



# Urban and Territorial Planning paradigms in transition. Academia 100+ Villages and Dropulli case.

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## Abstract

*The following text is part of the research on the discipline of territorial and urban planning by analyzing the planning paradigms and their transformation in the contemporary period.*

*This paper highlights the shift in spatial planning paradigms from total planning to spatial development planning based on interventions with a limited spatial extent that have a reverberated influence in a spatial radius that extends beyond the surface where they intervene.*

*This article aims to emphasize the change of this paradigm through the application of territorial planning with polar intervention in the project 100+ Villages in Albania and its replication in the vision designed for the municipality of Dropull from the study conducted within the International Doctorate in Architecture and Urban Planning (IDAUP)<sup>1</sup>. It should be noted that the strategy followed by the 100+ Villages Academy to create visions for the development of rural settlements in Albania was not new for Polis University and that for years it has been moving in the direction taken by AKPT for the development of rural settlements.*

## Introduction

100+ Villages Academy case.

Territorial and urban planning issues have been volatile for years. In many cases the instrument of plan and planning, in general, has been put in crisis: especially general plans that have a period of more than a decade.

The 100+ Villages Academy in the framework of the rural regeneration defined the terms of reference to develop over 100 villages in Albania that have great development potentials from the tourist or agricultural point of view. From these 100 villages divided into 22 main lots, the pedagogical staff of Polis University in collaboration with the third-year students Master of Science in Architecture and

Master of Science in Urban Planning, in the course of Laboratory and Theory of Urban Planning led by Prof. Dr. Besnik Aliaj and Dr. Llazar Kumaraku, built the visions for 8 lots<sup>2</sup> which included about 40 Villages.

According to the Academy, the goal of 100+ Villages was to design a socio-economic development model for each village that should be based on their touristic, agricultural, or another potential. It was clear that this model had to be designed based on the local potential of the settlement itself.

The objectives of the Academy for these settlements were the 1) improvement of public infrastructure, 2) economic development through the diversification of economic activities and 3) the

<sup>1</sup> International Doctorate in Architecture and Urban Planning (IDAUP) is a double degree Ph.D. program organized by the Research Department at Polis University Albania and Dipartimento di Architettura at the University of Ferrara Italy. IDAUP organizes every year a design workshop where a settlement is selected on which a spatial development model is proposed based on the characteristics of the settlement. In the academic year, 2018 - 2019 IDAUP cycle 34 worked on drafting a vision for the city of Dropull.

<sup>2</sup> The lots that were led by the teaching staff of Polis University were Lot 1, 3, 3, 3, 4, 5, 15, 16, and 20. For each Lot, a working group was built led by two Polis professors with experience in the field of planning and urban design supported by other graphic experts who collaborated with groups of third-year students from the Scientific Masters of Planning and Architecture.

development of social and human capital. These three objectives according to the Academy could be achieved through three strategic projects related to the development of agro-tourism in these settlements; setting up Incubators to support Traditional Products and building a chain of "I love" stores<sup>3</sup>.

Given the purpose, objectives, and strategies, it was clear that the answer to the development of these settlements could only be the design of visions that intervened in the strategic points of settlements and human resources, emphasizing the potentials and providing solutions to emergency problems.

The proposed visions could not intervene in the entire surface of the territory by providing the image of an ideal settlement that would be achieved after the realization of the project but had to provide a development model based on some polar interventions of physical but also phenomenological character. This approach was not only compatible with the approach of Polis University but since its birth in 2006, Polis has re-adopted this approach and influenced the change from the paradigm of total planning to that of polar planning by practicing this approach. both in teaching practice and realized projects.

### **From the Total planning to the Polar planning.**

After the overthrow of the great ideologies<sup>4</sup> that ruled the western world which also influenced the way the territory was controlled and managed, it passed from a vision of total control of absolute Newtonian space to process control with strategic interventions that tended to gradually improve space. a residence. This intervention methodology is not new to the world of planning and intervention in a settlement and this is shown by many early cases of modern architecture. Emblematic cases of this methodology that Kumaraku and Hoxha (2018) have defined as antipolar are numerous.

