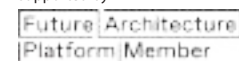




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FORUM A+P

INTERDISCIPLINARY JOURNAL OF ARCHITECTURE AND BUILT ENVIRONMENT

VOLUME 22 / JANUARY 2021

FORESEEING UNCERTAINTY. DESIGN AND NON-NORMATIVITY

JANUARY 2021

FORUM 22

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Printed by: Pegi

ISSN: 2227-7994

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Forum A+P: Interdisciplinary Journal of Architecture and Built Environment, published by POLIS University since 2010, is the only scientific and cultural journal in the Albanian-speaking countries in the fields of architecture and urban planning. This journal is recognized by the Ministry of Education and Science, the Academic Degrees Evaluation Committee and has an ISSN international registration code.

Vol.22/January 2021

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Introduction from the Editors

SKENDER LUARASI

POLIS University

VALERIO PERNA

POLIS University

This year, 2020, marks Tirana's 100th anniversary as the capital of Albania. Comparing photos of a bucolic Tirana in 1920 with the urban explosion witnessed from Polis University's fourth floor today, inevitably raises questions about the form of the city: What is the form of the city? Can the city have a form? Such questions express uncertainty, but they also introduce the concept of normativity, insofar as they posit a distinction between the form of the city and its lack. The nineteenth and twentieth century theorists and architects, as diverse as Cerdà and Camillo Sitte, adopted the normativity of organism in order to think the form of the ever-expanding modern city as self-generated. However, the frenzied and unbridled growth of our cities, especially in the current context of global pandemics, renders the concept of self-generation suspect. Theories like urban archipelagos turn out to be ineffective insofar they are preoccupied only with the normative islands but not with the non-normativity outside and between the islands. What is at stake today is precisely an updated normativity of the whole that is guided by a sense of self-limitation; that "contests production itself" and the "overriding principle"¹ of infinite growth and self-generation.

The objective of Forum A+P 22nd issue is to draw current research and design practices, as well as theoretical speculations on the topic of uncertainty and non-normativity in multiple scales and contexts, in and from the city of Tirana. The significance of addressing such topic from Tirana – with the certainty that these phenomena can also be found in international situations such as the sprawl emergence in the Italian countryside or the severe informal development of eastern metropolis such as New Delhi or Beijing - is that this city is a harsh and unmediated example of what is already a global symptom: a strong contrast between an ideology of normativity on the one hand, and its actual impossibility on the other; between the aim for responsible design practices and ethical boundaries impossi-

ble to overcome; between education and merciless economic reason, between daily ideologies of inclusivity and an increasingly predominant exclusivity, between plain design narratives and irresponsible political decision-making; between expensive normativity affordable only by few, and not-so-cheap sub-normativity for the many; between frenzied building development and destruction of urban artefacts; between 'glittery' shapes in the center and chaotic sprawl in the periphery; between style and non-style. What happens in-between is dimmed as 'uncertain'. We believe an updated normativity of the whole is predicated precisely in including the uncertain and non-normative in our inquiries about architecture and the city.

This research agenda was first explored in Tirana Design Week 2019. Given the ambition and scope of such agenda we asked the help of many national and international friends that could join us with their peculiar reflections and insights. The list of the keynoters/speakers of Tirana Design 2019 included researchers and professionals coming both from eastern and western world: Mario Botta (CH); Marcio Sequeira de Oliveira (BR); Ben Schouten (NL); Alireza Taghaboni (IR); Antonino Saggio (IT); Marcos Novak (US); Franco Purini (IT); Rudolf Lückmann and Gernot Weckherlin (DE); Kiersten Muenchinger (US); Maja Lalic and Jelena Matic (SR); Fernando Menis (ES); Dimitris Gourdoukis and Anastasios Telliou (GR). We wanted them to focus on the specific reality of our city, using Tirana as a vector to raise ideas that could be then applied on a global scale, by addressing two questions: "What do you intend for normativity and its contrary, the non-normativity?; And what from these concepts you can recognize or not in the current condition of Tirana", and before their speech they were invited to a 'non-normative' city tour with us.

Their response was enthusiastic and captivating. We could not imagine such heterogeneity of topics and reflections that flourished during the event. From the non-normative condi-

tion of the Iranian city, we traveled through the urban playful appropriation (Dix 2007) of the Dutch public spaces, just in time to land in a precise intersection point between the impact of Information Technology in the last major paradigm shift in the history of architecture and its consequent materialization of third parties disciplines such as visual and performative arts, education, and dance. For almost three weeks, design, art, architecture, and urban planning intersected in multiple ways under the main topic of the event. The discussion went beyond the expectations we had when we started our curatorial work. We invited five among the keynoters to deliver a critical essay regarding their experience at TDW2019 and to deepen some of the concepts they dealt with during their time in Albania. These essays form the 'invited paper section' of this issue.

This was just the top of the iceberg of what the events were. In parallel with keynotes and lectures, a series of workshops run by international young creatives involved the students from POLIS for six days. The majority of our workshop leaders were selected from the annual Idea Challenge organized by Future Architecture Platform, a worldwide known pan-European platform architecture museums, festivals and producers and one of the main sponsors of Tirana Design Week and Tirana Architecture Week since its foundation. The workshop leaders were Celine Baumann (FR); Sonja Dragović (MNE); Julio Gotor Valcarel (ES); Vojtech Rada (CZE); Stefano Romano (IT); Gaetano de Francesco (IT); Gregor Andoni (AL); Merita Guri (AL); Marco Pietrosante and Marta Lagna (IT); Thomas Schmid-Dankward and Stephan Pinkau (DE); Maki Morikawa (JP); Arben Shytlla (AL). Each workshop presented an original outcome related to the topic of Tirana Design Week and the personal research of the leaders. These contributions are collected in the editorial and are accompanied by images and comments regarding the experience.

While compiling the contents of this issue we started questioning ourselves if there was space for 'more'. Without a doubt, a scientific journal should not record just the memories of past events, but also further investigate the questions raised during those events. That is why, in January 2020, we launched an International 'Call for Paper' for this 22nd issue of Forum A+P on the topic of uncertainty and non-normativity. We received a wide variety of contributions that dealt with such from different scales and disciplinary perspectives. The final papers were selected on how they project new insights on the city as a complex organism: some offering direct solutions and strategies that deal with non-normative urban situations, others offering 'lateral thoughts' (De Bono, 1970) on the city as a complex and layered cultural artifact.

Artan Kacani's "Land tactics and the territorial impact on the informal urban growth in Albania," for instance, focuses directly on how to provide normative solutions to non-normative urban settlements in the post-communist context of Al-

bania. The research is supported by a systematic data analysis that leads to the author to provide different quantitative and qualitative strategies. Alessandro Melis's "Community Resilience through exaptation," on the other hand, explores the cultural and epistemic intersection of architecture and biology. He introduces the non-deterministic concept of exaptation in order to speculate about addressing different scenarios of uncertainty in the future. Amanda Terpo's "Facing Uncertainty With GIS, Using Non-Normative Tools To Plan Non-Normative Territories," focuses on uncertainty and non-normativity on the level of the procedures and instruments of planning. The paper proposes a major implementation of the GIS technologies to foster a more-informed and prediction-based methodology to support highly complex activities and decision-making practices [...]. Eled Fagu's paper "Theoretical issues on the socialist city and reflections on Albanian urban landscape" focuses instead on the intersection of ideological normativity and the city form, in particular the city of Tirana. The paper investigates how socialist ideology, national style and the accompanying process of de-urbanization gave shape the city of Tirana. Vincenzo Paolo Bagnato's "Design and public space: The university campus' open spaces between rituality and non-normativity" explores how a normative space par excellence like the university campus can create potential for non-normative spaces and encounters through the integration of smart communication technologies into its architecture.

This n°22 of FORUM A+P is the witness of the journey that precisely one year ago we undertook as curators. The last section of the journal poignantly called *Telquel* (as is) presents open ended yet informed opinions, arguments as well as drawings that speculate about the current state, problems and developments of architecture of urbanism in general and in Tirana and Albania in particular. These pieces will probably serve as trajectories of future issues of Forum A+P and events at Polis. We are glad that you have the chance to have it in your hand and read and we hope that, after doing that, you will be triggered as well and get back to us with YOUR personal view regarding 'Design and non-normativity'. We always welcome your opinions, insights and feedback.

¹Bruno Latour, "What protective measures can you think of so we don't go back to the pre-crisis production model?", <http://www.bruno-latour.fr/node/852.html>, accessed on September 20th, 2020. This article appeared in AOC on 29th March 2020: <https://aoc.media/opinion/2020/03/29/imaginerles-gestes-barrieres-contre-le-retour-a-la-production-davant-crise/>.

GLOBAL JAM: A Global Chain of Innovation to Create Sustainable Impact for the Global Goals

FIONA IMAMI

POLIS University

STEISI VOGLI

POLIS University

The Global Goals Jam is a two-day event where creative teams work together on locally identified challenges related to the Global Goals. In September 2019, 90+ cities, including Tirana – represented by Polis University (the local organiser), participated connecting over 5000 designers and policy-makers.

The Global Goals Jam Tirana, was hosted as a separate workshop of the bi-annual event of Tirana Design Week (TDW), and took place for 3 days in a row at Polis University and 'jammed out' in Tirana city centre for 2 Days, where designer and planning students of this University disseminated their ideas and the locally found challenges of Tirana/Albania. The main goal of the workshop was that, through engaging both design and planning students, we would be able to design a process that empowers people to create direct impact for the global goals, solving local challenges relevant to our own context.

The Global Goals Jam was founded by Marco van Hout and Gijs Gootjes of Digital Society School (DSS), Boaz Paldi, Simon van Woerden and Hana Omar of UNDP and has been further developed and coordinated by Anneke van Woerden (DSS). In the first edition in 2016, 17 cities participated, in 2017 45 cities, in 2018 75 cities, and this year we are moving to over 85 participating cities. Thousands of change makers have used this methodology and are now part of this growing learning community around the SDGs,

ready to design 2030 now. *«More than an event, GGJ is a network of cities and organisations that are excited to engage their local communities to create real impact for the Global Goals.»*(Global Goals Jam Team)

The challenges ahead of us are so complex that no single discipline, mind-set, or expertise will be able to solve them. To solve these social, economic pacts of disposal, including recycling.

The strategies of materials selection and waste minimization disposal, including recycling. The strategies of materials selection and waste minimization The challenges before us are so complex that no single discipline, mind-set, or expertise will be able to solve them. Only in this way we could come together and learn from the local ideas, that are being developed across the globe. In order to ensure this bottom – up grassroots approach, it is important to engage in a way that goes beyond talking, writing reports or documents (that usually go left in the bottom drawer). In this regards the Global Goals Jam community brings together the approach of making and creating, in a designer thinking way and in a space for people from all backgrounds who bring in their local knowledge.

Since early May of 2019, the Design Faculty of Polis University had applied as the Local Organiser of the GGJ 2019, an event/ workshop that was held during the Tirana Design Week 2019 edition. Using a tailored toolkit, provided by the



Photo During the Workshop



Team Work

Global Goals Jam team, during the GGJ-Tirana Workshop, we tried to create interventions aimed at short-term targets in support of the long-term goals, in the Albanian Context. In the fight against poverty, climate change, hunger etc. it seems that though the policy makers around the world have long conceptualised ‘universal solutions’, it is the local communities and their related engagement that fails in achieving substantial results to the what-so called Global Goals. That is why, under the moto “Fall in love with the problem not the Solution”, we aimed that through design-made prototypes, raise awareness in the Albanian/Tirana’s community regarding locally identified challenges. The approach here was to firstly, make people aware of the local challenge, by pointing out the right questions... those that stick in your mind and make you think of a further better solution in the future. During this 6 day workshop, students from design and urban planning disciplines were brought together to brainstorm and come with innovative ideas (and design oriented), on how to translate (some) Global Goals into local challenges for Albania/Tirana.

2 Global Themes were selected by the participants to be translated into local challenges in the Albanian Context, each of them differently approached/ designed in raising awareness during the Jamming Days.

- **Water and Climate Change**

Water is at the core of sustainable development and is critical for socio- economic development, energy and food production, healthy ecosystems and for human survival itself. Water is also at the heart of adaptation to climate change, serving as the crucial link between the society and the environment.

- **Sustainable Development for People and Planet Poverty**

Entails more than the lack of income and productive resources to ensure sustainable livelihoods. Its manifestations include hunger and malnutrition, limited access to education and other basic services, social discrimination and exclusion, as well as the lack of participation in decision-making. The whole process was organized in 4 different Sprints, during which the students were asked to create something tangible that other people could interact/respond to it, and they could learn from; in order to create new insights and perspectives about the challenge your team is facing.

Sprint 1: Explore it! Do a Data Jam

During this first Sprint, the (4) created groups of mixed disciplines students (design and planning), brainstormed together around the (2) Presented Global Themes. Trying to do a data-jam, students via a really quick research process identified 4 relevant local challenges in line with the Global Goals being:

Lack of drinkable water in Tirana city, Lack of relevant policies in support to the eldest, The wide gap between low and high income people in Albanian society and The reasons for unemployment come from lack of jobs or some people choose not to work. For each of the presented identified challenges above, students presented a load of data and relevant arguments, which sustained their initial ideas. It was this first step and the brainstorming process, which lead to a further productive process toward building a prototype.

Sprint 2: Respond to it! Create a first prototype

Through another quick brainstorm, each group tried to conceptualise and make their initial and key insight as tangible as possible. A rapid prototype of the initial ideas was created in 2 days, with the aim of creating a meaningful conversation around the challenge.

Sprint 3: Make it! Make your final idea tangible

Jam Jamming around the City was definitely the greatest Sprint for all, especially when enjoying the good September weather in Tirana. With an ultimate prototype and questions that sticks to the mind, each group of student jammed in different spots in the City, trying to catch pedestrian’s eyes and engage them in the conversation. Either out of curiosity, or sometimes the effort of the students approach in reaching the citizens, the Jam resulted successfully, with a vast amount of citizens participating or responding to the questions raised.

Sprint 4: Share it!

Document your process and share your object. In the last day of the workshop, all groups presented to the university community (both students and lecturers) their approach to designing the prototype, the raised questions and the experience they had in engaging citizens and raising awareness related the Global Goals. The process was well documented, and will be shared publicly in the Global Goals Jam Website! Global Goals Jam Tirana 2019, together with other Jams in more than 90+ cities are part of the global discussion in reaching our common goals, through local initiatives.

Fiona IMAMI is an Urban Planner, working for Co-PLAN, since 2014. Holds a master degree in Housing and Land Management, and a Msc. in Urban Planning and Management, both from Polis University. Currently involved as Local Expert on Regional Development, in Regional Development Program in Albania. Her prior experiences include: technical expertise in assessing economic development situations, analysing territorial issues, and compiling of strategies as part of the team developing eight General Local Territorial Plans for Albanian Municipalities.

Strategies vs. Metrics: A Sustainable Spoon Project

KIERSTEN MUENCHINGER

University of Oregon

KRISTIANA MEÇO

POLIS University

JOHANA KLEMO

POLIS University

Qualitative strategies and quantitative metrics can both be used to define the sustainability of a product. Using qualitative strategies and quantitative metrics together clarifies how a strategy affects a metric, and provides a more complete definition of a product's overall impact on the earth. Using the design of a spoon, this workshop demonstrates how to combine the strategies and metrics focused on material and manufacturing process selection to define product sustainability.

Participants in this workshop will be exposed to design and analysis of the defining formal elements of a product, in this case, a spoon. After defining a final spoon design's volume of material, participants will learn to use a life cycle assessment to determine the impact of the spoon when produced in different materials with different manufacturing methods. Participants will strategically present the results of the analysis graphically, for ease of understanding by a general audience.

The workshop is based on a multi-step process. First a spoon is designed and analyzed for the formal qualities that make it recognizable as a spoon. The spoon is then analyzed for volume of material used. Three materials: pine wood, stainless steel and high density polyethylene, and the mass manufacturing methods that would be used to produce spoons in these materials: CNC milling, sheet metal forming and injection molding respectively, are selected. The Okala Life Cycle Assessment (LCA) method is used to analyze each of the three

spoons for the environmental impacts that result from the material and manufacturing selections. Analysis of infographics that help convey complex environmental assessment information to a general audience are completed, and participants create their own infographic inclusive of the information assessed for their spoons.

Participants completed the design and environmental impact analyses of spoons. Additional time would have allowed participants to examine the LCA tool in greater depth to understand what it measures, how the life cycle of an object can be included in the assessment, and how factors like material and manufacturing method interrelate to each other.

Kiersten Muenchinger (USA) is an Associate Professor in the Department of Product Design at the University of Oregon. Muenchinger researches the intersection of materials and design, and quantitative and qualitative sustainable design strategies. Her experimental sustainable design work has been exhibited with the Green Product Award, Germany; ShowPDX, Portland, Oregon; and Salão Design, Brazil.



Photo of Expo



Photo of Expo

Ideas and Proposals for the Commercial Vehicle Sector Based on Technological Trends

GREGOR ANDONI

POLIS University

This workshop consists in analyzing the intervention of coachbuilt buses, starting from the beginning of the first designs of this segment to comparing and analyzing their different platforms and chassis, in the meantime taking consideration the requirements to be met. Taking in consideration the tendencies driven by technology, research will take more of a social science approach based on the activity rather than rocket science approach I would say. With this being said, the given task will focus on elaborating proportions and giving solutions in through both interior and exterior design on small, medium and large size vans.

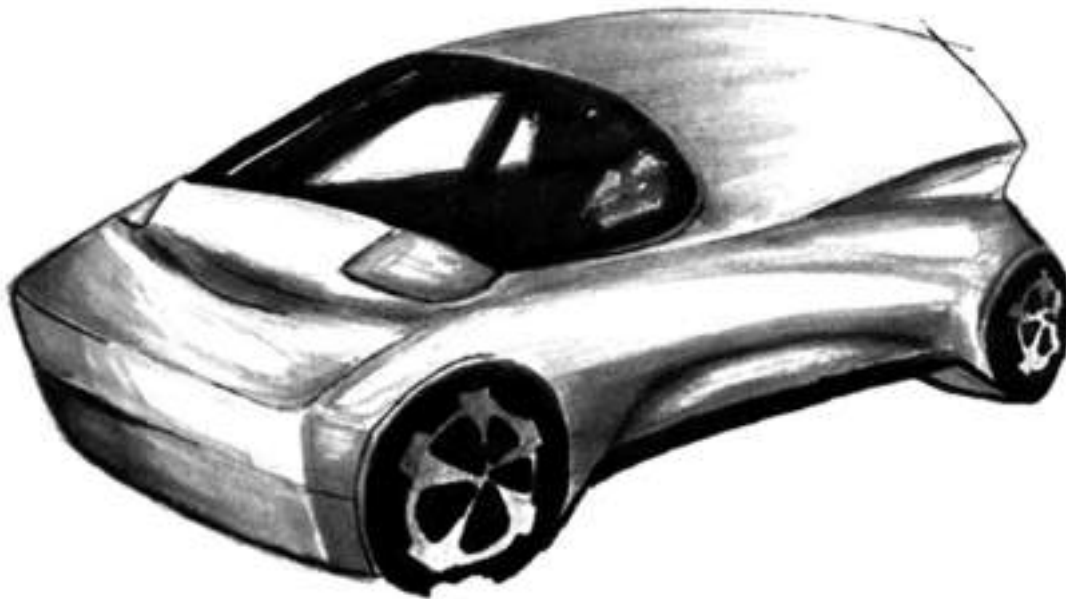
The aim of the workshop is to introduce students to the process of design and personalization of automobiles. Each one of them should develop their ideas and reflect their style and design language used for the final product. They should present different ways on how to elaborate this solution relative to the challenges of design adaptation in an existing platform even by making radical change for most of the platform. We started by describing the trends of different brands through the last decades in the overall automotive sector, illustrating with case study the approach that this sector is taking or at least which are the intervention hypothesis that are rising for the future styling.

The automotive segment is undergoing a period of radical change driven from main factors that represent new trends

such as autonomous driving through artificial intelligence and conversion from internal combustion to electric power based on lithium-ion batteries. We have already seen numerous prototypes experimenting with mobility, from Renault Reinastella (1992) where this model represented a futuristic idea of what flying cars would look like in the future, Bmw Gina possibly representing the beginning of a change in a more realistic and feasible scale considering the adaptation to the real infrastructure we have today, and continuing again with the BMW Vision Next 100, which is a continuation of the aforementioned concept. Both models have been produced within a decade, representing the same vision but when one represents the first step, the other highlights the adaptation to the trends and styles of the time, as well as the technology.

I'll start by analyzing the first concept, Renault is not to be mentioned as being too fast to imagine a functional utopia involving flying vehicles, so I'm starting with the BMW models which, in the future, I believe will turn out to be 'pilot' models not only for the look like in the future, with Bmw Gina possibly representing the beginning of a change in a more realistic and feasible scale considering the adaptation to the real infrastructure we have today, and continuing again with the BMW Vision Next 100, which is a continuation of the aforementioned concept.

Both models have been produced within a decade, representing the same vision but when one represents



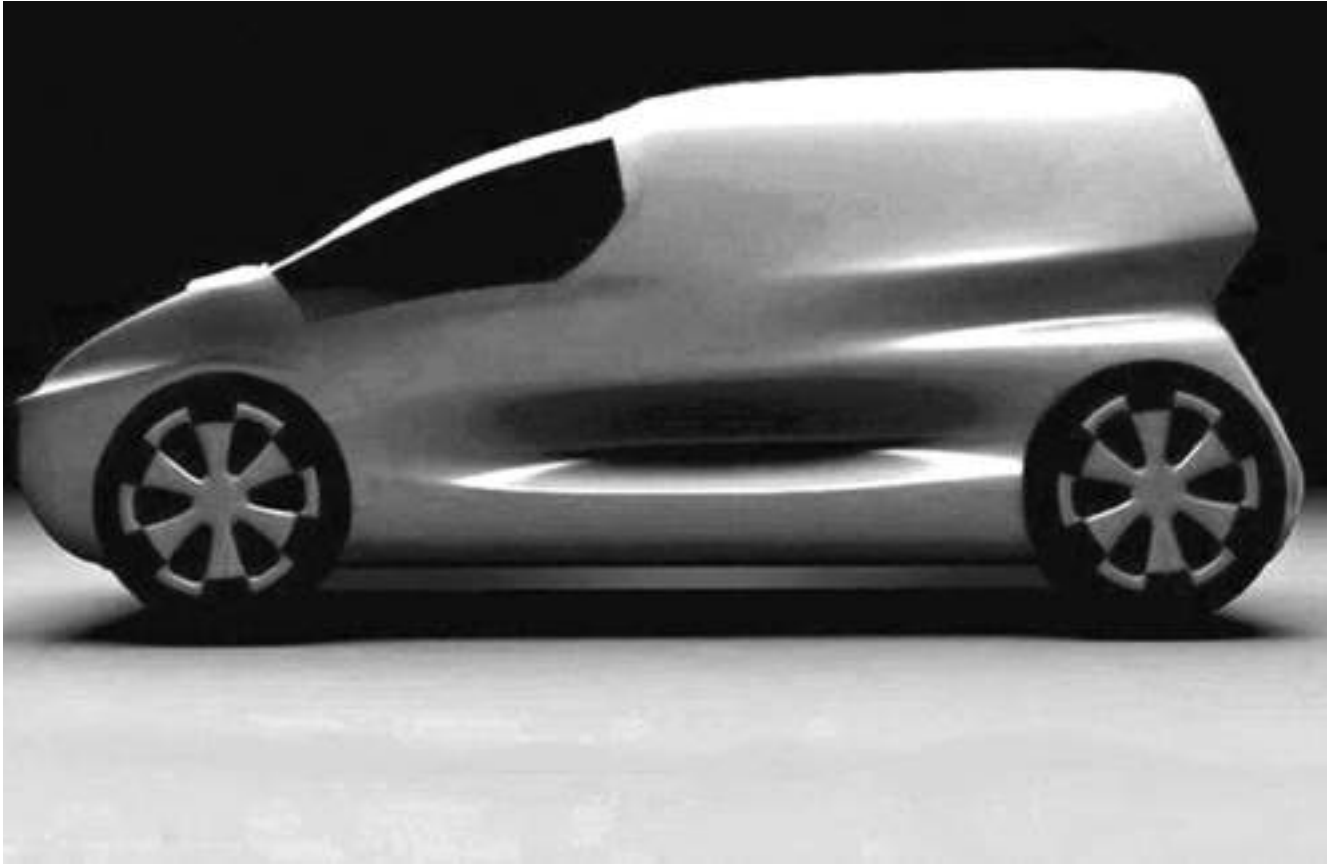
Freehand Sketch

the first step, the other highlights the adaptation to the trends and styles of the time, as well as the technology. Normally we might also consider other brands such as Tesla which is making a lot of profit due to the autonomy offered by the batteries and space capacity inside thanks to the elimination of various parts like the engine and gearbox, but where Tesla represents feasible innovation, "material" I would say giving the car a new image, as a product that it's easier to use and less expensive making it more reachable from the mass, BMW has tried to play with the philosophy of a vehicle that gives a higher level of interaction between the product and the user by letting the car change its shape as the driver demands. Looking at the Gina model, you realize that at first glance it is not a car destined for mass production, not only because it is presented as a concept but also because it lacks various details, the headlights and front lids are hidden using a fabric material that makes it uncommon and unused in the car's bodywork, so it makes even an untrained eye realize that this is an "unusual" car and that is exactly what a concept shares from a machine that fits the reality of mass production and the practical aspects it must contain. But technically, in addition to the piece of material that covers the car, what made this model represent the brand's approach and direction in the future and also to categorize it as a pilot project for the future, is precisely

the approach of extending the research on user center design.

This model essentially introduces a change that fits man's demand constantly, even when the user drives the car. It has been given a solution using a chassis made of electro-hydraulic equipment which eliminates the idea of a static chassis enabling continuous outside and inside transfer of the vehicle at the driver's request. It is a philosophical approach to the automotive sector that is characterized by its democratic nature of functioning. The other model, the BMW Vision Next 100, is essentially an extension of the same philosophy by presenting a more material and functional study of it. It is used a more rigid outside structure making it possible to adapt the same approach based on current trends and technologies.

If the Gina model always has a continuity in the bodywork given to it by a certain material, in the Vision Next 100 this continuity is presented differently, contributing once more to the style of the vehicle but above all to its functionality. BMW has called it "Alive Geometry" where the interior structure makes it possible to change shape and integrate functions such as integrated wheels in the bodywork performing the same functions as conventional methods but which in this case improve the aerodynamics of the vehicle in motion, this as BMW is known for its dynamics, or the vehicle's central panel consisting of 800 parts in a triangular shape that eliminates redundant parts, integrating



Workshop 3 d Models

various functions. So in this case we are dealing with 4D materials where the fourth dimension added is exactly the function.

In conclusion, both the BMW brand and the Tesla brand represent two different progressive approaches to the automotive sector. Battery cars are not the future, they are the present, they play a role in the economic and industrial system, on the other hand they create opportunities for visions like that of BMW to be realized in the future. While one brand presents a creative way of choosing the next moment, giving possible solutions on the hypotheses of the future, for example the Renault model mentioned before, the other one eliminates what may today be considered an unnecessary element such as problems with engine parts, gearbox, excessive noise, excessive stress, the other tries to focus on hypotheses that may arise from current technologies also offered by brands such as Tesla .

That said, this workshop aims to present the same approach in terms of intervening in a specific vehicle segment by reflecting ideas and vision on how these vehicles can be interpreted in the future. Starting from our baseline data, which focus on the function of work activity and tourism activity, the interventions will focus on the cargo space elements otherwise stated spaces dedicated to goods and also to persons in the case of tourism activity.

In the first case when talking about work vehicles, different examples have been taken in consideration from large capacity vans to smaller ones. Some references are based

on the first models of the Fiat Fiorino category, practically a citycar turned into a freight car, originally used by the mail company then by various private ones that parked them in their warehouses, this in the 70's when the model came out. First Fiat 124 and then Fiat Uno in 1977.

In the same category have competed German models with VW Caddy which is also taken as reference in this version. Having a "mini" minivan makes it easier to carry out work activities within the city, and therefore the exchange and transportation of goods would be easier. The aim is the practicality and dynamics of traffic in urban areas where traffic is higher in density.

As far as style goes, different models such as the Fiat Multipla are known for its practicality inside the cockpit where it offers 3 front passenger seats. The same methodology is used in this case as well. The cab is wide and the cab line continues to extend without escalating, making it different from the reference models as in the case of Fiat and VW. This gives the impression of a city-car platform that can easily meet other requirements such as freight transport by not necessarily being a "medium" or "high-tonnage" vehicle.

Other cases are based on longer or larger platform vans such as the Renault Trafic and Opel Vivaro sharing the same platform, as well as the Mercedes Benz Sprinter. In this case, it is a matter of large vehicles and has been experi-

mented with in both cases, as tourism and business activity. The original Renault / Opel platform was used for tourism and freight use, modifying it to best fit the new styling.

In another case where the basis of the model was taken as a reference to the Mercedes Benz Sprinter platform, the idea of having a commercial freight vehicle, which through the material could give the impression of a vehicle destined for it, was applied. both activities. Characterized by the lines and solutions given to it through the style and design language used which are minimalist. The glass part has consistency and evokes the nuances of modern design.

Meanwhile, the same platform was used by another student who was more inspired by sci-fi films. The project attempts to communicate an idea / hypothesis on how the form can evolve without compromising practicality. In this case the student's style evokes more nuances of the biomorphic current. The front has no compartment with the cabin extending all the way to the luggage compartment and with the width narrowing and giving even more aerodynamic looks. In this case, the vehicle would be battery-powered and not an internal combustion engine. The battery compartment is positioned underneath the luggage compartment making it possible to have a break in the trolley line and using two different types of material giving a more futuristic look that brings in mind the science-fiction films.

While these models are based on shapes that have existed and been around for a long time, another project takes the first set of the BMW X5 model into a vehicle more dedicated to tourism. Knowing that the BMW X5 is held as one of the first models of its category, a dynamic and functional SUV for different terrains, it was thought to give the platform a second function which would prove equally efficient for tourism due of the comfort it offers. In this case, there would also be interference on the vehicle platforms thus taking structural change at the bottom because the concept introduces the idea of an electric vehicle, thereby offering even more room for passenger since the engine and other components would be eliminated from the front. The applied design lines are inspired by the original model and communicates the same message at first glance, namely a relatively heavy structure for a vehicle which turns out to be dynamic overall.

In conclusion, projects present the idea of evolving a functional product based on the style and individual ideas of students, presenting hypothetical change without compromise.

Greg Andoni studied and graduated at the University of Design in Florence, Italy, in Industrial Design with a specialization in product design at the "Design Campus UNIFI". Most of his works and thesis concentrated on automotive design, focusing on new proposals for the FCA group regarding new applicable strategies and history of Italian car design. Apart from his main focus on automotive design, Andoni has worked on different fields of product design, automotive, interior design, landscape projects etc. Nowadays, he shares his working experiences between Italy and Albania. Some of his most well – know project stand between, Panzani Tuning&Design in Florence, Municipality of Calenzano in Florence, ISSH Albania (State Institute of Social Insurance), and MontAl (Montenegro – Albania, Osumi Canyons, National Torusit Route, campaign for reevaluating new concept between Montenegro and Albania).

Storytelling Architecture

VOJTĚCH RADA

FA Platform

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The goal of the workshop was to learn to use tools of architecture to create interactive audiovisual experiences describing structures which no longer exist. Main focus of this application was on the former town hall of Tirana, which was demolished in 1981 to clear room for current National History Museum. The process involved finding out the plans of former town hall, recreating it as a 3D digital model and make it part of interactive application using Unity Game Engine. The result were five applications, showing real history as well as fictional stories, four graphical collages and a text.

The Objective was to create several interactive applications, which were supposed to tell a story of former townhall of Tirana. The base structure was set up as a two to three scene narrative, beginning with an introduction with prehistory of the plot, than moving to the site from 1930s with newly constructed building and finally up-to-date situation. The important point of the workshop was to realise that architects have powerful tools, which are great not only for projecting of the future ideas, mostly buildings, but also to project structures which were long gone, or architecture, which was never meant to be built. This approach of using architectural tools like 2D digital drafting and modelling opens a new room for possible development of the whole architecture profession. One of the tasks was to recreate as precisely as possible the former building of Town Hall of Tirana. However, the information at dis-

posal was quite scarce, so the students had to face struggles, which were new to them. They were suddenly asked to do digital models not because of the building they are designing, but because the building was demolished. For this reason it was not only sufficient to use former plans, which were not very detailed anyway, but also to use old photos and videos. By using this photographic material and with tools for 3D digital modeling students were able to create more detailed model. They were simply asked to act as a software architects, to build architecture for use in software. The objective of the research group was to not only find an information from the internet and books, but also to pick the important ones which could be relevant to the history of the building. Important objective was to divide the history in scenes, where the most important events took place. The self-initiated objective from this group was to create a 2D graphical collages, which were supposed to serve as an illustration to the events and texts. This showed another possibility of how to tell a story of the former Town Hall of Tirana, which does not necessary have to be told by using interactive game engines, but uses calm, clear and very traditional way of how to tell stories – simply with a text. Images themselves were compositions of photos from the past as well as today, combined with graphical elements and patterns, resulting in the clash between real, fictional and documentary approach. This imagery was later also used directly in the application, which

helped a lot to support the storytelling. The objective of the last group was to deal with the software for the development of computer games and interactive application known as Unity.

Since none of the students had any prior experience with the latter, the task was to do a simple first person application, where the potential player could go through and eventually experience the story of the former town hall. The goal was to get along with the program, than to use standard assets, import objects like 3D models, bitmaps, JPGs, sounds etc. Then there was a request to create a simple script, allowing the player to change the scenes. Other tasks involved how to use rigidbody components, basic physics, and systems of colliders. It was fundamental to find out how to use standard assets, which are free to download from Unity store. These assets were used mainly for purposes of creating a first person character and basic audio listener. Setting up the final scene was done in very simple way, since there was no time left to tweak things such as lightning and materials. For this the objective was to use the simple presets from Unity and main task was just to position them correctly. One of the struggles was to create an easy understandable transitions from a scene to another. This was mostly done by some very visually attracting piece of geometry, usually together with some lightning. Some students made their own research and they looked up for other free to download objects from Unity store, such as explosions effects, cars, or trees. These things were also used in the final application. Than other objective was to create an audio guide which would let the player know what was the whole story about. This was also done in very simple and fast way, simply by recording it on the cell phone. Finally they learned how to export a game so that it can be executed on any computer running windows operating systems.

