

There is no need to say that global cultural mélange in London has started

---

9 – Balkanization is the division of a multinational state into smaller ethnically homogeneous entities. The term also is used to refer to ethnic conflict within multiethnic states (Encyclopedia Britannica).

10 - from the inquiry article of Repubblica Journal “l'Europa nera fa paura”, 28 June 2012, Massimo Razzi e Adele Sarno

11 – The tension within the Balkan states is not even close to be in equilibrium.

2001, p. 70) – should be considered, and Balkanization should be avoided. Just in these years and months, Balkanization effects are getting every day stronger, and entire political campaigns are being based on incitement of nationalist feelings (even more worrying is the fact that this is not happening only within the Balkans, but all over Europe too).
many centuries ago (helped also by the many Britain’s colonies), thus the birth of new cultural differences is much more evident compared to the Balkan area. But even so; How can we distinguish new cultural differences (NCD) in the Balkan cities? Where should we search them? Are their locations related to territorial distribution of the population? What role does these NCD play within the new metropolitan areas of the Balkans? What are the characteristics of the territorial distribution of the new Balkan metropolis? Will Durana ever get real? What will be its shape / dimension? What will be the role of Durana within South-East Europe?

The last questions refers to the New Trade Theory (NTT) and the New Economic Geography (NEG) developed by Paul Krugman. According to Krugman there will be an ever increasing tendency for production sites to concentrate in few countries, regions or cities of the world, and these locations will have higher incomes and also will be more populated. Small differences of population between confining regions will determine the development of one and the decline of the other. Thus, the question that comes up naturally is; will Durana ever get born? Will it be an important production site of South East Europe, or, its population will be sucked up by nearby important cities of the region, leaving Durana underdeveloped? If it would become an attractor of population how should it expand?

Krugman’s work is based on mathematical models which will not be discussed on this research (even though, it would be interesting to find the scientific logic that underlies the “chaotic” development of the new territorial city of the Balkans). The main points of this theory, have been explained in the paper published in The Journal of Political Economy in 1991, and in other papers, which were summarized in a book in 1999. One of the novelties brought upon international trade and the location of economic activity by Krugman’s work was the taking into account of the transportation costs (a key feature

12 – Krugman received the Nobel Prize in 2008 for his work related to NTT and NEG.
in producing the *home market effect*\(^{13/14/15}\), which would later feature in his work on the NEG);

[Krugman (1980) extended his 1979 model by introducing transportation costs.... these costs were assumed to be proportional to the quantity of goods shipped to another nation (sometimes referred to as “iceberg costs” in the sense that a fraction of the goods melts away before they reach their destination). This allowed him to accord analytical precision to the *home-market effect* – according to which firms tend to concentrate, i.e., locate more than in proportion to market size, in large markets.] (Committee, 2008)

Lower transport costs determine the *growth* of trade – the cheapest the transport the bigger the market - the bigger the market, the more population it attracts. And this gives birth to a process that would lead to higher incomes for the population as much as higher wages\(^{16}\).

[Firms have an incentive to locate in the larger market to exploit economies of scale in production and to save on transport costs. Individuals have an incentive to move to the larger region, since it offers higher real wages and a larger variety of goods. This tends to increase the difference in size between the markets and strengthen the incentive to migrate both for firms and individuals. Hence, there is an element of circular causality. .... If the home-market effect together with the real-wage effect is strong enough, the initial population perturbation will stimulate further migration to the larger region. This would set in motion a cumulative process, where migration increases the population and the size of the market in the larger region even more, thereby raising the real wage further and thus leading to even more migration etc.\(^{17}\)] (Committee, 2008)
In Albania, the process of the concentration of the firms - which has come in the area between Tirana and Durres hasn’t ever been planned. Instead, it has been guided by free private investments, which in 20 years have built much. In order to obtain a strong home market effect for Tirana and Durres, giving birth to Durana, interventions for the bettering of transport should be done, in order to “keep the ‘iceberg costs’ low”.

Let’s first explain the status of fact of the transport modes that connect the two cities. The axis (the highway) that connects Tirana and Durres homes many big companies of production and trade, many private universities and many malls. These services are made for costumers from Tirana and Durres as the distances aren’t very big (35 km). Today many of these private companies have their own public transport that brings costumers from Tirana city center to their location. There are several busses connecting the city center to the mall, university, or private company, and back to the city center. But if the user wants to go to more than one place he cannot do it in one trip. He has to go back to the city center (or to Laprake, the first quarter of the city when coming from Durres) and take the other bus line. Thus, a more sustainable solution is strongly required in order to avoid traffic and pollution, and to reduce transport costs, as much as intensify the use of the axis between the two biggest cities of the country.

[In a world characterized both by increasing returns and by transportation costs, there will obviously be an incentive to concentrate production of a good near its largest market, even if there is some demand for the good elsewhere. The reason is simply that by concentrating production in one place, one can realize the scale economies, while by locating near the larger market, one minimizes transportation costs. This point – which is more often emphasized in location theory than in trade

17 – [Krugman’s arguments also explain why locational patterns can change ‘catastrophically’. Assume that the initial equilibrium is symmetric, with half of the population living in one region and half in the other. If trade costs begin to fall, there may be no immediate effects on migration and the location of production. But once costs fall below a threshold value, a cumulative process could be set off. This regional inequality arises endogenously even if all exogenous conditions are equal. Thus, we see how agglomeration tendencies may suddenly become stronger at a certain point of development.] (Committee, 2008)
the theory – is the basis for the common argument that countries will tend to export those kinds of products for which they have relatively large domestic demand.] (Krugman, 1980)

With this, Krugman says that Albania would be advantageous to export a product that is produced and sold very much in Albania. But, interpreting his words, by lowering transport costs and by concentrating production sites near to a larger market (both Tirana and Durres), increasing returns would be higher, and a circular causality which attracts more population could be started. If cheaper, faster and better public transport would connect the two cities, an immediate densification along the two sides of this connection would take place. This would bring to more population in the territorial city, more production and higher wages.

Even though we know that the importance of transport for the development of an area is not new, having in mind Krugman’s theoretical background we can be sure that a development of the links between Tirana and Durres would expand the market which would bring to the creation of a territorial city. The tendency of urban agglomerations to expand by attracting more and more population as described by Krugman’s NTT and NEG is not something that has been studied by economists or geographers only, but urban planners also. The planning of global cities is something that makes us reflect on the changes on planning instruments for what we expect our cities to be in the future.

The initiative called “Gran(d) Paris” launched in 2007 from the French president Nicolas Sarkozy18 for “a new global plan for the Paris metropolitan region” (as he said during the speech) is a good example, not for its results (as much more was expected to be done) but for a approach to the new metropolis. The general modus operandi of the ten architectural studios

18 - The ten multi-disciplinary teams were:
- Antoine Grumbach e Associés;
- Ateliers Jean Nouvel, AREP, ACD;
- AUC;
- Bernardo Secchi e Paolo Viganò;
- Castro Denissof Casi;
- Christian de Portzamparc; - LIN - Finn Geipel Giulia Andi Architects Urbanists;
- Lion Architectes Urbanistes
- MVRDV
- Rogers Stirk Harbour & Partners.
called from Sarkozy to propose plans for the future of Île-de-France region is considered an avant-garde for the studying of contemporary metropolitan regions.\footnote{Following the example of the Greater Paris another competition for the Greater Moscow was launched in 2012 making the same approach for Moscow’s regional area. The competition for The New Greater Moscow was won by Antoine Grumbach Associés (which participated for the greater Paris also) and Wilmotte & Associés.}

The approach of the ten multi-professional studios to the future of the global city of Paris was varied.

For PORTZAMPARC the metropolis is a point within a global network, for CASTRO the right to urbanity is crucial and the need for symbols is imminent, for JEAN NOUVEL the question is political and we need new tools, for AUC the new metropolis is a matrix, it is polyphonic, polymorphic, and the responses are already in the place and we need just to identify them, for LIN it has to be compact and multipolar, with urban and natural polarities, and it needs structural changes, for LION the Seine is underused and we need to transform the geography against global warming, we need to plant new forests for energy production and construction materials, for RICHARD ROGERS we need to densify and make a green belt to stop expansion, ring roads for transport and rebalance the structure of governance, for SECCHI-VIGANÒ the adaptable porous city is the response for slower speed but more connectivity, topography and water, and the increase of accessibility of nodes, MVRDV are optimists with their Paris plus, intensify the Boulevard Peripherique and two more ring-roads with new Grand Axes and underground transport lines along the Seine, GRUMBACH gives the principal role to the Seine by intensifying the maritime transport as it would connect Europe to the Atlantic, and the construction of urban villagers would form a duality of city + nature.

The common thoughts that unified almost every work was the tendency to densify and contain expansion of the urban area (Grumbach apart, which proposed to extend until the Atlantic, and Secchi-Viganò which proposed to
enlarge the city as a porous sponge toward the waterways).

The role of the Seine was central for all of them but in different ways, and almost all of the studios concentrated upon environmental issues. What are the lessons from the Grand Paris' experience? How could Durana learn something from it?

**Urban expansion** should be limited in Paris according to Rogers, who proposes a green belt, and for Lin there must be a contraposition between “dense city and light city”, or we could mention Castro’s motto “not extensive but intensive”, and MVRDV want to avoid sprawl. In the opposite direction goes the proposal of Grumbach, who sees the future of Paris as expanding in the direction of the Atlantic.

According to analyses we must say that the future of Durana, because it is not in the same stage of development of Paris, doesn’t predict a limitation of expansion, but the opposite, and this expansion will need to have a thoughtful and well-structured plan before the new population comes.

**Transportation** is a major theme as it is strictly connected to urban development. Antoine Grumbach emphasizes that “*Paris has to project itself into the large scale of globalisation, the backbone of which is maritime transport. All the major international metropolises are port cities. Urban intensity needs to be reconciled with the proximity of nature*” (Bianchini, 2009), and Portzamparc’ tips about rapid transport tubes and the need to reconcile metropolitan scale and functional spaces with the local physical scale. Jean Nouvel proposes new urban centers of intermobility exchanges, the same proposed by Secchi-Viganò (big intermodal stations), MVRDV with their intensification of the Boulevard Peripherique and the construction of two more ring-roads. Ring-roads were also proposed by Rogers (he also proposes multilayered connections with the periphery), and Lin goes for the
macro and micro mobility systems, while Lion insists on the improvement of traveler conditions within the region.

According to this issue, many useful attitudes could inspire future interventions on Durana. We could immediately say that the Albanian highway could be seen as Grumbach’ sees Seine, an axis along which the development of the new urbanity would come until the creation of a continuous urbanity that connects the capital city with the port.

**Environmental impact** of urban areas is another major question that not only Durana but every big urban area has to deal with.

Rogers pushes for green technologies (renewable energy for MVRDV, alternative energy (solar, wind, geothermal, etc.) for Jean Nouvel) and uses key words such as reduce re-use and recycle. For Secchi-Viganò biodiversity, topography and water are the most important and for Lin eco-stations and special attention to river landscapes and the mix of urban and natural polarities surrounded by zones of lower density but of high potential should be crucial. Castro respects the indications of Kyoto’s Protocol and Portzamparc proposes a sustainable management of resources. According to Lion we need to transform geography against global warming, thus new forests are needed to fulfill the need for energy production and construction materials in the next 15 years, and that interventions are needed on the river, as Seine is actually underused. Grumbach wants to adapt the valley of Seine as a perfect place where the third industrial revolution with green energy could start, and AUC about the building of micro-climates.

Durana needs to pay absolutely careful attentions to the biodiversity of the area in order to make space for both urban expansion and natural environments. Water courses must be protected and the ecosystem must be protected. A system of natural settings integrated with urban ones must be planned
before irreparable damages. Everyone of the mentioned proposals could be acceptable but we must think of the possible solutions for Durana’s case.

In relation to the management of social issues MVRDV insist in collective enterprises (the same Grumbach, and Rogers proposes to build balanced communities and to help the poor), housing programs, education, culture and social cohesion. Castro introduces the right to urbanity as a democratic space and the need to invent new symbols of our time as the city must be desirable. Jean Nouvel puts it with the genius loci, the exploration of the potential of the place and the recognition of “neighborhoods”. For Lin multilateral identities are very important and Secchi-Viganò press for adaptability and accessibility, as their sponge system is less related to speed but more connected.

In the analyses in the previous part of the research it was said that Tirana is composed of some well defined quarters, which are different from each-other. These differences are only one feature of the problem. The next planning programs should take under consideration these points as social cohesion and housing programs, as much as the exploration of the potential of the place are very important to the future of Durana. When it comes to governance of the territory Rogers talks about a rebalance of the Structure of governance (Lion simply for the improvement of governance) and MVRDV introduce the concept of a city calculator for qualitative and quantitative parameters. Jean Nouvel puts it as a political question, malfunction, discomfort, segregation is all political.

At the moment Durana lacks on proper laws for the management of the territory but it has to deal with this problem very shortly. At the moment, probably the governance of the territory is the biggest problem for the future of Durana. The situation of permanent chaos in the national politics makes a possible change of governmental model quite impossible. The race for power
has created an impossible environment for change. The main worrying fact is that a political agreement for a new way to manage the territory has to be achieved as soon as possible. The expansion of the major Albanian cities has not come to a slow down yet, on the contrary, it will be even faster if some conditions will be satisfied. On the one hand, looking at the demographic movements of the population toward big cities after every crises (not only economical, but also political, social, etc.) gives us a clear indication to how to read the changes about the concentration of the population in urban areas. Economical crises, wars, social changes seems to bring the expansion of the principal urban settlements 20.

On the other hand, according to Krugman the expansion of urban settlements brings wealth because of the home market effect and economies of scale. This is congruent to the fact that during an economical crises the bigger cities attract more people and the smaller ones and consequently expand faster. If nowadays we’re passing through a worldwide economic crises, this means that we will have to deal with broader and consequential major concentration in big urban areas 21. When Krugman talks about urban growth he says that if two regions have the same population when a parameter reaches a threshold (he makes the example of transport costs saying that if transport costs fall below a certain level) the equilibrium will be broken if some inhabitants of a region go in the other, and this determines the beginning of a long process that will end when all the population of the first region will go to the other that have more inhabitants.