The authors state that "The antipole is a physical or immaterial entity that opposes a physical or a cultural reality and quietly seeks to change it by attempting to improve its quality" (Kumaraku and Hoxha: 2018: 62). This way of conceiving interventions in a space with physical-phenomenological duplicity constitutes the theoretical core with which the intervention strategies were undertaken in the rural settlement projects for the Academy 100+ villages.

This design methodology was used by the University of Polis in other previously realized projects such as the one for

<sup>3/</sup> Regarding the goals, objectives, and strategies of this project can be consulted the terms of reference given by Atelier Albania where it can be seen that the way they are expressed is confusing and often and repetitive confusing the development of work.

<sup>4/</sup> On this argument consult Jean François Lyotard with his two publications "The Postmodern Condition" of 1979 and "Il postmoderno spiegato ai bambini" published by Feltrinelli in Milan 1986. In these publications, it is clear how totalitarian and absolute ideologies were fragmented to give way to social behavior organized in local groups and interests.

the Bypass of the city of Gjirokastra<sup>5</sup> where the project authors selected some critical areas in the city of Gjirokastra and proposed a series of interventions that had a physical character as well as phenomenological. (Fig. 1; Fig. 2)

A clear contribution in the transition from a Total Planning to a Polar Planning paradigm at Polis University has given all the research done at this university and the texts published there. From these texts that are part of the teaching material for students, we can detach from the didactic content the publication of the Habitat series number 2 by Besnik Aliaj. This text that talks about planning movements in the USA at the same time write how when in Europe cities were designed and planned based on total planning, in the USA urban realities developed with polar interventions such as the construction of natural park networks, the urban engineering that had to do mainly with engineering works and with the solution of sewerage problems, the city beautiful movement with polar interventions within urban realities and others<sup>6</sup>.

### Visions for the lots led by Polis University at the 100+ Villages Academy.

Of polar character are all the visions proposed by the study groups of Polis University for drafting the visions required by AKPT for the eight lots. None of the visions projected the entire space of the settlement giving a final utopian and perfect solution, but aware of the limited resources and the procedural nature of interventions in a territory, envisioned a series of antipolar interventions where the focus was first on emergency issues and secondly the strengthening of the potentials of settlement.

In these visions, the proposals ranged from the solution of primary problems such as clean water supply, the proposal of the sewage disposal network, to those of accessibility, such as the requalification of a road that connected the settlement with the main roads or the provision of structures for having access to the online world. Other projects touched on the field of

services or that of various festive proposals based on local traditions of settlements. An important place was played by projects affecting the environmental sphere of these interventions. Like paving a water line or creating a promenade along with them; afforestation of forests etc.<sup>7</sup> Based on the same planning paradigm in the territory was organized the vision for the municipality of Dropull, which has main settlements: Devician, Jorgucat, Sofratike, Vrisera, etc. In this vision, the methodology followed was the selection of some parts of the territory where parts with different characteristics were intertwined, starting from the natural to the rural or urban character, and the proposal of a series of antipolar interventions within these selected areas.

### Impacts of polar planning on Dropull vision

Polis University being the main protagonist in changing the urban planning paradigms from total planning to polar planning followed the same design paradigm in the case of the vision for Dropulli. The vision for Dropulli is developed in the framework of the workshop organized by Polis together with the University of Ferrara in Italy within the joint IDAUP. Candidate Ph.D. of 34th cycle led by IDAUP pedagogical staff built a common vision for all the municipality of Dropull consisting of the overlapping visions for each settlement of this Municipality. These visions are composed of the proposal of some interventions and projects in the strategic points of these settlements.

