

DESIGN AS POLITICS: THE CASE OF TIRANA NORTHERN BOULEVARD
EXTENSION

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ABSTRACT

DESIGN AS POLITICS: THE CASE OF TIRANA NORTHERN BOULEVARD EXTENSION

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Cities that we live in nowadays, their urban patterns and architectural features, are outcomes of a series of decisions taken by a single person or a group of people. Despite eras and geographical location, it is undeniable the close relationship design has with politics. In totalitarian regimes, they are often the same thing. The strict concentration of power to a handful of people leaves little to no room for free will design. Nevertheless, politics is a determinant factor even in democratic governance systems.

Politics-based decision-making has created cities that are showing to be inadequate facing the new developments of the century. The modern economic market, new political regimes, different lifestyles, and needs of the local community are all pointing out the downside of the existing cities.

To be able to intervene, it is important to understand the decisions and events that led to the current situation. To adapt or further develop a city, it's important to know what to avoid during the process. This research would aim to identify the elements and patterns that are causing the problems and avoid them while making a new design. The paper identifies and distinguishes the design as an outcome from politics, and compares it with a design as an outcome of theoretical knowledge.

The research will be developed based on historical data gathering and project analysis. The first part of the thesis analysis cities which are an outcome of political

ideologies and points out their problems and disadvantages. The second part is a comparative analysis of the projects for the competition of Tirana Extension Boulevard.

The end of the thesis depicts a clear picture of the relationship: design-politics. We are able to achieve an understanding of the limit that should exist between the two key elements. Realistically speaking, one cannot exist without the influence of the other. But by bearing in mind the analysis of this theses, we can achieve a more successful co-dependent relationship for future projects.

Keywords: *politics, urban design, architecture, influence, urban design theories*

ABSTRAKT:

POLITIKA DHE PROJEKTIMI: RASTI I ZGJATIMIT VERIOR TË BULEVARDIT NË TIRANË

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Modelet urbanistike dhe tiparet arkitektonike të qyteteve në të cilat ne jetojmë, janë rezultate të një seri vendimesh, të ndërmarra nga një njeri i vetëm ose një grup personash. Pavarësisht periudhave kohore dhe pozicionit gjeografik, është i pamohueshëm fakti që politika dhe dizajni janë në një marrdhënie shumë të ngushtë. Përqëndrimi i fuqisë politike në një grup të vogël individësh limiton ose pengon tërësisht dizajnin e bazuar në vullnet të lirë. Sidoqoftë, politika ka një rol të rëndësishëm përcaktues edhe në format e qeverisjes demokratike.

Vendim-marrja me baza politike ka krijuar qytete të cilat janë të papërshtatshme të përballen me risitë e shekullit. Zhvillimet e tregut ekonomik, ndryshimet në sistemet politike të qeverisjes, ndryshimet në stilin e jetës, dhe nevojat e komunitetit vendas janë tregues të disavantazheve që qytetet kanë.

Përpara se të ndërhyjmë, është e rëndësishme të kuptojmë ngjarjet dhe vendimet që kanë krijuar situatën e tanishme. Nëpërmjet këtij analizimi mund të kuptojmë çfarë duhet të shmangim gjatë projektimit dhe ndërhyrjeve në qytet. Kjo punë kërkimore ka për qëllim identifikimin dhe analizimin e elementëve që paraqesin problematika në projekt, dhe si rrjedhim të shmangim. Teza paraqet një përballje midis një dizajni të ndikuar nga politika dhe një dizajni të bazuar në njohuri akademike.

Hulumtimi zhvillohet duke u bazur në grumbullimin e të dhënave historike dhe analizimin e projeteve arkitektonike. Pjesa e parë e tezës analizon qytete që janë produkt të ideologjive politike dhe paraqet problematikat dhe disavantazhet e tyre. Pjesa

e dytë e tezës bën një analizë krahasimore të projekteve konkurruese për projektin e zgjatimit të bulevardit të Tiranës.

Në përfundim të punës kërkimore bëhet e qartë limiti që duhet të vendoset midis marrdhënies politikë-dizajn. Ne kemi mundësi të kuptojmë limitin që duhet të egzistojë midis këtyre dy elementëve, duke qënë të vetëdijshëm që njëra nuk mund të egzistojë pa ndikimin e tjetrës. Duke patur parasysh analizimin e kësaj teze, mund të arrihet një marrdhënie më e frytshme në projekte të ngjashme.

Fjalë Kyçe: *politikë, dizajn urbanistik, arkitekturë, influencë, principe urbanistike*

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CHAPTER 1

1.1 General overview of the thesis

Design and politics represent a tight relationship that has shaped the history of the cities since ancient times. Its influence is seen across various political regimes, more notably on totalitarian one. Political ideologies of the time have shaped cities in a very distinct way, from the urban layout to the architectural features of its structures.

The research will take into consideration cities that have been under different regimes, such as communism in Albania and Poland, German Nazism, France authoritarianism, and more democratic approaches such as Brasilia or Washington. By comparing each case, it becomes possible to draw conclusions about their similarities and uniqueness and therefore be able to identify their advantages and disadvantages. This becomes a comparative base for the second phase of the paper. On it, Tirana northern boulevard extension project is analyzed. Starting with an analytical comparison of the competitors of the international competition, based on their overall design approach, the choice for the extension of the boulevard, landscape strategy, and more. The projects are also compared with urban design theories, depicting what key elements they use or avoid. The winning project from Grimshaw Architects is further analyzed due to the transformation it experienced from the municipality.

Even though there have been a lot of studies, additional research is required due to the complicated nature and broadness of the phenomenon. Quantitative research questions will describe historical events and provide a comparison base for conclusions. Understanding when, where and how politics has affected design is crucial in the development of the paper. Qualitative research questions will provide better insight into understanding the topic. Cause-effect factors and feedbacks will bring forth the fact that design is very much political.

The topic broadness attracts a lot of interest groups. The study would be of use for architects, urban planners, scholars, government officials, and also the inhabitants. As such the paper is applicable beyond an isolated case and it becomes more far-reaching.

1.2 Methodology

The research paper uses a combination of research methods in order to better achieve its goals. Data information is gathered from various sources and then analyzed towards the goal of the paper.

1.2.1 Data gathering

For the first part of the thesis is imperative creating a historical background layout. That is done through collection of old maps, sketches and photos retrieved from national public archives, photographers of the time, and personal files of the architects or urban planners which are highlighted in each case study. They help visualize the written information and its concepts. Also, they become comparative elements in themselves, reflecting changes and modifications that have occurred throughout years. As such they are a testimony of a given timeframe in history, of a specific political governance and a representation of people who caused the change.

Historical facts are to be thoroughly studied to be able to get accurate conclusions. They are retrieved from historical books, journals, autobiographies of the protagonists of the times and from the original projects and masterplans, now saved in public archives. Autobiography books from the people who were part of the projects or led them will provide a more wholesome point of view to the topic. As such a verifiable source of information becomes the base of analysis of the complex relation between politics and design. The quantitative information collected help to better understand the case discussed and becomes a base of comparison with other case studies. The qualitative information becomes the base of developing the narrative of the thesis that leads to conclusions.

For the second part of thesis, data gathering is heavily relied in project proposals of each studio in the competition. The 7 competitors: AS&P, Cino Zuchi Architetti, GMP, KCAP, West 8, DAR, Grimshaw Architects participated in the competition with a draft proposal for the Tirana Northern Boulevard Extension. Their submissions are used to retrieve maps, sketches and diagrams, and all the necessary information to create a comparison scheme. Additional data is gathered from Tirana Municipality and from the studio's websites.

In overall data collection is done on a secondary level, so retrieving information that has already been collected by somebody else. In case of interviews data collection is done on a primary level, with information unique to this thesis only.

1.2.2 Data analysis

Quantitative data are analyzed and compared through various diagrams. Project comparison holds a substantial part of the research project. This type of data is used to perform analysis such as: solid-void, expropriation approaches, buildings height, density, transportation systems and landscape strategy. These analyses are graphical representation themselves but also base for quantitative data.

They are created through various computer-based programs. AutoCAD, Adobe Illustrator, Adobe Photoshop, are the main tools used to generate architectural drawings or diagrams. Google Earth Pro is used to display up-to-date, top view of some of the cities that are part of the paper.

Qualitative data are also analyzed to interpret the given information, understand common patterns and conclude to the factors which cause a certain situation or to its aftereffects.

For the first part of the thesis, the research method is mainly descriptive, where data is collected without intervening, and as such is displayed in the paper. In the second part, the method becomes more experimental, where I systematically intervene in the process to make calculations and measure the outcome.

These methods ensure that the topic objective to be achieved and its conclusions can be easily understood from them. The chosen methodology ensures that the topic is thoroughly explored and analyzed.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

The relationship between politics and design is a complicated one that has been part of various academic researches and studies. Its codependent behavior can be seen throughout the 18 and 19-century time frame, across different countries and various regimes, from totalitarian ones to more democratic approaches. The cities we encounter nowadays, with their peculiarities and problems are mainly outcomes of political decisions or political regimes agendas. To better understand the situation, we face today it's important to analyze and understand what were the reasons and people that led to the creation or transformation of such cities.

2.2 Vast public works transform cities in France and Germany

Paris as we know it today is a result of an extensive public works program commissioned by Emperor Napoleon III. The project was directed by Georges Haussmann, who was given full liberty of action by the French senate and the emperor himself. The project came as a response to the atrocious situation Paris was at. In 1845, the French social reformer Victor Considerant wrote: "Paris is an immense workshop of putrefaction, where misery, pestilence and sickness work in concert, where sunlight and air rarely penetrate. Paris is a terrible place where plants shrivel and perish, and where, of seven small infants, four die during the course of the year." (Moncan, 2002, p. 10)

In 1853 Haussmann began his first phase of interventions with a new set of broad avenues and boulevards to create easier access and communications (Maneglier, 1990, p. 28). The construction of boulevards continued on the second phase as well (1859-67) aiming to connect inner Paris with the outskirts. Also, new roads, public

squares, and government buildings were built. Other medieval and modern buildings, and several ancient, dark and narrow streets, disappeared from the map (Maneglier, 1990, p. 28) As displayed on figure 1, Paris grew in size with the annexation of 1860 (Bournon, 2010, p. 62), and even though criticism for his work grew, Haussmann continued his plan on a third phase (1869-70). The new wide roads allowed government troops free movement to maintain public order and to conduct parades. (The Gates of Paris, 1871, p. 3)

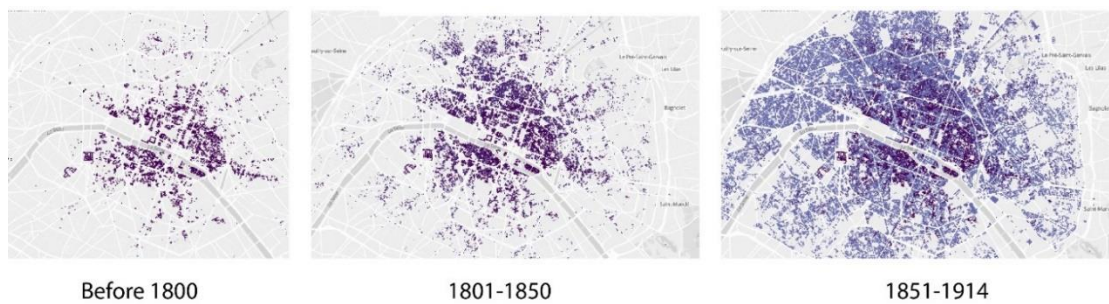


Figure 1. Paris Morphologic analysis.

Source : Etienne Côme, Université Gustave Eiffel

The morphological analysis indicates the Haussmann intervention affected the historical city and far –reached towards the outskirts with the annexation of 1860. (Moncan, 2002, pp. 58-61) Such action was achieved through political support of the relevant authorities.

Since the renovation project was commissioned from the emperor, Haussmann had full political support. In February 1852, the French senate simplified the laws of expropriation. (Faure, 2004, p. 443). This new law gave Haussmann the authority to expropriate private lands for public purposes as he wished without having to report the parliament. He only had to report the emperor himself, and since Napoleon III had already given him his full support, Haussmann had full decision-making power. Having this much political influence and support, he managed to get the parliament to approve millions of francs to carry on his ambition (Kirkland, 2014, pp. 156-157). Figures 2-4 below depict a photo comparison before-after his interventions.



Figure 2: Avenue de L'opéra 1877 / 2021. Source: “Album du Vieux Paris” by Charles Marville, Bibliothèque de la Ville, Paris / Source: Google Earth 2021

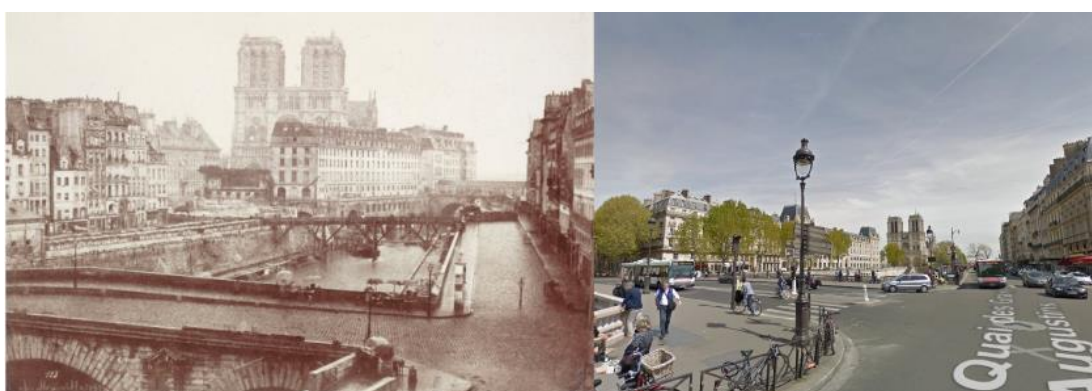


Figure 3. Île de la Cité 1852 (before). Source: “Album du Vieux Paris” by Charles Marville, Bibliothèque de la Ville, Paris / Source: Google Earth 2021



Figure 4. Boulevard Henri IV 1876 (before).Source: “Album du Vieux Paris” by Charles Marville, Bibliothèque de la Ville, Paris / Source: Google Earth 2021

Hausmann was accompanied by a large number of critics from scholars, opposition politicians and unsatisfied Parisians. Nevertheless, none of that stopped his work. His direct support from the emperor made him a powerful man with almost unlimited decision-making power.

A similar decision was taken from the Nazi Party in 1938 for Germania (Friedrich, 2016, pp. 370-72), a project model to rebuild Berlin as the capital of Germany. Hitler described his vision for the city: "As world capital, Berlin will only be comparable with Ancient Egypt, Babylon, and Rome! What is London, what is Paris compared to that!" (Jochmann, 1980, p. 318) Masterplan shown on figure 5 was designed by Albert Speer and had the intention of displaying the ideology of the regime on both aspects: architecturally and functionality.

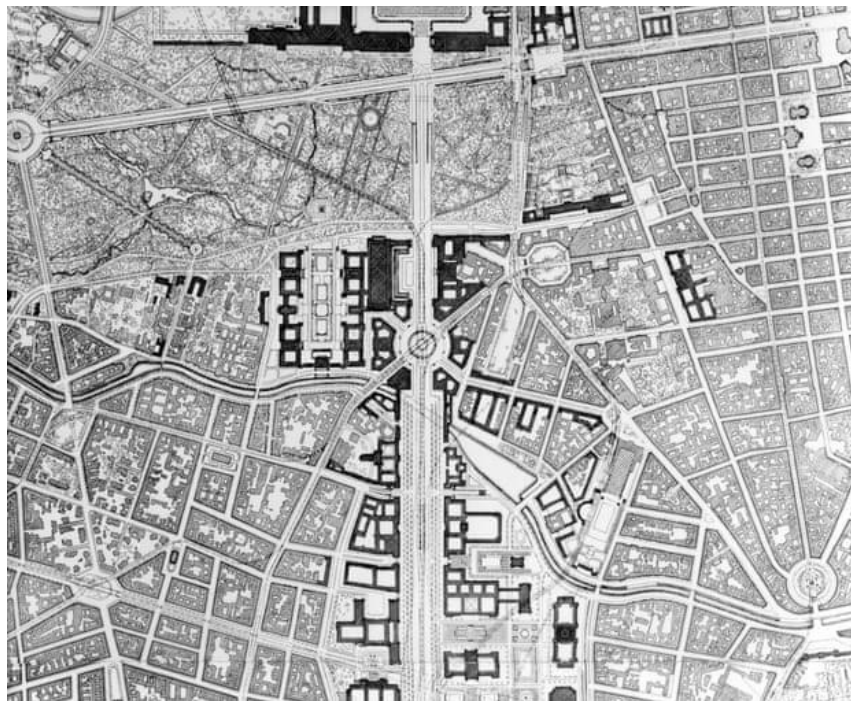


Figure 5. Germania Masterplan proposed. Source: German Federal Archive

Figure 6 shows a 3D model of the plan with buildings designed to be bigger than other similar existing structures. For instance, Großer Platz (Grand Plaza) was designed to be 350,000 square meters, *Volkshalle* would have been even this day the largest enclosed domed structure, Triumphal Arch would have been almost 100 m high. This kind of decision-making reflects an obsessive behavior: design to show off. It also reflects the political ideology of proving the power of the state to its people and

other countries as well. Speer organized rallies on *Zeppelinfeld* during the night to increase the dramatic effect of the speaker and to better emphasize the dramatic effect of the lighting system., as shown on figure 7 (Sereny, *Albert Speer: His Battle with Truth*, 1996, p. 131) Both Haussmann and Speer wanted to make Paris and Germania a point of reference that would be desired from the other nations.



Figure 6. Germania model plan (1939/1944). Source: German Federal Archive



Figure 7. Cathedral of Light in Zeppelinfeld stadium, Nuremberg 1935. Source: German Federal Archive

In contrary to Paris, Germania remained a project model, with most buildings remaining unbuilt. Both totalitarian regimes approached a top-down approach design, where the decision was taken by a single person with absolute power, without taking into consideration the inhabitants, urban laws, or heritage. The large scale of interventions of Haussmann was described as triumphant vulgarity by some critics. He was also accused of unnecessarily destroying the historic fabric of Paris to make room for his works. In Fascist Germany, Hitler put Speer as head of the Chief Office for Construction in 1934, while in 1937 he became General Building Inspector for the Reich Capital. Speer became part of Hitlers inner circle (Sereny, Albert Speer: His Battle with Truth, 1996, p. 106).As such Speer had extraordinary powers in decision-making over the city planning. In 1942 he was named Minister of Armaments (Kitchen, 2015, pp. 120-21) and gained even more control and influence than before. Unlike Haussmann, Speer wasn't able to pursue and use his full authority and power.

