BOOK OF PROCEEDINGS

1st International Conference on Built Environment

ICBE 2026

MAY 08th-09th, 2026
POLIS University, Tiranë

ISBN: 9789928347282

DOI: 10.37199/c4100031

CIP Katalogimi në botim BK Tiranë

Universiteti Polis

1st international conference on built environment (icbe) :

may 08th-09th, 2026 : book of proceedings / POLIS University,

Tirane. - Tiranë : Universiteti Polis, 2026. 1 burim në linjë (... f.)

ISBN 9789928347282

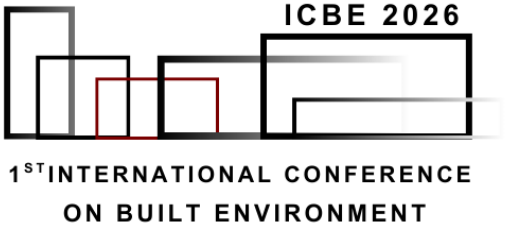
1.Arkitektura 2.Konferenca

72 (062)

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1st International Conference on Built Environment

ICBE 2026

Conference Theme and Rationale

The 1st International Conference on Built Environment (ICBE 2026) was conceived as an international and interdisciplinary forum for advancing knowledge, critical discussion, and innovation across architecture, urban planning, engineering, construction, materials, design, and the wider built environment. Organized by POLIS University in collaboration with the National Agency for Scientific Research and Innovation in Albania (AKKSHI), the Academy of Sciences of Albania and the University of Ferrara in Italy, the conference brought together academics, researchers, practitioners, students, and industry representatives to exchange research findings, professional experience, and emerging perspectives on the transformation of contemporary cities and territories.

The conference theme reflected the increasingly complex challenges shaping the built environment, with particular attention to sustainability, resilience, technological innovation, heritage preservation, and socially responsive design. Contributions addressed sustainable architecture and green building, innovative construction technologies and materials, climate-responsive and energy-efficient design, disaster risk reduction, circular approaches to construction, and the integration of renewable energy. Equal emphasis was placed on digital transformation through Building Information Modeling, Geographic Information Systems, artificial intelligence, data analytics, automated solutions, digital fabrication, and advanced manufacturing.

ICBE 2026 also recognized that the future of the built environment cannot be approached through technological innovation alone. Urban transformation, cultural heritage, adaptive reuse, inclusive design, ecological thinking, art, and interdisciplinary research were therefore integral to the conference rationale. The scientific sessions examined topics ranging from seismic resilience, geotechnical engineering, and structural safety to urban fragmentation, public space, heritage conservation, adaptive environments, and new relationships between human and non-human systems.

Through keynote lectures, scientific presentations, case studies, and interdisciplinary debate, the conference encouraged connections between research and practice while promoting approaches capable of responding to environmental, social, cultural, and technological change. The breadth of contributions demonstrated the value of bringing engineering, architecture, urbanism, design, heritage, and emerging technologies into a shared academic framework for more resilient, sustainable, adaptive, and human-centered environments.

Held on 8-9 May 2026 at POLIS University in Tirana, with in-person and online participation, ICBE 2026 welcomed guest speakers and participants from Albanian and international universities, research institutions, professional organizations, and industry. Its sessions established a platform for presenting current research, exchanging expertise, strengthening meaningful collaboration, and identifying future directions for the built environment.

The event

The **1st International Conference on Built Environment (ICBE 2026)** is an interdisciplinary academic and professional forum dedicated to exploring contemporary challenges, emerging research, and innovative approaches shaping the future of the built environment. Bringing together researchers, academics, architects, engineers, urban planners, designers, practitioners, and industry professionals, the conference promotes the exchange of knowledge and encourages collaboration across traditionally interconnected disciplines. Its thematic scope encompasses sustainable and resilient construction, technological innovation, advanced building materials, urban transformation, cultural heritage, and interdisciplinary design approaches. Particular attention is given to the growing role of digital technologies, data-driven methodologies, intelligent design processes, and advanced analytical tools in supporting more informed and responsive approaches to architecture, engineering, and urban development. At the same time, ICBE 2026 recognizes the importance of environmental responsibility, cultural identity, social needs, and human-centered design in shaping contemporary cities and territories. Through keynote lectures, scientific sessions, case studies, and interdisciplinary exchange, the conference provides a platform for presenting current research, discussing professional experiences, and developing new perspectives capable of contributing to **safer, more sustainable, adaptive, inclusive, and resilient built environments**.

Objectives

- Promote interdisciplinary collaboration among researchers, academics, practitioners, and professionals in architecture, engineering, urban planning, construction, design, heritage, and related fields of the built environment.
- Advance the use of digital technologies and innovative methodologies, including BIM, GIS, artificial intelligence, data analytics, digital fabrication, and parametric approaches, in research and professional practice.
- Encourage sustainable, resilient, and climate-responsive approaches to architecture, construction, and urban development through innovative materials, energy-efficient strategies, and environmentally responsible design.
- Address contemporary challenges affecting cities, buildings, and infrastructure through scientific research, applied case studies, evidence-based approaches, and innovative design solutions.
- Promote the conservation, transformation, and adaptive reuse of cultural heritage, balancing cultural identity, contemporary needs, structural safety, and responsible urban development.
- Support human-centered and socially responsive urban transformation, considering public space, mobility, ecological systems, community needs, and the wider social and economic impacts of the built environment.
- Provide a platform for knowledge exchange and emerging research, enabling scholars, young researchers, professionals, and students to present innovative ideas, strengthen international collaboration, and contribute to future directions in the built environment.