Among these projects we can mention for the settlement Dervican as main projects are :

- 1) on Infrastructure the extension of the existing road next to Goranxi;
- 2) on heritage protection the technical examination of the buildings and Parameters of materials.
- 3) Other foreseen intervention is on facilities and infrastructure for sportive areas and agriculture and finally
- 4) the requalification of the space between the national road and the village. While for

<sup>5/</sup> About this can be consulted the article written by Llazar Kumaraku; Dorina Papa and Etleva Dobjani entitled "The Adaptation of the Traditional Cities to Contemporary Use Interventions in Historical Areas: The Case Study of Gjirokastra". You can also consult the project published by AKPT on the competition for the Gjirokastra Project entitled "Gjirokastra Organic Loop" which can be found at the link >>> <http://planifikimi.gov.al/index.php?eID=dumpFile&t=f&f=1281&token=ebf5d7142569b472682441e5fea587189d5239b6> (October 2020)

<sup>6/</sup> On this argument can be consulted the text by Aliaj. B., (2014) *Levizjet e Planifikimit ne Shba*. Polis-Press: Tirane. This text builds a parallel between the reality of urban development in the USA and Albania. For the author of the text, the similarities between the beginnings of planning in the USA and the beginnings of planning in Albania are more, among which the most important is the rampant capitalism that brought an uncontrolled development of the urban form which appears fragmented and fragmented in the various archipelago.

<sup>7/</sup> To further deepen the proposed visions for the lots led by Polis, consult the Gazette published by AKPT with the work done by all groups, which is available at the link >>> <http://planifikimi.gov.al/index.php?eID=dumpFile&t=f&f=4282&token=212c7ab9e26ca1d24d724bce7144ef1d1f8e0a2b>. The antipolar character of the interventions can be seen in the visions for the villages of Lot 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 15, 16, 20.

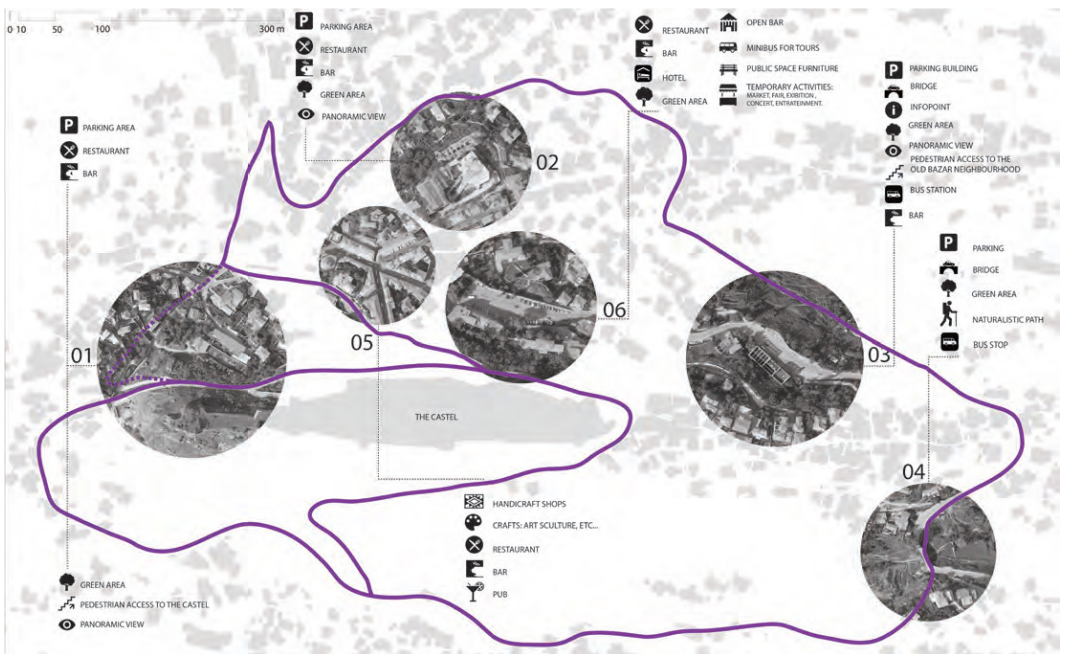


Fig.1 / The figure shows a series of polar interventions in strategic areas of Gjirokastra. This image shows the different approach from a total planning of all the city area. Source / Kumaraku et al. 2016