The students were divided into three groups. First group was supposed to do research and find valuable and important information about the history of the former townhall of Tirana. Their task was to think in two or three scenes, in order to make an narrative of the buildings prehistory, actual appearance after it was built, its demolition and current building of the museum. Second group was asked to find out as much information as possible about plans of former town hall and create a 3D digital model. Than the group moved on to create additional 3D digital models, which were supposed to show the ruins after the building was demolished, the surroundings of the plot in 1930s, 1980s and contemporary one. The last group was in charge of the game making, and they were asked to stitch the models and props from 3D group together with the story which was developed in research group. I have devoted myself most of the time to students in Unity group, since none of the students had any prior experience with the software. The important method focused on how to create 3D models for software application is to learn how to export it properly, so the scale and the orientation of the model stays same in 3D modelling

software as well as in gaming engine. For that we used files like OBJ, with a special setting to preserve axis in -90 degrees, in order to maintain the desired position. The other special task was to create a ruins of the former townhall, after it was demolished in 1981. Since there was no special footage and other real proofs of how the site looked like, the method was simply to create a destroyed model from the former 3D digital model. The group which was supposed to oversee the research for the whole story was first working as an ordinary researchers, reading texts and finding videos of the building. They have later moved on to create 2D collages in image manipulation software. This method was great to be accompanied by final interactive application, because it offered more detailed and thorough insight in the history of the plot. The method of the group which was in charge of using the software was focused on putting the results of the work done in storytelling group and modelling group. The main aim was to learn to use the Unity software as fast as possible. This was done by showing examples of my previous work, what methods have I chosen and why. Other source was the Unity manual, which allowed us to learn the fundamentals of the software, as well as to tackle various flaws and mistakes which we have encountered. Then most of the learning was done by explaining the things on the projector, and than just by going from student to student to explain individually what has to be done. Than some more skilled students were asked by me to explain what I told them to others. Some of the them were also researching the program and how to use it online, using sources like youtube tutorials as well as official channels like unity learning hub. Some of the students were asked to write a text, which should describe the history of the former town hall in Tirana. This was done in very simple and ordinary way, so that the potential visitor had very clear information of what was happening.

The resulted applications were spanning from strict history storytelling, across the half fiction half documentary approach all the way to complete fictional, poetic and even humorous results. A rare analog part of the final outcomes were digitally crafted collages accompanied with text, explaining a history of the former Tirana town hall. Some of the interactive applications were explaining the traveling between the scenes by using the so called time traveling booths, others were using simple objects, or lightings, which were just standing out, so they could attract the player. The final interactive applications were displayed on big TV screen and were offered to interact with during the final presentation. One of the ideas was to open a conversation with experts on current challenges and possibilities to the digital world and to invite people in the digital world to help, or give advice and expertise as a way of making sure what we were doing and how our research was working. I've also always been a skeptic person, and I think we all have to be, and I think it's very important that we do that.

But I've also been very clear that this isn't going to change the way we do work and the way we do policy. It's going to be something that just happens as a natural byproduct of getting more people more involved and using technology more effectively. The visitors were mostly able to go through all the scenes, however some of them were not waiting till the audio in the background finished. There was no time to tweak the interactivity of the applications, like adding the invisible walls to constrain and keep the player in desired area, there could be done more to prevent falling in infinity, and if so, there could have been an option to restart the game. Also, other option to add would be an interactive menu, with an option to choose from different applications and scenes, as well as to see the graphical collages. I am however aware, that this was not the goal of the project, nor was there a time to make this happen. So to make a summary of the whole process, I believe that students had an opportunity to learn how to design an interactive computer application, which could eventually serve as a tool to explain historical events describing the architecture which no longer exists. The final point of it all is that we all have the right to know about current structures that could have been. My hope, and the hope that many of you have since, is that history will be accessible to us all and the history of architecture will be a source of curiosity.

So when we put out our final reports, we should strive to produce information that will help the public understand this work, and I hope that we can all help ensure that that happens. I would say that in doing so, they had an opportunity to study and understand the development of our architectural heritage, or at least the nature of our modern day one. And, perhaps, they learnt that no matter what happens, a heritage project can only ever be successful through its design. I think it is a great idea not to be an architect. This is something you have to think hard about. It is very good to be an architect, as it is very important in the development of cities and for the development of the economy, but it is not always an advantage. Architects, with the exception of a couple of well-known architects, do not really have the same reputation for being good at designing projects as some of the other professions of the country. There are a few more architects than there used to be. But, even today, I have heard many of my contemporaries from other professions, including artists, say that their professional practice is their love of architecture. It is all about architecture, and not so much about their work, but only about their art. The problem with this approach is that it is a very self-indulgent way of living. It does not offer the person the means to be an architect or to appreciate the value of architecture. It is an excessive, almost frivolous obsession; it is based on the assumption that architecture is a matter of lifestyle. This is a dangerous attitude because it has the effect of keeping one stuck to one place and one field. One needs to move on to other things if one is to find a true professi

Vojtěch Rada studied not only sculpture, but also architecture and game design, which he was able to interconnect and expand into a very special final form of his graduate work. In a beautiful old villa in Prague's prestigious neighbourhood he modified the whole ground floor with various interventions, which can be further perceived through computer simulation as well as by a book, read by two performers in overalls of "geodets". Between these different types of descriptions and levels of reality, and also between cross-references across them, a whole new world emerges with its own rules.

Flesh and Stone: Personal Bodies in Public Space

CÉLINE BAUMANN

FA Platform

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The workshop *Flesh and Stone: Personal Bodies in Public Space* creates bridges between theory and practice, aiming to find a new reading of the city told through bodily experience. The course reflects the theme of Tirana Design Week “Design and non-normativity”, and was addressed to students of architecture, landscape and urban design

The Design of the space is relying on sets of regulations and norms, helping us to draw spaces, i.e. defining the width of a threshold, the height of a handle, or the maximum slope of a ramp. This is useful, but where are these measurements coming from? Looking at the textbooks, we soon realise that these norms are actually based on a standardised version of the body. Being the Modulor from le Corbusier, the Vitruvius Man by Leonardo da Vinci, or the Man from Neufert, they are all excluding the reality of races, sex, gender, dis-abilities and even social hierarchies. How can we create a feeling of inclusivity in public space that transcends archetypes? It is clear that standardisation does not have a liberating effect for everyone, and that a one-sided approach obstructs many forms of emancipation. We must try to think, act and design outside the confines the dominant system. The workshop explored new areas of operations in the field of architecture, landscape architecture and urban design. It confronted the notion of norm with the collective and personal experience of bodies in public space. Through an intersectional lens, it questioned the notions of inclusivity,

gender and social equality, and the place of the individual in the public realm. It aimed at emancipating conventional architectural production by the use of all the senses and the entire body.

The workshop aimed at creating a space to explore design from an intersectional perspective, exchange ideas, and create tools for daily architectural practice. It aimed at activating a type of knowledge that is not part of a traditional design education, a knowledge that we can experience with all our senses and our entire body – and therefore not only with our mind. The course was designed as an educational experiment, questioning more established ways of teaching, learning, producing and displaying man-made spaces in the form of architecture. The workshop time created a room for dialogue, personal expressiveness, caring and unlearning

The seminar was led following a performative process. The creation with simple means of 1:1 scale silhouettes of real and idealized bodies was the first act of the performance. The participants then explored Tirana cityscape with those artefacts to confront the standards of their own city. The mannequins allowed them to extrapolate individual experience from collective one. The walks were first led in a derive manner, in the tradition of French Situationism and the associated psycho-geography of Guy Debord. The documentation of the experience with photography and/or videos was discussed with all students together in the classroom, and the walks thereafter

directed towards specific themes (i.e. sitting / walking, active / passive) and locations (i.e. center / periphery, natural / urban). The material collected in the form of photographs and/or video footages was compiled and the silhouettes were part of the final exhibition, allowing visitors and passers-by to compare themselves with the mannequins presented.

The methodology of the course was based on active participation and iterative process. A preparatory reading list was communicated in order to allow immersion in the topic. Students were invited to spend time discussing and sharing knowledge. They were also encouraged to appropriate public space. The field research part of the course was held by little groups of 2 to 3 people. Phases of collective restitutions allowed groups to share experiences. Daily deadlines, as well as collective gatherings favoured regular progress, and allowed to adjust goals or methodology if needed. The final exhibition enticed students to thoroughness and give a concrete goal to the workshop. Due to the earthquake incidents, the workshop planned to be held over five days was reduced to three days.

Day 1 started with a presentation of the subject matter and the general idea, followed by a discussion with the students about their own bodily experience of the city. They then chose together the scale models to be executed.

Day 2, as soon as the mannequins were ready, the students first inspected the campus premises to experiment with the artefacts. Impressions were collected at the end of the day. The explorations were documented with the support of photography and video footages. Meetings were organized to discuss the various feedbacks and determine further steps.

Day 3 was devoted to a proposal of an intervention on the scale models, the final restitution, as well as the preparation of the exhibition in analog and digital content.

The students chose different architectural models that interested them: the Vitruvius man from Leonardo da Vinci (1490), the Modulor from le Corbusier (1945) in seating and standing positions, the man, the woman, and the disabled body from Neufert (1936), Joe and Josephine from the Architectural Standards of Dreyfuss associates (1981), as well as the prospective standards “natural beauties” of Thomas Carpentier (2012).

As they had realized their scale models 1:1 and ventured the campus and the city with them, the students made some interesting findings: the Modulor seated had in fact legs that were too short to allow it seating on a regular chair properly, its back was way taller than the student’s average; the Modulor standing was actually way too high and didn’t fit through door because of the raised hand; the architectural standard Joe was surprisingly too short in comparison to male students; the disabled body faced many obstacles outside due to raised curbs, steps, or improper paving.

From those observations the students were asked to realized an intervention on the scale model that would react accordingly to



The woman body from Neufert (1936) fits properly in regard to the library shelves

their observations: some decided to create an oversized door that would match Le Modulor dimensions, or an appropriate seat that would fit it. Another designed wedges to allow the disabled Neufert to go up the stairs, another one designed their own Albanian standard called “Arben”.

The workshop allowed the participants to question the given standards they work with as part of the everyday architectural practice. It gave them an insight on the fact that standards are neither universal nor unique. By experimenting with the silhouettes they could realize the subjectivity of every standard and sharpen a critical view towards it.

Céline Baumann is a French landscape architect and spatial designer. Over the years she has worked in a variety of contexts, reflecting her personal interest for international exchange and cross-cultural environments. Her approach is contextual and pragmatic, her design process holistic and keen on detail. She aims at creating dynamic open spaces informed by the interactive ecology between people and nature, be it on the scale of the territory, in public spaces or atop roof tops and in private gardens. This design work is complemented by a commitment to writing and research. Participation in lectures, events, and workshops allows her to explore the collective value of nature and its impact on individuals

Shaping the City Cartography of an Action

JULIO GOTOR VALCÁRCEL

FA Platform

LORIS ROSSI

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Tirana, as the modern city it is nowadays, has been developed as a continuous superimposition of layers. It is fair to say that its growth has happened as a collage. It is extremely interesting to observe how the morphology of the city has evolved through the different steps of the history of the city: The Ottoman, the Italian and Austrian influence, the Italian occupation, the communist era and finally the changes since the market economy period started. It is through that last layer how the interest of this workshop appears. After the communist regime, a time of chaotic, unruly and irregular growth started. Therefore, in a very short period, the city changed dramatically.

There is a huge relation between that and the smooth and striated space concepts, developed extensively in *A Thousand Plateaus* (Deleuze and Guattari, 1988). On the one hand there is the striated space, the ruled, planned and controlled areas of the city, well defined and measured. On the other hand, there is the new irregular, uncontrolled, undefined spaces, the smooth space. Thus, the motto of the workshop is related to that category, the smooth space, the informal urban space and landscape. It may be possible to simplify the reality of the unruly spaces into two different groups: the one which is happening without constraints in the outskirts of the city and the one which is modifying existing plots and urban spaces of the consolidated one. Among all the different recent informal spaces we decided to focus on a specific one: the inner urban space

of the communist city blocks. There is a very strong condition in these urban spaces that was caused by the emergence of new buildings and extensions in the consolidated interior of their urban space. New undefined micro-urban spaces appeared, new pathways, streets, different scale buildings, etc. A new layer that appeared in the pre-1992 city block, filling inner block spaces and creating new urban realities and routes (Dino, Griffiths, Karimi. *Informality of sprawl? Morphogenetic evolution in post-socialist Tirana*, 2015) The questions then are, what is the relation between this new space and the existing city? How the inner space of the city blocks has changed after the appearance of new extensions, buildings and streets? The workshop proposes a new way of looking at that given and vibrant reality. It is a landscape way to observe and analyze the city through a critical and proactive look.

That mantra is present in every modern city, but it is especially interesting in the city of Tirana. The aim is to activate and claim that space as a generator of the city, as something latent in the town, to go through from the latent to the patent, 'freedom space, unruly space' as Kevin Lynch wrote in his book *Wasting Away*, (Lynch, 1991). In the end, the workshop establishes a methodology to research in a phenomenological way, creating links with the city by means of actions developed in the territory. To define that smooth layer of the city, and to discover how it is related with the activity and life

of the city.

As it was introduced before, the aim of the workshop is to research about the uncertain urban spaces that shape certain areas of Tirana. The idea is to focus in that layer of the existing city and to analyze and synthesize it in an objective and rational way. In other words, the aim is to figure out which elements are constituting that reality, how is it happening and what relations are being established in those urban spaces. The objectives of the workshop can be summarized as it follows:

A new way of looking the city. Instead of proposing new realities, the goal is to understand and read what is given in the existing city, not giving it for granted, to put in value the smooth space, to claim it as a way to understand the urban reality and as a scape form.

Cartography as a tool. To research trying to identify the latent reality of that layer of the urban area. The city is constituted as a continuous and heterogeneous collection of layers (physical and abstract layers of information). Through the workshop we propose a selection and highlight process, revealing and bringing back that information in an analytical way. It will be developed using the cartography and photography as tool to reveal the reality. It is the development of a set of actions and cartographies to understand the existing city and the dichotomy between the planned and the real city.

Building an image. Unlike nowadays image production methods, camera obscura/pinhole camera photography is proposed as a way of producing meaningful and critical graphic material. The complex and not easy to anticipate pinhole camera process forces us think and work in a precise and reflexive way. Camera obscura photographs are used to reveal essential fragments of these urban spaces.

Abstract methodology. The most important aspect is to teach a methodology as an abstract idea, a way to face the reality. From the theoretical aspects to the practical ones.

And finally, back to the theoretical again, learning how to create an abstract cartography yet expressive and illustrative of the reality and the links experienced. Therefore, the workshop proposes a methodology, a way to face the understanding of the city and a tool to comprehend the given reality.

From the beginning, it was clear that the main interest of the development of this workshop was to work on practical things, development of cartographies and critical and constructive material.

The workshop was settled for one week and it was completed gradually, starting from the theoretical aspects, following with two practical exercises ones and finishing with the exhibition and presentation of the results.

The work was developed according to three main activities, where the students were working in groups of two or three people. Therefore, we can develop the methodology of each activity in the following way:

Theoretical framework of the workshop started with a critical explanation of the evolution of the city during the last century, specifically about the intense and unrulid growth process happened after the fall of the communism period, post-1992.

The aim of this first part was the definition and identification of the urban spaces that we were going to study. Therefore, concepts as the one introduced in *Collage City* (Rowe, 1978), deeply related with the urban that we see nowadays were considered. At the same time, the ideas explained by Deleuze and Guattari about the Smooth and Striated space was a basis for the following development of the workshop (Deleuze and Guattari, 1988). On the other hand, the idea of palimpsest (etymology, scraped again) was introduced as a key aspect. As it was held before “Tirana as a palimpsest, where different realities have been scraped on top of the existing layers”.

Consequently, the notions presented in *Wasting Away* (Lynch, 1991), and the way he claims that unrulid and free space was also introduced during this theoretical introduction in the first session of the workshop.

After the theoretical introduction, we started working on the practical aspects. The subject of study was the new urban spaces created in inner communist plots after the 1992. We wanted to answer the questions enumerated before: how were the new relations set? How that inner space had been modified after the unrulid growth?

Therefore, the selected area of study was divided into several plots and assigned to the participant groups of students. Once this was achieved, we planned a visit to the site in order to start the site survey and analysis.

The aim was to collect objective and physical information from the site, in order to translate it into a series of cartographies that allowed us to understand the territory in an abstract and analytical way. We were creating tools to understand the different layers of the city by collecting information of them.

The students did that exercise compiling sketches and drawings from the site and photographs that were consequently rendered into final cartographies. They were free to decide how many layers they wanted to focus on. Development of the cartographies.

The main interest of this exercise was the highlighting process, which is something we really insist during the development of the workshop. In the end, the students were using their cartographies and graphics information in order to highlight certain information and realities. They were using different documents as a tool to bring back specific realities of the sites they were working on. The cartography is not an artistic document but a meaningful and pragmatic one, if it is useful there is beauty. Each group produced a final document of his plot, were they were emphasizing their interest through a series of layer cartographies and a selection of pictures. Some groups were working about the idea of evolution in the plot, other about the rela-

tion between the vegetation and the constructions, some groups were working on the ideas of Kevin Lynch, etc.

The main objective of those cartographies was to select and highlight physical realities of the territory. Instead of proposing an interpretation of the reality the students were creating works based on an objective criterion. They are tools that reflect the reality of these spaces in a precise way. Each group of students prepared a final document following the same template. Layers drew on tracing paper, allowing the superposition of many layers, where they were highlighting different elements in each one those. A series of photographs relating to all these layers, where they were also highlighting certain elements.

The short-text/camera obscura images, was facing the ideas of the workshop in a completely different way. We used analog photography as a tool to register these spaces. Instead of working only with digital photography, where the image is usually automatic, fast and thoughtless, each group produced a black-box camera, pinhole camera. In the end we were proposing a different methodology to construct images in a meaningful way. Each group produced an image on site to summarize their work. During the workshop each group build its own camera obscura manually, went to the site and decided what to register. They used the camera to produce only one black and white analog image against the massive digital images we can produce nowadays. They used the pinhole camera to produce a critical image. All these images were the result of a long and not so easy process. As it was said before, they build and used the cameras and after that they developed the results in the photography laboratory, where depending on the time, conditions and treatment you will get different results. There was always an intention in each part of the process where they had to think about the next steps. The output was one photograph. A single analog image as a tool to reveal and condense the reality of the site. The final activity the students developed was related with the cartographies they had done after the site visit. Therefore, we went back to the city, to the plan, in order to create a final group cartography of the whole site. To reach that aim, each group was summarizing all their work into at least one tracing paper layer cartography. Each plot was summarized with those layers where each was referring to a different physical reality. Consequently, we were shaping an “exquisite cadaver” made of all these different elements of each plot. Some layers were highlighting the gradients of vegetation, the evolution of the constructions, the borders, the open spaces in ground level, etc. By doing that we were revealing the diversity and complexity of the whole urban scene that was transformed after the post-communism in 1992.

After all the activities and exercises were developed, we were able to enunciate a variety of conclusions. Among them, we can differentiate two groups, conclusions that derive from

the activities, and conclusions that derive from the methodology that we applied during the workshop. All these conclusions refer to the qualities and realities of the urban spaces that the students were researching about. We were able to enlighten the following facts through the cartographies and infographics they did.

The area has a strong diversity of scenes. The variety of typologies, scales, time of construction, streets, hidden pedestrian connections and program is immense. Five-story buildings coexist with small single-story housing, abandoned structures and modern high-rise buildings on the perimeter. Therefore, a wide variety of urban atmospheres are happening together within a walking distance. From the domestic reality of the east single-story embassy buildings to the considerable high south border buildings. The neighborhood works as a small city itself, since its borders are very well defined and therefore its urban shape. Thus, it is sort of a fortress, where the perimeter constructions appear as thick walls, enclosing a rich inner urban reality, containing a very different scale. Some of the buildings work as gates that you must cross in order to enter the inner urban spaces, a quality that is pretty much lost in the modern and regulated city.

New pedestrian connections, new realities. A set of not regulated pathways and shortcuts have appeared after the construction of all the new blocks and buildings after the 1992 in the inner urban void. Pedestrian or traffic ways share one distinctive: most of them are defined by the irregular disposition of the new constructions, there is not a regular path that defines them. From the social point of view, the inhabitants are taking advantage of the urban spaces as an extension of their own homes. That specificity is giving the whole area a very domestic quality. We could even argue that, even if it sounds nostalgic, this area of the city is preserving a sort of village atmosphere, where the kids still play in the streets, the elderly talk and play table games and the families use the communal spaces as part of their own homes, taking care of them in the best case scenario. On the other hand, a great area is in risk of degradation due to the immense number of cars and waste spaces without control. Regarding the methodology we tried to implement in the development of this workshop, the main aim was to provide new tools to the student: On the one hand, we proposed them a new way of looking the existing city. A new method of interpreting the city, the urban landscape, the evolution of the city and its traces. How did the city reach the current status? We wanted the students to reveal what is latent in the city, what has a potential, what can be used with a clear intention, how can we build the new city in continuity with what is given. There is no way to propose a valid reality if we don't know what the hidden genuineness of the place is, its history and evolution.

From a pragmatic point of view, we presented the cartography as a powerful tool to understand the city. The cartography

as an abstract, precise and expressive instrument. The drawing must be eloquent and speak for itself. On the other hand, the camera obscura process was useful to agitate the way the students create images. As it was outlined, instead of creating meaningless and automatic pictures with our cameras or phones, we used the process of creating pinhole photographs to reflect on the city and its distinctive features.

Finally, we wanted to provoke a reaction and reflection on the students. Instead of proposing, we wanted to research on the existing. To have a look on the past from a critical perspective. To understand what was there to be able to propose a solid new reality for the city.

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Water Machines

Devices for the River Environment Enhancement

GAETANO DE FRANCESCO

DFR Architecture

GERDI PAPA

POLIS University

ERIONA CANGA

POLIS University

Climate changes represent an emblematic condition of the rapidly evolving reality. Designing uncertainty and non-normativity is a necessary assumption of contemporary architectural, landscape, and urban design. The ever-changing water dynamics, in various ways connected to climate changes and the arising water emergency, continuously change the geographies of the territories and the conditions of the urban spaces. The necessity to face up to this contemporary crisis can be an occasion to create more ecological, sustainable and resilient urban environments. Water Machine Workshop investigates this contemporary condition. From 25th to 28th September 2019, during the event Tirana Design Week 2019, it involved 35 students of Polis University in the design of new infrastructural scenarios able to deal with the water dynamics of the Aniene river habitat. First, second, third, and fourth-year students of Architecture and Urban Planning Courses develop several proposals to reuse a series of urban voids in the East side of Rome, along the Aniene River, the affluent of Tiber.

The belief that moves the workshop is that in Rome, as in other major cities of the world, urban voids and brown areas - currently trapped inside the built cities -, represent a resource to redirect the urban development: from urban expansion and the continuous consumption of agricultural land to the reuse of the existing heritage. The regeneration of these areas, capillary diffused in the contemporary cities, has the power not only to

redevelop isolated parts of the city, but, if linked by new networks, also to create new generation infrastructures for the governance and qualification of the urban territory: infrastructures able to facing up climate change through systems of slowing down and recycling urban water, providing sustainable mobility in the city, ecological corridors, oxygenation and greening systems; infrastructures that bring together the new information cloud in models that can be transformed into rapid choices on the environment, infrastructures which determine an active sense of citizenship and civic participation. These infrastructures are the necessary driving force for the progressive transformation of entire urban sectors according to the principles of sustainability and resilience in the use of resources and in an increasingly widespread circularity that is transformed from a principle of the economy to the principle of a broader vision. Recognizing the fundamental role that infrastructures play in the city, the reuse of the empty spaces can give life to a network of small-scale infrastructural projects able to manage water dynamics and, at the same time to regenerate urban spaces. Thinking of many small infrastructures distributed in the territory in the case of urban flooding, water, and waste treatment, and for the energy production is equivalent to limited and more sustainable impacts, to construction times and limited costs and greater safety in as their simultaneous failure is certainly less likely. It is what many contemporary

cities try to do. The bank of the river and more, in general, the waterfront, represent privileged fields of research and experimentation to design metamorphic and adaptive landscape, architectures, infrastructures, and public spaces. The roman context of the Aniene river is an emblematic case study to imagine and experiment with new projects able to coexist with water and draw strength from them. In the meshes of the Roman fabrics, in the urban voids of the peri-urban context where the Aniene flows, we can imagine a set of water square, rain gardens, and stormwater parks, which can act as surface basins if necessary, as well as public spaces for the community which revitalize the existing city promoting new scenarios in which waters and inhabited areas coexist peacefully. The river margins can be rethought as a system of diffuse buffer-spaces for the control of floods, to be alternated with the big dikes, as well as walks and urban parks, able to contribute to the reconstitution of wet riparian environments. To a large pumping station, exclusive for an entire urban sector, we can substitute minute and multiple ones within the interstices of contemporary agglomerations, which would enrich the suburbs with their architecture. Old parking areas and underground tramway stations can become a system of small networked basins, to avoid water from being conveyed directly into the sewer, saturating it. These multitasking infrastructures can also serve as water reserves for contexts in which there is a lack of water, or as water purification plants, can generate energy from renewable sources, contain sports spaces, relax, culture, and education places, and thus building a new model of city.

It is a line of work that is expressed in the doctoral dissertation of Gaetano De Francesco (2017) and the urban projects mentioned in the bibliography that will characterize his work for the years to come. Over the last few decades, collaborative and interdisciplinary work developed by architects, engineers, artists, and designers has defined a particular landscape of projects that provide urban prototypes for expanding, augmenting, and altering capacities of the urban space. These objects architectures, urban devices, eco-machines, smart creatures, infrastructural bodies, adapting landscape hybridize scales, uses, functions and engage information technology as a catalytic tool for the interacting spaces. How to design new machines for the Mediterranean river environment enhancement? How to design new devices for the water spaces and their dynamics? How to design architecture and landscapes able to valorize these ever-changing contexts? Water Machines Workshop involves students in the design process of new infrastructural scenarios facing the water dynamics of urban spaces. Three days to design three urban voids along a river. Three abandoned and underused areas, located within the eastern urban sector of the Roman periphery, along the banks of the Aniene, are the object of the students' design. These three areas are identified within the UNLost

Territories project, an urban project of the professor Antonino Saggio's chair, in which Gaetano De Francesco has been involved since 2018. They are identified with the number UV. 78, UV. 83, UV. 85, and have different for scale, vocations, uses, and functions. The urban void 78 is a small infill area located in Pietralata, in a residential area. The urban void 83 is a medium scale public space located between the historical bridge Ponte Nomentano and the abandoned industrial structure Linda. The urban void 85, the biggest one, is an underused green area near Via delle Valli, located in one of the bends of the river.

Students, divided into several groups, are asked to choose, in the set of possible project areas, a specific urban void in which to develop their proposal of a multitasking infrastructural body (water machine) according to an integrated vision and an adaptive paradigm. The workshop inscribes in the category of instrumentality and participates in the building of a methodological approach to the students' projects. The main objective is the acquisition by the students of an holistic strategy to address the topic of contemporary infrastructures and, more in general, to the contemporary architectural project, as well as the theories and techniques that jointly contribute to its construction.

The infrastructural theme and the location within the existing contemporary city place the training experience within a broad disciplinary reflection that includes: the regeneration of existing heritage as the possibility of urban development in the periphery and of new models of contemporary city; the contemporary dimension of the infrastructure as a place for qualifying the contexts in which it is inserted; the infrastructural theme as emblematic of the relationships that the infrastructural project is able to establish with the various components of the urban and territorial ecosystem; the infrastructural project as an emblematic experience of experimentation of hybrid models marked by a-typological shapes and figures. The workshop is based on nine keywords

- zero soil consumption;
- multitasking;
- nature-based infrastructure;
- networking;
- data collector;
- social catalyst;
- dissipate;
- adaptivity & flexibility;
- auto-maintenance.

They represent the fundamental principles, deriving from the Ph.D. research of Gaetano De Francesco (2017), according to which each project is developed.

The workshop is conducted through lectures, guided intensive discussions, plenary and teamwork sessions. The sequence and the content of the workshop were structured

and pre-defined, whilst the results were largely shaped by the participants' contributions.

The workshop has two distinct sessions. The first focuses on the analysis of the context and the formulation of a multifunctional program, according to the multi-use city paradigm. Each program is based on five indicators - the same ones used by Professor Antonino Saggio in his teaching courses - which compose it in different percentages and which interact systemically: 1. infrastructuring, 2. creating, 3. exchanging, 4. rebuilding nature 5. living. The set of activities belonging to the infrastructural, productive, social interchange sphere, to the theme of green and the residential one, provide to structure a mixité program that, according to the contextual conditions, can implement existing activities, desired services, or create new ones. Each team organizes a multi-functional program that covers a 24-hour cycle through a mix of interacting activities on the basis of which materializes a spatial hypothesis.

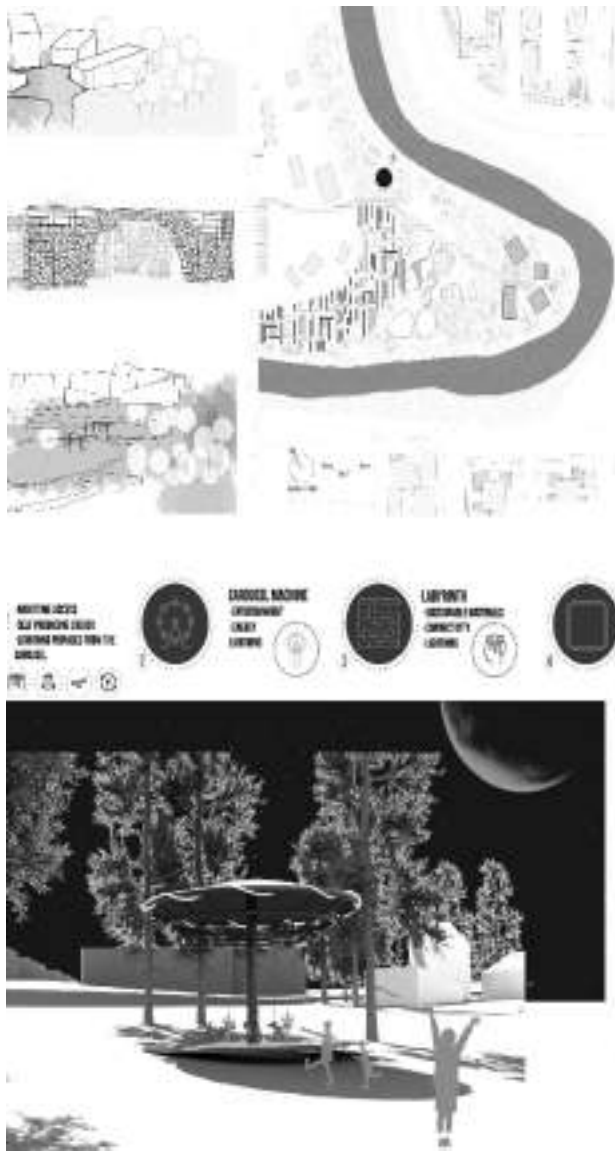
After defining the contextual crisis of the project area, the constraints, the program, and, therefore the objectives, the need to elaborate the main spatial and volumetric relations emerge. This session aims to formalize a design morphological hypothesis. The student identifies a set of compositional rules from which different spatial configurations can be derived according to an open project idea, able to easily respond to the different requests of stakeholders within a hypothetical design process, without betraying the principles underlying its constitution. Indwelling on the concepts of mutability, flexibility, and adaptability as fundamental substances of contemporary design, the workshop reflects on the transformative process of architecture in its different temporal phases, both during the design process that it once it is built. The student has the task of outlining different scenarios that can occur with the changing contextual dynamics, imagining how the project can react and change in its distributive, morphological, plastic, and expressive aspects while ensuring the normal use of its spaces, or part of them. 35 students, 18 hours, 9 concept designs for the city of Rome. The set of design proposals constitutes a network of possible micro-interventions for the Italian capital.

Reusing the city voids, it enters in the meshes of the periphery to activate new processes of transformation of the existing. On the urban scale, the several projects create a system of small infrastructures spread like wildfire, that contribute to the management of the territory and whose effects reverberate far beyond the context in which they are inserted. The urban model proposed is an incremental model that replaces the bottom-up process of traditional planning with a top-down process.

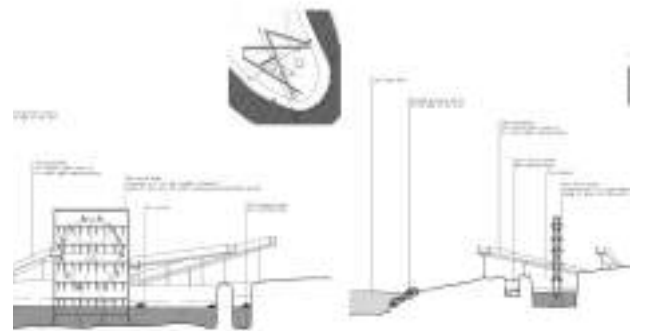
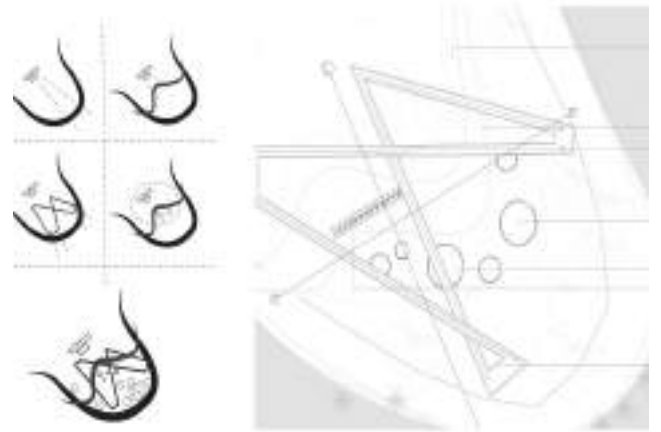
The traditional urban planning operates with big drawings lowered from the top, which to define in a unitary way the structure of the city.