20 – After the Great Depression of 1929, after WWI and WWII, after the energy crises, after the fall of the Wall, etc.

21 – According to demographical observations the population of the area of Durana has had important increase after the fall of communism first, then after the events of 1997. Is it going to be a third major round after the actual crises?

[The story also suggests that the details of the geography that emerges – which regions end up with the population – depend sensitively on initial conditions. If one region has slightly more population that another when, say, transportation costs fall below some critical level, that region
ends up gaining population at the other’s expense; had the distribution of population at that critical moment been only slightly different, the roles of the regions might have been reversed] 22 (Krugman, 1991).

All crises cause a movement of the population toward bigger urban settlements. The crises, let it be of philosophical, social, economical, or of political nature, expresses itself in the territory with the expansion of urban settlements. The birth of Durana has brought to the creation of a port-city that reminds to the attempts of the city of Paris to expand toward the Atlantic. Île-de-France region is not exactly a port region but it was considered by Grumbach as continuing until Le Havre, the port where the Seine flows into the sea. The planning responses for Paris are not applicable for Durana’s case for many reasons, nevertheless, they can lead into interesting arguments when thinking about Durana’s case. Ideally speaking, a similarity between Île-de-France region and Durana is the fact that they are both port regions which is very important as maritime connections will play an important role in the future transport modes. Nevertheless, they are very different in size and role, as; Île-de-France is extended for more than 200 km, instead, Durana extends for 45 km; Île-de-France connects two continents (Europe and America), Durana connects two regions (Western Europe and South-East Europe); Île-de-France has 12 million inhabitants, Durana has 1 million. Another similarity is that they are both the biggest region of their respective countries and they both include the capital city, which is not the port city, but it is connected to it through a river (Seine) or a highway (the one connecting Tirana and Durres).

However, the main difference between the two port regions, relies on the fact that Île-de-France looks toward the Atlantic Ocean, instead Durana looks toward the Mediterranean Sea, giving to the two very different role among global forces and a profoundly diverse character. The relation of Durana with the Mediterranean will be broadly discussed in the next chapter.
5. The solid – empty spaces relationship

Durana is the outcome of an equilibrium between Oriental and Occidental cultures, between the sea and the continent, the plain and the mountain, and its unique solid-void relationship is innate in its essence. The ephemeral spirit of architecture has given to social relations a primary role in shaping the cities, by producing an horizontal city, where the solid has been structured by the void; the house was shaped by its garden, which was the filter between public and private space; the bazar by its narrow streets, where social life took place; the Italian buildings by the central axis, which emphasized the weight of perspective in the city; the socialist buildings by the monumental space, a central matter while searching for a representational space; and finally the post-1990 un-representational space, shrunk to its essence to give priority to the built, the most secure and profitable investment now in Albania.

The innate relationship between the built-up environment and open spaces, and the character of the local architecture, the elements that structure and shape social and physical space in the Albanian territories, as part of a bigger family of the Mediterranean basin, are unique and must be maintained and reinforced. These elements can be described as those who shape the movement and the pauses, the colors and the sound of a place, the density and the distribution of events. Their clearness relies on their capacity to transmit its particularities to the inhabitant, and to the visitor, and establish that one is experiencing Durana and not another location.

One of these elements is the solid-void relationship between the built-up environment and open spaces. The ephemeral spirit of Balkan constructions - the horizontality of the city - the constancy and repetition of urban events -
the small and intimate spaces - the constant human contact - the vicinity - the narrow passages and the importance that sociality acquires (not the space itself), is what differentiate Durana from the rest of the world.

The solid-void relationship and human relations have been outlined through time until the actual configuration by some structural elements, such as; commercial routes, bazars, mosques, castles, inns, railways, industrial settlements, highways, etc. Observing the uniqueness of the equilibrium created here between Eastern and Western influences, between Christianity and Islam, between the Mediterranean and the Continent - and also the uniqueness of expressing this equilibrium in the relationship between streets and bazars, plazas and mosques and castles, highways, railways and industries, and all together with the territory - the need to protect and reinforce this singular urban composition comes naturally.

The Mediterraneity of Durana must be searched in its archaeological ruins, which have articulated and modified the territory throughout millenniums, and on the watercourses and topography, as much as on the sequential alternation of sea, field, river, field, lake, mountain, field, river, field, lake, mountain. The richness of the territory like a barcode type of topographical stripes is typical for the whole Balkan peninsula and in Durana it is represented in the widest possible “colors” of the land.

The tight passages of the bazars and the intimate courtyards of villas, intertwined with the water lanes at the edge of the streets in Tirana (described at the end of the nineteenth century by the British painter E. Lear), which served to wash things and refresh the streets, have articulated the built during the past centuries. They also constituted the diversity of Tirana defining it as a clean and fresh environment with rows of cypresses along the main roads making the green an important component for the urban distribution.

At the beginning of the urban development of the city, the bazar was the central space were people gathered and socialized. Today, the role of the bazar is not the same, as it doesn’t fit the needs of the contemporary city, likewise, the architecture of the bazar cannot fulfill them either. Thus, its architecture cannot be reproduced as it was in the past, unless we want to expose it as a museum of a traditional form of commerce (as it have been done in many cases through the Balkan countries to enhance tourism).

The bazar was a particularly interesting organic articulation of the social place and little attention was given to its architecture. Indeed, it had never been
thought as an important architectural construction (at least in the Balkan peninsula). Simple volumes surround narrow streets which sometimes end with small plazas were artisans met. The ephemeral character of the Balkan bazar is clearly expressed through its construction, the techniques of construction and the building materials. It is based in simple, often one floor, structures built always with wood for several centuries, even after they were involved in fire.

In fact, an interesting thing about bazars, is that after every fire they was rebuilt with wood again, demonstrating once more the building itself was something needed only to embrace the social sphere, annihilating the aesthetic quality of its architecture and approaching a basic functionalist language instead. This indicates clearly the importance given to the social role rather than to its form, which is not something common in the history of bazars.

In the Balkans the minute, low rise and simple constructions, crossed through by small streets that brought to small plazas, very intimate and human scale spaces, are a characteristic of the local culture that gives a maximum priority to social relations. The hierarchy of social relations, the presence or the indication of the state buildings or public buildings, or the houses of landlords, wasn't achieved by the construction of big plazas or big buildings, but with other architectonic elements (such as the number of chimneys in a house, etc.). The accommodation of a social volume is the main purpose of architectonic volumes, and its aesthetic is simple, elegantly decorated with few and symbolic paintings or bas-reliefs.

In conclusion, what should remain from the model of bazar is not its form, and maybe its function either, but its capacity of making direct and face-to-face social relations possible. New forms of gathering places should be though and planned that reminds to the bazar’s original concept, the intimate human scale that shapes a close relationship between people. The historical reconstruction of the social space in the past gives us clear insights through the structural elements of today. None of the historical shapes could absorb today’s necessities of communication and gathering spots within the city, but traditional shapes could inspire us to search for new ones that recall their meaning and role.

If the bazar was ephemeral, permeable, penetrable, traversable, transparent, the house had an imposing role. It was sacred and intimate. It was also representative of the social class of its inhabitants. The void was very important in the historical Albanian house as the void was the lubricant of
discrepancies between different families. In the towns this void was very narrow in the streets, delimited by high walls to protect the privacy of the next family, and before the house there was often a long garden that “filtered” the curiosity of the neighbors. In the towns the streets were narrow because they had to give as much space as possible to the internal garden of the house.

In the villages houses were built in a bullet distance from one another to protect themselves from improvise attacks from the neighbors.

After independence from the Ottoman rule, the urban expansion of Tirana brought to the saturation of garden spaces with extensions of the existing houses but the dimension of the streets remained the same. The narrowed and irregular streets continued to exist even during the western influences (Austrian and Italian) and only in some cases the streets were widened and the big north-south axis was build. Still, the Italian rule had not sufficient time to change drastically the urban shape of Tirana (in the regulatory plans between 1929 and 1942 the tendency was that of demolishing and construction of ring roads e big axes). But the communist dictatorship did change drastically the urban shape of Tirana by continuing the Italian strategies of ring roads, wide axis, and big plazas. The solid-void relationship got transformed and social relations got transformed also, as a result of the pressure for the formation of a new society.

After the fall of communism, the wide streets without cars were soon occupied by parking lots, barracks, holes, pieces of sidewalk, pedestrians and the sidewalks were soon invaded by illegal extension of the ground floors of the existing buildings for deposits, shops, bars, restaurants, casinos. The streets were narrow again, but this time not to conserve privacy but to use every single inch of public soil for private activities. Figuratively, we could say that the entire city became a big bazar, were every spot was a potential commercial space.

After many years, Tirana became to liberate its streets and retake its public spaces, and started to offer little and poor public services/spaces. From that moment the solid-void relationship has changed again, and the Albanian society is beginning to understand the value of public spaces. But still, the role of the void is uncertain in the actual city as it is often seen a void waiting to be filled and not a “not solid” that needs to find its role within the urban settlement. The void is seen as a single piece and not as part of a system of other voids, which, together with other systems, could shape the social sphere of the city.
The rethinking of a system of public spaces, voids, together, in the same system, with public transport, could reshape not only the system of meeting places for the inhabitants, thus the enhancement of social relations, but also the role of the built environment, making possible successful densification programs for the city and avoiding the unregulated expansion of the city which could bring to economical loss, environmental issues, or need for other infrastructural interventions. The creation of the historical conditions of vicinity of people, as much as the right to privacy, which is fundamental to the Mediterranean culture, and that innate horizontality of the traditional architecture are a *must* for the strengthening of the local identity first, and for the building of the identity for Durana.

6. Local food and energy production

Durana has always been a transitional place where import-export activities have guided its development and outlined the relationship man-territory. Today this relationship is weak and local production is very scarce. Future enhancement of local production of food and energy supplies would be important for Durana’s sustainable development as much as for the reconstruction of the man-territory relationship, that would bring to greater sense of belongingness, as Man is not only related to other men, and local identity is not only based on human relations, but also on the relation between man and nature, which was much stronger then today before the industrial revolution. It can be said that today people have quite strongly “detach” from land, as they have become almost incapable of distinguishing seasons anymore. For the inhabitant of a big city, it is difficult to tell which fruit or vegetable is naturally being harvested today, and which has been frozen before being ready for consumption.

The incapacity of peasant’s work in developing countries to compete with big farming companies equipped with heavy and efficient industrial machineries, and the lack of good infrastructures that connect rural areas with urban areas, have brought to their almost total abandonment, pushing many countries (Albania also) to import the majority of food supplies instead of producing it.

What is more, import-export and worldwide commerce has pushed people away furthermore from local products. You can find kiwis and bananas, papayas and dates where you can find apples and oranges, pears and plums,
and with reasonable prices, despite transport costs, because of economies of scale.

On the other hand, local production must have a primary role on the market because; of higher quality of food (it would have less preservative additives for the conservation of the products), it would increase the direct sale by agricultural entrepreneurs, it would ensure more working places for the population, and it would make people know their habitat better. Local agricultural and livestock products are a strong indication of belonging to a geographical context, because it defines the everyday diet which depends directly on the season, climate and variety of local products.

From here, a natural question comes out; *How exactly is the local identity affected by local production?* The geographical position and the shape of its border, the morphology of the terrain and its climate determine, on the one hand, a range of earth’s products, and on the other the models of human settlements. Hence, all these qualities, strongly related to one another, give birth to one and only man-territory relationship. Consequently, local production of fruits and vegetables influence directly not only the economy of the area but also the qualities of the territory.

In the marketplaces of Tirana and Durres today we could see that the majority of food supplies have been imported as a result of deregulation measures of the internal market and its opening to external forces, which is furthermore worsen because of the lack of efficient infrastructures, making local production unable to compete with the imported one.

Energy is also being imported even when it could be produced locally in several sustainable ways.

A continuous refrain is that the Earth is suffering and soon there will be catastrophic environmental consequences; you can help the world by recycling. How can that be true, one might ask. How can I save the whole world? What about those other people that don’t recycle? So far, the sensitization for climate change has failed in Albania because of the divergence of the scale of the problem with that of the solution. The problem is global and the solution is local. Global issues need to be turned into local solutions.

According to the analyses of international organizations in the future we will need self-sustainment because the increasing costs of carbon fuels will make importation of energy impossible. The prices of energy and food are
increasing, and this will bring unavoidably to a Third Industrial Revolution (Rifkin, 2011). Carbon fuels will be replaced by sustainable fonts of energy, which will be produced locally.

Assuming that Rifkin’s Third Industrial Revolution will certainly happen, a second point becomes important; After the creation of local networks for the distribution of energy, will there get born a local identity related to the belonging of a specific local network, bringing to major social relations? Self-sustainment in terms of energy could be transformed in something that unifies inhabitants of a territory. Energy production and environmental crises have been the protagonists of the last century and many efforts to find green solutions have been made, but the problem persists today stronger than before. With Rifkin started the trend of bringing to a local dimension environmental issues and energy production. At this point, the production of energy turns to have a key role on solution policies because it makes possible the creation of self-sufficient territorial units, plus it sensitizes people about environmental issues, bringing them much closer to the recognition of the properties and qualities of their territory, the font of production they need, what kind of energy they can produce and how they can recycle.

The creation of local energy is very important not only for the creation of a sustainable way of living but also (and maybe more importantly) for the raise of awareness of a popular consciousness about global warming and environmental issues. The relationship man - territory is not only narrated by the relationship man has with local production, but also with the way this production is realized and brought to the city to be commercialized. What type of energy should be used for production of goods and for their transport? In conclusion, renewal energy sources will have a key role on the definition of local identity in the future, and the capacity that they will have to transform a territory from depending on importation to self-sufficient, might help people to connect more to the physical reality of their territory.

7. Urban elements

Of what is made the identity of a place? How can we identify local identity? With what does the inhabitant identify him/herself with? Aren’t the smell
- the ground - the colors important? Aren’t the relation between man and language - man and earth - man and water, wind and sun important? In these relationships, what is the role of - local resources - local economy - local way of living and reproducing?