Main Conference Themes

- Sustainable architecture and green building practices.
- Innovations in construction technologies and materials.
- Heritage preservation and adaptive reuse in the built environment.
- Digital tools and smart technologies in architecture and construction (e.g., BIM, GIS).
- Climate-responsive and energy-efficient design.
- Disaster risk reduction and resilience in the built environment.
- Circular economy approaches in construction and material usage.
- Integration of AI and data analytics in building design.
- Acoustic and thermal performance in building design.
- Renewable energy integration in building systems.
- Advanced manufacturing techniques in construction, such as 3D printing.
- Innovations in construction technologies and materials.
- Heritage preservation and adaptive reuse in the built environment.
- Disaster risk reduction and resilience in the built environment.
- Digital tools and smart technologies in architecture and construction.
- Advanced manufacturing techniques in construction.
- Geotechnical Engineering for Sustainable Development.
- Cartography and Geographic Information System.
- Computer Automated Solutions for Built Environment.
- Reliability in Civil Engineering.
- Urban planning strategies for resilient cities.
- Climate-responsive and energy-efficient design.
- Regulatory frameworks and policies impacting construction and urban development.
- Design in the Era of Anthropocene (Rethinking the Relation between Human and Non-Human Species)
- Speculative Design (with Attention to “Discursive” and “Critical” Design)
- Design and Cross-Disciplinarity (with Emphasis on Processes rather than Design Outputs)
- Inclusive Design
- Art and Urban Regeneration (Focus on Participatory, Collaborative, and Research-Based Practice)
- Relational Art and Architecture
- Monuments and ‘Anti-Monuments’ (Particular Attention to the Process of Designing and Building the City)

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The conference is structured around six thematic sessions, each addressing a specific area of research and practice within the built environment.
Each session is coordinated by experts in the relevant disciplinary field and is open to professors, researchers, PhD candidates, and other scholars and professionals contributing to the conference themes.

SESSION I
Urban Planning and Societal Impact

Chair: Dr. Gent Avdija

This session examines the relationship between urban transformation, spatial development, and their social implications within contemporary cities. Contributions address rapid urbanization, urban fragmentation, the transformation and loss of public space, informal and spontaneous development, and the challenges associated with balancing growth and modernization with human-scale urban environments. Particular attention is given to the evolving conditions of Albanian cities and to planning approaches capable of supporting more inclusive, sustainable, socially responsive, and livable urban environments.

SESSION II
Sustainable Materials, Resilient Construction & Smart Design

Chair: Dr. Endri Duro

This session explores innovative approaches to sustainable construction, resilient structural systems, and environmentally responsive design. Particular attention is given to sustainable materials, energy-efficient and climate-responsive strategies, prefabricated and lightweight construction technologies, and human-centered approaches to structural and architectural design. The session investigates how material innovation, technological development, and responsible design practices can contribute to safer, more efficient, adaptable, and environmentally sustainable built environments.

SESSION III
Technological Advancements and Seismic Design for Resilient Places

Chairs: Dr. Seyyed Behrad Emadi & Dr. Ornela Şen

This session examines the role of technological innovation and advanced engineering methodologies in developing safer, more resilient, and adaptable built environments. Contributions address seismic hazard and risk assessment, digital fabrication, parametric and computational approaches, transformations of building envelopes and prefabricated housing systems, and emerging concepts for future urban mobility. The session highlights how the integration of engineering knowledge, digital technologies, and resilience-oriented design can strengthen the capacity of buildings, infrastructure, and urban environments to respond to contemporary and future challenges.

SESSION IV

Cultural Heritage

Chairs: Dr. Nikolla Vesho & Dr. Marsela Demaj

This session addresses the preservation, interpretation, and transformation of cultural heritage within contemporary architectural and urban contexts. Contributions explore conservation strategies for historic buildings and sacred architecture, seismic assessment and strengthening of heritage structures, adaptive reuse, and the social implications of urban regeneration and heritage loss. Particular emphasis is placed on achieving a responsible balance between conservation ethics, cultural identity, structural safety, and the evolving functional requirements of historic buildings and urban environments.

SESSION V

Spaces of Connection: Art and Design for an Interspecies and Interdisciplinary Environment

Chair: Dr. Francesco Scasciamacchia

This session explores the intersections of art, architecture, design, technology, and the built environment through interdisciplinary and experimental perspectives. It investigates changing relationships between human and non-human systems, spatial perception, adaptive reuse, post-industrial landscapes, urban representation, digital heritage, and environmentally and socially engaged design practices. Through critical, speculative, participatory, and research-based approaches, the session examines how art and design can generate new forms of connection, reinterpret existing environments, and contribute to emerging cultural and spatial narratives within contemporary cities.

SESSION VI

Next-Generation Pioneers of the Built Environment

Chair: Dr. Flogerta Krosi

This session provides a dedicated platform for emerging researchers and students to present innovative, experimental, and forward-looking approaches to the built environment. Contributions span architecture, engineering, urban planning, environmental resilience, design, and related creative disciplines, reflecting the interdisciplinary character of a new generation of researchers and practitioners. Through projects addressing topics such as bioclimatic design, flood-risk management, structural technologies, architecture-inspired design, and critical interpretations of objects and social space, the session encourages critical inquiry, experimentation, and new perspectives on the future of the built environment.

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SESSION I

Urban Planning and Societal Impact

Urban transformation and growth: Rapid urbanization / Urban expansion / Contemporary city transformation / Growth and modernization.

Urban form and spatial quality: Urban fragmentation / Human-scale development / Public-space transformation / Spatial continuity and connectivity.

Society and the city: Social impact of urban development / Community needs / Inclusive urban environments / Quality of urban life.

Planning challenges in changing cities: Spontaneous architecture / Informal development / Sustainable urban planning / Transformation of Albanian cities.