It predetermines the aspect volumetric, the infrastructures, public space, often proceeding by *tabula rasa* of the existing. On the contrary, the incremental model is the result of a multiplicity of small-scale actions - such the workshop design proposals - which, interrelated and made coherent by a system of general principles, act in the built city.

Each project intervenes in the urban structure improving it and providing possible new directions for future developments. In working with the water, particular attention is given to the redefinition of the geomorphological support in its thickness. Incisions, cuts, and cracks in the ground, overlaps, and stratifications, compressions, extrusions and lifts, grafts, morphing, bending, and rippling of the soil are the main design operations through which to create new topographies for water management e for the new multifunctional spaces. Students propose different topological models that sometimes use the cut and fill method, able to convey, slow down, store and absorb water and at the same time, determine spatiality suitable for the hypothesized functional program. From an architectural point of view, these projects give life to new figures that cannot be described through morphologies and preconceived languages, although we can identify the morphosyntactic figures that compose them. The hybridization process that marks them continually generates figurative alterations and shows the possibility of an integrated project in which nature and construction merge into a unicum, producing real designed ecologies. Techniques, methods, and applications using natural processes and sustainable technological processes for the ecological restoration of urban areas, together with the provision of several spaces for the community, are explored by the project proposals. Indwelling on the concepts of mutability, flexibility, and adaptivity as fundamental substances of contemporary design, several proposals face up the theme of the time, reflecting on the transformative process of architecture in its different temporal phases, in the short, and in the long term. On the contrary, the incremental model is the result of a multiplicity of small - scale actions - such the workshop design proposals - which, interrelated and made coherent by a system of general principles, act in the built city.



Students' works during the workshop



Architect Phd, DFR Founder, Research Fellow at Sapienza University of Rome, Adjunct Professor at Quasar Institute of Advanced Design University, Authorized Rhinoceros Trainer. Gaetano De Francesco hold a Phd in Architecture - Theories and Project at Department of Architecture and Project - Sapienza University of Rome, where is involved in activities of research and teaching assistance as Research Fellow. Investigating the implications of the information age on the contemporary city, his research focuses on the theme of infrastructure, more specifically on urban flooding. He edited volumes, articles and essays on online magazine and trade magazines, he participated in conferences as speaker. He is Adjunct Professor at Quasar Design University in Rome and Authorized Rhinoceros Trainer. He complements to research activities the experiences in Italian and international design firm. He has been member of the collective nITro (New Information Technology Research Office) and he is founder of DFR, an architecture practice based in Rome.

The Analog: Beyond Normativity and Non-Normativity

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Aristotle University of Thessaloniki; object-e architecture director

The Difference Between Red and Blue

Immanuel Kant in his “Critique of Pure Reason” argues that certain things must stay unchanged in order to create a stable environment that we can identify with and make sense of: *“if cinnabar were now red, now black, now light, now heavy, [...] then my empirical imagination would never even get the opportunity to think of heavy cinnabar on the occasion of the representation of the color red”* (Kant, 1922). In other words, Kant believes that certain standards need to be in place: cinnabar can only be red if we want the world to make sense. A hundred and fifty years later however, Pablo Picasso would indirectly challenge that concept: he allegedly once said that *“when I don't have red I use blue”*; emphasizing that color was not a standard but rather a variable of little importance. One would be justified to assume that, most probably, Picasso would not have a problem to represent cinnabar with the color blue and therefore break the ‘norms of representation’; at least the orthodox ones established by Kant.

The two approaches indeed appear to be on opposite sides: Kant insists on the importance of norms as the necessary elements that create a common ground for the world to exist while Picasso argues that those norms can very well be broken within a creative process. However, one can argue that the two positions can in fact coexist quite successfully: The replacement of red with blue in Picasso’s creative process is meaningful only

when the norm that dictates that cinnabar is red is in place. In other words, norms need to exist first in order to be subsequently broken; therefore, non-normativity can acquire meaning only through the normativity that it negates. In architecture and design too, as in almost every other discipline, norms are needed in order to define their properties, even if only to challenge them later on. Non-normativity - that is the breaking of the norms - acquires meaning only within a normative environment. Only in that context breaking the norms can become liberating.

Dialectics, or the Digital

The above line of thinking however, is based on a purely dialectical argument: you need an antithesis to a thesis for synthesis to happen; you need a reaction to a problem in order to find a solution; or, in a pure Hegelian way, you need a negation to something abstract in order to form something concrete. As all dialectical processes, non-normativity can only exist by negating what is perceived as a norm; a negation that the first component of the word clearly illustrates.

Accordingly, the juxtaposition of non-normativity to normativity is in essence a ‘digital concept’. A line of thinking that is based on a ‘digital’ logic: things can be either 0s or 1s; either follow the norms or break them. Unfortunately, such polarized ways of thinking and operating have al-

ways the tendency to create a new normativity out of a non-normativity. What now appears as a liberating force that breaks all norms can very soon become the new norm.

That process, how revolutionary ideas end up becoming the (new) establishment, has been described very effectively by Thomas S. Kuhn on *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (Kuhn, 1962). The juxtaposition between any normativity and its negation results in a movement from one closed set of ideas to another closed one. It is this repetitive movement from one truth to another that reveals the problem behind ideas like that of the 'Paradigm shift': such concepts are digital in nature; they force us to understand the world through oppositions that in the end can be represented through 0s and 1s.

Modulation, or the Analog

A different approach to how we can overcome the limiting effects of strict rules, standards and norms would be a more organic way of thinking - that is an analog one. Such a way of thinking would have us move beyond dialectics towards processes where we replace negation with affirmation as a *modus operandi*. Affirmation in that context is the process of accepting what is already in place (for instance the perceived norm), not as something that stays unchanged but rather as something that is in a constant flux. Therefore, progressing from a norm towards a new condition would not require a 'non-normativity' - that is a condition that is opposed to the norm - but instead a constant process of modulation that operates through transformation, variation and mutation.

One could argue that the above line of thinking might be an interesting but rather generic philosophical discussion. A juxtaposition that can be expressed in many ways and it can be codified through many sets of words: dialectic and non-dialectic, discrete and continuous, disparate and organic. However, it is when we codify it through the specific set of concepts that it reveals its fundamental relevance to our current condition: when thinking in terms of *digital and analog* processes we can more easily relate it to contemporary issues.

The Digital, the Analog and the Standards

Throughout modernity norms have been expressed through the setting of standards. Through the tireless definition of specifications. Modern architecture is a very representative example. Beginning with the infamous argument between Hermann Muthesius and Henry van de Velde in the 1914 Werkbund exhibition in Cologne, standards became the means for architecture to embrace modernity (Gourdoukis, 2018). They were formed around an optimistic view - in spite of, or maybe because of, the two world wars - where design and architecture were understood as solutions to specific problems (again: dialectics are in play here). Standards could guaranty efficiency in the process of providing those solutions. It was precisely 'modern thinking' that created

the digital computer - a tool that is in fact the ultimate machine of modernity; one that is fully incorporating its principles.

However, digital tools and media, while the result of modernity, they became also the means that pushed society beyond it and towards the current information age. Nevertheless, they kept its underlying principles: the standards. Arguably then, in the information age it is again the standards that play the most important role. Networks, the result of digital computers being able to connect to each other, are based on communication protocols, which in effect are nothing else than the application of standards. Protocols *refer specifically to standards governing the implementation of specific technologies* (Galloway, 2004) and they can be found in almost every aspect of our everyday life. But where standards during modernity could have had a certain tolerance, informational standards are absolute. In fact they are so absolute that they bring forth an almost totalitarian condition. One can either fully accept them or else not use them at all.

The Local and the Analog

Standards therefore are norms. They define how things should be done. Consequently, digital standards are a very strict, intolerant form of norms. Therefore, as a result of the dominating communication protocols, in a digital world non-normativity is almost impossible to exist. You either accept the norm, through the protocol, or you can't exist in the system at all (on a technical level we can think of the Internet Protocol: one has to fully accept it in order to use the internet and connect to it, without any other option in place). That situations gives rise to two very important questions: the first is about who creates the protocols, who creates the standards and who creates the norms. The second question is about how we break the standards and the norms in order to sustain the ability of human activities to produce subjectivity.

Of course, the solution to the rather dystopic picture that is painted above is not to negate digital tools or to try to return to some previous, pre-digital condition. That would be, beyond anything else, impossible. In the attempt to face norms and the normativity that arise through the rigid application of digital standards there seems to be two directions one can follow as the means of resistance. Those directions are the possible answers to the two questions posed above. The first question - that asks who is building the protocols and who sets the standards and the norms - brings forth the concept of autonomy, which in our context means 'being able to create local norms'. In other words, an attempt to operate through local norms instead of global ones and therefore decentralize the protocol creation process. By straightening the concept of autonomy on all possible levels, normativity can become liquid and transformative. Trying to answer the second question - that asks how standards and norms break - would lead us to try and handle

norms not as ‘digital’ concepts that operate only as discrete, rigid elements. Instead direct us to use them through an analog way of thinking that operate through organic, continues modulations. And while in a digital world analog processes can be difficult and demanding, they can nevertheless signify the necessary raptures with the existing structures that will release subjectivity and ultimately produce freedom.

Going back to the starting point, in order to move beyond norms, one doesn’t need to think in terms of red or blue as absolute values. But rather to understand that there are virtually infinite versions of red that change according to local conditions. And ultimately to realize that red and blue are not necessary ‘opposites’: One can go from the one to the other through a continuous, analog process of modulation of color.

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UnLost Territories, between norm and normative

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I think it could be useful to recall some fundamental aspects on the basis of Tirana Design Week 2019, and from that, we will move independently from the lecture that I delivered in Tirana on the 19th of September 2019.

The title of speech had been (1919-2019) “*FROM BAUHAUS TO A NEW PARADIGM IN ARCHITECTURE*”. My idea was to celebrate the centenary of the birth of the Bauhaus particularly to underline the paradigm shift from an architectural symbol of the mechanical and industrial world to a new one based on information, which is what portrays these times we are living in. Despite these celebrations usually have a historical-philological character, my lecture was based on the idea that history is always written from a today perspective and by the will to stimulate critical thinking. As many readers of this journal know, the presence of Bauhaus was essential in my book *Arkitektura dhe Moderniteti. Nga Bauhaus-i te Revolucioni informatik*, which was published by POLIS_Press at the end of 2015 and was translated by a team headed by professor Sotir Dhamo. Specifically, my contribution paused on the notion of ‘paradigm shift’ and was also the chance to publicly present our “charts”. The latter is an instrument we use with the students to conceptualize the differences between two completely notions of intending and making architecture. Anyway, I believe that it is pointless to resume now – in such a short space – the contents of a lecture that touched several topics and

would new a larger space to be explained. Moreover, for those who might be interested, the audio and pictures are available at the following link: <https://bit.ly/37OaOsi>.

From my perspective, I think it would more useful to briefly outline my last chair project, the urban project called ‘UnLost Territories : Ricostruire la periferia a Roma. Architettura e società nei territori abbandonati’ (Sapienza, Università di Roma 2016-2019), because it shows several contact points with the topics reflected during the Tirana Design Week 2019 - ‘Foreseeing Uncertainty. Design and non-normativity’. Particularly, the theme ‘The norm and the normative’ is stimulating because the whole UNLost Territories project doesn’t articulate itself from usual top-down planning practice, but opens up in a sort of oscillating balance between some normed aspects and others originated by peculiar “bottom-up” generated situations.

UnLost Territories, peripheries to bring back to life

Let us proceed to discover briefly what the project is about. We can start with the word UnLost. According to the Collins dictionary, the term means: **1.** not lost; retained and **2.** found or regained after having been lost. What we can now discuss is the title of the urban projects that indeed means “Not lost/not missed territories”. The latter we are talking about are areas in the extreme eastern periphery of Rome, within the 7th and 8th municipality, towards the Grande Raccordo Anulare.

The latter we are talking about are areas in the extreme eastern periphery of Rome, within the 7th and 8th municipality, towards the Grande Raccordo Anulare.

To a superficial knowledge, these territories might look definitely far from the chance to be recovered, especially if we based our practice on the traditional urban design categories. Nevertheless, they are anything but 'lost' if we learn to operate with new principles – as taught by several realities in South America, such as Medellín.

The project UnLost Territories would have never been born with the Museo dell'Altro e dell'Altrove di Metropoliz (Maam). The Maam is a former factory occupied by people with different ethnicities that, thanks to the work of sociologists and anthropologists such as Giorgio de Finis who transformed an entire wing of the old delicatessen Fiorucci factory in a museum, has become an extremely interesting reality. Indeed, the "Museo dell'Altro e dell'Altrove di Metropoliz".

With the nTro group, I was invited to realize an installation in one of the spaces of the museum. Our work, tree.it, consisted of a dynamic platform able to send vectors in the space and, at the same time, configured itself as a proper multitasking object. Surely, it was a plastic presence in the space but in the end, it was intended to be even more: a platform, a sitting for events, support for lights and multimedia effects and, mostly, a ramp for the 'wheeled' jaunts of the younger inhabitants of the occupied factory. All the experience of tree.it, and the developed knowledge regarding the experience of the Maam, spurred to reflect on the role that art could have had in derelict and peripheral urban sectors. The museum seemed to be a concrete possibility of redemption in which the moment of fantasy, metaphor, and narration, together with the presence of several site-specific pieces of art also by well-known artists that could start a reflection towards new interventions in the suburban areas trigger by art as a catalyst.

For these reasons, one of the main ideas of UnLost territories is the will to propagate art enzymes in the many abandoned and derelict areas of the neighborhood surrounding the Maam.

UnLost Strategy

But how do we concretely move? First of all, we mapped all the internal and external areas of the Maam that could host new design interventions. This map was created through several visits and photoshoots of two graduands, Michele Spano and Manuela Seu. 22 'red' spots had been identified within Metropoliz (indeed the whole area occupied by the museum, and the structure and external spaces in the big fenced area of the former Fiorucci factory). Those were places where it was possible to intervene with micro spatial actions that could 'transform crisis into value' as Bruno Zevi would say. In this logic, for example, we imagined that – sooner or later – we would have the strength to realize Reciprocal 3.0. The latter

is a light parametric structure that would have been built with hundreds of 1-meter length PVC bars and that would involve the inhabitants in a sort of big construction game. The outcome would take form in an organic shaped pavilion in which IT technologies would only be embedded to make the structure site-specific, but also statically optimizing the forces within the bars and superimposing other interactive systems able to interact with surroundings and transforming the installation in a big musical, performative, and ludic instrument.

We already did it successfully two times: in 2016 in Gioiosa Marea - Sicily - (goo.gl/Us1awF), and at CUBO Festival in Ronciglione, the northern part of the Lazio region.

In the UnLost Territories

The second chapter of the project happened in 2017 and started with an extension of the mapping process concerning the areas outside of Metropoliz. Thanks to the work of Silvia Primavera, together with the collaboration of several students, 44 new areas were added (today their number reaches 70 units). The mapping has been conducted through the identification of abandoned and underutilized areas belonging to the categories of the relicts or urban voids. As we precedently did in previous projects from my chair to this Google Map – which can be examined at the following link: goo.gl/znt2L6, we connected an online blog (unlostterritories.blogspot.it/) where each post, beside of a photographic/planimetric selection, contains projects that have been conducted in every area there during the years. Within these maps, lots of architecture students have been operating: they defined a specific functional program for every site, developed a negotiation with a client they identified in the community, and implemented a credible and realistic project, as much as innovative.

The areas 'ideally' mapped irradiates starting from Metropoliz that represent their symbolic, if not physical, center.

As we did in our precedent urban project – Urban Green Line - the sites are located in or in the premise of an infrastructural ring of approximately 4 kilometers diameter per 400 hectares. The ring, called "UnLost Line", hosts a tram line and it is organized through the principles of new generation infrastructures in the built city, that we already focused on Urban Green Line. The UnLost Line infrastructural ring is composed of a series of tracts that define the external perimeter, and others that rung along the diameter of the ring. It is about an '8' shaped path, its realization is programmed in two phases (firstly the northern one, then secondly the southern one), and it is designed to host a proper multitasking infrastructure (a tram, an ecological canal, pedestrian and cycle path). The ring crosses existing stations and nodes, creates a new pair of them and has been thought like an infrastructural flywheel to concretely motivate (either socially and economically) the projects in the single areas and the revitalization of the urban sector. Many projects

along the UnLost line have been developed starting from Information Technology and Architecture class (ITCAAD - at the 5th year of the MA in Architecture at Sapienza - University of Rome).

UnLost Principles

There are ten principles that lead our projects. We draw them up even better than the previous works. Five of them relate to the architectural design scale (mixité, driving force, rebuilding nature, infrastructuring, magic crisis), while the others are dedicated to the new generation infrastructural system. Our method aims for creating strong and sharable principles to free individual energies. We could talk at length about this basic concept, and most point out how in this dialectic lies the key aspect of the 'The norm and the normative' topic proposed by the International Scientific Conference. Strong and sharable principles to free individual energies is an assumption that is valid either at the scale of vital urban planning, and either in the context of a complex university chair proposal as in the case of UnLost Territories.

The basic concept behind the project, as we said, gives to the Maam a propagator effect to revitalize the urban sector around it. The propulsive factors we identified are the following

- the reuse of an abandoned structure and, progressively, of its external areas;
- the occupation from inhabitants of different ethnicities and arriving from various situations of marginality;
- a situation of dynamic and self-regulated social equilibrium;
- the presence of art as a 'defender' of the occupation;
- the presence of art as 're-centralization' of the periphery;
- the presence of the 'sight of the art' on the marginalization phenomena that open towards a new aesthetic which is, at the same, also a new substance.

Our idea is to engage the Maam as if the designers would have a sort of mirror neurons. It was fundamental to deeply analyze to further emulate and personalize at the same time. For example, all the UnLost projects have always worked on the concept of Mixité. In the case of Metropolis this idea has been declined in a very specific way because that is a museum indeed, but also a social support center, an open lab concerning small didactic and educational modules, and of course strategies of dwelling. Other projects in the area of UnLost Territories propose a mixture of these and those uses. Still, others focus on particular aspects concerning some ethnic communities (regarding the culinary field, music handicraft, languages, literature, art itself). In some cases, the social or educative component prevails, or the temporary sheltering dedicated to

migrants, or the topic of sustainability, even economical, with the development of wine auto production.

The project can be investigated and the dedicated volume, edited by Gaetano De Francesco and Antonino Saggio, *UnLost Territories Ricostruire la periferia a Roma Architettura e società nei territori abbandonati*, Publisher: Lulu.com Raleigh, December 2019, can be purchased at the following link: <http://www.arcl.uniroma1.it/saggio/unlost/>.

In Response to the Contentious: From Past Roots to Future Bridges

ALIREZA TAGHABONI

Next Office

Nextoffice's first project was commissioned by a friend. Being considered a religious minority, the client desired a house with a perfect view while being concerned with his privacy being compromised as the price of opening up to the desired vistas.

The phobia of being "gazed at", by the unwanted eyes on the one hand, and the desire for being the unobstructed gazer on the other hand, created a contentious situation for the project. Desiring a view without risking one's privacy; the client wanted an eye whose pupil could not be seen. Wanting to see without being seen is contradictory in nature. Although in the peculiar case of this very first project, the client's being a member of a religious minority was exacerbating the situation, this desire reveals certain sensitivity towards the relationship between outside and inside, which is not uncommon amongst us Iranians. We shall even go so far as to say that it is a token, within the discipline of architecture, of something historically prevailing in Iranian society. Iran has always been a milieu of opposing and even conflicting agendas of different classes, religions, and races. Although the 1979 revolution gave validity to a single formal voice, its imposed and artificial homogeneity instigated certain resistance in the public, particularly in people's dual lifestyles

The dominance of the official voice meant the withdrawal of all the others behind closed walls, from outside to inside. The informal retreated in order to survive. While abiding by the

formal and publicly accepted decorum within the public realm, those individuals that did not sympathize with the official ideology, adopted a different private lifestyle in parallel. As such the accepted public life and the perhaps not-accepted private one goes hand-in-hand in every-day-practice of life for Iranians.

In such context, architecture goes beyond spatial negotiations of inside and outside, or that which is owned privately and that which is a part of the common wealth. In order to address the schizophrenic duality of the public and the private, architecture both in its spatial formation and the configuration of its thresholds is problematized. Interestingly, Iranian architectural traditions have explored the issues of inside and outside and their relationships, extensively. Some architecture types are established entirely extroverted and in relation to the outside and some rely on the potentials of the inside manifesting characteristics of an extremely introverted space. Although, these types came about in response to various climatic and socio-cultural contexts in different regions in Iran nevertheless, they can be used as a reference point in the contemporary state of matters. As an example, in our *Safadasht Dual* project, introvert and extrovert architectures are adjacent in paired villas situated in the center of a garden, enclosed within high walls. In our *Sharifi-ha House* project, an operatable space results in a building of dual configurations, where different relationships and gradients of public and private can be



Figure 1. Sharifi-ha House (2013) | Dynamic Façade

achieved between the outside and the inside through the balconies and building's interior void. In *Guyim House* project, introverted and extroverted half domes, whether facing each other or facing away, create different qualities of space on differing and yet juxtaposed levels of the house. Furthermore, the study of material traditions of Iranian architecture and how it contributes to spatial formations and socio-cultural configurations, has been constructive to our practice. On the one hand, some of our projects are informed by examples of small-scale mud-straw (cob) structures. These structures are flexible and do not have very refined and precise geometries, hence, in their construction, it is possible to rely on local masons and unskilled workforce. At the same time, through repetition and variation, they can function as the base genome of urban or vernacular fabric. On the other hand, other projects of our office built on the tradition of Iranian large-scale iconic structures with precise and complex geometries that are only made possible with the skill of master artisans of the trade. In the *Sadra Civic Centre* project, a multi-functional complex of residential, cultural, and commercial programs is formed around the central courtyards, using mud-straw as the material of choice, creating a platform to host improve artistic interventions and performances of the intended public, that is, the artists and the artisans. This project creates a diverse alternative; a flow of connecting public spaces alongside the deprived social housing of the area, suggesting

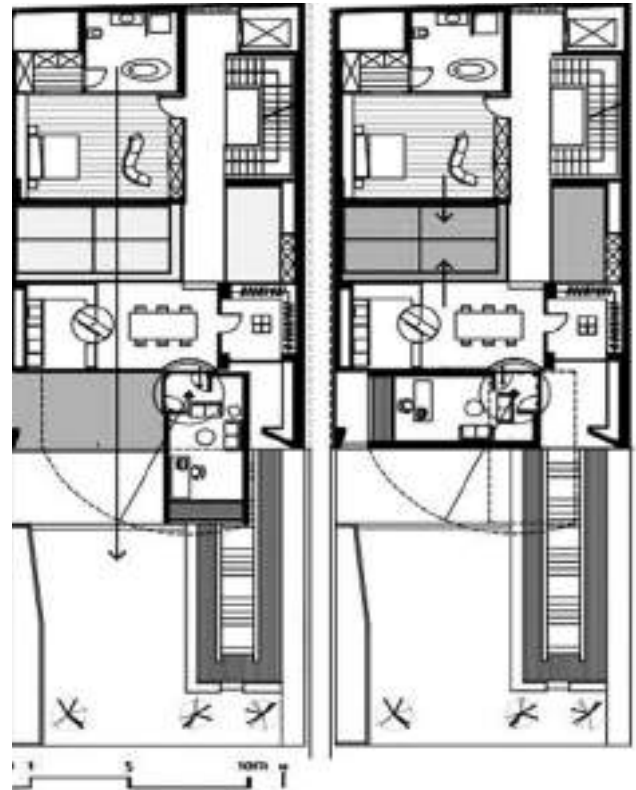


Figure 2. Left: Sharifi-ha House

other ways of life and construction as well. Another example is the *Sadra Artists Forum* project, where various public spaces have been divided with complex geometries. The geometries are initially constructed as brick vaults, yet the vaults are conceived as vanishing mediators of construction, functioning as temporary casts for concrete shells and will be removed – their bricks being recycled- leaving traces of brick texture on the final finish. Similarly, in *Guyim House* project, we have transformed the traditional precise geometry of quadruple vaults - *Chartaqi*, as we call them in the Iranian tradition of architecture - and their load transfer mechanism, in order to create half domes that in their relative positioning against each other, create a contemporary hybrid space. In Iran's current complex situation, we try to carefully observe our historical, social, and political condition to see where we stand and what our architectural precedents hold and how they can be a valuable source in order to arrive at valid solutions for the current context.

This knowledge is either typological, technical, or conceptual. To recognize what is relevant and to marry it with contemporary issues, resources, and technology is a challenge we set for ourselves in our practice. At the same time, engaging in architecture always concerns the future as well as the past. Recent developments in the socio-political and economic-cultural landscape of both Iran and its greater context (Middle East) has been and will be rendering the future less predictable and more

contentious. Under such circumstances, Architecture, as a discipline and with a capital A, has great potential and instrumentality to engage with this complex situation and the conflicting forces within it. As well as building upon the past practices, understanding and pushing against the limits of Architecture's potentials and instrumentality in dealing with exacerbated dualities in the future is a crucial part of Nextoffice's practice. That is, we resist being passive towards the ever becoming complicated context of our practice, trying to proactively author architectural responses that are informed by past practices, yet, looking at the contemporary state of things and their future trends.

Our Contrary Normal Practice and Normative Attitudes Around Plastics Recycling

KIERSTEN MUENCHINGER

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Our normative behavior is thinking and professing that recycling is an environmentally effective strategy. However, the norm is to not recycle plastics. And we know it. Our contrary normal practice and normative attitudes around plastics recycling

In time for the 50th Anniversary of Earth Day, *Frontline*, an acclaimed investigative news show on American Public Television, is airing “Plastic Wars,” a report on the fight over the future of plastics. “Plastic Wars” and its related print articles expose that plastics manufacturers have promoted the recycling industry as the clever, beneficial, circular end to plastics waste, all the while knowing that plastics recycling systems have never been robust enough to address plastics waste. It tells that soft drink companies like Pepsico have repeatedly fallen short of stated goals for recycled plastic content in their bottles. It clarifies that end-consumers should not expect that every plastic part embossed with a chasing arrow symbol will be recycled. These pieces of investigative journalism detail realities about recycling plastics that we citizens of the world have internalized, but don’t verbalize. We know that plastics don’t get recycled; that is the norm. Our normative behavior, however, is to promote and proselytize recycling; we say that recycling is important, worthwhile, beneficial and good. The norm and the normative in 2020’s plastics recycling are opposites, and we’ve known that since long before *Frontline*’s Earth Day expose.

Let’s start at the beginning of a product’s life. To design a new product with the admirable goal of environmental responsibility, there are generally two main strategies to consider: materials selection and waste minimization (Graedel, Lewis). Tactics of materials selection include choosing abundant materials,

choosing materials that require minimal processing and choosing recyclable materials. Tactics of waste minimization include designing for increased durability and minimizing the impacts of disposal, including recycling. The strategies of materials selection and waste minimization both accept end-of-life recycling as an appropriate consideration in the design of a new product.

We designers embrace recyclable materials choice as a strategy in the design of plastic products. It tends to be an easy strategy to implement, as all materials are recycle-able, and the most widely used polymers are the most recycled. Declaring a recyclable material strategy for a new product is a relatively normal, typical consideration that allows designers to feel accomplishment that we have addressed environmental issues with new products. We do this even though we know that once the product has been produced, we have no control over whether the product actually is recycled, and we can even reference data that only 8% of consumer-used plastics are recycled. We feel good about our role, and claim no responsibility for the user’s actions.

Designers can also quantitatively analyze a product’s sustainability. There is a single-figure Life Cycle Assessment (LCA) tool called Okala that quantifies the environmental impacts of a product and product system. (White, et al, 2013).

For example, Okala gives impact figures for PET bottle material as 2.0 impact points per pound (ip/lb) for primary material, and 1.6 ip/lb for secondary (recycled) material.

The recycled material has a solid 20% reduction in environmental impact from the primary. Because the total impact for the bottle also includes the blow molding manufacturing process and the landfill end-of-life, a 0.021lb (9.9g) primary PET water bottle has a total impact of 0.061 Okala impact points, and a secondary PET water bottle has a total impact of 0.053 Okala impact points. The recycled material reduces the impact by about 13%. Congratulations to me! I can design for the product to be made with secondary PET, providing an increase in sustainability of 13% over the primary option. I'm not responsible for the manufacturer procuring recycled material, which may be difficult due to availability and price. I espouse recycled material design through my work, though I know the product outcome to again be out of my control.

As consumers, we put ourselves in the position of no responsibility for a product's materials or for waste outcomes. Using single-serving beverages as an example, the bottle material is the responsibility of the beverage manufacturer. The recycling system, including the disposal options for my bottles, is responsibility of my workplace and my municipality. In addition, providing me with potable beverage options is also the responsibility of my workplace and my municipality. My consumer behavior is to purchasing and use single-serving beverage bottles, which I justify as normal behavior. If there isn't a handy recycling receptacle for my used bottle, my normal behavior is to dispose of it as waste. Despite my purchase and disposal decisions, my normal behavior is to say in groups that recycling water bottles is important, but I would never hold myself or a friend accountable to that. Because of these internal dichotomies, I'm comfortable both saying that recycling is important, and not behaving as if it was important.

As local and global citizens, we haven't asked for standards of recycling plastics. There are some municipal systems that include curbside recycling of plastics, which is picked up with household and business waste. Some municipal systems sort recyclables out of garbage bins. Some municipalities don't offer curbside recycling, but recyclables can be taken to a sorting center by households and businesses directly. Sometimes, communities can only maintain garbage collection and disposal. There is no norm for recycling.

Recycling centers that do exist must be responsive to local government requirements, including the wise utilization of citizens' taxes. In my municipal system, plastics with numbers 1 and 2, which are polyethylene terephthalate (PET) and high density polyethylene (HDPE) respectively, are the only plastics recycled. PET is the plastic found in most single-use beverage bottles. PET and HDPE look and feel fairly different from each other, so they are relatively recognizable to workers who sort municipal recycled waste. Accepting only two plastics is a relatively efficient way to process the materials. And these two plastics are more valuable than others. There are buyers

for these post-consumer recycled materials for use in beverage bottles and apparel fibers. The recycling center might be able to make some money on the sales of the collected, sorted plastics to maintain its operation. On a community level, we know that we are not recycling most of the plastic waste in our own area, yet we feel good about ourselves as a community with a sustainability-inclusive plan for recycling.

We value this behavior and support the normative story that we are good because we recycle and people who don't recycle are bad. Our knowledge that our plastics are waste popped up in art a decade ago. In 2007, artist Chris Jordan created a resonant photo collage in "Plastic Bottles." The piece is a digitally rendered landscape stretching to a distant horizon that is completely smothered by 2,000,000 plastic beverage bottles. This work is a part of Jordan's "Running the Numbers" series, and represents the quantity of beverage bottles used in the United States every five minutes (or every five minutes way back in 2007). This piece was an early digital meme, repetitively emailed and forwarded to friends and neighbors because it captured what we knew to be true, but couldn't observe, and wouldn't claim in our own actions.

Personal practices and business practices offer daily failings of our ability and motivation to recycle. In my most recent travel, my airline had a policy of recycling the plastic cups used on the flight. On the first leg of my trip, leftover ice and drinks were poured into a trash bag, and the used cups were stacked neatly. On the second leg, the cups were disposed of with the contents into the trash bag. Perhaps we were descending too rapidly or with turbulence on that second leg, so time couldn't be taken to sort for recycling. Regardless, my observation is that even with policies in place, recycling does not always happen. My normative practice includes both appreciating that my airline has a recycling policy, and not holding them accountable when their norm is more like a "sometimes recycling" policy. The research I conduct examines peoples' perceptions of product sustainability. The studies that I run consistently show that we do not actually perceive recyclability of a material to be an indicator of its sustainability. I give study participants sample objects to look at, feel, touch, smell, and place on a table, and ask them to rate the sustainability of the objects. The ratings are based on sustainability principles, including the durability, value, material accessibility and the recyclability. I use a statistical method called a multilevel confirmatory factor analysis to compare all of the participants responses to the objects they have, and to all of the responses that other participants give to the same object. Through the statistical analysis, sustainability principles that people use as the bases for their overall perception of the object are clumped together. To date, the factors that people consider the strongest indicators of a product's sustainability are the durability, the degradability, the naturalness and the rawness (Muenchinger, 2016).

Recyclability is included in the surveys, but statistically, recyclability is not being considered by people at all! These studies are another example that we profess to think recyclability is important, but our unconscious assessments deem recyclability to be unworthy of our consideration.

My research parallels *Frontline's* work, showing that plastics recycling isn't working and really has no support to be a successful solution to plastic pollution. While it is difficult to change behavior, particularly without intervention, we are all looking for things we can do to help the problem. Two actions you can take: use a portable, reusable beverage container (or two: one for hot, and one for cold) and don't purchase single serving beverages in bottles. Based on Chris Jordan's numbers, if I cut out the two single serving bottles I use per day, I will keep 14.5 pounds (6.5 kg) of plastics out of the seas and landscapes. I think I can shift my normative behavior, and profess through my behavior that the norm is not recycling, it is reducing.

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Investigative Environments

Theoretical Frames, Shared Concepts and Research by Design

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This article demonstrates initial outcomes of a recent investigation on a series of theoretical concepts originating from variable sources and trying to formulate a relevant, contemporary discussion on architecture. At the same time, it is attempting to connect to respective academic versions of informing this discussion, by designing experimental structures, spaces and environments, through the use of advanced design tools and methodologies. It tries to draw lines and connections between an ongoing theoretical research and a parallel design research through a highlighted academic course, taking place at the School of Architecture, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki¹.

Theoretical Frames and Concepts

A first area of theoretical research is focused on concepts regarding density and resolution in design. Density and resolution are perceived here as a methodological and composing tool. They root back to the practice of cutting and observing as a century old tradition of understanding matter. It presupposes the analysis of a bigger entity into smaller particles, in order to understand their attributes, through these resolving procedure.

¹ Design course titled '08EX12 Spatial Investigations', (Greek: 08EX12 Χωρικές Διερευνήσεις). Course coordinator Dr. Anastasios Tellios, Associate Professor, School of Architecture, Faculty of Engineering, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki

Then density occurs as the opposite procedure of seamlessly connecting and combining sometimes compatible but otherwise distant and sometimes unfriendly elements.

