

Planning Cities for the (Post-) Pandemic/Crisis Era. Aspects of territorial sustainability and resilience at Lezha Region, Albania

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POLIS University

The Workshops described below, represent research activities organized under the framework of the International PhD Program, between POLIS University (Albania) and Ferrara University (Italy) in Architecture and Urban Planning. Aimed specifically for the PhD candidates, the workshops build on the previous and ongoing research work, focusing in the city and architecture scale developed under the Department of the Scientific Research and the Department of Applied Research within the Faculty for Research and Development, as well as in collaboration with Observatory of the Mediterranean Basin (OMB) unit, at POLIS University.

Each year the research activity promoted by the workshops is aimed at a specific topic, which is then open for debate and critical analysis by each PhD student individually, in order to develop their capacity for operating within any given planning context by developing theoretical tools, able to generate design processes and new research paths. The workshop is structured in a way that promotes the merger of different expertise to address the diverse aspects related to Phoeniciae and its Municipality. In these international PhD workshops, the methodology is designed to conduct a result that emerges a series of concrete proposals that will be required to become instrumental proposals in all national and international contexts that have a similar character.

Abstract

During the year 2020, millions of people around the world had to quarantine, self-isolate, and apply physical and social distancing. Our lives, our families, and work have drastically shifted into what many are increasingly calling the “new normal”. People begin to work, study, shop, and even get health or medical advice remotely. Yet, the majority were not prepared in suitable spaces for conducting virtual lives. Large transformations that affected the way people gather and interact (the role of squares as collection points; the point where urban space is contemplated; the telematic square); transformations affecting financial exchanges; transport of persons and goods; the space of the apartment as a dwelling, orienting more and more towards a space that tends to contain all the functions in the interior where beyond the classic ones, pertaining a home, the space of working, creating or even recreation is added; intelligent city administration; transformations that affect social inequality; the way of nutrition; transformations regarding the working process and many other aspects. All these transformations necessarily translate into transformations of the inhabited space of man. While much of the public attention has been given to medical experts and government guidelines; it became clear that the way that it has been designed and planned so far, our homes and cities has been shaping how we were facing the pandemic at an individual and social level. The web reports and scholarly articles on the role of architecture and urban design and planning on the post-pandemic life and city are thriving

daily. Through many fundamental questions raised on the societal response in the post-pandemic city, the Ph.D. Candidates for the International Ph.D. Workshop during the academic year 2021-2022 focused on matters specifically about the “new” role that architecture and built environment sciences can embrace in a dynamically evolving context. In light of the recent crises both at the national and international levels, which have generated a series of phenomena, there has been a rise in the need for different urban spaces and housing models different from what society has been used traditionally. This workshop aimed to conduct research on these phenomena, and explore possible solutions at the spatial level while keeping in mind the need for environmental preservation, thus anticipating the spatial models of the cities of the future.

Discussions and research regarding the nature of (post-) pandemic city transformations, urban qualities that stand at the core of these transformations, understanding the ways health and well-being intertwine with city-making in a post-pandemic context as well as the extension that COVID-19 has altered our understanding of urban and living space, pertaining life dialectics composed some of the main research phases to explore future solutions. Such discussions become extremely relevant that the society is confronted with measures of physical distancing that will inevitably put into discussion the long-standing social distance; when new perceptions on sanitation and hygiene are emerging; and when uncertainty over the strength of the pub-

lic health system is just increasing. Understanding how society is now operating within the urban and living environment, especially regarding the houses, leisure activities, public space, mobility, and work environments has led architects, urban planners, and city experts to draw on their role in city-making and the new models of life. In short, while we adjust to new guidelines and protocols, aimed to serve as short-term solutions but arguably with long-term effects, for travel and urban mobility, urban safety, environment, leisure and sports, and social interaction; There is no place for speculation as this pandemic dissolve, the call to our collective consciousness to make cities sustainable remains. Whatever the case, the city needs rethinking and the urban space needs reinvention.

Objectives

One of the main objectives of the International Ph.D. Program, since 2014, has been to collect multidisciplinary experiences coming from different fields of architectural knowledge and to consolidate a group of researchers and professionals with a capacity to accept new complexity and challenges for future urban crises. During this workshop, the research project aimed to address and propose settlement alternatives that respond to the transformations and spatial crises generated by the situations that have emerged in recent years involving the Albanian context as well as that worldwide. These objectives touched on three different areas related to the main focus of the project which included: I) proposals for planning and settlement models II) Proposals for the protection and conservation of biodiversity and the Environment, III) Proposals for innovative housing models that reflect the needs of contemporary society.

Methodology

From a methodological point of view, this workshop started with clear research questions, which were focused on finding spatial answers that provided solutions to urban problems generated precisely by the post-pandemic transformations and the recent global crises. Addressing the issue of how should a settlement from a territorial and urban point of view be able to withstand major shocks such as earthquakes, floods, fires, droughts, and infectious situations for both people and the chain of life, the first approach to the methodology consisted in the division into several steps that were not necessarily sequential and they may even overlap with each other.

The first step was to gather information at a theoretical level that is directly related to theoretical studies on resilient and innovative cities. In parallel with this step, detailed analyses were made at the territorial and urban level on the case of the Lezha region, emphasizing the risks and dangers to which this region is exposed.

The second step had to do with the processing of the data extracted above within the workshop. In this intensive workshop beyond the analyses made, specific proposals at the theoretical and practical were provided. Three groups of researchers with members with expertise from different fields were created with a focus on three main dimensions: i) planning and development;

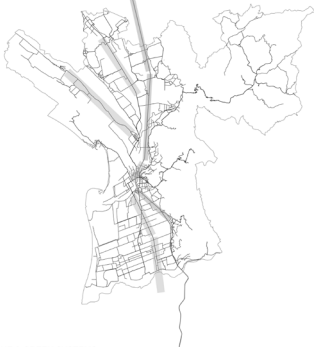
ii) housing and infrastructure; and iii) durability and resilience. During the workshop the current situation was analyzed, including the main threats to a sustainable and resilient future: i) floods and fires; ii) earthquakes; and iii) pandemics. Other threats can be identified during the analysis.

The third step of this research was related to the detailed research for each of the dimensions mentioned above where each participant in the workshop is expected to make a theoretical and practical contribution in proposing new strategies or spatial models that can withstand shocks in the cities of the future.