Examining the Internal Anatomy of Socialist-Era Hotels in Albania:

Spatial organisation, Geometry, Structure, Circulation, and Function

DOI: 10.37199/c4100036

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Abstract

In Socialist Albania, the hotel facilities were created under a controlled planning and design process. The aesthetics of exterior, the ideological significance and the development of these accommodation structures, built between 1945 and 1990 have been a subject of studying by scholars and professionals, while the internal organization and spatial layout has been perceived as separate and in the territory of Albania, remains underexplored. This study sheds attention to the architectural anatomy of selected case studies of socialist hotels, with the purpose of comprehending the distribution of functions, circulation spaces, the communication with the access points and examine the relation of the presented geometry with the spatial configuration. The study focuses on understanding the correlation of the analytical component of geometrical configuration, structural matrix, space utilization, access and circulation, with their impact on shaping the spatial configuration of hotels. In order to achieve this, the research proceeds with a comparative diagrammatic method that abstracts the plans into logical analytical schemes, including geometry, structural grids, access and entrances, circulation paths and functions. This approach allows structures of different sizes and designs to be compared while preserving the fundamental logic of each project.

The results show a common rational design strategy based on functional differentiation, modular structural systems, and regulated geometries. the three cases do not conform to a single standardized spatial model. While the structural matrices exhibit varying degrees of regularity and adaptation to the architectural form, their geometrical arrangements produce unique spatial and organizational patterns. Accessibility and the distribution of functions are directly impacted by entrance and circulation systems, which vary from centralized layouts to branched and primarily linear networks. The examination of space usage also exposes many methods for dividing housing, public, service, technical, and circulation areas as well as for concentrating or distributing served and serving spaces.

The paper shows how comparative diagrams can expose both recurrent principles and design variants throughout socialist hotel architecture by refocusing attention from architectural image to underlying spatial logic. The proposed framework provides a systematic method for documenting and comparing twentieth-century Albanian hotel architecture and may support future conservation, restoration, and adaptive-reuse strategies.

Keywords: *socialist-era hotel architecture, geometrical configuration, structural matrix, entrances and circulation, space utilization, served and serving areas.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Accommodations, public amenities, services, technical processes, and circulation systems must all be incorporated into a logical spatial and structural arrangement in hotel buildings, which constitute a complex architectural typology. Hotels require a clear hierarchy among guest, staff, service, and circulation areas. Unlike buildings organized around a single dominant function, they combine repetitive accommodation units with collective and specialized spaces. Therefore, the internal interactions between geometrical arrangement, structural matrix, entrances, circulation systems, and spatial use, as well as outward form and façade composition constitute their architectural identity.

Between 1945 and 1990, Albanian hotel architecture evolved under specific political, economic, and technical circumstances. Previous studies have documented the historical development and principal typologies of Albanian hotels constructed before 1990 (Thomai, Nepravishta, & Hoxha, 2019). City hotels, which started to occupy prominent sites within urban centres, became one of the most identifiable types of lodging for tourists.

The Majority of Albanian Socialist Architecture is related with the Rational Period of Architecture, which was characterized by minimal ornamentation, solidity, repetition of structural and architectural elements which presented a noticeable rhythm and uniformity.

Altogether they represented a uniform architectural language on the exterior design, based on similarities, which was not necessary translated in the internal spatial organization. The difference in scales, program, context and structural solutions, provided space for architectural interpretations in the interior, despite being created within a centralized planning system and construction framework.

This study aims on setting aside the formal expressions of socialist hotels, the ideological significance and the connection with their urban image, which has been mainly the scope of prior research, to focus on the on the internal architectural organization which have had relatively little attention. As a consequence, the study aims also to open a vaster discussion and address the gap on the comparative evaluation of the connections of geometry, structural and utilitarian systems and interconnected spaces through analytical analysing, despite the limitations on the documentation.

The research is structured around five analytical dimensions examined through comparative diagrams: *geometrical configuration, structural matrix, the relationship between entrances and circulation, served and serving spaces, and spatial use and functions.*

2. THEORETICAL AND ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Diagrams as analytical instrument

The hotel may be understood as a hybrid typology in which accommodation, collective activities, circulation, and service functions are combined within a single architectural system

(MacDonald, 2000). The theoretical and analytical underpinnings for investigating the internal structure of Albanian hotels from the socialist era are established by this study of the literature. In addition to taking into account the diagram as a comparative analytical tool, it integrates research on architectural form, geometrical configuration, typology, structural order, circulation, functional distribution, and served–serving relationships. These viewpoints offer a common framework for detecting recurrent organizational principles and case-specific variances among the chosen hotel buildings, and they also support the study's five assumptions.

2.1.1 Architectural form, geometrical configuration, and typological analysis

It is necessary to distinguish between a building's visible shape and the organizational principles that underpin it while analysing architectural designs. A basic framework for analysing architectural form through primary geometries, formal transformations, spatial linkages, and organizational systems is offered by Ching (2007). Because it enables complex configurations to be reduced to identifiable spatial structures, his classification of centralized, linear, radial, clustered, and grid organizations is especially pertinent to the comparative examination of hotel layouts. Ching also shows how the arrangement of spaces, volumes, circulation components, and structural systems produces architectural form, which is not a stand-alone visual characteristic.

The general arrangement, shape, proportion, symmetry, directionality, and compositional relationship of the main spaces and volumes that make up a building are all considered aspects of geometrical configuration within this framework. It has to do with how the plan is put together as a cohesive geometric whole as well as how different parts are put together, repeated, changed, or expressed. Therefore, the prominent figure of the building, its axis, regularities, extensions, recesses, courtyards, wings, and the connections between central and peripheral parts are all taken into account while analysing geometrical layout. Although the two may have a significant impact on one another, this category is separate from the structural matrix.

