Etleva DOBJANI, Ivana BARANDOVSKI, Olgica NELKOVSKA

QUALITY OF LIFE CHANGES THE QUALITY OF SPACE:
CASE STUDY TIRANA, ALBANIA

Housing Research of the Apartment Units in Tirana compared to the Balkan context

Recensent PhD. Loris Rossi
Redaktor letrar Kleitia Vaso

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REVIEW ○
PhD. LORIS ROSSI

"QUALITY OF LIFE CHANGES THE QUALITY OF SPACE: CASE STUDY TIRANA, ALBANIA.
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In this book the three authors, Etleva Dobjani, Ivana Barandovski and Olgica Nelkovska wish to explore how the analysis of a dwelling's spatial configuration and the related quality of space – but also the needs of citizens expressed through the configuration of living space - can be used as a tools to read, interpret and understand the social and political context. The research takes into account almost twenty-five years of Eastern-European history in terms of political and social status, highlighting the influences that these conditions had on the layout and size of the collective buildings' dwellings. Specifically, the authors analyze condominiums built during the communist and post-communist periods in Tirana and compare them to the general layout and characteristics of similar building typologies built in the former Yugoslavian cities of Belgrade and Skopje, where we can find apparently similar dwelling typologies.

In terms of an analytical methodology the authors selected fourteen flats in different collective buildings built before and after the 1990's in Tirana and they compared them through graphical qualitative analysis and by means of questionnaires addressed directly to the users and focused on the evaluation of the quality of space as is it perceived by the direct users. This part of the research revealed how the issues of dimensional standards and comfort levels are still not aligned with European standards.

I believe that this research will be useful to the Graduate students of the Schools of Architecture and Planning as it offers an analytical approach that can help them understand the quality of dwelling space in relation to the related contemporary social context. I recommend this book also to all researchers interested in a spatial analysis of Eastern-European collective buildings built in the second half of the Twentieth Century. As a recommendation for further development of this research I suggest an inquiry of the way in which "quality of space can influence quality of life"and not vice versa.

ABSTRACT

Since 1940, Albania has undergone numerous political and economic changes which have conditioned the concept of living, human and social rights, and architecture. Multifamily housing in Tirana went from a state-directed concept of collective housing to informality and private/ individual investments scattered throughout the city. The shift in the political system, the transition from a centrally-planned to a market-oriented economy, freedom of movement, among other factors, have altered the way of living and have affected the concepts and conditions in the design of housing units in Tirana. The quality of life and the quality of living space are deeply connected and residents' habits and behavior are conditioned by their housing space. Today, as in the past, different influences and needs shape living space. Housing could potentially serve as a central point in recording and analyzing the city's social and cultural changes. Through the

provision of interwoven social, cultural, and housing concepts and regulations, the intention is to show the relation between the subject's needs at a particular time as reflected in the living space of the apartment. This research aims at elaborating on the differences in the quality of life in relation to the quality of space and its distribution and organization in typical condominium units of the communist and post-communist period in Tirana. Through parallel examples in the neighboring country of Yugoslavia, later in Serbia and Macedonia, changes in context and condominium structure shared differences and similarities at a regional scale.

Key words: housing research, apartment unit, quality of life, quality of space, Tirana

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INTRODUCTION

During the past decades, Albania has experienced various political, economic, and social changes which have left their mark in the physical space as well, especially in the housing sector. The way in which the concept of the apartment has changed in Tirana during the communist and, later, the post-communist period and how this transition relates to the residents' needs is the main topic of this research study.

In other urban studies on Tirana, topics such as urban transformation processes, property rights, informality, illegal construction and extensions of the 1990's, have been treated by authors like Aliaj, 2003, Misja, 2004, and Kolevica, 2004. However, there were not a lot of studies on the analysis of the single apartment unit, its interior, distributional and organizational concept changes (with the exception of "Design Basis of the Residential Houses", Daja, 1986 from the communist period), which were the factors that led to these alterations, and on the impact

the differences in contemporary social needs have on the interior space of collective housing units. The importance of studying the "inside" of the apartment units in Tirana rests in the knowledge of the space which influences the everyday life of its residents. This study illustrates the way in which the two different periods of the city's development conditioned apartment design layouts and this impact's relation to real people's need for space, a need which, in the end, shapes the final structure of the living units.

The concept of quality of life in connection to living space and living unit is complex, because it includes various environmental and social factors. Living space affects people's behavior, changes their perspectives upon life, and therefore the meaning of this relationship is truly important and deserves serious attention. Neither in the past nor in the present in Albania has this relationship been treated with care from the users or the architect's point of view.

Sheshi Wilson, Tirana 2012


Beauty
OXXO

The research aims at elaborating on the changes in the quality of life in relation to the quality of space and its distribution and organization in typical condominium units of the communist and post-communist period in Tirana by investigating representative examples of the two periods of Tirana's development. It includes the analyses of 14 key study apartment units and interviews with architects working in Tirana's housing sector, both before and after the 1990's (Luarasi, Shtylla, Sardella, *Dea studio* office) and all of this information is placed in the Balkan context – specifically, the Yugoslavia of the past and Belgrade (Serbia) and Skopje (Macedonia) of the present.

The paper is organized in 5 main chapters. The first part defines the concept of the quality of life versus the concept of quality of space. At the beginning of the last century, the concept of buildings and the morphological patterns of its internal spaces of the 'the elementary unit', became an important topic and were studied from many architects, like: Frank Ll. Wright, Adolf Loos, Le Corbusier, Mies van der Rohe, Walter Gropius, Richard Neutra, Alvar Aalto, Paul Rudolph, Herman Hertzberger, Tadao Ando, Glenn Marcutt, etc. Being in the center of the reflection, some researchers had attempted to give some definition and standardization for the elaboration of the plans and the design of the minimal living spaces inside the houses, through some graphical examples, creating so far some famous manuals such as: A. Klein (1927-1934) with 'Graphical method for the elaboration of plants and design of minimal spaces of the house. New methods of

investigation'; E. Neufert, (1936) with 'Bauentwurfslehre'; I. Diotallevi and F. Marescotti, (1942-1943) with 'The constructive, social and economic problems of the inhabit'; M. Ridolfi (1946) with 'Architects Manual'.

In the beginning '90, F. Cellini published 'The technical, constructive and graphical standards for the conduction of an exercise project on the housing theme', etc. Their work aimed to contribute in the improvement of the quality of the 'used' space inside the house using the space in the most efficient way, through the standardization of some schemes plans of the living units in order to be used as a reference point from the other architects.

In our research, being award of other studies, we are looking at the understanding of the way of living in the 'elementary units' of our cities not only through distribution and organization of the standardized plans schemes but also understanding, as architects of nowadays, the human psychology inside of these 'typical condominium units' and their social relationships, networks and emotional support.

We focused our reflection in the studies in Doxiadis, 1970, Allardt, 1993, and also in the work of Souza 2003, and Giulia, Bizzotto, 2011. Constantinos Apostolou Doxiadis, a Greek architect and urban planner, with a doctorate from the Technical University of Berlin, who published in 1970 'Ekistics, the Science of Human Settlements'. He considered the human settlements as living organisms capable of evolution that might be guided by Man using 'Ekistic knowledge'. The term Ekistics applies to the science of human settlements. It includes regional, city, community planning

and dwelling design. It involves the study of all kinds of human settlements, with a view to **geography** and **ecology — the physical environment** — and human psychology and **anthropology**, and cultural, political, and occasionally aesthetics. As a scientific mode of study is currently being found to rely on statistics and description, organized in five ekistic elements: **nature**, **anthropos**, **society, shells, and networks**. It is generally a more scientific field than urban planning, and has considerable overlap with some of the less restrained fields of architectural theory. In application, conclusions drawn aimed at achieving harmony between the inhabitants of a settlement and their physical and socio-cultural environments.

Erik Allardt, being very famous with his research of 'Having, loving, being' made in 1993, related to the welfare studies and very used also in the framework of Eurofound's European Quality of Life Survey. His research deals with the people's 'basic needs' not only to the material resources and living conditions needed for a basic standard of living (such as income, housing and health), as well as people's need for social relationships, networks, emotional support and social integration.

The second one reflects on the main urban, social, and political conditions that defined development in Tirana from the 1930's to the present day and the state of architecture during this time period. In sub chapters, the context of ex-Yugoslavia and present day Serbia (Belgrade) and Macedonia (Skopje) is mentioned. The third part explains the methodology used in selecting the apartment examples and the types of analyses conducted. The fourth chapter shows the analysis of Tirana key study examples, compared to the Yugoslavian and Belgrade/Skopje conditions, as well as findings and conclusions of the process. These analyses are divided into several thematic units which are individually elaborated in the sub-chapters of this part. After the comparative analysis, in the conclusion (fifth part of the paper), the findings clarify how the principle compositions of living units have changed, namely the factors which conditioned these alterations, the ways in which this relates to the user's behavior and perceptions in order to understand the condition of contemporary Tirana in relation to the Balkan context, the resident's needs and disadvantages of current or past housing concepts.

② QUALITY OF LIFE / QUALITY OF SPACE

"The amount of space needed in a home depends on basic lifestyle needs and the number of people living there. People and their lifestyles change over time and homes need to be able to change with them." *(Roberts-Hughes, 2011)*The relation between the "Quality of life" and "Quality of living space", how they are connected to each other and how they have changed over time, will be one of the main topics of interest in this research. First we have to define these terms in relation to the previously done researches in this field.

Constantinos A. Doxiadis, a researcher whose work is mainly focused on analyzing the quality of life in living settlements, in the article "Ekistics, the Science of Human Settlements" elaborates on how we can make a judgment about the quality of architectural space: " A judgment about quality can be made in several ways in terms of **the**

relation of each individual to his/her environment - that is, the individual's relation to nature, society, shells, and networks - **and the benefit that he/she gets from these contacts.** We can measure his relations to air and to its quality, to water in his home, in the river or lake, and at sea (its quality and his access to it), and to land resources (their beauty and accessibility) and the recreational and functional facilities provided by them; and **we can express judgments based on the measurements of many physical and social aspects of the cities**." *(Doxiadis, 1970)*

The concept of quality of life related to the living space and living unit is complex, because it includes various environmental and social factors. If we look at history, the perception of the architectural space has been changed not only according to its size, but also in terms of its structure as well as its adaptation to the change by the elements that are part of it. The activities that the users

are able to have inside the living area, the environmental normative, and the architectural space has become much more complex throughout time.

"The elements that determine the quality of the living space more precisely **the quality parameters of perception, that influence the stimulus conditions, enrichment, and culture that define the psychological well-being …** are parameters which are more difficult to be defined of quantitative parameters - air, temperature, humidity and electro clime - as it is not detected by instrumentation objective but by the sensory capacity of the individual. The senses mainly "know", define the space around through differences of stimulus: hot / cold; light / shadow; near / far; smooth / rough etc. This peculiarity of human sensitivity indicates to us the first guiding element for the creation of an area as a source of stimulus, a design approach that moves away from the monotony, the reassuring approval to tap into the polyphony of the varieties of form - color - space." *(Souza, 2003)*

One of the approaches in evaluating the quality of life is directly related to the home unity and its relation to the surrounding environment. **By analyzing the evolution of our homes we can speak about the qualitative changes in societies as well.**

The research about the Comparative Scandinavian Welfare Study of 1972 conducted by Erick Allardt introduces three basic sets of needs of the inhabitants which determine and influence their quality of life; these basic set of needs are: "having, loving and being". **The**

first dimension of the quality of life, "having" refers to the material needs which define a certain standard of living and include the need for economic resources, such as income and wealth, housing conditions, employment and working conditions, as well as the need for good health and education. The other two parameters, "loving" and "being" are determined mostly by the social relation between individuals as well as their personal engagement and position in the society to which they belong*(Giulia Bizzotto, 2011)*. In this sense, the quality of living space, as a physical dimension, plays a very important role in defining and moderating the residents' standard of living.

The two main approaches for the evaluation of the quality of life according to Allardt are: the "welfares approach" (based on individual experience) and the "non-welfares approach" (based on objective conditions rather than subjective), *(Allardit, 2003)*, explained in his concept of "Having, Loving & Being" summarized in the Bizzotto research. Considering this, we will try to identify how these two factors influence in drawing objective conclusions about the relation between the transformation of architectural conditions in the private living spaces and the residents' individual relation to them, influenced by the ongoing political and social changes.

As we can conclude that the quality of life usually shows both an objective and a subjective facet, finding the right balance between these two approaches which determine it and their influence on the evolution of private living space and its quality will be our main topic of interest.

Tirana 2008

3.1 Tirana_Urban, Social and Political Development

According to the resolutions of the Congress of Lushnja, Tirana became the temporary capital of Albania on February 9, 1920 and, only in 1925, it was declared the capital of Albania by the Constitutional Assembly. (Frashëri, 2011)From 1945 until 1990, Albania was under a communist totalitarian system which isolated it from the rest of the world. Private property became state owned and the country's development was focused more on the industrialization of the countryside and the creation of small and medium industrial towns to minimize urban costs.

From 1945 to 1990, urbanization in Albania was enforced and controlled. In the first phase of the communist period, as a consequence of the WWII, the housing demand was high. Also the establishment of the working class increased the urban population which simultaneously influenced the increasing need for solutions to residential issues.

Tirana before '90

Until 1960 urbanization was encouraged along with industrialization and the formation of working class, but in the 1960s, migration to cities was discouraged by policies promoting the development of smaller towns and by forbidding people to settle beyond established city boundaries, the so-called "yellow lines".

'After 1945, the whole country was known as the poorest and the most undeveloped one in Europe. The economic development was more focused on the higher levels of economic growth. There was a rapid but erratic growth up to the end of 1960, followed by a continuous decline in the 1970s, the worst ever recorded situation during 1984-85, a further decrease of economic activities during 1987 – 1988, a total economic collapse at the brink of and during the early 1990s.' (Aliaj, 2003, p. 25)

Housing, as every other system, was planned and implemented by state institutions and there were no free professionals (architects or urban planners) who were

designing or investing in housing projects privately. In 1947, the National State Institute of Studies, Design and Town Planning, later known as the Institute of Architecture and Town Planning, or ZUP[1] (*Office of Urban planning and Design*) was established in Tirana.

By the late '80s the name of the Institution was changed to the "National Urban Planning Institute" and it was divided in two units: the Architectural and Urban Design unit and the Urban Planning Department. While several research and professional institutes were established for the implementation of the different projects on different sectors and construction, the housing projects were implemented by the NSHN - Housing Directors and State Construction Services Companies, using a great number of volunteers such as residents, students, solders, labor force members, etc.

The concept of the open market was not recognized in Albania until 1990, and the flats were not sold to tenants as late as 1993. *(Aliaj, 2003)*

Designed by the Institute, the apartment layouts were exclusively standardized and divided in different groups/ types according to the number of bedrooms (1+1, 2+1 and 3+1 structures) and the standards could vary only as adjustments to different locations and their climatic conditions. There have been two bylaws which defined the design project for collective and private residential housing during the communist regime period. The first one was that of 1977 - 'Regulations for the apartment project' which was then reviewed and changed in 1989, in 'New Design Normative'.

Before the '90s, a typical apartment unit was composed of a living room (10-15 m^2), bedroom (6, 12 or 14 m^2), kitchen (3,4 – 4,2 m^2), one toilet in every apartment type/size (3,5 – 4.2 m^2), storage room (0,9 m^2), balcony and connecting corridors. For every investment the main issue was to spend *as little money as possible* which resulted in great number of residents living in one small apartment.

The flats 1+1 were conceived for 3 people, 2 parents and 1 child, but with the growing number of children this kind of apartments was housing even 5 or more people. (Luarasi, 2012) The same was happening with the 2+1 apartments. Until1983, the average of the apartments built based on their typology was 70% for 1+1 flats, 25% for 2+1 and only 5% for 3+1. These data changed after 1983 in that 50 % of the flats constructed were 1+1 and 50% were 2+1 and 3+1 because of a growing request for bigger apartments. (Prushi, 2012)

The idea was to construct more horizontally than vertically, so most of the housing constructions were apartment buildings three, four or five-story high in the city's urban areas. In the countryside dwellings of two to three floors or small state farm blocks were built.

Several housing project types were defined by the *Institute of Design*[1]. The development of the construction materials industry allowed for the standardization of buildings and their constant repetition throughout the city.

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1. This is some short version of National State Institute of Studies, Design and Town Planning, later known as the Institute of Architecture and Town Planning, or ZUP (Office of Urban planning and Design), established in Tirana.

Palace in Dibra Street, designed by Maks Velo in 1971

Similar schemes were repeated across the country as well. This phenomenon of the standardization of the apartment space's design also included the standardization of dimensions and was called "*tipization*".

Despite apartment standardization requirements, there were architects who strived to break the uniformity of "*tipization*" and create other configurations, such as: arch. Petraq Kolevica, arch. Maks Velo, arch. Koco Comi, etc. These authors were critical towards standardization of forms and the reduction of construction costs. Most of these "*non-typical*" dwellings of the time were built for senior officers of the party, usually their residences or their holiday houses (example: Palace in Dibrës Street, designed by Maks Velo in 1971).

After the fall of the communist regime in 1991, Tirana had a rapid population growth and the number of inhabitants more than tripled. The transition from a centralized to a market economy led to the privatization process of property and also to a free movement of people from their places of origin. A lot of people moved from remote areas to the city in a search of a better life and their main focus was to find affordable housing,

Palace in Vasho Pasha Street, designed by Petraq Kolevica

appropriate to their needs, in an urban area, especially in Tirana, the capital of the country. In just one decade the estimated population of the district of Tirana has grown from 374,000 in 1990 to 618,000 in 1999. *(Veikko VASKO, 2002)*.

The city went through profound changes of political, economical, social and cultural systems, in transition from communism to the new capitalistic condition. These alterations in society logically expressed themselves in physical space as well, at an urban and small scale. Urbanism and architecture, and especially residential concepts, were among the areas which were largely affected by the changes. The growing population created additional urban space in Tirana, and city tissue rapidly spooled way beyond the former borders, changing the surface and shape of the urban landscape. The primary investment for the Albanian family was solving the housing question (some new illegal and informal neighborhoods developed), improving the living conditions of dwellings inherited from the communist era (a lot of former state

apartments got extended), or purchase new condominiums which could fulfill their needs in space, quality and size.

The political change was also followed by economic reform. Albania passed from a state-controlled to a market economy which was reflected in the main economic indicators such as the rapid GDP growth rates of 9% a year in 1993-1996 and the reduction of inflation from 226% in 1992 to 7.8 % in 1995. Initially Albania was considered to be a model transition economy, but restricting analyses to indicators alone may not give a full picture of the situation. Macroeconomic indicators would not reflect the undeveloped financial sector and many economists feel that the apparent rise in living standards was due to either remittance from abroad or to illegal activities. *(Veikko VASKO, 2002)*

Housing demand increased very fast and construction became one of the most profitable businesses in the city. Firstly, the location of these new dwellings was the same as the old apartment blocks, but with the growth of the city, the residential buildings continued to create new settlements.

The Association of Albanian Architects, AAA, was created in 1991 in Tirana, with architect Petraq Kolevica as president. More than 500 architects from all over Albania were registered in the Association, all interested in making an initial effort to solve the country's architecture and planning problems. Unfortunately, this didn't last long since architects started to pay attention to their own interests in increasing their economic incomes as much as

possible, which does a disservice to the city's development from an urban point of view *(Kolevica, 2004)*.

In the period after the '90s, the lack of legal framework regarding the housing units and living conditions is present. In 1993, a mere review of the old normative was made and the only changes made dealt with the terminology: the state housing terms were transferred to private flats. In 1997 there was a normative approved by the Council of Ministers "On the housing rates in housing built with public funds" (DCM, 3.12.2004), which was repealed in 2004 with the new DCM (Decision of Council of Ministers) Nr.814, 'For Housing Normative For these Families that benefit from Social Housing Programs'. (DCM, 3.12.2004). These were the only few normative with insufficient data, concentrated more on m^2 of surface that is valid for a single user and the minimum and maximum residents that can live in 1+1, 2+1, 3+1 or studio apartments, related to the minimum or maximum of meter square of these structures. The problem is that these normative are related only to public construction and not to private ones, which comprise the majority of residential production in the city.

As a consequence of this transitional period in Tirana's development, instead of collective socialist-style 3/4-floor apartment complexes predominantly located in central areas of the city, after the 1990's, individual big residential buildings among the city center structures and in the outskirts became the new predominant housing style. The main spatial difference from the old housing units in the 90s until the mid-2000s was the size of the apartments,

as the new housing trend was to have larger apartments.

In the last years this trend has changed. The price of the apartment per square meter has increased and because of the crises or because the new families cannot afford the big units, the current tendency is to produce several smaller units compared to previous years. *(Sardella, 2012)* However, there are also some exceptions to the rule in the case when the apartments are especially made on the highest floors of high rise buildings or in the more prominent buildings (ETC or the 24 floors building in front of the National TV Building) – however in the latter cases, the bigger apartments are usually kept by the owner/ developer and rented out rather than sold.

European Trade Center / ETC Center, 24 floor Building Tower

3.2 Yugoslavia

Yugoslavia was a country in the western Balkans, formed after the Second World War in 1943 and which collapsed after the turbulent Yugoslav wars lasting from 1991 to the final break in 2003. The capital city was Belgrade and the country consisted of the six Socialist Republics of Yugoslavia: SR Bosnia and Herzegovina, SR Croatia, SR Macedonia, SR Montenegro, SR Slovenia and SR Serbia; today, these are all separate independent states.

Modernist architecture and urbanism in socialist Yugoslavia reveals many original and progressive models. The planning of cities and settlements in the period of vital postwar economic growth proves to have been of a particularly high quality. It was comprehensive and well controlled with unprecedentedly great focus placed on the common living environment. Architecture presented and served as a research laboratory for industry and a source of innovation in construction. In addition, the political elite used modern buildings as propaganda or communication

tools in order to demonstrate the world how advanced the country they managed and operated was. *(Museum of Architecture and Design, 2012)*

A large part of the housing sector was functioning in a framework of planned economy, based on social property and the inexistence of a housing loan market. *(Vilogorac, 1990)*

Although the housing sector differed from Republic to Republic, in general, the housing quality was positively correlated to a region's level of economic and social development. Through the time market forces were introduced to the housing sector (investment in housing and public utilities fell from 8.0 percent of national income in 1976 to 4.8 percent in 1985, while the private housing sector investment increased from about 58 percent to 66 percent in the period from 1980 to 1982).*(Barnes, 1990)*

City social housing was a rather progressive system controlled by the state (from policies, design process, production, to standards regarding the urban development

and space requirements of the units), and apartments were available for the majority of citizens (size and structure of the apartments varied according to the number of the residents as well).The regulation from 1973 *(The Government of Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, 1973)* required the use of the modular coordination system in the housing projects as a reaction to the industrialization process present during this particular period. The aim of introducing this system was the classification and standardization of the construction elements as a first condition for production of prefabricated elements, offering a new flexibility in housing. *(D. Pljakovsk, Lj. Tomik, Lj. Filipovski, M. Kokalevskii, 1977)*

Regulation strived to ensure that every residential area had the right amount of infrastructure, proper urban disposition of the buildings, open green spaces, educational, social, medical and sport facilities and - so even though it was considered social housing, the general quality of life in these settlements was very high. In terms of the apartments, the sizes of the units and individual rooms were humble (although well adjusted the number of residents), but the space distribution layout, orientation and insulation factor, structure quality, and safety regulations were very developed. The housing regulations were uniform and implemented in the same way and evenly throughout the territory of the country, so the situation in state social housing in countries like Serbia and Macedonia was similar.

New Belgrade, block 45, 1975

3.3 Belgrade

Belgrade is the capital of Serbia, situated in South-Eastern Europe, on the Balkan Peninsula, at the confluence of the Sava and Danube rivers where the borders of Central, Southern, and Eastern Europe meet. It has a population of approximately 1.6 million inhabitants *("2011 Census first estimates", 2011)* of many ethnicities from former Yugoslavia, which makes it the second biggest city in the Balkans, right after Istanbul, Turkey. From the 19th century it has been considered the center of economy, finance, education, culture and science of the country. Since 2009 over 40% of Serbia's GDP is generated by this city, and also 31, 4% of Serbia's employed population lives there. *(Economic Chamber of Belgrade, 2011)*

Since 1989 Belgrade underwent dramatic socio-spatial changes which conditioned the alterations of the housing sector as well. Once one of the most prosperous and cosmopolitan urban centers in Central-East Europe, Belgrade deteriorated visibly, in terms of housing and infrastructure, as a result of the severe economic crisis, the wars, and the international sanctions that defined the tumultuous 1990s in Serbia/Yugoslavia. The new residential

New Belgrade, Fontana,block 1, 1970

profile of Belgrade is both quantitatively and qualitatively different from that of the communist period and its large scale housing construction. The clear shift happened toward smaller-scale, upper-class individual housing produced almost exclusively by the private sector, scattered around the city in the form of medium-height apartment buildings developed in separate plots. (Hrit, 2009)Only in recent years bigger housing blocks are being developed again by the state or private organizations, but still to a lesser extent than before.

As aforementioned, compared to the Yugoslavian period a general degradation in the housing sector occurred, especially in the availability of new apartments. Demand is constantly increasing and as result, there is an increase in small apartment units for mass demand along with large/luxury apartments for wealthy clients. Since the price of newly constructed units is two to three times higher

New Belgrade, panorama 1970

than the construction cost (contractors/entrepreneurs make a substantial profit), for the average-income citizen it became very difficult to obtain a new apartment. (United Nations, Economic Commission for Europe, 2006) This resulted in the special demand for small 1+1 or 1+2 apartment units, regardless of the number of family members who are supposed to live inside, or in a situation where a couple of generations share one apartment unit inherited from the former system (the situation opposite from the period of socialism, where individual needs for space were more satisfied).