Fig.2 / The design of the square at the entrance of the city. Ex – Agency. Source / Kumaraku, LL, Papa, D, Dobjani, E, (2016)

the settlement of Sofratike the foreseen interventions are:

1) on Sofratike quarry requalification and an artifact summer school about the stone usage.

2) Archaeological path Antigonea-Adrianopoli.

3) the historic center requalification.

For Jorgucat, the new administrative center of Dropull, the most important foreseen interventions are

1) reactivation of a panoramic point at the entrance of the settlement.

2) reactivation of abandoned buildings through the use of new technologies.

3) transverse urban corridor at the level of the terraces of buildings, activating the abandoned areas.

4) the proposal of a corridor with panoramic points that passes to the most important points of Jorgucat with a focus on religious institutions. And finally, for the settlement of Vrisera the most important foreseen interventions are:

1) an Innovation Park,

2) Open space labs (energy plants, agriculture, farms, etc),

3) Village entrance bypass and

4) a new cultural & representative center.

The overall vision of Dropull arises from the unification of all these settlements considered as the central nucleus in the construction of a vision based on polar interventions in determining points of the territory, leaving aside the paradigm of total planning.



## Conclusions

From what was said above in this text it is clear that Polis University has been a protagonist at the international level in changing the paradigms of urban planning and in the transition from total planning to polar planning.

This paradigm has been used in academic activity and urban visions built for various projects implemented by Polis University. Among the projects implemented according to this paradigm we can mention, the vision built for the Gjirokastra Bypass in 2015, the vision for the city of Belsh in 2016, Prishtina in 2017 (Fig.3), the visions for Lot 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 15, 16, 20 (Fig.4; fig. 5) that were part of the Academy 100+ Villages in 2018 and the Vision for the city of Gjirokastra in 2019.

The changing of planning paradigms from total planning to polar planning accelerates the application of visions in a determined context and makes them more realistic. This paradigm is more realistic because it is

closely linked to the changing political and ideological systems that govern society. The collapse of the totalitarian systems that ruled by making total plans inevitably led to the fragmentation of planning into smaller and polar interventions but capable of regenerating a city.