By concentrating on the geometrical and topological characteristics of building plans, Steadman (1983) advances this understanding through the idea of architectural morphology. He contends that cell arrangement, rectangular subdivisions, symmetry, adjacency, continuity, and connectivity may all be used to analyse plan layouts. This method is crucial for the current study because, despite having different overall geometrical arrangements, the three hotels that were chosen are mostly made up of connected rectangular units. The analysis is also made possible by Steadman's difference between geometry and topology, which allows it to go beyond the individual room shapes and take into account the connections that unite them into a cohesive layout.

A hotel's geometric layout can take the form of a radial composition, a courtyard layout, a compact block, a linear bar, an L- or U-shaped arrangement, or a combination of multiple geometric systems. The distribution of bedrooms, public spaces, service facilities, entrances,

and circulation routes are impacted by these configurations. They also have an impact on the building's orientation, views, natural lighting, interior hierarchy, and relationship to its setting. Because of this, rather than being a simply formal description, geometrical configuration is considered as a primary analytical category in the current work.

Building reproduction of a stable model is not always implied by typological analysis. Rather, it can highlight recurrent organizational principles in addition to variances brought about by program, setting, structure, and architectural interpretation. This approach is based on the diagrammatic precedent studies created by Clark and Pause (1996), where analytical components such as geometry, construction, circulation, massing, natural light, and the relationship between units and the whole structures are used to identify similarities between structures. This establishes an important methodological precedent which is used to analyse the three selected hotels.

2.1.2 Structural matrix and spatial order

In this study, the structural matrix in this study is recognized both as an organizational framework and a technological system that shapes the proportions, rhythm, repetition and distribution of places or buildings. In addition to demonstrating how grids can be altered by interruption, addition, subtraction, or direction changes, Ching (2007) links grid organization to the regular reading and positioning of structural and spatial elements. This relationship is especially crucial to the architecture of hotels, since accommodation units require the structural regularity and encourage repetition, while public space and service areas require a diverse arrangement.

In a similar approach, Clark and Pause (1996) view the structure as one of the primary analytical levels that make the comparison of buildings possible. These methods allow the detection of each component separately and as a functioning system independently of other elements. This fragmentation also facilitates the understanding of the repetitious modules in hotel structures like restaurants, service areas, entrance halls, and technical spaces.

By showing that the same space requirements may result in diverse geometrical configurations and that distinct plans may yet have comparable topological properties, Steadman's morphological method (Steadman, 1983) adds another dimension. As a result, this study does not make the assumption that a standardized layout is automatically produced by a regular or standardized structural grid. Rather, it looks at how each structural grid interacts with, supports, or alters the structure's functional and spatial order.

2.1.3 Entrances, Distribution, and Circulation

One of the main factors that indicates the how accessible and comprehensible a building's spatial arrangement is, is the circulation. This component is defined by Ching (2007) as movement through space and is analysed using approach, entrance, path configuration, path-space interactions, and circulation space form. As a result, circulation establishes the order in which the building is perceived, while the entry points are viewed as the transition point

between the exterior and interior.

This viewpoint is especially essential for hotels, considering the crucial need for coordinating the activities, the needs of guests and requirements of workers which usually need a set of mobility systems, as emphasized in the Principles of Hotel Design, where the essential focus is put on the circulation, as one of the primary problems to be taken in consideration in this type of architecture (Architects' Journal, 1970). The entry, lobby, vertical circulation core, corridors, service access, and loading facilities all directly affect a hotel's operational efficiency, according to the above-mentioned research.

Examining whether the chosen Albanian hotels implement centralized, branching, or linear circulation patterns and how these patterns connect to their overall architecture is therefore made simple by employing this functional difference.

Through space syntax, Hillier and Hanson (1984) present a more comprehensive theoretical framework, stating that relationships between spaces—rather than just their particular features—determine spatial organization. Concepts like connection, accessibility, and spatial sequence can be used to understand how a design can establish hierarchy and control and influence movement. Nourian, Rezvani, and Sariyildiz (2013) then demonstrate how diagrammatic representations and connectivity diagrams can be used to transform functional linkages into different geometrical plan configurations. Even though the current study does not do a comprehensive quantitative space-syntax analysis, these concepts support the qualitative interpretation of access, circulation, and internal spatial hierarchy.

2.1.4 Spatial Use and Served–Serving Relationships

In order to understand the conceptual framework and functional hierarchy analysis, also the ideas and architectural designs of Louis Kahn were refereed to during this study. On his theories on architectural designs, there was a specific distinction between served and serving spaces although without the implication that serving areas are to be considered secondary in architecture. In the same line, McCarter (2005), addressed the auxiliary systems as requirements to support a building's primary operations, including circulation, storage, sanitation, technical installations, and service functions, are housed in serving areas.

On the other hand; Penner, Adams, and Robson (2013) demonstrate that the coordination of these categories and the efficient division or regulated intersection of visitor and service flows are essential to a hotel plan's performance.

By challenging the idea that circulation is a residual or just transitional area, Hertzberger (2000) broadens the conversation. When incorporated into the larger structure of the building, corridors, stairs, halls, thresholds, and intermediary spaces can take on new social and spatial roles. This knowledge is helpful in determining whether circulation in the chosen hotels adds to spatial hierarchy and community use in addition to serving as a source of connection.

As a result, the current study uses two complementary classifications to look at spatial use.

Accommodation, public, service, technical, staff, recreational, sanitary, and circulation spaces are identified in the first. In the second, these roles are reduced to the more general link between served and serving areas. The comprehensive functional program and the underlying organizational logic of any hotel can be compared thanks to this dual reading.