This generates an elaborate bottom up way of designing, which essentially challenges and defies established hierarchies and priorities. It provides a design canvas, open to interpretations for the talented hand and the rigorous mind. It allows for broader understanding of design, as a creative act across the scales, joining the object to the building, to the city and the environment ahead. It allows for constant rearrangements of elements, promoting the designing, redesigning, undesigning and the avoiding of visible joints or ruptures. This procedure is practically tracing the essence of space as a combination of particles and components, thus a unique spatial mixture.

Available technologies and tools today have liberated an array of design capabilities and narrative capacities for designed environments, whether physical, natural or virtual, i.e. conceived and spatially experienced through advanced means. This has initially generated a sense of defiance towards the norm and aspiration for a new paradigm (Tellios, 2014). Constant repetition and spreading of technologies, though, has counter-created a new shared culture, which sometimes conveys the air of a newly defined 'norm'. This shared culture is evident through a series of concepts that relate to the way one can understand space, matter, architecture and design

I. The concept of discrete elements and the flexible assemblage of greater versatile aggregations that can provide for architectural space and structurally autonomous articulations. This relates directly to the notion of resolution as described previously and it includes the cutting, observing and reassembling procedure towards complex, open-ended architectural settings (Retsin, 2019).

II. The concept of establishing a new form of integration with the natural world. This integration goes beyond formal imitation as it has been documented in art and architecture throughout the centuries, whether it has been the marble Corinthian capitals in ancient Greece, or nature-inspired ornamented staircase railing in early 19th century Art Nouveau buildings in Brussels by Victor Horta². It aims to reach a more intrinsic level of natural wisdom, that of the inner logic of ‘natural design’, as it can be observed on the ultra-lightweight bone structure of flying birds, or the semi-arbitrary weaved bird nests in Kalahari desert, South Africa, structured upon an ingenious aggregation of lightweight branches and leaves.

III. The concept of abandoning an ‘international style’ approach when it comes to applying new tools and methodologies in architectural design and the development of a culturally and contextually sensitive agenda. This might inform the design outcomes with a redefined sense of ‘genius loci’, qualities which have long been nurtured in local contexts and societies, including materials, techniques and decorative styles. It could establish sometimes shattered bonds between architecture and architects with place and identity and it can essentially enhance the computational tools used and the assets they operate with.

IV. The concept of matter and materials not just as structural elements that can be of use by the architect or the engineer, but as a dynamic field of natural resource, with qualities and attributes that include density, resolution, tactility, temperature and haptic experience. This sense of new materialism seems to be directed by the need of computational design tools to adapt to a tangible material reality and matter, natural and manufactured. Materiality acts as bidirectional interface between a set of overlaying worlds, natural and digital, human and virtual. If one might need to summarize this under a current, broader theoretical envelope, Zygmunt Bauman’s ‘liquid modernity’ (Bauman, 2000) directs to the ‘amplification of modern capacity for constant change’ and might be offering a valuable transcription. It aligns this discussion with an always relevant discussion on modernity. Bauman’s aspect about being modern

meaning «to modernize, compulsively, obsessively; not so much just ‘to be’, let alone to keep identity intact, but forever ‘becoming’», avoiding completion, staying underdefined’ opens up a spectrum of definitions on advanced tools and methodologies

At the same time, Mario Carpo (Carpo, 2011) distinguishes modernity as related to ‘the mass production of identical copies from mechanical master models’, to a current digital turn, when ‘everything digital is variable’, offering an oblique view on modernity. One can easily overlap Bauman’s ‘liquidity’ to Carpo’s ‘digital’ and offer a new adaptation of the spirit of liquid modernity, as a demonstration of a constantly forward-looking prism. ‘Liquid’ reflecting the polyvalent, ubiquitous nature of advanced design capabilities today and ‘modernity’, describing an essential faith in human tendency towards progress and perfectibility. This frame can simultaneously embrace Leonardo Da Vinci’s advances towards the devise of a flying machine³, Hans Hollein’s operational speculations on his mobile office⁴ and Kengo Kuma’s ingenious floating tea house⁵.

Research by Design

The observations above, define a certain frame of research, which has been providing input for design experimentation at academic level. This has been applied to theory and design courses, as well as to diploma level approaches. A design-based version of this research is documented in the work of an elective design course, focusing on experimental compositions at School of Architecture, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki,



Figure 1. 08EX12 Spatial Investigations, Arcadia II, 2018-2019, Restructuring the “Samothrake Nike” using advanced documentation and fabrication techniques, School of Architecture, AUTH. (Image © Anastasios Tellios)

³ Leonardo Da Vinci (1452-1519), *Codex on the Flight of Birds*, 1505.

⁴ Hans Hollein (1934-2014), *Mobile Office*, 1969.

⁵ Kengo Kuma (1954-), *Floating Tea House*, National Building Museum in Washington DC, 2007.

² Victor Horta (1861-1947), *The Tassel House*, Brussels, 1893

Greece. The course's title is 'Spatial Investigations' (Greek: Χωρικές Διερευνήσεις) and it has been operating since 2009. The course's object is the research on the procedure of architectural design and the investigation of its origins and its limits, following the agenda presented in previous paragraphs. The course has been attempting to connect architectural design, as a deep, creative procedure with broad fields of innovation, study of structures (typological, formal, technological, ecological, etc.), documentation, as well as other scientific and creative fields, using advanced methodologies for design, spatial representation and fabrication (Figure 1).

The aim of this course is to understand the dynamics of space, place and its qualities, the challenging of established building schemes, the experimental process of complex and sometimes unexpected alternative functional programs (Figure 2). The purpose has been the final proposal of innovative spatial situations for the human-made environment and landscape, through coherent, compositional, architectural narratives.

Particular emphasis is placed on encouraging the development of personal design vocabularies and contextually sensitive environments, portraying flexibility and resourcefulness in responding to complex spatial requirements. Students are challenged to a continuous processing of their design proposal through the use of advanced spatial documentation and representational tools, digital and physical models, which may be conceptual, diagrammatic and not necessarily representational. During the years, the course has focused in various scientific

fields such as physics and biology, structural schemes, design-based criticism on architecture and extensive use of research loans by other disciplines. The last years it has framed the topic of cultural and contextual adaptation, initially through the very experimentation of Greek locality (Figure 3), through an extensive agenda titled 'Arcadia I'. Selected design and fabricated outcomes of this agenda have been exhibited and discussed within international events, such as the "Thessaloniki International Fair" in 2017 and 2019 (Figure 4) in Thessaloniki, Greece, the "Tallinn Architecture Biennale" in 2017 in Tallinn, Estonia and recently "Tirana Design Week", in 2019 in Tirana, Albania, in September 2019 (Figure 5).

The present year's (academic 2019-2020) topic is titled 'Far East' and it connects concepts such as Asian locality through calligraphy, the cultural expression of detail through intricate etchings, with advanced design and visionary proposals. Thus, it is linked to the initial issues of density and resolution. It is consequently raising architectural design as a prominent bearer of new meanings and encoded cultural load. 'Far East' is conceived as a regional focus and yet highly universal, simple and vernacular and yet intricate and avantgarde. Responses by students are expected to address a foreign locality and context, using universal, broadly available tools.

The design course will be adjusting its activities in the implementation of a research program within the Horizon2020 frame, funded by the European Commission, titled 'V4Design', which is investigating the field of repurposing of visual mate-



Figure 2. 08EX12 Spatial Investigations, Arcadia I, 2016-2017, Alternative housing section arrangement, School of Architecture, AUTH. (Image © Anastasios Tellios)



Figure 3. 08EX12 Spatial Investigations, Arcadia II, 2018-2019, Team student project "Nymphe", School of Architecture, AUTH. (Image © Anastasios Tellios)

rial and its reuse in order to create an advanced design platform and assist architects and designers, among other professionals, in designing proposals for architecture and landscape. During the course previously mentioned, operating modules are tested, provided for the V4Design research project and short seminars and workshops are organized on experimental architectural design, advanced documentation and modelling and spatial organization. Design research findings produced within the ‘Spatial Investigations’ activity frame, will be used to design and fabricate collective, three-dimensional spatial arrangements. Produced outcomes will be incorporated in the development of the ‘V4Design’ research project and selected student projects will be presented in international scientific conferences and proposed to participate in exhibitions internationally.

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Facing Uncertainty With GIS, Using Non-Normative Tools To Plan Non-Normative Territories. The Case of Dropull

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Abstract

Uncertainty represents an Oxymoron in planning. The truth is that the world, cities, and people have never stood still; they are both complex and indeterminate; therefore, uncertainty refers to the ongoing process of the future. (Klosterman, 1978) GIS enables access to large volumes of data and is a tool for effective decision-making in urban and regional planning. Insofar as it is about predicting the future and anticipating change and addressing both the past and the future of its sites, planning is a process that faces uncertainty eventually (Abbott, 2005). Planning is a form of decision making, which involves data, people, physical territory and social dynamics. (Friedmann, 1987) This paper inquires a step further: what happens with GIS after the plan has come to its full circle. The case of Dropull municipality represented quite a challenge since the newly formed municipality faced a lack of data, informational gap, territorial disparities, and mobility barriers. In attempts to better address these challenges, the team of Polis University, which assisted in the making of the plan, established the possibility of using a tailor-made geographic informational system model as a planning methodology, among others. GIS is defined as an intelligent tool in planning, aimed to develop and support highly complex activities. These challenges were addressed by using GIS mainly oriented towards online data records and overlay of information to bring together both quantitative data with its geographical location. In light of a special emphasis on the question of what happens after the fact, this paper prescribes to Dropull municipality must use this tool to provide both transparency and continuity of information to any future plan attempt.

Keywords

Geographic informational systems; planning methodology; planning scenarios; uncertainty; multilevel decision-making.

Uncertainty in Planning

The new Municipality has brought together three former administrative units: Lower Dropull, Upper Dropull, and Pogon. These administrative units host 41 settlements throughout the territory. Currently, Dropull is sitting in between two significant economic and cultural areas, the city of Gjirokastra and Ioannina, which share similar cultural, historical and trade opportunities that benefit Dropull as the gateway connecting these two centers (University, 2018). Dropull municipality represents a small territory in the south-east of Albania. As a newly established municipality, composed of three former administrative units that hardly cooperated in the past, Dropull started the process with no data, little understanding of its newly acquired territory, and the challenges it faced. The uncertainty of the process that followed two years of planning and analysis was in continues change. The experience was challenging for both Polis University and its new mayor.

This planning process was an initiative of the local municipality which unhesitatingly viewed the plan as a necessary step to solve many problems, and at the same time establish a vision and clear development objectives. The process of planning and analysis had to deal with uncertainty, and it provided challenges to both the Polis team and Dropull's new Mayor; the first was related to the lack of data, informational gap, territorial disparities, mobility barriers, and old cartographies that did not represent the territorial changes for at least ten years. Secondly, being a newly established municipality in a new territory (attributed to size), the population data and territorial information and needs were a "mystery" to both the local government and its mayor, which faced challenges in both planning capacities and human resources. Dropull municipality shared these and many other problematics but was not part of this first initiative. In 2015, due to a need expressed by the municipality, Polis University agreed to cooperate and provide the necessary capacities for developing a comprehensive local plan.

Why use GIS in planning Dropull

To better understand the role that GIS has played in the planning process for Dropull municipality, we must first comprehend the planning context. Planning in Albania has shifted from an urbanistic approach to a comprehensive one, changing the planning process radically. There are many theories as to why the country undertakes this change. Some attribute it to the long-term aspiration of becoming a part of the European Union. Others highlight the need for planning territories in a more realistic way that helps the municipalities better manage their assets and establish development goals (Çobo, 2010). The new Municipality has brought together three former administrative units: Lower Dropull, Upper Dropull, and Pogon, these administrative units host 41 settlements throughout the territory.

Currently, Dropull is sitting in between two significant economic and cultural areas, the city of Gjirokastrë and Ioannina which share similar cultural, historical and trade opportunities that benefit Dropull as the gateway connecting these two centers (University, 2018). It is important to set the background of why GIS is such an important step, the tools itself being quite common and used widely within the planning process. However, in the context of planning in Albanian cities we must keep in mind that the information and data are still undergoing a shift from the physical documents to digital ones. Having no geographical reference of the territory up to date causes quite a gap in data and ownership overlap¹.

The population number of this municipality remains the biggest challenge, and besides the internal migration and immigration, the population numbers have decreased significantly.

In the 1990 census, the municipality estimated twenty thousand people living in the territory. The second population census took place in 2015 and estimated only 60% of the population of the '90s. The municipality of Dropull has not accepted the 2015 census as an official enumeration since they did not take into account the seasonal tenants, people that work across the border, and yet fully pay taxes, take care of their homes, and participate in yearly activities in the municipality.

There are two main factors that pushed Dropull municipality to use GIS as a planning instrument. First, it was because Dropull municipality faced information gaps as a consequence of lack of data. The information of territory was represented in cartographic maps and excel tables dome more than a decade ago. The normativity applied in creating these data was a process extended in time that was not able to keep up rigorously with the dynamics of change of the territory. The second factor was the creation of the legal bases that established the National Geospatial infrastructure that was initiated on the 28th June of 2012. This law was to create a common, national geospatial infrastructure in the Republic of Albania, organize their operation and function, and define the methodology of how to collect, create, update and process the spatial data.

This was also a legal requirement of the planning process, making it indispensable for the plan to have a common geodatabase that unified all the data of each Municipal plan. The purpose of this requirement was quite simple, since it was addressing an important issue. First the data had to be unique (taking into consideration that this information came from many different sources) and precise to reflect the current condition and geographic location of this data.

GIS may be described as a simple applicative tool, applying easily preset methodologies. However, in the case of Dropull,

¹ Of course for the purpose of this paper we trying to simplify the matter as it is quite an agglomeration of years of territorial inefficiency and lack of planning.

GIS played a more significant role. The methodology built in cooperation with local actors, the experts from Polis University customized this methodology into a model that later on will answer many of the development dilemmas. The methodology relied mainly on using a GIS Multi-criteria analyses where 200 documents from ministries, former local offices, and data collection were brought together into a single platform. Using the GIS Multi-criteria analyses allowed both the people to understand how the information was confronted and confirmed but also the team to understand the importance of specifying accurate data. After the analyses of the documents, they were categorized into 50 shapefiles, each into a different category.

Considering one attribute that had 19 shape-files tell you the location of the protected monuments, but none of them being accurate, we would use interpolation instruments within proximity to starting point in GIS to establish the most possibly accurate among them. As soon as this process was terminated for 15 indicators - *Population, infrastructure, infrastructure conditions, transport, number of buildings, buildings quality, services/businesses, urban area, natural areas, water areas, infrastructure area, water management, municipality surface, monuments* - two teams traveled through the territory and confirmed the geographic location of data, coordinates and attributes related to the indicators.

Although this process is considered quite normal in any planning process, the case of Albania and therefore Dropull is quite different due to the overlay of property dispute, lack of updated data or lack of any data at all. Admittedly achieving this process was not hard, but it was the first time that GIS was used, guiding a method established from the existing data, using GIS to establish transparent and long-term database.

Past the Plan

This planning process was officially terminated in 2019, when the material approved by the municipal council was delivered to the NTPA², and is waiting the National council of the Territory to be fully approved. The process is later guided to give the local government the possibility of sustainably management of the territory to start compiling the Detailed local development plans, an initiative that works with the smaller territorial division, under the directives of the plan, fulfilling the development criteria. This process of drafting the plan was under the umbrella of Polis University, who provided a team of experts and young professionals working with territorial planning and GIS (territorit, 2020). During the continuity of the plan and after the team of Dropull municipality composed by two topographic experts received a three rounds of training sessions divided into 6 months following simple principles, firstly

helping to understand and navigate the platform, secondly how to find and update information and lastly how to share this data periodically with all the institutions. The role that GIS and data play within the planning process is quite clear, as stated into the Council of Ministers. Decision: ["Nr.402, date 20.5.2020 "Për miratimin e dokumentit të politikave "Për qeverisjen e sektorit të informacionit gjeohapësinor në Shqipëri, 2020-2030"], GIS is an instrument that helps increase transparency, provide continuity through metadata and unify the territorial data for the entire country. Using GIS is a legal requirement, specified by law and left to both municipalities and institutions to update. The main purpose of using GIS lies in the continuity of the information, in the unification of the information source and the creation of a digital catalogue that can address both the past development and help guide the future one. As specified in the role and obligation of local municipalities and their experts this obligation falls under their job description; it is their responsibility to update and preserve the information. (Vendore, 2015)

Methodology

Inquiring into the state of GIS after the plan will consider the institutional evidence and observation of the continuous planning and development process. Evidence from other municipalities illustrated in the development of the local detailed plan and a number of interviews with planning professionals and local experts should guide the process. The first part of the methodology will consider the request of and process the local detailed plans, and what base of information is used to send forward these local detailed plans. During this part of the inquiry we have accessed a national platform and gathered information from three municipalities and actors that are currently participating or have participated into the drafting of the local detail plans. The table illustrates the data collected from the NTPA web-site and the contacting of actors that are currently drafting the LDPs.

Interviews: were divided into two groups: the actors currently engaged into the LDP process and the actors that represent NTPA as experts in the field of data collection and processing. The first Group was subjected to an open question that was conducted via telephone communication, keeping in mind the limitation of Covid19 situation.

The telephone questionnaire was composed of sixteen questions divided into two categories. The first consisted of closed questions that would be answered by yes or No. The second category consisted of questions that were open, with the intention of giving the interviewee the possibility to explain one's experience and point of view. All the questions were submitted in advance giving the interviewer the time to collect information and be prepared.

² National Territorial Planning Agency is the institution in charge of managing and coordinating the General Local Plans drafting process.

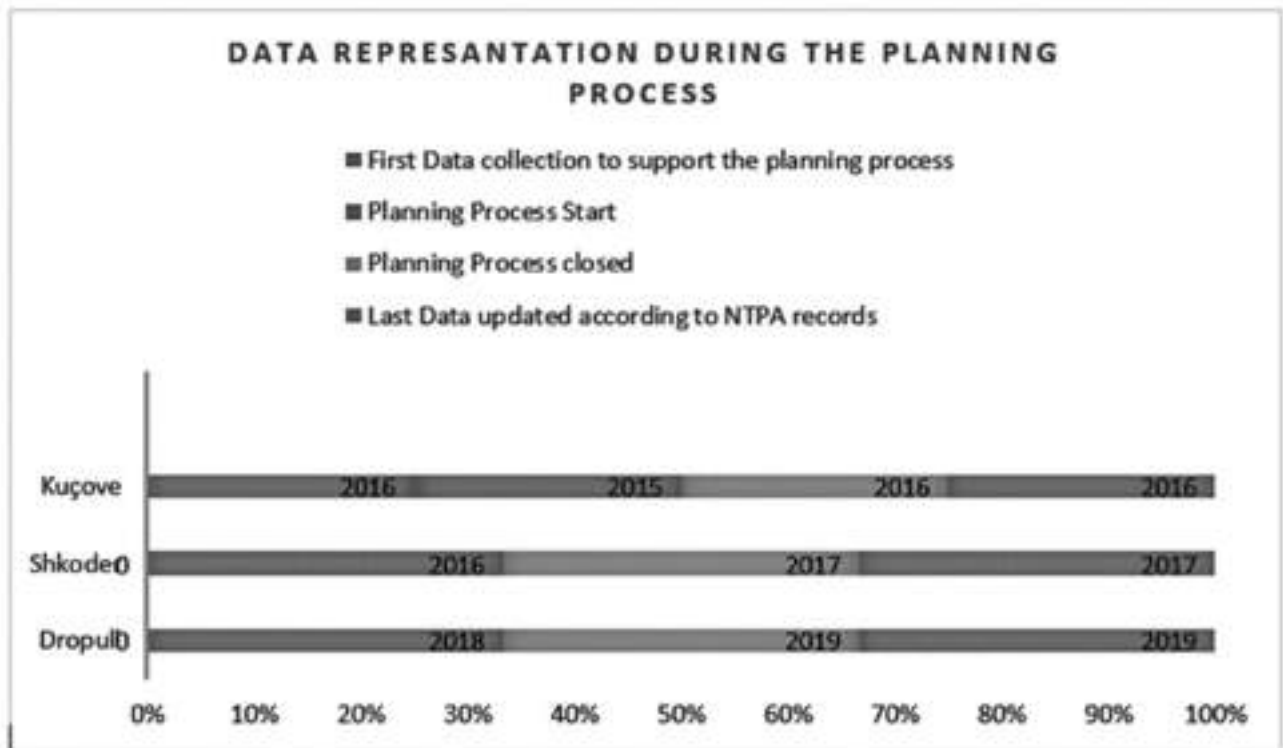


Table 1. Findings provided by the author inquiry into the planning data 2020, interview first outcome.

Interview Findings

Although the planning process has reached its first mark³, the municipalities like Shkodra were re-requested a plan review, due to the five-year specification⁴ allowed by the planning law. The case of Dropull has finished the process and overall approval but was reviewed before the final approval seal and its now waiting the National council to legitimize that approval. Our final case, the Kuçova municipality, has gone through the process and its now developing the LDP. Findings from the interview have helped this inquiry to understand, how and why the GIS are poorly used after the planning process. These findings were a direct outcome of the interview process. As we have previously established, it was a legal requirement for the municipality of Dropull to have 1 GIS expert trained for the continuity of the process, the municipality of Shkoder 2 experts and the Kuçova municipality 1 trained expert. However, more than five years after the planning process is over not one of these municipalities had someone on their staff able to manage or update the GIS database these municipalities built during the process. Only two of these municipalities have officially started the development of LDP process, and during this inquiry, we

have evaluated some of the main elements that these municipalities need to use during the drafting of the LDP.

Conclusions

Even though in terms of hierarchy the General plans stand above the LDP, the LDP must of course reflect the objectives and development criteria set by the LGDP. However, after the official planning process was over the database was considered “finished” as a tick in the box rather than become an instrument of the planning process and a way to monitor the development of the territory. The first responsibility to overcome this barrier falls upon the municipality which is responsible for the updating of the database and after that to the NTPA, which in theory should only coordinate the process, but since the municipalities capacities are still developing NTPA assists the process step by step. However, trying to remain loyal to the plan and its objectives is not the same as planning for the future in a comprehensive way. The data enables the plan to be contextual and coherent with a territory thus making the data very important. The main barrier toward using GIS stands into acknowledging the importance of GIS as a planning instrument, yet the

³ The considered case studies have past the first planning process and either have been through the review part of they are continuing with the LDP.

⁴ Law nr. 104 date 13.05.2014 specifies that the plan can be reviewed in five years of their drafting time because of territorial changes that may take place.

⁵ The challenges that this represents are mainly legal, as to rehabilitate the one road, a cooperation between the two municipalities must happen.

⁶ National Institute of Statistics in Albania.

⁷ General Local Territorial Plan.

⁸ General Local Territorial Plan.

Municipality	Data Updated	Land Use	Buildings	Infrastructure	Ownership
Shkodra	2017	NO	NO	NO	NO
Kuçova	2016	NO	NO	NO	NO

Table 2. Upgrade of Data during the LDP process for two case studies/ authors data elaboration.

inquiry in the field has revealed that the municipality itself sees GIS as nothing more than something the law dictates them to fulfil. Failing to understand importance to this instrument has caused two main problems clearly reflected by the intervening process. The first problem is the freezing of data which can cause long term disputes about intervening in the development process. The second problematic acknowledged by this inquiry is the overlay of inaccurate information making it hard to see development patterns emerging. As a reminder to both the municipality and NTPA, GIS is an instrument that is used widely in urban planning, but it is an expensive and time consuming endeavor to put together necessary data to manage and analyze the territory.

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Theoretical Issues on the Socialist City and Reflections on Albanian Urban Landscape

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Abstract

The architecture and urbanism of the totalitarian regimes, despite the ideological shades that have been produced from different systems, in their core share similar principles which mainly derive from the use of the urban area as an expression of political propaganda. The socialist city was considered by the politics of that time as the greatest social achievement of the Marxist proletariat. It was the same unique place where the functions of residence, production, sport and recreation were mixed together, by also searching a strained unity that was supposed to dialogue more in a territorial scale rather than in a human one. Although there can be found some similarities with the Western industrial city, - like the idea of deurbanisation, - principally the new socialist city was created to generate the supporting mass based on the bynom 'residence-production'. The decoration and the integration of the so-called 'national style' in the city architecture was considered more like a communication and a means of attraction for the new emergent citizenship, rather than as an integral part of architecture. Meanwhile, by that time in Western countries, the debate about the usage of styles and decorations had already been superated, while building tradition has been integrated and transformed in modern developments. Albania, as the last country to be part of the ex-socialist campus and also the last one that left it, basically manifests similar characteristics with it, however some sort of radicalization as a result of the historical and geopolitical causes can be noted..

Keywords

Architecture and politics; socialist city; soc-realism; total art; unificated space.

Landscape as a Tool to Implement Political Ideology

In every system, there exists a tendency of showing power upon the society through interventions in the urban landscape, but this was much more obvious in the contexts that were under the totalitarian regimes no matter these leftist or rightist. However, despite fundamental similarities due to shared radicalization of politics and the iron fist on the territory, different system approaches from East to West have developed in years different attitudes toward the build landscape. While totalitarianism in the West officially finished with WW2, to the East the totalitarian reforms lasted for another half of a century which caused a stronger impact on the territory and in the same time arranged to realise and test better the scale of social interaction with the urban scale in these both glorious and utopian political urbanism which somehow survived in a close relationship with each other.

The creation of the new socialist city represented the complete viewpoint of the totalitarian ideology in terms of architecture and organisation of everyday life. The ideology was materialized in the city planning by defining a distinct landscape of the socialist city. Unlike the 'liberal architecture', 'the totalitarian architecture' and especially 'the socialist one', under the motivation of the creation of a new society based on "the ideal man"¹ of Marx, - that was interpreted as "the new man", - tried to cut all the relations with the past and aimed to build a new society which would obey the rules of the new system. Groys² (2015) states that: «*Their problem was not how to create art that would be liked or disliked by elites or by the masses, but how to create masses that would appreciate good - namely avant-garde - art*»³.

The building of new cities and radical interventions in the existing ones aimed to create reflections of the political ideologies of that time. The negligence of the historical references, - especially the feudal-bourgeois culture, - was a strategy to undo the comparative context by the 'alienation' of the individuals towards the historical heritage, as thus resulting in a bigger exposure towards the new politics. Tafuri⁴ the idea of the Progressives (in the case of Russia) was the creation of an artificial urban society that would make possible the idea of the "new man" - a complete alienation towards the history and heritage, cultivated with the ideas and principles based on the

communist ideals. As a consequence of rushing towards industrialization and modernization, this phenomena occurred in all the totalitarian regimes of the XX-th century, despite their political spectrum. The city was transformed into an arena of the supportive mass, which in the ex-Eastern campus was called "the proletariat". Referring to Czepczynski⁵ (2018): «*Building a new town was often compared to creation of the universe*»⁶.

These ideas were massively inspired by the need of building a new world which would have been better for the people. This was also expressed by the social and political movements in Europe after the war that were widely affected by the propaganda of the Socialist Campus. While theoretically these purposes contained humanitarian elements, in reality some of the greatest speculations that were actually connected with the political power were committed in the name of the masses.

The history of architecture and urbanism has known some urban products that have directly been connected with the implication of ideology and extensions of political influence through the urban landscape. For example, the cities founded by Mussolini like Pozzo Littorio, Eur district in Rome, or the ones founded around the Mediterranean as a continuity of the colonial concept Mare-Nostrum⁷. Also, there is a broad literature about the monumental projects for the city of Berlin, - which resulted as a product of the collaboration between the dictator A. Hitler and his architect A. Speer, - that are viewed as implementations of the Nazi ideology, which was dominant during the period of the Reich III⁸ in urbanism forms. In parallel with this, but less documented (especially in the West), the socialist architecture was developed for more than 60 years in the countries of the ex-socialist Campus led by the ex-Soviet Union.

This classification, which was under the general umbrella of Modernism, was applied in a much wider territory than that of the Western architecture. Also, the continuous political revision affected the unification of the architectural language by showing a system focused on the general "image", with reduced and unproportional layers compared to the fragmental architectural development that was noticed in the Western countries.

¹The utopian Marxist concept that involves the creation of a new ideal human being replacing un-ideal citizens of that time. (Author's note)

²Boris Groys (1947) – an art critic, media theorist, philosopher, global distinguished Professor of Russian and Slavic Studies at New York University and Karlsruhe University of Arts and Design. (Author's note)

³Groys, B. (2011). *The total art of Stalinism – Avant-garde aesthetic dictatorship and beyond*. Verso. London. pg.123

⁴M. Tafuri (1935 –1994) – Italian architect, historian, theoretician, critic and academic, was described by one commentator as the world's most important architectural historian of the second half of the 20th century. (Author's note)

⁵Mariusz Czepczynski – professor, researcher in Cultural Anthropology, Visual Sociology, Urban/Rural Sociology, Urban heritage and transformations. (Author's note).

⁶Czepczynski, M. (2008). *Cultural landscapes of post-socialist cities – representation of power and needs*. Hampshire: Ashgate pg.78.

⁷Roman term that refers to the Mediterranean Sea; later used by Mussolini in function of the fascist propaganda. (Author's note)

⁸Reich III refers to the Germany during 1933-1945 when Adolf Hitler and his Nazi Party controlled the country through a dictatorship. (Author's note)

Socialist City vs. Capitalist City

The first socialist cities *Sotsgorod*⁹, were planned by the idealist architects with leftist views of the Western school, where among them was Ernst May, Hannes Meyer, Mart Stam, etc. These cities, which belonged to the “Modernism-Constructivism” culture of the beginning of the XX century, showed many similarities with the industrial Western cities, also as a consequence of the German movement *Neue Sachlichkeit*¹⁰ and the school of Frankfurt¹¹.

However, the main difference was the ideological one, as it basically propagated ‘the new socialist city’ as the answer to the idea that the capitalist system and the ideology developed during the XIX-th century were in contradiction with each other and that this could only be resolved by overthrowing the Bourgeois ideology and substituting it with the new Marxist ideology¹².

The socialist city also sought to create an antithesis of the famous Western model “garden-city”¹³ (Fig.1) which according to the model of Ebenezer Howard¹⁴ in 1898, predicted planned and self-sufficient communities, positioned in radial configurations, surrounded by green spaces and containing proportioned residential buildings, integrated with the industry and agriculture.

Industrial Western cities were seen from the communists as more fragmented urban. Politics, mainly based in the real estate that in most of the cases led to the expansion of the existing cities, but that never opposed the cultural heritage of the historical one. As Miljutin¹⁵ writes: «*The socialist urban landscape is going to be different from what we see today in our cities and villages. It will be neither this, nor that [...] At the moment that we remove the concentration of the industries, also the overpopulated city will stop existing and as a result of this there will be no reason for the existence of the idea of the ‘garden city’ nor of the ‘green city’*»¹⁶.

In fact, both of these models considered a decentralization and an avoidance of the concentration of the population around the historical city, principally representing a territorial reformation based on the “Marxist theory of collectivization”¹⁷. Despite this, the socialist city considered the industrial area as the core of the new city which would be built near it and in its function, thus treating the fabric as a continuous part of the urban area. This concept, which was born during the Constructivist culture, continued during the Stalinist regime when the idea of the “mono-industrial cities”¹⁸ was developed even more and where the type of the industry eventually identified and named the city. A typical characteristic of the “socialist city” was its organization in production units where the residential building and the industrial units were integrated both economically and culturally. According to Miljutin: «*Every new industry must be rationally connected to the residential area and the auxiliary implants of the production*»¹⁹.

‘The project for the new socialist city was the project for the city of the future and for the Marxist dream which was based on the gradual contiguity of the city and the village. This would be achieved by the mechanization of the agricultural industry, which meant the total urbanization of the territory.

The architects of that time often challenged themselves with almost sublime theses. The organization of the city in complex areas was seen from the Soviet architects as an

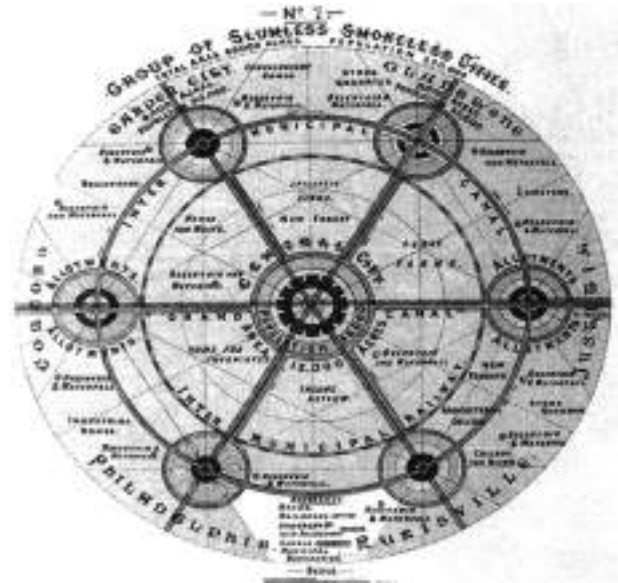


Figure 1. Concept of the “garden city” by Ebenezer Howard.

⁹ Term used for the utopian socialist cities. (Author's note)

¹⁰ English: ‘New Objectivity’, art movement in the German art during the 1920s as an objection towards expressionism. (Author's note)

¹¹ Original: Frankfurter Schule; a group of philosophers and scientists from various disciplines who were based on the theories of Hegel, Marx and Freud and whose center was the Institute for Social Research, which opened in Frankfurt am Main in 1924. (Author's note)

¹² A method of socioeconomic analysis that views class relations and social conflict using a materialist interpretation of historical development and takes a dialectical view of social transformation. (Author's note)

¹³ Original: Garden City movement. (Author's note)

¹⁴ Ebenezer Howard (1850-1928) - the English founder of the garden city movement, is known for his publication of the description of a utopian city in which people live harmoniously together with nature. (Author's note)

¹⁵ Nikolay Alexandrovich Milyutin (1889 –1942) – Russian trade union and Bolshevik activist, urban planner and an amateur architect, author of *Sotsgorod* concept. (Author's note)

¹⁶ Miljutin, N. A. (1971) *Socgorod – Il problema dell'edificazione delle citta socialiste*. Milano: Il Saggiatore pg. 62.