Conclusions

The workshop is structured in a way that promotes the merger of different expertise to address the diverse aspects related to Lezha and its region. The results promote a pragmatic approach that combines theoretical knowledge, physical environment, and existing data. Following the methodological steps, and in regard to the objectives, during the research activities, a series of concrete proposals for the case of Lezha emerged. The proposals derived were delivered as a set of instrumental proposals in all national and international contexts that have a similar character regarding the environment, risks, and hazards at the environmental level and planning. This project provided new proposals for intelligent infrastructure, as well as new proposals at the residential level where the issues highlighted and previously raised are related to the various risks to which the Lezha Region is exposed. The results of the project are also further elaborated and published in individual detailed research, which are published in conferences, congresses, or other national and international research activities.

B.1 LANDSCAPE AS INFRASTRUCTURES



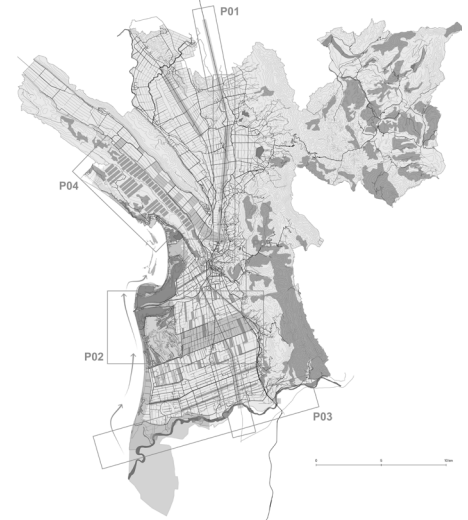
BLUE & GREEN SYSTEMS
Recognition of infrastructures as preponderant mutant actions on a territorial scale makes it possible to trigger design actions with direct consequences on landscape.

B.2 SYSTEMS MERGING



BLUE & GREEN SYSTEMS
The overlapping of the networks (natural and anthropic) present within an area allows the project to trigger conscious logics and strategies in its transformation.

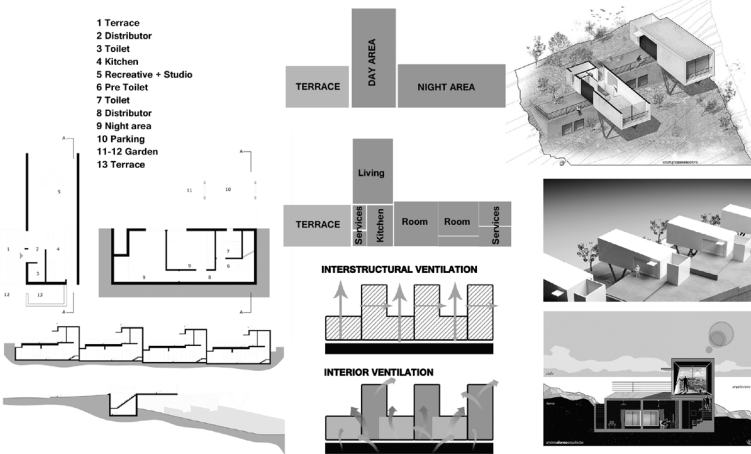
C.1 LEZHE AS A SUPERIMPOSED SYSTEM



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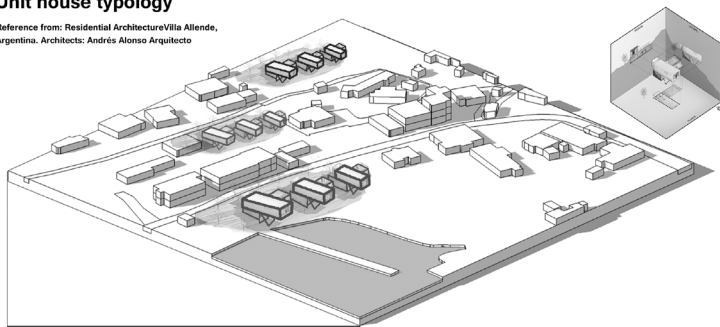


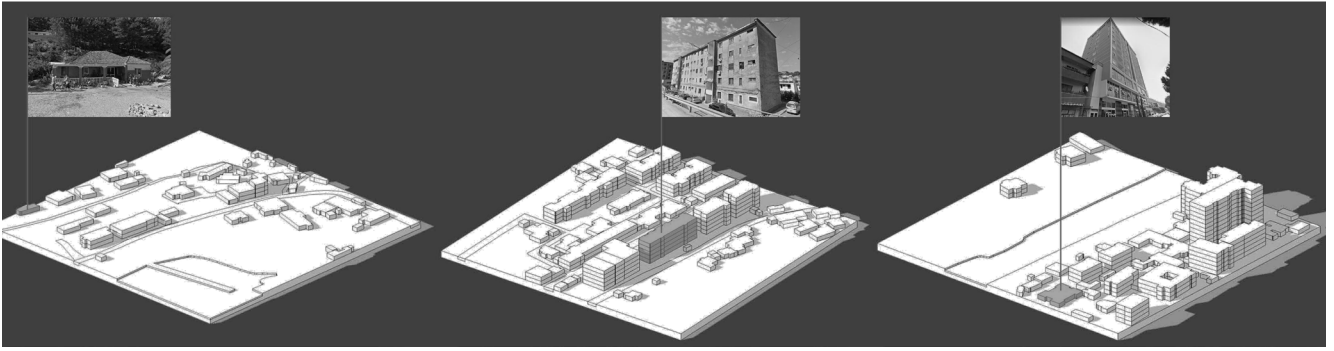
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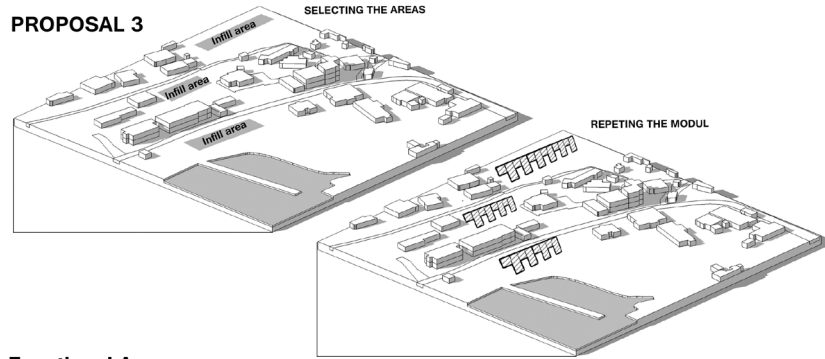
Unit house typology