The Government of the Republic of Serbia is currently regulating the minimum housing standards by the "P21 Law on Planning and Construction" that includes "Regulations on Conditions and Norms for Designing Residential Buildings and Apartments". *(The Government of the Republic of Serbia, Minister of Environment, Mining and Spatial Planning, 2011)*

New Belgrade, panorama

Skopje is a city in the Western Balkans, the capital of Macedonia and one of the newest capitals in Europe. Its geographic position, in the middle of the Balkan Peninsula, have made it a crossroads of the region and, in that sense, it has a very strategic position for the transferring of supplies and labor.

"The processes of de-industrialization in the Southeast European region have been connected to the fall of socialist systems. The transition periods have involved economic and social decline alongside the initial efforts invested in economic and social restructuring." *(Švob-Đokic 2007)*

After the Collapse of the Yugoslavian Federation 1990, Macedonia was not an exception in this process of changing the social and political context from a socialist society to a capitalistic one in which lots of the industrial capacities were closed and the unemployment rate increased. This process of de-industrialization affected

Residential Units in Skopje

Skopje residence buildings before 90

Skopje in that it became a main destination for the internal migration process which is still ongoing in the country. The migration process increased the demand for housing dramatically; the population increased from 448.200 citizens registered on the census held in 1994 to 668.518 citizens in 2006 when the last census was held. The increase in the number of the population had resulted in a huge demand for housing which caused an expansion of the built structures in the city, in and outside the city boundaries. Development of the housing constructions is mainly done by the private sector on individual plots located in side areas and rarely as a part of bigger residential complexes.

The specific dimension of each functional units, considering all the parts of the condominiums, is determined

and is guaranteed by the "Regulations of Standards and Normative used for Developing Housing Projects" announced in chapter 15 of the "Law for Construction of Investment Projects" announced in the Official Journal of R. Macedonia(The Government of Republic of Macedonia 1999). With this regulation the state is guaranteed a minimal standard for quality of living space, taking in consideration not only the separate housing units but also the common spaces which belong to all of the residents of a multifamily residential building. The standards are subject to change so they can fit the contemporary needs and ensure a certain quality of life.

Albania (Tirana), Serbia (Belgrade) and Macedonia (Skopje), although close geographically and all located in the Balkan Peninsula, have undergone very different historical development since winning their independence from the Ottoman Empire. Especially if we compare the Albania of the past to former Yugoslavia which both had communist regimes in the past, the difference is immense. Unlike the extreme dictatorship and isolation of Albania with its poor standard of life, Yugoslavia was an open country that combined a liberal market economy with high standards of living for a communist state. After the turbulent changes which changed both countries in the 1990's (from ex-Yugoslavia we will only treat the cases of Serbia and Macedonia), the development process is moving at its own pace; but the conditions, mechanisms, systems and heritage of the past make the situations in these three countries substantially different.


SK 4806 AF

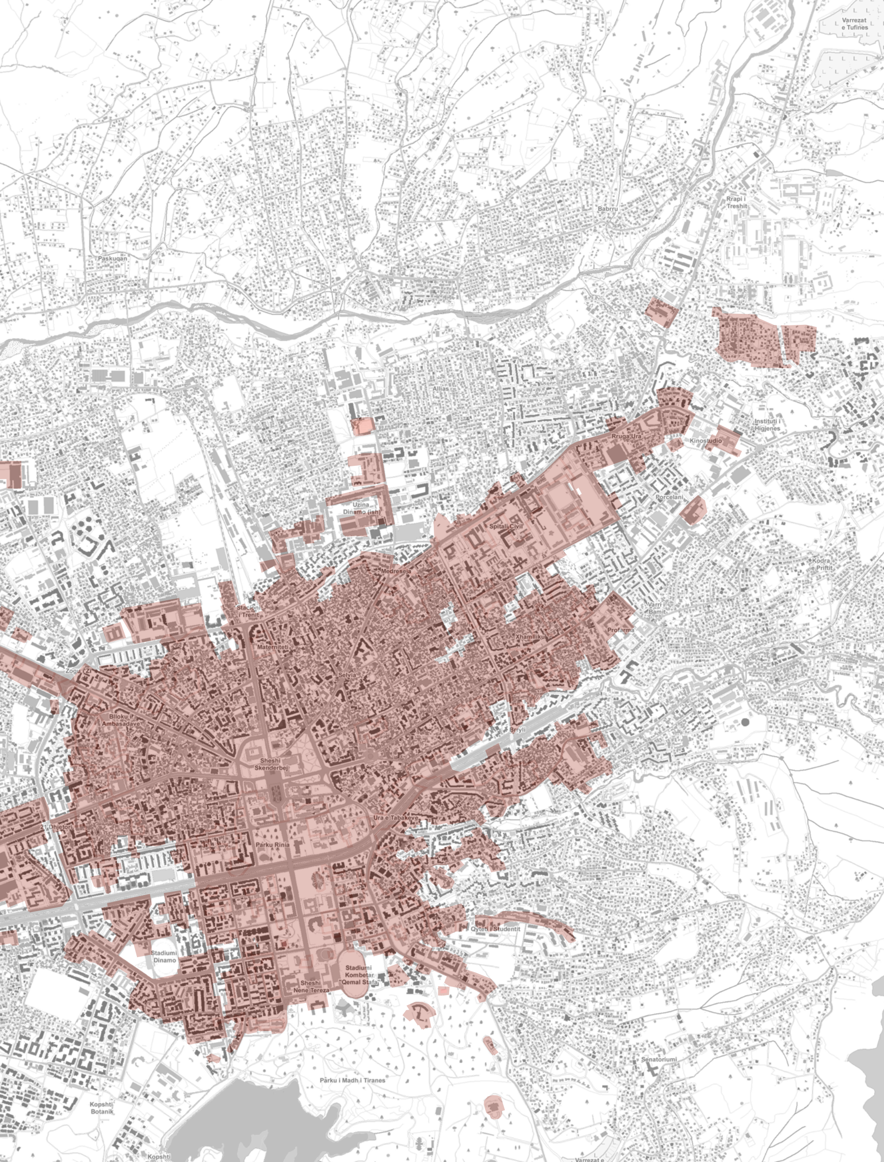
Skopje residence buildings after 90

④ METHODOLOGY OF FINDING THE KEY STUDY EXAMPLES

4.1 Selection of the Cases

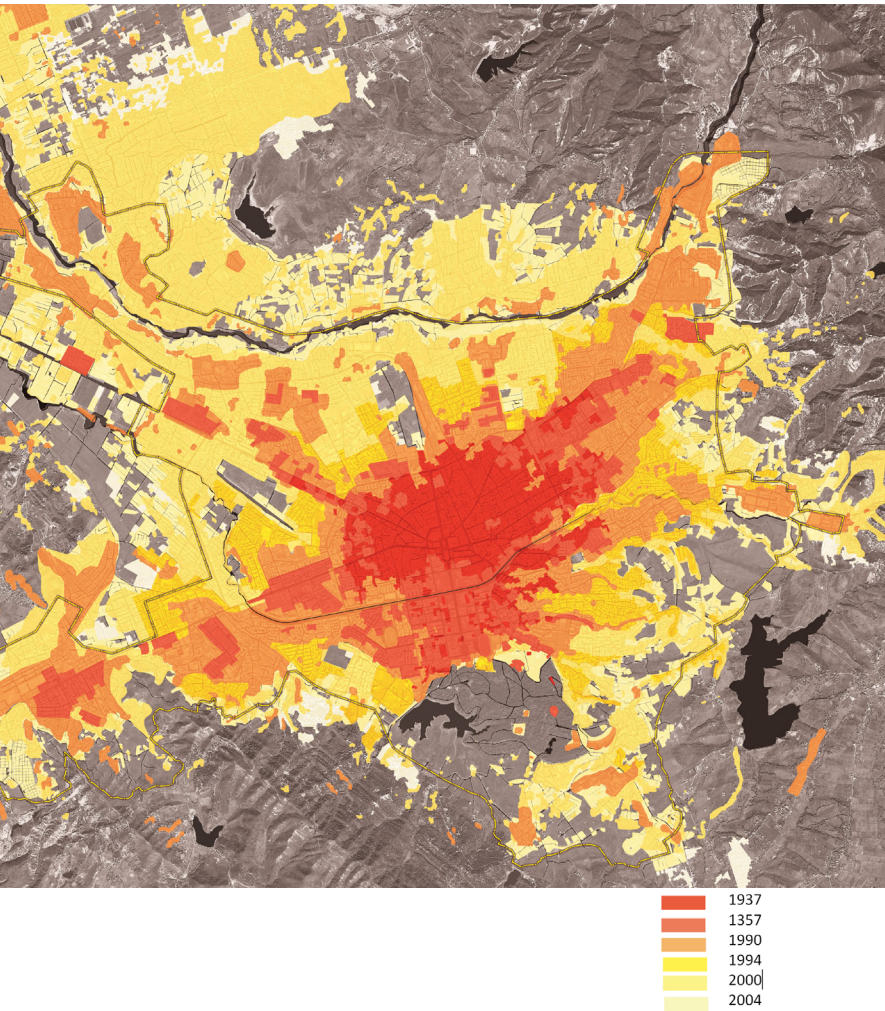
The focus of this research is to investigate the 'quality of space – quality of life' relationship within Tirana's apartments constructed before and after the 90's. In order to analyze the apartment units, the investigation of layouts for space analysis was conducted as well as questioning the residents who live in these condominiums in order to find out their personal perspectives on the issue of housing.

In order to find proper key study examples to analyze in the research, a methodology was developed for the selection of apartment samples from the two characteristic periods of Tirana's development, namely the period from 1945 until 1990 and the one from 1990 to 2011. In total, 14 key study units were taken for further analysis from the most populated areas of the city, seven of which were constructed before '90 and the other seven constructed in the last two decades. In this way it was possible to draw conclusions from the most characteristic neighborhoods of Tirana in which the majority of people live. This process

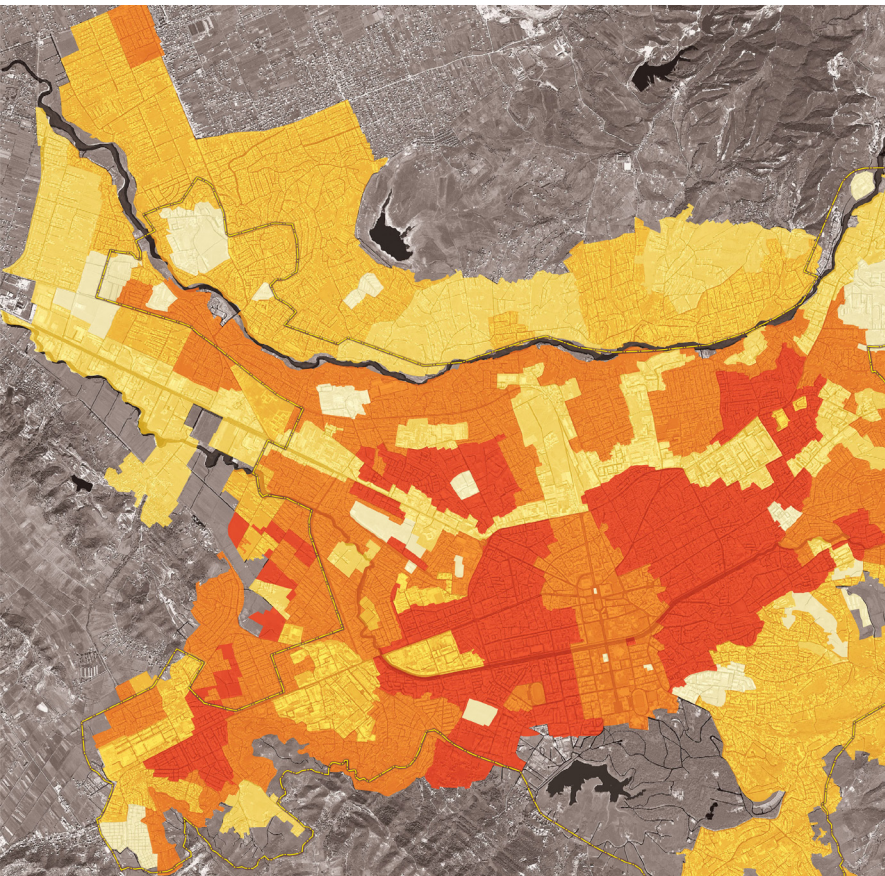


Tirana's spatial representation before the 90's

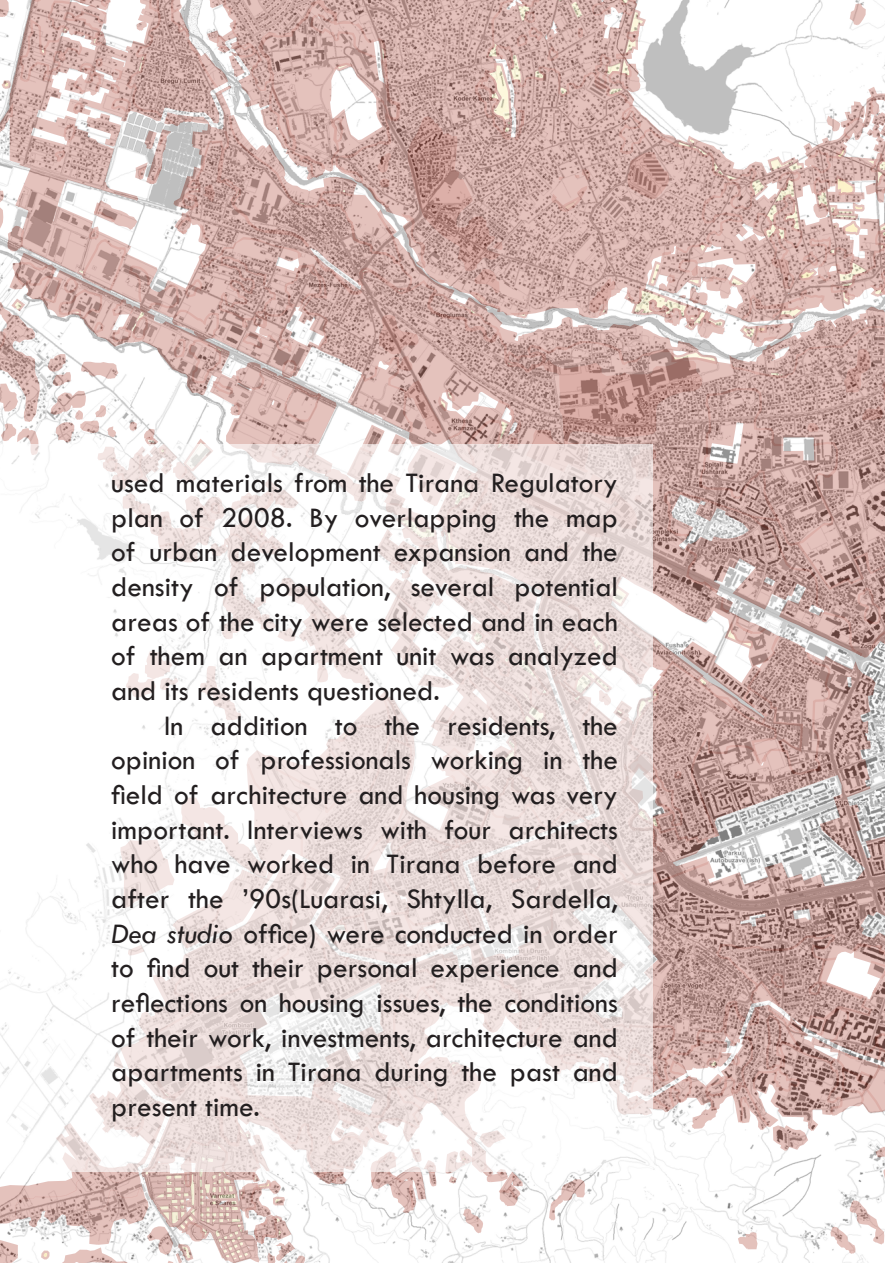
STAGES OF EXPANSION OF TIRANA CITY



Stages of Spatial Expansion (taken from the Analysis Stage of Tirana Regulatory Plan, Municipality of Tirana, CoPLAN, Urbaplan, February 2008

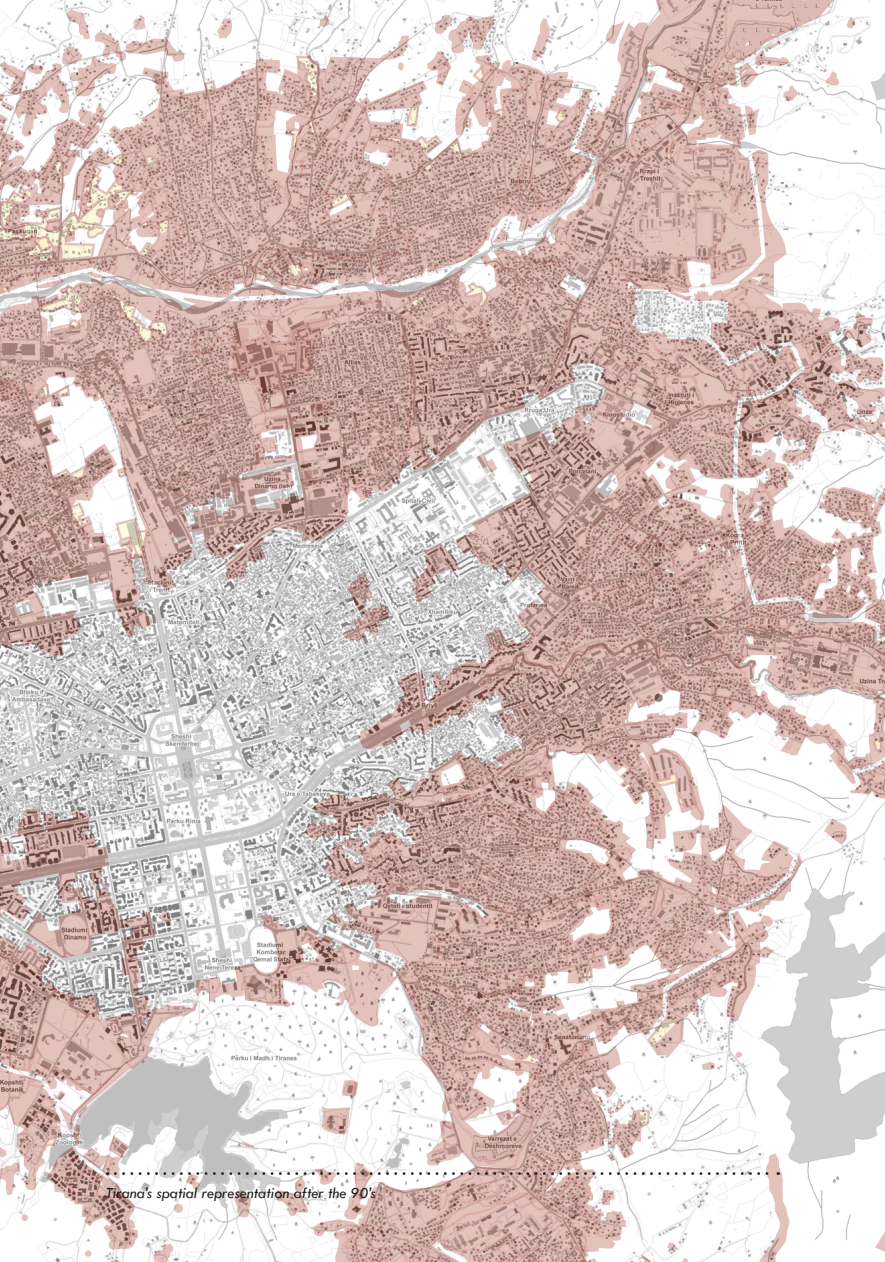


Gross Population Density by Sector (taken from the Analysis Stage of the Tirana Regulatory Plan, Municipality of Tirana, CoPLAN, Urbaplan, February 2008)

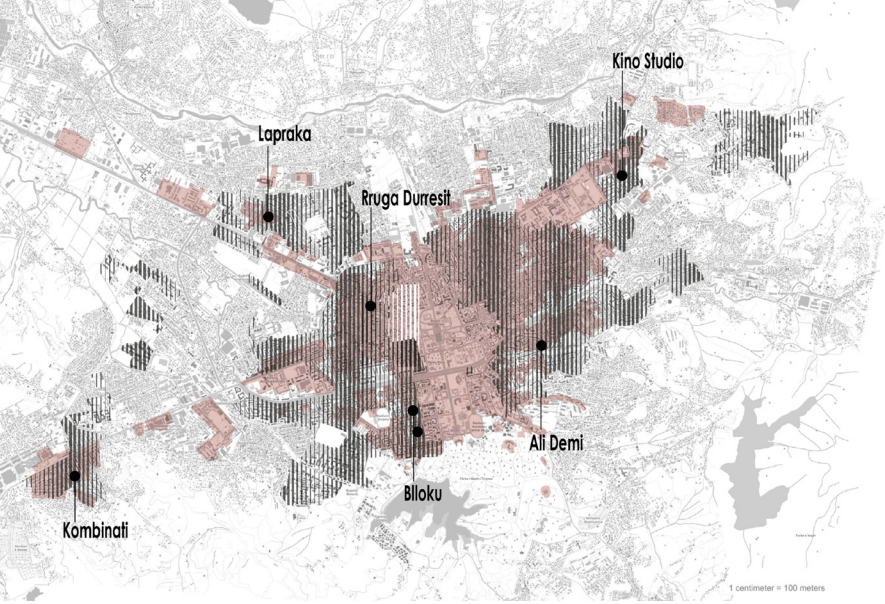


used materials from the Tirana Regulatory plan of 2008. By overlapping the map of urban development expansion and the density of population, several potential areas of the city were selected and in each of them an apartment unit was analyzed and its residents questioned.

In addition to the residents, the opinion of professionals working in the field of architecture and housing was very important. Interviews with four architects who have worked in Tirana before and after the '90s(Luarasi, Shtylla, Sardella, *Dea studio* office) were conducted in order to find out their personal experience and reflections on housing issues, the conditions of their work, investments, architecture and apartments in Tirana during the past and present time.

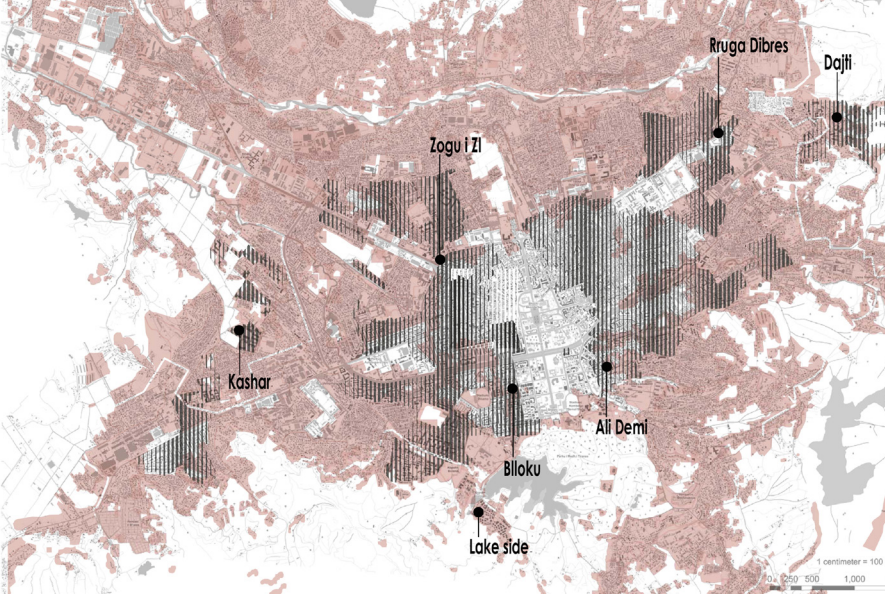


Tirana's spatial representation after the 90's



Tirana, 7 key study example locations, constructed before the 90's

A starting point was the map of Spatial Expansion of Tirana, displaying the process of urban growth of the city from the 1940's to the 2000's, which clearly shows that the expansion suddenly boomed in the 1990's1937. From the Spatial Expansion map, a separation of two layers was done, representing the urban tissue of Tirana before and after the 1990's.



Tirana, 7 key study example locations, constructed after the 90's

After this, a map of gross population density by sector was used by selecting the densest layer as an indicator of the areas in which population is densely settled. By overlapping the two maps, potential areas of Tirana for finding the key study apartments were gained. The maps below show the corresponding parts of the city and the general location of selected examples from these areas.

4.2 Types of Analysis

Investigation of the physical and perceptional aspects of the condominiums was done through a focused analysis on the single apartment unit configuration and the personal perception of its users by layout investigation and resident interviews. The comparison of examples from the two different periods of Tirana's development (before and after the 1990's), along with placement of the study in the Balkan context, with the Yugoslavia of the past and Belgrade (Serbia) and Skopje (Macedonia) of the present, was done as well. These analyses are divided into several thematic units.

Size of the Main Living Units (the main living spaces capacity is investigated); **Spatial Distribution and Communication** (the organizational structures of the studied examples and the connective spaces inside them); **Access to Private Open Space** (it shows the existing loggias, balconies, terraces or gardens in the examined units); **Resident's Activities Analysis** (where the residents' ways of spending their free time is explained); **Use of Space Analysis** (which shows how the residents are using certain units of their apartments); **Interior Microclimate** (analysis of the isolation

characteristics and the comfort level inside the units); **Lighting Analysis** (the insulation index); and finally the **Apartment Structure Analysis** (the investigation of the capacity of living space in relation to the number of residents).

