Rethinking Vernacular Architecture in a Contemporary Context

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Objectives

The primary goal of the workshop is to propose a design process based on the analysis of elements and principles of vernacular architecture, with the aim of reinterpreting the derived themes in a contemporary context.The workshop experiments on a design methodology that can serve as the foundation for the architectural design process. It aims to emphasize the need to create a strong and long-lasting dialogue between the new and the predecessor existences.

The objectives are listed below:

Noting the expression of individuality in the vernacular architecture in Albania;

Noting the expression of individuality in modern architecture.

Familiarity with cases that use traditional architectural principles;

Analyzing the architectural form of vernacular houses;

Breaking down the architectural compositional elements;

Applying the principles derived from the analysis into a design exercise;

Methodology

From a methodological point of view, the workshop followed a two-step approach – analysis and project design. The exercises encouraged students to adopt a design methodology inspired from the vernacular architecture.

The workshop was organized over 5 days with brief lectures and seminar sessions including a continuous hands-on laboratory. Students were guided through two complementary tasks, each methodologically distinct yet interconnected in terms of content and outcomes.

The first task centered on the analysis of selected historic buildings that were selected to represent each of the different typologies of vernacular houses present in Albanian speaking territories (see fig.1). Students were required to analyze selected case study buildings of vernacular architecture using different study layers such as Volumetry, Materials, Solid/Void and Served/Servant spaces.

Conclusions

The workshop aimed to experiment on a design methodology starting from the analysis of the vernacular architecture, that can serve as a starting point for the architectural design process. Some key conclusions can be listed as follows:

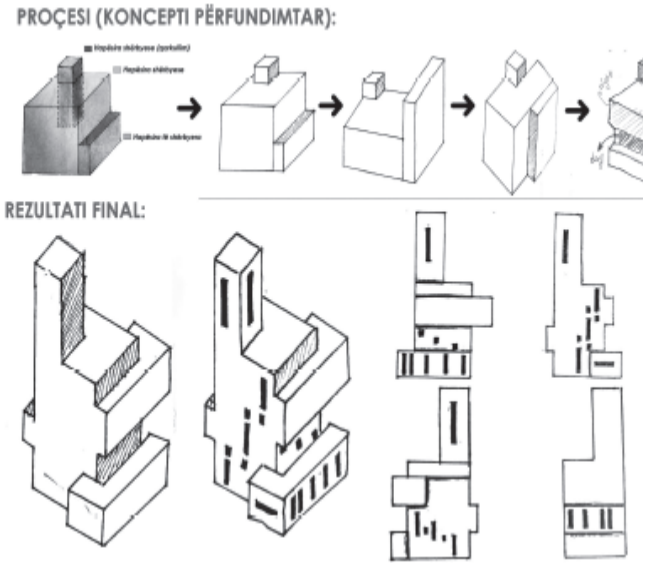
Methodological Approach

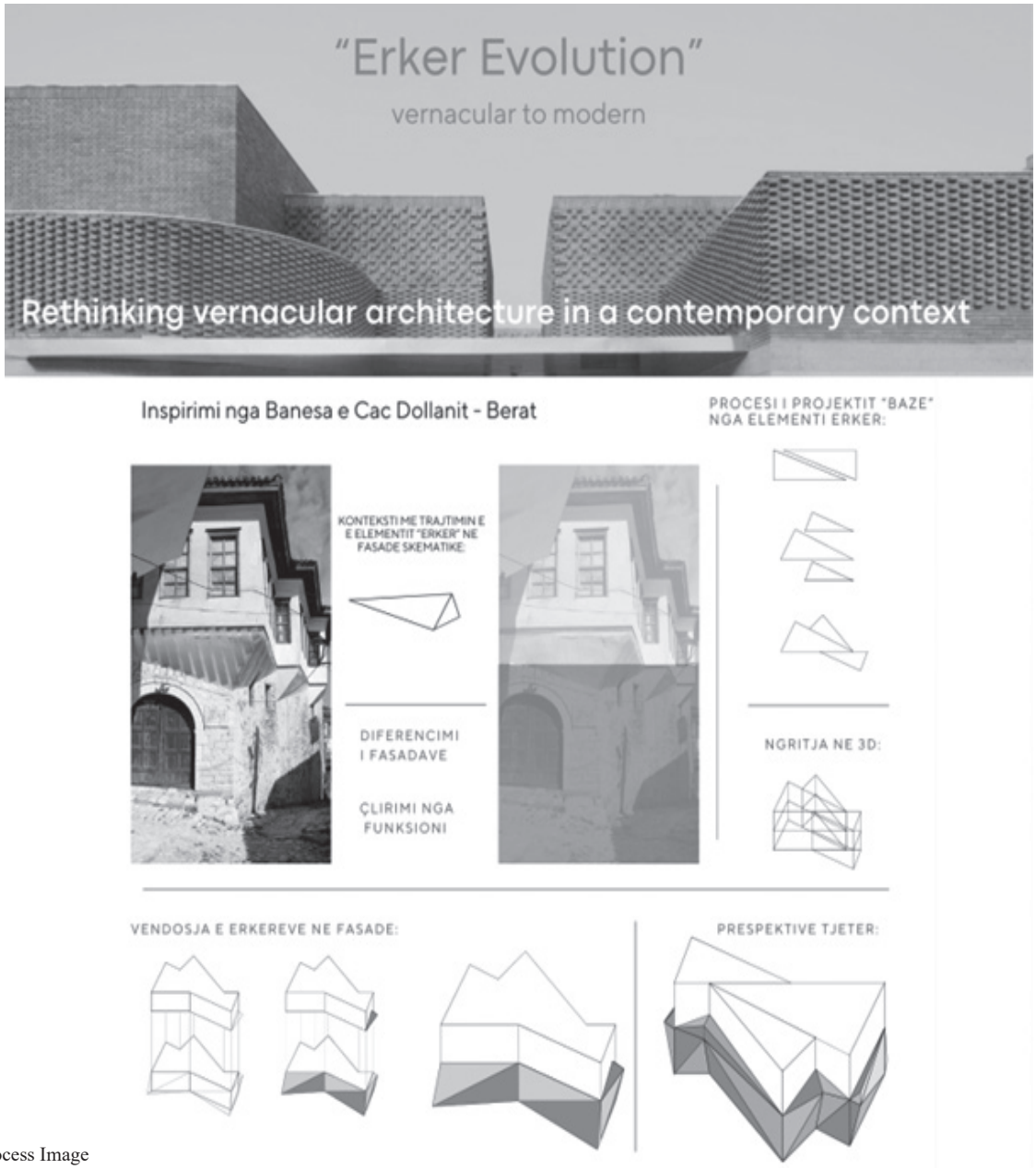
The two step methodological approach - analysis followed by design - demonstrated its efficacy in guiding students through the learning process. Task 1 focused on a formal analysis of selected historic buildings, enabling students to

critically examine and understand the compositional elements of vernacular architecture. Task 2 encouraged students to apply the insights gained from this analysis to a new design project, thereby bridging the gap between traditional architectural principles and contemporary design practices.

Principles of Vernacular Architecture informing Contemporary design

The principles of vernacular architecture provided a valuable basis for contemporary design, reinforcing the importance of a thoughtful, context-driven design process. Through the proposed sequential process of analysis followed by design, the students were able to enhance their skills in conducting formal analysis. This approach allowed them to gain a deeper understanding of architectural composition, which they then applied in the development of contemporary designs. The process encouraged critical thinking and hands-on experimentation, fostering a more comprehensive grasp of how vernacular elements can be adapted and reinterpreted in modern contexts.





Workshop Process Image