¹⁷ Marxist theory according to which the peasants were obligated to give up on their farms and join the collective ones, in the name of the campaign for the fast industrialization of the Soviet Union. (Author's note)

¹⁸ Original: monoton, cities whose economy was dominated by a single industry. (Author's note)

¹⁹ *Ivi*.

answer to the urban organization which was more integrative than the Illuminist structure consisting of “center-periphery” that was inherited from the Western cities. According to them, the Western cities had problems such as the usage of areas with respect to timetables, overloading circulation and hierarchical differentiation of population. According to the Marxist principle of equality and horizontality, but also the purpose of the minimization of the costs of the transportation infrastructure, “the socialist urbanism” was ideally against the creation of the peripheries, even though as it later resulted, the peripheries were created even within the city centers. Miljutin presented an alternative city model known as the “linear city”²⁰ (Fig.2) which was characterized by a development in a linear form that would prioritize the movement. “The linear city” consisted of a polycentric development which connected several production or residential poles in the continuity of the axis of movement.

This model at that time was seen as an antithesis of the traditional city, or as it is also known the “monocentric” city, which focused its values on a single center and where the organization of the buildings was controlled in a natural way, in accordance to the land value. So, in the “socialist city” the focus was more on the unity of the organization of the city, considering it a “total art work”, rather than architecture in particular. With the passing of time this

objective was understood to be impossible to be brought to life. The linearity of the city, which led to the concept of ‘deurbanization’ as a part of the global Marxist ideology, in its core consisted of a utopia which would have limited to just a few the reasons for the city existence.

About this thesis, Manfredo Tafuri states: *«It should in any case be noted that the antiurban Utopias have their historical continuity reaching back to the era of the Enlightenment - and here it should not be forgotten that the first anarchic theories of the necessity of a "dissolution of cities" appeared in the second half of the eighteenth century - and embrace the theory of*



Figure 2. The working class’ residential settlement proposed by OSA, the “linear Constructivist city”.

the Garden City, Soviet decentralization, the regionalism of the Regional Planning Association of America, and Frank Lloyd Wright's Broadacre City. [...] what is expressed is a strong nostalgia for Tonnie's "organic community," for a religious sect adverse to external organizations, for a communion of subjects who do not know the anguish of metropolitan alienation»²¹.

In Albania, inspired by the cultural Chinese Revolution, in the recent decades of the socialist regime, the postulate which stated “Converting the village similar to the city” existed. Actually, this objective indirectly demotivated the rural population on moving towards the city. While in the socialist city, especially in the main centers where the everyday life’s quality considerably differentiated from the other peripheral centers, problems in the distribution and differentiation of the population were noted. For this reason, the government defined strict residential rules and legal considerations, like the concept of “the yellow lines” which practically defined the confine of the urban area and that would separate the city from the village. As it is described by the Albanian architect Bego: *«Also for the villages there were made regulatory clarifications with the aim of positioning the construction within the yellow lines. There were also included the sites of the private buildings, the size of which was previously defined by the law»²².*

The ‘Building - Space’ Ratio in the Socialist City

Unlike the Western industrial cities, the government played a key role in the implementation of the projects for the socialist cities. According to Kopp²³: *«The government became the one and only responsible for everything that had to do with the residences, urbanism and the planning of the territory»²⁴.*

However, before this centralization, the architects were organized in separate studios and despite the similarities of their works resulting from the influential movements of the time, they produced an architecture with more liberal characteristics. After the grouping in state institutes of projection, the objectives of the socialist architects passed on a greater scale. It’s worth mentioning the case of the socialist architects and urban

²⁰ *Elongated urban formation, a city that would consist of a series of functionally specialized parallel sectors; method was firstly seen from the Spanish urban planner Soria Y Mata in 1882. (Author’s note)*

²¹ *Tafuri, M. (2007). Progetto e utopia. Roma: Editori Laterza. pg. 120.*

²² *Bego, M. (2009). Skeda arkitekture në kronikën e një jete të dallgëzuar 1965-2004. Tirana: DEA shpk pg.5.*

²³ *Anatole Kopp (1915-1990) – French architect and urban planner who became involved in the movement of Marxist town planners from the 1960s and 1970s, co-founded the review Espaces et Sociétés with Henri Lefebvre in 1970. (Author’s note)*

²⁴ *Kopp, A. (1987). Citta e rivoluzione. Architettura e urbanistica sovietiche degli anni venti. Milano: Feltrinelli Editore. pg.31.*

²⁵ *Alexei Elbrusowitsch Gutnow (1937-1986) – architect and soviet urban planner (Author’s note)*

²⁶ *New Unit of Settlement. (Author’s note)*

planners, led by Alexei Gutnov²⁵ known as “NUS ²⁶Group.”

In 1968 when growing leftist and anarchist influence in Italy, they were invited to the Triennial of Milan to present their plans for an ideal communist city. (Fig.3, Fig.4) According to the critics, they showed characteristics and notions that were innovative even to the Western planning of that time. As Gutnov explained for this project: «*The new unit of settlement (NUS) may be compared to a living organism, having both a brain and a heart. Functional connections can be fully realized. Space in this new kind of city reflects the harmony and rationality of the social and economic structure*»²⁷.

In some cases, the centralized system could tangentially give priorities and a higher efficiency in the territory intrusion, even more than the liberal urban planning which obeyed the trade rules. Although, the reality proved that through the unlimited power of the leadership of that time, the city was used as a promoter of the propaganda of the regime. Also, the popular city planning politics in fact intended to create the supportive mass. Since the very beginning, the socialist city showed the organization characteristics with respect to the productive character, thus placing the binomial “collective-production” in the first place. According to Tafuri: «*If architecture is now synonymous with the organization of production, it is also true that, beyond production itself, distribution and consumption are the determining factors of the cycle*»²⁸.

According to him: «*The fact is that the industrial object does not presuppose any single given location in the space of the city. Serial production here basically implies a radical overcoming of any spatial hierarchy. The technological universe is impervious to the ‘here’ and the ‘there’ . Rather, the natural place for its operations is the entire human environment - a pure topological field, as Cubism, Futurism, and Elementarism well understood. Thus in the reorganization of the city it is the entire three-dimensional space that must become available*»²⁹.

So, the Soviet industrial complex may be considered as an architectonic work because initially it was conceived as a unity organization, even though it had the character of a rational transcription of the industrial processes that occurred within it. Their planners tried to connect the complexity of the city with analytically defined functions which could be scientifically manipulated. “Soviet industrial cities” were important elements of the urban landscape. They were characterized by a strict organization axis, objects with considerate heights and almost same general volumes, thus promoting a general horizontal image, with a height of 4-5 to 7 floors and with the in between spaces equal or bigger than the sum of their heights. Even though there is seen some kind of generosity with respect to the public spaces in the urban territory, as a consequence of the elimination of the private propriety, the public territory effectively resulted in a “no man’s land.” The spaces inside the residential units were wide and impersonal, mainly built within the boundaries of the

void.

Usually the lack of the sufficient finances for finishings and urban accessories caused that this theoretically appreci-



Figure 3. NUS Group, model of the urban center along the canal, Triennial of Milan 1968. © 2008–2020 Graham Foundation, NER Group Archives



Figure 4. NUS Group, residential structure for the city of the future, Triennial of Milan 1968. © 2008–2020 Graham Foundation, NER Group Archives

ated method practically ended up generating a poor and characterless urban space.

Linguistic unification in the ‘soc-realism’ style

With the introduction of the “socialist realism” as the official style of the Soviet Union, practically the application of any oth-

²⁷ Gutnov, A., Baburov, A., Djumenton, G., Kharitonova, S., Lezava, I., & Sadovskij, S. (1968). *The ideal communist city*. New York: George Braziller. pg.154.

²⁸ Tafuri, M. (2007). *Progetto e utopia*. Roma: Editori Laterza pg. 115.

²⁹ Ivi.

er alternative cultural movement was stopped. In 1933, during the competition for the Soviet Palace (Fig.5), the refusal of all the other avant-garde styles, like the Russian Constructivism, Rationalist Modernism, was noticed.

The main purpose of this was the confrontation with the taste of the mass through the monumental decoration and pomposity. Despite this, the differences were mainly noted in the form, because the structure of the urban planning and construction was actually based on the method of 'socialist realism'. The Stalinist style of architecture was presented as a total order which had to affect all the building types by creating a unity between the residential and production area. The fabric was conceptually considered as an extension of the



Figure 5. Palace of the Soviets by Boris Iofan © Boris Iofan; Collection of the Tchoban Foundation

individual residence and, regarding their architectural elements, they even looked like one another. This was clearly expressed in the organization of the “total architecture of the new cities” regardless of the presence of the special buildings which were part of the existing city.

According to Groys: «*The architecture of the Stalin era is generally associated with an emphasis on decoration and facade. But the architectural critics of that era led an indefatigable battle against “facade-ism,” that is, against the fascination with decoration in architecture, arguing instead for the functionality and “livability” of buildings that were to correspond to human scale and human needs. This did not mean, however, that buildings were to look constructivist and cold, purely functionalistic and inhuman. Indeed, the idea of serving the people that was demanded of every Soviet architect also implied emotional connection: the socialist building was to look monumental but at the same time seem intimate, human, cozy. A few analysts of Stalinist culture have concluded that the demands critics made on architects were too paradoxical to*

be fulfilled. [...] Supposedly, these demands meant nothing less than the total subjugation of the architects to the tastes of the Party leadership»⁰.

One of the most interesting topics to be discussed in the studies for the 'architecture of the soc-realism'³¹ is the concept of what Rossi calls³² “building” or as it was found in the socialist architecture of this period as the concept of the ‘unified space’ or the city as an entity where architecture is part of it and at the same time a replicant of the whole idea. According to Rossi: “Architecture came into being along with the first traces of the city; it is deeply rooted in the formation of civilization and is a permanent, universal, and necessary artifact”³³. On the other hand, Czepczynski, during the first phase of the development of the stalinist style, described that as art: “The socialist city, especially in its initial, Stalinist form, was to become a Gesamtkunstwerk³⁴: a total work of art, based on a ‘harmonious’ interaction between urban composition, architecture and other arts, or, what we can call now, holistic aspect of cultural landscape (Groys 1988). [...] The search for an ‘assimilable’ past-prescribed by socialist realism as the only way to make the city legible for the ‘masses’ - gave rise to a wide range of sometimes surprising architectural inventions, like incorporating pseudo-baroque or renaissance décor. The new socialist cityscapes were transformed by the vertical buildings, as modern counterparts of the towers and spires of ancient churches and castles (Cohen 1995)”³⁵. So, in the impossibility of generating a modernist culture connected with the tradition referring to a regional context, urban planning turns to be an intentional ‘alienation’ or impersonification with respect only to style.

According to Miljutin: «The cultural revolution set a precise need: the creation of an analytic space which was not only a simple reflection of the surrounding landscape, nor the background for the ‘agitation of the masses’, but the space that re-

³⁰ Boris Groys 'The art of Totality' in Dobrenko, E. & Naiman, E. (2003). *The landscape of Stalinism – the art of ideology of soviet space*. Washington: Washington University Press pg.111.

³¹ Original: “Socialist realism”; a style of idealized realistic art that was developed in the Soviet Union and was the official style in that country between 1932 and 1988, as well as in other socialist countries after World War II, characterized by the glorification of the values of the communist system, like the emancipation of the proletariat, industrialization etc. (Author's note)

³² Aldo Rossi (1931 – 1997) - Italian architect and designer who achieved international recognition in: architectural theory, drawing and design and also product design; one of the leading exponents of the postmodern movement. (Author's note)

³³ Rossi, A. (1982). *The architecture of the city*. New York: The MIT Press. pg. 21.

³⁴ In english: a total art work; ideal art work; a synthesis of all types of art; refers to a artwork that uses many or all forms of art. (Author's note)

³⁵ Czepczynski, M. (2008). *Cultural landscapes of post-socialist cities*

³⁶ Miljutin, N. A. (1971). *Socgorod - Il problema dell'edificazione delle citta socialiste*. Milano: Il Saggiatore pg.16.

sulted from a set of elements with which there could be established an everyday relationship»³⁶.

Meanwhile Tafuri states: «Architecture might make the effort to maintain its completeness and preserve itself from total destruction, but such an effort is nullified by the assemblage of architectural pieces in the city. It is in the city that these fragments are pitilessly absorbed and deprived of any autonomy»³⁷

The unification of the urban landscape was the primary purpose of the architecture of 'soc-realism'. The recently created heterogeneous community needed a very precise cultural guide to get adopted in the new urban space. In these terms the Stalinist order and decoration of space, served as a cold unifying filter for the emergent society, but we have also to admit that more than a filter between society and urban landscape, resulted to be a tool for the transmission of political propaganda. In these conditions it remained unlive and sometimes unwanted.

The attempt to Modernisation in the Albanian Context

The Soviet influence in the city planning according to the 'Stalinist style' firstly came to Tirana through the experience of the Albanian students who studied in Moscow. An example of this was the proposal for the new urban plan of Tirana (Fig.6) by the fellow architect Gani Strazimiri, recently graduated in Moscow. With the force of his drawings, Strazimiri challenged the Italian city planning by incorporating the concept of urban reorganization inspired to the reconstruction plan of Moscow appeared in 1935, with monumental axis, the sheer size, regular geometry and the "super-blocks"³⁸ as a basic compositional tool. The architect refused the urban planning solutions of the Italians (who by the same analytical tools, can be considered radical as well), as they couldn't be acceptable according to the Socialist order. Strazimiri in his planification, closed the access towards the city center from the two historical streets, - "Dibra" street and "Kavaja" street, - and made them converge in a perimetral circulation ring that encloses the hygge central district. He also created a green corridor between the city center and the rest of the city, which would connect the center of the blocks by creating a series of parks with different geometry and dimensions. His concept would entirely separate the monumental center with the rest of the city to define a net separation between public space which had to become political space and the leaving neighborhoods. So the new socialist vision of space, looked more like the utopian drawings of Brasini³⁹, than the modern vision of Bosio's⁴⁰ who also dealt merely in the same way with the city center. However, the crucial difference between the two proposals, was that while Brasini proposed his monumental axis in an undeveloped area of the city as a tool to connect the new with the old, Strazimiri, influenced by the Soviet method, suggested the total substitution of the existing city center by a completely new urban reality, similar to the cities of the "soc-

realism" planned 'ex-novo'⁴¹, in the Soviet Republics. In this plan, the optimization of the new order to completely transform the old reality to a new urban concept that followed precisely the standard rules of the socialist realism was pretty clear. For the realization of this, it was hoped for a Soviet financial help, which was actually not fulfilled. As a consequence the urban interventions of that period (as also occurred during Fascism) were reduced in some distinct areas, which at that time couldn't create the homogeneous conglomerate that characterized the other cities of the "Stalinist soc-realism". However, the whole



Figure 6. Axonometric urban design for the center of Tirana of Gani Strazimiri's proposal, where the replacement of the Bank and Municipality buildings is noticed.

scene was completed in the next years of the totalitarian system by following similar urban principles, thus making Tirana have today's image of a former socialist city.

At this point, we recall the efforts to represent in the Albanian context the native modern architecture with a regional accent and with a special caution towards the continuity with tradition. This started directly after the Announcement of the Independence in 1912, thanks to the background and the Western influence of some remarkable personalities of that time. Shkodra, as a city with a tendency and admiration towards the Western culture, cultivated an intellectual elite which left its footprints in architecture and urbanism.

The process of modernisation and urban requalification of the city started during the First World War under the influence of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, when the first commercial and residential streets inside the separate nucleus from the binomial "Bazaar-Residence" of the Ottoman city were noticed. These premises that showed the enlargement and the modernization of the city, created the background for important urban developments were together with austrian architects were involved also some albanian artists and architects like Kolë Idromeno⁴².

He was educated as a painter in Venice in 1875 and in Shkodër near the Franciscans priests, especially by the Italian architect and photographer Pjetër Marubi. He accomplished some important works, mainly in the pre modernist 'Eclectic style of the Italian '900s'⁴³. According to M. Prenushi: «As an architect and autodidact urban planner, he overcame the boundary of the residence as a creation. He aimed for the urban planning of the ensembles with architectural and urban value for the city»⁴⁴. A product of this period where Idromeno was involved is *Rruga e madhe* ("The great street"), which is today named



Figure 7. "Kafja e Madhe" (The Great Coffeehouse), Kolë Idromeno.

after him. In this famous street for the city of Shkoder, it can be noticed some kind of fusion with Mediterranean architecture of Venetian baroque, bringing in a very mild and humble human dimension the fusion between Ottoman and Venetian architecture.

In the direction of modernizing tradition, important efforts were also done by other architects, especially during the period of the Monarchy of King Zog I, like: Qemal Butka, Skënder Luarasi, Anton Lufi, etc. But these individual initiatives were immediately stopped by the settlement of communism which closed the architecture in a collective regime. In the following years gradually every expression and representation was eliminated and only one context, the ideological one, was allowed.

Despite a continuous political campaign regarding the usage of the so-called "national style", the efforts for that were almost blank because the overcome of the related socialist tradition was never possible, especially in the conditions of a cultural isolation that prevailed during the whole socialist period. Among a few documents to which it can be referred to, while the critical thought of the architects was completely suppressed, it can be mentioned the book of Mosko & Sukaj⁴⁵, which was written in the last years of the regime and in a vocabulary compatible with the political ideology. There is noted their interpretation of the directives and the political critics as an obligation for the architects who had to be in a continuous tentative for the creation of a "national style" which had to coincide with the traditional

characteristics of the Albanian state. In fact the realization of this crucial objective resulted in utopian and almost impossible, considering the actual cultural conditions and the necessary predisposes for the creation of an architectural identity. In the first years of the socialist state, almost all the great projects for the construction of the new cities in Albania were imported, together with the fundings from the Soviet Union and so they rigorously referred to the official style. In these projects, also as in the ones of the native architects of this period, the integration of the national elements in the architecture was limited only in the decorative part of the architecture, as a superficial way, only sufficient to be easily noted from the outside and not as a deep reconception of it. Normally, this could not have been done in the condition of the lacking of the professional debates or the influence of the important movements of that time.

It existed as a famous postulate which served as a premise for the "Stalinist architecture" and which had to be accepted without any polemic. It stated the idea that the new architecture had to be: "Socialist in its content and national in form." This also expresses the status of the Soviet architects in 1936, where it was said that: "In the field of architecture, the socialist realism means the inner union of the ideological expression with truth of the artistic one..."⁴⁶. As Molnar⁴⁷ explains in her book, practically that meant the revitalization of monumentalism and the formal repertory of the historic architecture (specifically by drawing over the national traditions) completed with topics that glorified the everyday life of the laborers and peasants.⁴⁸

This philosophy was also applied, together with its specifications in the Albanian socialist reality. In one of his last speeches, Enver Hoxha recommended: «The Party has continuously

³⁷ Tafuri, M. (2007). *Progetto e utopia*. Roma: Editori Laterza pg. 17.

³⁸ Area of urban land bounded by arterial roads in the size of multiple typically-sized city blocks; where the local road network is designed to serve local needs only. (Author's note)

³⁹ Armando Brasini (1879–1965) – Italian architect of the Italian '900s, famous for his eclectic and visionary style. He was appointed by King Zog I to design the new kings palace and government buildings of the new monarchy (Author's note)

⁴⁰ Gherardo Bosio (1903–1941) – Italian architect, member of Tuscan Group, served as chief architect in Tirana Municipality during Fascist Invasion of Albania (Author's note)

⁴¹ From latin: completely new, completely from the beginning. (Author's note)

⁴² Kolë Idromeno (1860 - 1939)- painter, sculptor, architect, photographer, cinematographer, composer and engineer during the Albanian Renaissance in the XIX-th century, widely regarded as a precursor of both realism and landscape art in Albania. (Author's note)

⁴³ Original: 'Novecento Italiano'; an Italian artistic movement founded in Milan in 1922 to create an art based on the rhetoric of the Fascism of Mussolini. (Author's note)

⁴⁴ Prenushi, M. (1984). *Kolë Idromeno - jeta dhe vepra. Shtëpia Botuese "8 Nëntori"*. pg. 67.

⁴⁵ Mosko, S. & Sukaj, I. (1986). *Ndërtesa për veprimtari shoqërore – kulturore (Buildings for social - cultural activities)*. Tirana: Mihal Duri.

ordered that us not only should be supported in the local tradition, but should also cultivate it, because the tradition for us is also the rich tradition of the socialist realism [...] In all the fields - literature, architecture we need to create works that are beloved, understandable and felt by the people»⁴⁹.

According to this, the dictator intended that the local Albanian tradition should have been eliminated from the official architectural style and there should have existed only the “tradition of the socialist realism” and this was obvious only in the last years of the socialist regime in Albania.

After 1961 and the separation from the Pact with the Soviet Union, those socialist politics were refused by being considered imperialist. The communication with the Eastern architecture of that time took place indirectly, like it happened during the '70s with the import of the para fabricates technology from China, while in the other countries of the East, the para fabricated technology “Camus” developed in the '50s in France had already been exhausted by that time.



Figure 8. Eled Fagu, photo from the plaza of the National Museum of History, Tirana (2019)

Conclusions

The socialist city is the most important archive of the principles and the views of totalitarian politics in the fields of architecture and urbanism, due also to the longer lasting period coverage. Within its self-proclaimed realization, the city knew how to be selective in its content while giving priority to the reflection of the political ideology and propaganda. The fiercest opponent of the socialist city was the historical one. The socialist city continuously referred to the historical one, sometimes this was done by objecting it, like in the case of the expression of its priority towards the industry and the collective production instead of the trade economy and private property; while on the other hand, he tried to imitate its components also as visual aspect and often decoration. While the historical city gradually started creating a symbiosis with the village by being complementary of it, the socialist city through the industrialization tried to “turn the village similar to the city.” From this point of view, the theories of the deurbanization found place as they aimed

for the urbanisation of the territory. The large scale of the interventions in the territory became the main evident characteristic of the urban socialist landscape. The landscape of the socialist city gets its meaning when it is valued in a large scale, while remaining wanting in the aspect of interpretation in a smaller scale and in the direct contact with the resident. With the passing of time, the objective for the total urbanization proved to be unrealizable, just like the utopian Marxist concept of deurbanization which reduced in just a few reasons the existence of the whole city.

In the conditions of the inability for the generation of a culture connected to the tradition, which was referred and was orientated towards the local culture, architecture and context, the process of the planification went through the ‘alienation’ and the intentional style impersonalization. Meanwhile, the decoration served as a simple unifying element for the society and as a means for the transmission of the propaganda of the regime. In Albania, a modern tradition represented by some well-known architects of that time already existed by the time of the lining by the side of the Eastern bloc., but it was suppressed by the canons of the official style. The project of that time sought to transform the urban area by reformatting it with respect to the official stylistic rules, by neglecting the history and considering the present as the only history that’s ever existed. So, the urban transformations which took place during the dictatorship were imponent and finally made Tirana have today’s face of an ex-socialist city. To the other side, the problematics of the past can be the opportunity of a new future. The controversy of totalitarian architecture has amplified curiosity of research study, often using the totalitarian urbanism as an antithesis to the today’s chaotic development of transitional cities but not only. It is very important in this case to understand the limits of the theory and the beginning of practice. As the above analyses tries to make clear, there is a very hygge gap between theory of reforms and the every days challenges in the life of a city, challenges that if not confronted with the necessary knowledge and means, urbanism and development can become a question of propaganda.

Today, the Albanian city landscape remains indifferent to this theoretical debate, and the proposed changes to their urban and architectural realm, often takes place without reflecting the lay-

⁴⁶ Kopp, A. (1987). *Citta e rivoluzione. Architettura e urbanistica sovietiche degli anni venti*. Milano: Feltrinelli Editore. pg. 234.

⁴⁷ Virag Molnar – Ph.D. in Sociology from Princeton University; her research explores the intersections of culture, politics, social change and knowledge production with special focus on urban culture and transformations of the built environment. (Author’s note)

⁴⁸ Molnar, V. (2013) *Building the state: architecture, politics and state formation in post-war central Europe*. New York: Routledge.

⁴⁹ Mosko, S. & Sukaj, I. (1986). *Ndërtesa për veprimtari shoqërore – kulturore*. Tirana: Mihal Duri. pg. 3.

ers and richness carried over by past conflicts. The demand for modernization, the pressure of capital development in an increasingly global and competitive world, endangers the built context and individuality of Albanian cities if we do not develop a rich and in-depth academic debate in this regard.

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Design and Public Space

The University Campus' Open Spaces Between Rituality and Non-Normativity

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Abstract

The university campuses, in relationship with the sustainable development goals and with the contemporary criteria of urban quality in the public spaces, are nowadays configured as real grounds of experimentation for the design activities and for the strategies of urban regeneration: inclusion, security, sustainable growth and quality of services pass through the radical reinterpretation of the public spaces' potentialities with reference to the deep changes in the access system to services and information for extremely different levels of users, more and more open source and based on sharing platforms. In this mark, and in a condition in which the necessity to define non-normative strategies for the social use of the spaces becomes stronger and stronger, the question arise as to how could the industrial design discipline and the new digital technologies give a contribution to enrich and strengthen these new forms of "social connection" between people and between users and places. The article aims to investigate the strategies through which new information and communication devices can improve the physical and social quality of the public spaces in the university campuses. Starting from the analysis of the relationship between people, space and new technologies, making reference to some specific study cases, the paper presents some design experimentations which constitute examples applicable also in the urban context, as far as the campus' public spaces are seen as a common ground for the investigation of a new idea of city, more open, collaborative, accessible and based on a non-normative citizens' participation.

Keywords

Environmental design; university campus; public space; interactive device; non-normativity.

Introduction

The relationship between uncertainty and non-normativity has a specific interpretative approach in the field of design and, specifically, in its relationship with the public space of the university campuses. The new paradigms and the new rituals in the students' everyday life as well as the new sensibility towards the environmental sustainability requirements, introduce a new system of aesthetical and ethical references which radically changes the relationships between people and open spaces in the contexts of the university campus. The coincidence of the concept of sustainability with those of resilience and adaptability, now essential elements of the whole system of urban public spaces, requires a reflection on the relationship between what is "permanent" and what is "temporary" in the definition of the cultural identity of the contemporary social context which are the university campuses. Moreover, the line that connects the permanent and the temporary intersects another important dichotomy: the relationship between reality and virtuality, that means the dialogue between the virtual dimension of things and the physical conditions of the places. Otherwise, the important requirements of inclusion, participation, quality of services, security, etc. are strictly depending on the potentialities of the public space: the deep changes in the systems of access data, information and services by an increasingly more diversified public (more and more open source) and based on sharing platforms, makes now the traditional relationship between "institution" and students a sort of condition of "closed normativity". In this mark, the role of design and new technologies applied to it can give us a chance to reinterpret this relationship enhancing the public space of the university campuses with the aim of defining new forms of "social connections" between the different categories of users.

Non-normative relationships between people and public spaces

The contemporary public spaces are nowadays affected by a process of continuous transformation due to a radical and constant change in their uses and functions which are getting more and more unconventional, hybrid, "virtual" and made of new social meanings: this leads to a deep transformation in the social and cultural relationships and to new aesthetic and geographic configurations.

In relationship with people intended as "users", a first characteristic that we can trace, paraphrasing the words of Tomás Maldonado, is that these spaces are places where the persons involved in any kind of action pretend to intervene constantly and actively and not any more in a condition of "probation", as usually happens in a traditional public space in which the levels of freedom are limited (Maldonado, 1992). Moreover, the transformation processes themselves are changing, following the radical modification of the social rituals and the free move-

ment of information: weakening the traditional paradigms, from linear and complex they become simultaneous and variable, from "formal" they become "informal".

In this mark, the open spaces of the campuses become interactive and relational environments in which the ways of use by the users define a strategic and flexible "new order" based on a new logic that breaks the traditional normativity and goes to a reactive, resilient, open and permeable nature (Gausa, 2015).

Big squares, large green areas and crowded meeting points but also silent or hidden spaces, secret gardens, green passages and routes that lead nowhere, according to their environmental, physical, morphological and semantic values, the open spaces of the campuses may be included in different categories: from central to marginal spaces, from natural to built areas, from interstitial to crossing ambits, they always have the capacity to be "connective tissues" for the social community (Table 1).

Nature of public spaces	
	Outdoor spaces Covered areas Spaces in between Voids Empty spaces Interstitial spaces Enclosed spaces Fluid spaces Hybrid spaces
Categories of public spaces	
Interfaces	Squares Outdoor rooms Platforms Correns Green areas
	Quilons
Lines	Passages Corridors Bridges Galleries Ramps Chimbs Discents Staircases
Points	Entrances Accesses Divergents Thresholds

Table 1. Nature and categories of the campus' public spaces

Furthermore, if we consider the meaning that the different categories of users may attribute to these spaces and the way they use them, we can distinguish another system of categories, in which there are overused and underused places, study, free work and everyday areas, gathering spaces, spaces for thoughts and reflections, etc., in which everyone can express his sociality in a dimension that is both individual and collective (Table 2). Under this point of view, the relationship between people and public spaces is socially based on the concept of "community", that is not a group but a "system" of people sharing common social, ethical values, interests, practices and habits whose rituality is made of rules, norms and customs which are not "imposed" or "institutional" but produced by conscious choices of rational individuals (Pils and Trocchianesi, 2017).

Categories of users	
Permanent users	Students Professors Workers
Temporary users	Student's relatives and friends Visitors

Table 2. Categories of users

The role of technology: from tool to system of connective possibilities

The new technologies become nowadays really important not any more in terms of “tools” but in terms of “possibilities”: this means that the production of new services and technological devices (hardware and software, i.e. Arduino, open source applications, etc.) is not based on pre-determined targets (use for) but on the will to ensure that people can take advantage of them in a free, open and participative manner. This condition transforms the technological devices into “performative” products aimed at creating new “rituals”, new forms of social relationships: the rituality is a practice made of rules organized in a systematic order but at the same time it’s a creative process in which the participant have an active role also in the possibility of changing the rules themselves.

In this context, the design process can act on the products’ affordances, definable as the qualities of the objects that allow people to perform actions with them in a specific cultural context (Gibson, 1979).

The inclusion of technological devices (using low, medium or high technology according to the specific requirements) and the definition of new ethical design strategies can help creating new systems of training, research and access to services, enhancing at the same time the creation of innovative occasions of physical and social “connectivity” between the different categories of (stable or occasional) users and the public spaces, so to reach the goals of better conditions of functional organization, social inclusion, economic development and environmental sustainability.

Also in this case, this goal can be reached working on the dialectics between “real” (physical) and “virtual” (digital) and between “small” (the design scale) and “big” (the space scale): in the latter dichotomy, we have on one hand the “recycle” of many underused areas within the campus and on the other hand the “repetition” of small objects intended, in their entirety, as a multiple insertion of repeatable elements defining a system, temporary or permanent, ephemeral or durable, but always made of brief forays of shared, connected, interactive, smart, multifunctional objects.

Design and environment: a non-normative approach

The enhancement of the public space system passes through the ability to listen to places and goes directly to a design approach that is systemic and ethical for the environment and for the cultural context. Correct design strategies are asked to stimulate participatory processes useful for the whole community by acting directly on spaces and products and translating identity elements and signs of memory of the common social history into new forms and configurations. Hence, each design action needs to start from the analysis of the cultural behaviors, social needs and individual requirements and, addressing the complexity with a never-ending interdisciplinary dialogue, has to give answers to the contemporary critical issues and emergencies through the definition of objects, systems or services capable of activating new innovative ritual forms always following the continuous social, cultural and economic transformations: a “think different” philosophy in which design can play a hinge role between fields of knowledge that could reconcile the different disciplinary sphere, in the last decades too separated one from each other by a condition of over-specialization, in order to allow new innovative scenarios and to manage the local complexities considering the plurality of factors and driving their integration and interdisciplinarity (Table 3). In this mark, we can outline a new design paradigm

Design strategies	
	New visions and innovative scenarios New kinds of spaces New types of objects and products New meaning for the objects New uses and functions New social behaviors

Table 3. Design strategies

which doesn’t act any more directly on the shape of things but on the conceptual framework of the products, so to leave users free to “build” their own configuration in terms of connection with the social and physical context. Starting from the main basic requirements of an extended system of users, such as education, communication, accessibility, use of tools, services, infrastructures and open spaces, sharing of information, etc., we can have two different “directions” of design strategies: the first one is a top-down approach, in which, sharing a common ground of visions and horizons, the design of objects becomes less figurative and more con-figurative, less formal, static and esthetic and more multi-level, multi-relational and ethic, while the new technological systems and the innovative targeted measures are asked to promote and encourage responsible behavior by the users. The second one is “from below”, an approach that let the users free to modify and use the space and at the same time permits an innovative use of the existing resources and expresses in real-time new demands for services

that can more easily be intercepted.

The union of these two directions produces a product-process with characteristics of interaction, variation, dynamicity, non-normativity, sensible towards the surroundings, inter-connected with other objects and reproducible only with the active free participation of users: a holistic and dynamic development made of at least four aspects related one to each other: human factor (social sustainability), engineering (technical feasibility), aesthetics (form giving) and marketing (economical affordability).

Finally, the relationship between final product and environment will follow the intrinsic temporalities, rhythms and rituals of the environment, so to make the new product a medium through which people can interact with the environment without giving up their always changing basic needs: a “campus making” behavior through human centered design activities as a response to the homologation of the traditional institutional rules and as a contemporary image of new collective cultural, social and spatial expressions, a “storytelling” of the community’s aesthetic and ethical codes, developed both in the physical

Characteristics of products for the public space	
Desire	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mobility Communication Informal processing Reactivity towards environment Forming (not formal) Smart objects Interaction Informative Multi-level
Production	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Low maintenance Low price Made of recycled materials and/or components Long-lasting materials and/or components Diversity Projectivity which induce, lead and modify it
Use	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mobility Multiplicity (multiple actions, methods, forms, exchanges) Dynamicity Systemic Interconnection (object-environment, object-object, object-user) Interchange (user-citizen, city-territory, culture-habitat) Flexibility

Table 4. Characteristics of products for public spaces

(public spaces) and in the virtual dimension (social networks), able to define new non-normative relationships (Table 4). Among the many recent design experiences in the international context, there are some interesting examples that may constitute key points of a possible trajectory in the definition of this “non-normative” approach which can be adopted for the university campuses’ open public spaces. As a first study case, the “Stair Squares” temporary installation at the Brooklyn’s Borough Hall in NY by Mark Reigelman (2007) is an interactive public installation which takes advantage of the morphological characteristics of the stairs, designing a repeatable object which

creates a place to sit that can be used also as a table for two: a simple, site-specific interactive installation able to enhance the social non-normative dimension of the place, reducing at the same time its austere monumental and institutional image. Designed for more ordinary kinds of urban contexts, the second example is the “Totem AJC” by Roldán + Berengué Arquitectos (2010), produced by URBADIS – Microarquitectura, a system of elements for public spaces that may take different forms, starting from a common structural origin constituted by a metallic box combined with another material such as wood, stone, HPL, etc.: according to the users’ desires, the result can be a signage totem, a bench, a liter bin, a lamp, a jardinière or a pillar.