These investigations were conducted through the comparison of the past and current regulations and standards in Albania, former Yugoslavia, Serbia and Macedonia, in the Balkan context and also with some of the European current standards, represented by London legislation for housing. London as one of the densest city in Europe, with constantly increasing number of households is in a continuous search for a solution how to ensure the quality of living space, what is clearly represented through revised and edited version of this standards. In the same time, "London Housing Design Guide" is a contemporary research and an important tool that aim to help developers to guarantee a quality in the new house design as a respond and under the pressure of the high demand at the market."London as one of the most highly populated city in Europe, with constantly increasing number of households is in a continuous search for a solution how to ensure the quality of living space, what is clearly represented through revised and edited version of this standards. In the same time, 'London Housing Design Guide' is a contemporary research and an important tool that aim to help developers to guarantee a quality in the new house design as a respond and under the pressure of the high demand at the market. 'London housing design guides' is a guidance which ensures the space standards starting at the scale of a neighborhood then focuses on the individual home identifying new requirements that would make a difference to the quality of housing. This

guidance incorporates the Lifetime Homes standard and basic furniture and activity spaces derived from the HCA's Housing Quality Indicators promoting policies for better neighborhoods, high environmental standards, better accessibility and better design and includes new minimum standards for the amount of floor space and private outdoor space, as well as guidance on natural light and ceiling heights.

We choose this guidance, the aim of which is improving the quality of life inside the living space of the house because we think that this research focused more in the contemporary society needs can insure a highest quality of the inside space of the small unit and not just an acceptable standard.

The main housing standards and regulation references used were: in the case of Albania 'Regulations for the apartment projects' of 1977 *(Daja, 1986)*. Apart from this regulation, after the `90s, architects have often used the standards for living space as defined in the urban regulation approved in 1998, but this regulation does not have technical standards, only some space criteria that were followed in the way the building fit in the spatial context; for the European context, "London Housing Design Guides" *(Interim, 2010)*; for the Balkan context "Requirements and Technical Standards for the Design of Residential Buildings and Dwellings" from former Yugoslavia *(The Government of Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, 1973)*; current "Regulations on Conditions and Norms for Designing Residential Buildings and Apartments" in Serbia *(The Government of the Republic of Serbia, Minister of Environment, Mining and Spatial Planning, 2011)* and "Regulations of Standards and Normative used for Developing Housing Projects" from Macedonia. *(The Government of Republic of Macedonia 1999)*.

New resindential area Kashar, Tirana 2012

KREU

5 ANALYSIS OF THE LIVING SPACE, COMPARISON & FINDINGS

5.1 Size of the Main Living Units

Referring to the analyzed examples in this study, the size of the main living space in the apartments in Tirana, living room, kitchen and dining room, constructed before the 1990s' is most often considered one coherent space in the overall spatial distribution of the dwelling. The biggest part is always used as a main living space and the kitchen and the dining room are added aligned on one main axis on one side of the façade or are slightly separated in a small annex which is again part of the same unit. The Dining area in these cases is marginalized; it either takes the smallest space of the apartment or there is no exclusive space reserved for this function at all, and the dining has to be accommodated elsewhere in the remaining spaces. This has resulted that the dining area becomes the main focus of change in the later re-adaptation and extension of the living space.*(case: c) and d) figure 9)* The length of the kitchen in some cases is too small, as a separate sub-unit, to include all the necessary equipment, so the living space has to be rearranged. *(Case a) figure 9)* where the refrigerator is not incorporated in the kitchen surface.

According to Albanian Legislation during communist regime, there was a normative which ensured that the ratio between the useful surface of the apartment and its total surface should be 0.6-0.7%. There was also a compactness coefficient for the whole building, which demonstrated that the rapport between the whole perimeter of the building (in m) and the building surface (in m^2), should be 0.16-0.25. *(Daja, 1986)*

In these examples of the apartments constructed before 1990, in which the kitchen is a separate functional unit and doesn't have a direct connection to the living room, the connection is enabled through the entering corridor (case c), figure 9). In these examples the dining area is included in the functional unit mentioned above. The living room is aimed to accommodate two sofas with dimensions that can substitute two beds, because one of the secondary functions of the living room is that it should serve as a bedroom as well.

Until '70, the kitchen was designed and conceived as a separate space from the living room, but after '70,

the cooking surface merged with the living space area to reduce the total cost and surface of each apartment unit. The apartments with a structure of 1+1, were designed in a way so that they can accommodate an average family of 2 parents and 1 child in which the main living room was planned to accommodate several functions in an area of around 13-15 m^2. *(Luarasi, 2012)*

Some dimensions for the bedroom units were provided by the normative: if the perceptual of the furniture surface was 50 %, or only 40 % of the total surface of the room, the matrimonial room with one child should have 12 m^2 of surface, the bedroom for two 10 m^2, and 6 m^2 for single bedroom. If the surface of the bedroom occupied by the furniture was 40%, then it was supposed that the room should be bigger because people could do other activities in it, so the matrimonial room was 14 m^2, the bedroom for two was 12 m^2 and 7 m^2 for single ones. In any case, the surface of the bedroom or the living room and kitchen, surely should be more than 6 m^2.

Bedrooms in the apartment with 1+1 structure are designed so that they can provide a sleeping place for two persons and a small storage space. No place for any additional activity is available in these rooms the average dimension of which is 12m^2. The apartments with 1+2 structure have two bedrooms; one of it is built to accommodate a double bed and has an average size of 12m^2 and the other bedroom is built to hold only one sleeping place with an average size of 7m^2 or again to fit 2 sleeping places and a size of 10-12m^2 *(case e), figure 9)*.

The bathrooms' surface depended from the number

and the dimensions of the equipment put in it. From the different case studies before '90, the average surface in m^2 for the bathrooms was 3. 5 – 4.2 m^2. Until 1955, most apartments contained toilets in the apartments without natural ventilation and light, but there was a progress after this year because all projects were careful in allowing natural light in the toilets and also in the stairs. *(Daja, 1986)*

The regulations in neighboring Yugoslavia for the apartments with 1+1 structure ensured a minimum of 18m^2 for the "combined room", sleeping and living room,(a dining area was not a part of this functional unit), the minimum space for dining and kitchen was 8$m^2$for the combined area or 4m^2 for the dining and 4.9m^2 for kitchen. In the three-room apartment a minimum of 18m^2 for the living room is provided which should ensure enough space for leisure, watching TV, socializing and working; sleeping in this case is not one of the primary functions that needs to be included; the dining area should be a minimum of 5m^2 and the kitchen need to be min 4.2m^2. The size of the master bedrooms was supposed to have a minimum 12$m^2$of space, not including the space for the wardrobe which offers enough space for the working desk and vanity table. The additional bedroom in the 2+1 structure apartments has a minimum of 10m^2 for 2 bedrooms and 6m^2 for a single bedroom. The minimum size of the bathroom was limited to 3.2m^2 and for the apartments 1+2 an additional toilet was required. *(The Government of Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia 1973)*

After the 1990's the private investors become the

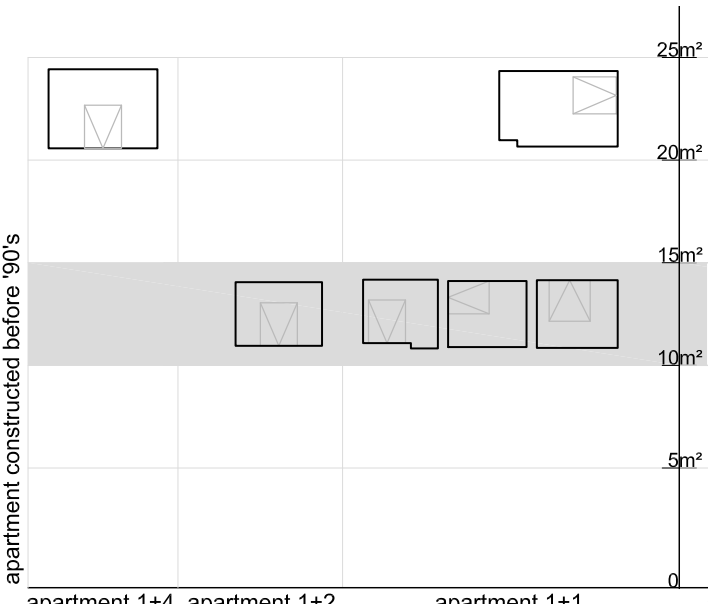
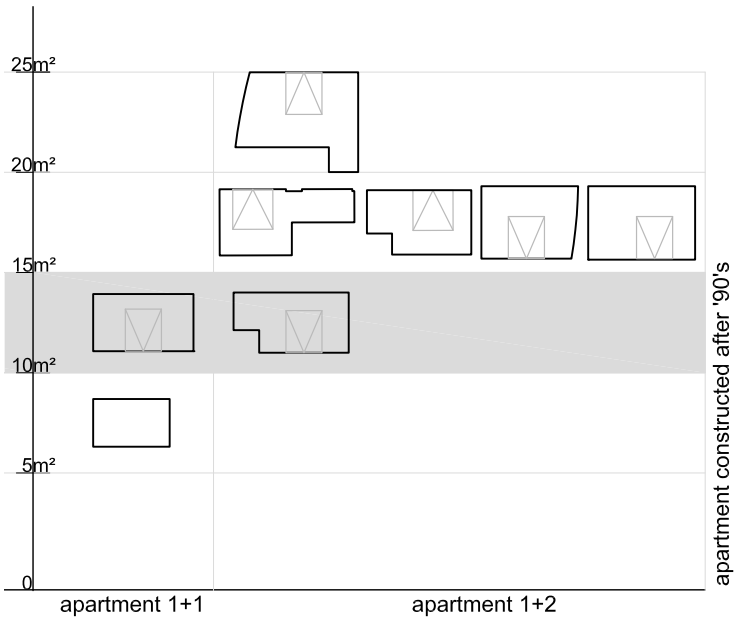


Fig. 6: Size of the main living units_ bedroom

main developers of the residential buildings and the apartments were no longer constricted by the minimum standard required during the communist regime as we can see in the previously analyzed examples. The standards for the dimensions for developing housing projects issued by the National Planning Institute of the Republic of Albania before 1990 are still in power but only in terms of the minimal dimensions. In the examples analyzed in this case study the average size of the combined area



for living room + kitchen + dining room is between 25-35m^2 in the apartments with structure 1+2 and there is no big difference in the apartments with 1+1 structure. In most cases, they form a single functional unit, the kitchen is aligned on one of the sides of the living room and there isn't any physical division between the speared functions. The main functions in this unit are leisure, dining, watching TV and working; this space is no longer designed to be used as a bedroom space as well, like in the case of the

apartments constructed before 1990. The size of the room ensures enough space for including all the necessary equipment for all intended functions. *(figure10)* In these apartments the living room is often used as a primary communication between the entrances and the secondary distribution core, with which the bedrooms are connected, which, in turn, adds a new function and that greatly impacts the organization of the interior.

The average size of the master bedroom in the apartments constructed after 1990's is between 15 and 20m^2 *(figure 10)*, but as a unit very often does not function as a compact space but is subdivided in two units, one as a main functional space and the second one is added as an element which is used as a connection to the facade and is often narrower than the main unit. This type of spatial subdivision directly influences the placement of the interior elements. In almost all of the studied examples of the 1+2 apartments, the master bedroom is directly connected to the separate bathroom, the other bathroom is connected to a corridor and is available to all of the apartment's residents and often serves as laundry space as well.

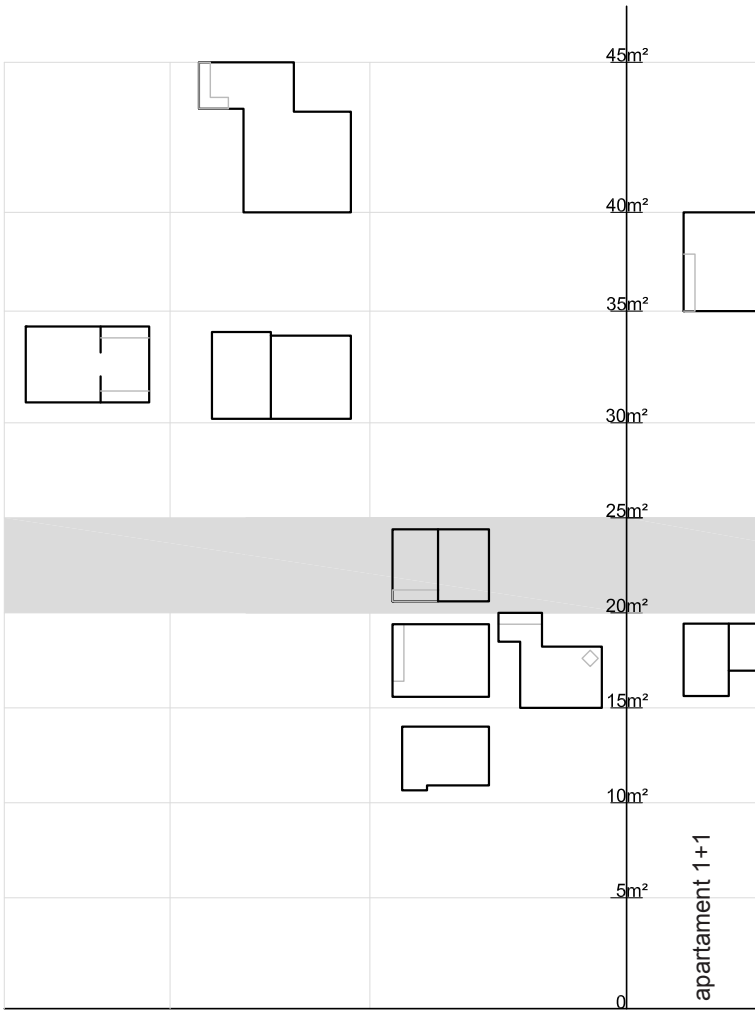
Social, political, economical issues are very connected to experiencing and shaping the living space of the apartment. Before '90 the small size of the apartment affected the residents' low quality of life. Analysis of the single apartment unit in terms of the social needs after 90

shows that these apartments fulfill the need of the users for more space but they still only have some basic spaces provided in it: the living room and kitchen incorporated in it, bedroom, bathroom and balcony. They don't have storage (which was included before), cellar, parking, office space or gym and other spaces that users may need. For this reason in some cases the users close the balcony with a glass façade to use it as storage or as a second kitchen for cooking.

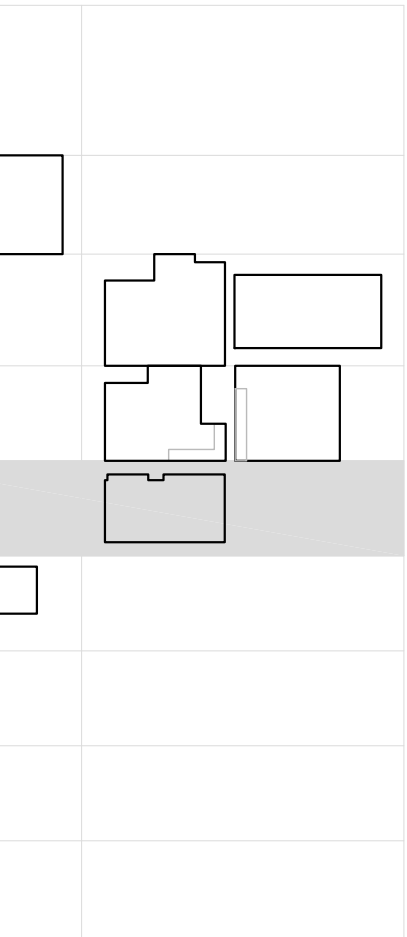
The standards for R. Macedonia and R. Serbia are not much different from the ones used in Yugoslavia. The minimum size of the living room is 17m^2 and if the space for dining is included than the minimum is 22m^{2}according to the "Regulations of Standards and Normative used for Developing Housing Projects". *(The Governemnt of Republic of Macedonia, 1999)*

According to the same standards the minimal size of a master bedroom is 14m^2 with a minimum width of 280sm. In the official "Regulations on Conditions and Norms for Designing Residential Buildings and Apartments" *(The Government of the Republic of Serbia, Minister of Environment, Mining and Spatial Planning, 2011)*, the minimum size of a living room for two and three rooms apartments is 18m^2, not including the dining space, and for dining an additional 4m^{2}needs to be provided. These are ongoing regulations and in order to get permission for building the project must respect all the required normative.

living room +kitchen + dinning



apartment constructed before '90's



London housing design guide" standard

Fig.7: Size of the main living units_ living room+kitchen+dining

5 ANALYSIS OF THE LIVING SPACE, COMPARISON & FINDINGS

5.2 Spatial Distribution and Communication

The distribution space in the apartments taken as key samples has been used for the connection of different spaces in the apartment or has also been treated as a simple filter between the inside and the outside space of the apartment, located in the main entrance. The function of communication space is important as it is used also as a division from the sound, rumors, and to ensure intimacy in the living room's interior space.

In Tirana, before '90, by regulation, "the dimension of the entrance corridor was related to the number of people who live in the apartment and the number of the communications that were in the apartment also, differently from the size of the toilet units, which was not related to the size of the apartment or the number of users, but to the equipment installed in it". *(Daja, 1986, p. 52)* The dimensions varied: for two people - 3.5 m^2, for 3/4 people – 4.5 m^2, for 5 people – 5 m^2 of surface.

In the case when the living room was conceived also as a distribution space for the bedroom, then the dimensions of the entrance corridor were smaller than in the case

when the distribution for the bedroom area, living room, and toilet was organized in it.

To fulfill these requests and to be as economical as possible, the connective space was often located in the center of the apartment and, in these cases, the lighting of this space was provided by the door which was partly glazed *(ex. Diagrams before '90)*. In rare cases when the entrance was lateral and the corridor couldn't be central, natural lightning and ventilation was provided. The living room was also used as a distribution space.

The function of communication space was "not only the distribution of space, but it was also conceived as a wardrobe to maintain coats and shoes, a big mirror, for the first meeting with friends and guests and to maintain the storage for the placement of firewood. The dimensions of the wall shelves were also regulated by persons for cubic meter (m^3), so for 2/3 people, there was 2.5-3 m^3, for 4/5 people – 4.5-5 m^3 and for more people living in the apartment, 6 m^3. (Daja, 1986, p. 55) The minimal entrance corridor was 1.3 m *(example, plan b and d)* and the others' minimal space couldn't be less than 1.1 m. Only in the case when the corridor was leading exclusively from the living room or toilet, could the width be 90 cm.

In the period after the '90s, there is no regulation or normative to control the spatial distribution of the apartment. As can be noticed even in the housing design of the apartments taken as case studies, in some cases the entrance corridor space was totally eliminated (plan g) making the living room the direct entrance to the apartment. In other cases, a small corridor was placed in

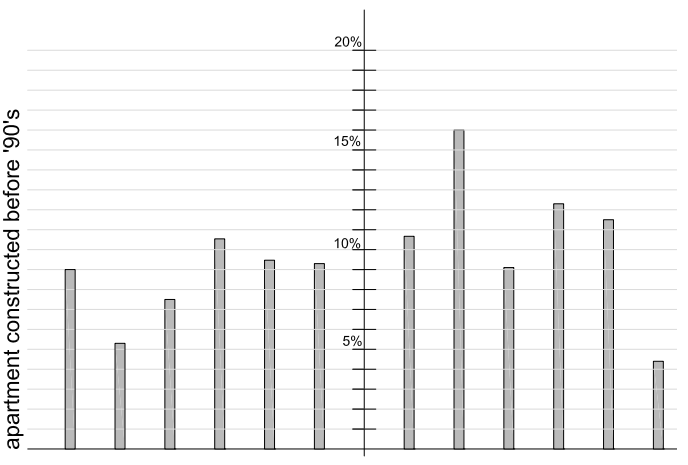


Fig. 8: Communication core percentage from the total surface of the apartments

the main entrance just to create a filter before entering in the living room and a second next corridor provides the distribution of the bedroom area and the service (plan a, d, e). In cases like in plan b or plan f when the main corridor from the entrance makes the distribution for all units of the apartment, its surface is bigger in relation to the total surface of the apartment.

The entire spatial distribution of Tirana's apartments has changed from the period before and after the 1990's. The entrance corridors are starting to lose their function as firewood and wardrobe storage spaces and are perceived nowadays only as connective spaces, without much regard for the furniture or equipment they should contain.

The vertical communication for the residential building - the stairs, according to the normative of fire protection, couldn't be less than 1.05 m width and the space between the two stairs could be less than 0.1 m to allow the passage of pipes in case of fire.In the diagram number 8 there is a comparison which shows in percentage the surface of the distribution space in the house in relation to its total surface. It is noticeable that the average of the surface for distribution space is lower before '90 than after '90. It has not changed a lot, but there is a reduction of this space in comparison to the projects of apartments made during the communist regime.

If one looks at the situation in the ex-Yugoslavian cities, Belgrade and Skopje, the regulations currently in use in Serbia and Macedonia concerning the spatial distribution and communication space are almost the same, since they are inherited from the old Yugoslavian system. These regulations state that:

"Living spaces in apartment units are intended for staying (living room), eating (dining room), sleeping (bedrooms) and work (multipurpose room). The serving spaces are intended for preparation and preservation of food (kitchen, utility), maintenance of personal hygiene (wardrobe, toilet, and bathroom); spaces for storage of

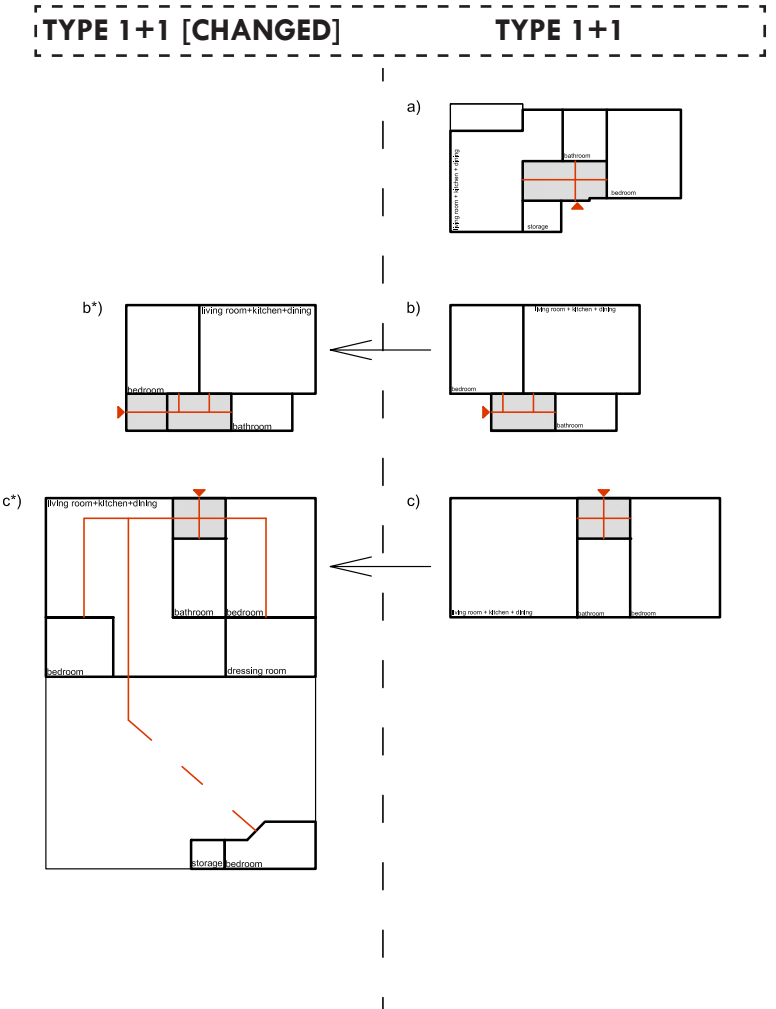
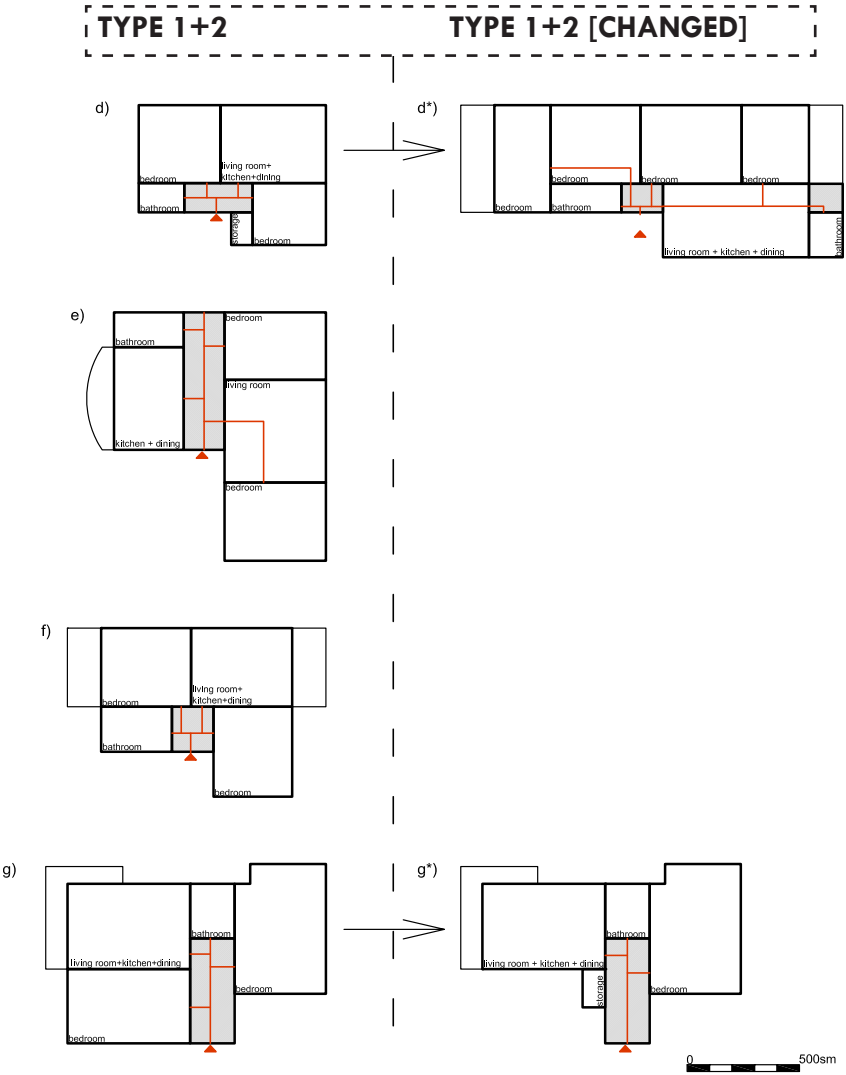


Fig.9: Spatial distribution of the apartment constructed before '90s.