2.3 Monumental axis and house blocks, case of Brasilia, Nowa-Huta, and Washington DC

Interventions of massive scale are widely encountered in totalitarian regimes. That is mainly because the interventions needed only political approval, while the people's needs and desires are overall disregarded. Still, large-scale urban construction can also be seen in countries with democratic governments. Such example is Brazil and its capital. Brasilia is a city designed from scratch with the aim of being the new capital of Brazil. It was designed by Lúcio Costa, Oscar Niemeyer and Joaquim Cardozo on 1956. The initial pilot plan was given by Costa with an airplane-shaped design (Wong, Planning and the unplanned reality : Brasilia, 1989) shown on figure 8. Even though it didn't include many specifications it was chosen as a winner because it supported the development of the city. (Epstein, 1973)

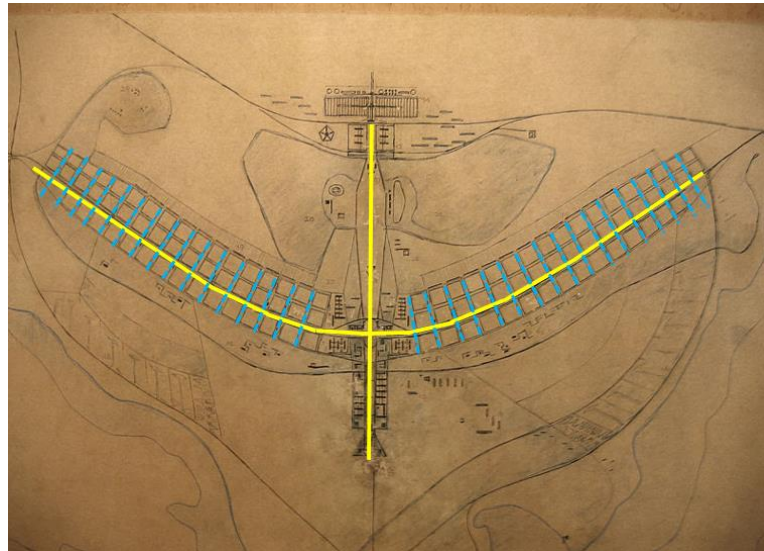


Figure 8. Brasília Pilot Plan Sketch.

Source: Public Archive of the Federal District / Novacap Fund, elaborated by author.

Figure 10 shows his plan in a cross-axial design, choosing to build a monumental axis for political and administrative activities and a Residential axis. One of the main objectives was to have free flow of car traffic, a way of displaying the modernity in the city. (Wong, *Planning and the Unplanned Reality: Brasilia*, 1989)

The residential axis (north to south) is accompanied by superblocks, parallel to each other. Each superblock was envisioned to be a self-sustained cell, able to provide all the necessary services for the community. The blocks are characterized by rectangular-shaped buildings with a uniform and simple appearance, shown on figure 9 (Wong, *Planning and the Unplanned Reality: Brasilia*, 1989)

On the other hand, the monumental axis (east to west) holds structures of large scale. Each one has its own unique design that stands from the others and is generally surrounded by empty green fields. In this way their importance and monumental character is strongly established. (Epstein, 1973)



Figure 9. Brasilia Superquadra. Source: Francesco Marini



Figure 10. Brasilia Monumental axis. Source: Sebastiano Pereira-Nunes

Axis choice is encountered mainly on totalitarian regimes."Deshmoret e Kombit" Boulevard in Tirana, 3 –axis intersection at Nowa-Huta (Poland), *Prachtstrasse*, (Street of Magnificence) in project model Germania, "Champs-Élysées" boulevard in Paris, are all examples of such approach. The monumentality of the axis is enforced by the presence of buildings alongside it with important political, social, cultural, and governmental functions. The residential axis is designed to be more private with superblocks of houses, educational and commercial buildings. nevertheless, this approach is applied also in the ex-communist district of Nowa-Huta in Poland.



Figure 11. Nowa Huta: 3 main axes intersecting at Plac Centralny.
Source: Google Earth, 2021, elaborated by author.



Figure 12. Residential blocks in Nowa Huta.
Source: Omar Marques

The district was designed to be a utopic city, the same as Brasilia. It is a socialist realism construction that serves directly the ideology of the communist regime in Poland. Figure 11 presents its design with a 3-way intersection, followed by a hierarchy of streets on a well-defined layout. The 3 monumental axes intersect at Plac Centralny and are enforced in their position by the presence of buildings with important functions alongside them. Figure 12 depicts housing which was designed in blocks with parallel roads allowing easier communication (Pozniak, 2014). The same design logic was applied in the residential axis of Brasilia, where private superblocks of houses are placed. The superblocks were designed to be self-sustained

neighborhoods where inhabitants could accomplish their needs without having to leave the block.

Another example of such approach it's the "L'Enfant Plan", displayed in figure 13. It is the urban plan for the city of Washington (USA) which got compiled in 1791 by Pierre L'Enfant (United States Department of the Interior: National Park Service, 1990). The plan was submitted to the first president of the United States, George Washington, which marks the beginning of American democracy. As indicated on the plan, most streets are laid out in a grid form. Also, grand avenues cross the grid diagonally providing easier communication. They meet the grid in open spaces in form of circles or rectangular plazas (Office, 1902, p. 12).

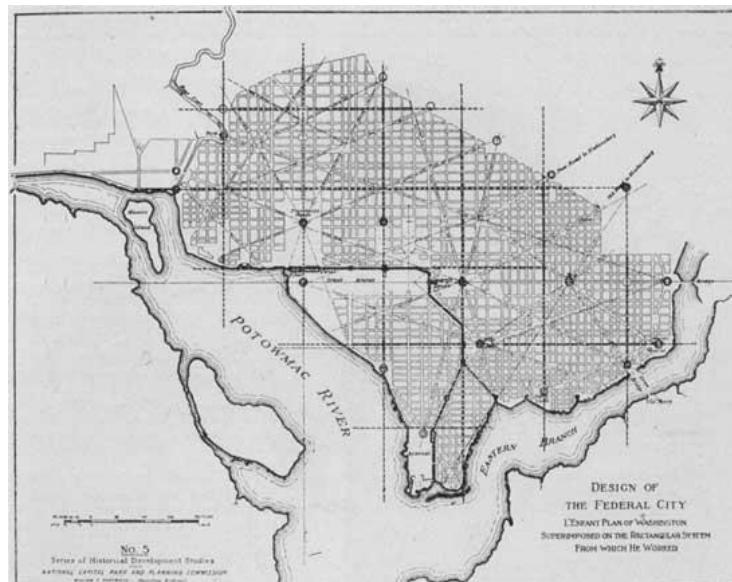


Figure 13. L'Enfant Plan of Washington superimposed on the rectangular system.
Source: Boston Public Library

The urban layout where US Capitol is located is almost a replica of the Nowa Huta district layout. DC being a symbol of freedom under a democratic regime that thrives under capitalism, while Poland being a communist city with common ownership administered by the state with little personal choice. Still, the design choice is the same. Figure 15 shows the 3 main monumental axes, which lead to a massive open space where an important administrative building is located. While in Nowa Huta each axis seems to have equal importance, in DC the center axis stands out, being a connecting element to the Lincoln Memorial. Another difference is that the housing

rectangular pattern is unaffected by the diagonal intersecting axis, while in Nowa Huta they are formed in a parallel way from the main axis.



Figure 14. 3 monumental axes intersecting in US Capitol. Source: Library of Congress's Prints and Photographs

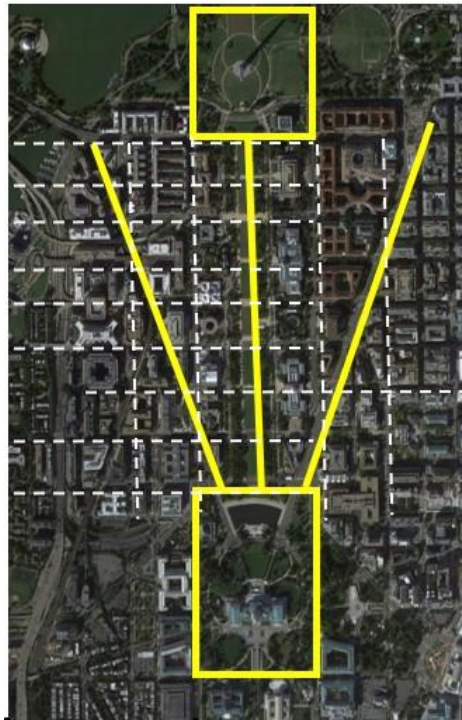


Figure 15. 3 monumental axis intersecting in US Capitol (2) facing Lincoln Monument (1). Source: Google Earth 2021, elaborated by author.

2.4 Single Monumental axis and large-scale buildings, case of Tirana and Bucharest

Political ideology was heavily applied in communist Tirana (Albania). Propaganda was evident everywhere. It also got materialized in architecture (Kolevica, 1997, p. 16) Political decisions intervened not only in the architectural style of a structure but also in its details, like the color choice, size of the windows, types of decorations, etc. This type of control was achieved by exerting a high level of terror towards the working groups. (Kolavica, 1997, pp. 39-42)"Deshmoret e Kombit "boulevard started to get built-in 1934 and was designed by Italian architect Gherardo Bosio. Its monumentality is increased by the presence of the buildings alongside it. They are a product of a totalitarian regime ideology (PLA, 1971, pp. 624-25).

Some of them are designed by Italian architects while others by architects of the communist regime. Besides the architectural features, the buildings also have crucial political, social, cultural importance. The boulevard leads to a grand opening on both sides. "Mother Tereza" square which faces "House of fascism "building (now the Polytechnic University) and "Scanderbeg" square on the other. The polytechnic university stands as a heavily monumental structure raised above ground level with multiple sets of steps. In this way, a podium is created where political figures would be able to address the crowds in the square. At the same time, it implies the ideology that the state is above and in control of people.



Figure 16. Polytechnic University of Tirana.
Source: Tirana municipality



Figure 17. "Deshmoret e Kombit" Blvd, Tirane. Source: Google Earth 2021, elaborated by author.

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1. Polytechnic University of Tirana 1939–41 Former: “House of Fascism” | 11. Ministry Of Internal Affairs 1929-31 |
| 2. Mother Teresa Square 1939–41 | 12. Ministry Of Transport and Infrastructure 1929-31 |
| 3. National Archaeological Museum | 13. Ministry Of Agriculture and Rural Development 1929-31 |
| 4. Presidential Palace 1939–41 | 14. Ministry Of Energy and Industry 1929-31 |
| 5. Palace Of Congresses 1982-86 | 15. Tirana City Hall 1929-31 |
| 6. Rogner | 16. Banka e Shqipërisë 1937 |
| 7. Kryesia E Kuvendit 1953 | 17. Skanderbeg Square 1929-31 |
| 8. The Prime Minister's Office 1939–41 Former: Palace of The Lieutenantcy | 18. Palace Of Culture 1959-63 |
| 9. The Pyramid 1986 -88 | 19. National History Museum 1981 |
| 10. Ex “Dajti” Hotel 1939–41 | |

The importance of the boulevard is increased by the number of important institutions alongside it, shown on figure 17. Their functions are administrative, economic, political, and social. Ceausescu ordered all churches to be demolished and had an obsession about systemization. This choice is a direct indication of the political intervention in urban design. In almost an identical way with Polytechnic University building there is the Presidential Palace in Bucharest shown on figure 18. The palace was ordered from Nicolae Ceausescu, the president of Communist Romania and it took 13 years to be completed. The palace is the heaviest building in the world (Guinness World Records, 1984) and the 3d most from the volume point of view. Numbers that once again show the obsession and ambition the political figure had to have a design that fit his personality cult of political worship and adoration (Malathronas, See Nicolae Ceausescu's grandiose and bloody legacy in Bucharest, 2014). The palace stands at the end of Union boulevard surrounded by empty areas to increase its monumentality.

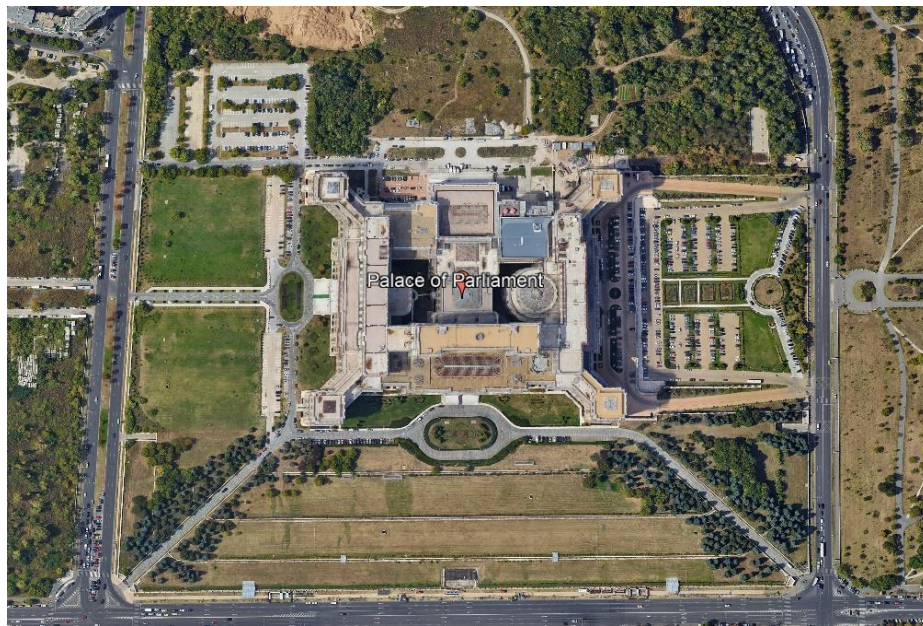


Figure 18. Presidential Palace. Source: Google Earth 2021

Figure 19 displays the same design pattern: a monumental central axis, that goes through the city with a destination an open large space for increased monumentality and grandiose appearance. In addition, the list below depicts the large presence of important buildings alongside it, mainly government buildings but also important social and cultural ones. The axis also becomes the development driving force for the city.

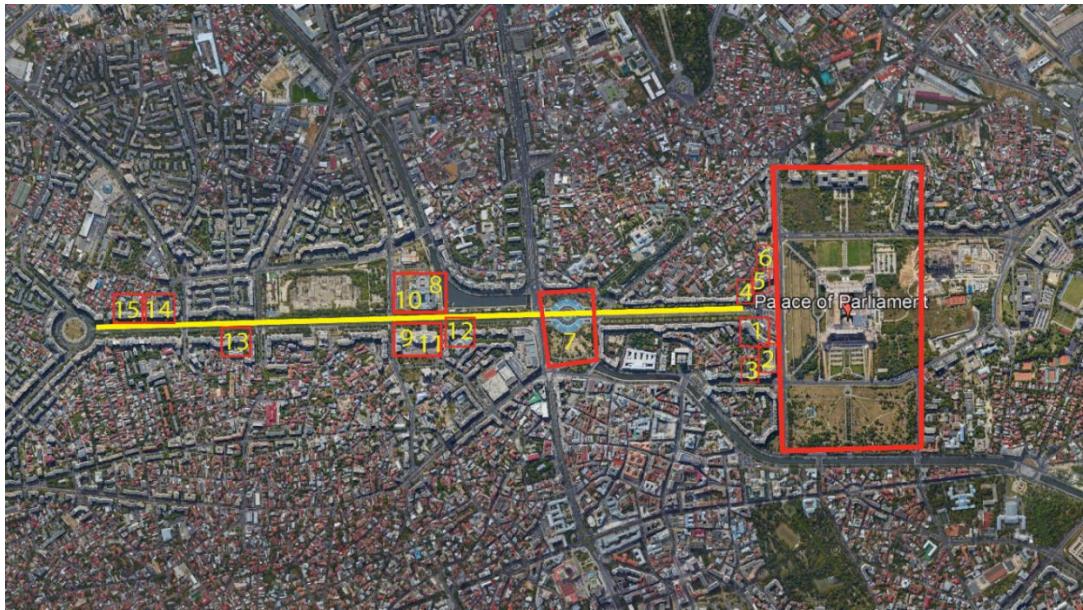


Figure 19. The palace is situated at the west end of the 3.5-kilometer Boulevard Unirii (Union Boulevard). Source: Google Earth 2021, elaborated by author.

- | | |
|---|------------------------------------|
| 1. Ministry of Regional Development and Public Administration | 8. Ministry of Culture |
| 2. Ministry of Justice | 9. Postal Office |
| 3. Ministry of Public Finances | 10. National Library of Romania |
| 4. National Audiovisual Council | 11. Bucharest Court |
| 5. Ministry of Environment, Waters and Forests | 12. ANA |
| 6. National Administration of State Reserves and Special Issues | 13. National Housing Agency |
| 7. Bucharest Artesian Fountains | 14. National Environmental Guard |
| | 15. National Trade Register Office |

2.5 Historical background of how the axis was formed

Since its construction during the regime of King Zogu, the boulevard has passed through different political influences. The Italian invasion, communism and post-communism left different structures, each with a style of its own, which have given the boulevard its identity.

2.5.1 Tirana regulatory plans of 1920- 1931

By the decision of Lushnja Congress, Tirana was declared the capital of Albania on January 1920. At the time Tirana had an organic structure and spontaneous development. Figure 20 shows the first plans of arranging the road system in 1923. Attempts were made to create a rectangular division, while trying to preserve the existing fabric. Radial roads such as: Durresi Rd., Kavaja Rd., Barrikada Rd., where widened and were considered as a drive force for the city development. (Aliaj et al.,2016, pp.16-17)

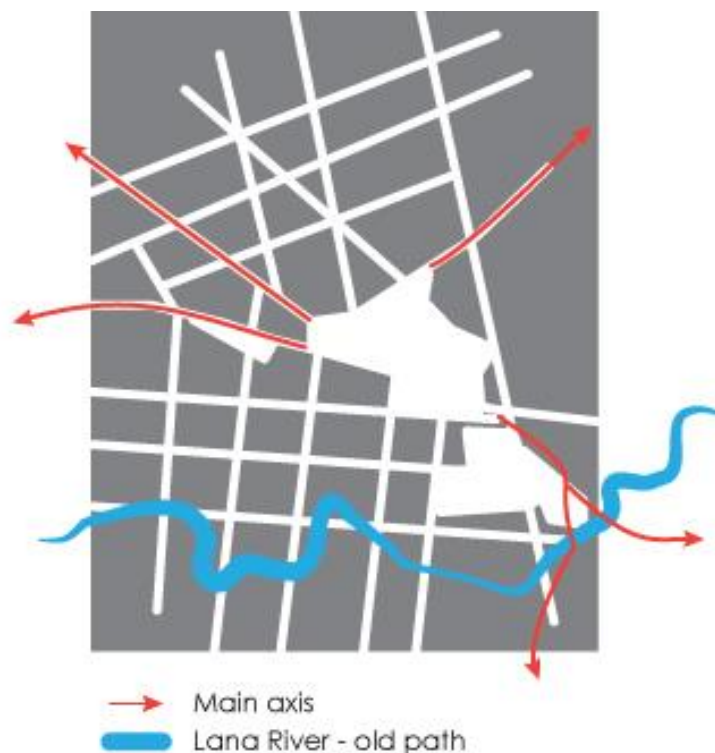


Figure 20: Capital layout plan 1923.

Source: (Aliaj et al.), diagram elaborated by author.

In 1925, under the rule of Ahmet Zogu, the Italian architect Armando Brasini was invited to draw up the masterplan of the capital. He proposed a central axis defined by a series of monumental buildings. His design was original based on geographical position and natural elements of the city but it didn't match with the existing fabric of the city. As argued by Kostof, axis presence represents also a political manifestation. The axis was the base of a monocentric city design which helped political agenda and distinguished people based on their economic and social status (Kostof, 2003, p. 167).

Brasini and Florestano di Fausto took the first steps in providing a regulator center masterplan. At the time the city had an absence of buildings of major importance, excluding the two main mosques, the old mosque and the mosque of "Eth'hem Bej", the former Royal Villa and the Old Bazaar. Brasini designed "Viale del Impero" (now "Deshmoret e Kombit"), Fausto modified it and finally it came to life by Bosio after the Italian invasion.