The role of this chapter is to underline the Balkan and Albanian character of the relationship man-territory that can be found in the urban form of Durana, expressed; in the housing models and their role in the transformation of the territory; in the commercial spaces and religious buildings; in public spaces and social relations; in the building materials; the role of light and sound in architecture; in the role of natural elements in shaping the urban environment etc. The character of the territorial city of Durana is shaped by the intertwinment of its urban elements. The singularity and uniqueness of its elements constitute the singularity of the whole. The shape of the plaza, of the housing units, and of the commercial space, together with the role of the natural elements in the formation of this urban settlement, have transcribed the regional scale of long distances to the local ad human scale. This constitutes the meaning and the purpose of Durana.

**The infrastructural system**

Tirana got born as a break along interregional antique routes that connected Eastern Adriatic with the inland of the Balkan peninsula. The city was neither the beginning nor the end of these connections, but it was a transition point.

This transitory quality continued until the end of the nineteenth century when new railways and automobile roads got built in the southern cities of Greece and the commercial routes from western Europe were moved from Durres to the south coast of the Balkans. Albania was the last of getting independence from the Ottoman empire and it was also very poor. The economic underdevelopment brought to impossibility to build railways (some short railway lines were built between 1917 and 1930 but they were only for mine works and military ones) and automobile connections with the rest of the region, and this changed the role of the entire country in the region. The interregional role of the Albanian cities was further mutilated during communism after the country closed every exchange with the confining states.

The interregional character of the axis Tirana-Durres, as a starting point of connections between the Adriatic and the hinterland will be “re-discovered"
only during the last decade with the construction of Rruga e Arberit and Rruga e Kombit.

While looking Tirana in an urban scale, the local character of the street system of the city derives from an oriental model that distributes like a cluster of grapes, that started from the city center, where the bazar and the mosques were located, and connected them with housing units. The streets were narrow to give more space to private properties, and often they were defined by the blind walls of the houses. In the traditional scheme the house was preferred to be at the center of the plot, surrounded by gardens which served as a filter for the privacy of the family, but usually in the towns the plots were small, so the house turned the back or the blind side to the street to enhance privacy. Along many streets there were water courses, to bring water to the gardens and to agricultural lands, which created also refreshing microclimates. Vegetation wasn’t part of the basic street, nevertheless the main entrances to the city were accompanied by long rows of evergreen local trees.

The oriental scheme was broken down by the Europeanization / westernalization of the capital city initiated at the beginning of the twenties. Streets were widened and straightened up assuming the shape of western boulevards with trees, piles of light, and sidewalks. A central axis and the expansion of radial roads were part of the new plans for the city. Also a roman trident (not completed) was proposed in Tirana connecting Sheshi Avni Rustemi with the bazar and Rruga Elbasanit.

During communism further interventions were made by following the Italian plans and by implementing new ones. The main streets were shaped by the high prefabricate buildings of apartments. The relationship house-street was definitively changed as; houses were higher and streets larger; the water courses were put underground with the installment of pipe water systems; and rows of trees were in most cases part of the street section plan since the beginning.

With the beginning of the nineties every spot of public soil got occupied and the Albanian commercial temperament re-flourished in all its forms. The street turned narrow again and the whole city resembled to a big bazar. The occupation of the public soil (sidewalks, plazas, parks, etc) has been largely described, but the main point here is the turning of the street into something that didn’t serve only to connect, but also to create a display/stage for commerce. The city turned to its original role, a meeting point of the
“caravans” from all Albanian cities. But, the scale of the “bazar” was bigger and unsustainable.

In 1999 the new major of Tirana started a cleaning process to make order to the city and recover public soil and many improvements have been done since then, a big part of abusive constructions in the urban core were pulled down and the sidewalk turned to the citizens again. A partial pedestrianization of the city center has been made also. and the process of the “construction” of public spaces still goes on. A growing sensitization for walkable streets, as much as for bike lanes and bike sharing is taking place among the inhabitants.

The plaza

The historical pre-state Albanian plaza had four basic elements; a plane tree, a shadoof, a mosque, a bazar. The image of men sitting cross-legged, gathered to discuss about public matters under the shadow of the plane tree has been a common reality until the beginning of the twentieth century and has remained very strong also in the actual popular culture. The shadoof was fundamental for the daily life of the place and many plazas had one. As the Country went under the Ottoman rule, the Muslim religion was imposed to every village, town or city and a big part of Albanians turned into Muslims, and brought with it the need to build a mosque in every village/town/city center. The bazar was also brought by the Ottomans in Albania and many of them, especially in the main cities, were built. These four elements made also the center of Tirana from its revival in the seventeenth century.

The setting of the central areas of the city changed when the first attempts to westernize Tirana started and the city started to develop along the new north-south axis. Piazza Skanderbeg was totally different from the plaza of the Old Mosque as it had a merely representative role at the beginning. The Italian plaza had representational qualities, and it was defined by public buildings that transmitted a sense of awe and intimidation through their size. The house of the Fascist party (today Universiteti Politeknik i Tiranes) and the ministerial buildings headed the new plazas along the central axis.

The fascist representational role of architecture continued during communism, however with a different aim. Its ambition was to convince people that the communist regime was making Albania develop very fast and impeccably by giving primary role to nationalist feelings. So the plaza was the display its
achievements. In the central plazas, new buildings were added (the National Museum of History, the Palace of Culture, etc.) next to the Italian ones. The plazas had a big role during communism, and also, very importantly, during the fall of communism, as they were the main places where the clash between the student movement and the regime had place.

The destiny of the plazas at the end of communism was to be the same as that of all other public spaces; they were occupied by kiosks, parked cars, children playgrounds, etc. When at the end of the chaotic period of the nineties the state regained its role, illegal constructions were turned down and the parking was not allowed anymore. Many attempts were done till then to rebuild the city center by launching international competitions for its planning, but the plan was never realized. Still today the central plaza, as many other plazas in the city, don’t have a planned shape. The representational role of the plazas is very strong even today (as it can be seen with the long “competition” between the main parties in Albania for the construction of the central plaza).

The house

To me, any type of architecture, no matter what its function, is a house. To me, all Chinese buildings can be grouped into one type, no matter whether they are urban or rural, residential, palace, temple, office, school, workshop, jail – they are all transformation of the courtyard house. There is no qualitative difference between common residential houses and monumental buildings.] (Shu, 2012)

The architectural philosophy of Wang Shu starts from an essential thought – every construction is considered a subcategory of the Chinese courthouse. By extending this notion furthermore we can imagine the whole city as the house of the human phenomena, and the traditional city model as the basic model of the contemporary cities.

The Albanian geography (¼ of its territory is mountainous) and its climate (hot and dry in summer, cold and wet in winter) have determined the development of a house model that develops around a central nucleus of heat or cooling systems. This model has given birth to diverse sub-models around the country mostly depending on precipitations and altitude, and also on cultural influences, religion etc. The housing model adopted depended also on the
historical moment. For example, during the nineteenth century, when a class struggle was taking place and a general sense of insecurity was perceived around the country, in the rural areas houses of opposite families were usually built in “a bullet” distant from each-other.

The typical Albanian village had a central public street paved with stones, and laterally accompanied by private plots with gardens and peasant’s houses. The public way continued and connected the village with the outer drinking water sources and other villages. The peasant’s house was rectangular and its shorter side, often blind, was exposed toward the public way. It had a central room where the everyday life was conduct and around which the other parts of the house expanded. The sleeping rooms were positioned between the central room and the cattle’s house, because the heat coming from the central room and from the cattle house made possible a passive heating system during the night, and also because during the night any undesired intrusion in the cattle’s house could be heard. This permitted also the saving in construction materials as the two houses had a wall in common.

In the city, where the “bullet” distances weren’t possible, the family suffering a “blood revenge” (a bloody conflict with another family) was forced by the community to leave the city. The city house didn't have a cattle house, but it related with the street in a similar way to that of the rural house. In the city the position of the houses, their height, their orientation and size, the number of chimneys it had, the building materials and paintings, etc. indicated the religion, the origin, the social class and the wealth of its owners. The figures painted in their front walls were the announcement of their political ideas, their professionals, their religion, their relations with other families, countries etc.

The typical house of Tirana’s region - the “banesa tiranase” (Tirana house) - is all gathered around the “shtepia e zjarrit” (the house of fire), a rectangle space of 30-35 square meters which can reach up to 5 m high, and in its center was located the hearth (Aliaj, et al., 2003). In Tirana’s housing model, the house of fire hadn’t a chimney as the smoke would pass through the tiles. This system is very efficient for the Mediterranean weather as it serves as a cooling system during the summer, by opening the windows and doors, and as a heating system during winter with the windows and doors closed. Only in the late nineteenth century chimneys appeared in Tirana.

The house of fire was the main room where everyday life was carried on, and the first volume to be build, after which other rooms were added around it as
the family expanded. This was the particularity of this model, as the family grows the house grows also. It reminds a banana tree, which give birth to new trees from the same trunk, which do not detach from the original one.

Around the central “house of fire” the house expanded, and its height also permitted the surrounding volumes to be divided in two stories. From the central space some inner balconies called “mafil” connected the upper floor with the “house of fire”. Before the construction of the new rooms, these “mafil” were used for the young to sleep, but only after the expansion of the house they assume a clear liaison function. In front of the house a porch covered by a very extended roof supported by two columns was used as a daily craftsmanship works and for storage (Riza, 1979) (Riza & Zhegu, 1971).

The roof, made of red tiles (from where it came the name “Red Tirana”), was particularly large compared to other Balkan model because needed to protect the walls made of qerpiç (earth bricks dried in the sun, prepared at the construction site, very convenient for thermo insulation and very economical). The walls, 70 cm thick, were made of earth bricks and the wall was reinforced by horizontal wood bars installed every 70-100 cm in the inner and the outer sides of the walls to resist to earthquakes.

The traditional house of Tirana’s region is unique in the Balkan peninsula for its architectonic composition. Its form seems to be a consequence of; a) the materials used for its construction, b) the patriarchal nature of the Albanian family, c) and the lack of public order (Frasheri, 2004).

The traditional house resisted until the first Albanian government after five centuries of Ottoman invasion was erected, and after an opening toward western tendencies during the 1920s. The housing models were changed and new European villas were being built. Due to the establishment of public order the position of the house wasn’t any more related to street safety but to compositional needs. The new house didn’t have high blind walls to protect private property but low and transparent wired mesh to display the new architecture to the public. The diffusion of “westernalized” houses was also helped by a law of the parliament in 1922 to impede the construction of new houses with qerpiç, but to use the new and advanced material of reinforced concrete. Some of the best houses built during that period are the; Fortuzi House, (1931), Xh. Dibra House (1928), Libohova House (1930, Vatican embassy) etc.

After WWII, during the communist period, the new model of society, rigorously
communist, was represented by the new house, which was a prefabricated multistory building with small apartment units for the working classes. As it has been repeatedly said the architectural styles have played an important role in the announcement of the new society that every govern, from the foundation of the Albanian state to today, used for its agenda. Every tabula rasa campaign started from the architectural style of the houses, of public buildings, plazas, and from the urban approach more generally. The new house wasn’t thought as a place to live in but only as a dormitory for the working classes, because, the big number of workers required in the urban areas, raised a great and immediate need to build many new housing units for the new inhabitants.

The new buildings shaped the street borders and defined also an internal space for courtyards where children could play. The intentions of the planners to assure an equipped courtyard with public services for free time failed as the country, very soon after the urban policies began, experienced a long economic crises (from the end of the seventies to the end of communism) immediately after the major part of housing units were built and many of public spaces were left unfinished.

After communism the favorite house of the Albanian family was still the traditional “banana tree”. As the working class family grew it added housing units to the original communist nucleus. New volumes were added to the prefabricated buildings in the first floor, in the upper floors, or by extending balconies. The communist prefabricated multistory buildings were radically transformed, reshaped, partially repainted etc.

When the first period of urban sprawl begin many families built their villas around the urban core and the favorite model was one that was simple to be build and that gave the possibility to add further floors up the first one (a Mediterranean model we could say as we can see it in south Italy, Spain, Greece, Morocco, Turkey, Croatia, etc.). At the beginning of the millennium, a repainting of the facades of the communist buildings (a project launched by the former major of Tirana, Edi Rama). These new old communist prefabricated colorful buildings suddenly became a singular and unique example.

Is there a Tirana’s style? Tirana’s traditional house is not only the “banesa Tiranase” but also the colonial, communist and post-communist housing models, as they reflect the region’s family model, its culture, its history, its climate and geographical position, etc.
The Albanian merchant temper is very known in its history as the Albanian territories have been an important break points between East and West. This part of the Albanian’s character, the ability for free trade, has long resisted in front of shocks of transformation. The communist regime has for almost half of a century band free trade and this blocked and stopped a long lasting tradition and broke the commercial continuity to young generations in a moment when international trade had its biggest growth. Nevertheless, immediately after communism new forms of commerce reappeared in the Albanian cities, and little by little a generation of capable entrepreneurs grew.

The bazar has been largely described previously in this research, but once more it must be underlined for its role as a central place for commercial activities since the re-birth of Tirana in 1614. The bazar was the heart and the only place where all commercial activities were held, until the liberation from the Ottoman rule. With the beginning of the westernalization of the country, shops began to appear along the main streets and very soon the bazar was no longer the only place for trade. New forms of commerce appeared and they extended outside the bazar and penetrated the city. Western type of private activities such as, shops and hotels, restaurants etc. detached from the central bazar and continued their expansion until the foundation of the communist regime. The re-assignment of almost all commercial activities under public ownership changed entirely the nature of commerce.

After communism commerce was the most (and the only one, in many cases) profitable activity and it gave employment to a great number of people, which, after the dismissal of state factories had lost their jobs. Commerce penetrated every spot of the city, and anything would be commercialized in the sidewalk, in the city center, in the garages. Ground floor apartments were turned into shops, bars, restaurants, hotels, clubs, gas stations, etc. During the events of 1997 commerce didn’t stopped, it only moved to safer places.