TYPE 1+2
TYPE 1+2 [CHANGED]
d)
bedroom
living room+
kitchen+dining
bathroom
storage
bedroom
d*)
bedroom
bedroom
bedroom
bedroom
bathroom
living room + kitchen + dining
bathroom
e)
bedroom
bathroom
living room
kitchen + dining
bedroom
f)
living room+
kitchen+dining
bedroom
bathroom
bedroom
g)
bathroom
living room+kitchen+dining
bedroom
bedroom
g*)
bathroom
living room + kitchen + dining
storage
bedroom
0
500sm

things and maintenance of the apartment (other rooms for household needs). Spaces for movement are the ones in between living and serving spaces in the apartment (entering space – every apartment must have a defined entering zone the function of which is only movement and storage; corridor; interior staircase etc.).Open spaces are loggias, balconies, terraces, gardens etc." (The Government of the Republic of Serbia, Minister of Environment, Mining and Spatial Planning, 2011) Further, distributional organization rules say: direct connection between the sanitary spaces and the living/eating room is forbidden, as well as a direct connection between the kitchen and the sleeping area. It is not allowed that the only connection of sleeping areas is through the living zones in apartments of 1+1. The bedroom can serve as a connection only if the space that it is connecting has other links with the rest of the apartment as well. If the space of the living room is partially used as connection space, the path must be placed tangentially to the main space of the living room, and it cannot be positioned in the façade wall. It is stated as well that the minimal width of the spaces for movement in the apartments is 1.2 m in the entrance zone and 0.9m in the other corridors.

Regarding horizontal communications in residential buildings, they cannot be less than 1.2m wide and longer than 15m without natural openings and light. Vertical communications – stairs, must be at least 1.2m width and must be naturally ventilated and lightened.

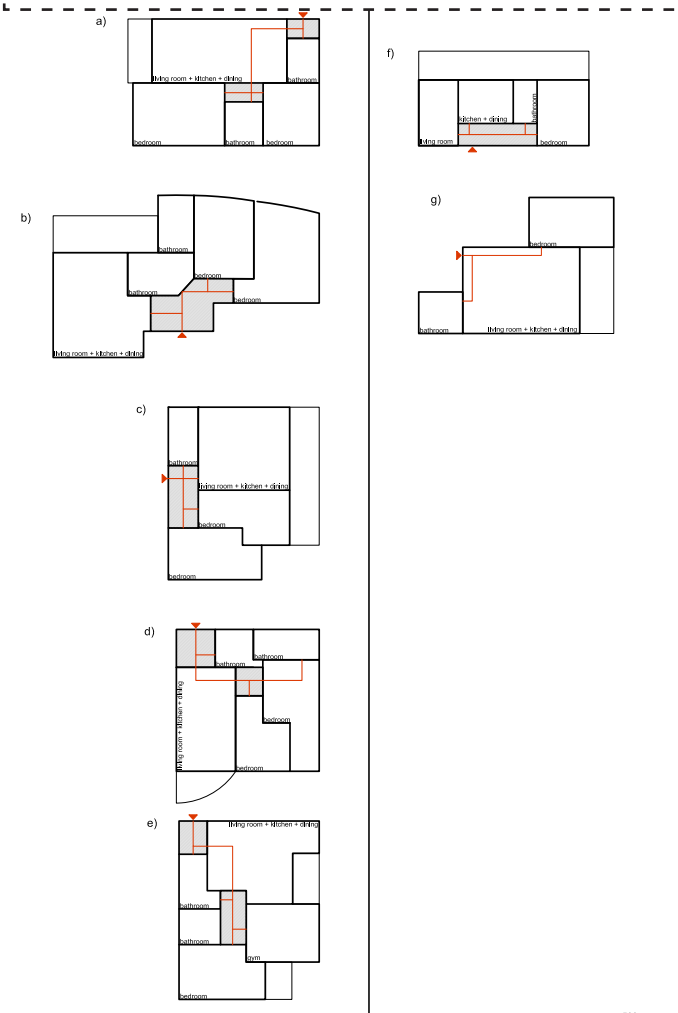


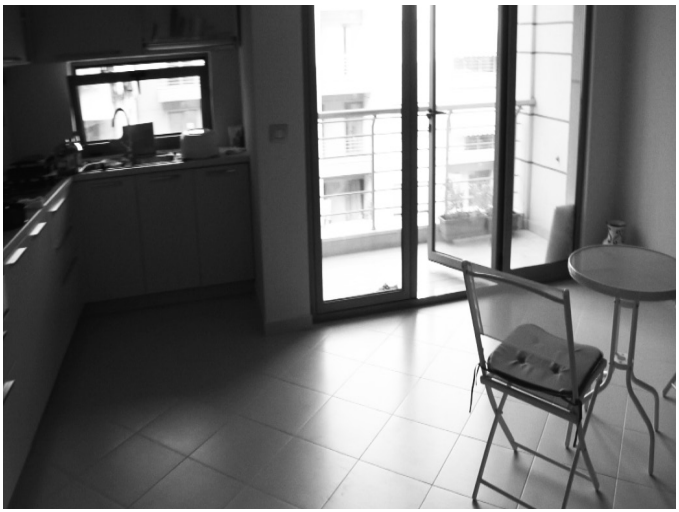
Fig.10: Spatial distribution of the apartment constructed after '90s.

⑤ ANALYSIS OF THE LIVING SPACE, COMPARISON & FINDINGS

5.3 Access to private open space

In this analysis the focus was to investigate the extent to which old and newly constructed apartments in Tirana, Skopje and Belgrade have access to private open spaces (balconies, loggias, terraces or gardens) and question the relationship between the size of these spaces and number of users, compared to the "London housing design guide" standards.

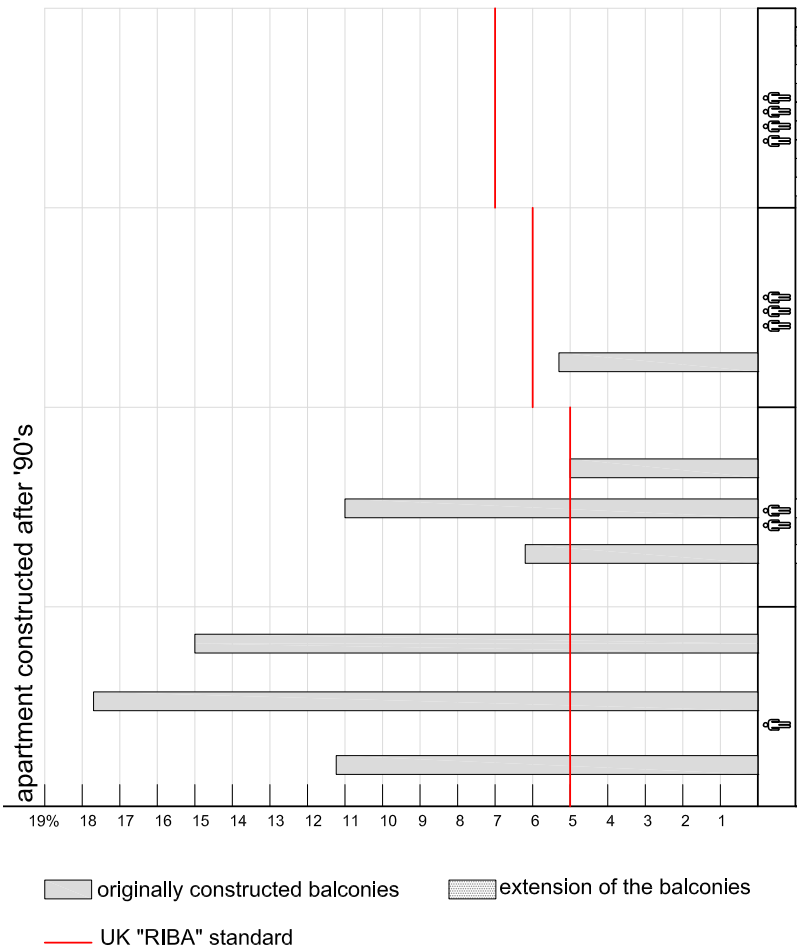
The results of fourteen Tirana key study examples show that in general the majority of them have balconies and terraces, even though according to the Albanian law there are no regulations regarding the existence of open space, size or conditions of such spaces (in the past only the minimal width of 1.25 - 1.5 m was regulated if the apartment had open spaces, but whether is obligatory to



have them at all was not stated. *(Daja, 1986)* The standard taken as a comparative unit ensured that a minimum of 5 m^2 of private outdoor space should be provided for 1-2 person condominiums and an extra 1 m^2 should be provided for each additional occupant. *(Interim, 2010)* If we apply that to the interviewed examples, we could see that the majority of apartments made in the period after the 90's has more than 5 m^2 of open space regardless of how many people are living in them.

If we consider the apartments build before the 90's, we notice that the private open spaces are substantially smaller and much less common (in some examples they do not even exist). We can say that this affects the quality of life of the residents living in such apartments, because the need for open space is not satisfied.

ACESS TO PRIVATE OPEN SPACE



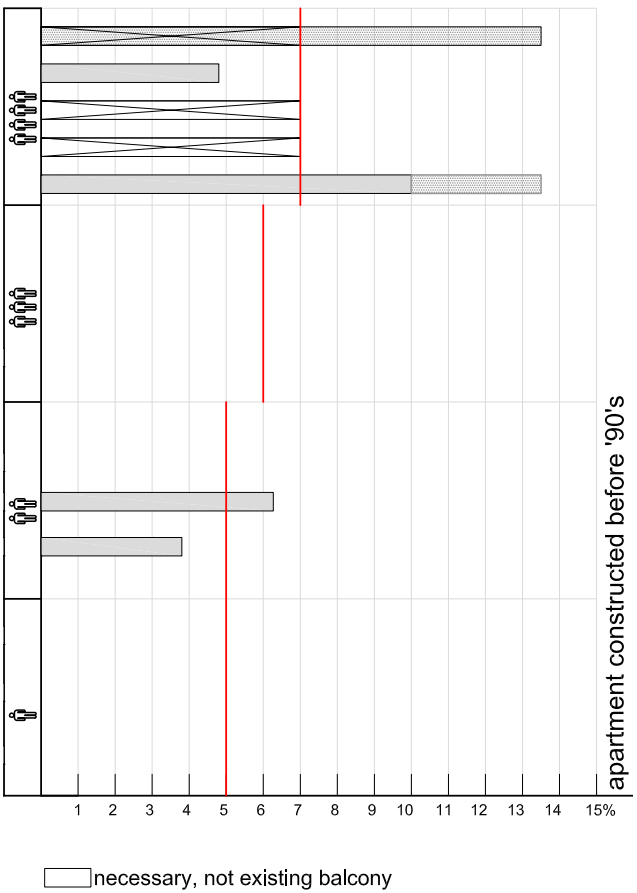


Fig.11: Dimension of the private open space

Even though private open space is not obligatory according the law on apartment units in Albania, the majority of the newly built apartments in Tirana have them, due to the climatic conditions and a great demand for them. Balconies are always present and quite spacious, so we could say judging by the size of these new balconies that the residents' need for open space has been fulfilled. However, if we compare this analysis to the conclusions drawn by the interviews, we notice that the balconies (both in the old and new apartments) are the last ones being listed as used spaces. People consider them necessary to have, but do not use them as much as the indoor spaces of the apartment (usage usually refers to plant and flower cultivation and drying clothes activity or storage, but not spending time in the sun or just being or socializing outdoors). The reason for this could be the fact that the terraces are often not comfortable, in some cases built in the wrong orientation or in strange and unusable shapes (for example in the study cases some of them were narrow and elongated), not protected from the sun, exposed to dust pollution etc. Very frequently the balconies are too close to the neighboring ones, so they do not provide enough privacy for their users or a pleasant view, all of which contributes to the fact that they were the least used spaces according to the questioned residents.

The usage of balconies for another function could indicate that people need more secondary spaces like depots, cellars, laundry and drying spaces, so they have decided to sacrifice the use of the open space for more utilitarian purposes.

The "Regulations on Conditions and Norms for Designing Residential Buildings and Apartments" *(The Government of the Republic of Serbia, Minister of Environment, Mining and Spatial Planning, 2011)*, which are inherited from the "Requirements and Technical Standards for the Design of Residential Buildings and Dwellings" *(The Government of Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, 1973)*, and are still used today in Macedonia, state that every apartment bigger than agarconniere must have a private open space which has at least 1m2 surface. The 1+1 structure apartment are required to have a minimum 2m2 of open space and the bigger ones 3m2. The minimum width is 1.5 m.

In newly built apartments in Belgrade or Skopje balconies are required by law, but usually they are built in the smallest possible dimensions (which do not satisfy the contemporary need for open spaces in order for the residents to spend qualitative time outside). The situation in newly built housing units in Tirana is more favorable in terms of size, but all the other factors for their poor usage mentioned above do not indicate the quality of such spaces. If we compare the situation in the past, the favor would be in the Yugoslavian case, since the terraces were required by the law for every apartment unit and the urban placement of the buildings ensured decent distances between the balconies and a view from them. More so, in addition to private open spaces, common joined terraces on the flat roofs of the top floors were very often present in Yugoslavia's collective housing and not in the Albanian case.

The residents living both in the apartments before and after the '90 were interviewed in order to find out how people spend most of their time at home, which activities they conduct in their apartments, and whether the space correlates to their actual needs.

The results were varied. The time spent at home, due to the long working hours of today is reduced to 2 or 5 active hours a day spent in the apartment (it was one of the questions of the research) and the activities preferred by Tirana's residents, according to the questionnaire results were: studying or reading at home rather than cooking, watching television and leisure and after that socializing (with the exception of virtual internet socialization), additional work, hobbies (most often plant and flower cultivation), and sport activities (only in two cases).

The preferred activities were correlated to the age of the residents, as more of the younger generations study or work in the apartment (irrespective of the fact whether

they have enough space for it or not), while the older ones cook and rest more, because they have more free time to spend at home.

For Tirana's residents, spending free time watching television is one of the dominant activities nowadays (especially in the homes of mixed generations) and it could be a consequence of the communist regime period, during which television was highly restricted, as a part of the total isolation strategy, both in duration (only for couple of hours a day) and in program choice. The size of the apartments before the 90's was a result of the economic situation in the country and the residents' activities at that time were different from the contemporary ones. The old apartments were equipped with just the basic household furniture, and therefore women were spending more time at home due to the house work, differently from men who were more outside.

From the interview findings, activities like recreation and socializing today, for residents of both genders, are

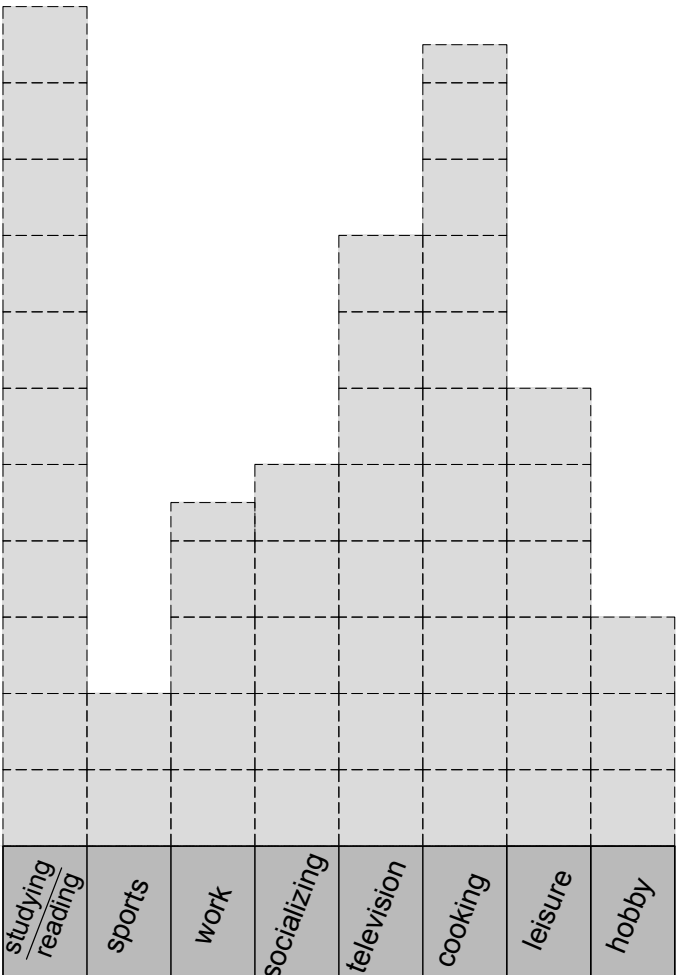


Fig.12: Resident's activities

conducted mostly outside of the apartment. Especially for the younger, but even for older generations, socializing is preferably done in bars and restaurants, very rarely at home inside the apartment. According to residents' interviews, the home is considered to be private and open mostly to relatives and close friends.

Generally, people in Tirana don't like to spend much free time at home (referring to the residents' interviews), not because their apartments are not adequate or do not provide enjoyable atmosphere for staying in, but due to the fact that they want to be social, especially after the long working hours of today. Meeting people is done outside of the apartment, in restaurants and bars (today there are more opportunities for a social life outside the home, compared to the communist period).

Differently, in Serbia and Macedonia, both in the past and nowadays, the main socializing activities are conducted inside the homes of residents. Even in a superficial interpersonal relationship, an invitation to visit somebody's home is considered expected and could be interpreted even as an insult if it doesn't happen after a period of friendship. Most often, a way of socializing is the organization of gatherings at home, dinners, parties or simply coffee visits for friends, acquaintances or neighbors on a daily basis. The level of intimacy of the Albanian homes, according to the interview findings, is limited, which differs from the ones in Serbia or Macedonia.

5 ANALYSIS OF THE LIVING SPACE, COMPARISON & FINDINGS

5.5 Use of Space

Listing the rooms of the apartment starting from the most to the last used one (including balcony) was one the things to do for the residents of the 14 key study units in Tirana, in order to find out what was the most important space for them and why. The intention was to interview people of different ages because of their different interests.

It resulted that the most used space in the apartments is the living room, followed by the bedroom and kitchen, and the least used one is the balcony (if we leave out the toilet which fulfills basic need and storage space which didn't even exist in a lot of questioned examples). These findings didn't seem to relate to the number of residents in the apartment – if it was one or two residents or a family with children, or even three generations living together, almost all of them would list a living room as a place in the apartment where they spend most of their time. Also, the fact that the condominiums were from different periods

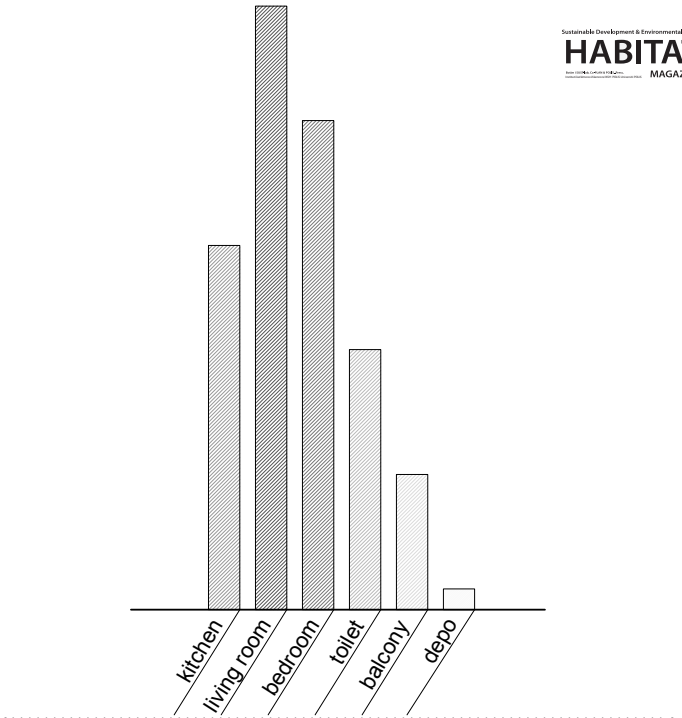


Fig.13: Use of e space according to the time spent inside

and of different sizes, the quality and comfort level didn't seem to make much impact on the use of the rooms. Surprisingly, even though Tirana has a Mediterranean climate and throughout most of the year the weather is suitable for staying outside, the balcony was the least used space and only for activities such as clothes drying and plant cultivation, not for spending time outdoors *(since the topics are highly related, the explanation for this kind of open space usage is given in one of the previous chapters – 5.3 Access to Private Open Space)*.

⑤ ANALYSIS OF THE LIVING SPACE, COMPARISON & FINDINGS

5.6 Interior Microclimate

The weakest point of the Albanian Situation is the lack of a normative that can provide the standards for living space quality. The only one present is the one inherited from the communist regime, which is not suitable by the contemporary European Standards, or the ones from the neighboring countries of Serbia and Macedonia. Lack of housing legislation which has led to the general decline in living standards and conditions is noticeable, especially regarding the structural, urban and architectural quality of the apartment units, materials used, size and disposition of rooms, but also openings surface and insulation sources.

As a consequence some of the architects working in the housing market in Tirana are trying to use the European Code Standards dimensions of spaces to increase the quality of life of the residents *(Dea, 2012)*, but in some other cases condominiums are constructed without fulfilling even the minimal standards for construction or thermal and acoustic isolation. The lack of isolation has created many problems with the noise and especially with the inner temperature of the apartments. The high temperatures in the summer and low ones in the winter have become a big and costly problem for the residents, due to inefficient heating and cooling solutions based usually on electricity. In the first decade after the '90, air conditioning was not provided by the developer, except in rare cases when the residents decided to add it with extra payment. This is also slowly changing in the last decade, because some of the companies provide in the project central or individual thermo systems.

Even hydro isolation is a big problem because it is done with scarce cheap material and usually does not provide protection from humidity. This is common for all the new apartments, especially for the last floor and the ground floor ones, since Tirana has a lot of underground waters. These phenomena, which are connected to poor use of materials and technology, reduce the comfort in the living space of the apartments and increase the maintenance costs for the residents, but also cause a lot of energy consumption.

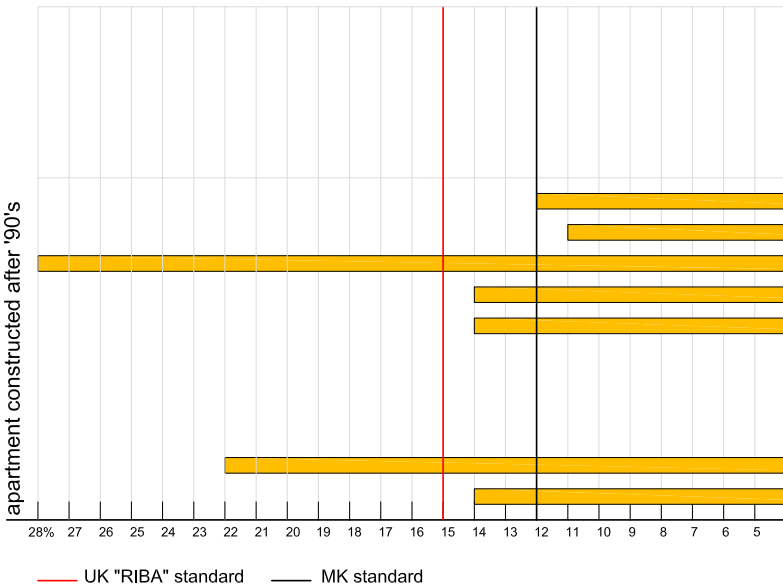
5.7 Lightning

Individual interaction with the surrounding environment and communication with the interior of the living units is an essential element for providing a healthy living atmosphere. The facade openings are one of the most important elements that ensure this important relationship between the indoor private living area and the surrounding exterior. The quality of this relationship is usually determined by many factors such as, the dimension, frequency and the type of openings related to the overall size of the specific living units.

Regarding this relationship, the regulations require that every room designed for daily activities must have direct access to sunlight. Concerning the analysis of the examples in Tirana, constructed before 1990s', and the need of natural light in the condominium, the findings lead to the general conclusion that the total surface of the facade openings dedicated for lighting living spaces is between 10% and 13% of the floor plane's net surface, a space in which significant renovation activities were not undertaken

(fig.14). In all of these examples the entering corridor is the only functional unit which does not have direct access to sunlight. In the examples that changed their distribution from the original layout, there are noticeable misbalances. In fig.9, d., the apartment with a structure 1+2 has been rearranged and extended to be a 1+4 room apartment is an example with spontaneously designed bedrooms without direct access to sunlight; the sunlight comes only indirectly through the neighboring room. There are other examples which have been reconstructed after the 1990s' and there is a bigger percentage relation between the floor plane surface of the apartment and the surface of the facade openings so that they can provide a better connection to the outdoors .