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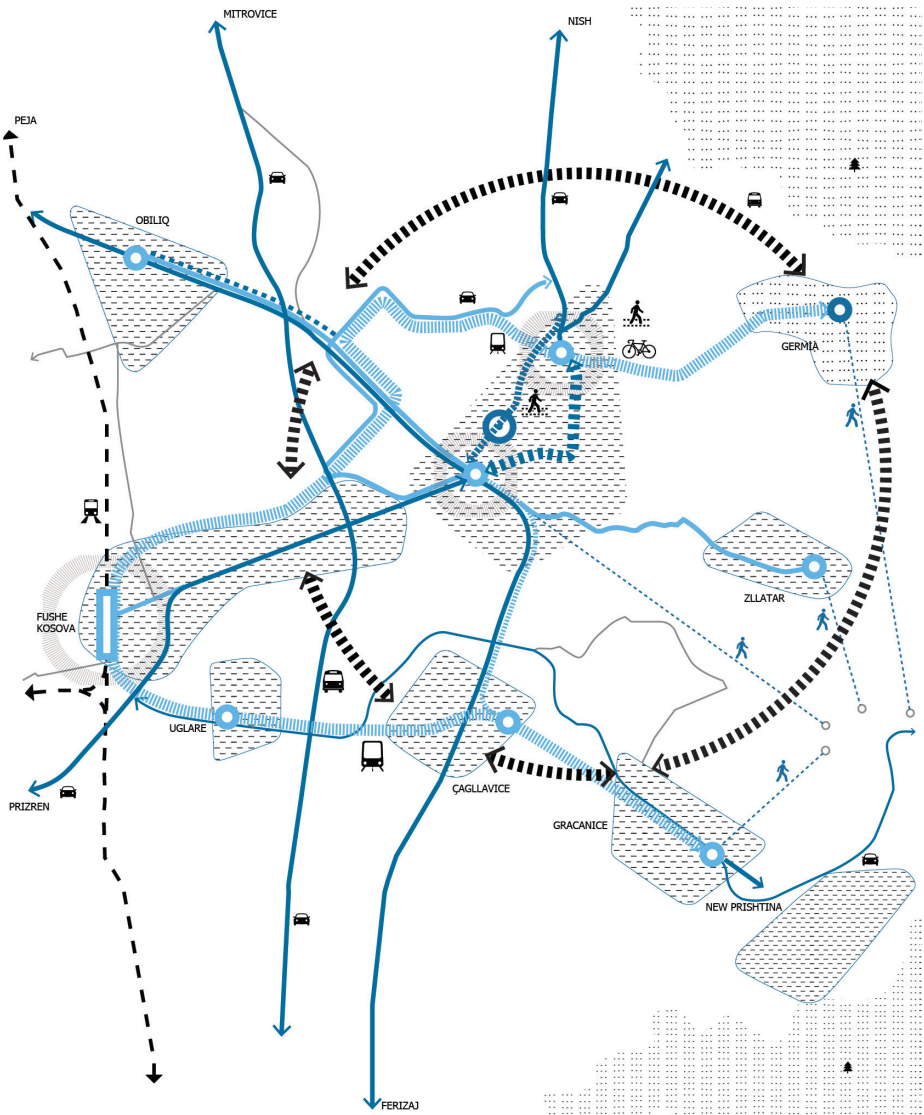


Fig.3 / Vision for Prishtina. This vision is designed by Ph.D. students of the 33rd cycle IDAUP on the workshop of February 2018. In this vision is made by a series of polar interventions that has the capacity to design a new image for the newest capital city in Europe. Source (Cover of "Prishtina New European Capital")

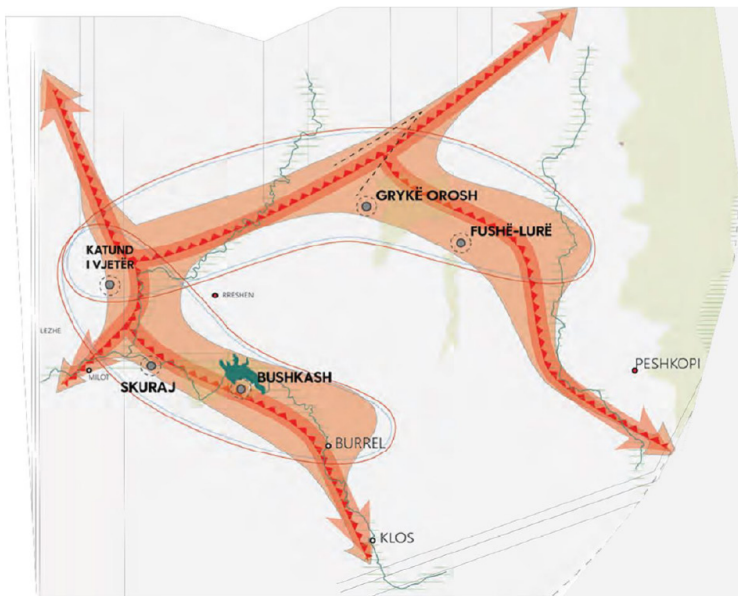


Fig.4 / General Vision of Lot 4 that shows the most important interventions in the villages of Lure, Skuraj, Bushkash, Orosh and Katund I Vjeter. Source / the author.