With the following of the political stabilization many markets, supermarkets and malls were build inside the city and in extra-urban areas, mainly along SH2 Highway that connect Tirana and Durres. This was the beginning of a severe change in the functioning of commerce within the urban areas, and consequently the relationship consumer-commercial area changed also the development of the city and its shape. The balance between urban growth and commercial activities braked down because the biggest part of the costumers
were sucked up by these new commercial “black holes”. This determined also the change of the commerce habits in the Albanian tradition, pushing it toward a more globalized model, and the need to be “contemporary” did the rest.

The water courses

The water courses have had an important role in Tirana’s development. The main streets were accompanied by canals which brought water from the rivers and ended to the cultivated field, and the central plazas had a shaft in the middle to provide drinking water. Rivers were a precious element for the development of the area as they provided water for the fields, and for the everyday life. Nevertheless, the relationship of the water courses with the urban settlement has changed over time.

Until the colonial period, the bed of the rivers in Tirana had been almost natural and little changes had been made to its natural course. Some bridges (for example “Ura e Tabakeve”) had been built and many canals had deviated a small part of the water toward the city. Fundamentally, until that moment, the urban settlement had followed, and had been shaped by, the natural course of the river. The subdivision of land properties and the value of each portion of land had been directly determined by the course of the river.

The role of the river changed with the beginning of the new phase for the city’s development which was based on urban regulatory plans. The idea of adapting nature to the urban development and not vice-versa started to be felt in the 1920s and the first physical intervention was the straightening of a short piece of the river bed.

The straightening wasn’t only a demonstration of the dominant role of urbanity in the territory, but also a first attempt to use natural element as part of the urban project. Nature and city were thought as one, and the river was thought as part of the new infrastructural grid. The new river bed would be perpendicular to the central Italian axis, and it would act like the decumanus of the roman cardo-decumanus infrastructural system.

During the communist period the river bed continued to be built, and it soon became one of the big achievements realized by the regime to give the city a more modern look, as the green grass and the little trees along the river bed
transmitted a sense of order and development. It continued toward both sides of the water course, east and west, and covered almost entirely the length of the urbanized area of the city. With the beginning of the nineties, as any public space, both sides of the river were occupied by commercial activities (hotels, bars, restaurants, casinos, etc.). The discharge of wastewater was done directly to the river, and it soon became a font of pollution. The role of the river ironically turned back to one of its historical functions, that of cleaning, but in a dramatically different manner.

When Edi Rama came to power in 1999 a new era for the city’s image was about to begin. The illegal constructions along Lana river and those that had occupied the central plazas and public spaces in the urban core were turned down to leave place to green areas. However, the river wasn’t seen as only a flowerbed but as part of an important natural element that traverses the urban settlement and articulates the urban ecosystem.

Actually, the role of the river in the new urban plans is that of an important water course for the enrichment of the natural habitat of the local ecosystem. New urban parks along the rivers had been proposed and the role of the river to represent in the better way the new political power has began. Its importance has been re-established and it has been considered by many urban studies as one of the leading elements for the city’s development.
Chapter five
Strategic plans

8. Rethinking public space

In this chapter public transport and public spaces will not be considered as separate entities, but as a whole, belonging to the same entity. Which means that also their planning is considered as part of the same strategy. This intention comes after two considerations:

- The development of technology has changed communication among people and public life consequently. The plaza, the place where most likely people would go to socialize in the past, has changed its “shape” and “location”, as today it is more fluid, almost “continuous in space”, helped by world wide web connections, social platforms etc.

- In big metropolis most of the people use much of their time during a normal day to go from home to work and go back at the end of the day. While the city grows this time frame (the time implied to go to work and turn back), becomes more consistent and every km of distances to cover brings to the shortening of free time to use while not at work. Also the comfort of travelling decreases when distances increase, and the passage from a part of the city to another very often is dramatic and exhausting. This means that, especially in developing metropolis, traffic jams, bad conditions of public transport, pollution, and long distances to travel, make this everyday experience very hard.

Since the use of public space has changed due to advanced technological modes of communication, and since time dedicated to daily travel has increased, and will certainly increase more in developing cities, public space itself must be rethought and its planning tools updated. The traditional modes of planning the system of public spaces is obsolete. The planning of public transport, and public space separately is unthinkable. Instead, they should be thought as a single system. The fact that the planning of public transport
today is strongly connected to “home-work-home” system influences its overall conception and functionality, as it is demonstrated by the fact that during holidays public transport reduces its services. Apparently, this means that public transport has been strongly thought since its planning related to a weekly work schedule, and not related to leisure time.

A new planning approach should be engaged in order to improve the quality of the public city. New technologies and communication platforms should be used as basics for new social spaces and transportation, thought together as a *continuous apparatus*, composed of; plazas, sidewalks, public transport, multimodal stations etc. By theorising the continuity of the public city, which penetrates and connects various parts of the city, and the role it has for a strong urban identity, this apparatus can start a domino effect of regenerative processes overall public life.

When the mobility is being planned, the plaza should be planned also and the passage from the fixed to the mobile (and also the passage from a type of transport to another) should be almost invisible to our senses. The plaza and the transport lines must evolve and grow together as a unit of the city, as the *shell* of a person’s movements, which would structure the city. The continuous sociality is meant to enter the whole urban extension, going from the courtyard of our houses to inside public transport, continuing in open spaces in front of office buildings and public buildings, until it opens up to the plaza or park, enhancing the quality of interpersonal relationships in contemporary urban environment - its final feedback.

The main goal of this system (the continuous apparatus), social equity and mixture, would be achieved by creating; *safe, accessible, adaptable, flexible, livable, attractive, healthy* and *smart* public city. Its most important and delicate points are the intermobility nodes (where different types of transport, passages and directions met and exchange), and a special attention should be given to them aiming the enhancement socialization, entertainment, communication and multicultural exchange. The definition gave to the intermobility nodes by Rodrigue; “*Intermodality enhances the economic performance of a transport chain by using modes in the most productive manner.*” (Rodrique, et al., 2009), enhances the role they have to organize, overlap and coordinate different fluxes. In these points, where global and local meet, the metropolitan scale confront with the human scale by merging together different cultures. Usually these nodes are studied to be as efficient as possible, economically above all, but this should imply the creation of a multifunctional space for
a better socialization. Intermobility nodes should have the role of filters for the new, the global new, and should confront people with a global culture, a broader scale of novelty, as International Expos where people see the world and confront with it.

The plaza shouldn’t be thought only as a place for free time, intermobility nodes not just to exchange transport, and the transport vehicle not only as a transport vehicle. We should consider these three elements as elements of a whole system of public apparatus capable of enhancing interpersonal relationships between people. Because of the capacity good public spaces have to guarantee social security and to strengthen urban identity, as well as city’s appropriation from citizens, an intervention over public spaces can give rise to a chain of regenerative events of the public city creating a domino effect of redefinition and reinforcement of these aspects. The passage from one part of the city to another, in the fastest and pleasant way, helps inhabitants of a large metropolitan area develop that public multidimensional consciousness necessary to enjoy the city.

The attention given to persons (significantly indicated with the expression “people-oriented approach to city planning” by Jan Gehl, (Gehl, 2010)) is therefore intended for creating suitable spaces for the performance of everyday activities. It is of crucial importance the focus on the public city and its responsiveness to contemporary social practices by monitoring constantly the changes and the variability over different sociocultural contexts and addressing the development toward a reinforcement of local identity and by always analyzing regional and global forces which directly or indirectly influence urban settlements, where the human scale tend to disappear in front of the metropolitan one. The construction of a strong public system not only is fundamental for the reinforcement of a local public consciousness, but also it prepares the local to affront the global, not by annihilating itself but by supporting a proper world-wide cultural braiding.

Actually, mass transport vehicles are thought as only for displacement of people from one part of the territory to another, and mass transport companies tend to invest on the improvement of physical comfort and on the carrying capacity of passengers per vehicle; better air conditioning, better amortization, sound proof, sitting commodities and number of sits. But the most important thing, accessibility, is often forgotten. W. H. White said that the easiest way to find out if an open space works well is to see if there are people in it (White, 1980). But, this depends very much on its location and its accessibility, whether it is
easy to reach and if the traveling is comfortable or not.

If a space - even if it has a good urban design, proper dimensions and it is filled with mixed functions - is not reachable for everybody in different and good ways, it doesn’t work. Reachability is not meant only as accessibility for disabled people, wheel chair users, blind people, children, elderly people or people carrying heavy luggage, but also as the possibility for everybody to arrive at this space in multiple ways; by walking or cycling, by bus, by train or tram, by private car etc.

According to Lucas, today’s transport planning projects are concerned more about how extensive and fast (mobility), rather than how well connected should it be (accessibility). Also transport costs and benefits tend not to be studied at regional and national level, which makes local agencies, that should provide these services, not to consider transport access as their concern (Lucas, 2003). And also, an urban public space is characterized by proximity, diversity and accessibility (Zukin, 1995). There are many problems related to unfrequented public spaces. The famous phrase of Jane Jacobs “Eyes on the street” (Jacobs, 1961) indicates the importance of natural surveillance of open spaces. Unfrequented places can be revitalized starting with the possibility to arrive there from many places of the city by entering this location in an urban grid of public spaces served by public transport and sustained by proper urban design. This basic characteristic every open spaces should possess was described very well by Newman in 1973;

[The capacity of the physical environment to create perceived zones of territorial influence: mechanisms for the subdivision and articulation of areas of the residential environment intended to reinforce inhabitants in their ability to assume territorial attitudes and prerogatives. And the capacity of physical design to provide surveillance opportunities for residents and their agents: mechanisms for improving the capacity of residents to casually and continually survey the non-private areas of their living environment, indoors and out]” (Newman, 1973).

Many research have been made for the development of public transport studying values of walking distances one would cover to reach stations. Research made for the development of TOD (transit oriented development) districts give us a clear view of walking distances one would walk to arrive at a mass transit station. Based on the research of O’Sullivan, Sean and John Morrall (O’Sullivan & Morrall, 1996); people walk farther to get to a light-rail
station than a bus stop and the walking distance one is likely to do to get to a station is bigger to the suburbs than to the center of the city. Generally one would walk for 5 min. and if we suppose a walking speed of 80m/min the walking distance is 400 m. The longest walking distances are in residential areas and the shortest in industrial areas.

These numbers differ depending on; the type of station, the city’s sector (residential, commercial etc.), if it’s a central or a suburban station etc. We can use researches made in other Countries only for the method put in place but the measurement and analyses of walkable distances should be propaedeutic to every intervention on public spaces and transport of a city, as different cultures (walking habits, the use of bicycles etc.), different types of city (dimensions, geographic position, morphology etc.) and different economic development directly influence on transportation habits its population has.

In the case of developing metropolis, the entire planning-implementation process is much more complex than the developed world, as it has to put into account some obstacles that the developed world has already surpassed in the past, such as; corruption, political instability, lack of public security, urban fast growth rates, etc.

Above all, the time factor determines whether a plan is successful or not, as corruption slims the budget, which gets furthermore slimed to protect the construction site from irruptions, the political instability makes unpredictable the duration of the government, which, if changed, would, most likely, bring to the immediate interruption of the project, and the urban high growth rate does the rest, as it makes most of the projects be obsolete and unsuccessful by their completion.

Because of the time factor, most of the long-term or expensive projects proposed for a developing city fail. As it has happened many times in Tirana, the classical scenario is; a problem is detected, which brings to a preliminary study, and then to the call of a group of professionals (or an open competition), which brings to deeper studies of the status of fact, and probably to an adequate solution, thereafter the solution starts to be realized. The planning process in the best hypothesis of the cases is interrupted at the completion of the works, or in a less lucky case it would be completed with several cuts to the “not fundamental” works (the aesthetic part), or interrupted because of excessive costs, or even because the political power has meanwhile changed. There isn’t a “worst” scenario for the interrupted projects as it is always a waste of public money, and in many cases brings to the worsening
of the existing conditions by, for example, scraping the ground to build a new road, but since the project wasn’t finished, the road now turns into a trail of mud.

The *money* factor is the other important point, as it determines whether a project is successful or not. Not talking about the absolute investment in terms of money (the absolute amount is also very important as the strategy of using the money is fundamental, but this aspect will be developed in the next section), but in terms of distribution of the investment to all the stages of the project. Often, in developing countries, the investment is concentrated almost all at the first part of its accomplishment, until the ending of the construction works, without estimating/determining the part of investment needed for the maintenance of the project while it is used. This happens mainly for two reasons; because the investment is only a demonstration of accomplishments of the political power, so that the political party would obtain more votes in the forthcoming elections, or, because the expenses for the ending of the project have been bigger than expected. In either cases the project is successful, as the interruption of investments for its maintenance would bring almost always to its failure and decay in the near future.

Starting from these two fundamental factors, time and money, it can be said that, especially in developing countries (but it is true for every project everywhere in the world), *the triggering of processes is recommended*, and not the “completion” of a project. The project itself must be thought as a process and must aim to increase in time and adapt to the changing conditions of the urban settlement. Especially in developing countries, with an unstable political scenario and not favorable economic conditions, are needed short-term plans (based in strategic territorial scale) that activate the *beginning of a process*, where the process is intended as a condition that enhances the livability of an urban settlement over time, and expanses/increases as diverse existing urban mechanisms interact with the original *seed*, incorporating it in a larger and deeper system.

The process must be customized according to the local conditions and use these conditions to its success. It is fundamental, for example, to start from the legislative unit in the territory the process is being started in order to adapt the phases of the process to the phases of politics. If the territory will go under elections every four years, also the time-unit used for the phases of the project should endure four years.

Giving the amount of money for the investment, the process should be
customized according to it, and calculating as part of the investment every step of the process, from the starting to the point when it becomes self-sufficient.

In the process of the building of a system of public spaces the traces of the ex-industry cannot be left out because their system makes the skeleton of what is the city today, and the recovering of that historical urban fabric, which was originally planned for industrial production, today should be used for the production of social relation. This doesn't mean that the industrial footprint would be re-discovered in toto but only its essence, its urban shape, the dimension of the built, their elevation, the internal distribution and the relationship of infrastructures with public spaces, with the city.

The discourse of the recovery of the traces of industrial settlements is only the beginning of a bigger and wider process of re-discovery of the historical urban form. And the system of the ex-industry are considered here as only a part of that millenary shape of Durana, composed of the byzantine city, the ottoman one, the colonial and communist one.