In the apartments constructed after 1990's there is a tendency for designing much larger facade openings compared to the previous ones, which is evident in the results of the survey conducted for this research *(fig. 14)*. In the examples from this case study, the smallest surface of the facade openings dedicated for lightning the living spaces is 12% of the net surface of the floor plane and the biggest one is 28%, which compared to the present UK standards, a part of the EU legislation, is much above the necessary limit defined as 12% *(Interim 2010)* and 15% defined by the standards in Macedonia. *(The Government of Republic of Macedonia 1999)* The possibility of enlarging the facade openings is also closely connected to the new available construction techniques which can support these design solutions; this was not the case before. The standards for a minimum lightning surface have not changed a lot during



the period, thus the minimum standards or 15% façade openings as defined by the legislation in Yugoslavia still corresponds to the qualitative normative. *(The Government of Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia 1973)*

It is not always the case that the increase of the percentage regarding the relationship between the façade opening in and the floor plane surface is a qualitative one and ensures an increase in the quality of living space; there are many other factors that should be taken in consideration such as, the proportion of the opening, the orientation towards the outside, surrounding elements from

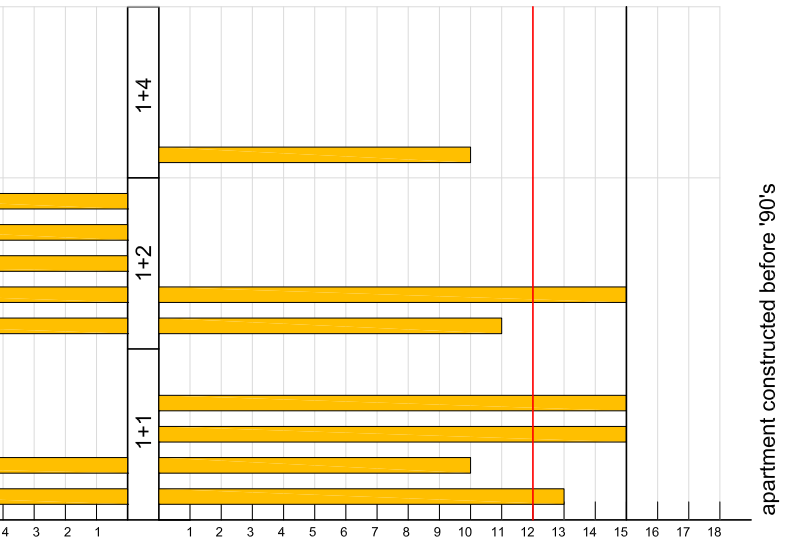


Fig. 14: Facade openings

the exterior environment, quality of the material from which this elements are made, among others which can make an direct input on the overall spatial quality. The dimension of the openings significantly influences the organization of the interior elements; in a way, it relates to the way in which the openings are placed in relation to the overall solid wall surface of the room parapets, parapets, edges, etc. so that they can be used as part of the interior design. The lighting is a very important element which influences the overall quality of the living spaces and the creation of the comfortable micro climates inside the apartments.

5 ANALYSIS OF THE LIVING SPACE, COMPARISON & FINDINGS

5.8 Apartment Structure

In this diagram the capacity of the living space is shown, in relation to the number of users, if the size of the apartment satisfies the minimum standard of space needed for the number of persons living inside one unit as referring to the English standards (Interim, 2010). Also additional extensions of living spaces, private open space, storage and garage spaces are shown, if the unit includes them.

From the investigated 14 key study examples, it is clear that the apartments constructed before the 90's in the majority of cases do not fulfill the need for minimal space necessities compared to the number of residents living in them (which was usually more than two). Exactly for that reason, some of them got extended (by occupation of common spaces in the building, joining part or total surface with the neighboring unit or extending from the building) to satisfy the residents' contemporary needs for space.

By the standards of the previous period 1+1 structure of the units, which in our case studies varies between 50 – 55 m^2 and was intended for 3 residents, in the case the family grew in time to four or five members all its members were still living in the same space which couldn't support their needs anymore. The 2+1 units were made for 6 persons and the 3+1 for 7 residents. In very rare cases garconnieres of 40 m^2 were constructed and they were considered uneconomical. Later in time, even 1+1 condominiums were considered non profitable because the number of family members was bigger than 3 and larger space was requested, so the decision was not to construct 1+1 apartments anymore. *(Luarasi, 2012)*

If we now reflect on the examples of the apartments build after the 1990's from the diagram *(Figure 15)*, we can see that the minimum standards in regard to number of users are certainly satisfied (by the UK standards*(Interim, 2010)* the minimum surface of the entire apartment for one person is 30m2, for two 50m2 and for three users is 60m2), and even exceeds the minimum in all questioned cases because the majority of them are inhabited by one or two persons and have 2+1 structure. These large surfaces are being used by one, two or maximum three residents, so the space needs are satisfied for the present moment. It is also shown that the newly constructed apartments have open private spaces (balconies and loggias), as well as parking spaces.

In these new spacious apartments one resident is living in 1+1 structure, new couples buy apartments 2+1 probably in preparation for a growing family, while families with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minimum and maximum surfaces declared are very low, unlike the situation we have in the private housing sector. For a garconniere structure the minimum surface (for 1 user) was 12.5 m^2 and the maximum surface (for two users) was 20-21 m^2; for 1+1 the minimum surface (for 2 user) was 20-21 m^2 and the maximum surface (for 3 users) was 27,5-29,75 m^2; for 2+1 the minimum surface (for 3 user) was 27,5-29,75 m^2 and the maximum surface (for 4 users) was 35-38 m^2; for 3+1 the minimum surface (for 4 user) was 35-38m^2 and the maximum surface (for 5 users) was 50-56m^2.

The minimum residential area, which belongs to a single person, is 12.5 m^2. To each additional person, over the age of 10 years old, belongs 7,5 m^2 living space while each additional person aged from 5 to 10 years has the right to 3.75 $m^2$of residential areas. Children under 5 years old don't have the right to obtain additional residential space.

Due to the lack of space and the large number of residents sharing one unit in Tirana during the communist period, after the 90's, the sizes of the apartments drastically increased, as a result of a higher demand for more living space, since people were ready to buy units that would fulfill their needs.

These tendencies dictated that the dimensions of new apartments were, approximately, for 1+1 structures 65-70 m2 of total surface, 2+1 configurations varied between 80 m2 and 110 m2 and the apartments 3+1 were equal or bigger than 120 m2 *(Shtylla, 2012)*, although there are assumptions that the tendency of very large apartments

is declining in the last few years, in correspondence to the decline of purchasing power of Tirana's residents. *(Sardella, 2012)*

Comparing these cases to the former Yugoslavian standards *(The Government of Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, 1973)*, where 1+1 structure was 50 to 60 m^2 of surface, 1+2 configuration 69 to 86 m^2, 3+1 units 90-100 m^2 and 4+1 structures 110 to 135 m^2, we notice that the standard was higher than the Albanian one, and in general users had more space for the satisfaction of their needs. The average floor space of the apartment in 1988 was 62.5m2 and the average floor space per person was 19m2. *(Vilogorac, 1990)* The garage or parking place was not required during that time, the same as in Albania.

Today, by the current law regulation in Serbia, minimum sizes of the apartment units are: for a garconniere or 1 room apartments 27.5 to 32 m^2, for 1+1 structure 48 m^2 (a decline from the socialistic standards); for 1+2 units minimum is 66 m^2; 3+1 structures are 86 m^2 of surface and for 4+1 apartments 108 m^2 and the minimum of one parking space needs to be provided for one apartment unit (the exact number of parking places depends on the surface of the apartment). *(The Government of the Republic of Serbia, Minister of Environment, Mining and Spatial Planning, 2011)* In practice, the majority of mass produced new apartments are built in these minimum surfaces. The average size of new units gradually increased from 72 m^2 in 1989 to 80 m^2 in 1999 before dropping to 78 m^2 in 2001. *(Economic Commission for Europe, 2006)* If we compare this to the findings from the questioned examples in Tirana build after the 90's by

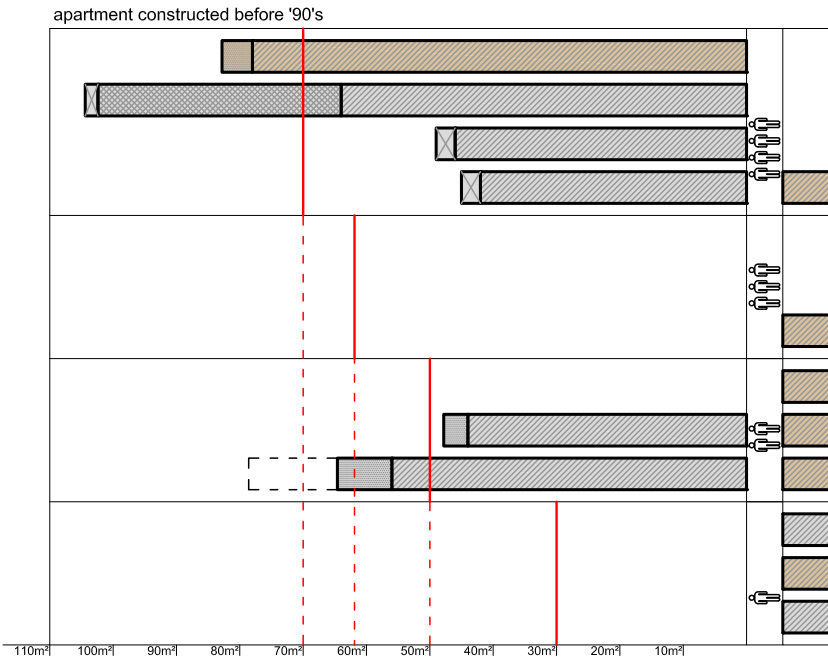
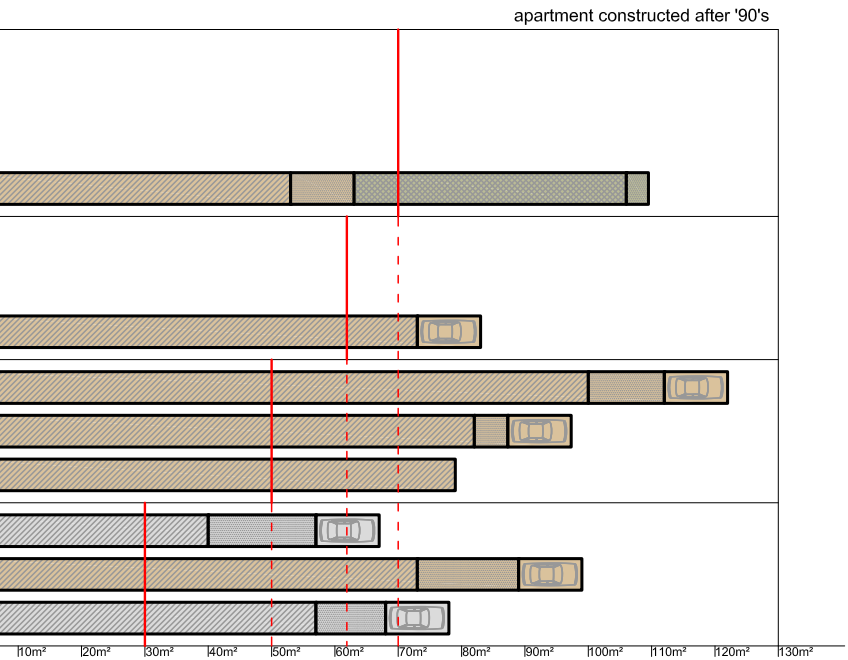


Fig. 15: apartment structure

following the market demand and affordability and not regulations or normative (where 1+1 units have from 55 to 70m^2 and 1+2 structures from 80 to 110 m^2 surface) we can notice that the new sizes of apartments in Tirana are bigger and more spacious than the ones in Belgrade.



Before '90 the average size of living space per person in Tirana was more than 6 m^2, *(Daja, 1986)* usually 7,5 m^2 of living space per capita *(Guarda, 1993)* and very poor sanitation levels against 19 m^2 in Yugoslavia.*(Vilogorac, 1990)* Today the average size of living space per person in Tirana has changed. There is not a normative regarding this, but according to the case studies of the apartments that are constructed after the '90, the average size of living space per person in Tirana is around 20 m^2, still smaller than 22m^2 of the Belgrade. *(CB Richared Ellis, 2012)*

6 CONCLUSIONS

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In different periods, the house evolution has reflected the economic, political and social relations of Albanian Population. *(Misja, V., Misja, A., 2004, p. 32)* In Albania and in the Balkans, there was a big change of the identity of the urban space and in the residence living space, as well, which try to adapt itself to the contemporary society needs. Housing is one of the most interesting architectural subjects closely linked with social issues and the relationship between the user's needs and the living space concept itself has always been intriguing. 'For the users, the house space reflects the way of life, aspirations for comfort, intimacy and social status. For many individuals dwelling is regarded as an opportunity to invest personal savings.' *(Misja, V., Misja, A., 2004, p. 11)* In Albania, 'for the majority of the population dwelling is one of the greatest assets and constitutes one of the most important voices of family expenditure and for the national economy, the construction of housing constitutes one of the most important sectors of the economy. *(Misja, V., Misja, A., 2004, p. 11)*

Tirana, residential blocks

Analyzes conducted on the key study examples, in particular the residents questioning part, revealed a users perceptional review on their space. A general notion was that the inhabitants are quite satisfied with their living environment (in terms of living space of their apartments, not necessarily the location, position of the building etc.) no matter how the microclimate characteristics of that environment are, but their complains were mostly focusing on the spacious issue for the apartments constructed before 1990's . In both cases, in the apartments that have satisfied spacious, distributional or light aspects (generally in the new built units, or the old modified and extended ones) or in the ones that were lacking in these basic attributes, the users were pleased with the living spaces they are dwelling in. Questions about the possible changes in the apartments,

Bridge Palace in Tirana

additional needs for space or moving away from home rarely gave answers that could indicate dissatisfaction, and the complains were more concerning the environment "outside" the living unit - location, relation with neighboring buildings, views and presence of nature; or a need for renovation. Even in the question that was dealing with explanation of the ideal home, often it was described like the one they have right now. Although the relation between individual and his living environment is highly subjective and it depends of various factors peculiar for each person, a general impression was that people are very conciliatory and adaptive to environment that they are living in. After a period of habituation they learn to love it, regardless of the faults it might have – they adapt themselves to the living space in which they are condition to be.

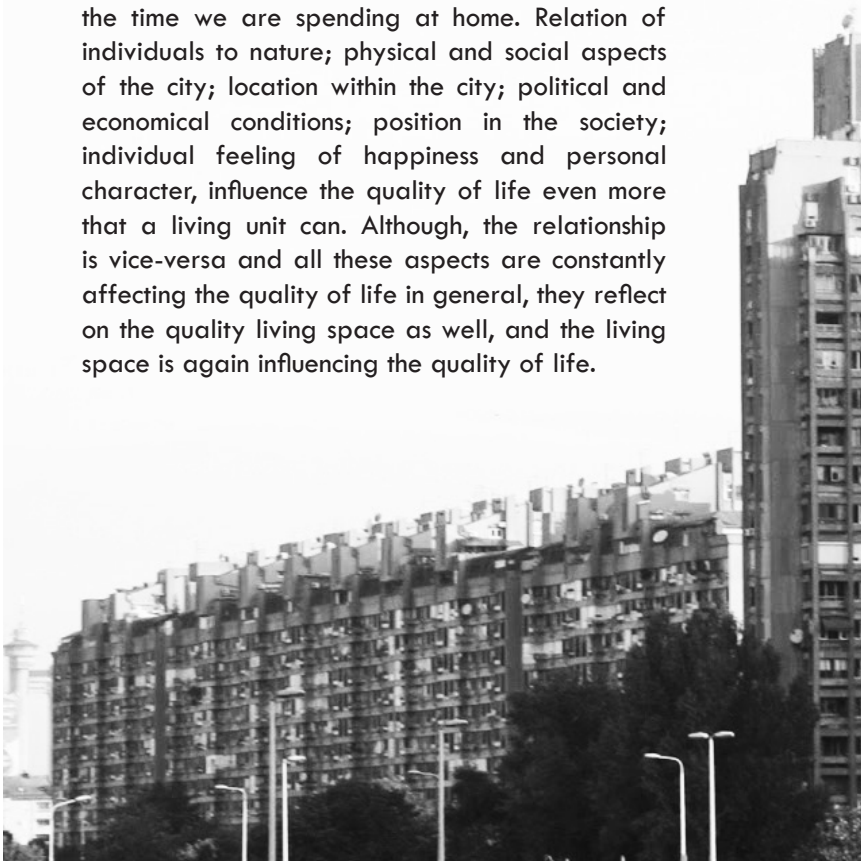
The change of the complete political and social system in all former socialistic countries, including Albania as a case of radical implementation of this ideology, had made a significant influence on the future development in every segment of the society. Transformation of our homes is a direct reflection of the change in the society, in the case of Tirana that means that now the users had started to shape the market what had resulted with response from the private developers on the contemporary needs for space of the users. Introducing the opportunity for the open market oriented economy had influenced on the change of the standard of living for many families, there have been created different layers of groups of users distinguished by their incomes. Because of the fact that the material condition of the users had made a strong influence on shaping the real estate market, we can speak about a verity of solutions that are aimed to respond on the needs and the possibilities of every family. The Quality of the living space is not always responding directly to the needs of it users, but in most of the cases it is a reflection on the purchasing power of it residences. The new designed homes should have the capacity for offering flexibility for adaptation on the variety of needs for the deferent typology of users with different interests but similar standard so they can satisfy their standard for quality of life.

If we reflect on the Yugoslavia/Albania context of the past, there were rules in both countries that ensured basic unit organization, but the regulations of Yugoslavian case were more elaborated and specified. Therefore, the situation

like usage of the sleeping zone for communication or direct contact of sanitary space with kitchen, for example, or lack of balconies and loggias was not possible. The quality of apartment's organization and distributional schemes were more developed. If we compare situation today, in Serbia and Macedonia, the crucial rules set in the low, ensure that there is some basic logic of spatial distribution guaranteed by the state for the design of new housing units. Although the new constructed apartments in majority are less organizationally developed compared to the units of the past, as part of a general decrease in housing standards; still some basic dispositional sense must be guaranteed by the low. Albanian case is the contrary because the lack of legal standards that would ensure a certain organization rules. Instead the distribution layout is left as a freedom of developer or designer to make it according to his preferences, which can result in a successfully organized apartment or in a bad and chaotic spatial distribution, where a lot of space is lost on communications. The users do not really have the standards they can rely to - rules that would guaranty them a certain organizational quality of the apartment, which is surely influencing their quality of life inside of these units. In order to increase the quality of life in Albanian condominiums, there is an immediate need for normative and regulations that can provide the minimum design requirements to guaranty the quality of living space to satisfy the contemporary resident's needs.

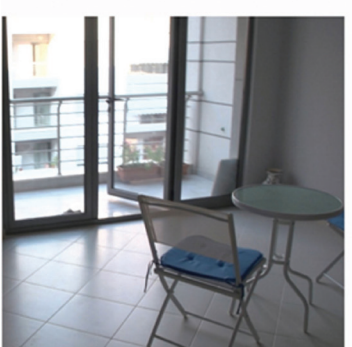
Overall analyses conducted in this research, based exclusively in investigating the apartment itself, lead to finding that the residential unit is functioning within a

system, and it cannot influence individually on the overall quality of life, but it is one of the factors that we should not be underestimated and be aware about it grates importance concerning the time we are spending at home. Relation of individuals to nature; physical and social aspects of the city; location within the city; political and economical conditions; position in the society; individual feeling of happiness and personal character, influence the quality of life even more that a living unit can. Although, the relationship is vice-versa and all these aspects are constantly affecting the quality of life in general, they reflect on the quality living space as well, and the living space is again influencing the quality of life.



New Belgrade, Block 23, old +new

STORY OF AN APARTMENT



EXHIBITION:
STORY OF AN APARTMENT

Four stories of four apartments in Tirana, two from the communist period, 1950/90's and two constructed after 1990's, displaying and analyzing functional changes, how they have influenced on the users quality of life and how are they related with the general conditions in the society in that period. This exhibition is a section of a broader research: "Quality of life change the quality of space", conducted in cooperation with Co-Plan Institute for habitat development, through the project of research studies on the topic of "The Typology of Albanian Housing in its Balkan Context".The main theme of the research is the relationship between the quality of life and the quality of living space, in the apartments in Tirana, both before and after the 1990. The research should clarify how the living space is conditioning people's behavior, and how the user's needs could shape the living space itself, but also, to shed a new light on a relationship of psychology and housing in the case of Tirana – to show how this emerging situation (after the change of the regime) is affecting the psychology of the users, compared to how it affected them before (in the communist period).

Before ‘90

For almost 45 years, from 1945 till 1990 Albania was under a communist totalitarian system which isolated it from the rest of the world. The country development was focused more towards the industrialization of the countryside and the creation of small and medium industrial towns to minimize the urban costs.

The private property became state’s ownership and the urbanization growth or movement was restrained and for every city was create the so-called “yellow line”. The housing needs in Tirana was high in the first phase of the communism period, because of the damaging and the destructions of the Second World War and also because of the establishment of the working class that increased the urban population. This process went on till 1960, and then for the next 30 years the population growth declined.Most of the housing construction were apartment blocks of three, four or five floors in the city urban areas. Also in the countryside two to three floors dwellings or small state farm blocks were built.In 1970s, new urban housings typology was introduced, built by prefabricated system.Housing, as every other field, was planned and realized by the state institutions and there were no free professionals (architects or urban planners) that were designing or investing in housing projects

privately.In 1947, in Tirana was established the National State Institute of Studies, Design and Town Planning, later known as the Institute of Architecture and Town Planning, or ZUP. By the late '80 the name of the Institution was changed in "National Planning Institute" and it was divided in two part regard the specific project: 1) Architectural and urban design, and 2) Urban Planning Department.The projects were implemented by the NSHN - Housing Directors and State Companies, using also a lot of voluntary work from the residents, students, solders, labor force, etc.

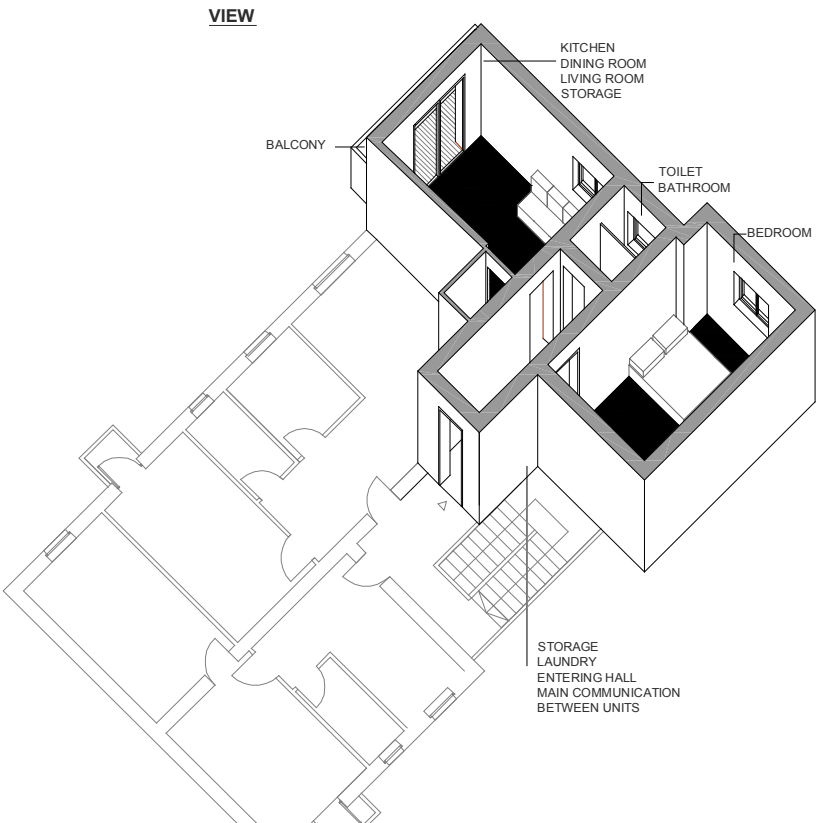
The houses were property of the state and residents rented them till late '80, time when the state gave the possibility to the people the right to buy their home, which became the only private ownership. Designed by the Institute, the apartment layouts were exclusively standardized and divided in different groups according to the number of rooms (1+1, 2+1 and 3+1) and according to that the standards used were changing regard to the building place and its climate characteristics. Depending on the terrain, or the exact place, some changes were made in the executive phase as the walls thickness, the direction of the building regarding to the connection with the road and the neighborhood. The size and the number of

the windows; closing or opening of the staircase cores were decided previously by the Institute. If any reason some changes had to be done, the architect or the engineer had to make a written request that had to be approved by the council. For every investment the main issue was to spend as less as possible which resulted in large number of residents living in one a small apartment. After the '70, even the cooking surface was merged with the living space area to reduce the totla cost and surface for each apartment unit.From the Institute of Design were developed several types of projects. The development of the industry for the materials in construction, allowed the standardization of the buildings and their constant repetition in the city, regardless of weather conditions, traditions and culture of the country. Similar schemes were repeated across the country. Despite the requirement to standardize the apartment, there were architects who sought to break the uniformity of the "tipization" and to create other shapes, such as: arch. Petraq Kolevica, arch. Maks Velo, arch. Koco Comi, etc. These authors were critical of the regime that demanded the standardization of forms and the reduction of construction costs. Most of these non-tipical dwellings of the time were built for senior officers of the party, as their residences or their holiday houses (example: Pallace in Rr. E Dibrës, designed by Maks Velo in 1971).

Tirana, 2012

Program: Housing / socialistic apartment building
Location: Tirana Center, Ruga e Kavajes, Albania
Years of construction: 1962
Developer: The state
Author: State department for housing standardization / typisation
Construction: Carrying walls + columns
Facade: Bricks and plaster

PROJECT SPECIFICATION



ARCHITECT / STUDIO

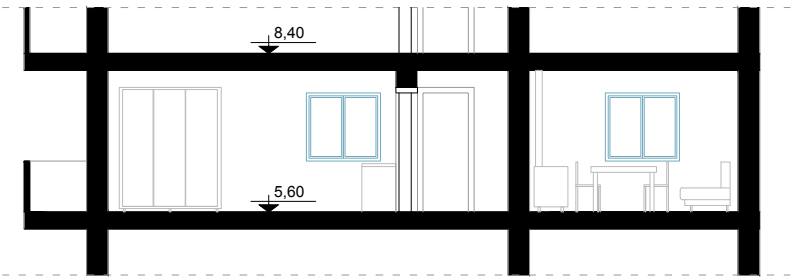
*__Pavllo Skender Luarasi__ is born in Tirana on 8 June of 1943. He was graduated in the Polytechnic University of Beijing Hua Qing in China in 1961-1966, in the Faculty of Architecture. In 1967-1970 he worked in N.Sh.N. of Durres as an Executiv engineer. In 1970 he came in Tirana and worked for 12 years as Architect in I.S.P. No.1. After a so long experience, in 1982 he became a Vice. Director of I.S.P. No. 1., till 1989. From 1989 to 1991 he grew in duty and he became the Coordinator and the main architect of this office and in 1991 he became Director of I.S.P. No. 1 Tirana and remain for three years. In the years 1983-1991 he was also teaching in the Faculty of Architecture in Tirana as an invited Professor. From 1993 till 2001 he was engaged in a private studio of Architecture but in meanwhile he has worked also as a free professional. In a 35 years careers the architect has participate in 80 projects in total. From 2001 till 2006 he lived in United States of America. Nowadays he is retired and living in Tirana.