3. METHODOLOGY

The study adopts a qualitative, comparative case-study methodology based on the architectural and diagrammatic analysis of three hotels built in socialist Albania between 1973 and 1982. The cases were chosen because they exhibit variations in scale, form, structural organization, and spatial distribution despite falling within the same functional category and historical era. The availability of genuine architectural documentation played a significant role in their selection. The drawings and diagrams of this study are generated through the original plans, elevations and sections which have been obtained from the Central Technical Archive of Construction of Albania. In light of the Vitruvian principles of *firmitas, utilitas,* and *venustas,* the study is extended at an iconographic and planimetric level, taking into account the relationship between structure, function, and form, through finding typological parallels and architectural differences between the chosen projects.

There are two primary phases presented in this research. The first one is related to choosing the three notable case studies and prototype hotel projects from the Albanian Socialist Era. To comprehend each building's overall composition, interior structure, and key design elements, the original architectural drawings are analysed. Creating a logical set of analytical diagrams from the original designs is the second step. Five interconnected layers—geometrical configuration, structural matrix, entrances and circulation, served and serving areas, spatial use, and functions—are used to analyse each scenario. The geometrical analysis identifies dominating forms, proportions, alignments, and relationships between volumes by breaking down each plan into its primary compositional elements.

The structural matrix is replicated by monitoring the position, rhythm, and direction of the main structural elements and examining how they correspond with the spatial arrangement. Mapping external entry points, hallways, distribution routes, and the relationships between various building sections allows for the analysis of entrances and circulation. The areas supporting circulation, services, sanitation, storage, and technical operations are separated from those supporting major hotel activities through the analysis of served and serving spaces. Finally, functional zoning is examined at the selected plan level by identifying accommodation, public, administrative, service, technical, recreational, sanitary, and circulation areas. A direct comparison of buildings with various plan configurations is made possible by using the same analytical sequence to all three scenarios. Geometrical order, structural regularity, circulation pattern, functional distribution, and the degree of concentration or dispersion of served and serving spaces are all taken into consideration while evaluating the diagrams. Despite their formal disparities, the chosen buildings are compared to see if they have an underlying typological logic.

Formal ethical approval was not necessary because the study did not involve human

participants, interviews, personal data, or experimental procedures, and the archival drawings are only utilized for academic examination. One of the main drawbacks is that the available drawings fluctuate in scale and graphic quality, and they depict several floor levels. As a result, the analysis through diagrams, places more emphasis on organizational principles and qualitative spatial links than on precise dimensional or quantitative comparison. An initial sequence of original plans, geometrical configurations, structural matrix designs, circulation diagrams, served-serving diagrams, and functional zoning was established by the previous analysis of the three Albanian hotel projects (Koliçi Istrefaj, 2017; 2021). Nonetheless, this content was mostly offered as an initial graphic analysis. The current study transforms it into a methodical comparison framework that is backed by notions related to space syntax, architectural morphological and spatial organization, and hotel planning literature.

4. CASE STUDIES AND DISCUSSION

The Tirana Hotel, designed by Valentina Pistoli in 1973; Hotel Turizmi–Enkelana in Pogradec, designed by M. Mitrojorgji in 1973; and the Hotel in Mjeda, near Shkodër, designed by A. Kuçani in 1982, are the three hotels that are examined in this comparative research. The cases vary in scale, location, geometrical composition, structural organization, and spatial distribution, but they are all part of the same historical era and functional category. They were chosen due to the Central Technical Archive of Construction in Tirana's original architectural designs as well as their representative significance.

Tirana Hotel represents one of the principal works associated with architect Valentina Pistoli and with the development of modern architecture in socialist Albania (Dhamo, 2011). It is a large urban hotel designed as a prominent landmark within the capital. It is composed of a horizontal pedestal with collective and supporting functions and a high-rise accommodation tower. A more well-thought-out option created in connection with Pogradec's lakefront setting is Hotel Turizmi–Enkelana. Several modules are gathered around a central organizational area to construct its plan. The hotel in Mjeda is smaller in size and has an L-shaped layout with two connected wings for circulation and functions. Therefore, the three scenarios offer a suitable foundation for assessing how various spatial models were used to interpret a common hotel programme.

The published diagrams are based on the ground-floor plans of the hotels in Pogradec and Mjeda, whereas the diagram of the Tirana Hotel is derived from its basement plan. Therefore, the study concentrates on qualitative organizational concepts such as served-serving connections, access and distribution, dominating geometry, structural rhythm, and functional zoning. Plans of various scales and levels can be compared without losing sight of their fundamental architectural logic by using the same diagrammatic categories.



Figure 1: The three selected socialist-era hotels: archival photographs, elevations, and sections. From left to right: a) Perspective of Tirana Hotel, b) Eastern and Western View of Hotel in Mjeda, c) Western View of Hotel Turizmi Pogradec. Source: Central Technical Construction Archive

4.1 Comparative analysis through five diagrammatic layers

4.1.1 Geometrical configuration

Although the three buildings are primarily composed of simple rectangular shapes, these shapes produce three different geometric models. The Tirana Hotel is defined by a tower-and-podium configuration. Its horizontal podium accommodates public, administrative, technical, and service functions, while its vertical volume supports the hotel program's repeating elements. Through its volumetric composition, the building's functional divide is made visible by the contrast between the two elements, which also creates a strong vertical–horizontal hierarchy.

An aggregated-module setup is created by Hotel Turizmi in Pogradec. The plan is composed of rectangular and quadrilateral elements arranged around a central space rather than being dominated by a single vertical body. The use of controlled geometry is evident in several modules that approximate 1:1 or 1:2 proportion. A series of interactions, spatial orientations and connections derive by the layout.