Reference from: Residential Architecture/Villa Allende, Argentina. Architects: Andrés Alonso Arquitecto





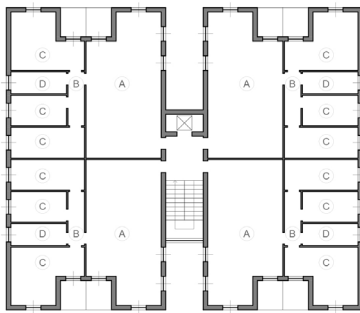
PROPOSAL 3



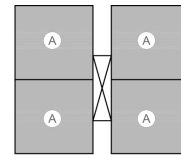
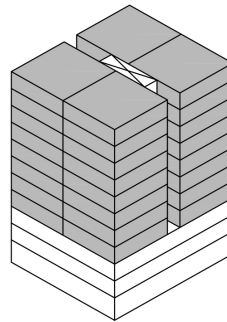
Functional Areas

TPOLOGY: Tower house - current state

Type floor plan (1:200)



LEGEND
 A- Living room, kitchen, entrance
 B- Corridor
 C- Bedroom
 D- Bathroom



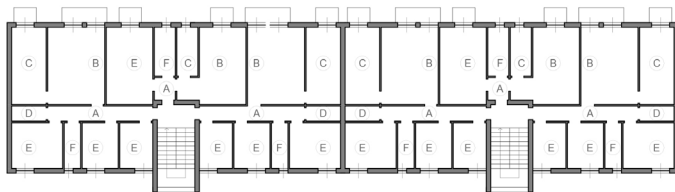
Height: 21 m
 Storeys: 7
 Dwellings: 28

Apartment size
 A- Apartment 90 sqm + balconies

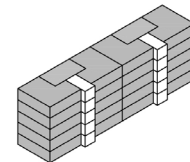
Common spaces
 - Stair (70 sqm in total)

0 m 5 m 10 m

Type floor plan (1:200)



LEGEND
 A- Entrance, corridor
 B- Living room
 C- Kitchen
 D- Storey room
 E- Bedroom
 F- Bathroom



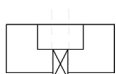
Height: 15 m
 Storeys: 5
 Dwellings: 30

Apartment size
 A- Apartment 80 sqm + balconies
 B- Apartment 60 sqm + balconies

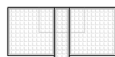
Common spaces
 - Stair (70 sqm in total)

0 m 5 m 10 m

TPOLOGY: Linear house - proposals of intervention



SUBDIVISION
 Subdivision of the central apartment into three parts.



FUSION
 The resultant space from the subdivision is given both to the apartments and to the common central area (stairs).



ADDITION
 Addition of an external structure to increase the surface of common space at each floor.



DENSIFICATION
 In order to maintain the same number of dwellings, two storeys are added.

Re-Inventing Phoeniciae (Finiq): New Intersections of Tradition, Innovation, Landscapes and Tourism.

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Abstract

In the period in which we find ourselves, scientific research in the disciplines of architecture and urban planning has always gone more and more toward the intersection of many other disciplines that are directly affected by inhabited space. In fact, after the decline of the great "metanarratives" (Lyotard 1979), where the "great architectures of thought" that structured the state of knowledge, were disintegrated, we are experiencing the presence of fragmentation and mixing of different "languages" and disciplines. The interdisciplinary character on which the organization of this workshop seeks to address the problem of space by interweaving a series of interventions that are influenced by the different "languages" on which knowledge is raised in the postmodern period. This workshop studied the settlement of Phoeniciae and aimed to propose some strategies for the "Re-Invention of Phoeniciae". The use of the word Re-Invention is intentional and is based on the legend of the bird "Phoenix" from which the name of this settlement was derived. Just like the Phoenix that was resurrected from its ashes, the municipality of Phoeniciae wants to be rebuilt over its current state, which appears degraded and very problematic. The main problems of this municipality directly affect the organization of social life, space, and quality of settlements.

The first and most important problem is that of the shrinking number of the population living in these settlements. For various reasons; mainly economic, unemployment, and lack of services, the young population of these areas has mostly migrated

to Greece.

In this panorama, what remains in these settlements results that mainly the age group from 45-65 years old lives in this area and that of aged people who have the main need for services and medical assistance. Most of the settlements that are part of the municipality of Phoeniciae present a social framework consisting of a shrinking and always aging population.

Another important problem is the one presented by the isolation of the settlements, which is expressed by their separation from the central municipality and each other. Although physical connections currently exist, isolation occurs because of the poor quality of these connections as well as the level of urban planning. In some cases, this connection is at an embryonic level, and in others, it is almost non-existent. At the level of direct connections, the main lack is the connection between Phoeniciae and Butrint. The quality of public spaces is another problem of the municipality of Phoeniciae, but also of other settlements that surround it. The identity of the public space is a problem that accompanies most settlements in Albania, but in the case of Phoeniciae, this problem is even more pronounced. Due to a public space of poor quality and without identity, the municipality of Phoeniciae, but also the settlements that surround it, are presented without spatial hierarchy. The identification of spaces that have the potential to have a public character and the creation of a spatial identity based on local tradition presented one of the challenges of this workshop. The first assumptions for the functional character of these spaces were based on the

needs that were currently manifested and organized empirically. They were also channelized into an organization of a local market where handicraft products are exhibited and sold to spaces for the organization of parking or other functions that appear sporadically throughout the settlement. Phoeniciae municipality has an agricultural character and relies on the fragmented fields at the property level by law no. 7501. The main problem of these agricultural lands is connected with the floods and the degraded soil drainage system. On the other hand, the Municipality of Phoeniciae presents a series of potentials that, overlapping, make up the "genius loci" of this area. Located in the southern region of Albania and on the Ionian coast, this municipality combines great natural, historical, and culinary assets. The history of these areas is "written in the stones" of the old settlements of Phoeniciae, Butrint and the religious buildings of Dhrovjan. These historical evidences speak of a glorious period of these areas that are now unfortunately in a state of constant shrinkage.