The architect was interviewed in the research as a representative architect of the time - he is not the author of the key- studied project presented here.

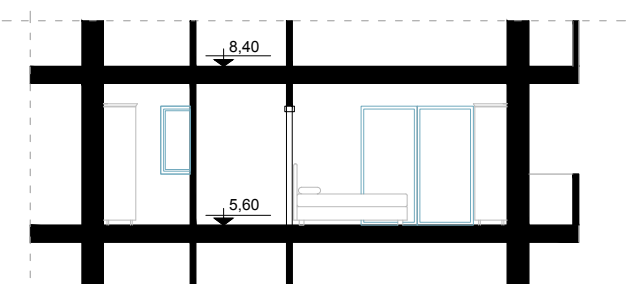
USERS

Residents: Family of 2 (husband and wife)
Age: Older couple
Occupation: Retired (ex mechanic engineer and an economist)
Relation: owners of the apartment
Pets: No
Family origin: Other city in Albania - Permet
Living in this apartment for: 5<20 years
Apartment structure: 2+1 (was the original structure), now 1+1
Floor: third
Surface: 50-80 m2
Terrace: Yes
Common spaces: No
Emergency stairs: No
Services: water, electricity, sewage, heating (individual), cooling(airconditiion), hydroisolation

SECTIONS



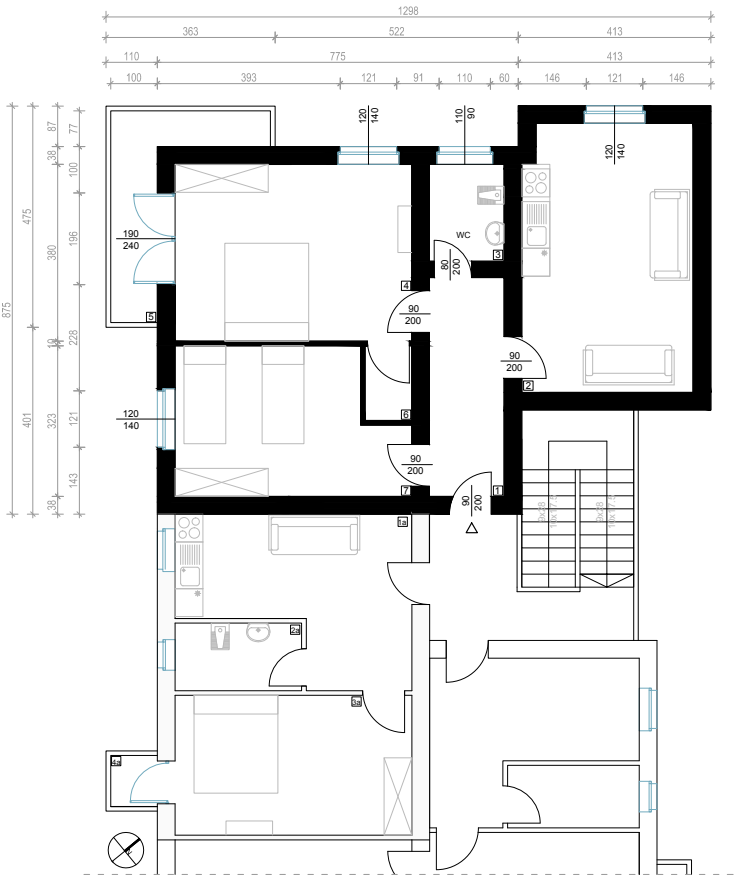
A-A



B-B

0 100 200 300 400 500m

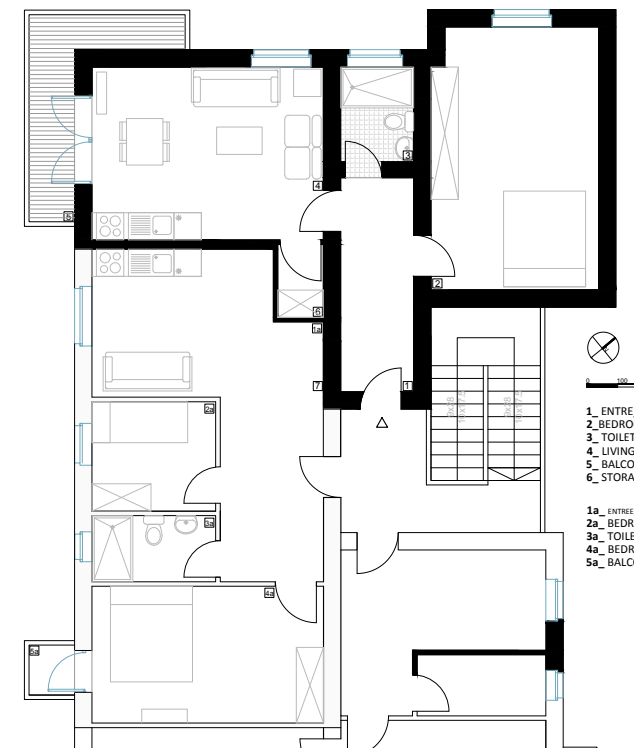
DESIGNED FLOOR PLAN



1_ ENTRE_____ 7.50m²
2_ LIVINGROOM/KITCHEN _____ 21m²
3_ TOILET_____ 3.35m²
4_ BEDROOM _____19.30m²
5_ BALCONY _____ 6.40m²
6_ STORAGE_____1.60m²
7_ BEDROOM _____14.55m²

1a_ ENTREE/LIVINGROOM/KITCHEN ____14.9m²
2a_ TOILET_____3.95m²
3a_ BEDROOM _____15.25m²
4a_ BALCONY _____1.10m²

EXISTING FLOOR PLAN



1_ ENTRE _____ 7.50m²
2_BEDROOM _____ 21m²
3_ TOILET _____ 3.35m²
4_ LIVINGROOM/KITCHEN ___ 19.30m²
5_ BALCONY _____ 6.40m²
6_ STORAGE _____ 1.60m²

1a_ ENTREE/LIVINGROOM/KITCHEN ___ 23.95m²
2a_ BEDROOM _____ 6.50m²
3a_ TOILET _____ 3.95m²
4a_ BEDROOM _____ 15.25m²
5a_ BALCONY _____ 1.10m²

USER - APARTMENT RELATION

- How many hours during the day you're spending in the apartment?

5<10h

- Where do you spend mostly you're after work/ school time and why?

Usually at home, doing something... or in the morning in the bar, meeting with friends.

- Which are the activities that you do at home?

Cooking; Watching TV; Leisure; Relaxing

- Arrange the rooms (including the terrace) in the apartment starting from the most used to the least used one:
    1. *living room*
    2. *kitchen*
    3. *balcony*
    4. *bedroom*
    5. *toilet*

- What do like most in your apartment?

Spatial distribution - it is functional, Natural Light , It is very comfortable

- What do you consider as a main problem in the apartment?

In general there are no problems, the only thing is that the original and new apartments have different interior quality (new is renovated) and that could be unified so both are on the same quality level

- What would you like to change in the apartment?

We already made the changes in the past, according to our needs. Now, we would change the thermal isolation by installing thermo isolated glasses where it's needed

- Do you have needs for other additional rooms and for what purposes?

No, there is only two of us now and we are satisfied.

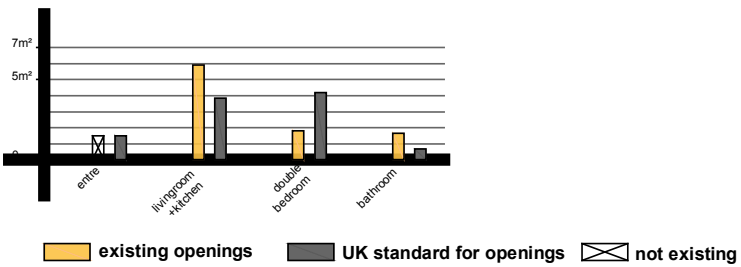
- Have you ever planned to move from home and why?

No

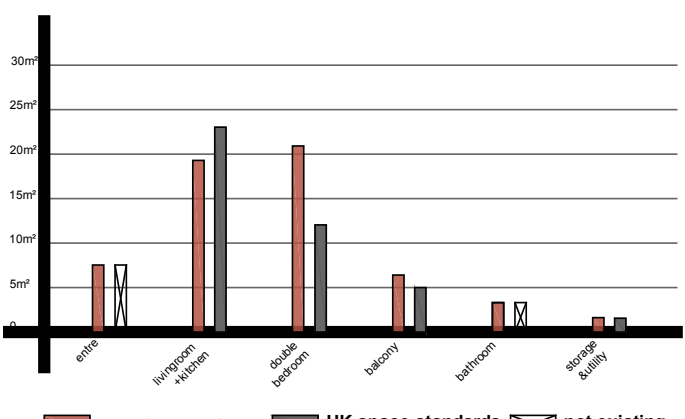
- If you would move or change home, what would you prefer your apartment to be like?

It would be like the one we have now - after we made the changes according to our needs, our home is perfect for us.

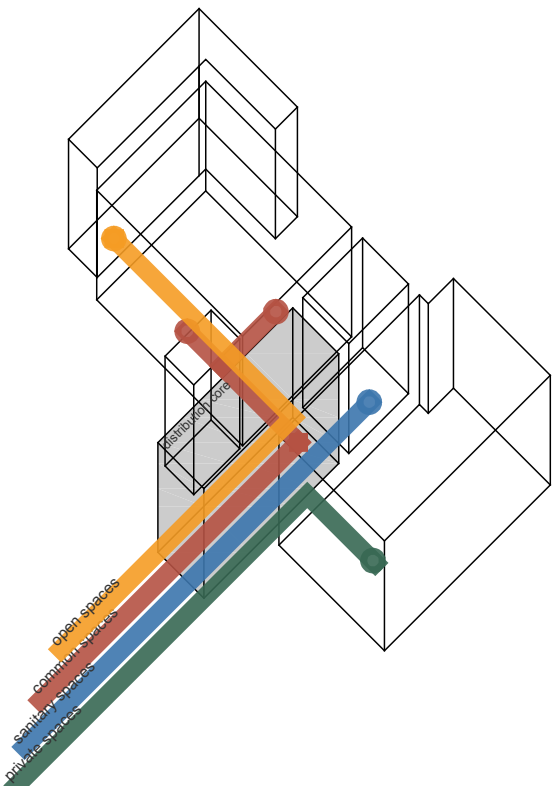
INSOLATION ANALYZE



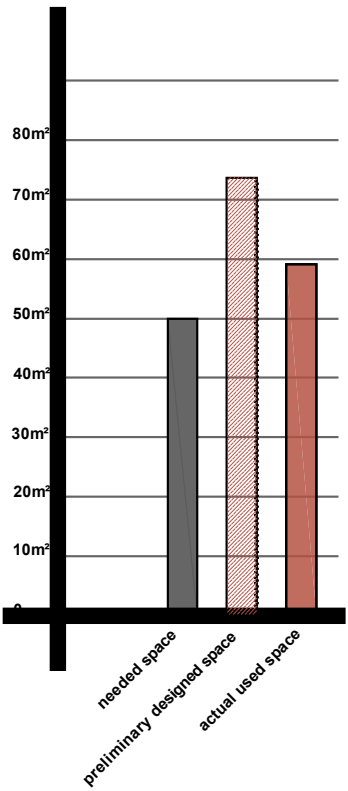
SPACE ANALYZE



DISTRIBUTION ANALYZE



SPACE REQUIREMENT vs ACTUAL SITUATION

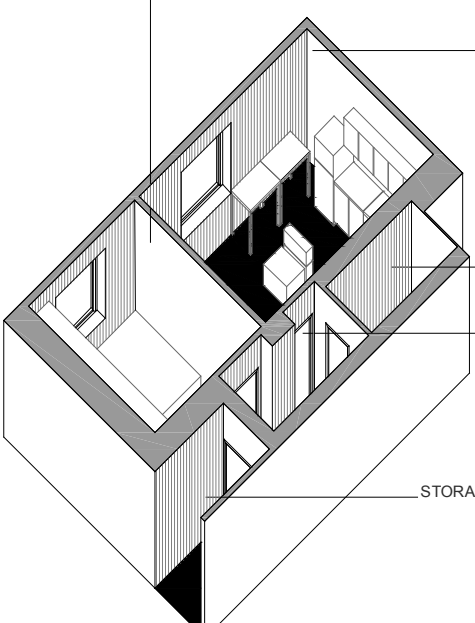


This home in the time when it was constructed it was aimed to be use by a high class Albanian family, two parents and two children (it was not according by the average communist standard that was offering 8m² housing space per person).

According by the nowadays users needs this space was to big and unused for 2 people living inside so they decide to sell one part of it. Even after this intervention, according to the nowadays UK standards for a minimum space requirements for housing, this apartment is offering more than the minimum commodity for the users.

Program: Housing / socialistic apartment building
Location : Kashar area/Rruga Hamdi Cenojmeri, Tirana, Albania
Years of construction: ~1970-1980
Developer: The state
Author: State department for housing standardization / typisation
Construction: Carrying walls
Facade: Brick and plaster

PROJECT SPECIFICATION



ARCHITECT / STUDIO

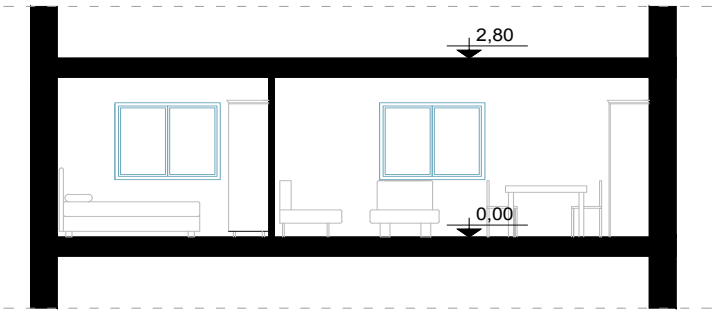
*__Arben Shtylla__ was graduated in Architecture in the University of Tirana - Faculty of Civil Engineering, in June 1976. In June 1989 he became doctor in Doctor in Science Technique. Today he is a Membership of Association for Albanian Architect. In 1978 he worked as a designer in the Ministry of Construction, Design Institute No. 4, for two years. In 1986 he was the Chief of department in the Regional City Planning Department of Puka working as Architecture design and city planning. In 1988, for three years, he returned back to work in the Ministry of Construction, Design Institute No. 4 in Tirana, but now as a Chief of department. He worked also as a professor in the Faculty of Civil Engineering in Tirana for the Post-University Courses: "The Prefab System and the Modular Co-ordination" -1986 - 1994. In 1992 and still on going he established Studio Architecture Shtylla and in 2002 he became the Executive Director of the Cooperation & Development Institute (NGO). Today he works at POLIS University as a full time professor.

The architect was interviewed in the research as a representative architect of the time - he is not the author of the key- studied project presented here.

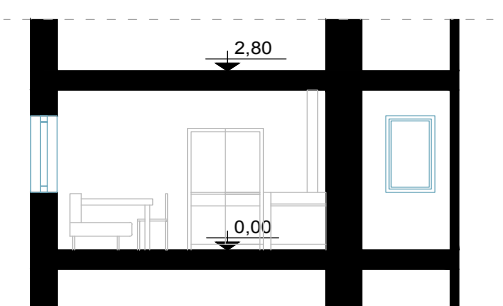
USERS

Residents: Family of 4 (parents and two daughters)
Age: Parents - middle age / daughters - early twenties
Occupation: Parents - employed / daughters - 1 student, 1 employed
Relation: owners of the apartment
Pets: No
Family origin: Other city in Albania - Dibra
Living in this apartment for: 5<20 years
Apartment structure: 1+1
Floor: ground floor
Surface: <50m2
Terrace: No
Common spaces: No
Emergency stairs: No
Services: water, electricity, sewage, thermoisolation, hydroisolation, Digital TV

SECTIONS



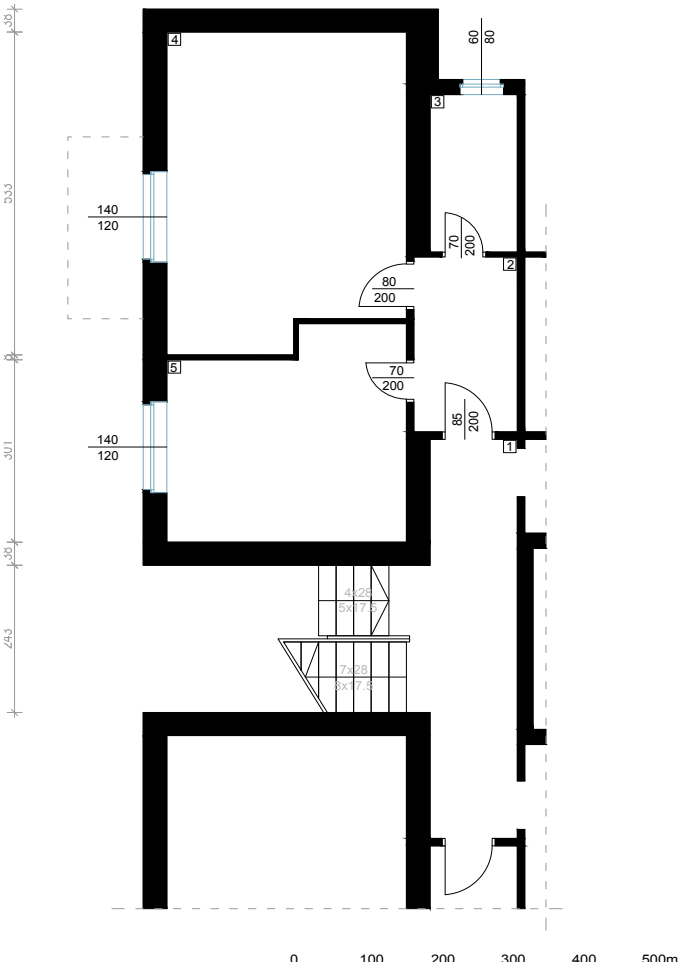
A-A



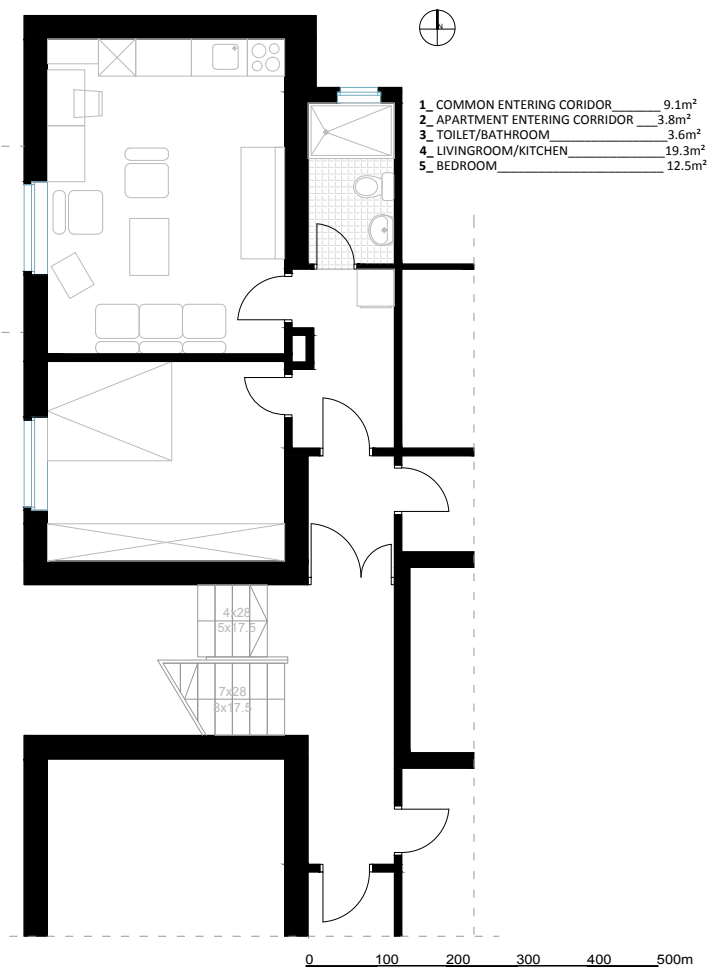
B-B

0 100 200 300 400 500m

DESIGNED FLOOR PLAN



EXISTING FLOOR PLAN



USER - APARTMENT RELATION

- How many hours during the day you're spending in the apartment?

5<10h

- Where do you spend mostly you're after work/ school time and why?

Outside of the apartment -in the bar, reading a book ...

- Which are the activities that you do at home?

Watching TV; Studying; Talking on the phone

- Arrange the rooms (including the terrace) in the apartment starting from the most used to the least used one:
    1. *bedroom*
    2. *kitchen*
    3. *toilet*
    4. *living room*

- What do like most in your apartment?

Natural Light

- What do you consider as a main problem in the apartment?

Humidity, Temperature, Lack of space

- What would you like to change in the apartment?

To make it bigger - so each one of us have more space for himself.

- Do you have needs for other additional rooms and for what purposes?

Yes, a separate rooms for me and my sister, then a parents bedroom and a normal living room and also a terrace.

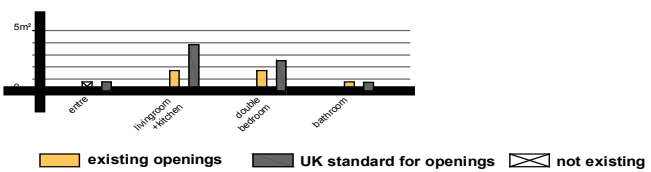
- Have you ever planned to move from home and why?

Yes, because this one is too small for us.

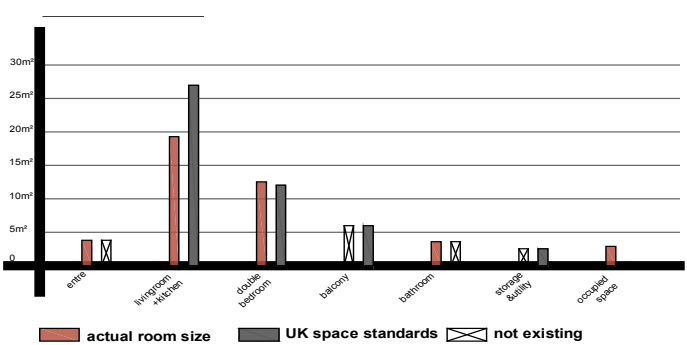
- If you would move or change home, what would you prefer your apartment to be like?

It would be a bigger apartment, in the same neighborhood that we are now (Kashar).

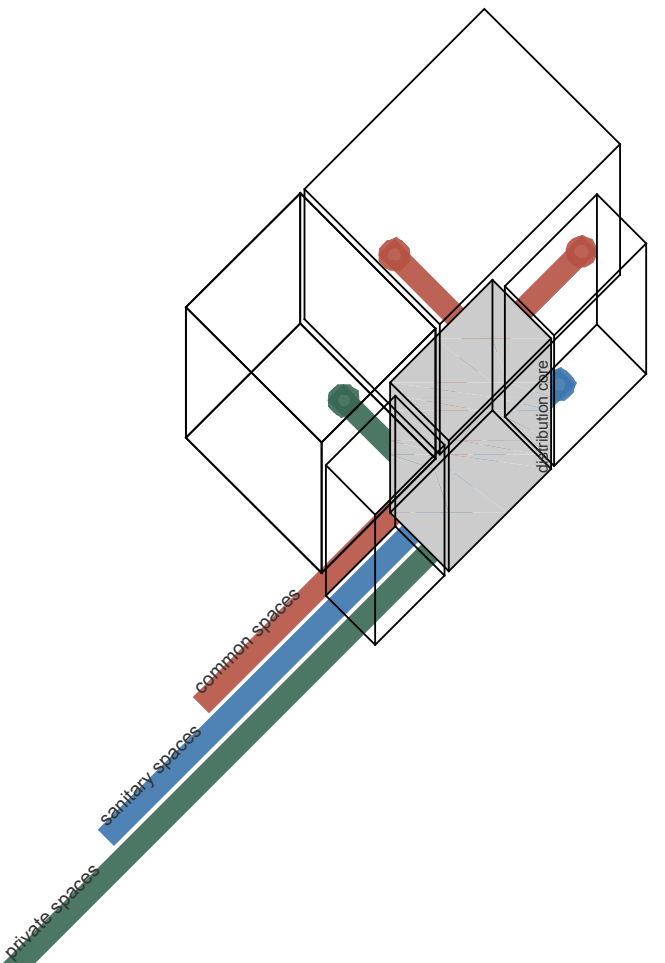
INSOLATION ANALYZE



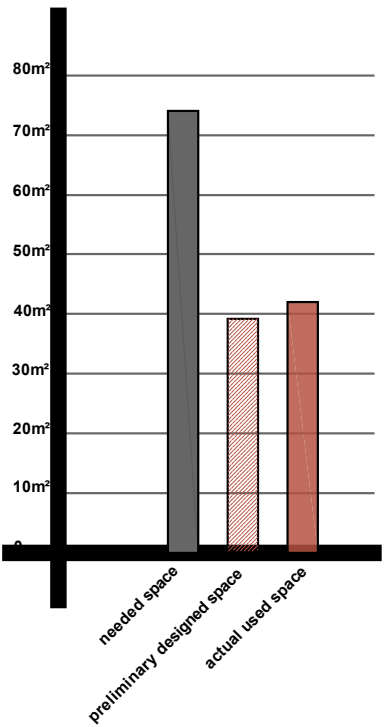
SPACE ANALYZE



DISTRIBUTION ANALYZE



SPACE REQUIREMENT vs ACTUAL SITUATION



This home in the time when it was constructed it was aimed to be use by a typical Albanian family, two parents and 2 children (it is according by the communist standard that was offering 8m² housing space per person).