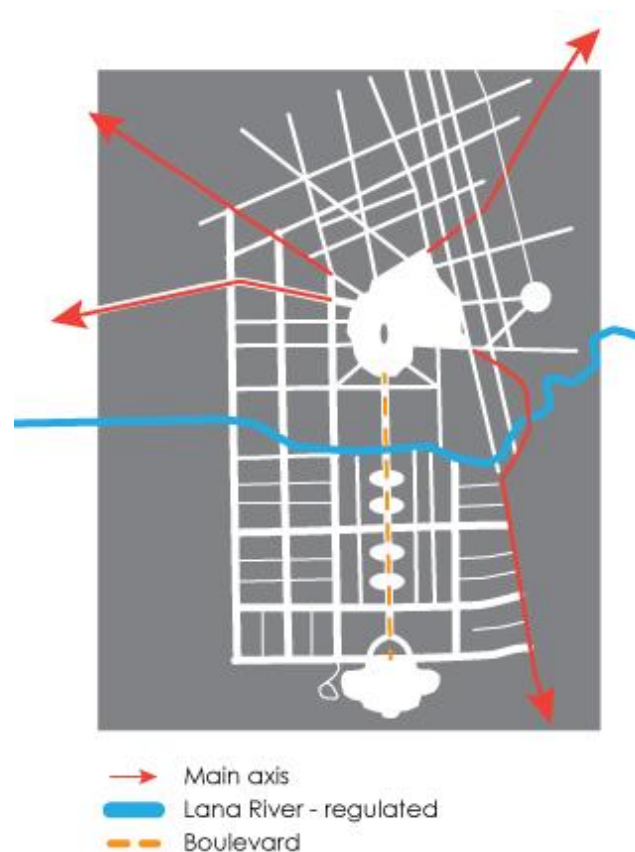


Figure 21: Capital layout plan 1928

Source: (Aliaj et al.), diagram elaborated by author.

In 1928, Zogu admissioned Austrian architect Kohler and Albanian architect Frasheri to draw a plan where the city would develop south-west. As seen on figure 21, the plan imposed the rectangular development in areas that were currently empty. It was planned that this zone to be developed on the concept of “garden city”, low density area with villas surrounded by large open spaces (Aliaj et al.,2016, p.24). The axis itself would lead to the Royal Palace south and Scanderbeg Square north; idea preserved from Brasini. Also, this was the first plan which included Lana River regulation.

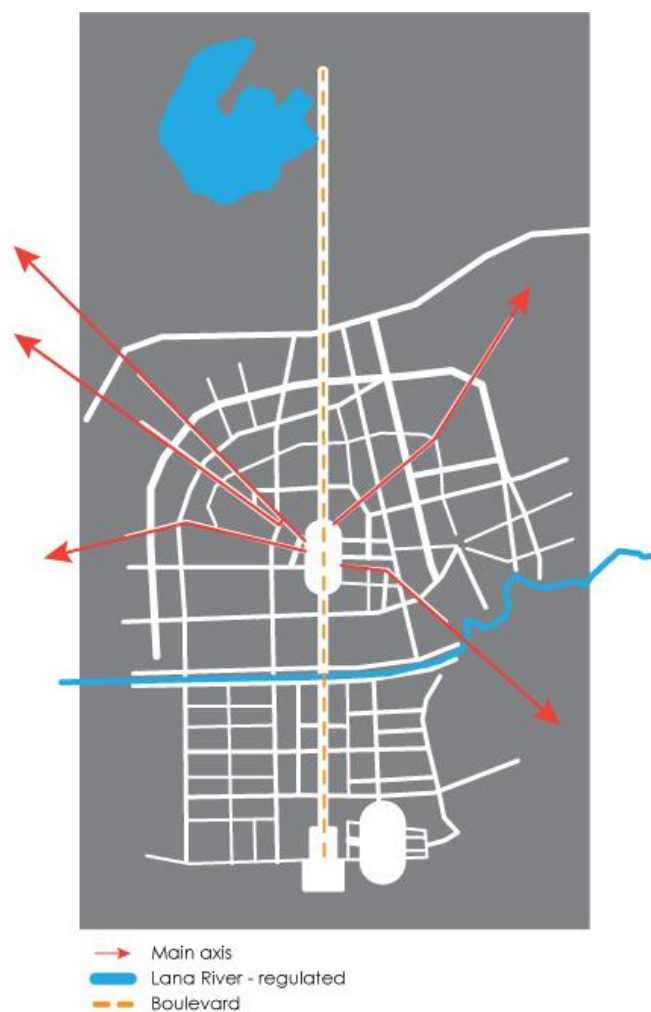


Figure 22: Capital layout plan 1929

Source: (Aliaj et al.), diagram elaborated by author.

Figure 22 is the plan of 1929, where additional modifications were done. Now the boulevard was extended further north, up until the Stadium (Ish Stacioni I Trenit). This design was a compilation of previous works of Frasheri, Fausto and Kohler. While the southern boulevard extension took place on empty fields, the northern part had to go through the existing built structures. During this year, the municipality determined the extents of the city's surface. The work process considered the capital as a detached entity, with no disregard of neighbor settlements and displayed a lack of vision for the future of the city (Aliaj et al.,2016, p.38)

2.5.2 Tirana regulatory plans of 1939- 1943

April 1939, Albania is conquered by fascist Italy under the rule of king Victor Emanuel III. Now, all regulatory plans for the country had to comply with the vision of an empire that was extended way beyond our borders. At this point in time, Tirana's fabric had already gone from organic to organized development. For the first time the capital got a wholesome masterplan designed to details, with a vision for the future, plan displayed at figure 25. As such the plan included widening roads for vehicular access and enhancing rail transportation. It paid great attention to property management and management, something that would be completely disregarded after WW2. The plan also included advanced concept of community integration (Aliaj et al.,2016, p.76).

This moment in history marks a critical point in the urban history of the capital. The city faces the choice of choosing its future as a linear city or as a polycentric one. The linear city option incorporated also elements from garden city, with vast open spaces, surrounding it. This option was disregarded.

Gherardo Bosio initially intended to develop Tirana based on the concept of Garden City. The city was to be developed around the boulevard axis. He planned clear zoning of the city characterized by three distinct bands: intensive, semi-intensive and extended. He also tried to preserve the existing landscape of the city.

He wanted the boulevard to have continuous and unified facades. Therefore he established a planimetry where the width of the facades of individual buildings to be built on multiples of 4m. (Bosio, 1939)



Figure 23. Project of the Piazza del Littorio Tirana", 1939-41.
 Source: Gherardo Bosio heirs' Archives

Bosio envisaged a second political-sports center (fig. 23), Piazza del Littorio (Now Mother Tereza Square). The square would hold the House of Fascism (now Polytechnic University). It provided a dominant presence and scenic backdrop for the square and boulevard as well. As such it would a physical representation of the fascist government in Albania. Bosio also designs emblematic buildings such as the Council Office Building and the Grand Hotel "Dajti". (Cresti, 1996) To emphasize the importance of House of Fascism, Bosio placed two important buildings Academy of the Arts and the Rectorate of the University, with the scenographic objective to redirect the attention towards the House of the Fascist Party. (Vokshi, 2014)

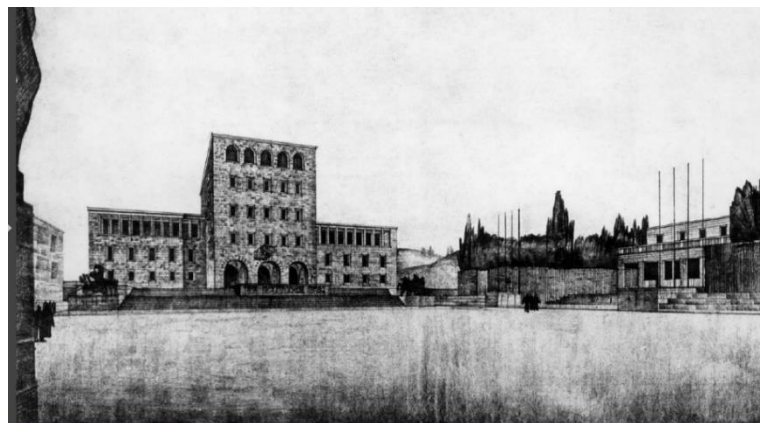


Figure 24. Project of the Piazza del Littorio Tirana", 1939-41.
 Source: Gherardo Bosio heirs' Archives

The colonnades used, also served as a filter passage towards the stadium, a half-hidden part of the large architectural complex. Bosio placed the stadium in the foot hills of Tirana. (Giusti, 2006)

In overall his design represent a need to express the majesty of Italian political regime. As such the architecture and urban design was directly use a political tool to convey a message or an ideology the Albanian population.

The proposed masterplan included a road system based on 2 axes. North-south axis composed of “Victor Emanuel” Blvd (now Blvd. Zogu 1) and “Imperial” Blvd (now Deshmoret e Kombit Blvd) which led to Piazza del Littorio (Now Mother Tereza Square). The square would hold the House of Fascism (now Polytechnic University). East-west axis composed of “Principe Umberto” Blvd (now Durresi Rd.) and “Mussolini” Blvd (now Kavaja Rd). The plan clearly determined two rings for the city.

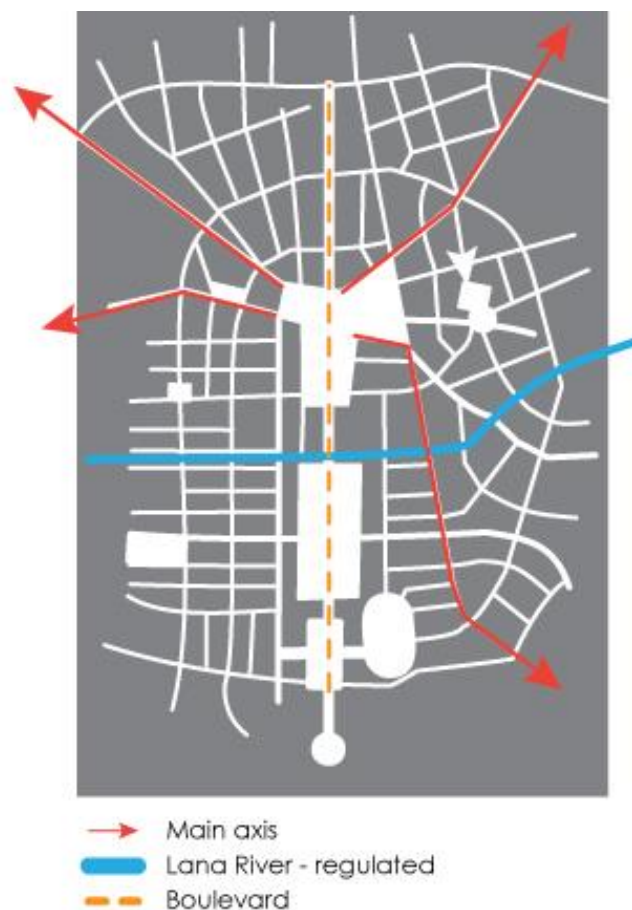


Figure 25: Capital layout plan 1939-43

Source: (Aliaj et al.), diagram elaborated by author.

2.5.3 Tirana regulatory plans of 1957- 1958

In 1944, Albania started its communism period, with head of state Enver Hoxha. When the plan of this period got drafted, Albania was completely isolated from the west and had started detaching from the Eastern Bloc. The regime made it extremely difficult for architects and urban planners to express their design concepts freely. Still the Eastern Bloc influence is present, initially the Russian one for the draft of 1953, followed by the Bulgarian one of 1957. In 1958, the plan drawn by Misto Mele and Angellov, was the first plan undertaken by an Albanian institution.

The plan had a strong re-founder character with 2 most notable actions: the destruction of old bazar which led to a chain effect of destruction of the old Tirana, and the creation of the Grand Park of Tirana, with an artificial lake, botanic garden and zoo. This way of designing had political ideology in its geneses, reflecting the propaganda “leaving the past behind and rebuilding the future ourselves”. (Aliaj et al.,2016, p.170)

In 1944, Albania started its communism period, with head of state Enver Hoxha. It has been recognized as one the harshest implementation of this ideology. The Socialist Party of Albania would take control of absolutely everything. As such, all the architectural and urban planning decisions had to comply with the political agenda. (Kolevica, 1997). Some of the most notable structures built during this period where alongside the existing boulevard: Palace of Congresses, National Art gallery, Palace of Culture, National History Museum and National Arts Gallery.

They were all designed and built to be a manifestation of the power of the state (Fevziu, 2014, p. 22). They are characterized by their monumental appearance, the use of straight line and colors of greys tone. Rectangular or square shaped structure were used for various political, cultural and administrative functions.

The state originally received aid from Chinese allies (Vickers, Albania: From Anarchy to Balkan Identity, 1997, p. 210) and later on was fully isolated. As such any attempt to borrow a foreign design concept or building technique was considered a heresy and treason towards the country. As such the overall process was conducted under great pressure, leaving no room for improvement.

2.5.4 Tirana regulatory plans of 1985- 1989

This plan became necessary because the previous one of 1957-1958 was no longer relevant. Figure 26 displays the plan of 1985-1989. Conceptually speaking, this plan didn't have major changes from its predecessor. Following the road system of 1939-43, this plan consolidated the scheme with 5 city rings and elongating the radial roads. The plan proposed another entrance for the city up north, which was provided from the elongation of "Deshmoret E Kombit" Blvd. This was the first time the idea of the Northern Boulevard took place. Also zoning concept became more evident as a way of clarifying areas character.

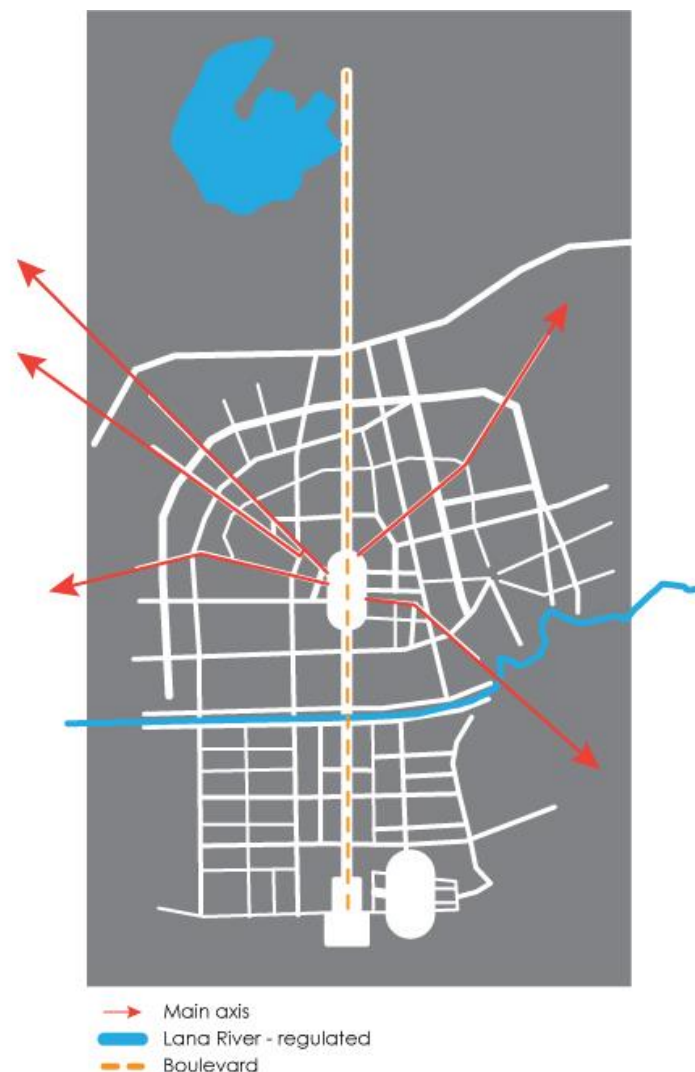


Figure 26: Capital layout plan 1957-58

Source: (Aliaj et al.), diagram elaborated by author.

2.5.5 The zones defining the boulevard

As mentioned in the previous sub chapter, the capital went through various political influences, each with specific strategies and ideologies. They have left traces in form of buildings, open spaces and various structures. The following analysis are a reflection of such influences. Figure 27 and 28 provide visual information of the character, function and period built, for the zone surrounding the historical axis. In addition, in figure 29, an analysis for green open spaces is done, to better understand the existing situation the city is facing.

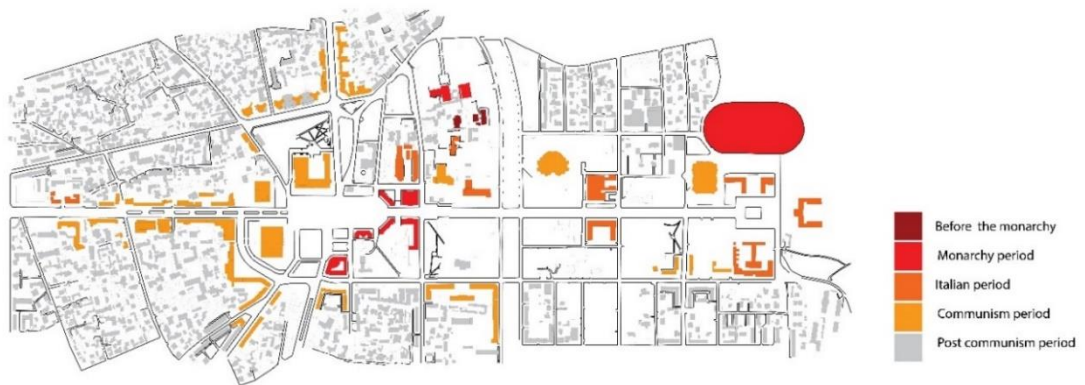


Figure 27. Buildings along the historical boulevard through regimes analysis

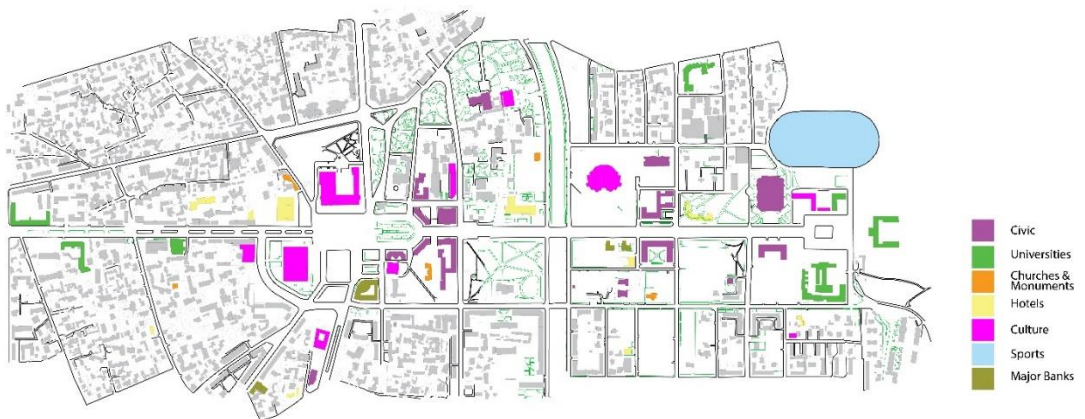


Figure 28. Functional analysis of buildings of the historical boulevard

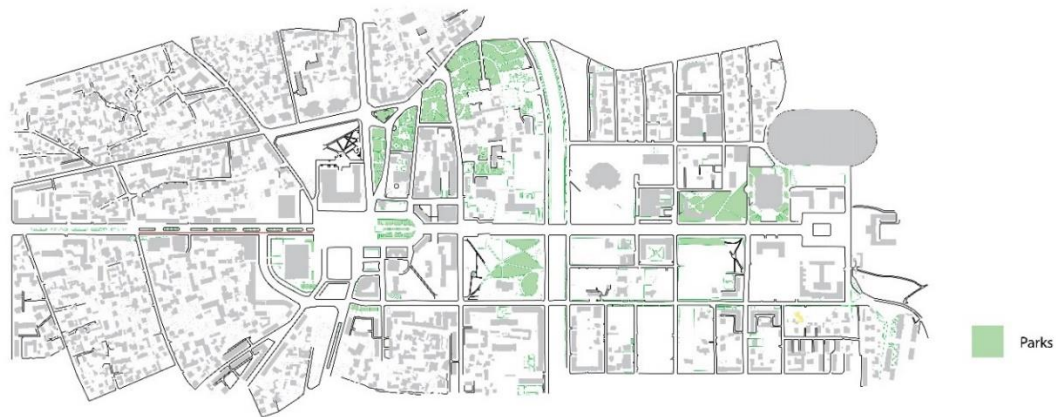


Figure 29. Green space analysis around the historical boulevard

2.6 Gentrification and city problems

For state vast projects to take place, a huge number of inhabitants had to be displaced to make room for the new design. To make his master plan a reality Haussmann demolished around 20.000 existing old buildings and by his calculation 350.000 people were displaced. (Clark, 1984, p. 37) This phenomenon is known as gentrification. It can be defined as "– the transformation of a working-class or vacant area of the central city into middle-class residential or commercial use." (Loretta Lees, 2008, p. XV). Moreover, gentrification expands in a wide range of changes, including social, economic, and physical change. (Smith, 1987, pp. 462-465). In Paris, thousands of businesses had to be closed or relocated while the new urban pattern of the city affected heavily the price of the rents. This situation forced the working class to move into the suburbs to afford living. The same situation would have also happened if Speer's plan for New Germania would have been applied. The transformation is even more radical in totalitarian regimes, where the state has absolute control over people's life.