The hotel in Mjeda presents an L-shaped layout with connected rectangular volumes. Their intersection serves as a geometrical and organizational articulation, and its two main side plans define perpendicular directions. This hotel distributes its program linearly along the two axes of the building, in contrast to the vertical configuration of the Tirana Hotel and the multidirectional agglomerate of the one in Pogradec. The comparison indicates that a logical language of modular organization, clean proportions, and simple forms is shared by the three scenarios. In Figure 2, it is illustrated specifically the configuration as a centralized collection of modules in the Hotel of Pogradec, a vertical tower-podium form in Tirana, and a directed L-shaped type in Mjeda.

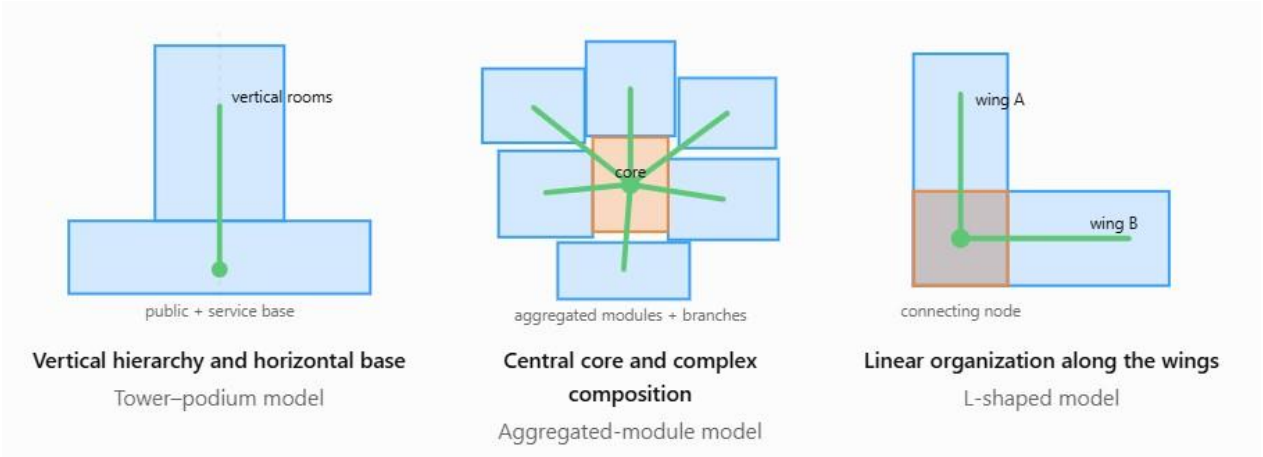


Figure 2. Schematic spatial diagrams of the three case studies. Author's elaboration based on archival drawing.

4.1.2 Structural matrix

Despite variations in the matrix's uniformity, density, and connection with the plan in each of the three scenarios, the structural diagrams show that the matrix functions as an ordered system. Instead of using a single homogenous matrix, the Tirana Hotel's layout makes use of many connected orthogonal grid fields. The right-hand segment introduces a denser and more repeating subdivision, whilst the middle and left-hand sectors show a relatively regular succession of structural axes and larger intervals. Where these fields line up, there are interruptions and modifications that enable the grid to accommodate locations of various sizes and purposes. As a result, the structure preserves structural continuity, distinguishes recurring spatial units from larger communal or technical sectors.

The largest, most dispersed, and most uniquely shaped matrix is found at Hotel Turizmi- (today known as Enkelana Hotel). Its diagram consists of a number of neighbouring orthogonal areas with different spatial spacing, density, and coherence but typically coordinated axes. Even though they do not form a uniform grid throughout the entire plan, regular structural sequences can be recognized within specific sectors, especially if spatial repetition is in place. As a result, the matrix functions as a coordinated set of grids, following the plan's aggregation while also defining the dimensions and potential connections of its component spaces.

The structure of the hotel in Mjeda is more concentrated and refined. Denser subdivisions are introduced by narrower or functionally different portions, with the main plan sectors placed along comparatively regular axes. When the two primary parts converge, changes in spacing, continuity, and orientation are most noticeable. By joining the multiple grid fields and facilitating the transition between bigger areas and smaller repeated rooms, this junction serves as the main hub for structural cohesion. Because the matrix is made up of linked structural sequences coordinated by a common linking area, it behaves simultaneously as uniform but also fragmented.

In all three cases, structural regularity is more apparent in regions with spatial repetition (figures 2, 3), and it varies when greater flexibility is needed due to bigger dimensions or a

diversity of roles. The Hotel in Mjeda adopts a compact matrix centred around a centrail point, the Hotel Turizmi in Pogradec creates a more dispersed system of coordinated local fields, and Tirana Hotel integrates interconnected grids of varying densities. The comparison demonstrates that the structural matrix functions as a bridge between spatial dimensions, geometrical configuration, repetition, and functional distribution rather than as a distinct technical layer.

4.1.3 The relation between entrance and distribution

The three circulation models displayed in the entrance-distribution diagrams mostly corresponds to the blueprints' geometric layout. The hierarchy and centralization of the Tirana Hotel's organization are predominant. From the main entrance, movement is directed toward the plan's primary sectors. Whereas secondary branches cater to specific spaces, additional external and service entrances offer direct access to periphery sections. Access, mobility, and spatial hierarchy are clearly associated, as seen by the circulation's organization around the distributive lines, despite several direction changes. The circulation network of the Hotel Turizmi in Pogradec is the most dispersed and branched. Internal circulation is not centred over a single main axis but rather develops through a number of corridors, crossroads, and auxiliary arteries. In addition to increasing spatial variation, this layout makes the interaction between access, orientation, and internal depth more intricate.