The third project is the “Little free library” by Stereotank, installed at St. Patrick Old Cathedral School in Nolita (NY) in 2013, a small urban project made of an upside down plastic tank on a wooden frame which creates an inhabitable free library where people can take, borrow and/or exchange books, having a continuous visual connection with the exterior space, watching the surrounding park through some “selective” perforations around the tank. A similar design intervention, this time without any specific function, is the “Heads” by Rob Sweere, installed at the Hoek van Holland beach in 2014: in this case we have a series of four elements which people can actually go into and admire the landscape, sit or just lie in the sculpture, or put the heads through the opening.

Especially significant are the prototypes produced by P5 Studio, an assembly of furnishing business unit based in Singapore, in collaboration with the Danish furniture label Montana, within the “Freeplay Vol. 1 project” in 2019; between them, two particularly interesting examples are the “Interlock” by Provolk, a multidirectional furniture piece that is a side table or a drawer module which can be installed anywhere and easily transportable, and the Totem designed by WINK, which can be used as an organizer, a stand-up cabinet or a reading shelf.

In 2013 the IBM brand has achieved an advertising campaign called “People for smart cities”, conceived to give a value to the relationship between people’s everyday life and public space, perfectly combining product design and marketing presentation: the idea foresees a series of billboards installed along the walls or on the steps, offering passerby to sit (long benches) or shelter (protective coverings from the rain).

Last but not least, the “Dead Drops” project by Aram Bartholl is an anonymous peer to peer file-sharing network installed in the public spaces of New York City in 2010. The concept is to inject a USB drive (each dead drop contains a readme.txt file explaining the project) into a wall which is accessible to anybody: people can drop or find files plugging their own pc or laptop, sharing any kind of file and data. What these examples have in common is a low level of used technology, a free possibility not only to be used but also to be installed and modified, an ontological condition not based on their physical

aspects but on their relationship with the space and with the social context: the ambitions are different but all of them are united by a common ground which consists of an unconventional non-normative design approach able to generate new and always changing social relationships.

Interactive information devices: a non-normative design experimentation for the University Campus

A design experimentation, specifically held for the University Campus of Bari, is a theoretical and practical research on the new product development strategies applied in a specific context: a methodological and critical investigation on the potentialities of design as a factor of physical and social connector between users and environment. The working methodology follows the concept of “open design”, an approach based on the public sharing of information, on the free and open source use of hardware and software and, ultimately, on a design co-creation in which users become key actors. At the same time, the design methodology is also “social”, due to its attention in enhancing the designer’s role and responsibility, the priority of marginalized user groups and the relationship between interaction, communication and environment: a social use of objects and processes with the elimination of deep impacts on people’s ordinary life, maintaining a continuity with the social memory. Another particularly important aspect that frames the design experimentation into a non-normative dimension is the idea of innovation: we are dealing with a specific interpretation of “innovation” which is not completely planned and rationally organized, nor totally structured, but, starting from the bottom and coming from the awareness of the continuous and constant change in the users’ needs and requirements, is based on an implicit drive towards the elimination of uncertainty by means of opportunity, flexibility, simplicity, empathy. Therefore, not a design driven but a “curiosity driven” innovation as a result of systemic processes in which technological, social, economic and cultural aspects act simultaneously influencing each other, capable of transforming the scarcity (lack of resources and economic restrictions), the diversity (co-existence of different kinds of users with their experiences, values and expectations) and the velocity (the social and physical lifecycles are shorter and shorter) into opportunities and also capable of giving new senses and new meanings to the university campuses’ public

spaces and, therefore, to users’ social everyday life (Table 5). The first example is a “linear crossing space”, a structure made of linear elements forming a system of modular metal boxes supporting a pre-finished PVC outer casing with five possible mounting configurations; the boxes are made up of standard components joined together by a single type of structural node with the possibility to be positioned side by side so to obtain a sort of “covered passage” through which people can have access to information, interact and share documents. The concept is to link together the passing of information with the passing of people, totally changing the static idea of places appointed to provide information and, at the same time, naturally following the rituals and the movement of people. The boxes, placed in waypoints or crossing points of the campus area, are equipped with an interactive system made of a projector, an AUX port, a microphone recorder and a USB port: these devices make possible the free interaction between people and environment and the sharing of information between people and the academic institution and/or with the student associations

The second project is a way finding device designed to be installed in the campus and faculties main accesses: it’s an open stainless steel structure on which some small freely rotatable plywood cubes are mounted using a simple nylon thread; on the cubes there are QR codes, I-Beacons, Braille systems containing information (in form of maps, apps, routes, texts, vocal assistance, etc.) about the locations of departments, offices, laboratories as well as cafeterias, shops, services, etc., directly placed autonomously by the students. The concept is based on an open source low tech platform configurable by the users and containing any kind of information regarding official and institutional as well as secondary functions that people need or want to reach within the campus area: a system which gives users the opportunity to connect, interact and share any kind of document or information (Figure 1).

A third experimentation is an “interactive portal” which provides a double interpretation of the idea of “gate”, both under a real and a virtual point of view: on one hand, there’s the real access to specific places of the campus having environmental qualities or significances and, on the other hand, the virtual access (through USB ports) to a platform (controlled by an app) where students can be connected and share documents and/or information. The structure is made of two elements (one linear and one L-shaped) made of, respectively, stainless steel and larch wood in which is inserted a low tech system consisting of a USB port, a router cloud, a small solar panel and a projector, this useful to visualize the contents of the pen drives on the floor

The fourth and final example is a multifunctional totem made of different blocks separated by function, freely accessible by people, which gives new useful interchangeable, replaceable and integrable possibilities: electronic devices, access to wi-fi, opportunity to print and get free drinkable water or simple

Critical aspects of the open spaces	
Difficulties	Abandoned and/or unused spaces Not well furnished spaces Difficulty in accessibility Difficulty in orientation
Lacking	Lack of efficient communication systems Lack in number of books in the campus libraries Insufficient study spaces Insufficient spaces for student representation

Table 5. Critical aspects of the open spaces

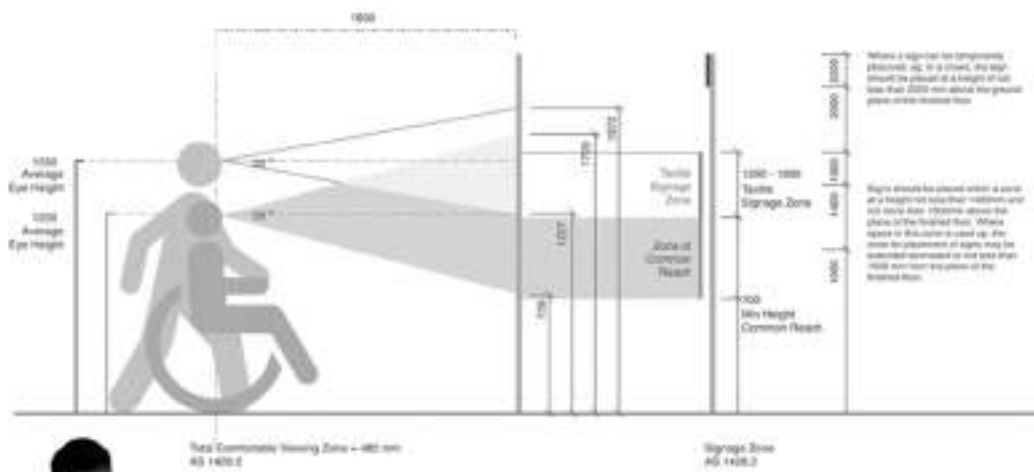
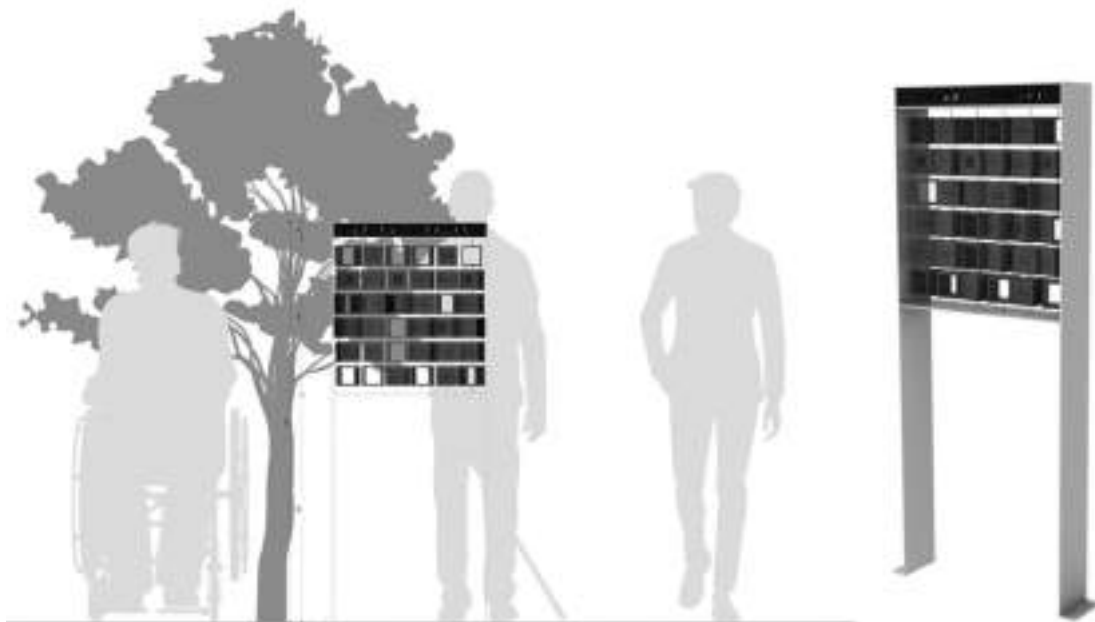


Figure 1. DICAR-Poliba students (Federica Gentile, Marina Ricci, Adriana Romeo) of Master Degree in Industrial Design (course of New Product Development - Prof. V.P. Bagnato, Prof. E. Pantartzis, Prof. C. Torre)

wayfinding and/or information systems can be inserted in aluminum cubes organized on top of each other and held together by a vertical steel core containing electric lines, powers and inductions which start from a base module up to the upper cover. Modules system variations can be set up according to the specific requirements and depending on place where the totem is located and, at the same time, the modules themselves can be created by customers inserting new functions and using any kind of digital or technological device.

Conclusions

In the university campuses there's always a strong relationship between social rituality and non-normative way of experiencing the public spaces and of using any kind of service. The regeneration of the campus areas cannot nowadays pass only through the physical transformation of the public spaces but it's asked as never before to "listen" to the "social narration" that comes from the interaction between people, space and cultural environment. In this mark, as the examples and the abovementioned experimentations have demonstrated, the role of design becomes fundamental because the new requirements in terms of places' qualification undermine the traditional approach based on the urbanistic and/or architectural physical transformation and increasingly require intervention on the social dimension as well as on a new relationship between reality and virtuality. Therefore, acting on the small scale (the scale of objects), the experience of design can offer an environmental interactivity between places and people building an open source system of things in which people can actively participate in this social transformation.

As a brief conclusion, without claiming to be exhaustive, we can affirm that this approach which puts the objects (industrial products) at the center of the regeneration processes has a double immediate advantage: on one hand it becomes free from depending on "radical" actions, often useless and expensive when not completely wrong; on the other hand, being interactive and inclusive, it's at the same time open and non-normative, free and modifiable by the users, then able to reduce uncertainty in its conception, production, use and modification according to the new social requirements.

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Community Resilience Through Exaptation. Notes for a Transposition of the Notions of Exaptation Into a Design Practice to Promote Diversity and Resilience as an Alternative to Planning Determinism During Crisis.

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Abstract

The cities planned to date are the main cause of greenhouse gas emissions. Thus, it is now necessary to study an alternative way of designing resilient cities. Starting from this consideration, this text is an exploration of the possibilities of using non-deterministic tools, therefore not suitable for designating a use (function) from the planning stage, as a way to respond to the uncertainties of the future. To do this, we hypothesised a methodology that compares biology with architecture and, in particular, natural selection with design. The components of the natural selection's aptation are, in fact, both deterministic (adaptation) and non-deterministic (exaptation). While adaptation is a concept widely studied in architecture, there is no literature regarding the study of the mechanisms of exaptation, as defined by Stephen Jay Gould, despite the obvious practical applications of this principle in city planning. From the studies carried out, the difficulty of overcoming an exclusively deterministic planning emerges, above all, because of some prejudices in the form of reification, including the 'recapitulative' reading of the city. In conclusion, the diversity of subjects who can contribute to city planning is essential to increase their resilience in view of future unexpected effects of the global crises.

Keywords

Sustainability; resilience; exaptation; informality; reification.

Background

While sustainable design is aimed to mitigate the effects of climate change through the reduction of impacts, urban resilience deals with the crises beyond the point of no return. On the one hand, thus, resilience confirms the objectives of sustainability; on the other, it imposes its expansion towards adaptation strategies to future scenarios that are constantly changing and largely unpredictable due to the complexity of the feedback phenomena (Melis, 2020a; Melis & Foerster, 2020; Melis & Medas, 2020; Melis, Medas, & Foerster, 2020).

In times of global crisis, radicalism is, therefore, a need: any scenario hypothesised to date, and over the past two centuries, has failed, to the point of transforming solutions into problems. The heroic modern city, founded on specialisation and mass production, is today the main generator of greenhouse gases. And even the much admired Eighteenth century city, with its elegant boulevards, can generate a majestic heat island effect, like the one which caused an unprecedented number of deaths in 2003 in the Haussmanian Paris.

The planning in which we believed, imagined the future as a static picture, as a result of an alignment to an alleged linear growth chart. The resilience of the city, therefore, in the long term, depends more on the immediate cultural change of the whole society than on its future planning made today, for example under the influence of the pandemic crisis. The failure of deterministic planning requires, in fact, shifting our attention from viewing a scenario set at a certain moment in our future, towards the design processes that allow us to reproduce urban systems capable of reconjugating and adapting to scenarios, even unpredictable ones. The idea of design as a process, rather than a scenario, is not new. However, process and systemic design have often been confused with the reference to a theoretical endogenous transformation of the workflow, and not as an evolutionary transposition of the project.

Huxley Chessboard

«...much as we may love ourselves, *Homo sapiens* is not representative, or symbolic, of life as a whole. We are not surrogates for arthropods (more than 80% of animal species), or exemplars of anything either particular or typical. We are the possessors of one extraordinary evolutionary invention called consciousness - the factor that permits us, rather than any other species, to ruminate about such matters [...]. But how can this invention be viewed as the distillation of life's primary thrust or direction, when 80 percent of multicellularity (the phylum Arthropoda) enjoys such evolutionary success and displays, over time, no trend to neurological complexity through time - and when our neural elaboration may just as well end up destroying us as sparking a move to any other state that we would choose to designate as 'higher'?».

This preliminary consideration by Stephen Jay Gould, in

Full House (1996, p. 15), leads us to reflect on how much our society has been conceived to respond to a superior perception of ourselves, and, therefore, to last for a limited time. The city, as the most 'advanced' product of man's neural capacity, more than any of its other products, suffers from the poor resilience of this approach.

Continuing in the transposition, why, therefore, do we continually portray the pitifully limited image of the human settlement, in the form of city, village or other, which, instead, is nothing more than a brief episode in the life of vertebrates, as if it were the more advanced multicellular coexistence model? And why, then, do we fight wars to keep alive a form of settlement that inevitably seems to lead us to self-destruction? Gould is in good company here: according to Freud, the main revolutions in knowledge have led to the dethronement of human arrogance from Olympus of our cosmic certainties (from the Copernican revolution to the discovery of the unconscious, and, evidently, through Darwin's theory of evolution).

Coming to today's global crisis and recognising that the city's CO2 emissions are the main threat to human survival, it follows that the new paradigms, which presuppose a revolution in human thinking, will imply a less 'arrogant' vision of human settlements (city?) than the idea that they represent the most advanced outposts of life on this planet.

According to Gould, we are "narrative creatures", and, as such, we seek directionality, a trend towards which to turn, even if this is not real. For these reasons, before building an idea of the city, we must build a new narrative that leads to an idea of humanity as an alternative to the current one, less privileged, along a non-existent evolutionary single scale.

This recalls the allegory known as Huxley's chessboard, discussed in biology for some time, and still present, in the 1970s in the famous diagram by M. Scott Pegg, which accompanies the best seller *The Road Less Traveled*:

«*The chessboard is the world, the pieces are the phenomena of the universe, and the rules of the game are what we call the laws of nature. The player on the other side is hidden from us. We know that his game is always correct, fair and patient. But we also know, at our expense, that he never neglects a mistake and has no tolerance for ignorance*» (From *A Liberal Education and Where to Find It*, 1868).

Contemporary biologists of evolution have widely refuted this view, which, paradoxically, was proper to advocates of Darwinian theories such as Huxley, who, however, did not accept the hypothesis that humanity was a subset of nature like any other species. Mankind at the top of any evolutionary ladder is a bias, which even the supporters of Darwinian evolutionism agree, clashes with its most subversive truth and is shared by the wider society. This legacy is probably still present in our cities, or rather in their forms.

The alleged assumption that architecture and nature are

separate and equivalent players on a game table, sometimes coexisting in harmony, often in conflict, led architects to promote an alternative category of existence called artifice, into which cities and buildings fall.

Exaptation

«Adaptation has been defined and recognized by two different criteria: historical genesis (features built by natural selection for their present role) and current utility (features now enhancing fitness no matter how they arose). Biologists have often failed to recognize the potential confusion between these different definitions because we have tended to view natural selection as so dominant among evolutionary mechanisms that historical process and current product become one. Yet if many features of organisms are non-adapted, but available for useful cooptation in descendants, then an important concept has no name in our lexicon (and unnamed ideas generally remain unconsidered): features that now enhance fitness but were not built by natural selection for their current role. We propose that such features be called exaptations and that adaptation be restricted, as Darwin suggested, to features built by selection for their current role» (Gould, Vrba, & Pievani, 2008).

According to their Promethean nature, it could be said that men interpret design as a replica of the deterministic mechanisms of natural selection known as adaptation. The deterministic design of the cities, as the main cause of the emissions at the origins of the environmental crisis, is the clearest evidence that we were wrong: artifice as a category is a pure intellectual invention, and the only consequence of imagining ourselves as competitors of nature is our self-destruction. It follows that, to adopt a truly ecological design, the definition of exaptation, an alternative to adaptation, can contribute to a better understanding of the development dynamics of the cities. The opposition formal-informal, intended as a contrast between a deterministic and anti-deterministic planning, seems to me the architectural concept most matching to the biology definition of adaptation - exaptation. When we talk about informality we usually refer to settlements lacking in adequate infrastructures for potable water and hygienic-sanitary services, with low quality of life. Namely the poorest areas, those not based on the design efforts of urban planners and architects.

The planned city - the 'evolved' concept of the urban settlement - contributes to the environmental crisis, which affects dramatically the life in the informal settlements. Paradoxically the latter are indicated as a problem, rather than the 'victim'. If, however, we think of a more extensive definition of informal, such as to include, for example, also the phenomenon of temporary appropriation of public space, we can find creative and unexpected solutions and behavioural practices of low environmental impact, including coexistence with non-human species (Lara-Hernandez, Coulter, & Melis 2020; Lara Her-

nandez & Melis, 2020; Lara-Hernandez, Melis, & Caputo, 2019; Lara-Hernandez, Melis, & Lehmann, 2019, 2020, pp. 11-26). Obviously, the idea is not to put a positive spin on infrastructural shortcomings and social pressures. Instead, we need to think about the dynamics of adaptation activated in places, like the Algerian El Houma, the historical centre of Mexico City and the suburbs of Akure, analysing their value as a possible antidote to design determinism (Ijatuyi, Ayoola, & Melis, in press; Khemri, Caputo, & Melis, in press; Khemri & Melis, in press; Khemri, Melis, & Caputo, 2020).

The discussion, here, is not intended to exclude determinism as a planning practice. It remains a fundamental component, as adaptation is for natural selection. It is, however, a matter of recognising this second mechanism of use for the survival of elements that were born for another function. Consequently, we could speculate that it is a back-up mechanism capable of responding to crisis conditions. Thus, a parallelism can be built between linear logic, to be used as a standard survival mode and, therefore, as a deterministic instrument of adaptation, and the crisis mode that depends on the activation of associative thinking and which, perhaps, leads to the design version of adaptation. In order that the analogy with evolution does not remain a pure theoretical speculation, it is, however, necessary to understand what are the practical modalities through which the exaptation operates in such a way as to increase the chances of survival of the species (Gould, 1991). Gould, for example, has explained that a variability of forms responds to unpredictable environmental conditions. These proliferating and redundant forms, which can be coopted to fulfil an unforeseen function, are called 'spandrels'. The classic example is the sixth finger of the panda, a previously existing bony growth that became a tool when the animal - originally a carnivore - wound up handling bamboo to gain its nutrition (Gould, 1982, p. 22).

The redundancy and variability of forms offer incredibly practical applications for urban resilience, similarly to exaptation (Gould, 1991), seen, in design, as the capability of cities to adapt to unexpected conditions. What might happen if, like the panda, we began to use forms that we already have (and now consider useless), as tools to cope with the issues of the present? If we intend informal design as a planning approach based on functional cooptation, it can teach us a lot regarding alternative, non-anthropocentric processes of colonisation of the biosphere.

Reification

As humans, we often, *«abstract the variation within a system into some measure of central tendency, like the mean value -and then make the mistake of reifying this abstraction and interpreting the mean as a concrete thing»* (Gould, 1996, p. 40) Known as "reification", this is "a legacy as old as Plato". The reification is, therefore, *«our tendency to abstract a single*

ideal or average as the essence of a system, and to devalue or ignore variation among individuals that constitute the full population» (p. 40). This happens because we are «*story-telling creatures, products of history ourselves. We are fascinated by trends, in part because they tell stories, by the basic device of importing directionality to time, in part because they so often supply a moral dimension to a sequence of events [...]. But our strong desire to identify trends often leads us to detect a directionality that doesn't exist, or interfere causes that cannot be sustained»* (Gould, 1996, p. 30).

«*A focus on particulars or abstractions (often biased like the lineage of Homo Sapiens), egregiously selected from a totality because we perceive these limited and uncharacteristic examples as moving somewhere - when we should be studying variation in the entire system (the 'Full House' of my title) and its changing pattern of spread through time»* (Gould, 1996, p.15) Transdisciplinarity, therefore, is an essential discriminant to reduce the risk of reification, in the study of the phenomena of the history of architecture and civilization, which have developed, respectively, over the past two-thousand years and the past seventeen thousand years. In palaeoanthropology, the evolution of man is measured in the order of hundreds of thousands of years. In biology, the evolution of organisms is measured in millions of years (Melis, 2020a; Melis & Foerster, 2020; Melis & Medas, 2020; Melis, Medas, & Foerster, 2020).

Climate change studies by Michael Mann are an emblematic example of the contribution of transdisciplinary research in overcoming reification, due to lack of information. Twenty years ago, the graphic chart, drafted by the trio Mann-Raymond-Huges, and indelibly renamed *Hockey Stick* by Jerry Mahlman, irrefutably demonstrated the existence of global warming and its anthropogenic origin, despite a general conviction that global warming was a cyclical fluctuation of the climate (Melis & Foerster, 2020). The hockey stick is epochal, both for the data collected and for the introduction of an innovative and transdisciplinary methodology. Thanks to the collaboration with Raymond S. Bradley, also a climatologist, and Bradley Malcolm K. Hughes, professor of dendrochronology, it was possible to extend the results to different regions of the globe and for long periods, through the intersection of the quantitative data coming from the rings of the trees, those of cores in the ice, corals and lake sediments. The trees proved to be a climate seismograph of absolute precision, capable, for example, of confirming the evidence of the presence of El Niño in 1791 and the absence of summer in 1816 (Melis & Foerster, 2020). Until then it had not been possible to distinguish the normal fluctuations of the climate compared to a unique event such as that described by the hockey stick. Thus, if the historian of the city, as well as any other human, transforms their abstractions into empirical facts deriving from a few hundred years of observation, how many times have planners designed cities, or

transformed them on the basis of reification?

Whether it was an unshakable trust for the Modern, or for the Marxist criticism of post-Fordism, each interpretation risks being a mere scenario of a non-existing progress to be aimed at or decadence contrasted with. If we consider a time span of 200,000 years - twenty times more extensive in the history of humanity and about 40 times more extensive in the history of cities - we could detect environmental crises comparable to the present one. Consistently, we will find more useful answers to address the issue of global crises in those disciplines that have already developed research over such long periods, such as archaeology, palaeoanthropology and biology, rather than in the history of architecture. This approach also involves the questioning of millennial paradigms such as the binary model of the human settlement city-countryside, or the attribution to man of creative roles in society. Unlike the autonomy of architecture, transdisciplinary research, therefore, lays bare the senselessness of constructing visions on trends, which manifest themselves in a very short time, and which lead us to confuse a symptom, like the current pandemic, with the cause, that is, the environmental crisis on a global scale. If the immutable categories of architecture based on deterministic dichotomies such as artifice-nature, on which our idea of design is based, enter into crisis, evidently it is the design itself that becomes obsolete. To date, the architects move with the speed of the most inertial part of the society, believing that the immediate danger, like Covid-19, was our main concern, also for the future, without grasping the extent of the transformations, slow for humanity, but very rapid and inexorable, if read in the light of palaeoanthropology. Some of us have now rushed to hypothesise future scenarios based on the need, for example, for social distancing, which stands as an evident reification.

These are certainly necessary projects in the immediate term; however, the strategic component of the discussion is missing from the debate. For instance, moving to internal villages, as suggested by many parties, is desirable, if this contributes, in some way, to mitigate desertification or the tropicalisation of the climate. It should certainly not be proposed with the scope to offer more opportunities for social distancing without considering potential infrastructural consequences and environmental impacts in the abandonment of settlements compact models. If, inspired by the three months of lockdown, we risk proposing permanent changes to our urban fabric, we may pay the price in the coming years, due to the rigidity and limited approach. A similar polarisation of trends can be observed between those who wait for everything to return as before and those who have developed a real obsession with the 'all online, immediately'. Thus, we risk neglecting, once again, the interpretation key on the complexity that the transdisciplinary reading of environmental phenomena has given us for some time. Moreover, the complexity is also synchronic: everything

that happens today in the western world has already happened elsewhere in recent times.

Ontogeny and Phylogeny: the Recapitulation of the City.

«Evolution occurs when ontogeny is altered in two ways: when new characters are introduced at any stage of development with varying effects upon subsequent stages, or when characters already present undergo changes in developmental timing. Together, these two processes exhaust the formal content of phyletic change; the second process is heterochrony» (Gould, 1967, p. 4).

Before the emergence of the biology of evolution, thanks to molecular genetics, the recapitulation theory stated that the development of the embryo of a living being (ontogeny) occurs in stages that recall the stages of the evolutionary development of its species (phylogeny) starting from the most remote ancestors. The theory is often summarised with the famous formula created by Ernst Haeckel: "ontogenesis summarizes phylogeny". Strongly present since the time of Aristotle (Gould 1967, p. 5), and, despite its success and its instrumental interpretation during Nazism, the theory of recapitulation still enjoys credit in many scientific disciplines, such as, for example, glottology.

At the same time, precisely the issue of Nazism has also pushed aside Van Boer's interpretation which, according to Gould, still has theoretical validity in opposition to Haeckel's recapitulation. However, there is no literature in architecture on recapitulation regarding the development of the city, despite this seems to be the only reading made by historians on the city (albeit through the use of different definitions). With years of delay, therefore, the recapitulatory idea of the city has never been subjected to real criticism, although, in one way or another, each architectural critic's book interprets the city as a progressive evolution of the previous ones, in a 'summary' form. Hence the ontogenesis of the contemporary cities includes a 'recapitulation' of the phylogeny of the previous ones. This Haeckelian reading of the city, which also includes the accelerations, the crises and the condensation in it of the traces of previous cities, has led to dogmas regarding the untouchable manifestations of architecture of the last two hundred years. In evolutionary terms, if we wish to overcome the recapitulative concept of the city, as a reification of the progress to which it should aspire, what remains is the aim at complexity and variability of its components (spandrel), as a possibility of adaptation to unpredictable events (resilience), through the functional co-optation of these components (exaptation). Although apparently very different points of view are encountered, from Leonardo Benevolo to Manfredo Tafuri, none of these critical positions on cities, therefore, question the general urbanisation paradigms: the different perspectives which fuelled the discussion on the city belong to and represent a very limited portion

of the human society. The differentiation of points of view, in architecture criticism, has not led, until now, to an effective increase in diversity.

Diversity and diversification, in transdisciplinary terms, cannot be superimposed and are both pivotal components to guarantee the resilience of a system. In addition, both different and diverse positions should provide an equivalent, and not alternative, contribution to recurring or dominant thinking (thus ensuring a greater potential for resilience).

Towards Diversity

A serious side effect of the reification of trends is the underestimation of some phenomena that do not align with the narrative of linear progress. The Covid-19 narrative, told as the story of a virus, similar to the Spanish flu, that triggered a sudden pandemic, which affected everyone, without distinction, will lead to a different response than that referring to a chronicle of a virus spillover, prompted by environmental pressure, which has reached the heart of the West, in a perhaps less dramatic way than what happened in the Kenema slums, in Sierra Leone, due to Ebola. The narration is important, because, in the second case, a designer from Guinea (or an NGO) could hypothesise a different scenario for the future of our cities, but just as useful because it is built, perhaps, on experiences in the city plagued by epidemics and endemic diseases. It can be observed, in fact, that the attention towards extemporaneous solutions, and the obsession for the consequences of a symptom, rather than towards the structural causes of the crisis, is proportional to the little diversity of points of view and the limited diversity of subjects who tell the story of the pandemic. In simpler words, the idea that the crisis from Covid-19 is resolved with solutions 'as needed', such as larger houses, plexiglass partitions, or, more seriously, with better hospitals, is likely to be, once again, the narration of those who live in the north of the world. Each story has its own coefficient of importance, which depends on the economic and communicative power of those who describe it. Here, it is not a question of repeating the adage according to which history is written by the winners, or by the strongest. Nor is it to make morals against the cultural colonialism of the West. Instead, it is a matter of emphasising that, in times of global crisis, a limited narrative also puts the winners themselves at risk. Situations like these could also occur countless times in architecture. If we look at ancient cities like Shybam, in Yemen, we immediately realise that something is wrong with our interpretation of the urban paradigms that we consider very recent. In the past years, the underestimation of some forms of radicalism, such as the *Oasis* of Haus Rucker Co., a declared response to the development threads described in the Club of Rome Report, is an evidence of the inability of critics to read in advance the signs of changes and crises, when they get lost in the myriad of evolutionary branches, rather than aligning

themselves along an imaginary evolutionary scale of progress

The fallout in the field of design is as disarming as it is obvious. This diversity increases the breath of the narrative which, in turn, increases the proliferation of opportunities that can be functionally co-opted, exactly as organisms do in the course of evolution, when subjected to environmental crises. The success of the design processes, which aim at the resilience of the city, will be proportional to the diversity of those who participate in their realisation. It is, therefore, legitimate to ask whether a history of architecture written with the contribution of what we consider 'minorities', on the border of the empire, or of the less 'dominant' categories, in its heart, could question Huxley's chessboard.

The Female Perspective

The city we know, its organisation and, to a certain extent, its lack of resilience, are the products of a man-centred society (Kern, 2020, pp. 5-6; Johnston-Zimmerman, 2017; Melis, 2020b). To respond to the current crisis, therefore, before thinking about the project, it is necessary to invest in the processes and on the diversity of those who implement them.

In this sense, greater inclusiveness, for example, considering the female perspective, with its innovative, disruptive and original potential, not only as a gender alternative to the male one, is more important than the project or the extemporaneous scenario. We must obviously consider the risk that even the two-sex model is, in turn, an abstraction of "a single ideal aspect or an average to make it the essence of an entire system, and to devalue or ignore the variations between the individuals that make up the entire population" (Gould, 1996, p. 37).

It is, therefore, not surprising that the author of one of the very few iconoclastic texts of post-war town planning was written by a woman, not an architect. I refer to the Jane Jacobs of *Life and Death of the American Cities*, written in 1962, when the Modern was still an object of worship for many historians, and when postmodernism, as its apparent alternative, the Post-Modern, was one of the most evident manifestations of the architect's recapitulation trend (Jacobs, 1961). In the latest issue of *National Geographic*, a recent study showed that the first signs of creativity were mostly expressed by women. Rather than attributing them to women, the author of the study notes that the inconsistencies in the size of the hands measured in the cave paintings had been traced back to the young males.

Consistent with the premise, we can imagine a female city as a first step towards diversification and inclusiveness. Marco Romano, in his recent *City of Women*, claims to have found traces of the influence, always underestimated or hidden, of women in the organisation of historic cities (Romano, 2019, p. 79). The reception of some public spaces, such as the arcades in front of the shops, seems to be a prelude to the use of space by women. In some scenic features, such as baroque

facades, you can glimpse the vocation for the female declinator theatrical space in the city. However, one has the impression that Romano's, however intriguing, is rather a narrative that does not allow one to indulge in the fact that even a possible female influence in the design has gone through its reading and interpretation in the male (Foerster, 2020, pp. 146-147). It is necessary to wait to find the first attempts to reset the city in a paradigmatic way on gender diversity: it is necessary to wait until more recent times.

The first incontrovertible evidence of female influence in the idea of the city dates back to the years of experimentation of the hippie communities that had made a manifest of sexual liberation. In fact, when Jacobs wrote her revolutionary *The Death and the Life of the Great American Cities*, it called into question the dominant urban model, also as a fetish of the heroic phase of American capitalism, now dying. At the same time, this text also shows that the female perspective, less compromised by conventionality, allows an unexpected forward momentum, the same that, in architecture, had contributed to the success of architects such as Lina Bo Bardi and Denise Scott Brown (Rustin, 2014). It is surprising that Jacobs' intentions are present in a programmatic dimension, only in very recent times, as in contemporary Vienna. The Aspern neighbourhood, for example, which was deliberately designed with a clear female gender identity, offers examples of spaces on a human (and female!) scale and extended inclusiveness. All streets and public spaces are named after women, as if to say that the symbolic aspect also has its communicative importance. The 1997 Frauen-Werk-Stadt (Women-Work-City) complex, designed by women, offers a perspective on uses that are generally overlooked by men: «*the wheelchair storage on each floor and the wide stairs to encourage the interactions of the neighborhood; flexible layouts and high-quality secondary rooms; up to the height of the building, low enough to guarantee the view of the street*» (Hunt, 2019).