The phenomenon is encountered also as an aftereffect of such interventions. Jane Jacobs argues that outstanding success in a city is a destructive force in itself. (Jacobs, 1961, pp. 242-256) An example of achievement is Brasilia. It was designed to be a utopic city where all the city economy was attached with one monumental axis. With the avalanche of capitalism Costa's plan failed to support the exponential growth

of the city. This led to the creation of *favelas* (slums) as satellite cities (Statistics, 2005). Development of real estate gave way to the middle and upper class to move to the central city, while the working class had to be displaced in *favelas* (Hernández, 2010, p. 58). Commute needs were increased extremely and therefore traffic as a consequence. In addition, *Superquadrants* failed to be self-sufficient. Streets and local businesses were prone to theft, which forced people to go to larger malls and spend time out of the pre-planned local zones. (El-Dahdah, 2005) Brasilia is now considered a dystopia.

In addition, she argues that massive single elements are also forces that bring a downfall of a city. (Jacobs, 1961, pp. 257-269) These types of elements can be monumental axis or high administrative buildings. "Deshmoret e Kombit" Blvd or "Unirii Boulevard" in Bucharest have a high concentration of institutions around them, attracting only a specific target group. Building sizes like the one of Presidential Palace in Bucharest, US capitol, National Congress building in Brasilia are placed in a middle of a large open space. These buildings, while located in city centers, with their layout create borders in themselves. To limit this phenomenon, structures from totalitarian regimes are converted to touristic attraction points and readapted to different functions.

2.6.1 Gentrification today: case of Tirana

According to law 8561 of the Albanian constitution the state: "has the right to expropriate the assets of private natural or legal persons, as well as the protection of the rights and interests of the respective owners " (Constitution, 1999). The state has exercised this right several times since it was first issued on 1999. On recent accounts, part of existing community has been displaced for the development of public infrastructure in the zones of "5 Maji" and in Astir neighborhood. In both cases protests rose from the community in objection to the government (fig.30). They blamed the government for unjust compensation and requested fair rent bonuses for the house-owners in legalization process. In Astir about 300 buildings were affected by the construction of a 3 km segment road of the "Unaza e Madhe" (Citizens Channel, 2018)



Figure 30: Residents' protests affected by "Unaza e Madhe" project.

Source: "Citizens Channel"

According to Albanian Road Authority leader, Afrim Qendro, 163 buildings that were on legalization process will be disqualified from the property compensation scheme and will be given rent bonus for 1-2 years. 123 other buildings which have ownership proof will be compensated according to legislative law.

Shown in figure 31 the demolition situation; 15 buildings, among them a 5-story flat, are to be demolished in "5 Maji". This zone is considered as informal and will be transformed as part of "Tirana Riverside" project. There were multiple complaints about lack of transparency and no community integration into decision-making process.



Figure 31: Demolition of buildings in "5Maji".

Source: "Citizens Channel"

2.7 Conclusion

All in all, it's undeniable that architecture and urban design can be used as political tools. They are used to display state power or to convey political ideologies. Political influence and control vary in scale, from the decisions of the urban layout of a city, up to the choice of small design elements in architectural structures. It targets directly the inhabitants and expands its reach internationally outside country borders. In this way, it imposes an architectural situation where the primary focus it's not on its users.

As analyzed throughout the chapter this relationship is displayed through notable actions, similar among each case. The pattern uncovered consists of a person/group of people who have great political support or are the government themselves. They apply a top-down approach in their design, usually with a proven lack of vision towards the future, and more with an ego that would serve state's agenda.

Architecturally speaking, the most notable pattern is a central axis design in a form of a boulevard. It is always inflated in size compared to the existing situation, accompanied by the most important buildings and structures of the city on its side. The axis leads in one or both ends to open squares/spaces which has a notable landmark of the city. This pattern is observed through the case studies and remains intact in various regimes or time periods.

This situation has been proved to create major problems for the cities that we have now days, problems that could have possibly been avoided if decisions would have been taken without political influence back in the day. None the less, there is plenty to learn and correct for the future to come.

CHAPTER 3

TIRANA NORTHERN BOULEVARD EXTENSION

3.1 Project Brief:

In October 2011 the Mayor of Tirana issued a request for expressions of interest for the: Building Tirana's Green Future: Tirana Northern Boulevard & River Project. The urban area consists of 14km² (1/5 of land area of existing city). The project was to be based on principles of sustainability and should be able to address the issue of traffic congestion, revitalization of local neighborhoods and improve the metropolitan green spaces.



Figure 32: Zoning diagram.

Source: Municipality of Tirana project brief, elaborated by author.

Figure 32 shows the competition brief required the following levels of interventions:

- Strategic Development Plan: 1400 ha (Zones 1–5)
- Boulevard & River Master Plan: 585 ha (Zones 2, 3 and 4)
- Implementation Area: 35 ha. (Selected Area of Zone 2)

According to Tirana Municipality the following key elements should be addressed:

- Drive city development north
- Boulevard prolonged until Tirana River
- Strengthen Centers
- Green spaces
- Transportation system

There were 7 participants on the international competition: AS&P, Cino Zuchi Architetti, GMP, KCAP, West 8, DAR, Grimshaw Architects. The finalists were Dar and Grimshaw, out of which the latter was announced the winner. The projects had various design approaches which will be compared in the rest of the paper. The comparison is done based on known urban design theories, depicting their strengths and weaknesses.

3.2 Analysis process:

The thesis aims to undertake a thorough analysis of the proposals from each studio. As such a better understanding can be achieved of their uniqueness and common features. The analysis is done on a qualitative and quantitative level. Calculations and comparisons are done based on the project proposal of each studio.

The first point of analysis is that of design. The intent of this analysis is to confront each design with known urban design theories and draw conclusion out of them.

“Linear City” is taken as an example for its elongated urban form, usually alongside a natural element like a river or man-made feature. It represents punctually divided areas, which stand parallel or side by side. The city was initially envisioned by Artur Soria and its primary concern is “*locomotion*” or movement. As a result, its drive force for development is based upon the design of movement patterns (Palacio, 1969).

“Compact city” is a comparison example for the project proposal. It represents a design urban concept with priority to relatively high structures and mixed land uses

(Jacobs, *The death and life of great American cities*, 1961). For this urban form to work, an efficient public transportation system is needed. Thus, activities such as walking and cycling are also encouraged.

A “Polycentric city” represents an urban form with several nucleuses. The spatial structure of the city is spread around many centers, which usually are centers of employment. as such a job decentralization is one of the immediate outcomes of this concept application. Transportation system affects greatly the success of this urban form.

“Garden city” is generally referred to an urban form of smaller size. Its more notable feature is the use of landscaped parks, gardens or other open areas. The layout of such cities is spacious, with broad streets containing trees. It can also be enclosed within a green belt (Caves, 2013).

The next set of analysis defines a specific part of the project, upon which calculations are done to be able to understand patterns and design style for each studio. Solid-void analysis, provides a visual representation of open-built spaces, depicting the level of “delicacy” the studios have towards the existing fabric of the city. Expropriation approach is another analyzed point, which takes in consideration the fact that the master plan will be implemented in an area with a high percentage of already built structures. The proposals are also confronted in their approach towards the historical boulevard, being one of the most notable and fragile elements of the site. Further analysis include: buildings height, density, transportation system and landscape strategy.

3.3 Design Concept

3.3.1 Cino Zucchi Architetti



Figure 33. Cino Zucchi's Masterplan proposal. Source: Cino Zucchi Architetti.

Figure 33 shows the masterplan proposed by the studio, where the following design principles are applied:

- The form of the voids and contextualization

As described by the studio, the main driving force of this project is contextualization. The studio emphasizes the importance of the existing urban form in their design proposal. Site analysis is a great important factor that determines their design. This theory also pays great detail to its aesthetic approach. (Fred, 1984) and indicates that it provides conceptual strength to the design. (Rowe, 1996). The use of curvilinear lines is used to break the existing pattern of straight, continuous lines. It is also a means of offering a natural and free-flowing solution while limiting the amount of expropriation.

In addition, an important generator of the new urban structure is the design of the void. It can be a park, garden, a square or a street. Individual voids are designed in themselves and then connected to a formal continuity. Streetscapes form continuous sequences, with different degrees of privacy and accessibility, depending on their location.

- Polycentric districts

On an overall point of view the studio bases its development on polycentric districts, as shown on figure 34. The most important and visible zone of the proposal is the extended boulevard in the curvilinear form of a park. But the proposal continues also in district organization, where each district has its own center. Decentralizing the boulevard allows the masterplan to have an even distribution of population and overall distribution of employment. The usage of many centers provides higher chances at employment in shorter distances. In addition, vehicular traffic or people crowding can be avoided or limited. Throughout the map, there are special destination introduced as developing factors. On a smaller scale the principle is applied on community centers. Each neighborhood includes services of its own, increasing the degree of independence from each other.

This type of approach it is usually observed to increase life quality due to its function distribution. The uniform spread of transport and service supports a democratic approach for equal rights for all its inhabitants. (Cino Zucchi Architetti, 2012, pp. 4-43)



Figure 34. Cino Zucchi's Polycentric district proposal.

Source: Cino Zucchi Architetti, elaborated by author.

3.3.2 West 8

The award-winning international studio, based on the Netherlands is known for its “Dutch” way of approach, generating projects on a logic based on utility and necessity and using landscape as a way of addressing city problems.

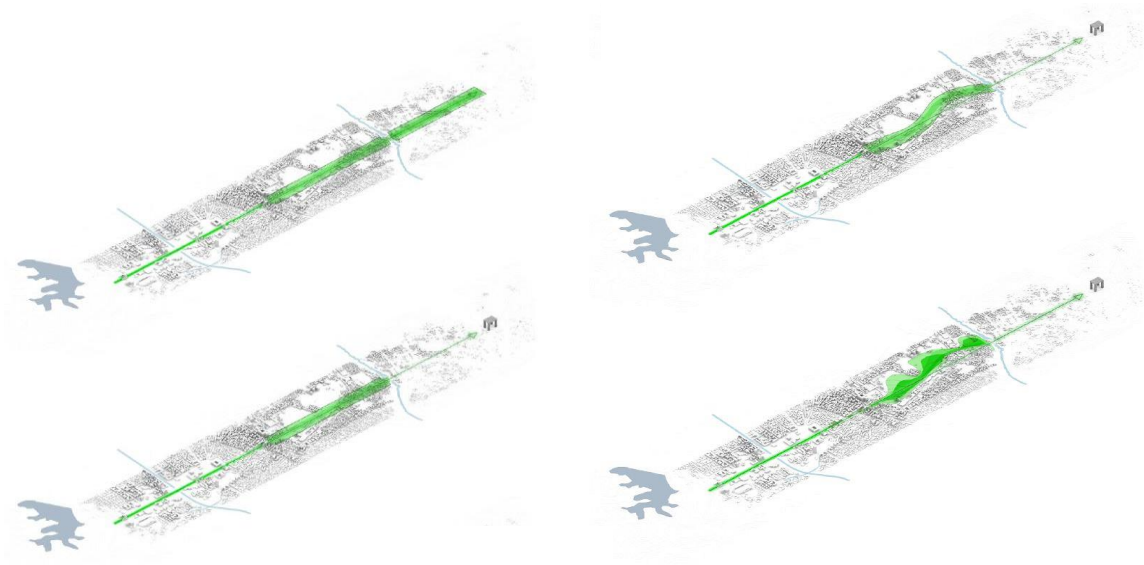


Figure 35. West 8 boulevard design. Source: West 8

Figure 35 shows their proposal, where they use the urban design theory of compact city. It is most ofently defined as :“... a relatively high-density, mixed use city, based on the efficient public transport system and dimensions that encourage walking and cycling. It contrasts with the car-oriented urban sprawl“- (Burton, 2000). West 8 uses this priniciples to contain the uncontrolled urban sprawll of the city .

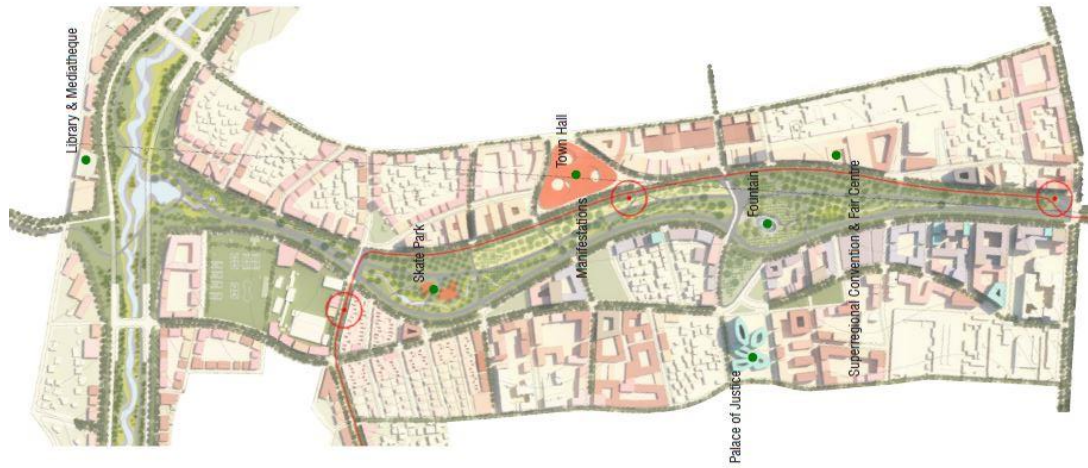


Figure 36. West 8 intervention scale. Source: West 8

Figure 36 displays the masterplan alongside the main axis of the site. As visualized from the studio, the curvilinear axis is perceived as a green area incorporated with the transportation system. On its sides, mixed area zones take places, with shapes the follow the design of the axis. Therefor a more uniform appearance is created. In figure 37, a simplified version of the buildings proposed in contrast to the existing situation.

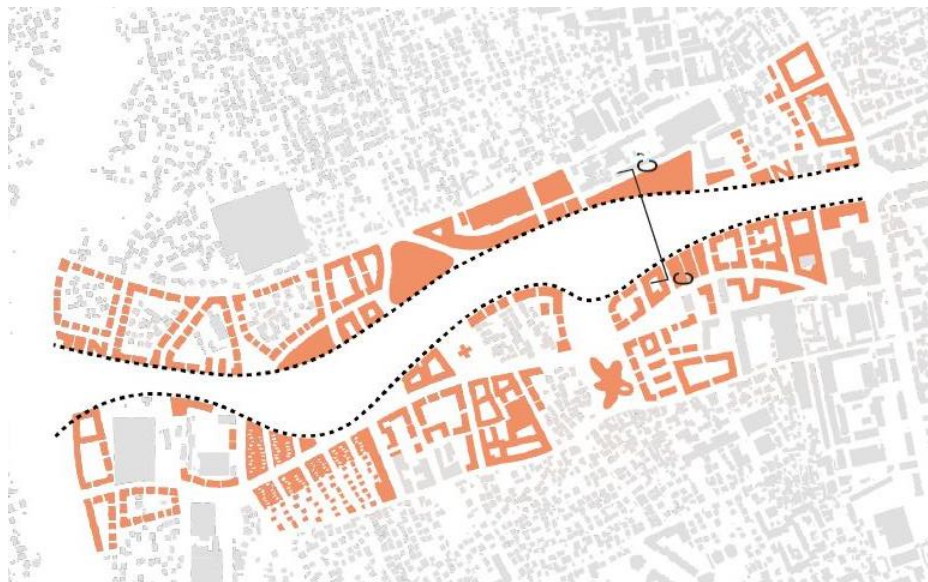


Figure 37. West 8 masterplan. Source: West 8

The high-rise buildings are mainly located alongside the boulevard extension, since that is one of the main corridors of the urban area. Buildings can be as tall as 25 storeys and are spread throughout mixed use zones as seen on the figure 38. (West 8, 2012, pp. 6-31)



Figure 38. West 8 masterplan render. Source: West 8

3.3.3 Dar Al-Handasah

The privately-owned international consulting company based on Lebanon, was one of the two finalists for Tirana's Green Future competition. Their design was developed along 2 main corridors: Boulevard extension and Tirana River. Enriched with tall buildings and eye-catching design (fig. 39 and 42), the studio aims to provide a compact design with a modern multi-modal transportation system.



Figure 39. Dar Al-Handasah masterplan render. Source: Dar Al-Handasah

Focused on dealing with the rapid, uncontrolled urban growth of the city, the studio's approach relies on high-buildings, as shown on figure 42. Mainly positioned alongside the extended boulevard, the residential structures aim to accommodate the existing local population, attract newcomers and establish the urban pattern for future growth.

The studio uses this approach to identify two clusters:

- Southern end: landmark of connecting old city with the new
- Northern end: connecting point with the regenerated Tirana River

Low and mid- rise structures are used on the rest of the masterplan in the form of superblocks while taking in consideration the existing fabric of the city.

In contrast with the existing boulevard, this part presents a parallel zoning, each serving a different function. The zoning principles is again based on urban principles of linear city. (Gasset, 1968)

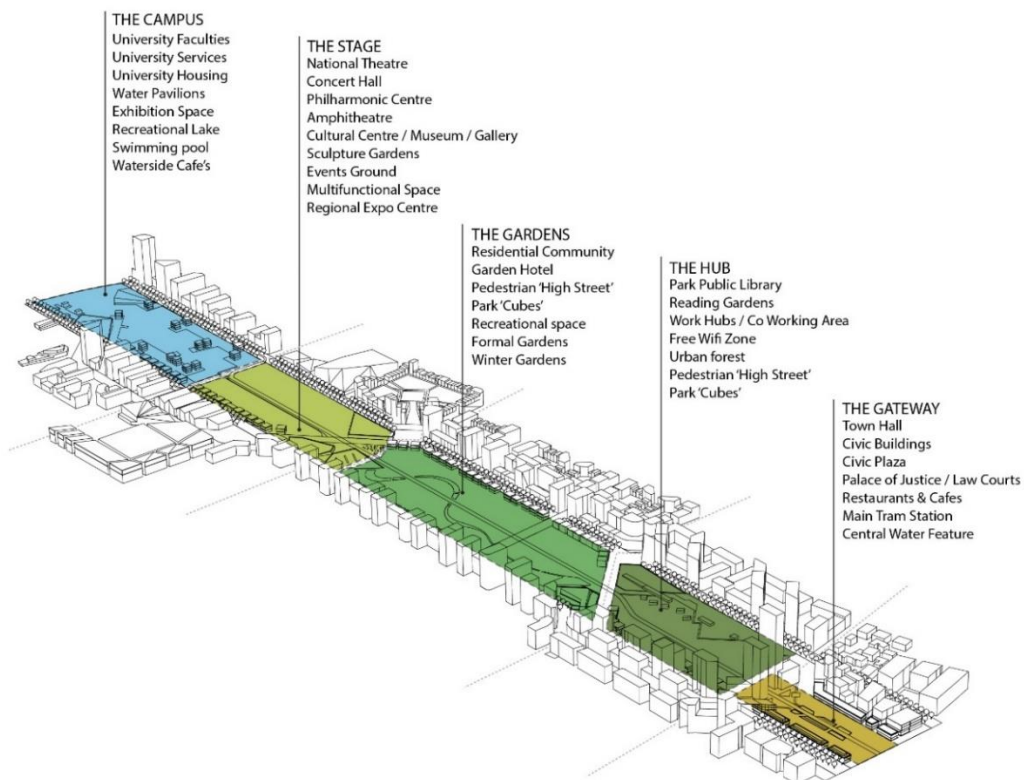


Figure 40. Boulevard zoning analysis.