The system used by the hotel in Mjeda is primarily straight and partially branching. Two main routes connected to the major plan sectors are followed by movement, and the intersection of these routes serves as a distributive and linking point. Additional entry points connect directly to various areas of the building. As a result, the system combines distributed access with directional clarity, making it less multidirectional than Hotel Turizmi–Enkelana and less centralized than Tirana Hotel.

The comparison as presented in the diagrammatical matrix of figure 3, reveals a linear, node-based system in Mjeda, a branching and dispersed network in Pogradec, and a centralized and hierarchical architecture in Tirana. Rather than operating as separate layers, entrances and circulation in all three scenarios are derived from the plan's geometry. While corridors, intersections, and distributive nodes convert the plan configuration into patterns of movement, direction, and spatial hierarchy, entrances create the first points of access.

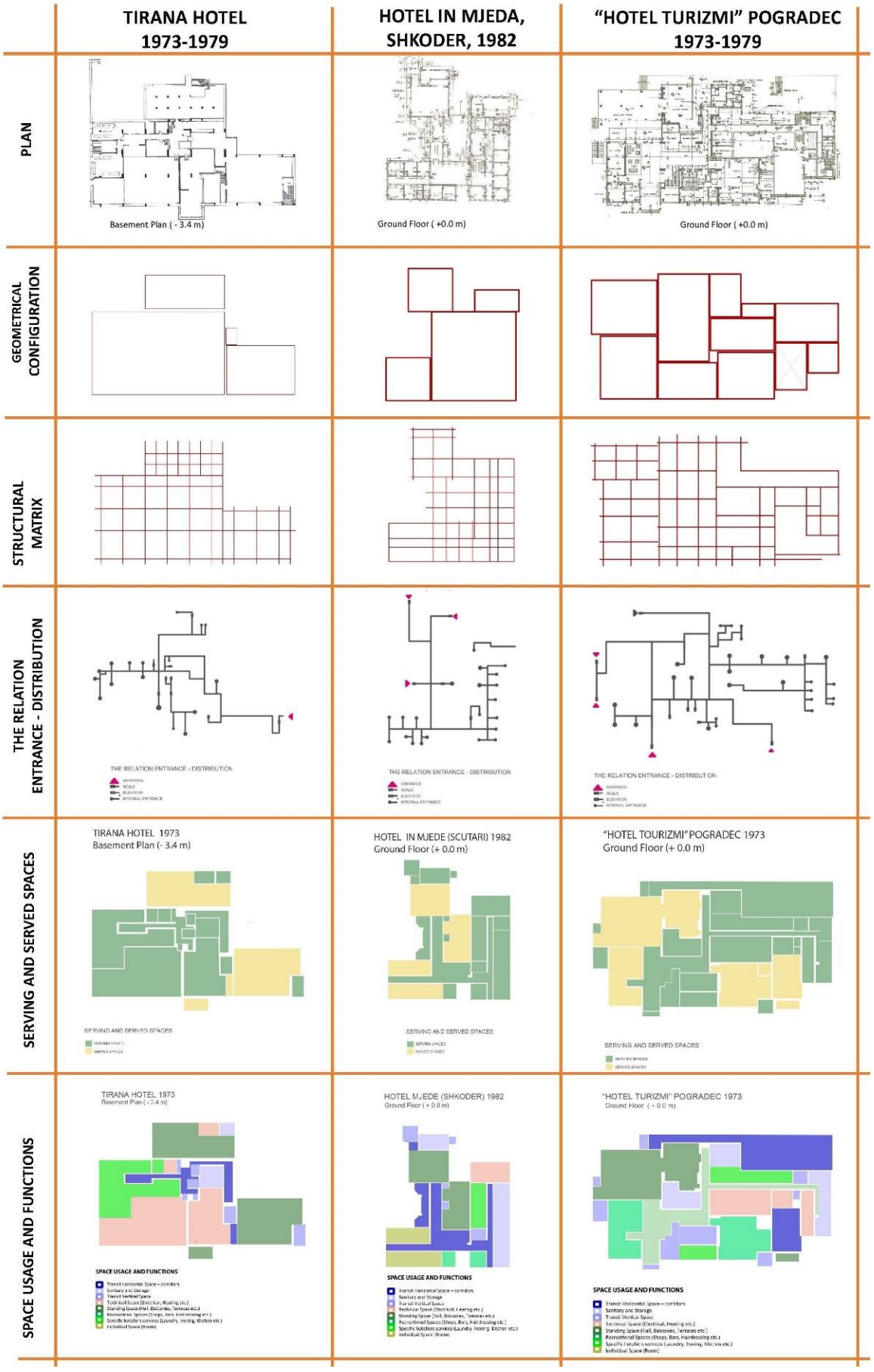


Figure 3: Comparative analytical matrix of the three case studies. Author's drawings and elaboration.

4.1.4 Served and serving spaces

Large, continuous served areas and more concentrated serving zones are clearly separated in the Tirana Hotel's served-serving diagram. The supporting spaces are not evenly distributed; instead, they form distinct clusters that are linked to the internal distribution system.

In Hotel Turizmi in Pogradec, the relationship between served and serving spaces is more distributed and interwoven than in Tirana Hotel. Serving spaces do not constitute a single compact core; instead, they occupy numerous adjacent zones and span several peripheral and centre sectors. Simultaneously, a more complex arrangement is produced by the increased number of interactions between the two categories. As a result, the system relies on multiple serving clusters coordinating with the surrounding served spaces and the circulation network.

A largely linear and partially clustered structure is used to arrange served and serving areas in the Hotel in Mjeda. Serving spaces are located within smaller peripheral zones, along their boundaries, and close to the connecting region, whereas larger served areas are located within the primary plan sectors. Although the serving areas are not concentrated exclusively around the central intersection, this junction helps coordinate the two spatial categories.