The framework of antique commercial routes and the traces of prehistoric caves, castles, amphitheatres, bazaars, mosques and paleochristian churches, make an important cultural patrimony. Thus, it must not only be preserved but also, and most importantly, promoted and thought as an important and essential part of the new city.

The Paleolithic findings in the "Shpella e Pellumbit" (Pellumbi cave) in the Dajti mountain that confines Tirana in the east should be strongly promoted, and the Roman house (later transformed into a church) with a mosaic-floor of the 3rd Century A.D. in it, together with the remains of the castle built by Emperor Justinian in 520 AD and restored by Ahmed Pasha Toptani in the 18th century, must be thought as part of a system that connects them with pedestrian passages, bike lanes and public transport.

And in Durres, a city found in 627 BC, must be created a network of passages and connections not between archaeological sites only but with public spaces, in order to create a compact and unifying system of pedestrian courses. Of the long list of the fine archaeological findings in Durres we could mention; the Roman Amphitheater built in the 2nd century AD during Trajan's time, a World Heritage candidate and the biggest in the Balkans, the ancient city defenses built in the 1st century BC (final form in 5th century- reconstruction after an earthquake by the Emperor Anastasius I), and the Castle of Durres,
Besides the cities of Durres and Tirana there are other archaeological remains that must be included and promoted somehow and integrated into public system. Via Egnatia and Rruga e Arberit have determined the birth and the survival of these cities until the beginning of the twentieth century and they can guide us in the journey of discovering our history.

Also, nearby the city of Tirana, in Kus, a village of the parish of Kashar, a medieval church, a three hundred old mosque, another church and an antique cemetery were discovered some time ago. Discoveries like this does not happen very often in the area, but still, the possibility to revive and develop the creation of an archaeological network that can be transformed into a precious mode of rebuilding the historical identity of the place. (Dedej, 2012)

In Tirana Shpella e Pellumbit is almost unknown to the most, the Roman house is delimited and secured but it is very hard to find because of the lack of informative tables in the quarter or other types of indications, and the same for the castle. In Durres the dramatic situation has already been denounced by many scholars around the world since the fast and illegal sprawl after the fall of communism has brought to the submersion of the archaeological rests under abusive constructions and demolitions. Only lately these sites have been little defended.

The system of the public spaces in both cities needs to be thought as a whole. Since now many projects have been drafted and only some realized because of the political and economic conditions mostly, but also because of the incapacity of the projects to avoid these obstacles and propose fast and cheap projects instead of massive, expensive and long duration projects. Only after two decades some very little improvements have been done to the pedestrian’s conditions in these cities and there is no sign of sensitivity toward disable people. Since now only projects for bike lanes have been done and only lately public space has been safe from further abusive constructions.

Even though, signs of wanting to change the face of our cities have been growing since the end of the twentieth century (we can remember the work of the former mayor of Tirana for three times, Edi Rama). Nevertheless, the need for practical projects that get build and improved with the passing of time is very strong. The quality of life have risen and the stage of development is different from the past two decades, the number of uncontrolled constructions are lower and the schizophrenic expansion has been calmed down a little,
and now the quality of city services is needed.

The last point is that the economical point of view and how economic fluxes works must be understood better than anything else because it is economics that start a good or a bad process. We could say anything about the positive effects that a certain type of urban development might have upon peoples life but we'll never achieve it if it doesn’t fit with economy’s logics.

9. The infrastructural system

The infrastructural system, which is the backbone of the urban development of Durana, includes the road system, the railways (existing and future), the maritime transport (International Port of Durres) and the air transport (Nene Tereza International Airport). The infrastructural system is thought in two scales; the regional scale, which supports the global forces, and the urban scale, which supports the local forces.

These regional / global connections (via airport, port, and international highways) sustain the territorial scale of Durana, which would be appropriate to absorb the external forces, thus it also considers other territorial systems, such as; the water systems, the archaeological system, the environmental systems, the distribution of agricultural and industrial systems. All these systems (including the infrastructural one) are strictly related to the geology and morphology of the terrain, and the morphology and density of the urban settlements. The connection between the territorial scale and urban scale will be possible across intermobility nodes, which have the function of distributing the regional fluxes within the urban area, from the massive and fast transportation to a more minute of public transport and bicycle lanes, taxis, carsharing, etc. adapting the intensity of the transport to the necessity of the particular urban settlement.

In the case of Durana a particular role is played by the satellite cities of Tirana built during communism. These satellite cities, positioned around the capital city as if they embraced the urban core from west, north-west and north, were originally connected through railways and road systems with the rest of the country. After the fall of the Wall these satellite cities were the fertile ground of the new sprawled city, and their infrastructural connections with the city and with the country were used as the skeleton of the sprawl, which absorbed them (the satellite cities) in the new dimension.
This system, originally used for the industrial settlements, should be rethought in a contemporary way, for the contemporary territorial city, with the contemporary instruments, for the contemporary society, and according to the contemporary production and distribution needs. This can be the system where the global and the local meet, and where the other territorial systems catch the local/human scale.

The dimension of infrastructures often remains something theoretical when it comes to deal with reality and the transport modes raise the problem in a more practical way. This means that transport modes make the crucial turn from the theoretical study to a practical approach. In Tirana, also because of the tendency to Westernize the city, for more than a decade it has been discussed about rail transit, and many proposals have come along. The rail transit should “solve traffic jams”, which is actually the most important problem of the city, bringing environmental pollution, noise pollution, makes the city hard to live, it slows economy, etc.

The light rail transit in Albania is strongly considered and is supported by many professionals, as demonstrated in the last Regulatory Plan for the city (presented in 2012), where the new rail lines (which partly reuse the old rail lines) play a very important role in connecting the city to the airport. Nevertheless, when it comes to adopt it in a developing reality, even though rail transport is one of the most sustainable modes of transport today, the scenario gets more complex.

This complexity is related to the time and money factors mentioned in the previous section. The rail lines are not small projects that can be realized in a short period of time and with a small amount of money, but they are important interventions that need very deep analyses before starting their construction. But meanwhile the city grows, as much as the traffic and all problems related to it. As the problems get bigger the urban deprivation grows and the city doesn’t develop.

In this way the solution (the construction of rail transport lines) becomes a problem, because, since it isn’t built yet, it doesn’t solve anything, and, since it is still the main subject for transport solutions, it captures all the intellectual attention and effort, blocking the city from founding alternative solutions to traffic jams. Thus, the feasibility of solutions proposed for the city must be the first condition. And a feasible mode of transportation in Durana for the moment we live, and according to the actual development stage, is the bus system. According to a study made by Jaime Lerner in Curitiba, Brazil,
before his intervention of the revolutionary “Bus Rapid Transit” (BRT) the costs for the construction of a metro line are ten times higher than those for the construction of a tramline, which are ten times higher than those for the construction of a bus line. This study made him go for the bus lines rather than the metro line that everybody wanted at that moment (Lerner, 2006)

This means that a comparative study must be done before any effort of choice of public transport mode, by taking in mind that ecological and sustainable public transport is important but much more important is the accomplishment of projects and the proposal of feasible projects. For the moment, the most important think is the creation of an efficient public transport rather than trying to import avant-garde models that need decades to be installed in the city. Because meanwhile more and more people will use their cars and they’ll pollute more than any ecological technology would save from sending into the air. This means that the first approach must be immediate to solve an actual important issue (traffic jams and pollution) and only after another stage of development the passage from the bus transport to the light rail transit should be done. This means that the positive characteristics of the rail transport can be added to the bus rapid transit only after Durana has reached a certain development.

It is broadly accepted that trains have greater economies of scale then buses, thus also the development of the territory would be strongly pushed by the introduction of rail transit systems, but it must be taken under consideration that it isn’t sure that the light rail transit encourages people to stop driving (Jaffe, 2013) (Lee & Senior, 2013), as the majority of the users of a light rail transit were previously users of buses. Which means that the number of car-users wouldn’t go down only by building light rail transit systems. Light rail transit would work best if associated with planning policies which does not consider only “home-work-home” transit. The system of public transport must be adaptable to the city’s needs. If a person should use public transport to go to work, but also stop to some interstitial destinations (to drop the kids to school, to go to the supermarket, etc.) he needs to have an efficient public transport, otherwise he will drive.

The bottom line here is the fact that, in Durana, there is no need for long term projects, but for long term strategies and short term effective and doable projects. Avant-garde plans for tramways have been suggested in the past decade to improve Tirana’s mobility but they cannot be put in place until previous steps of urban (but not only urban) development are reached.
First of all, the time factor determines the development and the extension of developing strategies and plans, considered for development, is crucial for the achievement of plans. In developing countries, generally, the shortest is the intervention the major chances it has to be realized. But how short should it be? To respond to this question one should ask what determines the achievement of a project mostly, finding the answer that politics are directly responsible for it. Thus, the achievement of a project is directly related to the political force that has the power. The achievement of the project isn’t ensured after the change of the political force, as the projects started from a given party that had the power will have very low chances to be continued by the next political power. Consequently, this means that if the duration of the term of a mayor lasts four years, then also the projects proposed for the development of the territory must have a maximum of four years of duration, from the beginning to the end of its construction. The duration of the achievement of an intervention is strongly related to the legislation, thus projects must be thought in base of political legislatures.

Second of all, the money factor has its fundamental role in determining the feasibility of a project. The budget available determines whether a project can be realized or not. The budget is strongly related to the planning approach. The more it re-uses available resources the more the project will be feasible. Thus, it would be necessary an evaluation of the status of fact and of the local resources available and ready to be reused, and finally the optimal extension of the intervention should be found. A deep analyses of the feasibility of the project, its costs and its duration should be made by comparing it with different solutions for the same goal. The major ambition of the intervention strategies on a territorial scale is to use in the best way the available resources, and the will of an urban settlement is to grow in an harmonious, sustainable and people-friendly way.

For example, the project for the new tramway that should connect the periphery with the city center, a comparative study before the project must be done between various types of transport modes, such as; railways, tramways, trolley busses or bus lines etc. In the case of the tramway project, maybe it is not a priority to connect the city center with the periphery but to connect Tirana and Durres – so the connection between the north periphery and the city center would be only a part of the intervention. In the new urban plan of Tirana presented by the municipality of Tirana at the end of 2012 a big importance was given to the connection of the capital city with the airport (figure needed) extending transport plans from the city center to it. But in the
same plan little importance was given to the connection of the capital city with Durres and its port.

The new plan should correspond the actual situation in all its forms, in the sense that if the territory is experiencing a continuous change also the plan should be able to follow this change, thus it should be adaptable, and it must provide the reuse of available resources for its achievement. The transportation of food supplies is mostly achieved using large trucks (mainly used to bring food supplies into the city of Tirana from neighboring countries or from Durrës port), medium-size vehicles (used for national transportation or for transportation within the capital city), small vehicles or even automobiles (used for urban transportation), and almost never railways (food supplies reach Tirana by train only for a marginal part brought in by farmers who go to Tirana to sell their own products) (Verçuni & Zhllima, 2008).

Considering the precarious conditions of the actual railway, which connects Tirana and Durres with the rest of the country, actually under-used for the passenger transport because it doesn’t provide a good service due to many factors among which it stands the fact that it has only one binary (a train coming from Tirana should wait to Vore to let the train coming from Durres pass, and then continue the journey), wouldn’t be a serious issue for the transportation of goods toward Tirana or Durres. This means that, if the conditions of the rail transport as they are today aren’t so good for public transport, but the transport of goods from the agricultural sites toward the cities of Tirana and Durres wouldn’t need comfort but only physical displacement, this makes the actual rail transport in Albania adaptable to transportation of goods only, and not people.

Thus, if the conditions of the railway permits it without much investments, the same railway could be adapted for the transportation of only goods. This means that the actual railway can solve a big part of the traffic congestion in the entry of Tirana and Durres, as it avoids the use of road transport for agricultural and industrial production along/near or that can be connected to the railway. Otherwise, in the case when the former railway isn’t operative (like in the western

The production and distribution of goods have a crucial role in the planning of the territory, and, if by one side we can consider the transformation of the railway totally dedicated to the transportation of goods (even if only for a definite/limited period of time), from the other side the locations where these goods could be distributed could be the ex-industrial areas, or similar (in
dimension) locations outside the historical urban core, but within the urban expansion. It must be said that the western branch of the railway built during communism has been dismissed and most probably it would cost a fortune to recover it. Nevertheless, a parallel road has been built connecting the “Kombinati I Mishit Yzberisht”, and the whole area (which also includes the production sites of Tirana Beer and Cognac Skenderbeu) to the Tirana-Durres highway. This road connection has assumed a tangential role in relation to the city.

Also the choice of turning ex-industries into wholesale locations wouldn’t be very new for the city of Tirana. For example, the buildings of the “ex-Uzina 5 Maji” have been used as location for wholesale since the nineties. For these types of buildings/areas is needed only their adaptation to host the new function in order to increase its use and avoid the transformation of these areas into urban barriers for the nearby quarters, but enable their connection. Thereafter, these areas need to be connected with the rest of the city through public transport. Also they need to be very porous spaces and connected to the rest of the city. They need to function as intermodal transport locations.

If, on the one side the transportation of goods comes through railways, public transport between Tirana and Durres should rely upon a road transport mode, because it is less complex to be realized, more flexible, and economical (in the short term). Since Durana is still experiencing a fast urban growth, there is the need to adopt feasible projects and they need to be achieved as soon as possible, in order to encourage urban growth.