Source: Dar Al-Handasah, elaborated by author.

Figure 40 and 41 display the boulevard extension in a form of park, combining open spaces dedicated to pedestrians and water features, where it meets with the river. The boulevard is spatially divided in various zones, each with a defined function: (DAR, 2012)

- The Campus – Education
- The Stage – Cultural
- The Gardens- Leisure and Recreational
- The Hub - Work
- The Gateway – Civic

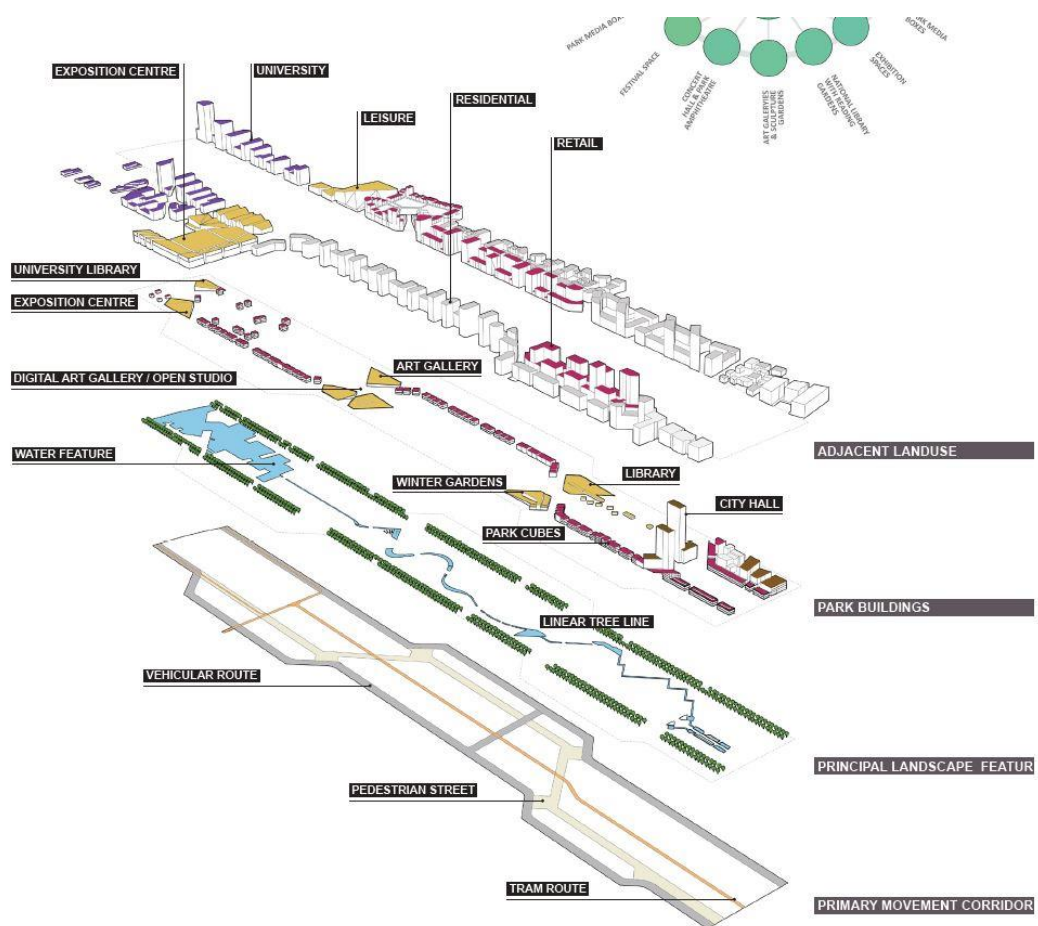


Figure 41. Boulevard character areas
 Source: Dar Al-Handasah, elaborated by author.



Figure 42. Dar Al-Handasah boulevard render. Source: Dar Al-Handasah

3.3.4 KCAP

Based on Netherlands, the design studio specializes in sustainable architecture and flexible urban design. The project proposal is heavily based on local tradition and culture. Figures 43 and 44 display the extended boulevard, called “Axis of heroism” and it is a landscaped visual corridor with triangular parks.

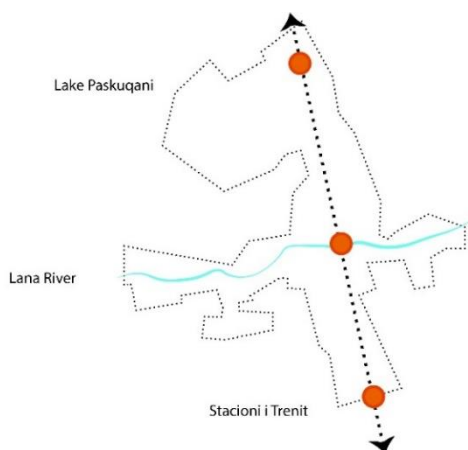


Figure 43. Linear connection.
Source: KCAP, elaborated by author.

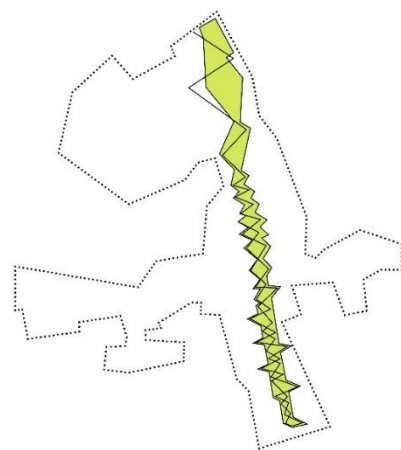


Figure 44. Culture-based design
Source: KCAP, elaborated by author.



Figure 45. Traditional carpet- qilim.

They are an imitation of the traditional Albanian carpet- qilim shown on figure 45. The axis represents a physical and visual connection from “Mother Teresa” Square to Lake Paskuqani. Connecting in a straight line with the historical boulevard on the south and continuing further north to Lake Paskuqani, the axis makes up to ~5km. As seen on figure 46, it becomes the most distinctive and recognizable element of the city’s fabric. It also becomes the driving force for development and growth. It becomes a connecting element, similar to the approach of linear city.

According to Arturo Soria, the main problem that has to be solved when designing is “locomotion” or the ability to move from one place to another (Collins, 1959). As such, the continuous straight axis that goes through the entire city becomes of vital importance.

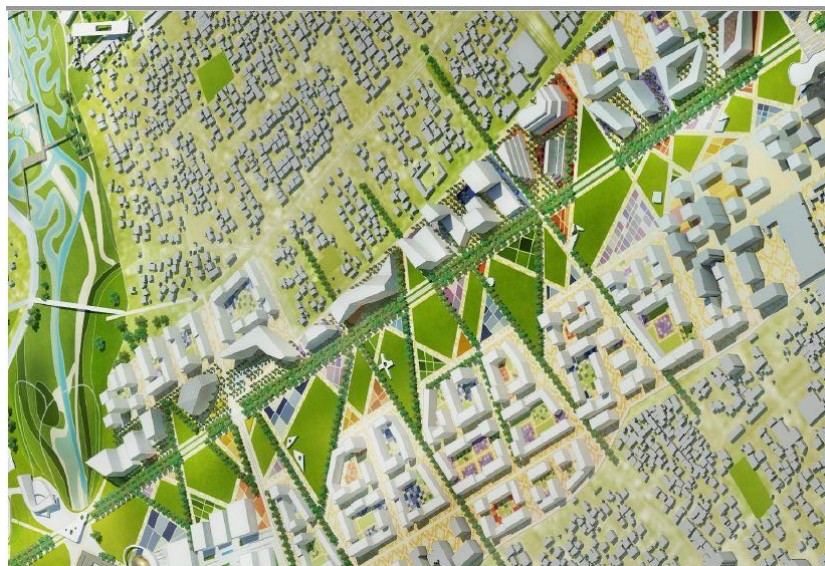


Figure 46. KCAP "Urban Mosaic" design proposal. Source: KCAP

Figure 47 shows the masterplan developed in an elongated form on both sides of the boulevard. The concept follows the principles of linear city and it depicts a clear zoning of functions. Vertical division includes:

- Courtyards – Residential
- Parks – Leisure and Recreational
- Squares – Economy (retail and commerce)

Each major grouping includes in a smaller scale various functions and service needed for the superblocks. KCAP studios aims to achieve a sustainable development for the whole masterplan through this zoning idea. The boundaries of each zone is affected by the triangular shape of the parks from the main axis.

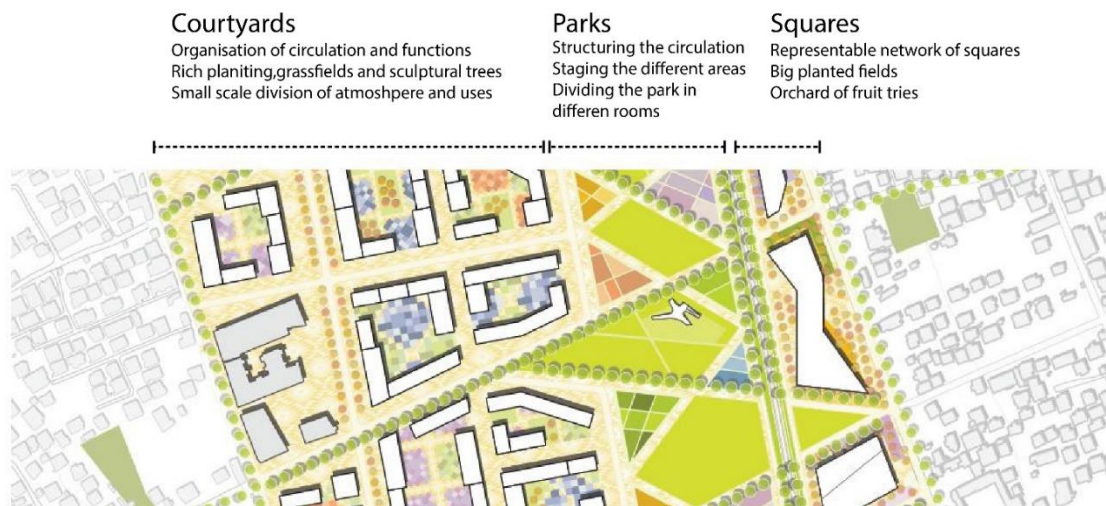


Figure 47. Vertical Zoning. Source: KCAP

Considering the overall masterplan there is a clear functional zoning system. There are mainly spread alongside the boulevard, with the exception of the production zones, located alongside the river. The studio believes that this approach would work best considering the plane for the future of the city and the rapidly increasing population.

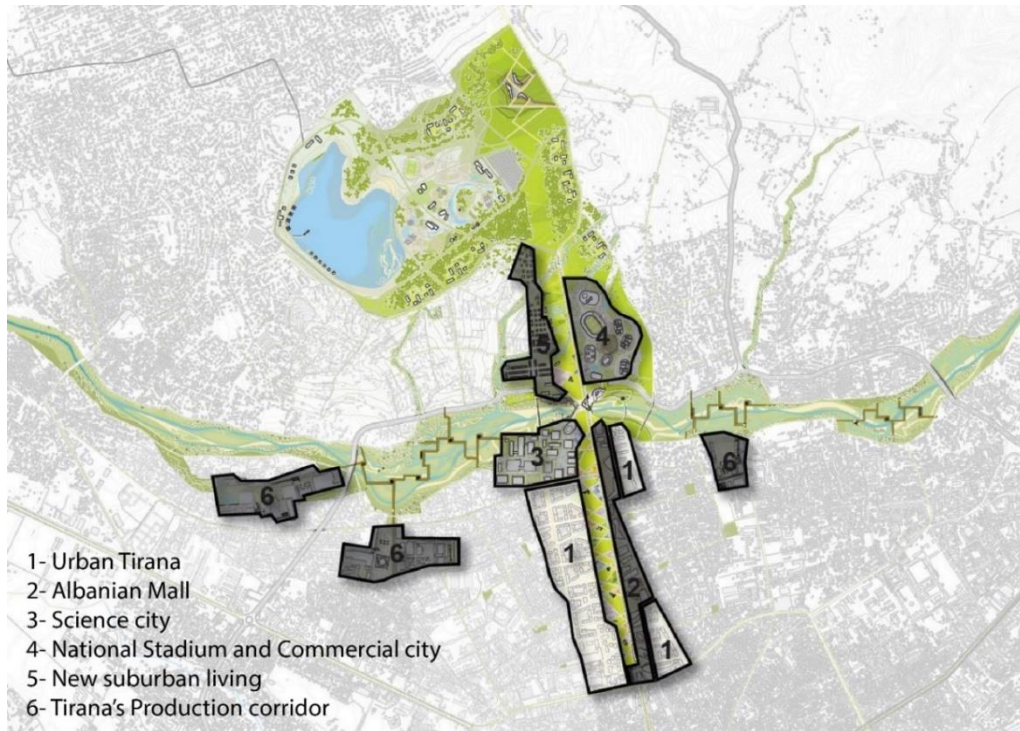


Figure 48. Functional Zoning.

Source: KCAP, elaborated by author.

Figure 48 displays the main groupings, which include:

- Urban Tirana- residential typology, equipped with social infrastructure (schools, kindergartens), public and communal spaces
- Albanian Mall- envisioned with unique looking structures, with diverse uses, such as administrative, cultural buildings, museums, libraries etc.
- Science city- a gathering of various university with their specific facilities. The proposed spatial concept is building on the existing industrial heritage. It adds new buildings, while reusing the existing ones. (KCAP Architects, 2012)

3.3.5 Grimshaw

The English design studio was announced the winner of the international competition. Their approach is constraints driven and is borne out of the existing context, form and profile of the city of Tirana. Figure 49 shows the design idea. which aimed to define the informal layout of the existing city and insertion of order and hierarchy.

The studio proposal presents a linear continuation of the historical boulevard. the straight-forward axis end in Tirana River in a green area. Its length is divided from 4 squares, designed as urban living room. They intend to be activity nodes for the nearby community. Landscape strategy is applied in a form of a single park, called the “Central Park”, adjacent to boulevard, but bounded by relatively high structures. The masterplan is developed in a grid form, with roads laid out in a hierarchal layout, thus forming block of buildings.

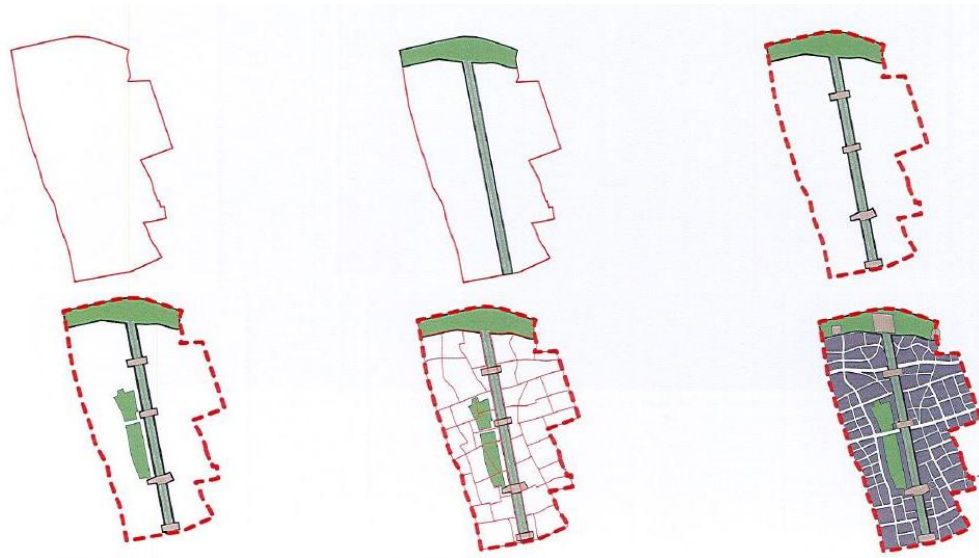


Figure 49. Grimshaw's design concept.

Source: Tirana Municipality project brief, elaborated by author.

The studio believes that a more sustainable city can be achieved as a compact city. As such they rely on high rise buildings, the highest being along the boulevard or in primary roads. The masterplan follows a hierarchy of streets, mainly positioned on a grid form, which intersects the superblocks. To able to have a successful outcome, the studio relies on the use of mixed uses areas. The primary use is the residential one, which is combined in various zone with commercial, social services or education.

The boulevard represents a visual and physical connection with the old historical one. Even though it belongs to a different area and different political administration, it is designed to be the key element of the project. Its importance is highlighted not only from the tall structures alongside it, but also from specific spots

of important functions. As such it increases attraction groups and widens the possibility of uses.



Figure 50. Grimshaw's "Central Park" sketch. Source: Grimshaw

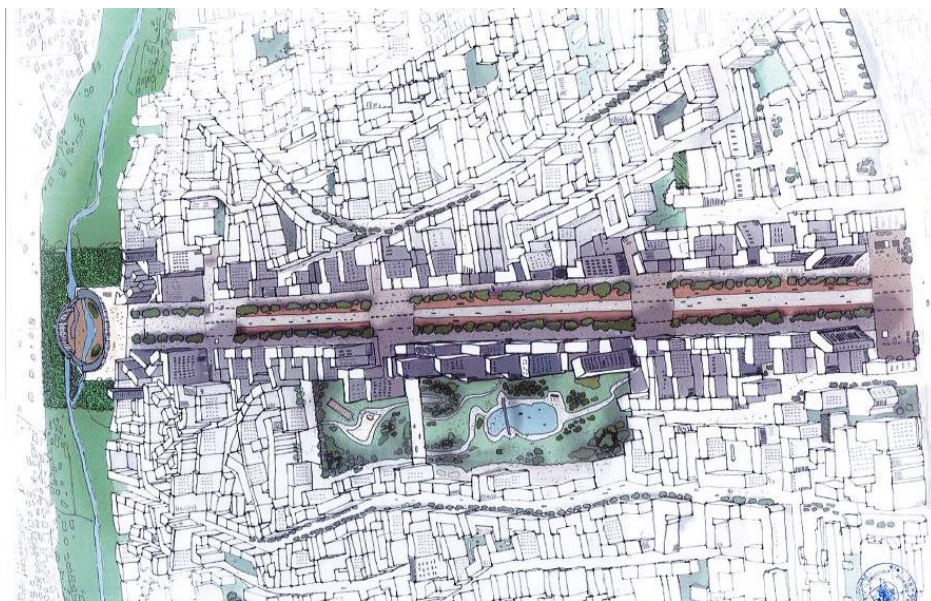


Figure 51. Grimshaw's masterplan sketch. Source: Grimshaw

Figure 52 shows a map of important spots in the masterplan. which include important public investments, such as the new municipality, opera house, cultural center and a library. Several areas are dedicated to private developments, aimed to be used as mixed-use zones.

Some of the activities include Tirana River, as part of its regeneration process.
 (Grimshaw Architects, 2012)



Figure 52. Important spots in the masterplan.

Source: Tirana Municipality project brief, elaborated by author.

Following the pattern conclude on literature review chapter, the masterplan applied is identical. The municipality has set a list of spots alongside the boulevard which are considered of important strategic development. They will be a combination of public and private developments. Due to the close proximity with the boulevard, they will be of high importance, defining the area characters and the nature for its users. The axis will be accompanied with 4 public squares alongside it, concepted as stops while going through it.