Two years later, volleyball and badminton courts were preferred in Margareten rather than the conventional basketball cage; the courtyards have been designed to accommodate sessions for groups of girls, to chat and look around. The quality of the lighting and the economy of the paths promote a sense of security and encourage parking (Hunt, 2019).

The debate on gender equity in Vienna, as mentioned, quickly turned towards tools for social emancipation, especially in terms of universal accessibility. Marihilf's work between 2002 and 2006 concerned an improvement in public lighting in areas which, according to preliminary investigations, caused a sense of anxiety; the traffic lights have been modified to give priority to pedestrians; public seating has increased; architectural barriers have been eliminated, so as to accommodate wheelchairs, as well as encourage the reception of elderly people. According to Giorgia Vitale, of Arup, gender equitable planning and

design must be fundamentally more inclusive in general for the whole community. If we want this to learn about the place, take care of it and celebrate the shared spaces, it is essential to rethink the city in terms of short distances and consider accessibility, aiming to welcome and use the space: more mixed use and differentiated land use, more accessible public transport, with greater frequency and options, greater security and more strategic and hybrid location of social structures (Vitale, 2020).

The aforementioned examples, therefore, show a focus on obsolete or unrecognised uses that acquire centrality in the female city as an instrument of openings towards a multisexual city, and, therefore, more resilient, but which still do not tell us much, regarding the aesthetic perception of the architecture from a female perspective. On this it would be necessary to deepen the theme, starting from two perhaps more emblematic authors: Kazuo Sejima and Zaha Hadid. The extremes of the architectural minimalism of the former, and the maximalist flood of the latter offer two opposing interpretations of aesthetic sensuality that suggest that, in addition to a universe of uses, a female architecture also opens doors to a universe of forms still unknown today.

Conclusion

In the premises we have identified a trend aimed at the centrality of man in human society that has led to a model that, today, faced with global crises, has proven to be not resilient. The diversity increases the variability and, therefore, the possibility of adaptive and exaptive transformations. Justice and equity are, therefore, not exclusively ideological categories, but express qualities that increase our chances of survival. In recent experiments, the female point of view has been fundamental not only for a greater use of space by women, but also for greater attention to minorities and less advantaged categories. In fact, the feminine perspective has allowed the development of safer neighbourhoods, with better and more accessible infrastructures, contamination and extension of conventional uses towards previously underestimated activities.

However, ecology today teaches us that the two-sex model is also a limited model. We have learnt from Gould's research that both the exclusively male and the binary perspective of the two sexes can be the result of a reification. We must, therefore, embrace the evocative complexity of cities, welcome its opportunities, precisely where our certainties are called into question. The examples proposed in this text show that the radical and subversive vision of women opens up to more extensive and inclusive perspectives that also go beyond the traditional interpretation of genres. The aim of the research was to show that the current-past male dominated city is not resilient, due to the lack of diversity. So, the female perspective is intended, in our research, as a first step to increase diversity, not to suggest an alternative female dominated model, which would effectively

lack diversity as does the male one. The case of districts like Viennese Mariahilf, for example, show that the inclusion of the female perspective has increased the inclusiveness for all, not the dominance of women's position (i.e. uses that have been overlooked appear for the first time, without neglecting the existing ones). Families with children, elderly, minorities simply find these places more safe and liveable. Our argument is that including the underestimated female perspective is a first step leading to universality, equity, and diversity. In conclusion, since the categories change over time and respond to culture, for an effective resilience of cities with respect to unpredictable phenomena, we should begin to consider the city organised according to a multi-sexual and multi-ethnic perspective, and, in addition, even metasexual and meta-ethnic. The next step is the questioning of anthropocentrism in an ecological key.

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Land Tactics of the Single Housing Unit in the Informal Urban Growth in Albania

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Abstract

Learning from the informal transitional phases is a process that focuses on the diversity and multiple forms in which land and building alike are shaped and re-shaped in the territory. Moreover, there might be various reasons as to why this perpetual condition persists in informal areas in the Albanian context. This diversity is analyzed and named according to the impact that it has on the territory, including land fragmentation and densification. The purpose of this research is to illustrate transitional phases, of the informal settlements, to identify the cases of the multiform and to open up an irrevocable professional debate on the matter that not all informal settlements are the same in the territory. This starts from the local Albanian practices of building informally to the actual form of territorial transition. All of the practices have one thing in common; they are half-realized utopias. Such is the urbanization process in Albania which has never co-occurred within the settlement and parceling in informal areas. It is up to urban planners and landscapers to identify these conditions even if the public and institutional apparatus do not deal with them. Passing from the informal practices and into their territorial partialities, the methodology gives a tactical description of the territorial impact as a result of the three processes of the urban informal growth in Albania: a) building, b) parceling, and c) putting in infrastructure. These processes are considered as a transitional phase and analyzed in this study. The multiform of their alternations can be described as land tactics, with a high impact on fragmentation and densification. The result illustrates and shows that not all the informal settlements are the same, although the same typology of the housing unit. Architects, landscapers, and social workers can contribute to the methodological solutions, starting from a single inhabitant and practices described and then enlarged to the regional scale of all 55 informal areas.

Keywords

Land tactics; transitional phase; territorial impact; informal growth; single housing unit.

The Development of Informal Settlements in Albania

Informal settlements in Albania are a phenomenon of the last 30 years. The phenomenon gained interest in Albania only in the beginning of the twenty-first century when the urban growth began to be relevant to decision-makers and international partners. With the Communist regime's decline a national centralized housing system collapsed a new phase of uncertainties, marked by high political tension and internal migration. Beyond this pushing factors, an institutional vacuum was coming out, a process that was unable to control the building permissions and the practices of construction.

Starting from the 2000s, the number of informal settlements has rapidly increased in both number and typology. According to the numbers, around 500,000 settlements have been informally built in Albania¹. Only the region of Durres and Tirana counts more than 400,000 applications in its legalization process covering a total of 8050 ha. From the administrative point of view, the informal areas are divided into 55 units, and only 33% have presently been legalized. While several studies reports the growing number of the informal settlements fewer are those studies and research on the settlements typology.

The urban agenda on legalization, urbanization, and the integration of informal settlements and areas in Albania exists from 2006 up to the present days. For this purpose, the national government created a regional agency, named A.L.U.I.Z.N.I², to deal with the following three objectives:

- the legalization of informal areas where possible;
- bringing urbanization to these areas - significantly meaning solving infrastructural issues;
- integration, which has never had specific priorities or projects focused on the informal areas.

From this perspective, we can say that the means of national planning are already defined. What remains important from the public policy analysis is the study of the impact on the real territory of these objectives. In most cases, this inability to act on time has created a situation of uncertainty between the inhabitants and public administration. Densification and development have been increased freely for more than 25 years. The latest attempt of the government to respond to this uncertainty is the National Cadastre Agency³. This is a centralized entity that is directly dependent on the Council of Ministers. It is disconnected from constitutional and parliamentary decisions. According to the new law that gave birth to the National Cadastre Agency, the administrative process of the legalization should pass through this new public entity. However, no methodology has been stated or sought. Here we have to mention the unresolved challenges of A.L.U.I.Z.N.I and if they really coincide with the new public entity.

These include the noncompliance of the mapping systems,

the delayed legalization process, and the missing revenue's reversibility from the legalization to infrastructure and integration priorities⁴.

The Growth of the Informal Settlements in Albania

Urban growth is characterized by two urban phenomena. The first is demographic growth and the second is by the physical growth of the city. While there are many studies on the demographic growth and its factors, there is a growing interest in studies focused on physical growth especially when referring to territories where the factors of territorial inequalities have caused an influx of residents towards the urban centers. High land fragmentation, the construction of settlements without a building permit and densification are the territorial results in Albania for more than 30 years. The physical expansion of cities like Tirana in Durres is almost three times larger than 30 years ago. The same goes for the number of residents.

According to local authors, (Aliaj, Shutina, & Dharmo, 2010), the process of building informally in Albania has passed through a consecutive line of actions: **i**) first by building and later by **ii**) occupying, parceling, the land portion that surrounds the structure raised informally. At the beginning of the '90, this process happened following the land sub-urban divisions, but later it started to grow also inside the agricultural land, without infrastructure, and in many cases following the irrigation canals - see the case of the former Wetland of Durres city, named Keneta neighborhood. The urbanization⁵ objective, **iii**) will be addressed only after 2006, when the first revenues came from the legalization process from the regional agency. These three territorial elements, the building, the land occupied and the in-

¹ (ALUIZNI Agency, 2016)

² A.L.U.I.Z.N.I are the acronyms of the Regional Agency for the Legalization of the Informal Areas and Settlements. It was created in 2006, and today the future of this agency is unclear since on 2018 the National Cadastral Office took the leading process for the legalization for the informal settlements.

³ Nr. 111/2018 ON CADASTRE. Pursuant to Articles 78 and 83, paragraph 1, of the Constitution upon the proposal of the Council of Ministers.

⁴ As the three objectives of the Urban Agenda expressed by ALUIZNI.

⁵ Urbanization is described directly as the second objective by the regional agency, and is used to bring in infrastructure. It is an essential element that has shaped the urban morphology of informal settlements and the buildings therein. Meanwhile, infrastructure for the inhabitant in the periphery of Tirana or Durres is more than a road, it means access to water and sewage system, energy and other fundamental housing rights. Here it is important to underline that not all informal areas have applied this objective and that many areas have no infrastructure at all. This inability to manage the informal areas and to bring in the infrastructure needed has had further effects on the territory strictly related to mobility.

⁶ (Ligji 9482, 03.04.2006) This law defines the legal constraints for the legalization process from the regional agency. Buildings raised informally in a land parcel that does not have an open access to a primary urbanization works, such are roads, cannot get the legalization.

frastructure constitute the full rights to get the legalization, see (Ligji 9482, 03.04.2006)⁶.

Land Occupation Tactics and the Territorial Impact

For the legalization of the informal settlements, the regional agency for the legalization considers the **1**) land position, if there are natural or physical and legal restrictions or other forms and, if **2**) the building meets municipal standards or not (shanties or formal buildings). In other words, this legal statement, the legalization, constitutes different financial revenues such as the land fee and building fee. For this purpose, the national government has created various regulations related to the land fee⁷ which vary from 25euro/m² to 100euro/m². Municipalities from the other side collect revenues, the building fee⁸, based on housing or economic activities. From this perspective, the total public revenues are limited and determined, by the number of land subdivided and the number of the settlements in a given informal area, the size of the land occupied, and the kind of activity, such as either housing or economic. Moreover, all of these circumstances have different and additional costs for the inhabitants.

Many inhabitants have answered to additional, and unforeseen costs, by developing tactics to re-shape the land occupied, or by un-finishing the building process. Some land tactics are when inhabitants, even though they have managed to legalize a part of the land where they have built the building, they actually claim for more land, because the costs might be un-affordable⁹. This process creates a high land fragmentation and consequently an impact on the urbanization process, put in infrastructure, and on the mobility in general. Other cases are where the double fences and walls are raised from the front street to hide the building raised for economic purposes. In some circumstances, there are secondary settlements built on the same land parcel for economic activities registered as housing units. This last physical condition may also result in an informal labor market. Other circumstances include when the applications consist of semi-built settlements and fences, in most of the cases with no inhabitants inside.

The land tactic of informal settlements has happened and taken place in order to avoid unwanted effects. The reasons for this are both internal and external. The internal reasons are strongly connected to the social, economic, and family structure. It is also related to the economic projection that each resident has in a neighborhood. There are many cases where desire exceeds the economic opportunity available, leaving the building or floors unfinished. The external reasons are related to legal pressure and the pending administrative proceedings of legalization. This is tied to constantly changing the cartographic system of measurements¹⁰ and the taxation system¹¹. Land tactic for the legalization is also a transitional phase to obtain or not the requirements expressed by law.

«The first lesson is that informal constructions are not simply a legal problem, even when it is recognized that this phenomenon has considerable implications and takes on different legal forms. The constructions may be illegal for a number of reasons: they are built on land that is public or property belonging to someone else, there are problems of marking or registration, inheritance, marriage, property claims or compensation, disregarding urban norms, or having obtained construction permits, the latter which may not comply with de facto implementation. The constructions do not respect the environmental conditions or they are built in a protected historical area. They may be located in areas of low durability and pose a danger to the safety of people, such as being built on agricultural land etc». (Aliaj, 2008. Translation from the author).

Objectives of the Research

This research aims to explore and illustrate, from recent theories on the forms of urban development in order to create a tactical matrix of the multiple forms of the practices in the different phases of informal development. There is a need to identify these tactics on the map and, to open an irrevocable professional debate on the matter that not all informal settlements are the same throughout the territory. The primary objective of this research is to investigate one typology¹² of urban growth and its multiform in the territory. The typology of the urban growth is given by the theoretical description of the informal settlement developed on agricultural land over the last 30 years in Albania¹³.

⁷ The land fee for the legalization process is defined by the National Council for the Territory and collected by ALUIZNI. The land fee in Albania is the price that the inhabitant buys the land from the state. It is made only once and the fee may vary by the activity and by the dimensions of the land occupied

⁸ The building fee is the price that the inhabitant makes only once at the municipality and it corresponds to the building permit.

⁹ According to the national regulations for the land fee, when the land size is larger than 300 square meters, every meter, in addition, is purchased by the inhabitant as the real estate market value - this may result in a fee that is four times higher than the price given by ALUIZNI, approximately 25€/m².

¹⁰ Nowadays, in 2019 in Albania, not all of the cadastral maps are digitalized. Even the cadastral maps that have been digitized are not up-to-date with reality. There are many cases where different parcels overlap. This creates an unclear situation for citizens on the steps that they need to take to obtain legalization.

¹¹ For the taxation of the informal settlements in Albania, we should consider only the fee that each householder should pay for the land purchase and cadastral registration, including the fee for the infrastructure impact, which is less than 10% of the total cost.

¹² The typology of the informal growth analyzed in this research is the one that follows the consecutive process: 1) setting a building, 2) parceling and 3) putting in an infrastructure. This is (S)>(P)>(U) as described by local authors.

¹³ See (Aliaj, Shutina, & Dhamo, 2010)

Although the forms of informality are diverse, such as touristic resorts and housing blocks, the research will focus only on one form, that of the single family¹⁴. The importance of the research is to read anew the legalization constraints. The hindering factors, the constraints, of the legalization might be an administrative matter, related to economic, social or human behavior. What they have in common is the territorial dimension and the tactical actions related to it. The understanding of the multiform of this informality is not only crucial for the public revenue but also for the territorial impact that it has generated. High land fragmentation is one of these impacts. Other effects are related to the institutional capability to deal transparently with the applicants. The roles of the director and gatekeeper¹⁵ of ALUIZNI, and the National Cadastre Agency, has generated a conflicting practice with the inhabitants that in many cases has created privileges for certain informal conditions and others not, such as where the legal restrictions are not explicit by law¹⁶. Inhabitants, being under uncertainties have developed their way of shaping the land and building. For these reasons, of the need to address specific conditions to the decision making, the objective of the research is to offer a pair of new lenses on the tactical description of building informally.

Methodology

For a better understanding of the multiform that a single family housing unit may change during its transitional phases till to the legalization, the methodology starts from previous introduction of the informal practice described in three processes¹⁷. Each process may pass through transitional phases where informal practices and tactics has happened. The tactical phases are of two big sorts, or to “get back” or “forward”¹⁸. Starting from this assumption the methodology answers what it means to make “a step back”, and a “step forward”, on the transitional phase **i**) Building, **ii**) Parceling, and **iii**) in the Urbanization phase. For the first transitional phase **i**), a “step back” means or to live in a house that due to the un-affordability costs of

constructions it does not fulfill the Municipal standards¹⁹ or do to the housing emergency need, inhabitants have built on land violating or the private ownership or the environmental or urban restrictions. On the contrary “a step forward” in the building transitional phase means to advance on the territory with developments that aims the future occupation of the land by raising un-finished buildings or only walls to reclaim the development right.

For the second transitional phase, **ii**) parceling, a “step back” means land reduction, fragmentation, which has occurred or when the land fee was un-affordable to the inhabitant, or when the intention was to preserve the land occupied and make the future development on the existing building densification.

Making a “step forward” on the second transitional phase, **ii**) parceling, means to get to the other land, fragmentation, by making a further expansion, or by sub-diving the land for future land densification. For the third transitional phase, **iii**) urbanization, a “step back” means that the parceling phase has got the land expansion/fragmentation and the urbanization cannot occur in a proper network. Or, when due to a compact urbanization process there’s more possibility for future developments and the building densification is the only possibility. Making a “step forward” on the third transitional phase, **iii**) urbanization, means bringing infrastructure beyond the parcel²⁰ or inside it²¹.

¹² The typology of the informal growth analyzed in this research is the one that follows the consecutive process: 1) setting a building, 2) parceling and 3) putting in an infrastructure. This is (S)>(P)>(U) as described by local authors.

¹³ See (Aliaj, Shutina, & Dhamo, 2010)

¹⁴ Firstly, there is where the informal settlements are self-build. They are composed of a single family living in settlements between two and three floors. They are located on the periphery and on agricultural land without urbanization and infrastructure. This form of urban growth represents the most diffused typology of informal settlements in Albania. In the beginning, the informal settlements came as a result of the need for a primary house close to the urban areas, to the working places and to the opportunities that the city offers. Later, the first settlement typology has been diffused among other practices of building informally for secondary houses such as those in Velipojë, Shëngjin, Lalëz, Golem, Palasë, and in other areas with a high environmental impact. At the same time, the self-build settlement is raised inside the urban blocks

¹⁵ In public policy analysis studies, (Dente, 2014), the gatekeeper is the role that one actor may have in a decision making process, such is the judge court, or the external expertise in evaluations. The methodology used by ALUIZNI regional agency is based on satisfactory criteria, on a limited rationality of decision making model (Kacani A. , 2016). Till 2009, the methodology was to use the informal areas as a planning process as a participatory process; 1) to stop further informal building practices, 2) start of process of collecting the land and building fee, 3) and invest immediately on the urbanization process (Aliaj, Shutina, & Dhamo, 2010), (Co-Plan, 2000). From that moment, the law on legalization of the informal settlements follows a centralized system of revenue’s reversibility to the single informal areas, approximately 30% of the total revenues from the land fee. (nr.50/2014, Ligji). There’s a clear need for an independent evaluation system able to open a dialogue between those informal housing practices that cannot get the legalization process and the public authorities. (Beyond the building technical matter, the householders may need a social and economic assistance).

¹⁶ (Ligji 9482, 03.04.2006).

¹⁷ See (Aliaj, Shutina, & Dhamo, 2010).

¹⁸ See (Sawyer, 2014). Between 36 stratagems, the half is in defensive situation and the other in offensive, divided into a symmetric axis where the first and the last are the most opposite reactions, “retreat” or “advance”. Sun Tzu explains why the tactics are all a decisive matter, the same matters when inhabitants decides to get into transitional phases for the legalization process or not.

¹⁹ (Law 107/2014)

²⁰ Example are when the legalization has occurred correctly and from the land fee and building fee the revenue’s reversibility has covered the informal area with a infrastructural network.

²¹ Examples are when urbanization has taken land portions from parcel shaped on the second transitional phase.

Results

In some cases, *Building* and *Parceling* have occurred but not *Urbanization*. In some circumstances, this process has left a space for a second a *Parceling* process. This research focuses on the identification of the diversities that happens during the transitional phases of growth from the first informal practice starting from the regular informality²². The transitional phases are a good tool to use to understand the different forms of urban tactics, both in terms of land fragmentation and the densification processes.

The first transition phase comes via the process of setting a building as the first process of the regular informality. Four land tactics occur as a result of fragmentation and densification. As a result, the settlements may vary in different conditions. It may be only a land occupation, which is an abusive practice, see (I.1) in Figure 1, or a hazardous building - half-build with or without inhabitants in it (see I.2, I.3 and I.4 in Figures 1). These land tactics are the most precarious forms²³ from all the other informal practices. In some cases, these tactics have occurred as part of an immediate need for a shelter or just to occupy land. Many are the cases where the residents have migrated abroad, leaving behind a half-built settlement (see I.3 in Figures 1). Other cases consist only where there is an occupation of the land abusively, and it represents the latest way to claim future ownership²⁴ (see I.1 in Figures 1). What characterizes all of these tactics is that no one can get legalization from the Urban Agenda.

The second transition phase in the informal urban growth occurs in the land with fragmentation and densification²⁵. Four tactical conditions are produced if fragmentation and densification occur; land expansion, land reduction, settlement densification and land densification. Land expansion, or reduction, is one of the most widespread tactics in missing urbanization areas. Many are cases when the declared parcel is smaller or bigger than the one claimed in the territory²⁶. In the territory, these cases of informal settlements are surrounded by two or more borders. This land fragmentation has also left

space for a second process of setting a settlement and consequently, land densification²⁷. The most typical case is when residents from the same family or their relatives build a new settlement²⁸ in the existing occupied parcel. Meanwhile, other forms of densification take place in the same informal settlement. All of these urban growth tactics are widespread and have occurred mainly where urbanization has been lacking.

The third transition phase corresponds to the development of infrastructure. This process is primarily conditioned by the impact of parcel fragmentation. Where this parcel is expanded, the infrastructure has failed to offer transit²⁹. This kind of tactic has its consequences in the territory by directly impacting on city mobility and its management. Urban public transport, urban waste management, and other city functions are disadvantaged by this process of land extension as related to the roads and infrastructure spaces. Other cases of parcel fragmentation in the urbanization process consist of parcel reduction tactics³⁰. This parcel reduction may have come as a necessity to avoid additional legalization costs after the cost of over 300 square meters has been determined by the legalization office in 2014. It can also be a process used to give place to the new infrastructure. In the same transitional phase is the densification of land and settlement where the process of urbanization has occurred. The best example is the last land tactic, where due to the urbanization that is done on time, there is the process of setting a building and the parcel that comes with the urbanization process³¹.

Conclusions

The land tactics described above, from the Albanian theory of the development of the single informal practices through to the methodological analysis up to the territorial reclaiming impact, should not be seen as a weakness of the territory but rather as an opportunity to explore more and to give answers to those who live in territories where laws and plans have not arrived yet. Learning from the 'informal' land tactics can open up future opportunities for public services or other forms of investment that might occur from private actors willing to invest in the territory. The case of II.2, for example, shows a clear distinction in the land fragmentation by reducing the size that is occupied. This fractal opportunity, related to the land not occupied, is present in almost all of the informal areas and it shows its diversity even where the urbanization occurs. Sometimes the

²² According to the theory as described by the (Aliaj, Shutina, & Dharmo, 2010), the informal growth of the single families in Albania has followed three phases: (B) setting a building, (P) Parceling and last (U) Urbanization.

²³ Scare materials and use of them in the building process. In many cases the raw materials are taken abusively from the natural resources – out from the regular market.

²⁴ In addition, informal settlements can be a form of real estate speculation for all income levels of urban residents, affluent and poor alike (UN-Habitat, 22 – INFORMAL SETTLEMENTS, 2015)

²⁵ See II.1, II.2, II.3, II.4 in Figure 4

²⁶ The land reduction tactic may happen also where the land is informally reshaped in order to avoid extra fees for land bigger than 300 m² as defined by law. In such conditions, the inhabitants have made a second process of parceling or reshaping after, or before, the urbanization process, ii.2, in Figure 4.

²⁷ Densification of the same land, II.4 in Figure 4.

²⁸ Settlement Densification, III.3 in Figure 4.

²⁹ Land Expansion before urbanization, iii.1. Examples are when the land expansion has occupied the future network where urbanization was thought to pass by. Informal areas in Albania has a complex networks. In many cases, this complex network is interrupted or curved following the form of parcel shaped informally

³⁰ Land Reduction after urbanization, III.2

³¹ Densification of new land after the urbanization process, III.4

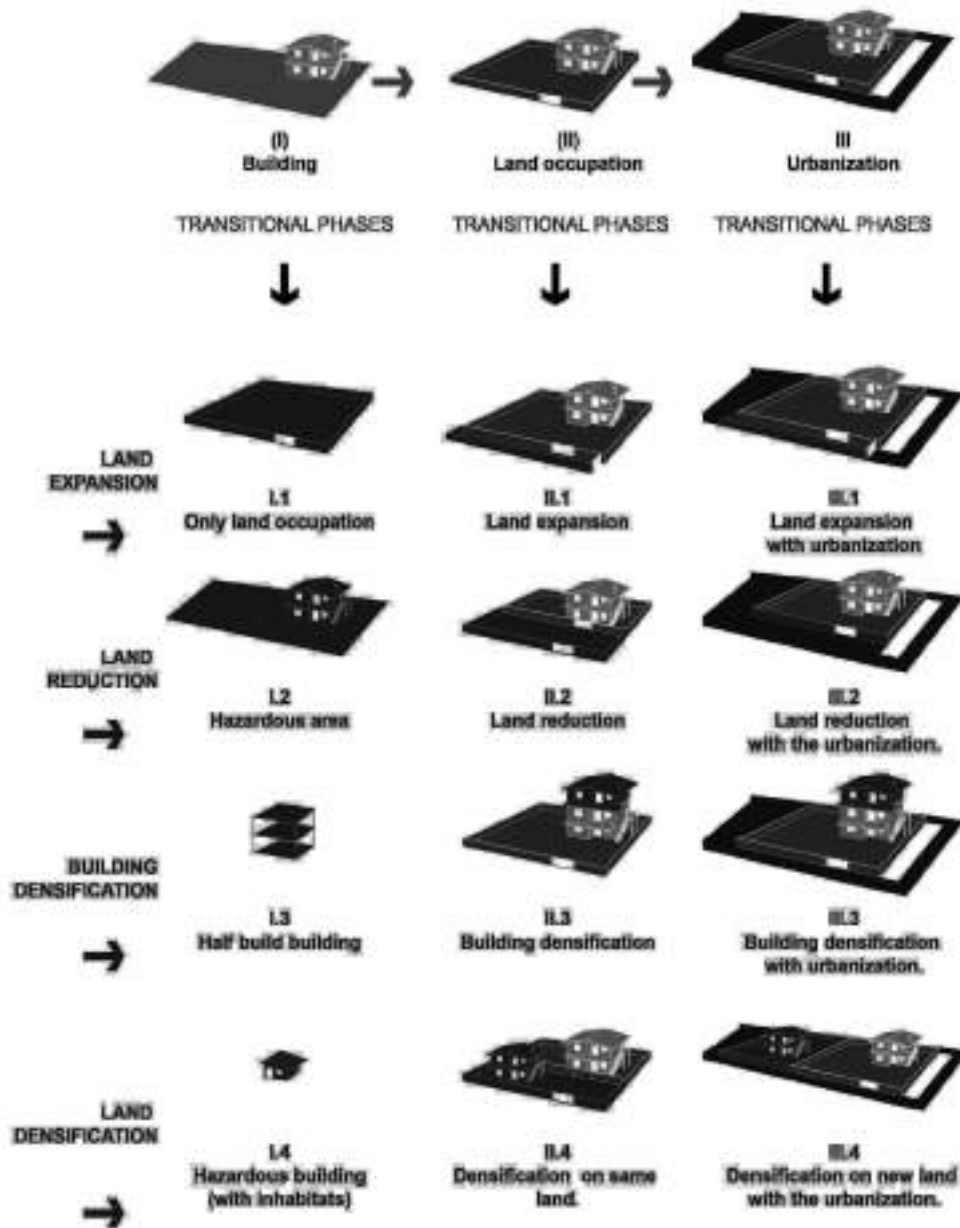


Figure 1. Transitional phases of the informal urban growth in Albania. Twelve tactics for land and settlement as a product of fragmentation and densification. Illustration by the author.

urbanization process is takes time, and the primary building inhabitants have left a big land lot isolated from public access.

Another lesson from the transition of the three transition phases is the fragmentation from land expansion. This should be seen as a determinant in the future investments in the informal area. A major part of these tactics involves hindering factors and legal constraints related to the legalization tenure. There are also the hindering factors: for example the less revenue there is, less return there is to the urbanization. In this territorial circumstance and land tactic context, ALU-IZNI and the future National Cadastre Agency should be un-

equivocal and open up a dialogue with single applicants, independent landscapers, and architects. The hindering factor and the territorial circumstances that bring in legal constraints are of public interest. The role of the director and gatekeeper³² of ALU-IZNI should be separated from the the various public actors in order to avoid expansion onto land that belongs to other public intuitions in the urbanization processes.

For better policy responsiveness, the future National Cadastre Agency can declare the land tactics which hinders the legalization tenure, identify the applicants and open up a dialogue with legally recognized parties. Direct policies and

urban agendas can address various actors in the mid-process in order to meet formal legalization. Architects, landscapers and social workers can contribute to the methodological solutions, starting from a single settlement and then enlarge to the regional scale of all 55 informal areas. Beyond the tactical solutions given above, it is important to maintain a research frame at the regional scale to measure and evaluate continuously the land fragmentation due to expansion or densification. The focus is the extensive land consumption with high consequences on mobility and the land market.

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³²In public policies analysis, see (Dente, 2014), the gatekeeper is the actor that has the right to judge and take a decision after or during the decisional context. The ALUIZNI gatekeeper role consists in assuming that there's only one actor who has the right to say "yes" or "no" to the future legalization practices. This practice should be extended to other institutions and to various professionals by reclaiming what's wrong and how it can be fixed.

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The National Theatre of Tirana: a non-normative DNA

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This is not just the fall of a building designed by Giulio Bertè in 1939, an important part of the architectural and Cultural heritage of Albania, as the building doesn't mark of only architectural value but of course of its impact in the urban morphology providing a qualitative public space in the center of the city of Tirana as an integral part of its conception, but the repeated act of the fall of democracy in Albania after the destruction of the historic houses of Tirana, the destruction of the National Stadium, and the collective memory and history of Albania. (Kristo in Bugaric, 2020)

At the first light of dawn of Sunday 17th of May 2020, the bulldozers escorted by the police forces started the demolition of the National Theatre of Tirana, by now one of the still-standing shreds of evidence of a very kaleidoscopic history such the one that Albania and its capital have been living during the last century. After driving away all the actors and activists that had been staying inside the structure during the last few months in its defense, around 4.30 AM the first blow of the bulldozers hit the main façade of the north-right building of the complex. Just a few seconds and an iconic image of the city of Tirana, and indeed of the country itself, ceased to exist.

If we refer only opinions regarding the value of the building before and after the destruction, the debate behind the event risks to fall into a subjective point of view, where every opinion claims to be sustained by the most valuable and proven theses. Instead, what we find worthy to analyze is the originality of the National Theatre that represented for many decades a non-normative act either from an historical, urban, and behavioral perspective, within the peculiar condition of Albania, or in its destruction that embodied an unique manifestation of the decision to not follow any existing norm regarding the defense of

recognized valuable buildings. Following this thread, we firmly believe that new reflections can arise and, maybe, it could be clearer why so many people stood in its defense and why its destruction was a scar that cannot be healed in the physical environment of the city of Tirana

Between Autarchy and Propaganda: a Non-normative History

In his work, *Le normal et le pathologique*, the French philosopher Georges Canguilhem (1966) defined normativity the capacity of organism to create more or less efficient way of organizing their structure with the purpose of surviving, and indeed, the life - and reiteration - of complex systems is a normative act in itself. Starting from this parallelism with medical thinking and physiopathology, we use this concept to identify some enzymes of non-normativity of the history of the National Theatre of Tirana, we highlight why, in its specific case, his long-term existence was guaranteed precisely by its inner non-normative DNA.

The National Theatre, built during the late 1930s by the construction company Pater-Costruzioni Edili Speciali di Milano



Figure 1. The National Theater of Tirana. Author: Saimir Kristo

based on the design of the Italian Architect Giulio Bertè, was completed in 1940.

In our speculation, what is interesting to underline is that the above-mentioned company was mostly known during the Italian Fascism for the realization of residential interventions (Viliani, 2012) in the former Italian Empire and for small pavilions and exhibitions spaces dedicated to party fairs and propaganda. The National Theatre of Tirana represents, instead, an exceptional act of its activity since it is one of the few public buildings of that kind that Pater - and Bertè - could realize under the fascist times. Furthermore, as reported by a 2008 research by the Polytechnic University of Bari, the building was made with material prefabricated in Milan - experimental cement mixed with poplar fibers and algae. (Menghini, 2013). The use of that material, called 'carpilite', even though being glorified during the Italian dictatorship, was an act of necessity rather than a technological advancement as it is claimed by Mussolini's propaganda. The poverty of Italy, and the impossibility to retrieve good materials from many European nations because of its alliances with the Hitler's Germany, were justified by the Fascist Regime with the concept of 'autarchy' that, in the International law, stands for the capacity of a country to be completely independent of the foreign production of any kind of good. The original project was named "Circolo Skanderbeg" or "Italian-Albanian District - Skanderbeg". The project was part of the Italian strategy during the occupation of Albania between 1939 and 1943. Two main parallel buildings formed the complex, divided by a half-patio for relaxing, with a pool in the middle and a gym at the front end of the building. The architecture of the complex was based on the principles of the "ventennio", as the twenty years of Mussolini's regime in Italy are called. Initially, the left building was used as the Savoia Cinema where films were shown, and theatre and concerts were performed. The technical infrastructure was entirely suitable for cultural and public events because the building materials offered perfect conditions for acoustics and light technology. It was therefore for a long time also used for meetings and conferences.