Three distinct spatial strategies are identified by the comparison: a largely linear, node-related layout in the Hotel in Mjeda, a scattered and interwoven serving system in the Hotel Turizmi–Enkelana, and concentrated supporting clusters in the Tirana Hotel (figure 3). Served and serving spaces remain interdependent in all three cases. The main distinction is the extent to which serving regions are located at the borders and intersections of larger serviced zones, or they are scattered or concentrated.

4.1.5 Space use and functions

By differentiating circulation, sanitary spaces, technical, public, service, recreational, administrative, and other individual or communal spaces, the functional diagrams offer a more thorough classification than the served–serving analysis. The comparison reveals that while the three hotels have similar functional categories, they are arranged differently.

The program at the Tirana Hotel is distinguished by vertical and horizontal division. While the tower is connected to the repeated accommodation component, the horizontal base supports a wide range of public, administrative, technical spaces, circulation, and supporting services. Larger functional zones are divided inside the examined basement level, although they are still connected by a central distributive space.

The highest level of functional interweaving is shown at Hotel Turizmi in Pogradec. The aggregated modules are divided into public, service, technical, sanitary, circulation, and other areas. A number of functional zones are connected in the centre of the design, while larger regions with more specialized functions are found in the periphery. Thus, functional diversity directly adds to the plan's geometrical complexity.

The Hotel in Mjeda uses linear sequencing to arrange its operations. The wings are arranged

with circulation zones, smaller individual rooms, larger public or community spaces, and supporting areas connected by the centre junction. Functions can be spatially distinguished while yet remaining continuous thanks to the L-shaped geometry.

Three functional techniques are identified by the comparison: linear sequencing in Mjeda Hotel, central aggregation and functional interweaving in Pogradec Hotel, and vertical–horizontal separation in the Tirana Hotel as presented in figures 2 and 3. All three plans show a purposeful distinction between public, operational, technical, circulatory, and more regulated regions despite these variations.

5. RESULTS AND CONCLUSIONS

Despite not adhering to a single planimetric or typological paradigm, the comparative analysis shows that the three hotels were constructed within a common rational architectural culture. Three separate organizational systems were developed based on their shared concepts of basic geometry, modular coordination, structural ordering, functional differentiation, and spatial hierarchy.

Analytical component	Tirana Hotel	Hotel Turizmi–Enkelana	Hotel in Mjeda
Geometrical configuration	Tower–podium	Aggregated modules	L-shaped configuration
Structural matrix	Differentiated and regular	Fragmented and adaptive	Directional and node-based
Entrance–distribution	Centralized	Branched/distributed	Linear
Served–serving relationship	Concentrated	Distributed	Linear
Space usage and functions	Vertical–horizontal separation	Functional interweaving	Linear sequencing

Figure 4: Comparative Framework of the three case studies. Author's elaboration

The tower-podium structure of the Tirana Hotel, the collection of modules in the Hotel Turizmi of Pogradec, and the L-shaped arrangement of the Hotel in Mjeda are all identified by the geometrical diagrams. These configurations represent more than just formal components because they provide the main spatial frameworks that each building's other systems are situated within. Hotel in Mjeda is based on two directional wings joined by a common junction, the Hotel in Pogradec is based on the interaction between core and peripheral modules, and Tirana is based on the distinction between key plan sections.

These variations are reinforced by the structural matrices. Interconnected orthogonal grid fields with differences in density and interval are combined in the Tirana Hotel. With its coordinated local grids that adjust to its aggregated layout, Hotel Turizmi in Pogradec, offers the most dispersed and unique matrix. With its main modifications centred at the connecting node, the Hotel in Mjeda employs a more directed and compact structural system. In each of

the three scenarios, structural regularity is altered when dimensions, functions, or orientations change and is more pronounced in repeating spatial zones. Thus, structure functions as a layer of ordering that operates as a mediator between spatial distribution, geometry, and repetition.

Three corresponding circulation models are shown by the entrance-distribution diagrams: linear and slightly branched in Mjeda, branching and scattered in Pogradec, and centralized and hierarchical in Tirana. While corridors, intersections, and distributive nodes convert the geometrical arrangement into patterns of movement, orientation, and spatial hierarchy, entrances set the starting places of access. Therefore, rather than being implemented as a stand-alone system, circulation is produced by the plan's organization.

The served-serving analysis reveals a linear, node-related organization in Mjeda, a dispersed and interlaced system in Pogradec, and concentrated supporting clusters in Tirana. The circulation, sanitary, technical, and service sectors that support primary spaces can be connected to them in many ways, as demonstrated by these strategies. Through linear sequencing in Mjeda, functional interweaving in Pogradec, and vertical–horizontal separation in Tirana, the functional diagrams further support this differentiation.

Overall, the results show that rather than using the same solutions repeatedly, standardization in Albanian socialist hotel architecture primarily functioned through common architectural concepts. By focusing on internal organizational logic rather than the external architectural image, the diagrammatic approach makes this relationship apparent. The study offers a reproducible framework for recording and analysing different hotels from the same era by separating and contrasting geometry, structural matrix, access and distribution, served–serving connections, and functional use.

Because the available drawings represent different building levels and vary in scale and graphic completeness. Therefore, with archival and field verification, future study should expand the comparison to include equivalent floors, vertical circulation systems, sections, structural technologies, and present physical conditions.

Author's note:

During the preparation of this paper, Quill Bot and Grammarly were used exclusively for English-language editing and proofreading. The author reviewed and approved all revisions and assumes full responsibility for the final content of the paper.

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