3.4 Study Area:

For the next phase of analysis physical boundaries are determined in a small scale compared to initial intervention plan. It includes in full length the extended boulevard and reaches until Tirana River. The area covered of 1.2 sq. km² is shown on figure 53.

The area is bounded from:

- North: Tirana River
- South: Rd. “Rreshit Petrela”
- West: Rd. “Jordan Misja”
- East: Rd. “Jashar Erebara”



Figure 53. Study area boundaries.

Source: Google Earth 2021

3.5 Solid – Void Analysis

3.5.1 Original Condition

The area is populated with informal settlements, usually 1-3 stories. Figure 54 shows no pre-designed urban layout and there is a lack a proper and efficient transportation strategy. The overall area is of low density and doesn't take advantage of the site potential. Chart 1 shows the condition of the site before any construction with about 23% of the space of empty area.

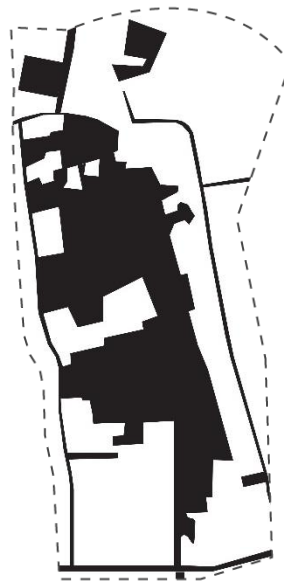


Figure 54. Original condition solid-void.

Source: Google Earth 2021, elaborated by author.

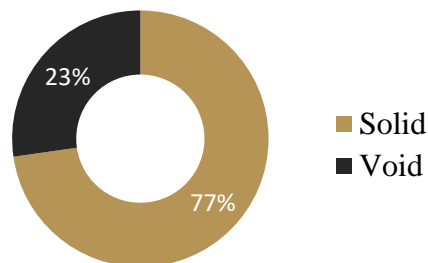


Chart 1: Original Condition percentage comparison

3.5.2 Cino Zucchi Architteti

Figure 55 shows the “void” space mainly generated from the curvilinear boulevard. The solid-void ratio is almost to a balance. As seen on chart 2, the studio proposal consists of the following ratio displaced below, with approximately 55% of its surface dedicated to open spaces. They will mainly take the form of green open spaces, small squares and public function.



Figure 55. Cino Zucchi Architteti proposed solid-void.
Source: Cino Zucchi Architteti, elaborated by author.

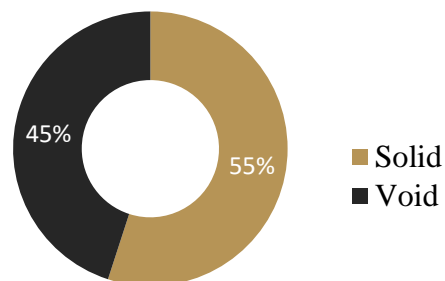


Chart 2. Cino Zucchi Architteti percentage comparison

3.5.3 West 8

The void from the following analysis represents the approach of the studio for the overall design. Figure 56 shows the principles followed by the studio, flexible, with curvilinear lines, adaptable to the existing environment in order to limit expropriation. The voids are generated from the continuation of the central axis and also from the system choice of transportation.

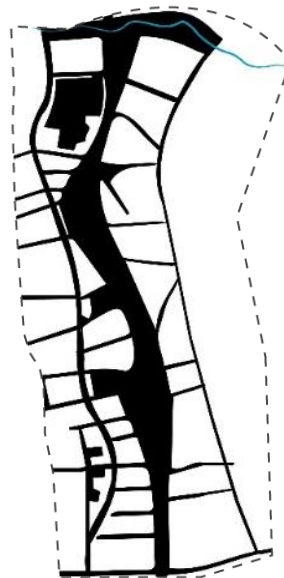


Figure 56. West 8 proposal solid-void.

Source: West 8, elaborated by author.

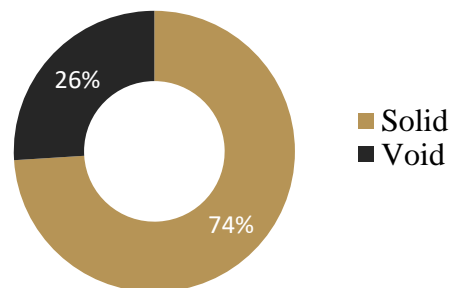


Chart 3. West 8 percentage comparison.

3.5.4 Dar Al-Handasah

The analysis represents the rigid, top-down approach the studio proposes for the masterplan. Chart 4 shows the ratio percentage emphasizes the studio goal to maximize land use in order to increase density.

Observed from figure 57, the studio tends to maximize the build area to serve its goal of increasing density to house more inhabitants and control urban growth. Figure 57 depicts the void area, which is generated from the linear park.

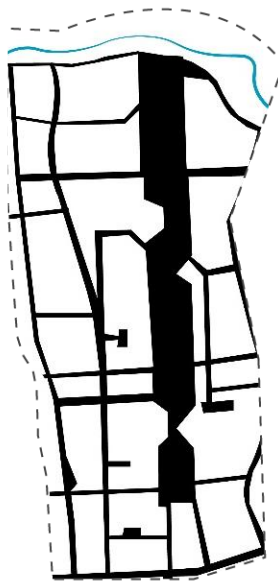


Figure 57. Dar Al-Handasah proposed.

Source: Dar Al-Handasah, elaborated by author.

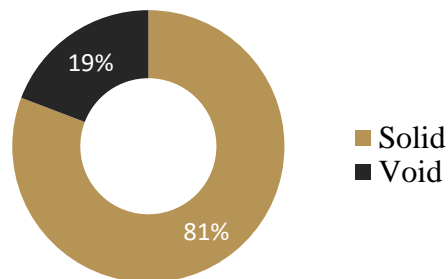


Chart 4. Dar Al-Handasah percentage comparison

3.5.5 KCAP

The design of the void depicts the importance the studio has placed towards a design based on local tradition. Chart 5 shows the percentage ratio to be balanced, giving importance to the open, green public spaces. Mini Park accompanies the central axis in the form of triangular patterns as seen on figure 58.

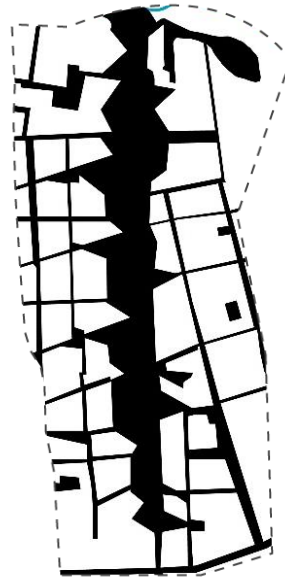


Figure 58. KCAP proposed solid-void.
Source: KCAP, elaborated by author.

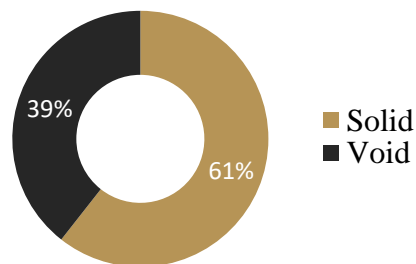


Chart 5. KCAP percentage comparison

3.5.6 Grimshaw (original)

Figure 59 displays the original proposal of the studio, with the concept of discontinued parks. They are shaped in different sizes and are attached to the main boulevard. The analysis also displays the choice of using superblock in the urban layout. The solid shows the choice of using rectangular housing blocks which also generates the transportation system.

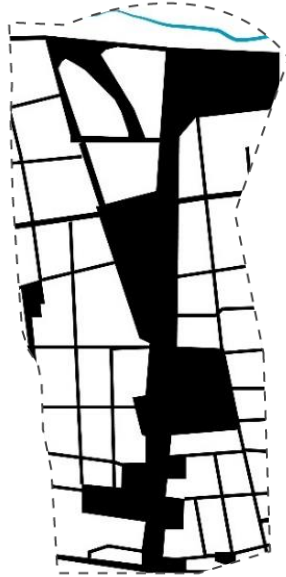


Figure 59. Grimshaw (original version)

Source: Grimshaw architects, elaborated by author.

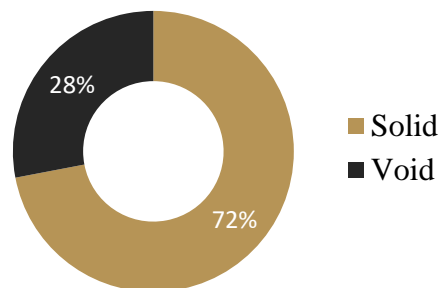


Chart 6. Grimshaw (original) percentage comparison

3.5.7 Grimshaw (modified)

The project got modified from Tirana Municipality and now displays the linear boulevard with 4 public squares (fig.60). The green space percentage is accumulated in a single place called the Central Park. Chart 7 shows the percentage ratio with priority towards built environment, which most of the open spaces in one place in close proximity with the boulevard.

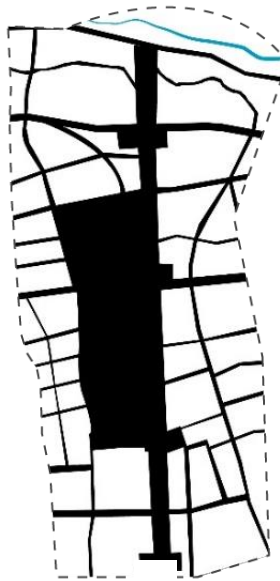


Figure 60. Grimshaw (modified) solid-void.

Source: Tirana Municipality project brief, elaborated by author.

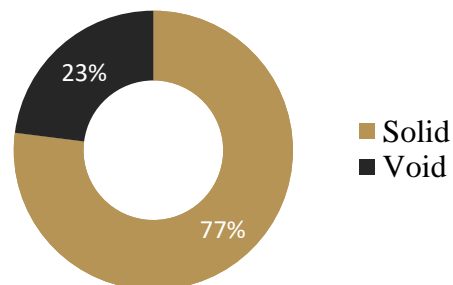
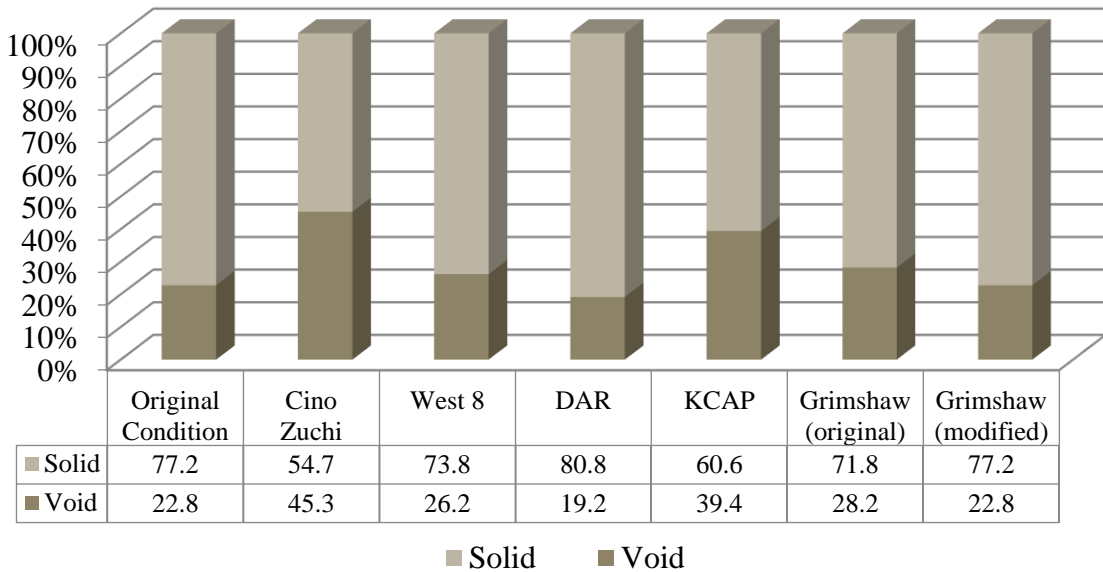


Chart 7. Grimshaw (modified) percentage comparison

3.5.8 Comparison of solid-void

Based on the solid-void analysis, comparison chart 8 is compiled. Out of the studied proposal, DAR proposal had the highest percentage of the study area built (80.8%), followed by Grimshaw (modified) (77.2%). On the other hand, Cino Zucchi Architteti had the highest percentage of void area (45.3%) followed by KCAP (39.4%).

Chart 8. Solid-Void percentage comparison



3.6 Expropriation approach

Taking in consideration the significant number of built structures on the site, the expropriation approach become of vital importance. The analysis studies the choices of each studio in 3 categories: expropriation, regeneration and retained. The charts compiled depicts the percentage of territory that falls within each category.

3.6.1 Cino Zucchi Architteti

As displayed on chart 9, masterplan application requires the expropriation of 84.56 % from the study area, out of which more than half consists of built structures. The regeneration area is part of the contextualization approach the studio applies. The

retained zones consist mainly of relatively high residential buildings, already built a few years before. (Cino Zucchi Architetti, 2012)



Figure 61. Cino Zucchi expropriation proposal.
Source: Cino Zucchi Architetti, elaborated by author.

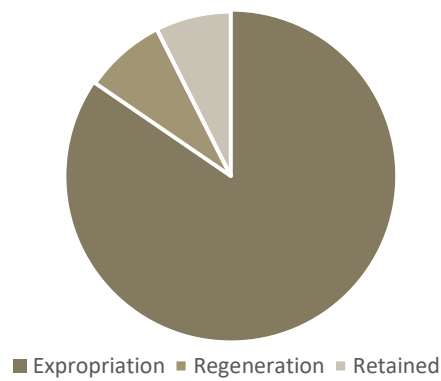


Chart 9. Cino Zucchi Architetti expropriation percentage comparison

Table 1. Cino Zucchi Architeti expropriation area analysis

Expropriation	1 082 988 m ²	84.56 %
Regeneration	102 588 m ²	8.01 %
Retained	95 158 m ²	7.43 %
Total	1 280 734 m ²	100 %

3.6.2 West 8

The following proposal presents a more flexible approach, combining expropriation areas with regeneration ones, as can be observed in figure 62. The regeneration strategy includes the adaptation of the built environment into residential superblocks. The studio goal is to limit the amount of displaced people using a free-flowing approach as a natural part of the design. (West 8, 2012)

Table 2. West 8 expropriation area analysis

Expropriation	754 992 m ²	58.95 %
Regeneration	455 941 m ²	35.6 %
Retained	69 801 m ²	5.45 %
Total	1 280 734 m ²	100 %



Figure 62. West 8 expropriation proposal. Source: West 8, elaborated by author.

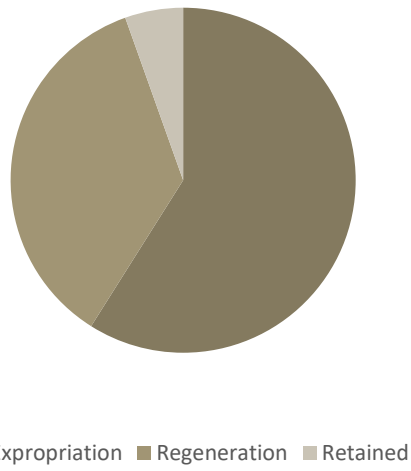


Chart 10. West 8 expropriation percentage comparison

3.6.3 Dar Al-Handasah

From table 3 we can check that the project proposal included the highest percentage of the expropriation. It reinforced the displays the studio's design approach as top-down. This tactic presents a rigid masterplan application, leaving little room to flexibility or contextualization. The regeneration attempts have little priority. (DAR, 2012)

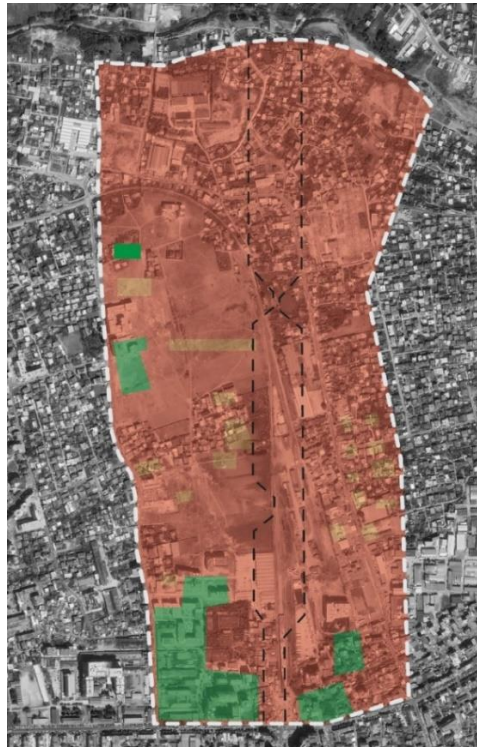


Figure 63. Dar Al-Handasah expropriation proposal. Source: Dar Al-Handasah, elaborated by author.

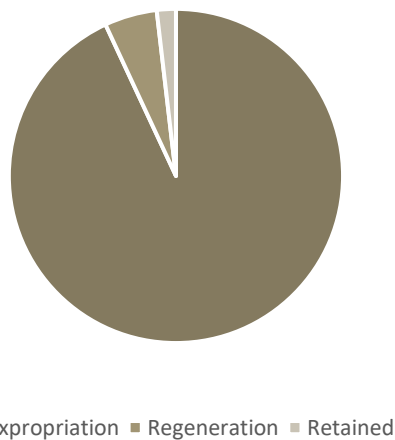


Chart 11. Dar Al-Handasah expropriation percentage comparison

Table 3. Dar Al-Handasah expropriation area analysis

Expropriation	1 146 842 m ²	89.54 %
Regeneration	37 743 m ²	2.94 %
Retained	23 617 m ²	7.52 %
Total	1 280 734 m ²	100 %

3.6.4 KCAP

Even though the studio pays great detail to local tradition and culture, it leaves little room for regeneration strategies, as shown on chart 12. The expropriation leads the percentage chart, while several areas are left to be readapted within the new urban layout. (KCAP Architects, 2012)



Figure 64. KCAP expropriation proposal. Source: KCAP, elaborated by author.

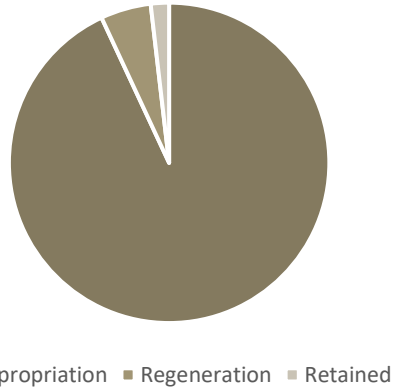


Chart 12. KCAP expropriation percentage comparison

Table 4. KCAP expropriation area analysis

Expropriation	1 119 141 m ²	87.38 %
Regeneration	85 068 m ²	6.64 %
Retained	76 525 m ²	5.98 %
Total	1 280 734 m ²	100 %

3.6.5 Grimshaw

Figure 65 shows the analysis done based on the modified project from Tirana Municipality. The boulevard extension, together with the majority of the masterplan will be built after expropriation happens. From figure 65, the retained areas are mainly located on the south part. (Grimshaw Architects, 2012)



Figure 65. Grimshaw expropriation proposal.
Source: Grimshaw, elaborated buy author.