According by the nowadays standards for housing, represented by the UK standards, this home should be with the structure of 1+2 or 1+3 rooms depending of the standard of the family and not less than 70m². This family is constantly looking for a solution for their space problem and had find a way to extend for a storing space by closing the entry corridor from the common space.

Tirana before the '90

SPACE REQUIREMENTS

Following the analyzes done on the apartments constructed during the communist period in Tirana we can conclude that the minimum space standards for housing, from the period when they were constructed, is not corresponding with the nowadays needs for comfortable housing. That is a reason why most of the residents are deciding to extend the apartment, by occupying part of the common spaces in the building, partially or fully join the apartment with the neighbor one or extending out from the building volume. This situation is caused, because of the new needs of the users who want to adopt their homes according to the functions that one contemporary living space should support.

SIZE OF THE APARTMENTS

The communist ideology was to spend as less money as possible on the construction of the apartments. The surface of the units was varying from the number of the rooms. Usually there were following the normative for the minimum space requirements defined by the Institute, in which: the bedroom was about 12 - 14 m2; the living room about 13 - 15 m2; the kitchen was sometimes part of the living space or if it was closed, it could be more or less 2 m2; the bathroom also 2 m2; balcony 1 - 3 m2 depending on the facade layout and the technical rooms (storage) was around 1 m2.

ACTIVITIES

In the communist regime, most of the time apartments where used predominantly by the women, dealing with the activities like cleaning, cooking, children education and socializing. The television came very late, and when it arrived it was functioning only a couple hours in the day with restriction of program, as a part of a general isolation politics. The other activities related to recreation, socializing and culture were conducted mostly outside the apartment.

LANGUAGE

The architecture language can be divided in three phases.

The first one before '50s, period in which the buildings were of two-three floors. The second period was the neoclassic influence in architecture (Shallvaret and pallatet Agimi, in which the toilet was without natural ventilation, and the high of the ceiling was between 2,8-2,9 m). Between 1950-1953, there was also an influence from Bulgarian architecture (for example the palaces in Kavajes Street, in front of the Catholic Church). The third phase, after '60, the west influences were abandoned and the only one to be followed

were the Soviet references (tipical for this phase is the area around Myslym Shyri Street and the area near Pasticeri Flora). Soviet typology was also used in settlement of Kombinat in which the toilets were without natural light and a well is used for mechanic ventilation.

NUMBER OF USERS

The apartments were realized with 1+1 structure for 3 users, but when the family enlarged to the number of four or five people, they were still living in the same small space, waiting from the state to give to them a bigger apartment. The 2+1 units were made for 6 persons and the 3+1 for 7 residents. In very rare cases garconniere of 40 m2 were constructed and they were considered anti-economical. Later in time, even 1+1 condominiums were considered non profitable because the family number was bigger than 3 and larger space was requested, so the decision was not to construct 1+1 apartments anymore.

LIGHTENING

The dimension of the openings was varying from 6% or 8% of the floor surface. The design usually proposed to have the living room in the south and bed rooms in the west or east, so transversal ventilation solution is achieved. Also it meant that the apartments where usually double orientated - they had openings and views on two sides of the building.

SPACE DISTRIBUTION

The space distribution of each apartment was defined by the typization projects made from the National Planning Institute, based on architectural study of the space the needs for the families. Only small changes could be done in the executive phase of the project on the site. Usually the distribution space inside the apartment was organized between the communication core positioned in the main entrance, the living room with the kitchen, the bedrooms and the sanitary space (toilets and storage). In the best cases the double orientation and distribution was made - to have sun in the morning and in the evening and also to have a transversal ventilation of the apartment. Also, orientation only on one side was

applied often. The main configuration of the buildings was only two apartments per floor, connected with the stair core (3+1, or 4+1 stories buildings - without elevator, common terraces, joined spaces or basements). Only rarely, there were three apartments for floor.

PERSONAL PERCEPTION

The personal perception of the residents for their apartment, according to the interviews was more related to the size of the apartment, the location and the neighborhood in which they are living. They were complaining about the lack of space inside of it and their need for one or two more rooms for their children. Their perception about the quality, the lighting and other issues was generally positive.

Tirana after the ‘90

After the communist regime, Tirana has had a rapid population growth and the number of inhabitants more than tripled. Transition from a centralized to a market economy leaded to the property privatization process and also to a free movement of the people from their places of origin. A lot of people in a search for a better life strived to live in the city. Especially Tirana, being the capital, became their focus. After the 1990, because of the rapid urban growth, the predominant type of property become the apartment. Primary investment for the Albanian family was solving the housing question; improving the living conditions of dwellings inherited from the communist era or purchase of new condominiums, that could fulfill their needs in space, quality and size. The housing requests in the city increased very fast and construction became one of the most profitable businesses in the city. Firstly, the location of these new dwellings was inside the old apartment blocks, but with the growth of the city, the new condominiums continued to create new urban settlements.

The main spatial difference from the old housing units was in the size of the apartments - the new housing trend was to have more larger apartments. Their dimension are various, but approximately apartments of 1+1 structure had a surface around 70 m2; 2+1configurations vary between 80 m2 and 110 m2 and the apartments 3+1 are bigger than 120 m2.

These grater dimensions were not distributed equally in all the units of the apartment. Different rooms did not became bigger proportionally, but instead the living room became the largest space in the house, taking more or less half of the total surface of the apartment. The rest of the space is divided between the bedrooms, which surface was reduced less than before '90. The services, due to new technology and equipment installed in them, became more spacious.

New housing solutions are focused more in the developer economic profit by implementing in the project design only the basic needed spaces for

everyday life, such as: bedroom, living room, toilet and balcony… No addition space was planned in the units - for example, the storage unit, often used in communism period, is not anymore part of the design in the last two decades.

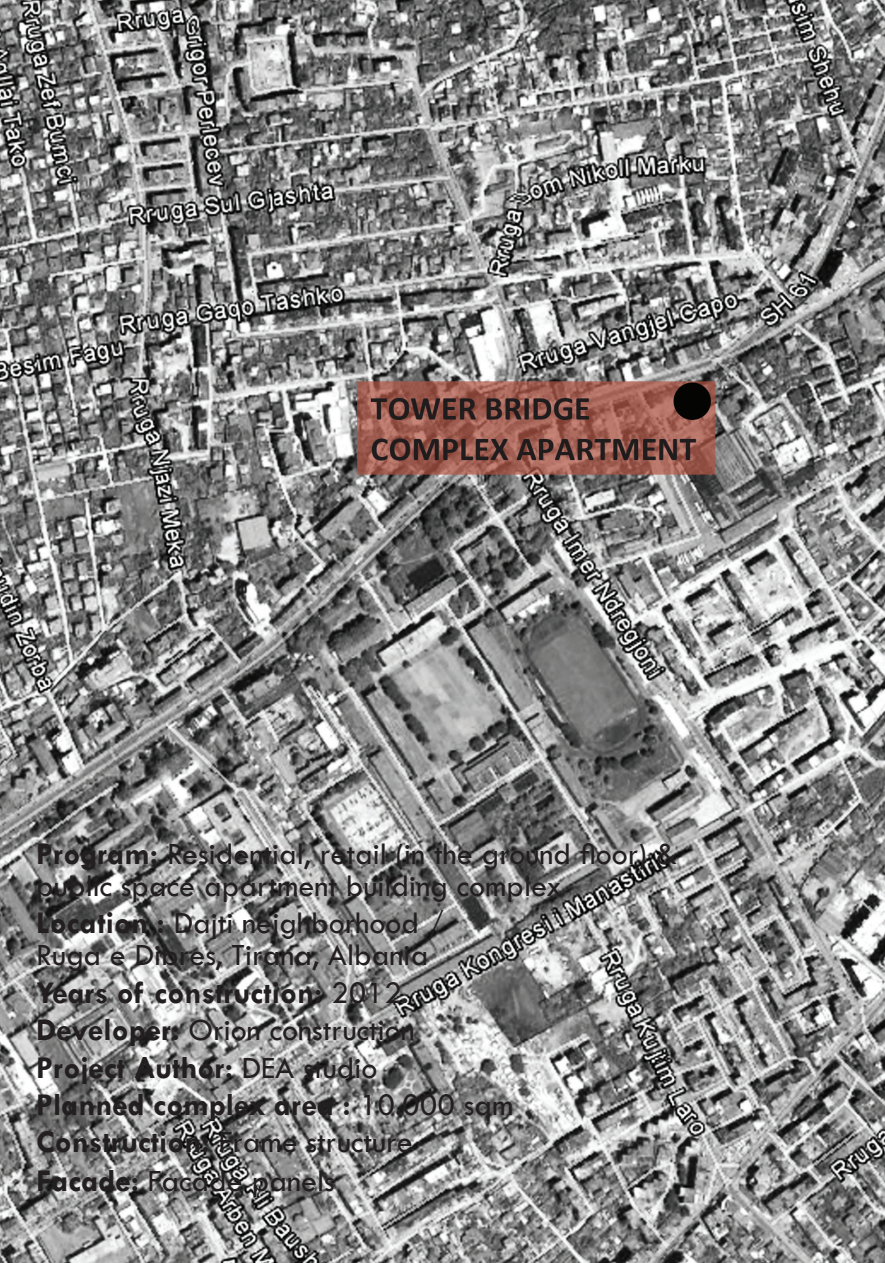
The design became more orientated towards the condominium itself, without considering the common spaces, communal terraces, cellars or other places that can contribute a more comfortable life or improve of the socialization in the neighborhood. These features can be labeled to individual buildings, but are also changing nowadays by construction of larger housing complexes (for example: two cases shown in the exhibition) which include in their design common spaces, mixed-use ground floors, playgrounds and underground garages.

In the period after the'90, no normative or standards are obliging to be respected by the low, so it is left to a free will of the developers, investors or architects to construct and set the minimum space standards by their preferences. Not always, but often the new condominiums are constructed without fulfilling even the minimum of European Code Standards for construction or thermal and acoustic isolation. Lack of

isolation created many problems with the noise and especially with the inner temperature of the apartments. The high temperatures in the summer and low in the winter became a big and costly problem for the residents, due to inefficient heating and cooling solutions based usually on electricity. In the first decade after the '90, air conditioning was not provided by the developer, only in rare cases when the residents decided to add it with extra payment. This is also slowly changing in the last decade, because some of the companies provide in the project central or individual thermo systems.

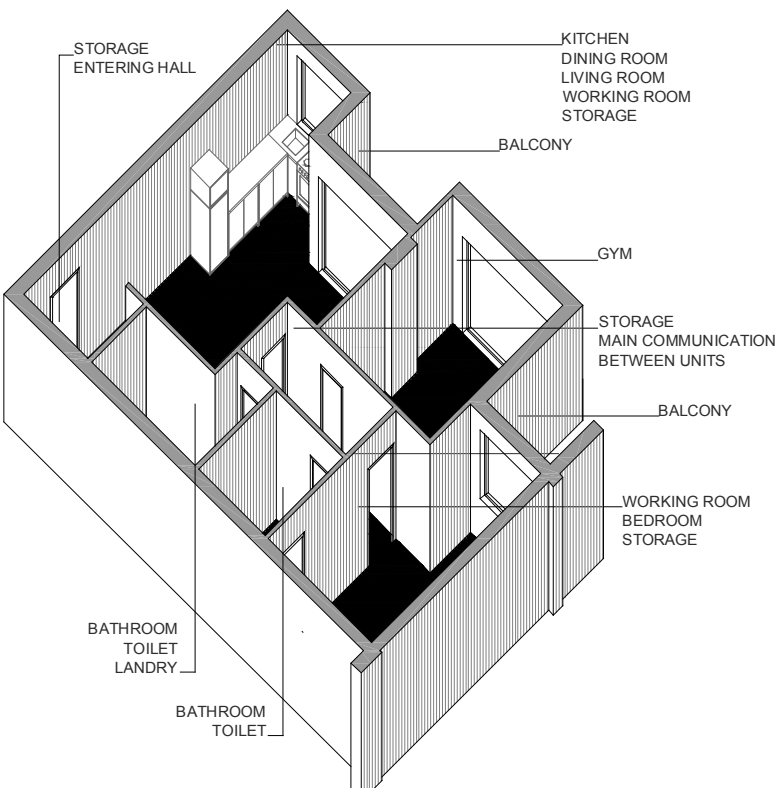
Even the hydro isolation is a big problem because it is done with scarce cheap material and usually it does not provide protection from humidity. This is common for all the new apartments, especially for the last floor and the ground floor ones, since Tirana has a lot of underground waters.

These phenomena connected with the poor use of materials and technology reduce the comfort in the living space of the apartments and increase the maintenance costs for the residents, but also causes a lot of energy consumption.



Program: Residential, retail (in the ground floor) & public space apartment building complex
Location: Dajti neighborhood / Ruga e Dibres, Tirana, Albania
Years of construction: 2012
Developer: Orion construction
Project Author: DEA studio
Planned complex area: 10,000 sqm
Construction: frame structure
Facade: Facade panels

PROJECT SPECIFICATION



ARCHITECT / STUDIO

DEA STUDIO

[Klodiana Emiri]
responsability: director
diploma title: architect
year of graduation: 1999
university attended: Politechnic University of Tirana, Faculty of Civil Engeneering

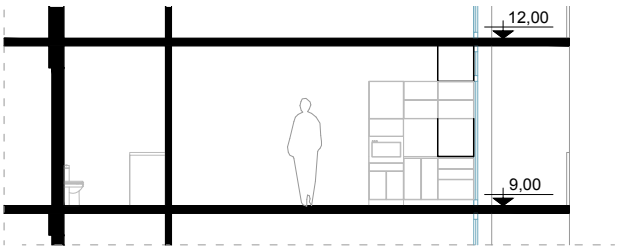
[Ervin Taci]
responsability: general administrator
diploma title: urban planer
year of graduation: 1998
university attended: Politechnic University of Tirana, Faculty of Civil Engeneering

[Alket Meslani]
responsability: administrator
diploma title: architect
year of graduation: 2001
university attended: Politechnic University of Tirana, Faculty of Civil Engeneering

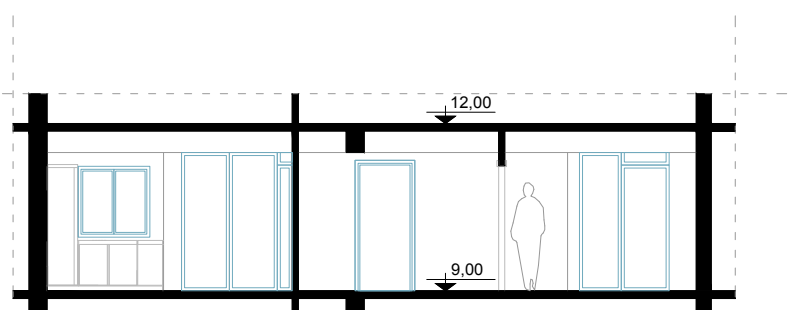
USERS

Residents: Family of 2 (husband and wife)
Age: Young couple
Occupation: Employed (both with university diploma)
Relation: owners of the apartment
Pets: No
Family origin: Tirana
Living in this apartment for: <5 years
Apartment structure: 2+1
Floor: fourth
Surface: <100 m2
Terrace: Yes
Common spaces: No
Emergency stairs: No
Services: water, electricity, sewage, heating (individual/electricity), cooling(airconditiion), thermoisolatin, hydroisolation, Interenet, Digital TV, building maintenance

SECTIONS



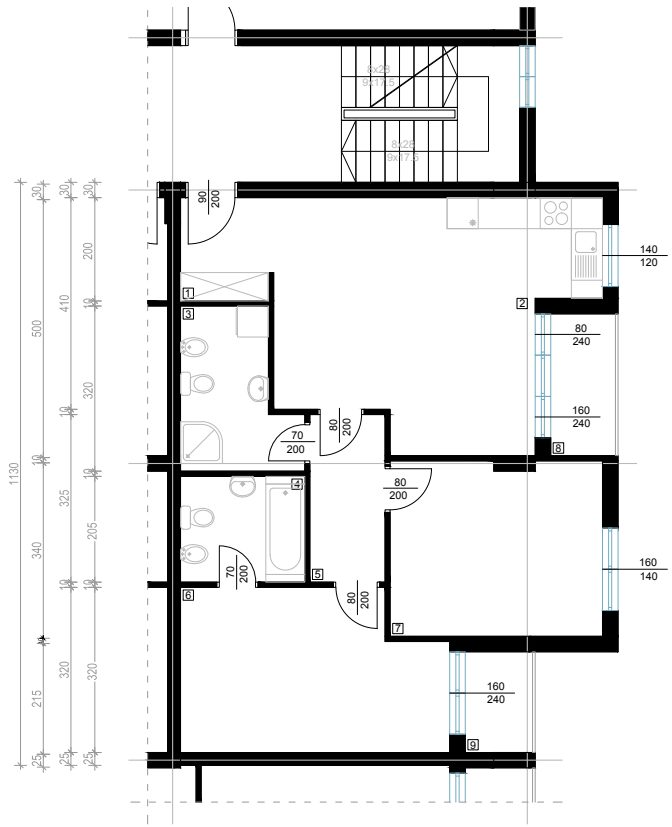
A-A

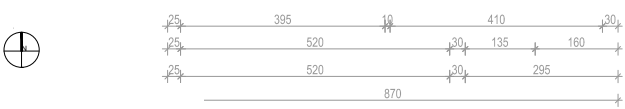


B-B

0 100 200 300 400 500m

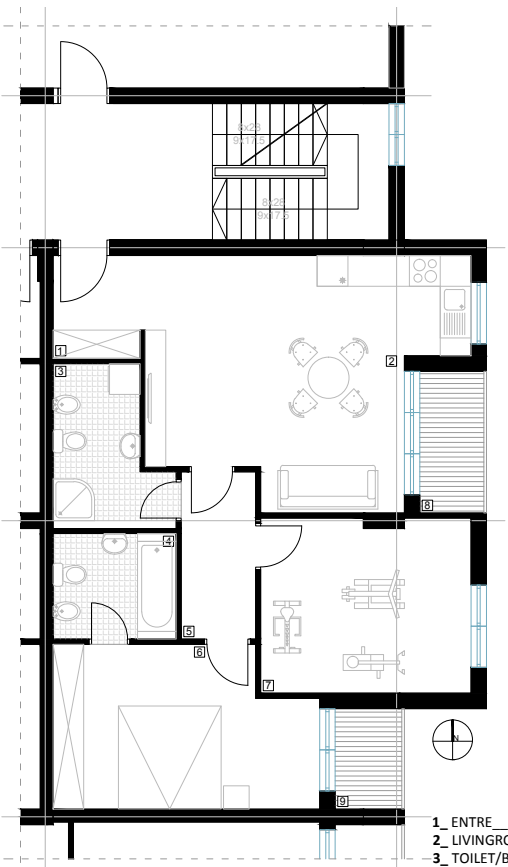
DESIGNED FLOOR PLAN





1_ ENTRE_____ 3.4m²
2_ LIVINGROOM/KITCHEN ___ 25.9m²
3_ TOILET/BATHROOM _____ 6.21m²
4_ TOILET/BATHROOM _____ 4.92m²
5_ PRIVATE CORRIDOR _____ 4.71m²
6_ BEDROOM _____ 15.32m²
7_ BEDROOM _____ 13.78m²
8_ BALCONY _____ 3.47m²
9_ BALCONY _____ 2.53m²

EXISTING FLOOR PLAN



0 100 200 300 400 500m

1_ ENTRE_____ 3.4m²
2_ LIVINGROOM/KITCHEN ___ 25.9m²
3_ TOILET/BATHROOM _____ 6.21m²
4_ TOILET/BATHROOM _____ 4.92m²
5_ PRIVATE CORRIDOR _____ 4.71m²
6_ BEDROOM _____ 15.32m²
7_ BEDROOM _____ 13.78m²
8_ BALCONY _____ 3.47m²
9_ BALCONY _____ 2.53m²

USER - APARTMENT RELATION

- How many hours during the day you're spending in the apartment?

2<5h

- Where do you spend mostly you're after work/ school time and why?

At home, resting after work.

- Which are the activities that you do at home?

Sports; Cooking; Leisure; Reading

- Arrange the rooms (including the terrace) in the apartment starting from the most used to the least used one:
    1. *kitchen*
    2. *bedroom*
    3. *balcony*
    4. *toilet*
    5. *gym room*

- What do like most in your apartment?

Natural Light , Air

- What do you consider as a main problem in the apartment?

We just started to live here, so we don't know jet, but there is one thing - the toilets do not have windows windows

- What would you like to change in the apartment?

Toilets (to have windows)

- Do you have needs for other additional rooms and for what purposes?

No, for now there is two of us, and we have all that we need.

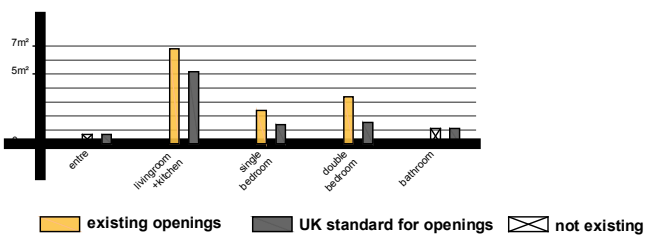
- Have you ever planned to move from home and why?

Well, this is our new home, there are no plans to move.

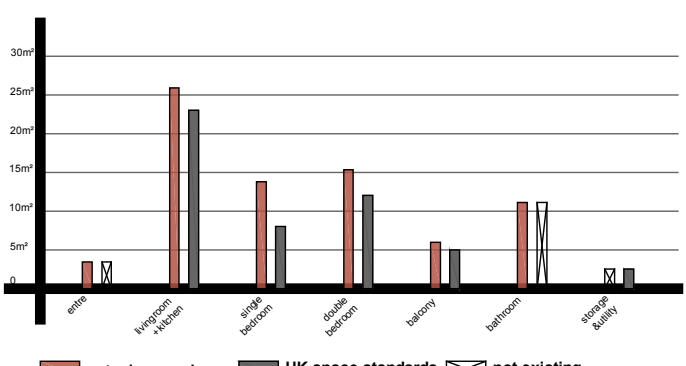
- If you would move or change home, what would you prefer your apartment to be like?

The perfect home for us would be a villa type house.