The main front entrance doors lead to the main hall, paved in black and white marble, and draped with a double layer of velvet curtains. The doors also lead to the left and right lodges and a gallery as well. In this theatre, Albanians could admire Greta Garbo, Laurence Olivier, Alida Valli, Anna Magnani and attend performances by composers such as Vivaldi, Paganini, Chopin, Schumann, Verdi, Bellini, and Donizetti, not to mention those of the most popular Albanian artists of that time. In 1941, it was renamed Kosova Cinema. Its mirror image, the building on the south was the main headquarters of the Skanderbeg Foundation which undertook, under the motto "Pro Cultura", several studies and important publications, and was the forerunner of the Academy of Sciences of Albania. After the Second World War, communist authorities used the complex for public show trials of governors accused of collaborating with ideological enemies. Thereafter, British and American, later on, Russian films were shown there. Later the Professional Theatre of the State was located there, until June 1991, later known as the Teatri Popullor (People's Theatre). When it was called the National Theatre, the most famous artists of communist Albania performed there. After the fall of the dictatorship, the theatre building was neglected and left to itself, because of a lack of financing. Recently the Theatre is in the center of a citizen movement. "The Citizen's Alliance for the Theatre" fighting to prevent its demolition from a political campaign that is stigmatizing the building as Fascist and built of poor-quality materials. The building stands against the decisions of the municipality of Tirana and socialist governments that, since 2002, tried at least twice to demolish it and replace it with new high rise profitable developments, and finally succeed the 17th of May 2020 conducting the life of the National Theatre to an end. Moreover, not only the Albanian civil society was engaged in its defense: on the 17th of March 2020, Europa Nostra - the paneuropean federation for Cultural Heritage - inserted the Theatre in the its list of the '7 most in danger building of the European Heritage' and, together with them, many other foreign institutions and associations. Anyway, even this call remained unheard and, what we can see if we go today to the place, it's a desolated void waiting for nobody knows what.

The value of images: a non-normative collective appropriation

«The destruction of the National Theatre leaves a vacuum in Tirana's physical space. Despite its specific architectural value, recognizable in its big courtyard able to generate spatial tensions and urban space within its twin bodies, through the months of its defense has strengthened the human identity of many in the name of a sense of collective and civic responsibility. Maybe, it is because of this that the Theatre should have been saved, because it reminded us that the built form defines images that, through a process of ac-



Figure 2. The destruction of the Theater. Source: Albanian media.

ceptance and human appropriation (Dix, 2007), contribute to an evolutionary modification of ourselves. (Perna, 2020b)» As we have seen, the history of the National Theatre is full of non-normative events. Its construction was almost a *unicum* within the history of the Italian Empire and, not least, its technical features represented an obligated choice within an extraordinary historical moment of market isolationism and (fake) self-sufficient propaganda. Its entire life was indeed a series of moments where the original nature of the building continuously suffered attacks and discreditations generating the only case in the world where a public building such as a theatre of that kind it is transformed a bingo and casino house (1991) without further questioning and debates. Besides, the latter was just one of the main acts that led to its final destruction. Of course, there also some positive dynamics that aroused from these tragic events. During the last two years, a tense public debate ensued among intellectuals, artists, citizens the Alliance for the Protection of the Theater who became passionately involved. Citizens spent nights and months within the structure guided by the certainty that the building still was a bearer of social and collective values of the Albanian society that deserved to be defended and transmitted to the new generations. It has been a human appropriation of the architectural space of the theatre and a moment of empowerment and evolution for the national civic society at large and, just for this, its image and architecture had to be saved because it represented the spark with whom many people have constructed their sense of human and political beings. Just before the curtain fall for the National Theater of Albania, its last show was dedicated to the collective art exhibition of 52 young artists curated by artist/curator Stefano Romano. The exhibition “Objects, sounds, images, questions and some answers” a production laboratory with intellectual and creative discussions to encourage the student’s cultural and personal growth dedicated to the Theater itself, and as an oxymoron gesture, together with the Theater as a monument of architectural and historic values, fifty two arts works are buried with it. There is a not so old movie in the Albanian cinematography which is called *Parullat* (2001 - in English: Slogans) directed by Gjergj Xhuvani. It deals with the story of Andrea, a young and liberal-minded school teacher, who is sent from Tirana to work in a small village school in the rural mountains. The whole is developed around a series of empty and narcotic political slogans that slowly disenchant the protagonist and pre-

vent any kind of cultural and social debate with the small community where he, full with hopes, is sent to give his contribution. Unfortunately, even the debate on the theatre has been transformed in a series of slogans - from many of the parts involved - that completely twisted the situation and moved the attention towards topics that have little to do with the reality of the facts and are not able to focus on the real loss we all suffered from the violent disappearing of the National Theatre of Tirana as a primary example of a non-normative meaningful urban DNA.

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Albanian Archipelagos': The City of a Non-normativity Foretold

Skender Luarasi

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Globalization takes place only in capital and data. Everything else is damage control
Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak

Sub-urban non-normativities

During the last thirty years, Tirana, the capital of Albania, has taken the form of an archipelago, a city of islands. In what used to be a countryside of rolling hills, today one encounters gated communities of 'smart' mansions, private schools and shopping centers. These islands are expensive and exclusive utopias, literally, *non*-places. (Alas, can there ever be any cheap and non-exclusive utopias...!?) In-between these exclusively normative or normatively exclusive islands lies a 'sea' of non-normative suburban growth: whole neighborhoods haphazardly packed with two to three story constructions and unfinished concrete *Maison Dom-inos*. Such uneven suburban distribution is also reenacted from within the historic city of Tirana in the form of an archipelago of towers, designed by architectural firms like 51N4E, MVRDV, Archea Associati, Stefano Boeri Architetti, and others. As in the case of the rolling countryside, the 'sea' between the islands consists of an unbridled urban growth, which in this case, it is both an extension beyond the city, and an erasure of the existing historic fabric from within. The latter consist of what is commonly called the 'organic' fabric of the old Tirana, as well as the modern architecture of the

20's and 30's.

These high-rise islands may seem as randomly placed, but when seen from the tip of the flat pyramid of Skanderbeg Square, they seem to form a larger project. In "A White Pyramid And a Center that Is Not a Center", I argue that the white pyramid of Skanderbeg Square anticipates the new high-rises in the city and the carbon expenditure that ensues from such growth. Part of this argument is reproduced below:

«The idea of a grid of towers dropped onto the city originated with the "French" master plan by Architecture Studio in 2004. While this plan, unlike the ones that followed it, hinted at an intertwining of the historic fabric with new high-rises, the latter eventually took precedence over the former. The objective was explicit: "Support the growth and modernization of the city," the very same goal that was behind Gherardo Bosio's plan of 1939. But Architecture Studio's plan was not so much about growth expanding the city as it was a long-term substitution of the existing with another city, another urban growth from within.

The aim of Architecture Studio's plan, and especially what followed, was not to interrupt the urban flow but to encourage

and sustain more flows, more growth, more development. In these terms, the white pyramid is not absurd, capricious, out of place, or badly designed, as many in Tirana seem to think, *but rather rational and in full concordance with the physical and monetary scale and function of a larger yet more camouflaged flow: an intensive large-scale de- and reterritorialization taking place outside the center, yet aesthetically comprehensible only from within that center. The pyramid is an infrastructure for construction at one scale and for erasure at another. It mediates between new carbon flows of up-scale private development and urban mnemonic lobotomies: the erasure of a historic poché of mostly modern villas built in the 1920s and '30s. Between an underground parking garage that attracts carbon expenditure around the center and an amnesiac crowd enacting its pedestrian image through the gardens of native plants, bicycle infrastructure, and reflective sheets of water silently gushing forth from underneath the surfaces of the pyramid clad with local stone, the “restructured” Skanderbeg Square is the noncarbon veil for a hypercarbon space. The white pyramid is the visible manifestation of the invisible “mani sulla citta” (Santi & Rosi, 1963) and the “white mythology” (Derrida, 1974) of an unconscious (or perhaps all too conscious) carbon reality with everlasting social, economic, and political consequences. The real center of the pyramid, its raison d’être, its sustenance, is in what flows outside the pyramid. The pyramid itself is empty (Luarasi, 2019, 79-80)» .*

Such argument should be extended to include the countryside: If the flat pyramid of the Skanderbeg Square retroactively structures and anticipates the archipelagos of towers in the city as well as the mnemonic damage that ensues from such urban growth, then this urban archipelagos retroactively structures and anticipates the unbridled sub-urbanization of the countryside, as well as the ecological damage that ensues from such sub-urban growth.

Archipelagic Utopias

Archipelagos is a post-modern project, and it has a history. It is most explicitly articulated by Oswald Mathias Ungers, Rem Koolhaas and Elias Zenghelis in the sixties, and today by Pier Vittorio Aureli, one of its strongest adherents. *Archipelagos* is based on the performativity of the fragment(s), rather than the whole. In Unger’s and OMA’s famous project of Berlin as a Green Archipelago, postwar Berlin is thought in terms of the “city within the city” (Aureli, 2011, p. 190), or a set of *autonomous* fragments mediated by a grid. The project departs “from modernism’s comprehensive planning to propose a strategic retreat into a composition of finite, limited forms” (p. 218). In the *Archipelagos*’s project, the lack of a coherent whole *defaults* into an internal structure of the city. As Aureli points out with regard to Unger’s work, such structure “reflected the separateness that characterizes city form and became, in its limited

dimension, a representation of the city. [The] ‘city within the city’ was not the creation of an idyllic village as opposed to the fragmentation of the city, but an attempt to reflect the splintering form of the city from within the architectural artifact itself” (p. 190). *Archipelagos* is considered as both a methodology and a constitutive reality of the separateness of the city itself.

The central motivation behind the project of *Archipelagos* is *how to find urban form amid a disposition of unbridled growth and urbanization*. Such mandate, however, was also central for the modern theories of architecture and urban planning. These theories emerged in the nineteenth century as a way to deal both with the expansion of capital and that of diseases... Nietzsche already saw the earth as a body without organs infected by man (Nietzsche, 1969, p. 153)¹. What *form* should the modern city and its architecture take? Not a particular one, because for modernity “*form is nothing*” (Cerdà, 1999, p. 85), to quote Ildefons Cerdà, the great theorist of urbanization. The form should be rather general, that of the organism. Such was the question Cerdà, Camillo Sitte, Hilberseimer, and Le Corbusier asked. The epistemologies of extension and self-generation that laid the ground for such questioning in the first place were already laid out by the enlightenment and critical philosophy in the 18th and 19th century. Yet the formal coherence sought through the epistemological ideal of the organism would prove to be utopian in face of the fragmentary and uneven development of the modern city. In the *Archipelagos*’s project, the lack of an organic whole turns into a generative possibility; the impossibility of utopia becomes a measure of the “project’s realism” (Aureli, 2011, p. 90). Upon close inspection, however, the project of *Archipelagos* is as utopian and non-realistic as ‘modernism’s comprehensive planning’, with the difference that the epistemological and utopian dimension is shifted from the whole to the part: instead of one organicist autonomous whole we have, instead, many organicist autonomous fragments or parts. The latter serve as “city islands” (p. 197) for self-organizing, ideally monastic communities that are dialectically opposed to the infinite flows of capitalist production and “uprooting forces” (p. 215) of urbanization. In the *Archipelagos*’s project, especially in Aureli’s discourse, the architecture of the island acquires almost a vital status, the life quality or character of the community imagined to inhabit the ‘city island’. With regard to Palladio, for instance, Aureli writes that his “architecture extends its influence on the city precisely by being a finite and thus clearly recognizable thing, a ‘species’ - in the sense that the Marxist philosopher Paolo Virno has used the term - consisting of a sole individual that can only be politically reproduced and never be transposed into an omnivorous general program” (p. 82). The building, then, or the island, is

¹“The Earth (he said) has a skin; and this skin has diseases. One of these diseases, for example, is called ‘Man’.

personified and expressed as an individual, a conscious and political entity that is dialectically juxtaposed with other ‘individuals’, or individual looking-like objects. Here there is a surreptitious empathy or projection of the epistemological, political or aesthetic subjectivity onto the (architectural) object. Such empathy is the hallmark of style, despite the vehement rejection of it by Aureli and all those bent toward an ideological reading of architecture. That there is (a desire for) style is not a problem...; on the contrary, one can never be outside style; one starts and ends *in* style. But disavowing style and the technical density it entails in favor of an ideological dogma is a problem, insofar as it deforms current reality by simplifying it, and pre-empting future realities, more precisely that very realism that the dogma claims to *pro-ject*.

The so called ‘fragments’, ‘parts’ or ‘city-islands’ are rarely, if ever, autonomous. Or rather, their very perception as such depends on their *not* being autonomous. The ‘autonomous’ superblocs of Vienna that Aureli admires *so* much are not really autonomous from the planning standards of the city like Aureli seems to think. Instead, they are autonomous precisely because there are planning standards and institutional normativities that ensure the *image* of autonomy. Take the *Shallvare* and *Agimi* apartment buildings in Tirana, which are very similar in form, scale and spirit to the Viennese superblocs. After the nineties, their wonderful courtyards were violated and appropriated by in-formal constructions. Their ‘autonomy’ was obliterated precisely because of the lack of institutional planning standards and normativities that could have saved their formal autonomy from the non-normative capitalist greed of post-communist Albania; more precisely, by the lack of that very liberal and democratic institutional tradition that Aureli wants to be autonomous from. At a suburban level, it is really the gated neighborhoods, and not the communitarian collectives, that are the autonomous ‘islands’ of the archipelagos. They are *literally* autonomous at the expense of an equally literal nonexistence of a shared urban space, and precisely because such islands are *de jure* autonomous from those very planning standards and normativities that regulate and calibrate the urban form.

What happens outside and in-between the islands? Here, the Archipelagos’s protagonists give an answer that is as utopian as it is naïve: in between the islands there is a “sea” (p. 225) of “nothingness,” (p. 226) or a “green” (p. 226) zone with gardens, left to the islands’ inhabitants or those who “choose to live [...] more informal[ly] and temporar[ily]” (p. 226). Such being-left-by-itself-as-a-sea-of-nothingness is indexed by the empty grid. Who are the people inhabiting such grid? The rich and *sans culotte* farming organic tomatoes together? Such naively yet deliberately unthought space is nothing less than a calculated victim or the ‘damage control’ of the dialectics of the project: “...the ‘green’ between the islands serves as an antithesis to the ‘cityness’ of the islands. While the islands [are]

imagined as the city, the area in between is intended to be the opposite: a world in which any idea or form of the city [is] deliberately left to its dissolution” (p. 225) In reality, such in-between space is dissolved all right...; the uneven distribution of capital takes care of that ‘dexterously’, as if ‘by itself’... It is the very same ‘sea’ dissolved into ‘nothingness’ from the outskirts of an ‘orientally’ formless Tirana to the ‘post-industrially’ formless landscape between New Haven and New York as seen from Metro-North. Rem Koolhaas is wrong when he claims that we have not paid sufficient attention to the countryside (Koolhaas, 2020, para. 1). It is not a matter of the city versus the countryside, but rather of expensive normative islands both in the city and countryside *on the one hand*, and an impoverished non-normative ‘sea of nothingness’ *on the other*.

Unconscious Anticipation

What is at stake here is how the archipelago’s claims are reified into their opposite: how the islands of collective living become, in reality, gated communities; how the ‘sea of nothingness’ ends up being a collateral damage of urbanization; how its conceptual claims for a “collective dimension of the city” (Aureli, 2011, p. 197) anticipates the segregated global archipelagos of the 21st century. More generally, what is at stake here is how the predisposition of urban form may eventually be different from its conceptual and ideological content, and how the latter may retroactively sustain and anticipate the former, despite their difference. As Leonardo Benevolo points out, the urban forms of the industrial age well predated the advent of industrial machines:

«*Examples of Baroque town-planning and particularly certain illustrious buildings of the first half of the eighteenth century, are often impressive anticipations of the spatial dimension of the modern town (one can imagine the avenues of Versailles transformed into the “boulevards” of a late nineteenth-century town, just as the radiating avenues of the Champs Elysées became the basis for Haussmann’s Etoile) whereas the time factor, which was to be so important in the new urban society, remained totally foreign to them*» (Benevolo, 1971, p. 12).

In light of such hypothesis, Benevolo distinguishes between the town planning practices and the political commitment of their protagonists. Though a Marxist himself, Benevolo is critical of those Marxist approaches who saw planning as a result rather than a trigger of social change. He points out that Haussmann, who, on a political level belonged to the reactionary regime of Napoleon III, in his planning practice he served the public. What is at stake here is the unconscious anticipation of a future through criteria that do not conform to what that future was originally imagined or intended to be, the gap between the ideological *orientation* and the *technicality* of practice, as well as the disposition of the latter to skew or invert the former.

Can we identify and change anticipation before it manifests

itself? Is it possible for archipelagos to anticipate a (city) form other than one with segregated islands in a sea of nothingness? What does such update of the concept of archipelagos involve? In “The White Pyramid” I argue that “our anticipation is structured by technics and our thoughts are exteriorized by technical tendencies, even before we have them. We do not choose such tendencies, any more than we do our name, our mother tongue, our social security number. Rather we are thrown into it” (Luarasi, 2019, p. 81). Unconscious anticipation is a “function of exteriorization” (Stiegler, 2008, p. 215). Such ‘fate’, however, is not absolutely determined, precisely insofar as it is technical, thus being open to the indeterminations and “equivocities of the techniques involved in the process of exteriorization” (p. 81). The technics in question consists of both design techniques involved in the modeling and making of architecture, as all as planning techniques or protocols involved in the making and planning of cities.

The question, then, is how the technics involved in the making of architecture and the city can change the conceptual and ideological terms of the Archipelagos’s project. Or in Bachelardian terms: how can the *common* intuition of the conceptual terms be transformed into a *worked* intuition. With regard to the concept of the line, for instance, Bachelard writes: “The common intuition of the line is a ‘totalitary’ intuition which has wrongly accumulated an excess of teleology on the trace of the line: the line is thus determined not only step by step as it should be but from its origin to its end” (Bachelard, 1940, p. 95, quoted in Gandelonas, 2000, p. 120). A line that is determined ‘step by step’ is the parametric curve, or the spline as it is colloquially called today. The parametric curve is a relational mathematical concept that controls - to put it simply - the way the geometry of the curvature changes in time. Whether a line is (intuitively perceived) as straight or curved it obeys the same the parametric relation. Such concept is not new and predates Bachelard; in his essay “Dialectics: Quantity and Quality” in *Anti-Dühring* Frederick Engels announces precisely such scientific model:

«...people who in other respects show a fair degree of common sense may regard this statement (that is, contradiction = absurdity) as having the same self-evident validity as the statement that a straight line cannot be a curve and a curve cannot be straight. But regardless of all protests made by common sense, the differential calculus under certain circumstances nevertheless equates straight lines and curves, and thus obtains results which common sense, insisting on the absurdity of straight lines being identical with curves, can never attain» (Engels, 1959, p. 165).

The apparent difference between a straight line and curve is an ideological distortion that can be explained by calculus. Engels suggests a ‘parametric’ *Model* that generalizes what we ‘wrongly’ perceive to be different shapes. “Contradiction = ab-

surdity” is only on the level of appearance: ontologically the straight line and the curve are the same even if they appear to be different.

Working the archipelagos

In light of such distinction one could *work* the concept of archipelagos. The islands do not have to necessarily look like islands, and the ‘sea of nothingness’ does not have to look like a rectangular grid. The islands could consist of relations that yield different forms at different building, district or territorial scales. The grid, on the other hand, is an ordering concept that can take different shapes, not just the rectangular one. The ‘finite’ architectural form does not have to be a ‘militantly’ rectangular building that ‘looks dialectically’ to other islands or the void of urbanization. Instead its form can be informed by different geometrical, economic and technological protocols that structure both what is perceived as an island and a ‘sea of nothingness’. The city, or ‘cityness’ cannot stand in a dialectical opposition to urbanization. Rather the latter structures the former. The city, both in its formal and collective dimension, is what might yield from the processes of urbanization while remaining distinct from them. The finiteness of architecture cannot stand in a dialectical and oppositional relationship to the forces and flows of urbanization; it rather yields from a process of *creatively* framing those very forces and flows through different technicities. Thinking about islands and an acupunctural urbanism does not relieve us from thinking about the whole. Indeed, what seems to be at stake today, in these limitless pan-demic times is precisely the *re-working*, *re-acquirement* or *retrieval* of the very concept of the whole, both beyond a nineteenth century organicism and postmodern fragmentary dispersions. Such concept must be *re-worked* in light of both new and existing technical paradigms and their intertwining.

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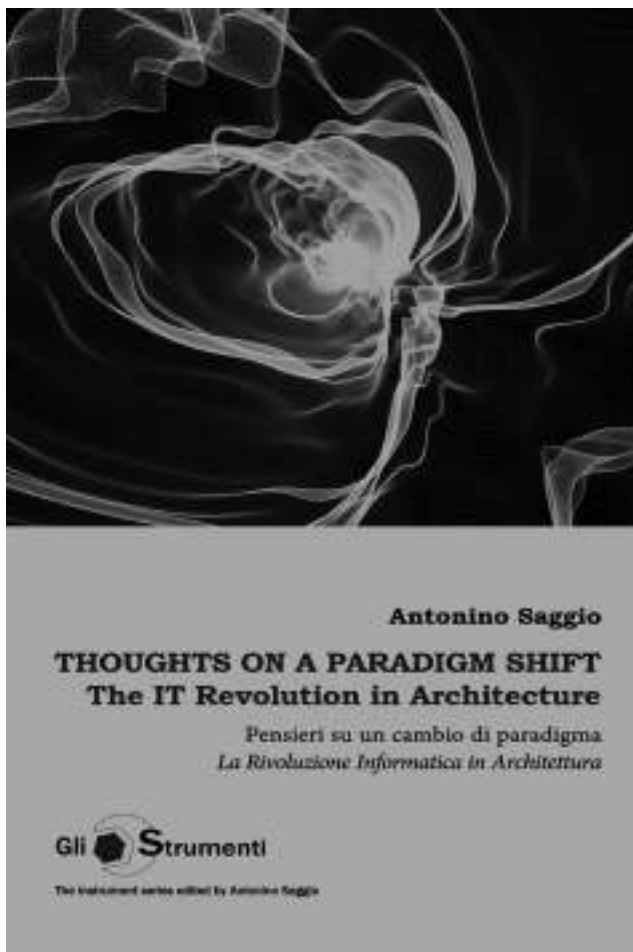
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Thoughts on a Paradigm Shift/ the IT Revolution in Architecture

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Author: Antonino Saggio

Publisher: Lulu.com – ‘Gli Strumenti’ series

Pages: 318

Year: 2020

ISBN: 978-1-716-98581-2

How can we define the IT paradigm in Architecture? Which are the substances that can guide us through the discovery of a new aesthetic in the discipline? Also, how can architects catalyze these new enzymes to position themselves into a shift of historical significance? These are just some of the main questions that are contained in the book *Thoughts on a Paradigm Shift/ The IT Revolution in Architecture* written by Antonino Saggio, full professor of architectural design and information technology at Sapienza - University of Rome.

This edition is a new version of the original manuscript that was firstly published in Italian in 2007 (*Introduzione alla Rivoluzione Informatica in Architettura*), and then translated in English in 2013 by Stephen Jackson, and presents itself merging for the first times the two previous releases. Not by chance, it is also enriched by a series of colored panels that aim to show the impact that this text had over the last 15 years on at least two generations of young architects. Indeed, before exploring the structure of the book, and describing some of the inner concepts that build the narration of Antonino Saggio, it is important to contextualize the cultural humus at the time of its first publication.

At the beginning of the 2000s, a whole generation of young professionals was deeply inspired by the possibilities of applying the IT technologies to the architectural discipline; young practitioners and re-searchers such as Marcos Novak, Greg Lynn, Kas Oosterhuis, Ben van Berkel, Makoto Sei Watanabe, etc. were some of the main actors that were deeply involved in experimenting with digital tools and in exploring the limits of the latter in the contemporary architectural debate.

Besides their important efforts, all the investigations until that time were fragmented and punctual and struggled to succeed in creating a theoretical framework that could sustain and legiti-

mize their field of interests and activities.

When the first edition of Saggio's book was published, the intention of the author was indeed to fill this enormous gap and to provide to all the young 'digital architects' solid bases in which they could recognize themselves and position their works and aspirations. The author clears this inner intent the Foreword itself where he states that 'our relationship with information technology is structural, cultural, and formal at the same time'. This is an iconic passage of the whole book because it underlines the need of a complete shift (a paradigm shift) regarding the way that until that moment architects have been approaching the IT tools: not indeed an instrumental knowledge, but a holistic understanding of new substances that could define specific mental categories that could lead us to understand the central position of the link between the IT revolution and architecture in the contemporary culture.

Furthermore, the book is permeated by two main strong concepts that clarify the thesis contained in it and act like road companions for the reader. Firstly, a Kuhnian vision of the history where the emergence of new scientific discoveries generates severe moments of discontinuity in the history and mankind and lays the foundations for the rise of a new paradigm that unveils new trajectories putting into crisis the precedent one until reaching an epochal and revolutionary shift. Secondly, the certainty that – following the thought of the Italian critic Bruno Zevi and the French sociologist Jean Baudrillard – at the core of the architectural discipline there is the concept of the 'crisis' intended as the element able to give rise to aesthetics of rupture and to generate a newborn (timeless) 'modernity'.

According to Saggio, if we want to generate new modernity, able to embrace the changes generated in the surrounding world by the emergence of IT technologies we need to bravely accept to put in crisis our inner structures, to shake our mental world from its founding, and to trace a sign in the ground (like in the famous myth of the foundation of Rome) to firmly position ourselves inside or outside this debate. With a closer look at the structure of the book, the most attentive reader will notice a very original composition for a volume of this kind. The index develops more like a website than a paper publication, where every single chapter is a system of hyperlinks that allows everyone to jump from a chapter to another without forcibly following a linear progression, and this decision stands within an inner operative and conceptual coherence of the author.

Like the bright LEGO bricks mentioned in the opening of the book by the author as an important event of his childish life, every single section is organized with the main intent to put the reader in an active position to build and un-build the narration in the way he prefers. The latter can then follow different links and different directions when discovering the text; one can skip from the first chapter "Substances" directly to the last one "Synthesis", or one can start the reading directly from the

interesting final section "For Further Study", without losing any single fundamental passage in the narration but, instead, building for himself a personal journey through the important implications of the IT Revolution in Architecture.

The opening section, "Substances", has the important role of opening Saggio's digression. In light of the famous quote by Edoardo Persico - "Architecture substance of hoped things" - it defines some fundamental substances that architects have to understand and make their own to trigger new thoughts regarding the future shape of architecture in the times of the IT Revolution. The three interconnected words 'communication', 'city', and 'landscape', are then analyzed not through a mere scale-jump but, rather, on how they can be inserted in the logic of the informatics paradigm and continuously interrelated using the through the dynamic interconnections such paradigm allows.

The second part, "Theoretical Aspects", goes deeper in this examination and, through the fundamental concept of information as the 'application of a convention to a datum', the notions of 'space', 'time', and 'model' are analyzed under the lens of cultural implications they are facing through the impact of the IT Revolution. Specifically, the last one, the model, is the main actor of this triptych, because it is unveiled under a new simulative, generative, and interactive, meaning where the dynamic interconnections are its inner core and where the two precedents terms - space and time - are continuously questioned not by a mechanistic conception, but rather by an Einsteinian relativity framework.

The last two chapters, "New Spaces of Interactivity" and "Summary", get into the heart of the architectural material and the need to give shape and aesthetic to the consequences of the IT Revolution in Architecture. According to the author, every paradigm shift has its catalyst able to condense its enzymes and gives birth to an 'aesthetic of rupture' from the previous times. If in the case of the Industrial Revolution, transparency was the main catalyst - and Saggio magnificently explains this concept through the example of Walter Gropius's Bauhaus - the catalyst of the IT paradigm is interactivity that can be used to catalyze all the hints of an 'informatizable architectures' where information and dynamic interconnections become the raw material of architecture (for who might have any doubt about it, go and see the Diller and Scofidio's work 'Blur', still one of the most convincing examples of total 'space as information container').

As part of a young generation of critics that formed itself with Antonino Saggio, let me underline two main things that I believe we are author's debt. On the one hand, the recurrence in the contemporary architectural debate of a Zevi-influenced 'operative critic' that slowly disappeared in the last decades either from the main debate platforms but also in the academic world. With many years of international teaching activities,

Antonino Saggio reminded us that the main objective of the critic is to unveil the inner dynamics within the discipline of architecture, and to write – and think architecture – through the lens of the necessity of the ‘making’ and not only through Machiavellian thoughts that confuse and picture the architect as a demiurge, owner of a not-transferrable knowledge.

The author does this specifically through an operative and historical-critical method where history itself is understood and used not as an inert material but as a generative substance that could foster and trigger future and speculative thoughts.

On the other hand, what I think it is fundamental to underline is the endless hope that Antonino Saggio places in the younger generations. Following the teachings of Bruno Zevi and its iconic ‘now you continue, you, you’, the author aims not to create disciples or faded versions of himself. He aims for emancipating the researchers and practitioners to trace their path starting from the multiple messages that he left in his books. It is not by chance, indeed, that the books of his series ‘The IT Revolution in Architecture’ - whose releases are inserted through color pages within this new edition - are mostly written by young architects that used those volumes to outline for themselves possible research paths and directions.

Furthermore, it is in small details that you can understand the importance of things, and the final section of the book For Further Study is exactly that. Differently, from the canonic ‘reference section’, the closing of this volume is a hidden treasure that helps the reader to open new chapters that, otherwise, would risk passing unnoticed. Coherently with the hypertextual structure of the whole book, it is another link that one can decide to open or not, it is another chance for emancipating ourselves from the simplifications of the current critic (divided too often between the rhetoric of the ‘loss’ and the ‘new’) and to go deeper in the inner components of things through those dynamic connections of which this book is one of the main poles itself.

Të kompozosh Arkitekturën

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Author: Francesco Purini

Publisher: POLIS_Press

Pages: 198

Year: 2019

ISBN: 978-9928-4459-3-3

The book *Të kompozosh Arkitekturën* is an adaptation in the Albanian language, in 2019, of the book *Comporre l'architettura* by the architect Franco Purini, published for the first time in 2000 by the publishing house Laterza. The adaptation in Albanian was published by POLIS_Press, the publishing house of Polis University.

Franco Purini immediately states that «*the book is an attempt to reveal some personal views on the topic of architectural composition*», continuing with the explanation that in this book «*the unfolding of topics and instruments of architecture is intentionally empirical, sometimes repeated, sometimes interrupted, perhaps even completely untreated; often simplified to the schematic.*». The author himself states that this writing is radically influenced by his academic and professional experience. Here it can be added that the book strongly relates to the personal experience of Purini, which was formed in the context of major clashes at first glance, but which tacitly tried to create new social, political, economic, architectural balances. The text consists of about fifty-five paragraphs. After an introduction on the current situation and urgent issues, finds place a discourse the topics of composition, design, light, space, materials, drawing, ideas-instruments and typology in architecture, to then conclude with one of the most important paragraphs of the author that is the building of a linguistic affiliation where the individual will of the architect is expressed to transform the world in order to improve the living conditions in it . The treatment of topics is empirical and seeks to focus the attention of architects on the permanent themes of architecture without fear of confronting them with the situation we live in. These arguments always have been within the academic and intellectual debate affecting the sphere of doing architecture, but after WWII appeared to be eclipsed by the one oriented approach

towards the centrality of the image and transition of the reality.

The biggest conflict that appears in the pages of the book is between the sustainable aspects of architectural form and the currents that seek to transform it by adapting it to the fashions of the time. The author seeks to publish in his book what exactly are these aspects that have been consistent on the history and essence of architecture .

The main conflict between the formal sustainability of architecture and transitory transformations derived from the pervasive and persuasive information is solved by proposing some ideas-instruments, positioned between theory and practice. They can be used to give space a formal character, able to guarantee the "eternity" that man seeks to achieve through his work. The book is positioned at the level of a manifesto and architectural treatise at the level of *Vers un architecture*, *De Architettura* or *De re edificatoria*. It cannot be read as a continuous book but should be consulted based on the topics it touches on by going into the finer details of the architecture. The book was published for the first time in 2000, in the heart of globalised architecture dominated by the figure of the archistar, requires unfolded inside them that can be called aspects and formal values that have permeated architecture since its birth up nowadays, but dominated by pervasive and persuasive information, it tends to obscure by favoring an alarming visual hegemony. As was mentioned some paragraphs earlier, the text is influenced by the academic, professional and personal experience of the author.

It should be noted here that the architectural vision of Franco Purini, who clearly appears in the pages of this text, is influenced by architects and intellectuals such as Manfredo Tafuri, Vittorio Gregotti or even Maurizio Sacripanti. This influence is evident in the modern approach that Purini has mastered by grafting them into a deep sensitivity to the great transformations of postmodern reality, to produce a personal linguistic itinerary that contains the lessons learned from the mistakes of modernity. but also the stratifications, clashes, contradictions, conflicts, instabilities that postmodernism unfolded in the Western world starting in the 1970s. This book is recommended for all professionals and for all those who want to study architecture to understand the state of architecture in the current period and what are its constituent elements with which it is built today. This book is useful for understanding how to intervene in the constructed reality in order to improve the living situation. The weak point appears in the linguistic articulation and the depth of the concepts often presented in a single sentence, which for the non-maximally professional reader constitute difficulties in reading. The strong point of this book is the attempt to combine theory with construction practice and to give it the colors of a lost organicity which considers the building as a body that cannot be mutilated or transformed by the temporary currents that pass through every age of humanity. This is clearly shown at the end of the book where the author states in relations

to the transformation of the building that "whatever it is done, the building is, however, the display of a unit, of something that has a presence and recognition and that for this becomes an individual between human individuals. And in this resemblance lies one of the truest meanings of the composition of architecture. *«In this sense, the creation of an architecture that resists time and fashion for being "eternal", as human desire, is the main message the book seeks to convey.»*

Imagining a Vertical Forest

Endrit Marku

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“A tower carved with niches of trees. A monumental piece of architecture and an apparent intelligent solution, pleasing everyone, the egos of architects and developers, their wealth too, but also their desire for a public display of social responsibility. The building shadows the old land-consuming city that paved the path for the relentless earth’s anthropization. This tower aspires to become one with nature, claiming a place among the planet’s remaining forests, and it feels special, fresh.

Before it, there were just the mountain forests, the Babylonian gardens, Chernobyl’s abandoned khrushchyovka’s or even the potted flowers on grandma’s terrace. It is made of concrete, earth’s alienated son. Labyrinths of pipes pumping water upstream, for the trees to survive, are an improved version of nature’s streams. The missing fertilizers can be bought in any hypermarket. The imagined architecture is a simulacrum of already built simulacra precariously floating without foundations in illusory perpetuity.”

Drawing. Original artwork by Endrit Marku