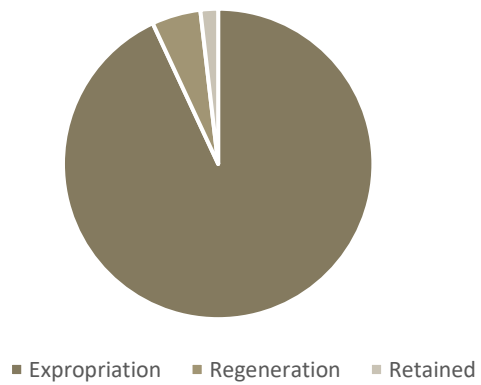


Chart 13. Grimshaw expropriation percentage comparison

Table 5. Grimshaw expropriation area analysis

Expropriation	1 146 694 m ²	89.53 %
Regeneration	44 923 m ²	3.5 %
Retained	89 117 m ²	6.97 %
Total	1 280 734 m ²	100 %

3.6.6 Comparison of expropriation approach

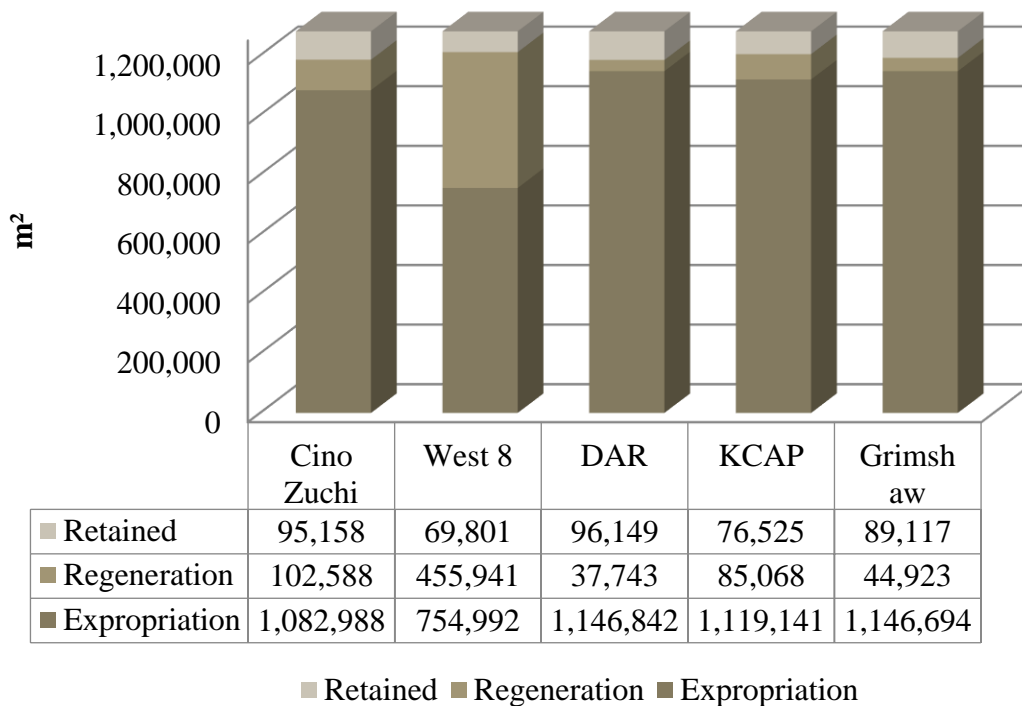


Chart 14. Comparison of expropriation proposals

The analysis done in the 1.2 sq km study area shows the strategy and approach that each studio has generally taken in the whole site. This analysis is displayed in chart 14. While the percentage ratio might differ if the whole intervention area would have been taken in consideration, several conclusions can be drawn still. DAR studio ranks high on the percentage of expropriation proposed to be undertaken. At the same time, it ranks the lowest for the amount of regeneration areas proposed. As such it

separates itself from the other proposal for its choice of project implementation. It prioritizes achieving goals, such as increasing density and controlling the urban sprawl of the city, while not taking in full consideration the existing local community and the existing fabric of the city. Following DAR ideology, Grimshaw project ranks second on expropriation and regeneration area percentage. West 8 leads the regeneration attempts with the highest percentage and also the one with the least expropriation area. In this way it demonstrates its delicacy in implementing its masterplan in the existing urban layout. The highest area to be retained is proposed from DAR, being almost on the same percentage with Cino Zucchi Architteti.

3.7 Building's heights

3.7.1 Cino Zucchi Architteti

The general urban frame takes account of the present state and suggests a reform strategy built on two main elements. The “catalysts”, or district centers, with a concentration of non-residential and mixed-used destinations, and the “superblocks”, a strategy for the reform of built-up areas and the accommodation of an appropriate urban road network to support the development.

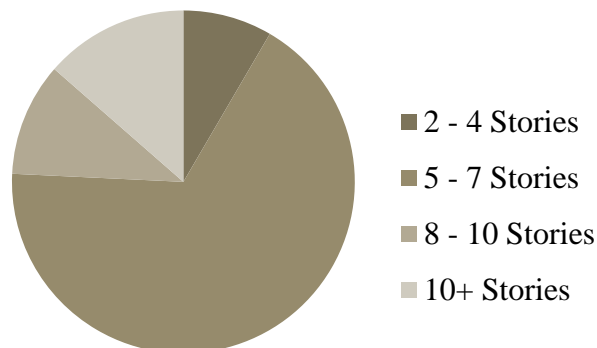


Chart 15. Cino Zucchi Architteti buildings height percentage comparison

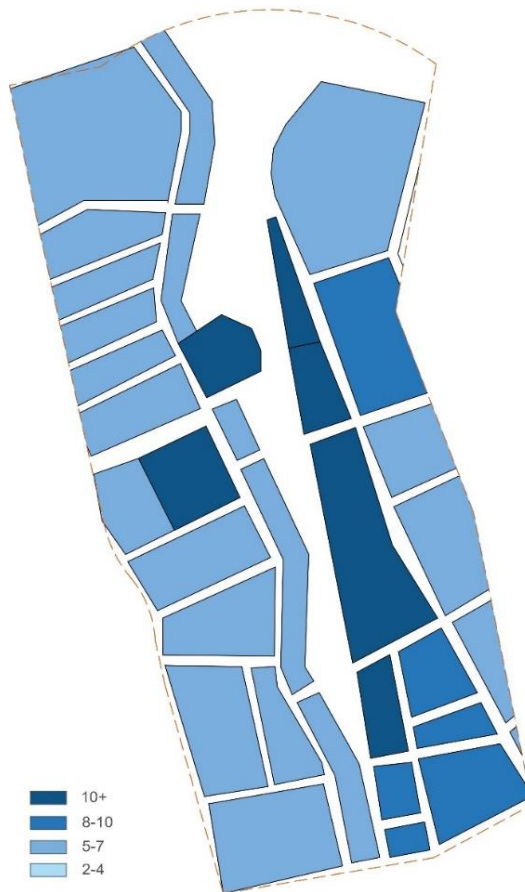


Figure 66. Cino Zucchi Architteti buildings height proposal.
 Source: Cino Zucchi Architteti, elaborated by author.

Table 6. Cino Zucchi Architteti buildings height area analysis

2 - 4 Stories	67 000 m ²	8.41 %
5 - 7 Stories	536 000 m ²	67.33 %
8 - 10 Stories	85 000 m ²	10.67 %
10+ Stories	108 000 m ²	13.59 %
GFA	796 000 m ²	100 %

The superblocks vary in size throughout the masterplan. They consist of relatively high buildings in its boundaries, with lower height towards the center. The boulevard extension is accompanied by several areas of mixed-use function applied in the structures of 10+ stories, as shown on figure 66.

Density is proposed to be highest along the new boulevard and high towards the existing town. This reduces the need of moving north, and the northern side of the river park is adequate for a reduced building pressure to respond to the specific geographical opportunity. (Cino Zucchi Architetti, 2012)

3.7.2 West 8

Concluding from figure 67, the building's heights and densities vary within certain logic. They are related to several zones along the Boulevard of Europe. Each of these zones is characterized by its uses as: maximum heights to 80m in the business area, 38m in varying housing and mixed-use areas, and 16m in low rise, high dense areas. Exceptions from the height regulations are possible for slim tower buildings if convincingly explained. (West 8, 2012)

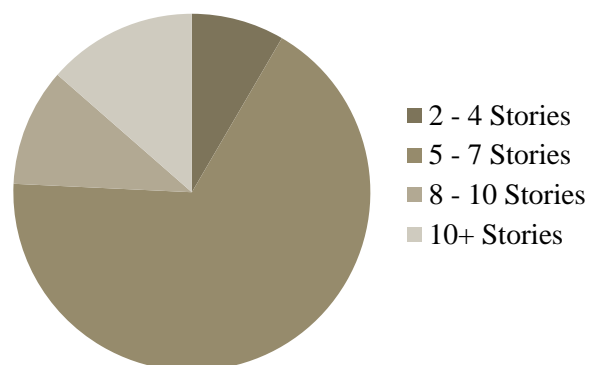


Chart 16. West 8 buildings height percentage comparison

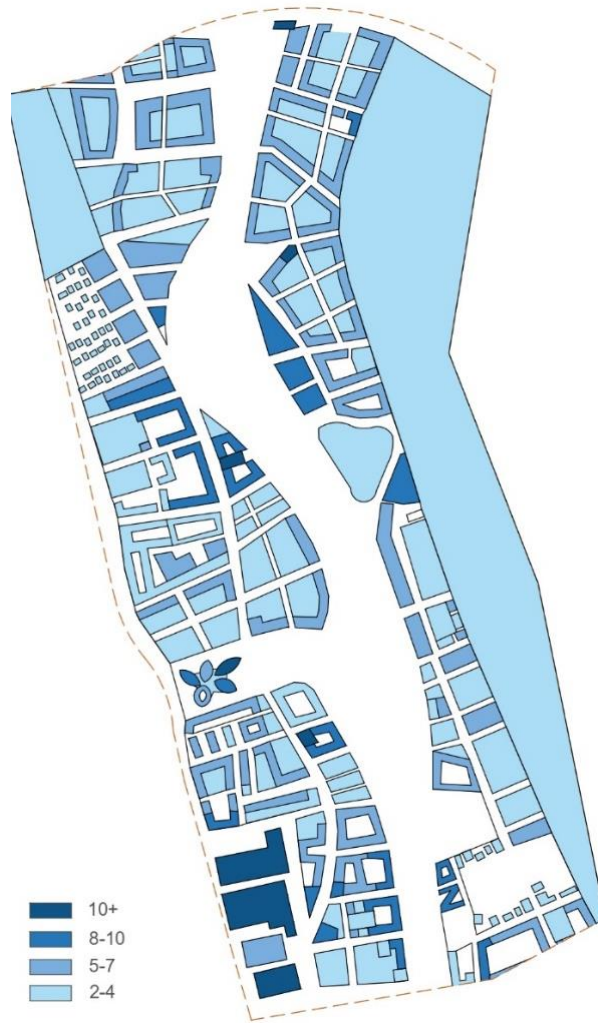


Figure 67. West 8 buildings height proposal.
 Source: West 8, elaborated by author.

Table 7. West 8 buildings height area analysis

2 - 4 Stories	339 000 m ²	45.93 %
5 - 7 Stories	77 000 m ²	10.43 %
8 - 10 Stories	305 000 m ²	41.32 %
10+ Stories	17 000 m ²	2.32 %
GFA	738 000 m ²	100 %

3.7.3 Dar Al-Handasah

Figure 68, shows DAR's approach, aiming to consolidate medium rise development within the key development areas and to establish the principle of two tall buildings clusters within the boulevard extension. The first proposed cluster at the southern end of the boulevard extension will create a campanile between the old city and the new, acting as a legible landmark for the new Tirana. The second cluster will be located at the northern end of the boulevard to identify the new regeneration area along the River Tirana. As such the studio aims to achieve its goal of increasing density. (DAR, 2012)

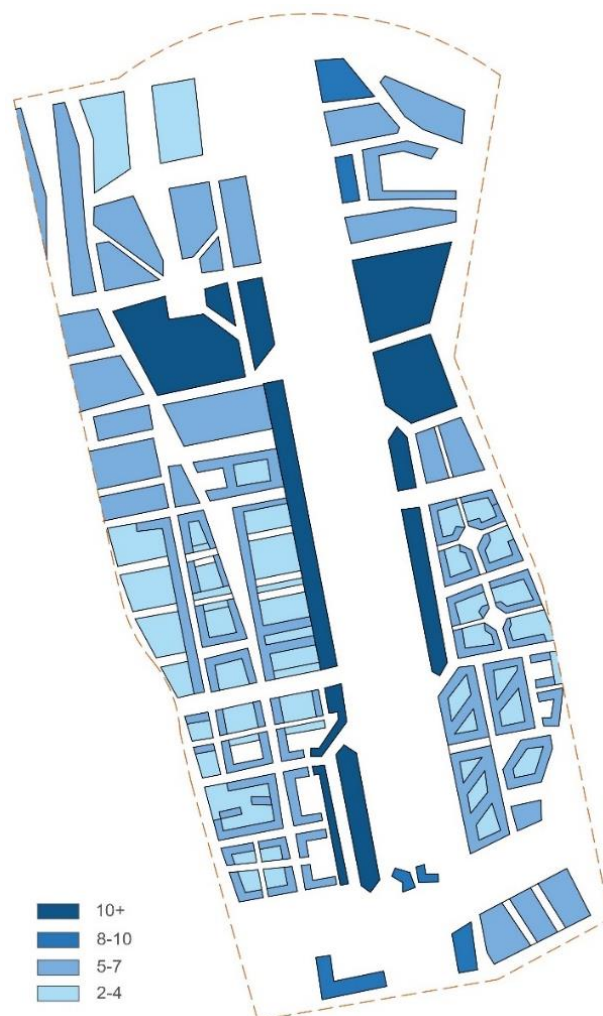


Figure 68. Dar Al-Handasah buildings height proposal.

Source: Dar Al-Handasah, elaborated by author.

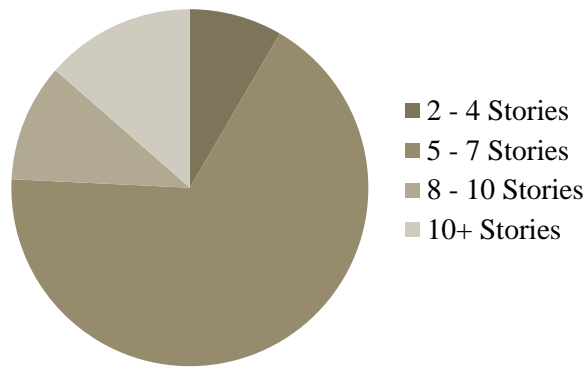


Chart 17. Dar Al-Handasah buildings height percentage comparison

Table 8. Dar Al-Handasah buildings height area analysis

2 - 4 Stories	59 000 m ²	6.37 %
5 - 7 Stories	552 000 m ²	59.61 %
8 - 10 Stories	133 000 m ²	14.36 %
10+ Stories	182 000 m ²	19.66 %
GFA	926 000 m ²	100 %

3.7.4 KCAP

Figure 69 show buildings which are proposed to be built as part of superbloc. They vary in height and enclose and open space in their center. It usually creates an open area, pocket garden or local park. The tallest buildings are located adjacent the main boulevard. the height and their unique design offer an eye-catching panorama. (KCAP Architects, 2012)



Figure 69. KCAP buildings height proposal.
 Source: KCAP, elaborated by author.

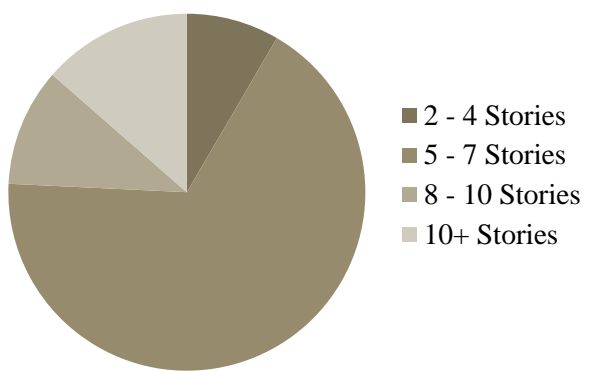


Chart 18. KCAP buildings height percentage comparison

Table 9. KCAP buildings height area analysis

2 - 4 Stories	339 000 m ²	16.68 %
5 - 7 Stories	77 000 m ²	4.46 %
8 - 10 Stories	526 000 m ²	69.11 %
10+ Stories	74 000 m ²	19.75 %
GFA	761 000 m ²	100 %

3.7.5 Grimshaw

Building's height is correlated with the road system. Figure 70 shows the project developed with a hierarchical road system of primary, secondary and local roads. The highest buildings accompany the primary roads and the main boulevard. The height decreases on secondary roads but is still higher than the innermost part of block. As such it creates clusters within the masterplan. (Grimshaw Architects, 2012)

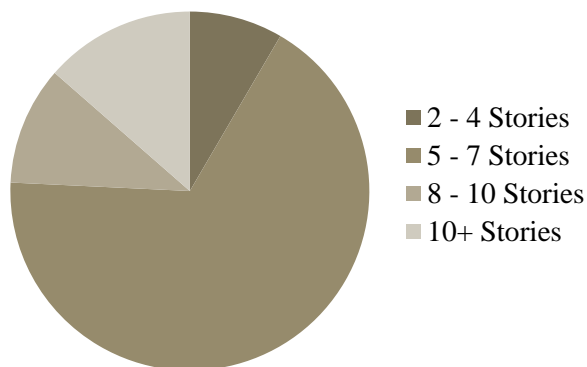


Chart 19. Grimshaw buildings height percentage comparison



Figure 70. Grimshaw buildings height proposal.
 Source: Grimshaw, elaborated by author.

Table 10. Grimshaw buildings height area analysis

2 - 4 Stories	206 000 m ²	27.57 %
5 - 7 Stories	231 000 m ²	30.92 %
8 - 10 Stories	272 000 m ²	36.41 %
10+ Stories	38 000 m ²	5.1 %
GFA	747 000 m ²	100 %

3.7.6 Comparison of height analysis

Chart 20 shows a comparison overview of height analysis. Dar studio takes the lead on 10+ stories building percentage due to their “tall building strategy”. They are followed by Cino Zuchi architects even though there is a notable difference. On the other end of the analysis, for 2-4 stories buildings, West 8 has the highest percentage. This is due to the flexible choice and friendly nature of the project towards the existing fabric and community. The winner studio, proposal, has an almost balance percentage amongst the first 3 categories, excluding the 10+ category.

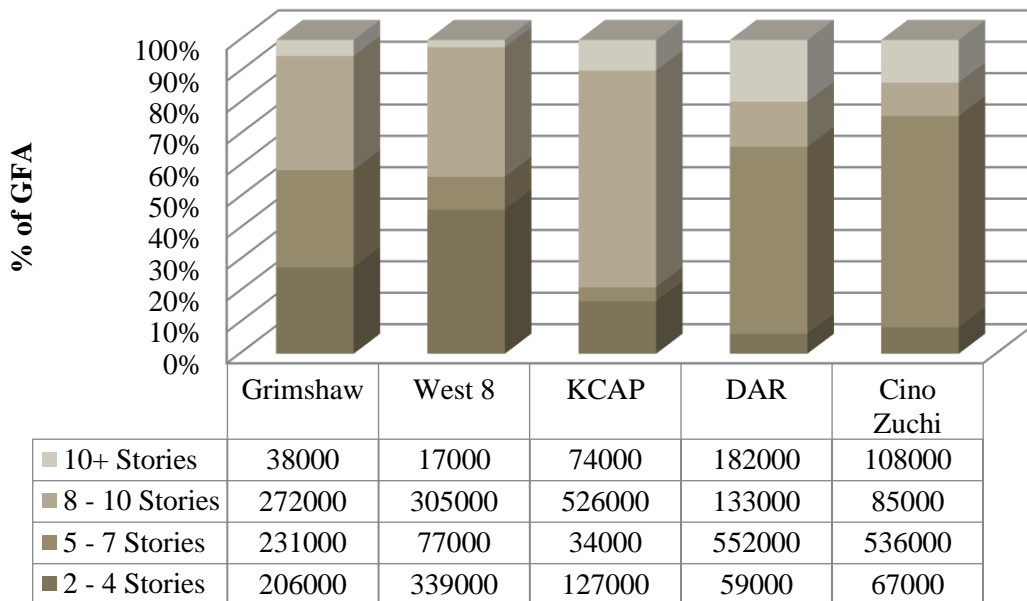


Chart 20. Comparison chart: Buildings height

4.3.1 Comparison of density

Chart 21 is compiled from data collected from each studio, in correspondence with masterplan proposals. This analysis further emphasizes the design followed by each studio and their principle. Studios with a more flexible approach and attention to existing community, offer a subtle approach, with a higher percentage of areas with low or medium density. Overall, the zones with the highest density are located on each side of the axis or in close proximity with Tirana River.