Objectives

To define the objectives of this workshop, the working group needed to research and discuss the character of city transformations and the problematics of Phoeniciae; urban factors and qualities stand at the core of these transformations and problematics and also how these transformations and problematics intertwine with city-making in the Phoeniciae context. The main objective is to find spatial solutions that can re-incentivize the city by creating the possible conditions so that the population

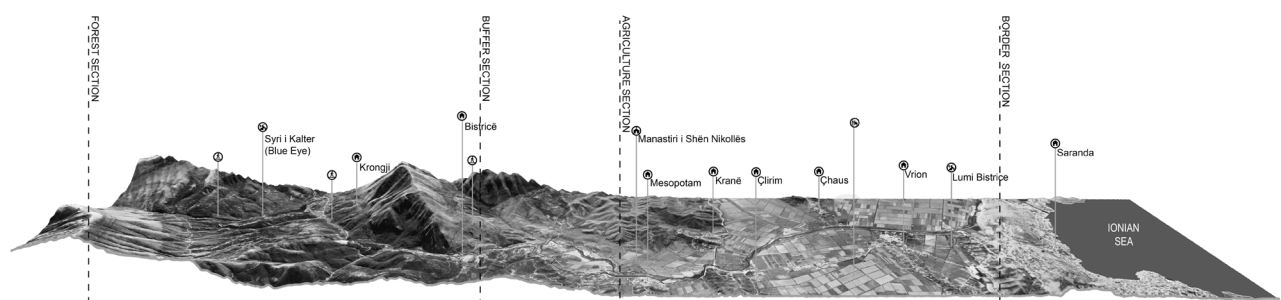
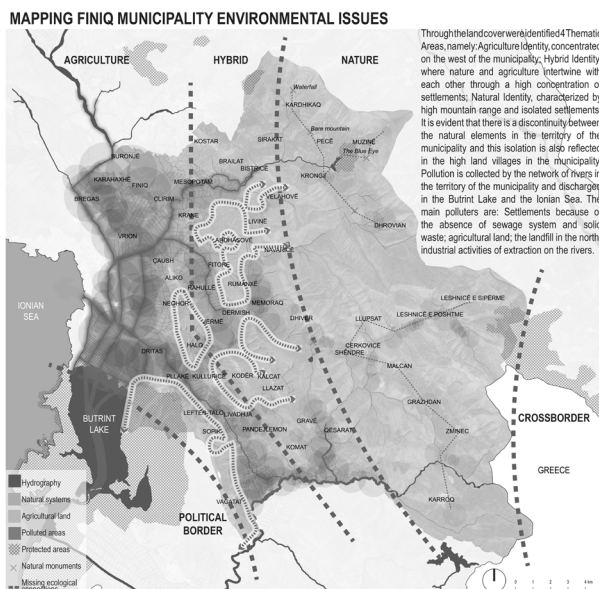
does not shrink. This objective touches on three different areas related to the main focus of the research which are I) Proposals for regenerative strategies at the level of urban planning where infrastructure, services, and natural systems can be included; II) Proposals at an urban level for the Municipality of Phoeniciae and for the settlements that surround it; III) Proposals for the landscape and cultural heritage, IV) Proposals and specific projects for each settlement taken in particular.

Methodology

From a methodological point of view, this workshop started with a clear research question, regarding the form of the territory and the settlement for the region, in such a way that it generates well-being and creates conditions so that the population does not shrink. To develop the theoretical and practical contribution in proposing new strategies or spatial models that can withstand the shrinkage of the city, the participants focused on three main dimensions: i) planning strategies on the territorial scale; ii) urban strategies on the cities scale; iii) urban projects in architectonic scale. The methodological steps used as a pragmatic approach to combine theoretical knowledge, physical environment, and existing data consisted of an Introduction to the area through maps and literature study, followed by the enforcement with the theoretical lectures and case studies. The most important processes: are fieldwork (documentation, photographing, sketching, drone mapping), discussions, and class project work.

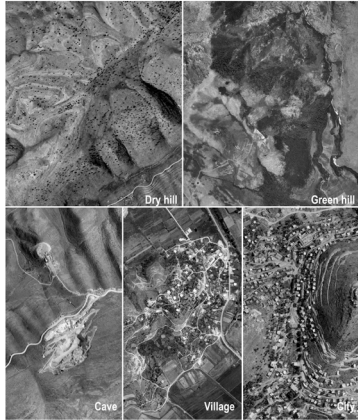
Conclusions

This workshop emerged a series of concrete proposals for the case of Phoeniciae Municipality which will be required to become instrumental proposals in all national and international contexts that have a similar character. Concrete proposals are mostly related to the problem of city shrinkage and raising sustainability and attractiveness for the area. The workshop provided proposals in the three different scales to tackle the problem of city shrinkage.

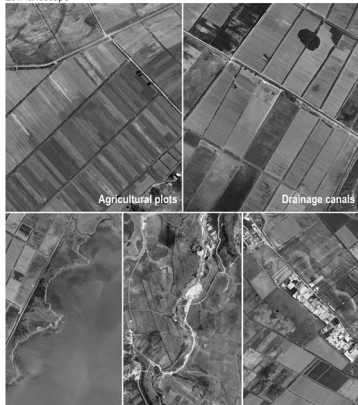


Landscape typology abacus

Upper landscape

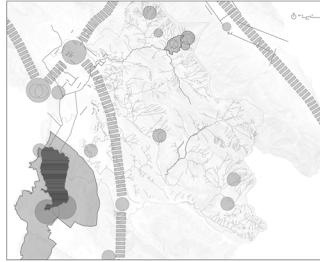


Low landscape

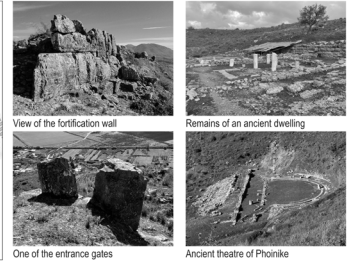


Landscape as Heritage | Regional level

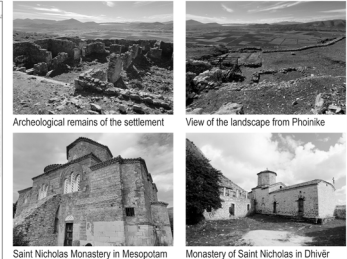
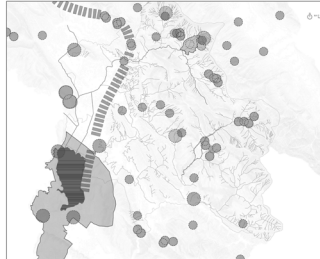
Ancient routes and centers of Kaonia region