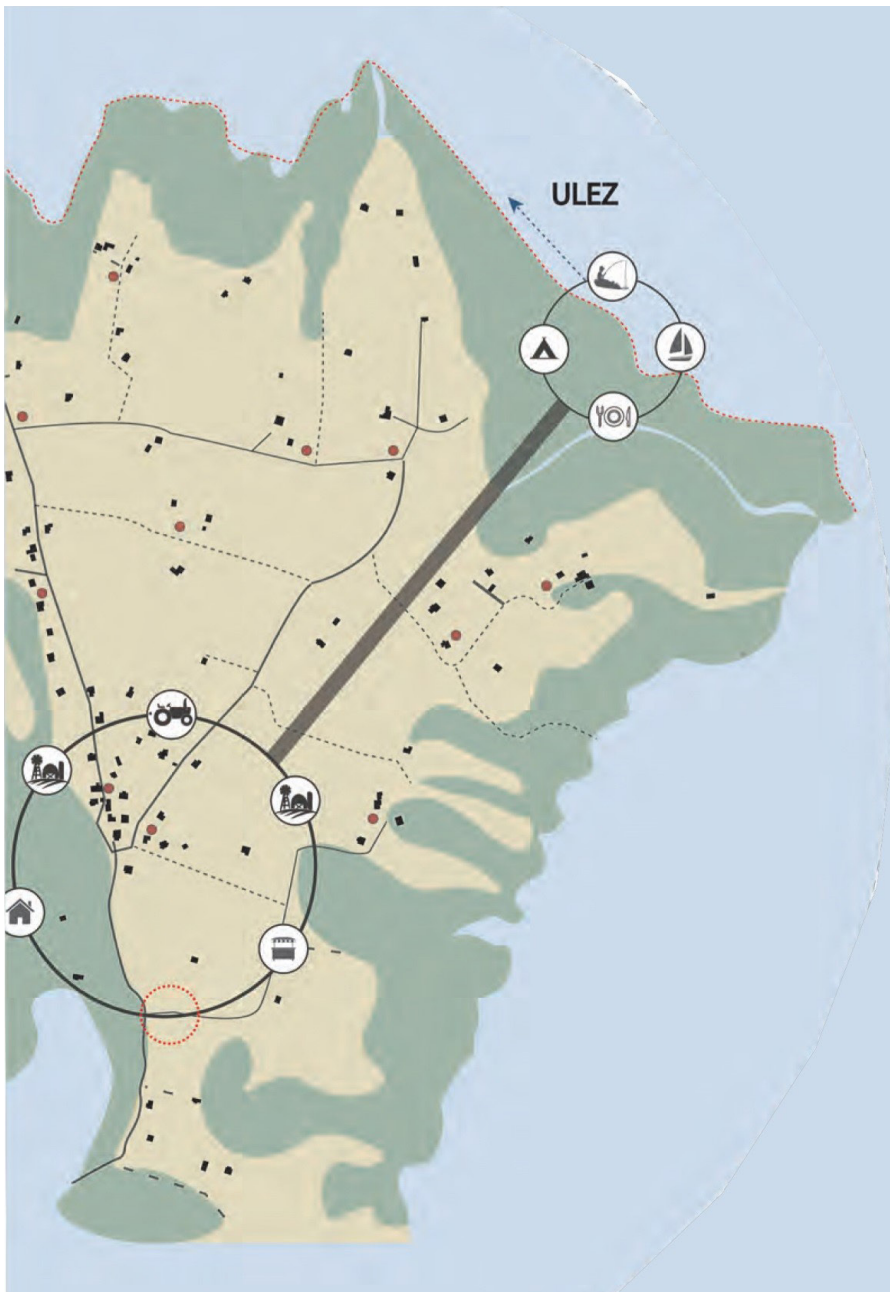


Fig.5 / Vision for the village of Bushkash that shows the most important interventions in the area of the settlement. Source / the author.