Actually, public transportation along Durana is very expensive and inefficient, discontinuous and not at all convenient to pedestrians interested in services along the highway or in the cities. It curious how many commercial centers, private universities, enterprises and factories along the highway have created their own transport companies, have bought their own public transport vehicles, have their own timetables and tickets, and they cannot cooperate between each-other to invest in an unique transport company under an unique timetable, ticket prices, etc. The main Malls also provide this service for their costumers for free. But the fact that every mall-company-enterprise-university has its own public transport is not an issue only to them (as it would cost much more than it would cost if all of them had an unique transport company that subdivides the costs) but also to the city. Their transport companies increase traffic, pollute, and damage the roads. Their cost is very high for the city and there must be find a solution.
If an agreement between the companies along the highway would be possible, leading to the creation of an unique solution to public transport, this would also bring to the increase of use by the inhabitants of Durana, the space between the two cities would be more fluid, accessible. Thus, the companies that share the expense of public transport would benefit immediately. Thinking about the actual model (every big company has its own transport line) a costumer interested in shopping would get a bus from the city center and go to the mall that that transport company leads to. He would buy stuff and turn back to the city, or if he wouldn’t find anything interesting to buy in that mall, he would be constrained to turn back to the city and take another mall’s transport company, as the companies doesn’t stop to the other malls. Most probably, the costumer would have to decide where exactly to go and what to buy before going to the mall, because, in relation to his interests he has to choose a location, which most probably will be the one where he will buy stuff.

Thus, following this reasoning, when the same public transport company would permit to stop in every one of the malls the costumer would be more confident in his choices as he would go to every mall and buy in the most convenient one. This model would increase not only the possibility of the inhabitants to enjoy all the services along the highway, but also it would increase competition between companies.

According to the European Bank in the document for the reconstruction and development strategy for Albania, the seaport and railway sectors can play an important role to achieve sustainable transportation in the country (including containing, if not reducing, CO2 emissions and localised pollution). The landlord model could be introduced for the port of Durres, outsourcing terminal management and operations to the private sector through tenders. In the railway sector, further corporate restructuring and financial sustainability improvements would be required. Private sector participation in the urban transport sector is on the rise, but the market is fragmented and contractual arrangements with the regulator are weak. The urban transport system operates at a very low level of organisation where small private bus operators are organised into loose associations. Tirana’s public transport market is characterised by fragmentation of market participants, poor regulation, and poor quality of service. Financial performance is mixed. Urban transport operators have gained limited access to the commercial funds as a source of investments, albeit with short-term tenors; however, due to the simple and weak contractual arrangements with the regulator (operators are granted a simple license), financial resources are currently insufficient to provide for
financing of modern bus fleets. Due to the rapid growth in car ownership, traffic congestion is a growing problem; the need for investment in key missing link road segments and traffic management is evident in Tirana and other secondary cities. In railways, operating and policy setting functions are not separated and core railway businesses (infrastructure, passenger, freight, etc.) are operated by the same entity. Following significant labour restructuring, the number of staff declined from 8,800 in 1989 to 1,900 in 2008. Ancillary rail activities have been divested and are now operated by private entities (on a lease basis) (EU, 2012).

In the new Urban Regulatory Plan of 2012 the development of Tirana doesn’t take enough into consideration the axis Tirana-Durres but concentrates its interest toward the Airport, considering it as part of the plan. Also, by looking at the figure of the areas defined as high, medium or low building permits in the future, or by looking at the plan for bike lanes (which considers only the central part of the urban settlement) it can be said that it considers the capital city as monocentric and considers the western and northern extension of it as appendixes. The extension of the view even larger, including Durres also in the general vision, would bring to the fulfillment of the bigger strategy of Durana.

The alteration of the size of the territory considered implies unequivocally radical changes in the government of the territory and it brings to the birth of new “supra urban” political figures that would have the power to govern the development of the entire Durana’s extension. Only after this change politics of territorial development can be put in place. So, the entire political form of governance of the city must change, thinking of it not as a whole but as a part of a metropolitan region, Durana, able to support and enhance the global forces, and at the same moment by promoting urban people-friendliness.

10. Agricultural production

Agriculture plays a pivotal role in the development of real sustainable cities in the Mediterranean, heading towards a synergy between food, urban planning, landscape, architecture, design and tourism. The importance given to production is profoundly related to the urban development. This approach isn’t new to urban planners, but yet, the local character of agricultural production, strongly related to the place, thus different for every urban settlement, isn’t
obvious. The guidelines for the strategic planning give top priority to the aiming of an urban area that is people-oriented, livable, sustainable, and which aspire to fight inequality among people. Production of goods and human relations, both connected through a network of infrastructures.

In the case of Albania, with a long-lasting agricultural history, is in fact agricultural production what can put together the various territorial systems of Durana. The connection of agriculture with urban development has given birth to many contemporary concepts and the sensitization of urban developers about the topic is increasing due to the alarm launched by international studies about food supplies in the future. According to Pimental, the worrying scenery about food supplies is related to the future block of exportation of cereal grains (which is up to 80% of the world’s food supply) by the countries that actually export it. (Pimental, 1998, p. 37).

From a study of EU Commission about agriculture and rural development in Albania, resulted that the EU-Albania trade balance between the imports and exports of agricultural products was negative in 2010\(^2\) (-124.7 million euro, of which exported 27.0 and imported 151.7 million euro) (EU, 2012). This means, according to Pimental, that if all nations reach the limit of domestic food production, importation of food supplies will not be possible by any country anymore, and the survive of a wealthy nation means the starvation of the poor one. And [based on realistic trends, sufficient food supplies probably will not be available for import by China or any other nation on the international market to import by 2050.] (Pimental, 1998, p. 37). Despite the credibility or not of this alarming scenario, it is fundamental to realize that the future of urban settlements will depend more and more on self-sustainment and not on importation. The world-wide economic crises of 2008 puts under the spotlight even more the role of agricultural development.

According to Bideleux and Jeffries, Albania, in the period between 1992 – 1997 experienced a slow agricultural restructuring process because of the slow pace of reforms to settle compensation claims from pre-communist and preollectivization property-owners\(^5\) (Bideleux & Jeffries, 2006).

The analyses of sustainable models that use properly and without irreversible damages to the land and ecosystems that exist in the territory. will lead to the discussion of modes of development for Durana to accomplish the self-sustainment of the urban settlement. Actually Albania, according to Ministerial data, is sustained mostly by importation of food supplies, even though 30% of its territory is plain and arable\(^6\). In the case of Durana particularly, the conditions...
mechanisms for establishing the legality of land transactions and the requirement that all land holdings in a village be registered before any could be sold; in fact only 3% of privatized land had been so registered by mid-1997] (Bideleux & Jeffries, 2006, p. 52)

6 - About 40.5% of the total area of Albania is utilized for agriculture area, of which 48.7% is arable (EU, 2012).

16% of the country lies below 100 m, 55% falls between 100 and 1,000 m and 29% is above 1,000 m. The agricultural land is often quite sloping, with only about 44% of the agricultural land having a slope of less than 5%, also 40% of the arable land lies in the coastal areas that are predominantly plains (Skreli, 2007).

24% of the land is classified as agriculture land (43% is lowland, 34% hilly and 23% mountains), 36% as forests and 15% are pastures. 25% of the territory on the coastal plane and over 60% of the country is mountainous.

7 - [Worsening this crises today is the paralyzing technical debate between agriculturalists and environmentalists over what environmentally sustainable farming would actually look like. Production-oriented agriculturalists argue that environmental protection – especially protection of forests and topsoil – can be advanced through modern, input-intensive farming. Environmentalist advocates, by contrast, associate high-input farming with chemical pollution, a faster exhaustion of water supplies and loss of biodiversity. They feel it is better to hold onto traditional farming techniques suited to local ecologies and to the circumstances of ordinary resource-poor farmers…

for such a development are excellent as the biggest part of its territory is arable. But what its astonishing in Durana is the fact that its population mostly comes from rural areas all over the country, where agricultural activities were a lifetime activity, thus specialized in agricultural development.

Starting from the point that an agricultural sustainment is needed for Durana, the way of achieving such a goal needs a 360° of planning approach. According to Paarlberg there is an intense technical debate between agriculturalists and environmentalists. The first say that the protection of ecosystems can advance with the help of agriculture, instead, the second associate farming with chemical pollution of the land, exhaustion of water supplies and loss of biodiversity. The second want to rely on traditional farming and the first say that only industrial agriculture can ever feed the ever-growing population of the earth. He says that there isn’t a single response to this issue but all depends on region-specific conditions and that we must pay attention to geography and politics also.

During the last century, after the beginning of the “Green Revolution”, agricultural production increased astonishingly and this follows the split of environmentalists and agriculturalists described above. According to Lal, Hobbs and Uphoff the agricultural intensification has achieved in protecting environmental resources because by increasing yields on the lands best suited to agriculture world farmers have preserved vast areas from being used. Of course that many negative outputs (due to use of fertilizers and chemicals) have been witnessed, yet industrial agriculture has made possible the reduction of landuse of 2/3 (actually it is used 600 million hectares of agricultural land instead of 1.8 billion that would have been needed to produce the same amount of food with traditional agriculture) (Lal, et al., 2004).

Today, a sustainable agriculture is needed, which, according to Altieri, should be very different from the modern agriculture which has come to an environmental crises because it has favored large farm size, specialized production, crop monocultures and mechanization. However, what actually stops agriculture from developing in a sustainable way and pushes it toward on short-term economic profits, is the possibility to increase production by favoring large farm size, specialized production, crop monocultures and mechanization and by integrating into international economies. This brings to the disappearance of diversity, lack of rotation and development of monocultures, which brings to the loss of key self-regulating mechanisms, turning monocultures into highly vulnerable agroecosystems dependent on
The sustainable farming debate will remain deadlocked until it is recast in a region-specific and politically aware form that emphasizes the vastly different circumstances of farmers in different parts of Asia, Africa, and Latin America”] Paarlberg, 1994)

8 – “Green Revolution” refers to technological development that increased agricultural production occurring between the 1940s and the late 1970s (most markedly in the late 1960s). It developed more in western’s colonies wherein agriculture was viewed as more of a commercial sector than a subsistence one. (Hazell, 2009)

9 – [Agricultural intensification has made major contributions to the protection of environmental resources. This is true despite problems such as salinization, etc. By increasing yields on the lands best suited to agriculture, world farmers have been able to preserve vast areas of land for other purposes. For example, if cereal yields levels of 1950 had failed to increase to the year 200, we would have had to use nearly 1.8 billion hectares of land to produce the current global harvest, rather than the 600 million hectares that were used for production. Much of this land would not have been available, especially in highly populated Asia. moreover, had more environmentally fragile land been brought into agricultural production, the impact on soil erosion, loss of forests, grassland, and biodiversity, and extinction of wildlife species would have been enormous.] (Lal, et al., 2004, p. 2)

10 - [Agroecosystems are communities of plants and animals interacting with their physical and chemical environments that have been modified by people to produce food, fibre, fuel and other products for human consumption and processing.

high chemical inputs. And this pushes us every day more toward a more profound environmental crises. (Altieri & Nicholls, 2005).

Yet, positive steps for sustainable agricultural development are being done based on providing of balanced environment, sustained yields, biologically mediated soil fertility and natural pest regulation through the design of diversified agroecosystems and the use of low-input technologies.

According to Altieri there is the need to diversify agricultural production in order to enhance variety of ecosystems etc. but according to economical profit logics economies of scale and specialization on a few types of production brings bigger profits. So in Durana there is the need to make a specific study to understand which is the grade of balance between these two factors. We cannot say which is the perfect dimension of farms in Durana in terms of ecological sustainability and economical gain. But one thing is certain, as actually in Albania, after the reforms of the beginning of the nineties, the national agricultural scenario is now characterized by a multitude of small family farms (400,000 small family farms according to Skrel (Skrel, 2007)), with an average size of 1.1 ha, and usually very fragmented. This fragmentation brings to manual land preparation, instead of mechanized one, because of the low income generated on small farm plots, being not sufficient to afford the high prices charged for mechanized land preparation (MAFCP, 2007).

Nevertheless, starting from the two points of view, the ecological and the economical point of view, it is not possible to say exactly which is their role, as the only possibility is to balance the two in order to avoid environmental disasters and also provide food supplies for the population. To do this, there is the need for specific and profound analytical studies for every location starting from the carrying capacity of the territorial dimension considered (the carrying capacity is the maximum population that a territory can sustain when food, habitat, water and other necessities are available in the environment), economies of scale, and according to the preservation of the environment. Future planning politics for Durana should undisputedly calculate its carrying capacity and regulate the use of natural resources.

The territorial structure of Durana should consider the distribution of urbanization, the water network, geology and the morphology of the terrain. These factors determine the distribution of agricultural land. The actual distribution of agricultural lands should be sustained by territorial strategic plans that aims the realization of fast and efficient strategic plans. In Durana’s
Agroecology is the holistic study of agroecosystems, including all environmental and human elements. An area used for agricultural production, e.g. a field is seen as a complex system in which ecological processes found under natural conditions also occur, e.g. nutrient cycling, predator/prey interactions, competition, symbiosis and successional changes. Implicit in agroecological research is the idea that, by understanding these ecological relationships and processes, agroecosystems can be manipulated to improve production and to produce more sustainably, with fewer negative environmental or social impacts and fewer external inputs.[11  

(Altieri & Nicholls, 2005, p. 31)

11 - There are 20 152 active enterprises in the region of Tirana compared to 51 945 countrywide, or 39 % of the national total. Of which, about 35 % are manufacturing companies, 32 % are construction companies, 45 % are service companies. About 40 % of trade companies of Albania are located in the Tirana’s prefecture. Also, 26 % of the active population in the Tirana region works in agriculture (Verçuni & Zhllima, 2008).

12 - Statistics show that the capital city’s population consumed 215 151 tons of food in 2005 and is expected to consume 282 783 tonnes in 2016 (Verçuni & Zhllima, 2008).

13 - Some households own small gardens in peri-urban areas and grow small quantities of fruits & vegetable (Verçuni & Zhllima, 2008).

14 - 71 % of the working force is employed in agriculture or agriculture related activities; agriculture makes the 23 % of gross domestic value and has been growing at about 3 % per year (nonetheless share case the development of suburban agriculture is needed, located mainly in its peri-urban areas and all oriented for urban demand: the production of vegetables, fruit, milk, fish, livestock and poultry, as well as some high value-added grain products such as various beans. Suburban agriculture is labour -, and relatively capital, - intensive with a high level of productivity. The region of Tirana has absorbed many rural laborers and provided a stable and diversified food supply to the urban residents in terms of quantity11.