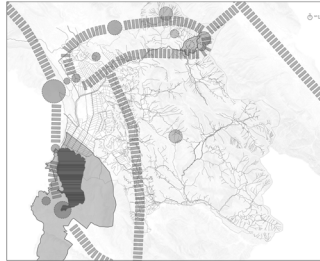
Views of the area



Medieval routes and monuments



Modern routes and urban centres



IDENTITY



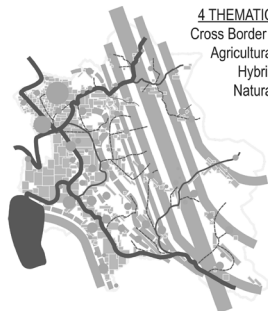
NATURE
Rich in natural resources
Only 25% of the original forest cover remains



AGRICULTURE
High quality of agricultural land
Land fragmentation

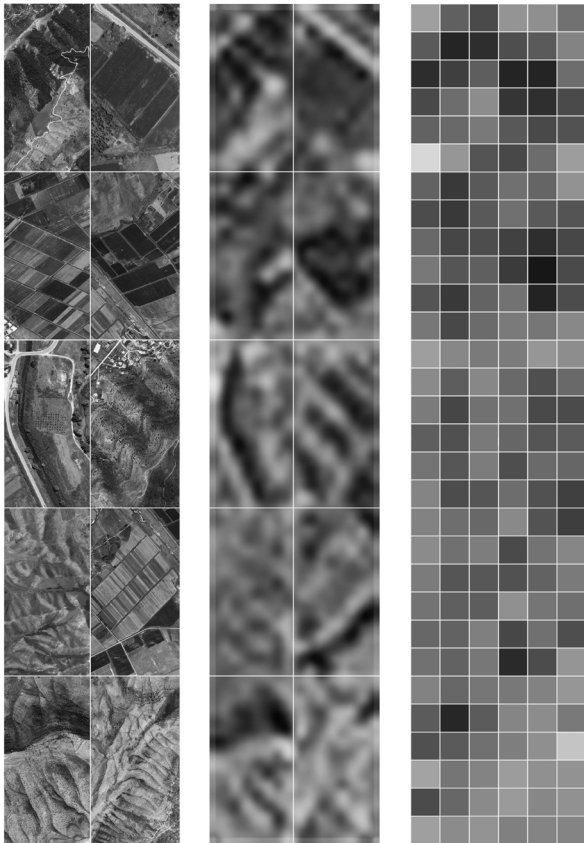


WATER
Connects the whole territory
Collects pollutions from human activity



4 THEMATIC AREAS
Cross Border Potential
Agricultural Identity
Hybrid Identity
Natural Identity

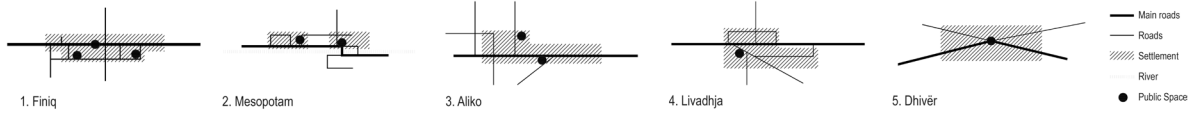
The Colors of the Landscape



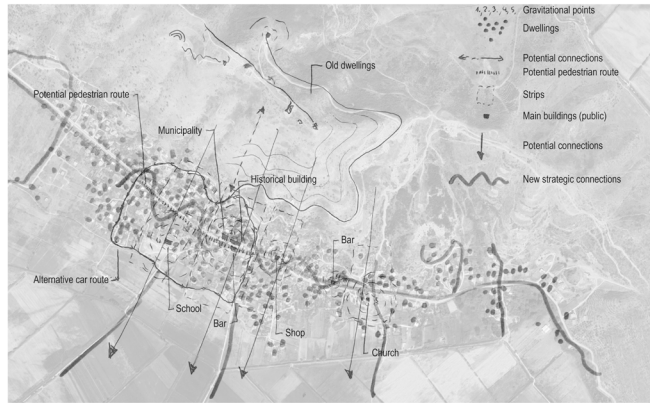
Urban, Infrastructure and Environment Analysis on Phoinike.
Authors: PhD Candidates of 38th Cycle