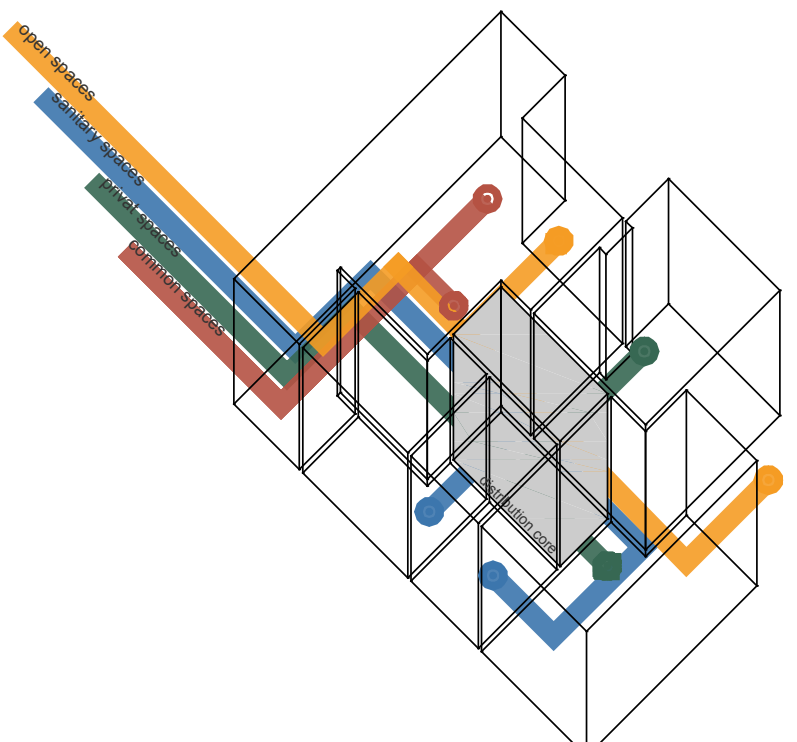
INSOLATION ANALYZE



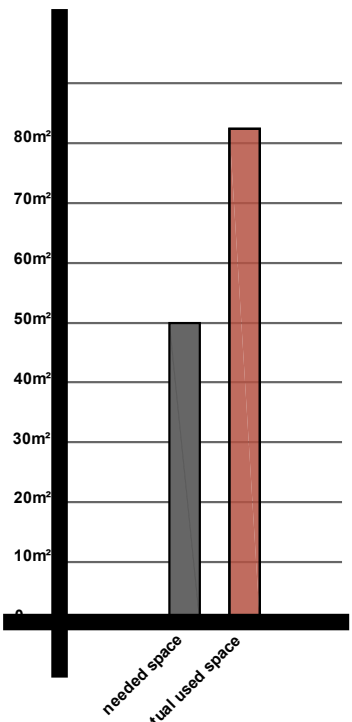
SPACE ANALYZE



DISTRIBUTION ANALYZE

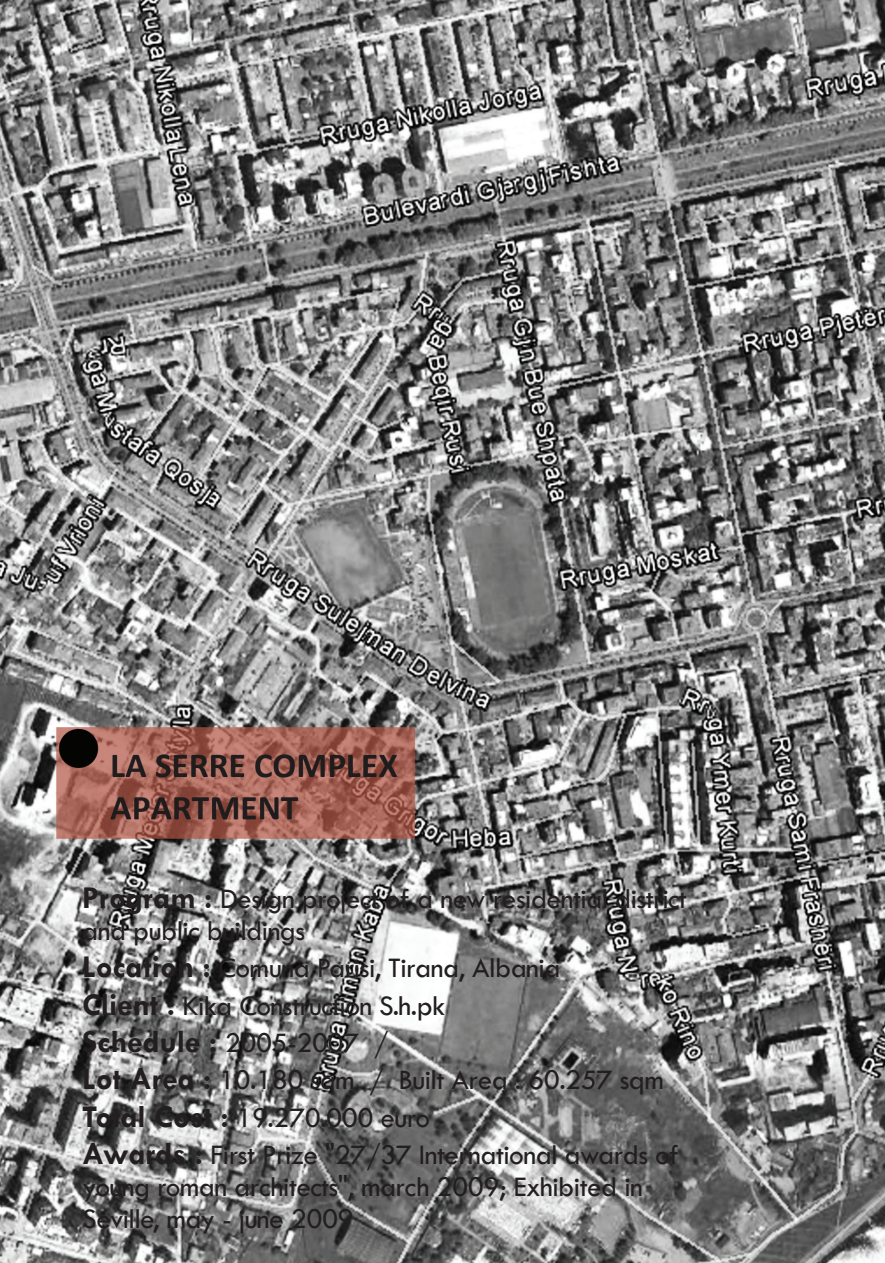


SPACE REQUIREMENT vs ACTUAL SITUATION



This example is one of the newest apartment constructed in Tirana. The young family that have just moved in the apartment, is using almost twice more space than the minimum , according to the UK standards for a minimum space requirements for housing for two persons.

Subsequently they have readapted one of the bedrooms as a gym and by that they have added a new function in their home.This facts are representing how the needs of the users for new activities in the contemporary living spaces have influenced directly in their changing.



LA SERRE COMPLEX APARTMENT

Program : Design project of a new residential, artistic and public buildings

Location : Comuna Parisi, Tirana, Albania

Client : Kika Construction S.h.pk

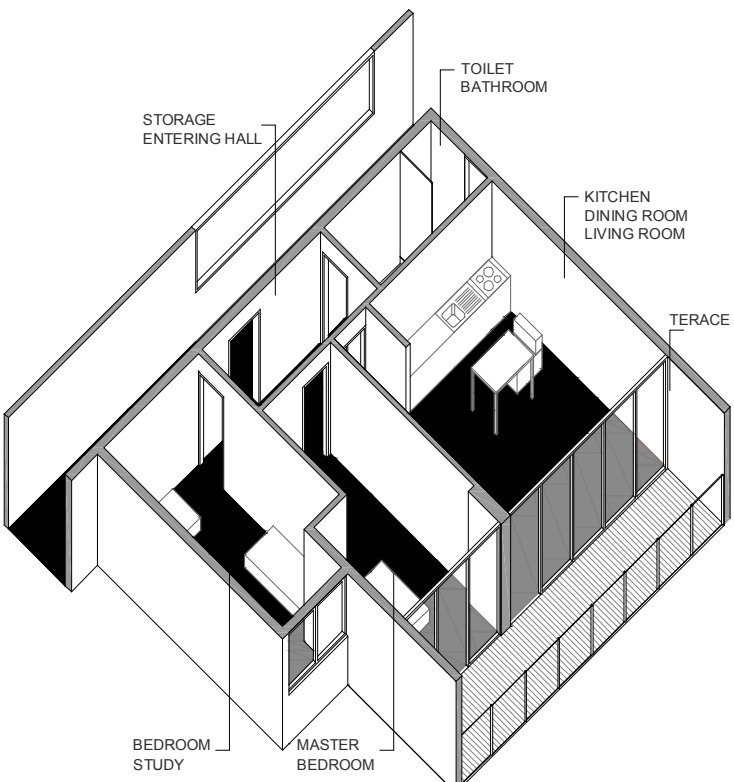
Schedule : 2005-2007 /

Lot Area : 10.180 sqm / Built Area : 60.257 sqm

Total cost : 19.270.000 euro

Awards : First Prize "27/37 International awards of young roman architects", march 2009, Exhibited in Seville, may - june 2009

PROJECT SPECIFICATION



ARCHITECT / STUDIO

ATENA STUDIO

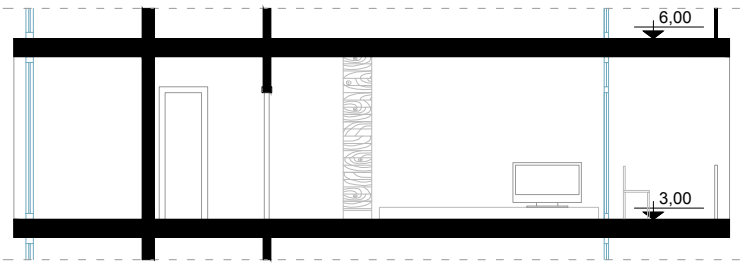
[Rossana ATENA]
Graduated in architecture at the University of Rome 'La Sapienza', (1999). She received the Master of Excellence in Architecture (2003) from the Berlage Institute, Postgraduate Laboratory of Architecture, in Rotterdam. During the years 2003-2004, she was researcher and guest co-tutor at the Berlage Institute of Rotterdam, for the II Year Research Program: 'Domesticating Technology Transfers'. Since 2003 she is Contract Professor at LUDI, University 'La Sapienza' of Rome for the ' Technology and Design' studio.

[Marco SARDELLA]
Graduated in architecture at the University of Rome 'La Sapienza' (1999), received the Ph.D. in Architecture Technologies (2004) from the ITACA/Department of Architecture at 'La Sapienza' University in Rome. Since 2003 he is Contract Professors at LUDI, University 'La Sapienza' of Rome for the 'Technology and Design' studio. In 2002 he founded Labics studio together with M.C. Clemente and F.Isidori. In 2005 he established ATENASTUDIO.

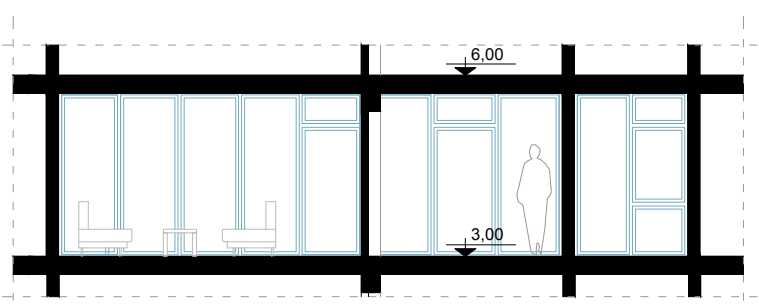
USERS

Residents: 1 mail
Age: early twenties
Occupation: Student (soon to be a graduated dentist)
Relation: owner of the apartment
Pets: No
Family origin: Foreign country - Kosovo/Gjakova
Living in this apartment for: 1 year
Apartment structure: 2+1
Floor: last / loft
Surface: 80-100 m2
Terrace: Yes
Common spaces: Not in the building, but public space between the buildings (green, playgrounds)
Emergency stairs: yes (they are the same stairs for entrance) but the corridors are open
Services: water, electricity, sewage, heating (central), cooling(central+airconditiion), thermal isolation, hydroisolation, Internet, digital TV

SECTIONS



A-A

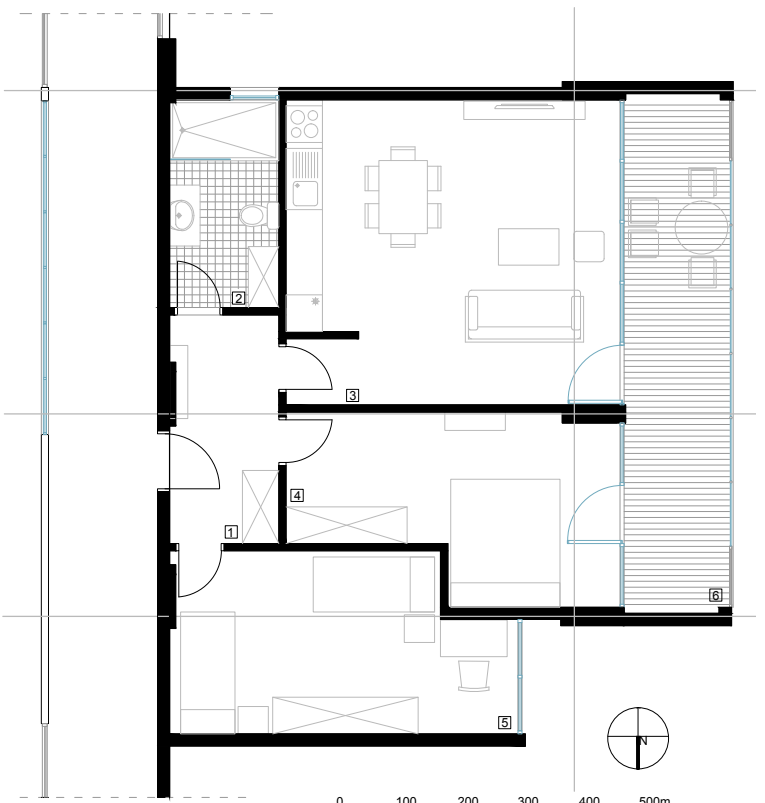


B-B

DESIGNED FLOOR PLAN

1_ ENTREE_____ 6.7m²
2_ TOILET/BATHROOM_____ 6.1m²
3_ LIVINGROOM/KITCHEN _____ 27.4m²
4_ BEDROOM_____ 14.7m²
5_ BEDROOM_____ 15.8m²
6_ BALCONY_____ 14.5m²

EXISTING FLOOR PLAN



1_ ENTREE	6.7m²
2_ TOILET/BATHROOM	6.1m²
3_ LIVINGROOM/KITCHEN	27.4m²
4_ BEDROOM	14.7m²
5_ BEDROOM	15.8m²
6_ BALCONY	14.5m²

USER - APARTMENT RELATION

- How many hours during the day you're spending in the apartment?

2<5h w

- Where do you spend mostly you're after work/ school time and why?

Home, because I need time to study

- Which are the activities that you do at home?

Cooking, sometimes, rarely; Socializing; Watching TV; Studying; Leisure;
Cleaning (by the cleaning lady that comes…)

- Arrange the rooms (including the terrace) in the apartment starting from the most used to the least used one:
    1. *living room*
    2. *bedroom*
    3. *balcony*
    4. *toilet*
    5. *kitchen*

- What do like most in your apartment?

Spatial distribution, Natural Light (a lot of light, which i like, but it can also be a problem in the summer), A lot of places for the children (public space between the buildings)

- What do you consider as a main problem in the apartment?

Natural lightning - it is a plus also, but because is the glass facade, there is a lot of sun…
The quality of the hallways, communication space, size of elevator and so on
Temperature - in the summer is too hot on the terrace and in the apartment (because it is the last floor), in the winter is much better

- What would you like to change in the apartment?

Nothing. In the beginning I wanted to close the balcony, but they did not allowed it and now I like it this way with the open terrace

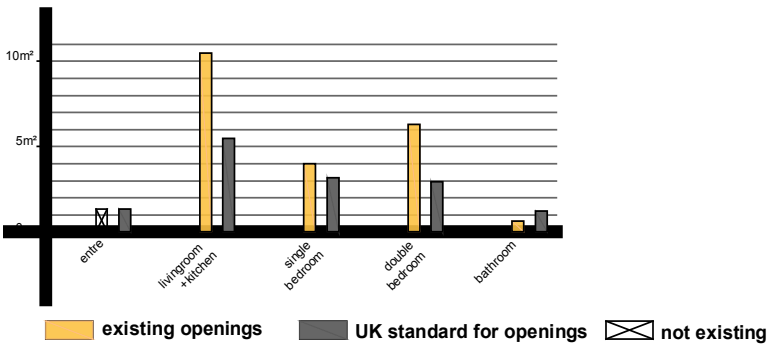
- Do you have needs for other additional rooms and for what purposes?

No, I am alone in this apartment. I am not planning to live here anyway, so I have no other needs for now, only if I would marry here, than it would be a different story, but for now, for me is suited perfectly.

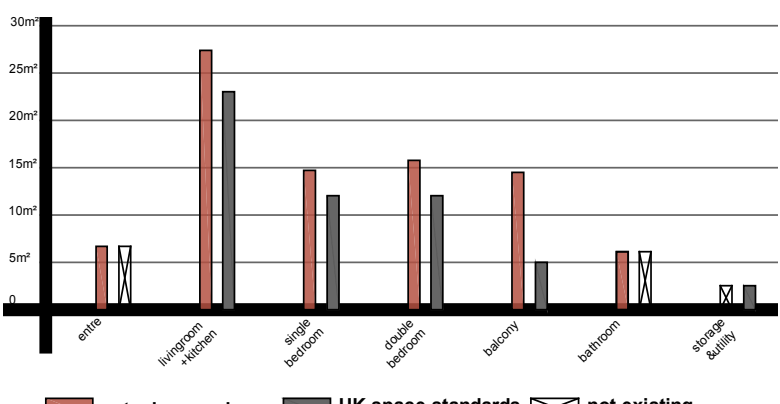
- Have you ever planned to move from home and why?

I am planning to move from Albania when I finished my studies. To go back to my home city for personal reasons, not connected to the apartment

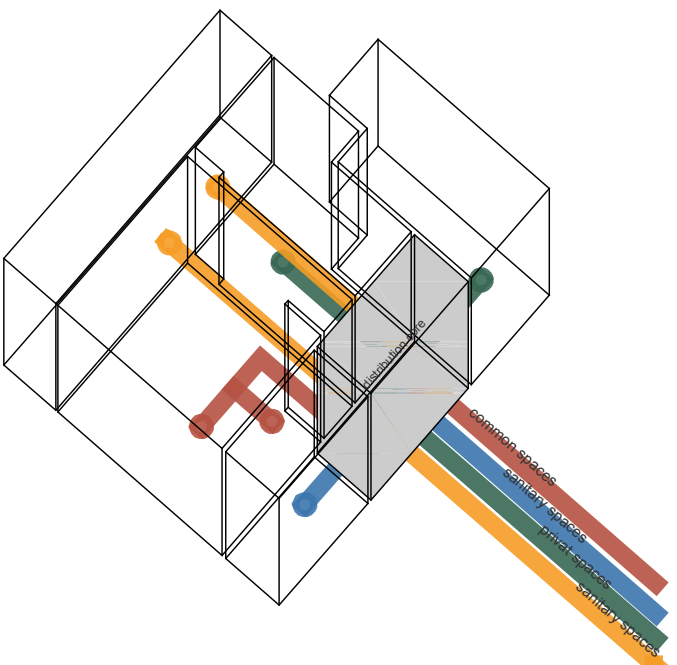
INSOLATION ANALYZE



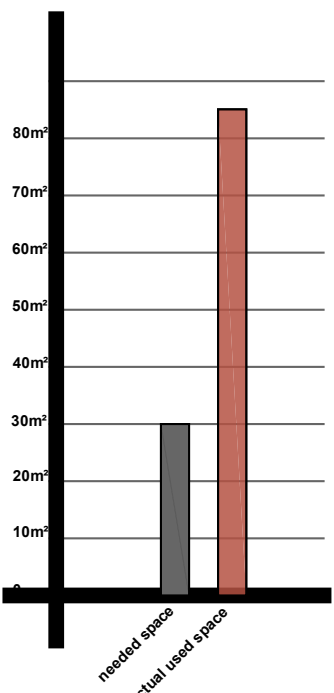
SPACE ANALYZE



DISTRIBUTION ANALYZE



SPACE REQUIREMENT vs ACTUAL SITUATION



In the contemporary societies where young people have a tendency to live alone, it is not rarely to find an examples where one person is using a living space with a surface which is way above the minimum standards, what is ensuring high commodity of living. Compared to the UK standards for a minimum space requirements for housing where an apartment for single should ensure 30m2 of living area, this apartment is ensuring a high standard living space for one person.

This phenomena is also related to the rising of the needs of the users that is rising the question how can we define what is minimum for the contemporary houses.

Tirana after the '90

SPACE REQUIREMENTS

In the contemporarily societies it is a tendency for creating mixed use spaces, that is evident also in the way in which the new apartments are designed and even more in the way how they are used. Analyzing the user's perception of the apartment and the way they are using it, we can't standardize all the additional functions that a home have to obtain, which are depending from the individual needs.

Related to the previous, the flexibility of the contemporary homes and it adaptability, following the needs of it users is one of the most important element in ensuring a qualitative living environment.

SIZE OF THE APARTMENTS

Because of the lack of space in the apartments during the communist period, what was a big issue for the users, after '90, the size of the apartment dramatically decrease. People wanted to live in spacious apartments and the designers tried to fulfill their requests. The apartments size were varying between 70 m2 for 1+1, 80-110 m2 for 2+1 and more than 120 m2 for 3+1.

The big size of the apartments it does not mean always a big private rooms. The core of the apartment, the living room and the kitchen in most of the cases are taking 40-50 % of the total surface of the space, the bedrooms analyzed in this case study are comfortable but the space is not homogenous, is often divided on few parts what create difficulties in it organization. Most of the apartments are having a lack of space for additional activities that in the contemporary way of living are becoming necessity.

ACTIVITIES

The time that people spend at home is less than before '90 due to long time of work. This time various between 2 or 5 hours per day and the number of the activities that they are practicing at home had increased. Most usually they cook, read, study, relaxing, do any hobbies, socialize on Internet and rarely in special cases they invite friends because in the most of the time they prefer to go out and meet in bars or restaurant.

The long working day and the lack of a free time to practice an outdoor after work activities, had introduced the need of the users for adding new functions to their homes. In most of the cases the home should "substitute" a gym, office, cinema etc. this practice is becoming a standard for the contemporary way of living.

NUMBER OF USERS

The new family in the contemporary time is small with few members. Usually persons that live alone, take apartments 1+1, new couples usually buy apartments 2+1 because they need space for the future family or

because they need a room as a studio to work, while families with more members buy apartments 3+1 or if the apartments of 2+1 is big and give the possibility, they change it in 3+1.

SPACE DISTRIBUTION

In the last two decades, the plans of the apartments were made by the individual architects officies or by no architects at all, so the distribution of the inside space is really diversified. In the most of the cases the inside space is spliced between living room, bedroom/s, toilet and balcony. Usually the main entrance enters directly in the living room doing then the distribution in the other spaces, or sometimes there is a small corridor that make a barrier before entering in the living space. The kitchen is inside the living space and they are conceptualized as one big space. The day area and the night area are divided what offers to the users privacy and comfort.

The main distribution in the apartment building is enabled trough the central staircase core . The elevator is used mostly in the apartment building that are higher than 5 floors. The number of the apartments at one floor is varying between 4 till 8.

LIGHTENING

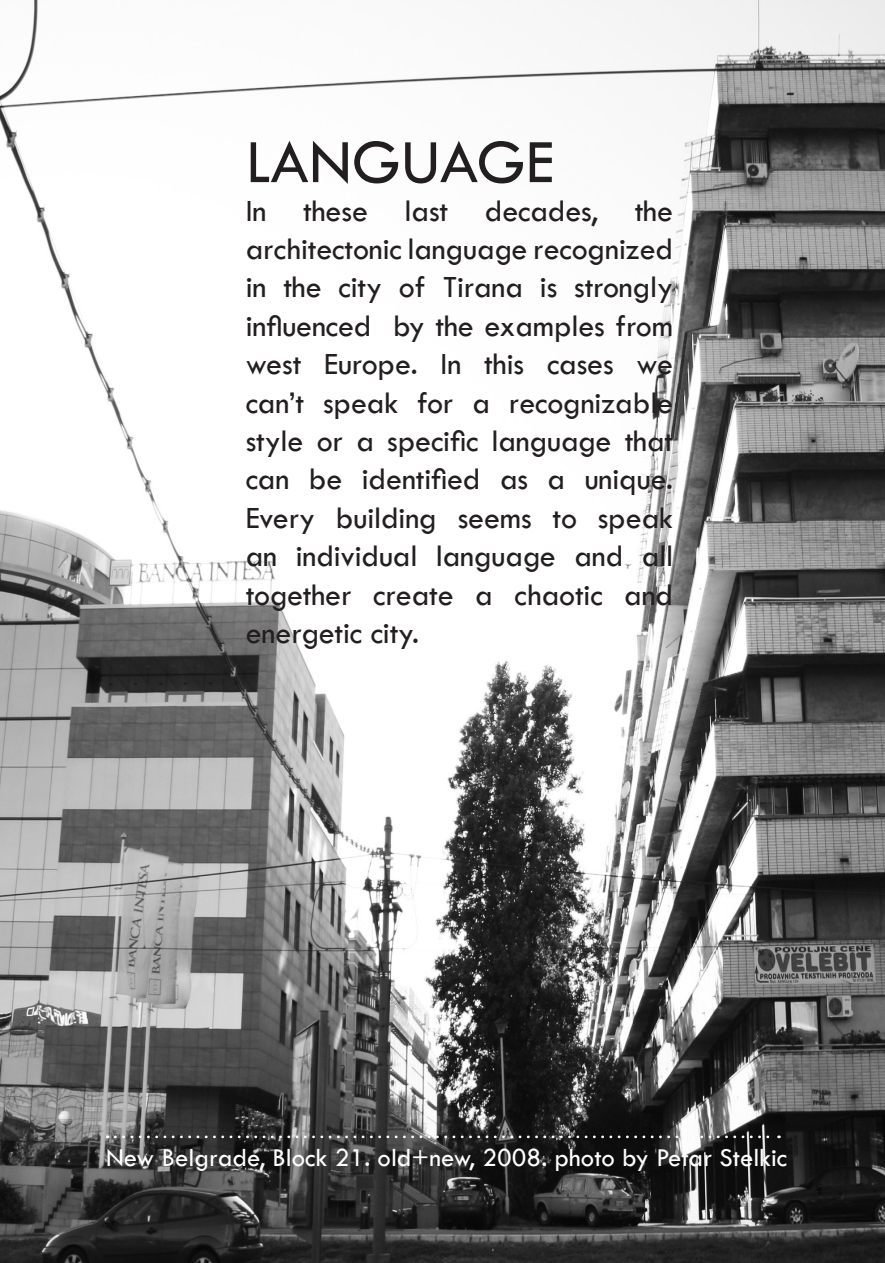
The lightening in the house is occurred by big windows for each room or door-windows. For the living room and for the bedrooms there is always provide the natural light, but for the services (toilets or storage if there is any) not often is provide the natural light and ventilation, the ventilation for this spaces if very often resolved with the mechanical ventilation. The stairs are usually settled in the center of the building as a main connection between the floors and usually they are not ventilated or naturally lighted, but there are a lot of cases when they are alignment on a side and have natural lightening and ventilation. There are no normative for fire protection and the developer is not obligated to invest for their construction.

PERSONAL PERCEPTION

The personal perception of the residents of the apartment from the period after the '90, is that these apartments are offering high commodity and the living space is spatial, but the private rooms, bedrooms are rally small even according to the one of the before '90. They complain because of the lack of any storage space or because of the low quality of the materials that create humidity or the mold in the walls and ceilings.

LANGUAGE

In these last decades, the architectonic language recognized in the city of Tirana is strongly influenced by the examples from west Europe. In this cases we can't speak for a recognizable style or a specific language that can be identified as a unique. Every building seems to speak an individual language and all together create a chaotic and energetic city.



New Belgrade, Block 21. old+new, 2008. photo by Petar Stelkic

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ETLEVA DOBJANI

Was born in Kavaja, Albania on February 22, 1984. She had graduated with a bachelor degree on Polytechnic University of Turin in the Faculty of Architecture in 2006 and in 2008 she got a Master of Science degree in Architecture in the same University. During her studies she has been working in an architecture studio in which she engaged her practical experience. In September 2012, she had a Master degree in "Urban design and landscaping" at Polis University, Tirana. Currently she is a PhD candidate in Rome, La Sapienza in "Architecture, Theory and Project" Department. From 2008, she has worked at Metropolis architecture studio in Tirana and since 2008 she is working as a lecturer at POLIS University.