Nevertheless, according to statistics made from the Ministry of Agriculture for production, consumption, and food balance in the city of Tirana in 2005, the food balance of the city of Tirana was very negative (the comparison between consumption and production for vegetables was 3 : 1, for potatoes 7 : 1, for fruits 6 : 1, in total 3.3 : 1), which means that there is an important disparity between production and consumption, which brings to importation of food supplies from the nearby countries (about 85 % of Albania’s international trade is with Greece, Macedonia, Italy). The national trend in product supply per capita studied by the FAO in 2005 showed that the annual trend per capita for fruits and vegetables has increased by 47% from the biennial 1993-1995 to 2000-2002, for meat and other animal products by 30%, and for milk and eggs by 15% (FAO, 2005). Total consumption is therefore expected to increase by 31.4 % in 11 years12. Demographic growth in Tirana led to urban expansion and loss of productive land to the extent that the regional food balance is now negative, as Tirana is unable to feed itself (Verçuni & Zhllima, 2008).

Peri-urban agriculture should be incentivized13 and strong mobility connections with the urban centers should be thought. In Tirana, distribution channels are fragmented and confused. Often, small producers, retailers and wholesalers try to sell their products at the same urban marketplace, bringing about 70 % of the farms in Tirana’s municipality sell directly to final consumers. The remaining 30 % sell mostly to wholesalers and retailers, but also direct a small percentage to final consumers. Accordingly, the percentage of farmers that sell directly to consumers sums up to 85 % of the total.

There is only one wholesale market – the Dinamo Whole Market – which provides only 7% of the city’s supply. Of the fifteen public markets (22 685 m2 of total area) guaranteed by the municipality only 70% of their surface is exploitable (only 50% for the meat market), with very poor hygiene and maintenance, and also poor transport near markets. These markets can potentially accommodate 1 870 traders per year, but currently no more than
850 traders per year because many vegetable and fruit traders tend to sell outside these markets in order to avoid paying market occupancy tax. Also, they consider it more attractive to sell outside these markets for there is less competition. (Verçuni & Zhllima, 2008).

In a moment when the country's economy is slowing down the professional effort to make it restart puts little importance to reforms related to agriculture, even though, according to statistics and economic studies, a big part of the Albanian economy is sustained by agriculture\textsuperscript{14,15} (MAFCP, 2007). But in the same time, the trade balance table shows how the comparison between import and export in agricultural products is about 5 : 1, thus the country remains a net importer of agricultural and food products. Instead, the contribution of agriculture to the national economy is being weaker than before as the time goes by. According to Skreli, there has been a steady reduction in skills of the rural labour force through ageing, migration, and the absence of education and training of new entrants\textsuperscript{16}. Nevertheless, the weakening of agriculture is not specific to the Albanian case, as the Nobel Prize winning economist, author and lecturer, Joseph Stiglitz, while talking about his latest book: “The price of inequality: how today’s divided society endangers our future”, in 2012 at, Oregon, USA, said that:

\[\text{Global employment in manufacturing is going down. Employment in manufacturing in China in going down. So, this goes back to the more fundamental problem. We have to restructure our economy. And markets do not do it by their own. That's why we need a more active government]} \text{(Stiglitz, 2012)}

This brings the attention back to the role of political role in shaping the future of the economy, consequently to the shaping of urban settlements. Yet, often in Albania, among professionals, agriculture is considered as something related to underdevelopment. The attention of professionals to agriculture misses and the effort of professionals to solve a very important economic gap with other more developed countries considers transportation, service economy, urban development etc. as priority, while giving little importance to agriculture, even though it ensures 17% of the GDP of the country, and the 48% of the total labor.

Also, rural development should have high priority in the future and modes of impulses to launch its rebirth should be found. According to FAO\textsuperscript{17} a very important thing that must be considered for the planning of rural development, of GDP has declined); in rural areas, agriculture accounts for 71% of the employment (although most of farmers are underemployed); 53% under 55 and a further 24% under 65 years old (95% of farm workers is male), which means that the farming population is still relatively young (MAFCP, 2007)

15 - According to a study of EU Commission about agriculture and rural development in Albania, the agricultural sector in the country accounts for 48% of total labour and 17 % of GDP, continuing to be one of the most important sectors of the Albanian economy. According to the same study in Europe agriculture accounts for 5.8% of share of the total labor and only 1.8% of GDP (EU, 2012).

16 - A survey of household income found that agriculture accounted for 37 % of total income, remittances for 31 %, and nonfarm business for only 16 % of total income), even though since 1998, agriculture had growth rates close to 5 % annually (Skreli, 2007).

17 - [Concepts of rural development have become much broader and have expanded to include increased environmental awareness and a wide range of non-agricultural applications. The emphasis of land consolidation projects has shifted from a focus on restructuring agriculture to one of achieving more efficient multiple use of rural space by balancing the interests of agriculture, landscape, nature conservation, recreation and transportation, especially when land is required for the construction of major roads.] (FAO, 2003)

18 - In the document of the Design of Land Consolidation Pilot Projects in Central and Eastern Europe, it was said that: [There is growing inequality between rural and
urban areas. Much rural infrastructure has deteriorated considerably. Villages are becoming less attractive places to live. Schools and other rural public and cultural facilities are suffering from lack of attention. Rural roads are in poor condition, power and water supply systems are less reliable, and communications and media infrastructure is inadequate. There is high unemployment, and migration to urban areas is resulting in a declining and ageing rural population. Agriculture has developed into a dualistic structure of a relatively small number of large-scale farms and many millions of microfarms. There is an almost necessary for today’s Europe and a globalizing economy, and little is done to encourage people who are capable of creating competitive to do so. ... Such potential entrepreneurial farmers are unlikely to invest their time, energy and money if they believe the quality of their life will be unsatisfactory. If the local school does not give children a good education, if local medical facilities are not available, if there are no recreational areas to enjoy on the weekends, if roads make travel difficult and dangerous, and if electricity is often unavailable, those who could be successful commercial farmers may decide to follow a different career if it offers them a better quality of life. (FAO, 2003, p.1)

18 - In order to initiate and maintain it, is the planning of these areas not only as production places but also as a living place, enhancing the quality of living in the countryside for peasants and their families. What has broadly drained away rural population during the last century is the fact that public services were often of a lower quality compared to the city, so, for example, many of the peasants left their homes in the countryside and went to the city to assure better instruction for their children. This is very important when it comes to contemporary development programs for rural areas that have experienced a shrinking during the urbanization of the country. In fact, it implies radical changes of the political and planning approach to the countryside. If we need to develop rural areas the first step is to send people to take care of the land, and to do so, new public services, open spaces and public activities are needed.

Agricultural production, as strictly related to environment, need to provide a positive balance between the production and efficiency, and environmental impact, in order to not jeopardize the future of natural ecosystems, while being economically efficient. For Tirana, environment is particularly a hot spot, yet unsolved. Pollution coming from urbanized areas is damaging Albanian fragile ecosystems, which, make about 30% of all European floristic reach (MAFCP, 2007). The coastal lagoon system, in particular, is one of the most important complexes of the Mediterranean region and is under threat from an increase in human activity, including settlement and tourism. Marine habitats are also threatened, notably by loss of habitat and illegal sports hunting. Declining public interest in how Albania’s natural resources are being used doesn’t contribute positively to the efforts to improve biodiversity (MAFCP, 2007).

Not only the marine habitats are in danger but all the hydric system, which comprises drinking water as much. Especially in rural areas over-consumption of drinking water take place because of the improper use for agriculture, lack of control over consumption including underpriced water and low collection rates, weak water utility institutions, and lack of a strategy to improve services. Improvements in rural areas will be closely linked with the decentralization process in which the local governments will be responsible for the operation of the water supply systems (MAFCP, 2007).

The territory of Durana is very rich with water courses, artificial lakes and reservoirs, which are an important patrimony not only for the environment but also for the development of the nearby urban areas and they need to
be protected for the future generations. This patrimony will be even more crucial for the survival of urban areas in the future, as according to the World Meteorological Organization; [By the year 2025, as much as two thirds of the world’s population could be under stress conditions]²¹ (Lal, et al., 2004, p. 11).

The centrality of soft water sources for the future of agricultural production as much as for other uses must be considered as soon as possible because a negative use of these resources could bring to irreversible consequences upon the natural habitat. Many scholars are calling for a blue revolution which refers to the remarkable emergence of aquaculture as an important and highly productive agricultural activity. Aquaculture refers to all forms of active culturing of aquatic animals and plants, occurring in marine, brackish, or fresh waters. But the risks are high, as the beginning of a blue revolution could cause many environmental problems as the green revolution caused during the 60s. The only difference would be that, while for the green revolution there were 3 billion people on earth (according to UN statistics) today there are almost 7 billion people, and the consequences of a wrong politics of the use of water sources would be dramatic. The difference is not only on the number of the population but also the consumer’s demand is today higher than during the 60s, thus the proportion of the catastrophe would be worst. The precautions for the water use, like for agricultural lands, have to be controlled by specialized politics aware of the risks behind the angle.

However, water-use efficiency has been much improved by technological advances and wastewater can be treated for irrigation in the peri-urban agricultural lands. Proven technologies, such as drip irrigation, save water and reduce soil salinity. Various new precision irrigation systems, which will supply water to plants only when they need it, are also on the horizon. Improved small-scale and supplemental irrigation systems can increase the productivity of rainfed areas and offer much promise for smallholder farmers (Lal, et al., 2004, p. 11). Besides, ecological systems have a crucial role in putting the urban dweller more in contact with nature, as much as providing the urban settlement with a clean environment. The national parks of Durana are very important to enhance these qualities, which may be carried inside the urban settlement with capillary systems of urban parks such as those along the rivers or around water basins. The morphology of the terrain also must be considered for the big or small scale strategic plans, as the transport modes are directly related to it and also agriculture. The direction of the development of the city toward a direction or another is directly related to it also. Thus it needs to be analyzed before every intervention or planning strategy. For which removed garbage from the city and brought them to the urban garbage deposit “Sharra”, in south-west of the city, after “Kombinat”, which doesn’t have a waste treatment facility, but instead, all burned out (Verçuni & Zhllima, 2008).

21 – [Water covers about 70% of the earth’s surface, but only about 2.5% is fresh water. And most is found in the ice caps of Antarctica and Greenland, in soil moisture, and in deep aquifers not readily accessible for human use. Less than 1% of the world’s fresh water is readily available for direct human use. … About one third of the world’s population lives in countries that are experiencing moderate to high water stress, resulting from increasing demands from growing population and human activity.’ (Lal, et al., 2004, p.11).

22 - [One effect of land privatization has been a shift from mechanized to non-mechanized production because new owners face great difficulties in getting access to machinery which was taken over by local monopolies or which remains state property. In some countries, a significant proportion of arable land is idle because of obstacles to cultivation and the absence of the present owners. … The agricultural structure comprises some very large farms and many millions of microfarms, with an almost complete absence of intermediate sized competitive, commercial farms. The larger farms, sometimes covering thousands of hectares, are operated by the state, commercial companies, private associations or cooperatives. In contrast, farms of under five hectares account for 75% or more of the total number of farms in most countries. Many farms are even smaller: in Bulgaria, farms smaller than one hectare comprises 86% of individual farms and cover only 26% of the farming area.
Most farms are subsistence farms that produce little for the market, but they are often an important source of income and food security for many rural residents. Daily food consumption is based to a large extent on a household’s own production. For many farmers, their strategy is one of trying to survive with no clear vision of how to advance. (FAO, 2003, p. 8)

A model of efficient agricultural production is strictly related, as we saw before in the same section, to the dimension of plots of land. The dimension of the plots is a consequence of a political action of land consolidation initiated in the early nineties, but which has still to continue in order to reach that dimension of plots that gives the possibility to enlarge agricultural plots, giving the possibility to landowners to mechanize the production process and increase production, but without creating massive agricultural companies which are less flexible in using the land, but tend to plant monocultures and use much fertilizers

Thus, given the conditions of Albania in general and Tirana and Durres in particular, it should be said that the birth of a bigger urban dimension should be supported in order to fulfill the role of the western gate of the Balkan peninsula. Nevertheless, this new dimension must be accompanied by some very specific devices, as it will need to improve quality of life in a people-oriented model, also it will need to sustain a sustainable way of life, based on the creation of a social capital which would bring to better sociality, better use of the city, increase local identity etc. This new city also must be self-sustained as the growing worldwide preoccupation about the forthcoming food supplies crises by 2050 indicates the role local production will have in the future. Besides, agriculture already cuts a good share of Albania’s economy, which means that there is a cultural patrimony already in the country and it needs to be properly used. The development of the new territorial city will rely upon the intertwining of various systems and one of them, maybe the most emergent one, the first of the list when it comes to investments, the infrastructural one, which will make possible the conjunction of the two scales, the global and the local, where the human scale will meet the global one. And most importantly, All the strategy of the “building” of the new territorial city should follow the local time and money factors which determine whether a strategy will work or not.
Figures next pages:

fig. 1 - the urban footprint of Durana

fig. 2 - the position of the old railway within the urban settlement

fig. 3 - the concentration of industry along the Tirana-Durres highway

fig. 4 - the highlighting of the legislative boundaries of the two regions and their municipalities

fig. 5 - the road network

fig. 6 - the relationship of the road network with the morphology of the terrain

fig. 7 - the relationship of the water system with the morphology of the terrain

fig. 8 - the position of strategic locations for urban regeneration

fig. 9 - the relationship of the strategic locations with actual industrial areas

fig. 10 - the relationship of the strategic locations with agricultural areas

fig. 11 - the relationship of the strategic locations with agricultural areas and road network

fig. 12 - the relationship of the strategic locations, agricultural areas and road network with the water system

fig. 13 - the relationship of the strategic locations, agricultural areas, road network and water system with the morphology of the terrain
Is Durana still a Mediterranean city?

The Mediterranean Sea is seen as a “great plain of water” by Braudel, anticipating Catucci’s image of the “Solid Sea”, built on virtual lines of past and future open conflicts, symbolically represented by submerged bodies of men and ships. Its “solidity” is also emphasized by the logic of transnational corridors called “Motorways of the Sea”\(^1\), regarding the sea as a solid earth, and confirming the thesis of Carl Schmitt that is the sea to represent the paradigm of the modern market, projected beyond the size of nation states (Catucci, 2006).