Heritage on Phoinike. Authors: PhD Candidates of 38th Cycle

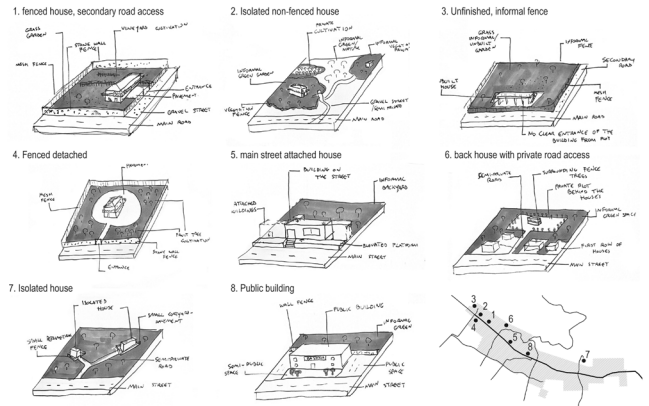
Settlement morphological diagram



Finiq settlement strategic analysis



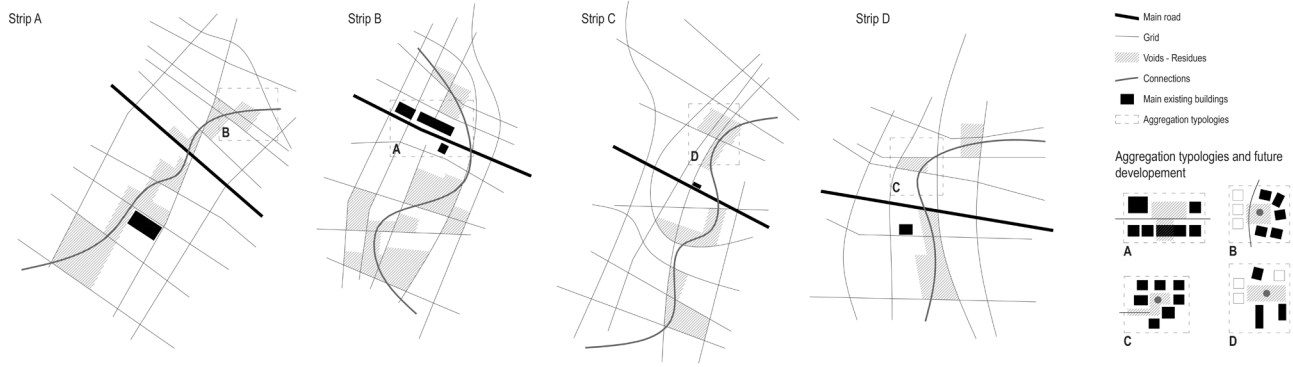
Dwelling and public building typologies



Strips - existing



Strips - diagrammatic strategy



Strips - proposal



"City Sustainability through (Urban) Form"

MALVINA ISTREFAJ

POLIS University

Abstract

The joint research project between the University of Innsbruck (Austria) and Polis University (Albania) focuses on the topic of sustainability of the urban form, in the context of the urban layout in Tirana, Innsbruck, and Los Angeles but also cities of a more global scale. By 'sustainability' here we mean the disposition of the urban form to persist at different scales of the city in history and to play a formative role in the future development of the city at different scales and performative levels, such as: symbolically, morphologically, and functionally, among others. This topic has been addressed in two directions: I) How to read an existing city (or part of it) in terms of the sustainability of its form at different scales and II) How to design a future city (or part of it) according to the principles of urban form sustainability.

The research project has been motivated by special phenomena in the cities of Innsbruck and Tirana. The latter, for example, has grown from a city of 250,000 inhabitants to a city of almost a million inhabitants in the last thirty years. This transformation is not only an expansion of the city beyond its former boundaries but also a destruction of the existing historic city from within those boundaries and its replacement with new high-rises. On the other hand, in Innsbruck, the expansion of the city is limited due to the topography, so pressure is put on the historical fabric and whole areas are destroyed and replaced by high-density buildings. There seems to be a correla-

tion then, between urban growth or sprawl and the transformation or destruction of the urban fabric. This is, indeed, a global phenomenon and is embodied differently in different contexts. It could be argued, for example, that a gated community like Hudson Yards in downtown New York corresponds to a landscape of urban decay and degradation as seen by Metro-North between New York and New Haven. However, it is noted that some urban areas have been more stable and resistant to building speculation and urban degradation than others.

Objectives:

The primary hypothesis of this research project was that such sustainability or the lack of it, is an inherent predisposition or tendency of the city form. Our hypothesis is also that more formal stratification and neighbourhood correspond to a more stable form. In this project, the specific objectives or questions regarding the sustainability of their formal and existing predisposition, in specific urban areas starting from Tirana to Innsbruck and Los Angeles, including the future potential for transformation in scales and contexts, have been addressed.

Main Issues which were opened for discussion and a baseline for offering the upcoming solutions regarding: I) the measurement, evaluation, or demonstration of the predisposition of the city form; II) The meaning of the predisposition of the (urban) form and possibilities to design by this predisposition;

III) identification of possible initial situations which have remained intact in a given context or a specific historical interval; IV) Defining the theoretical or epistemological correspondence (assuming there is one) between this indicator and the inherent formal qualities of initial situations as well as; V) identification of predisposition in such landscapes towards the future, based on the formal intelligence identified.

Methodology

Based on the research objectives and questions raised, the purpose of this project was twofold:

I) To develop a methodology or a set of methods for measuring and evaluating the sustainability of the urban form. II) To address specific urban areas or problems by measuring and evaluating the sustainability of their existing parts and speculating about their sustainable development in the future. Project deliverables consisted of different analyses, and architectural and urban composition expressed through drawing. The conceptual submission consisted of compositions that show, in a visual form, the sustainability of an existing context, and on the other hand, propose a sustainable form in the future. While these blueprints are site-specific, they serve as a general intelligence and framework, able to be instrumentalized in other conditions and contexts. The final product of this collaborative research project consists of a dedicated publication.

Conclusions:

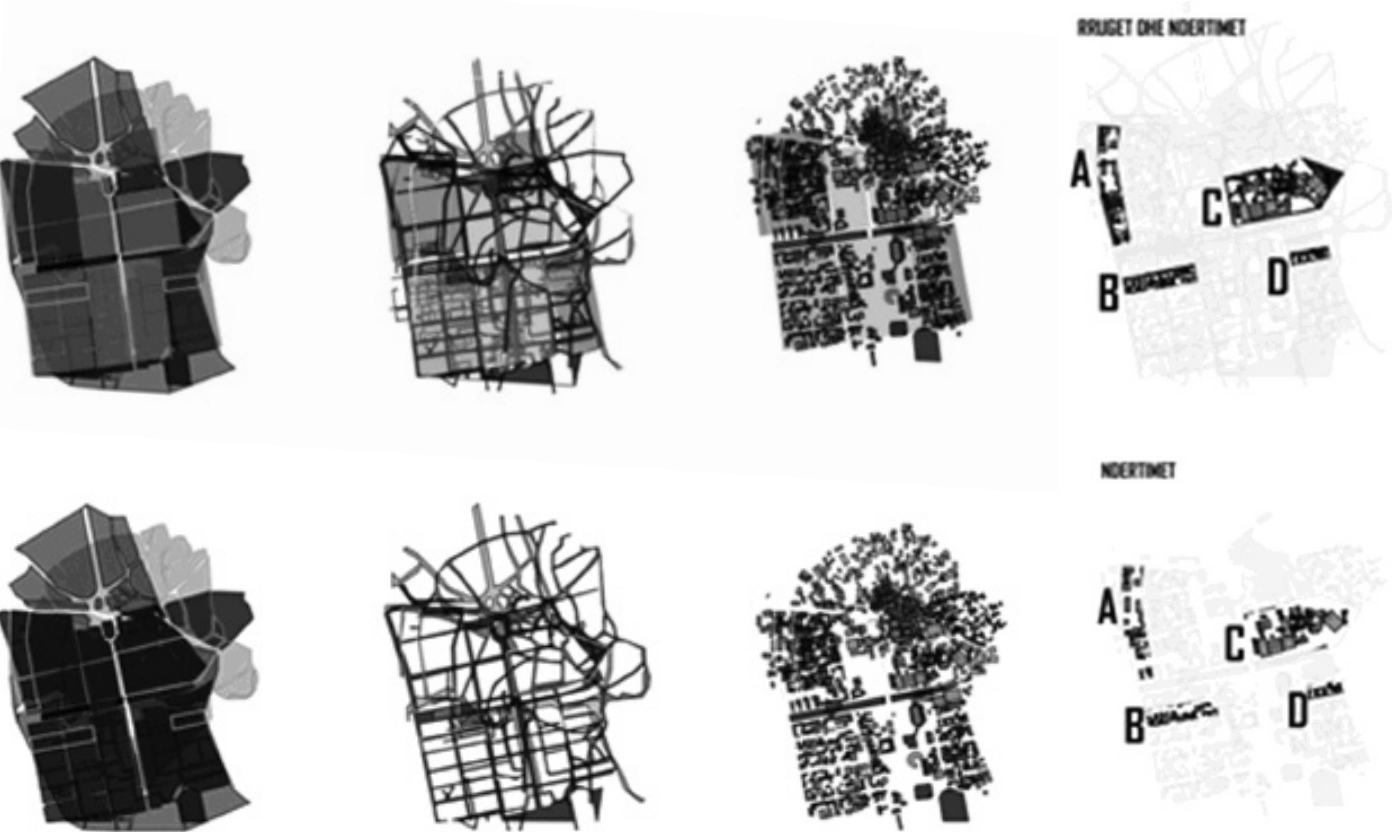
During the Project Work, two different approaches were followed. The first is called a "close reading" in very specific areas in selected cities such as Tirana, Innsbruck, and Los Angeles among others, while the second approach focuses on "far reading" that uses computational techniques to identify the sustainability of form within a large number of urban data.

For example, the context in Tirana was the main Boulevard that consists of two parts, one in historical Tirana and one in that part of the city that has been populated in the last 30 years. The context is significant in itself as long as it is part of or represents the development of Tirana in the last 30 years. Context has been also significant because it acts as a methodological axis for this project, which moves from measuring and evaluating the sustainability of an existing site to projecting sustainability principles of form into the future. Innsbruck on the other side, is a small town and the area between the high alpine peaks is limited. However, the districts are quite different from each other. From the old medieval city to the classical countryside, to modern urban forms. In the meantime, Los Angeles is an imported country and was founded on the idea of conquering the land with many precedents. With the current developments of the 21st century, Los Angeles is repeating itself internally, more than ever before. This replication process produces built examples, in height and in itself. Instead of expanding further into the periphery, the urban fabric begins to "fold back in on itself", physically densifying the existing city and consequently

creating a network of complex layers of form consistency, interweaving much like a palimpsest. The persistence of its form will be determined and categorized to prove its self-reflective identity. In addition to the close reading approach, during the Project Work, a quantitative methodology with far reading was followed, for measuring and evaluating the sustainability of urban form on a more global scale. The visualization of large amounts of urban data provided by the participants through map analyses and diagrams represented the input towards the new ideas about the sustainability of form.

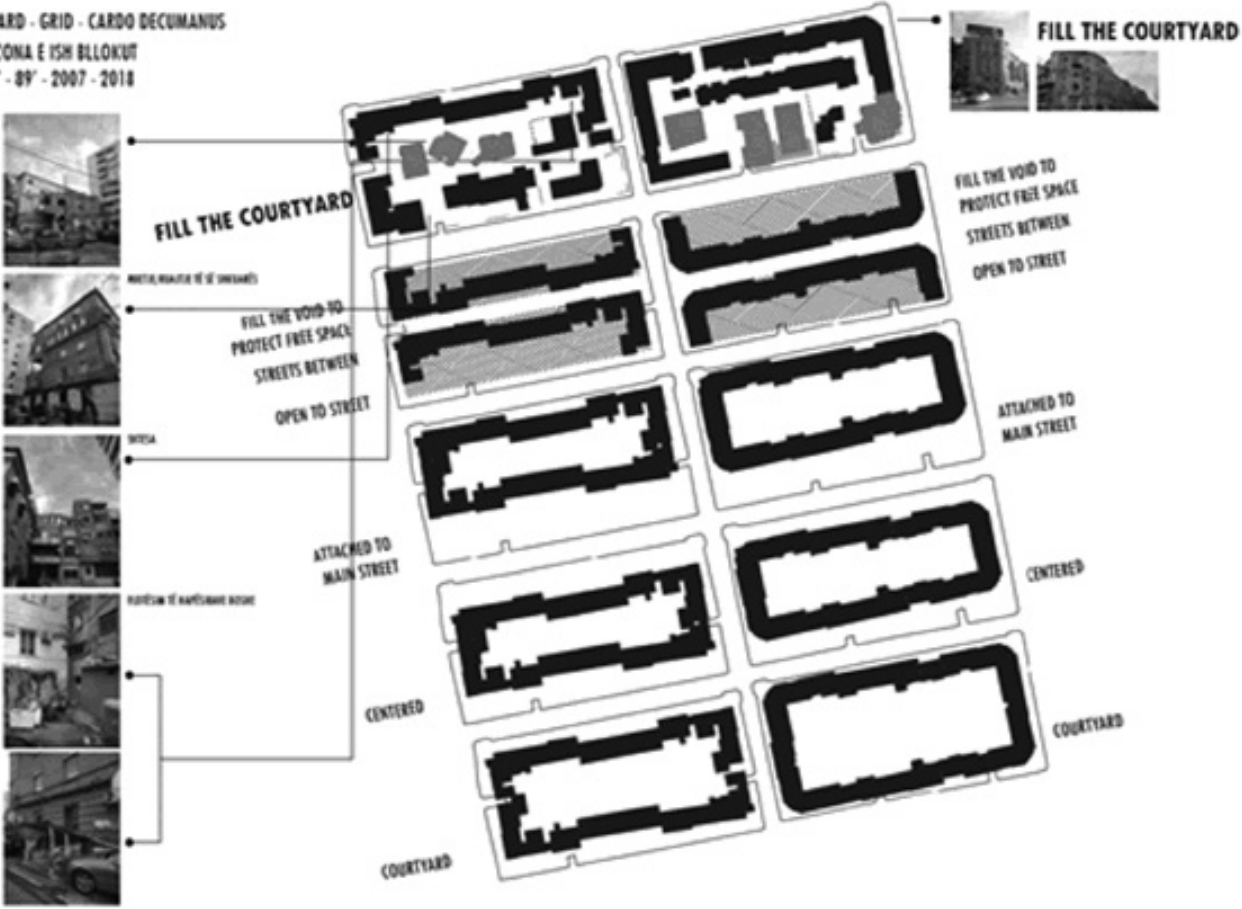
In conclusion, the main task of this workshop was to observe how and why some urban areas have been more sustainable and resistant to building speculation than others. It was a fundamental hypothesis of this workshop that such sustainability is an inherent predisposition of the form of the city. More formal layering and more formal adjacency indicate more sustainability and resiliency of the form.