The sea’s connective spirit, is also described by Cacciatore as “space motion”, where the frequency and intensity of relationships between peoples, exchange and mutual influence of religions and political experiences, can even be seen in the context of contrasts and conflicts. The duality, between being a Sea or being a Land, becomes a fundamental philosophical and ideological question while searching for the character of the New Mediterranean City. As Cacciatore puts it, the Pillars of Hercules symbolize the location where the transition to the “Age of the Technique and Discoveries” takes place, and by going beyond them the center of the world moves from the internal sea to the external one, from the Mediterranean to the Ocean. And again, quoting Schmitt, he says that to the earth’s fundamentalism is opposed that of the open sea, where the limitless freedom, the loss of any connection to the earth and visible links between the lands, at the end brings the predominance of the technique. Therefore, there is a double face of the Mediterranean; an internal face, which pushes to be aware of the differences but also cooperation between peoples (behaving as a sea), and an external face, where everything is decided within a dimension of closed fundamentalism, and where the power of the technique, like that of politics, appears to be typical of the land without

\(^1\) - a concept of transport policy in the EU, that stresses the importance of sea transport. Its main aim is to improve port communications with peripheral regions of the European continent and thus strengthen the networks between the EU candidate countries and EU. The concept was adopted in June 2001 in Gothenburg, as an alternative to concrete motorways by land.
Matvejevic, on the other hand, shapes the Mediterranean territory as something that is not only geography, not only history, and not only a sense of belongingness, as its borders are not defined neither in space nor in time. In ancient times, the wise speak of six Mediterranean areas, complementary or contiguous: the Latin Arc from Gibraltar to Sicily, the Adriatic Basin (with some marked variations between the eastern and the western), the Maghrebian Front, the Libyan-Egyptian Inflection from Tripoli to Cairo, the Middle East Facade, and the Anatolian-Balkan bridge. But today, there are some places right on the coastline that aren’t Mediterranean, or are less than others. Actually, we don’t know how to define areas that belong to the basin, as they are not related to state or national borders, but they continue to be described and cancelled. (Matvejevic, 1991).

Today, the Mediterranean lives in a past which struggles to peak up speed. Its own historical qualities, it’s richest past, becomes often the main barrier for its “contemporaneization” to fulfill actual needs. Its value becomes also its condemn, which prevents evolution, by turning it into an archaeological site, a territory that survives in a coma thanks to its history, losing the pace of evolution, and blocking itself in the mythologized frame of the pre-New World Mediterranean. A situation that Roberto Secchi described as; “crushed by the present which cannot see towards the future nor can it see toward the past, bringing us today to an obsessive need for actuality and vision.”

According to Micara, while looking toward the future, we need to start from the historical city, from the city that history has given us, from its concrete reality tripped of magniloquent ideologies, as it constitutes today the element of greater diversity to understand and draw a possible evolutionary line (Micara, 2006). We might ask ourselves if the Mediterranean - for centuries considered as the periphery of the modern Western Empire, plagued by endemic condition of backwardness, of lawlessness and underdevelopment - is able to “mess up the cards” and give to Europe an alternative (Criconia, 2006). Because, as Catucci sees it, if the Mediterranean is selected as the neuralgic center of a reflection on the development of Europe and its future, a political issue is needed to be placed even when it is thought that it can be reduced to a simple design of infrastructure networks (referring to Trans-European Corridors (TEC)), as the actual model of TEC brings to the conception of Europe in an exclusive economistic view, almost as if its physical reality, made up of lands and men, were nothing but the surface effect of the market (Catucci, 2006).
According to Criconia, the contemporary Mediterranean hides something more complex, which is hard to name, related to the processes of de or post-colonization, that has not directly to do with the evocation of the myths and the geographies of the seas, but rather with a process of self-determination long incubated which, “incidentally”, has emerged along with the European Union’s attempts to reconfigure itself as a political and economic entity in the eastern and southern areas of the Mediterranean. Talking about the Mediterranean today, it means to discover the backgrounds of many different modernization gaps (Criconia, 2006).

In an époque when nation-states are overwhelmed by the global scale, and the world goes around global cities extended in the territory (Sassen, 2006), and where the high speed of change and adaptation to new tendencies and urban strategies, the Mediterranean urbanity is less agile and more fragmented in the territory. But what unifies the Mediterranean basin is its cultural landscape which is the result of a profound continuous and slow stratification in time, assimilating and metabolizing generation after generation exchange with other people of the sea and of the continental hinterland. Its being fragmented, minutely subdivided has also been defined by its role as a territory of transition of intercontinental commercial routes. The meticulous division of the territory and the slow process of formation of the cultural landscape, distinguishes that character, which allows us even today, in a world profoundly changed, to speak of “Mediterranean city”, but with a premise that requires the review of the the classical sense of the term.

Today, the scale is different. The new urban dimension needs to relate the global and the scale of the historic city (Micara, 2013). The new is added to the sediment of time by digesting the change, and the metabolizing of the past through a process of assimilation of the traces, tempered in accordance with the strong local character - which can be understood as a form of recycle and reuse - identifying the Mediterranean city as one that resists to fast change of urban conditions by giving rise to a temporal gap.

The question of; “Why we should still talk about the Mediterranean city?” takes on an almost metaphysical character when looking for the character of the Albanian city today, whereas the planning and architectural trends, but also the political, economic and social, are leading to a forced Westernization by ignoring local values (considered negative values).

In Albania, westernalization is strongly required not only to fulfill the temporal gap that characterizes the entire Mediterranean basin, but also to annihilate
the defeatist feeling that the victory of capitalism over socialism has left throughout all Eastern Europe (described by Severino), leading to a period of disillusionment first, and then to western trends. Therefore, Albanian suffers a double temporal gap, that of the Mediterranean basin, and that of the ex-socialist countries, compared to the Western World.

Durana - fragile as it is, a classic example of the Mediterranean city which survives by adapting to its own time - radically transformed during communism, incorporates the strong signs of the regime in new urban dimension and re-establishes its identity by recycling the existing and by adding new elements, immediately after 1990. Durana has brought a new dimension in the Balkan peninsula. This new dimension, which has a territorial scale, needs the creation of a new identity unit in order to behave (perform) as a single organism, unique in its morphology, climate, natural resources, which define also its dimension and perimeter.

Identity, first of all, is related to a territory, which is different from other territories because of the specific relationship established between it and man, who identifies himself with. This territory has a beginning and an end, a limit that defines and distinguishes it from other territories. Accordingly, the dimension – as much as the limit - is the first element to establish the character of the abovementioned relationships.

The dimension is strongly connected to the territory itself, to geography, history and culture. As aforementioned, the Mediterranean territory is microscopically subdivided among populations, which makes the extension of its territorial units very small (compared to other geographies)\(^4\). Since we can say that the dimension of territorial units depends on its geographical position, we could also say that this dimension haven’t been the same during the history of that territory. The dimension is not something static but it changes in time, in relation to the development of society. The dimension of territorial units in antiquity, or in the Middle Ages, wasn’t the same as it is today. The territory was divided differently during multiethnic empires compared to its division during the actual nation-states, or future global cities. The dimension of the territorial unit was different over these periods, sometimes smaller and sometimes bigger\(^5\).

This transformation of dimensions of the territory is strongly related to the man-territory relationship. Schmitt says that;
Man has a clear awareness of his space, which historically is subject to deep-going perturbations. To the plurality of forms of existence corresponds an even plurality of spaces. Quite simultaneously, the plurality of skills or professions introduces a different environment in the acts of the everyday life of each one of us. The inhabitant of a big city has a different image of the world than does a farmer. A whale hunter has a vital space that differs from that of an opera-singer. … This redeployment may be so profound and so sudden that it alters not only man’s outlook, standards and criteria, but also the very contents of the notion of space. It is in that context that one may talk of a spatial revolution. Actually, all important changes in history more often than not imply a new perception of space. The true core of the global mutation, political, economic and cultural, lies in it (in spatial revolution).] (Carl Schmitt, 1997, pp. 28-29)

The spatial revolution announced by Schmitt is what is happening world wide and what is also happening in the Mediterranean, although with a temporal gap.

Hence, the dimension of the territorial unit depends on space (geography, climate, natural resources) and time (stage of development of society, speed and tempo). The dimension of territorial units (as percieved by man) is being modified, percieved differently. Durana, the new territorial city, which is being built under global conditions, would introduce to the Balkans a new dimension.

How can the new dimension be defined? The definition of a territory is made by detecting its perimeter / border, since the perimeter determines the end of Durana and the beginning of the nearby cities (Kruje, Elbasan, Kavaje, etc.). The border is that “imaginary line” (which sometimes matches with the juridical line) that encloses a territory represented by an identity unit, beyond which begins another - similar but diverse - identity.

What is exactly an identity unit? How can we determine it? There are many types of identitary units, depending on what unit we are talking about and on the specificity of identitary characteristics that that identity unit wants to describe. Hence, there are different scales of identity in the same territory depending on the specificity of the identity wanted to be defined. The more specific the identitary characteristics are willing to be described the smaller is its extension. The specificity of the identitary characteristics of a neighborhood is greater than that of a district. Furthermore, a district is defined as an identity
unit which encloses those of different neighborhoods, and builds a single one, less specific than its particles. The same we could say about the identity unit of a city, of a state, of a region, etc.

At the fundamentals of the concept of the territorial unit there is the social unit and social relations (the anthropomorphism of the unit), which are those who define the belonging to a group with common characteristics. The definition of this common characteristics comes in relation to the scale of the border that we consider. When we talk about the Mediterranean basin the common characteristics have a certain nature and quality. When we talk about the Balkans the nature and quality of the common characteristics, that defines the peninsula, gets more specific and precise, and leads us into the distinction of states that compose the peninsula. When we talk about Albanian territories it gets even more specific. When we talk about Tirana, we instinctively think of its internal subdivision in neighborhoods. This breakthrough in smaller units goes on until we come to the definition of the common origin that characterizes the single unit of a dozen of houses (Dunbar’s number).

From here it comes out a question; can these units merge together? In the sense that, two of them become one and the former two pieces become sub-pieces of the new bigger one. As it happened with Kamza and Tirana, which, formally, and by legal borders, are distinct from one another, but in the popular image Kamza is a part of Tirana and not something apart.

Can this happen further more with Tirana and Durres? If yes, does it depend on the time needed to go from one place to another, or in something else? In the new scale of Durana, which will be the common characteristic to be considered? In what way this common characteristic will put in relation the global scale with the local one? The common characteristic is strongly related to social relations, thus to places were sociality grows and develops. We could say that sociality might occur in meeting places, public spaces, open spaces, mass transport vehicles, commercial areas, virtual space, etc. And the type of social relations that have place in these spaces depend on the development of the innate (innate because it is the outcome of a millenary development) awareness of his space that man has (as described by Schmitt), and on the character of local architecture, local production, of the relationship man-territory, and of the political system.

The character of the political system defines strongly the openness or the closure of a territory, which shape immediately the type of social relations and the relation man-territory that are created, thus the identity of that place. A
good example of how much politics influence (or decide?) the social model of a territory is the previous near past of the socialist era. And the consequences of that closure are also clear when looking at the past two decades. The role of politics is fundamental to make possible cooperation between different localities as much as between different states. By doing so, it would encourage openness to external cooperation and avoid closure. In a global era, territorial units must be opened to external forces and extra-territorial cooperation. In Durana’s case continuous external forces should be thought of as energy for improvement of a local reality and not as a threat to its existence.

The “creation” of a territorial identity for Durana would be possible when the political exertion - urban politics, investments and laws for the development of the territory - is the same for all the territory. The territorial identity already exists in a telluric form, but needs to be reinforced and enhanced in order to bring to the surface that new perception of space that inhabitants should have in order to be / feel part of a global society. This is possible only upon a unified territory, which means that Tirana and Durres must become a single legislative unit. The management of Durana must be under the responsibility of a single political cluster upon a new wider border that include both regions. The legislative unification means that also the set of rules that governs the urban development of the territory will be one for all Durana’s extension. Only after a political unification of both cities as a single one, feasible large scale strategies are possible.


Co-Plan Group (2007). *Bashkeveprimi nderkomunor ne qeverisjen vendore dhe zhvillimi rajonal. Analiza e sherbimit te transportit publik ne rajonin e Tiranes*. Part of the program; “Shteti ligjor dhe qeverisja e mirë”.


GTZ (2002). Towards a Sustainable Development of the Tirana-Durres Region. Regional deveopment study for the Tirana-Durres Region: Development concept. Dresden: Institute of Ecological and Regional Development (IOER)
Research Institute.


Norberg-Schulz, Ch. (1980). *Genius loci: towards a phenomenology of architecture.* London: Academy Editions Publisher


Ward, S. (2006). *Jane Jacobs: Critic of the modernist approach to urban planning who believed that cities were places for people*. The Independent. www.independent.co.uk


Acknowledgments

In five years of research on the topic (Master Degree thesis and PhD) I realized that the submission of this thesis is only an intermediary step toward more questions, that will lead to more questions again.

Yet, I reached this important step thanks to the support of an impressive number of people, which I cannot mention all.

I am deeply grateful to my supervisors; Prof. Alessandra Criconia and Prof. Ludovico Micara, for their encouragement, faith, criticism, and most of all for guiding me toward those questions that have laid the foundation of my future professional life.

I take this opportunity to thank, again, also the supervisor of my master thesis, Prof. Laura Valeria Ferretti, the many teachings of which have made me discover Tirana.

This I would have never achieved without the sustain of my friends and collegues; Filippo de Dominicis, who’s help during theirst steps of my research has been extremely useful, Sara Gangemi, a friend more than a collegue, who has guided me toward correct scientifiic attitudes, Robert Gjergo and Dritan Miço with whom I’ve shared a decade of friendship and professional growth, and most of all Vittoria Fazio, Domingo Abrusci, Alessandra Ferri, Alessandra Sebastiani for always being there for me.

Finally, I thank my North Star, distant but ever-present, the foundation of my strengthness, of my principles and believes, my family - this thesis is dedicated to you.