Malvina is an architect, graduated in 2012, at the Faculty of Architecture and Design of POLIS University, with the title of Master of Science in Architecture and Urban Design. After completing her studies, Malvina focused her research activities, in the professional Master's program in the field of Housing and Infrastructure Development. These studies, directed by POLIS University in collaboration with the IHS-Erasmus Institute in Rotterdam, developed her interest in the urban context and the architectural influence on the life of cities.

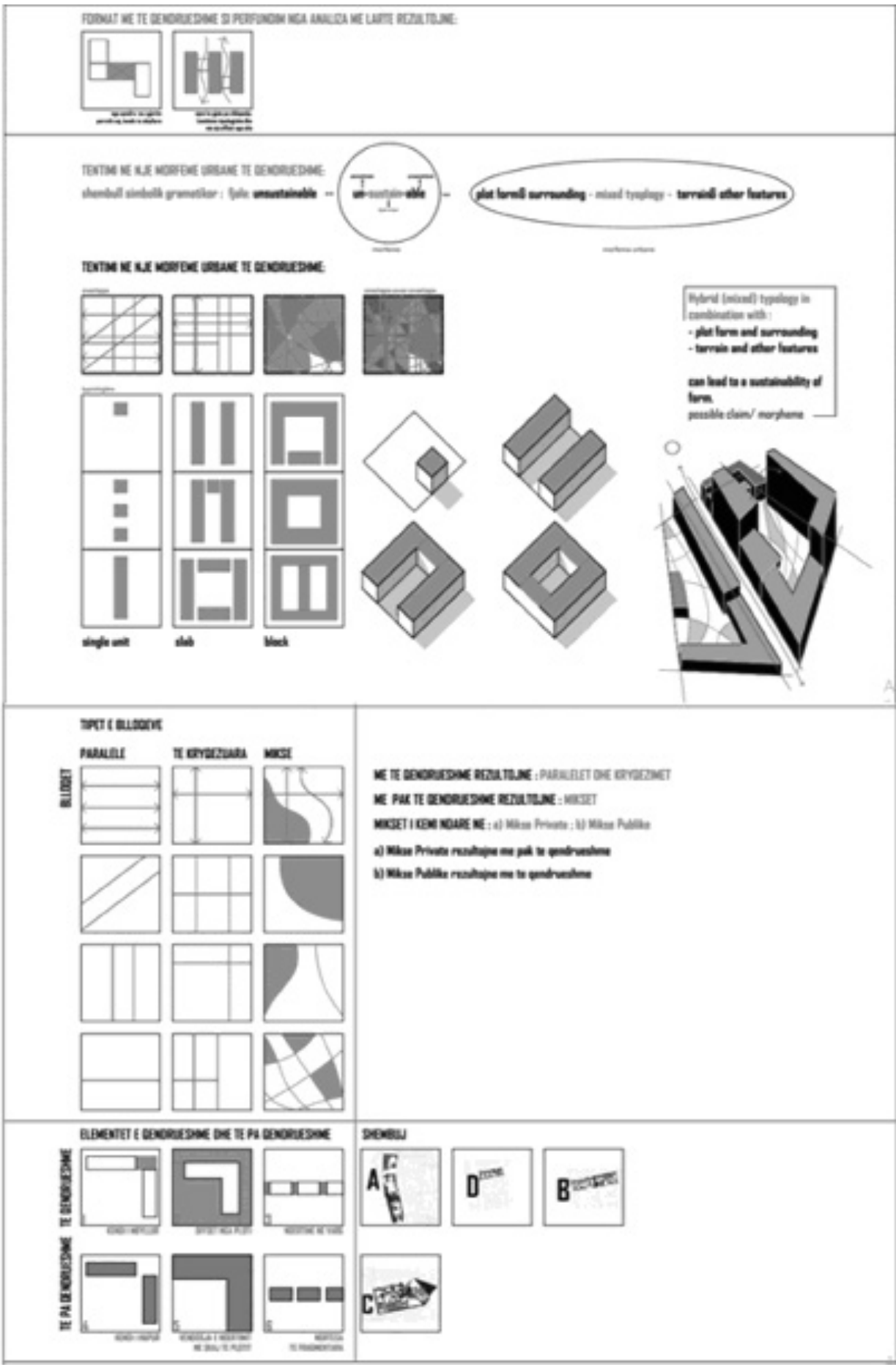


Urban Analysis and Changing Processes:
 Author: PhD Candidate of 35th and 36th Cycle

COURTYARD - GRID - CARDO DECUMANUS
 AREA - ZONA E ISH BLOKUT
 21' - 37' - 89' - 2007 - 2018



Block Analysis.
 Authors: PhD Candidates of 35th and 36th Cycle



Diagrams generated during the workshop.
 Authors: PhD Candidates of the 35th and 36th Cycle