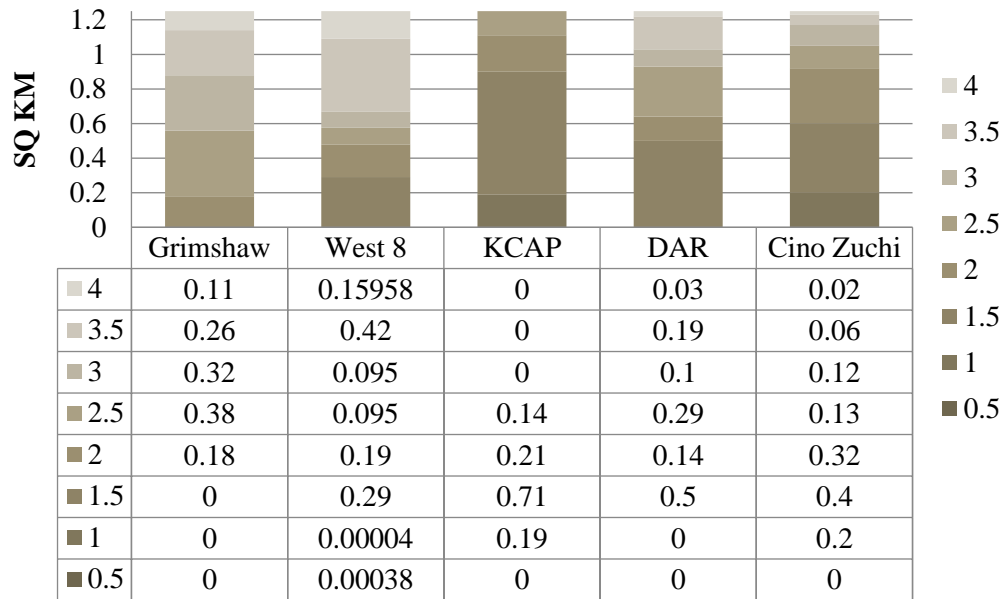


Chart 21. Comparison chart: Density

3.8 Transportation system

3.8.1 Cino Zucchi Architeti

The asymmetrical boulevard runs from the existing train station to the river and opens up to the hills reaching the northern park. This space is the main catalyst for all main urban destinations of a city capital and defines the formal character of the city. Figure 71 shows their transportation scheme. Two tramway lines are suggested: the first one running east-west across the competition site, the second one running north-south along the boulevard and its northern expansion. The two lines are carried across the middle of the development maximizing public transport accessibility to the full site. Large parking areas to allow a high level of modal interchange serve both destinations. Large parking areas are provided by the stadium and underneath the boulevard when it meets the river park. The road network incorporates dedicated bus lanes along the main streets to support speed and service reliability. The same strategy applies to bicycle lanes. (Cino Zucchi Architeti, 2012)

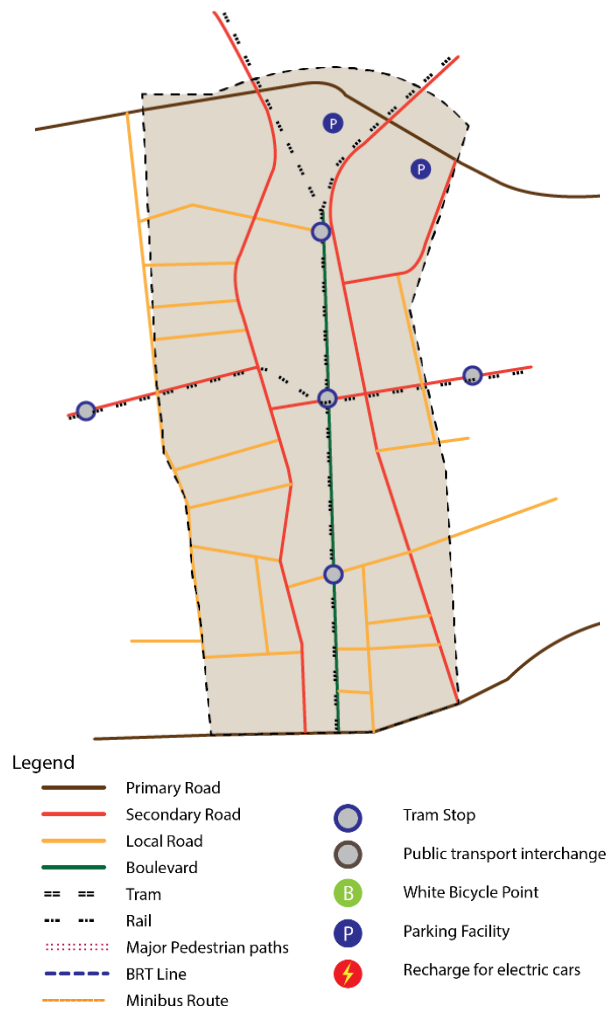


Figure 71. Cino Zucchi Architteti Transportation system analysis.

Source: Cino Zucchi Architteti, elaborated by author.

3.8.2 West 8

From figure 72, the Boulevard’s profile’s space has been reserved for the inclusion of a tram line that will link the city with the station and extend to the airport. The tracks of the tram will be embedded in green zones and the tram stops will stand out with a clearly recognizable, kiosk-style architecture.

Highway of cyclists: a six-meter-wide track that provides convenient access to the city and surrounding landscape dominates the street profile of the Central Boulevard zone. The highway for cyclists’ traverses throughout the park. The tramway is located on the parks’ edge. The access way to the new ring road initially follows the

edges of the Park Lane, subsequently deviating to join the new northern ring road at two separate points. (West 8, 2012)

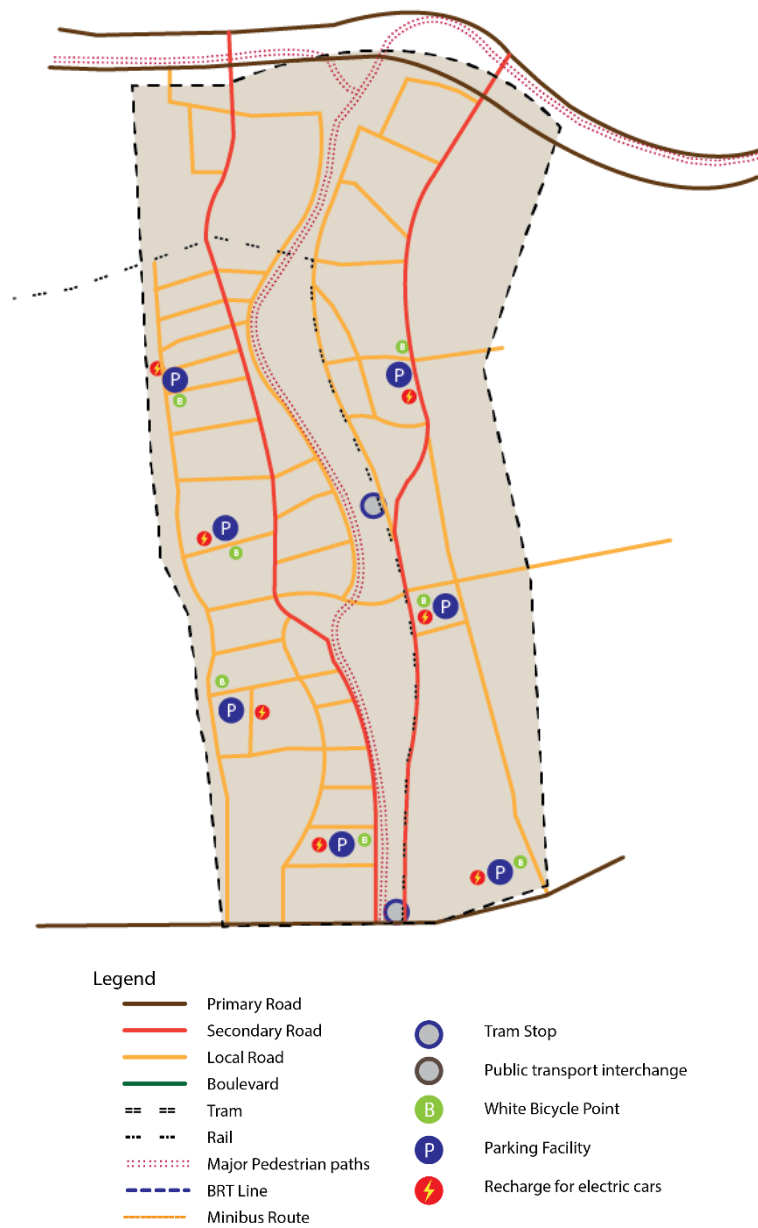


Figure 72. West 8 Transportation system analysis.

Source: West 8, elaborated by author.

3.8.3 Dar Al-Handasah

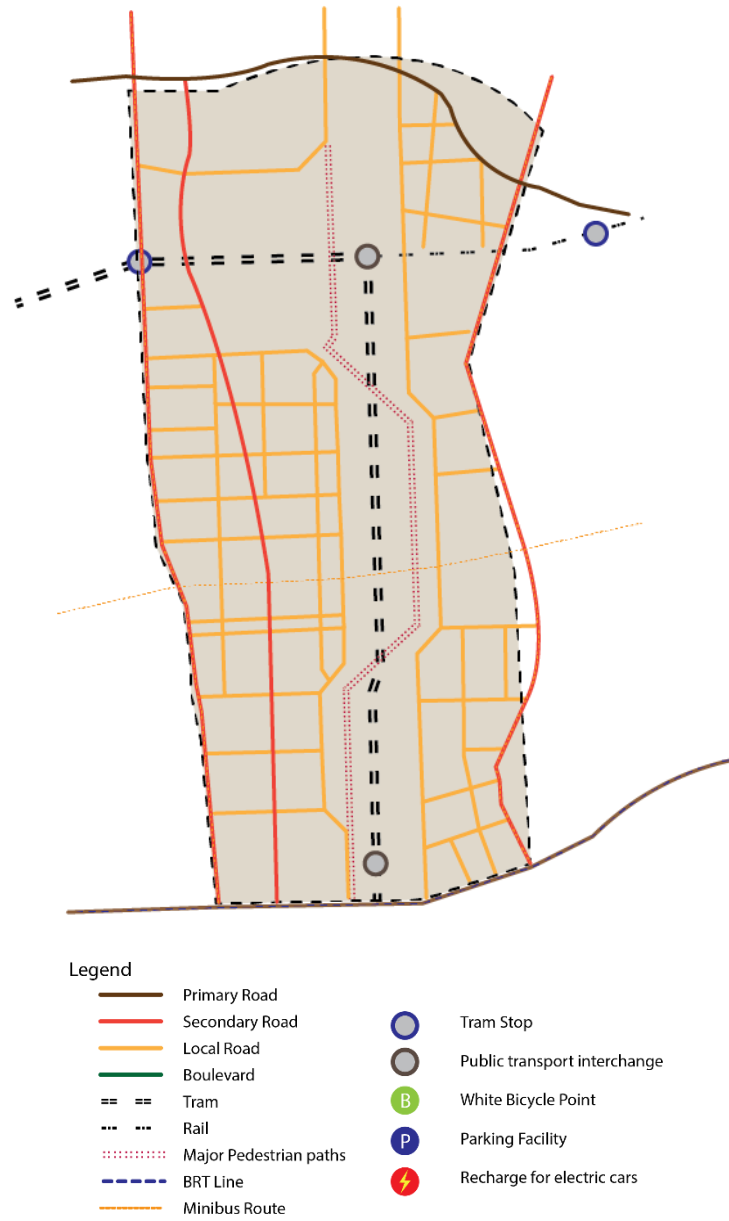


Figure 73.Dar Al-Hanasah Transportation system analysis.

Source: Dar Al-Hanasah, elaborated by author.

Concluding from figure 73 analysis, the studio proposes the application of a multi-modal transport system. The centerpiece of the approach is based on the following points:

- Public transport-oriented approach,
- Creation of bus only lanes in the city center and on main arterials,
- Promotion of soft mobility (cyclists and pedestrians) in the city center and along the Tirana River and Tiran River.
- The completion of the Outer Ring Road is the fundamental prerequisite for this approach to succeed

The multi-modal Train Station & Intermodal Hub to be located along Tirana-Durres Road to facilitate inter-modal between public transport lines (city and inter-city buses, long and short distance rail based public transport lines and also opportunity for private vehicle users to inter-change by the means of a Park & Ride site). (DAR, 2012)

3.8.4 KCAP

KCAP proposal presented on figure 74 shows the Boulevard extending from Paskuqani lake to Mother Theresa square. It has one car lane per direction, two tram tracks or BRT lanes running along its middle for all its length, two cycle lanes and curbs. The Boulevard is not a traffic infrastructure but a place where to stroll and enjoy the environment. It crosses the city center without breaking it. Hierarchically, it is a local street. It is connected with the surrounding territory more than to the surrounding streets and protected from becoming a thoroughfare. (KCAP Architects, 2012)

This choice of transport allows for further connections and expansion based on the city growth. As such they aim to provide a sustainable approach with a vision towards the future.

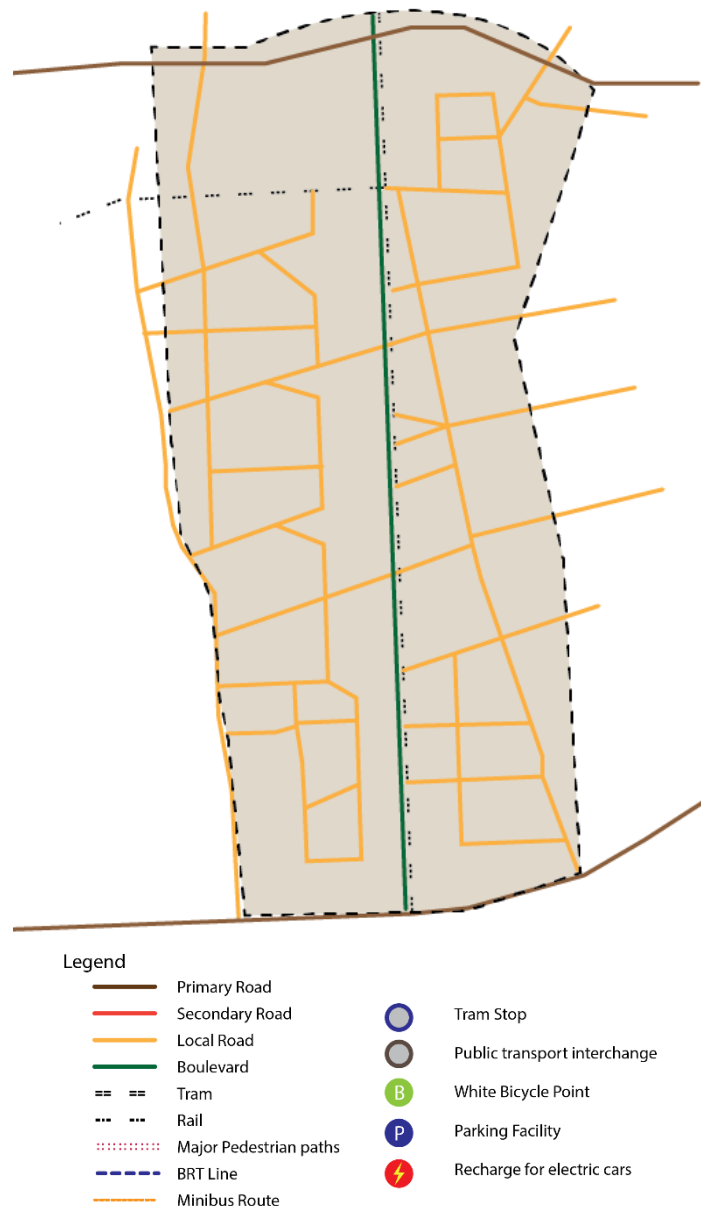


Figure 74. KCAP Transportation system analysis.

Source: KCAP, elaborated by author.

3.8.5 Grimshaw

The transportation system key element is the elongated boulevard extension. Figure 75 displays a system developed in a hierarchical form interconnecting in primary urban roads, secondary urban roads and further into local roads. The system relies mainly on private vehicular transportation. In addition, it also has dedicated bus

and bicycle lanes, aiming to ease the traffic of the area and the city overall (Grimshaw Architects, 2012).

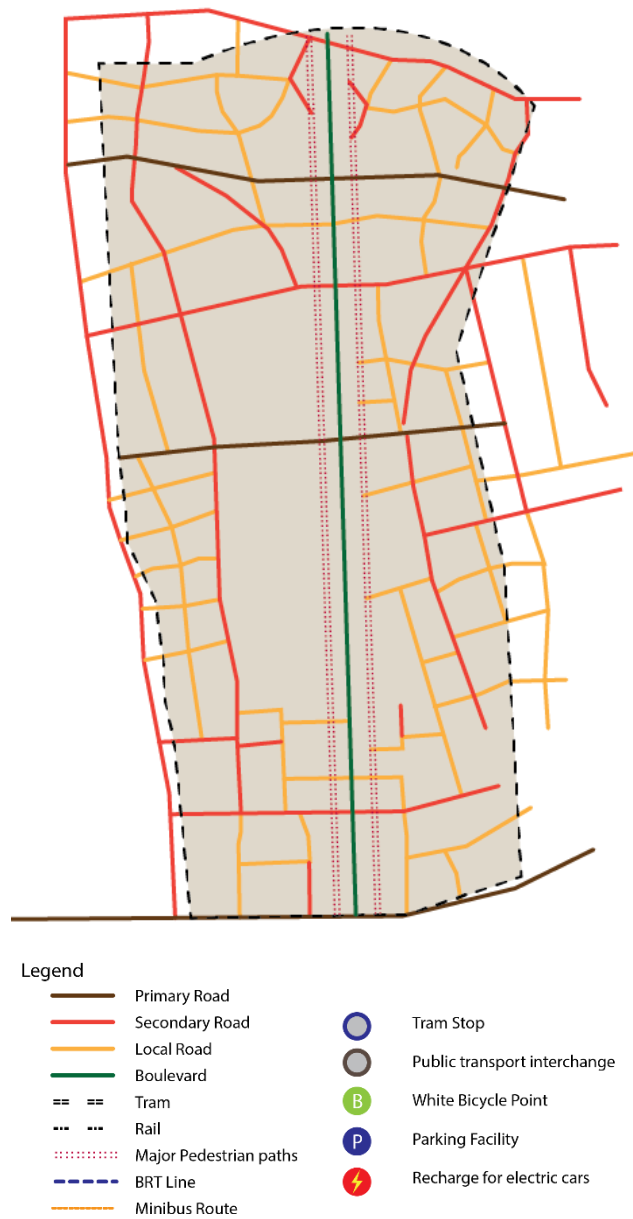


Figure 75. Grimshaw transportation system analysis.

Source: Grimshaw, elaborated by author.

3.8.6 Comparison of transportation system

Table 11. Transportation system comparison chart

	Tram	Rail	BRT	Dedicated Bus Lanes	Pedestrian paths	Electric cars	Bicycle routes	Parking plan
Cino Zucchi Architeti	✓	✗	✗	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓
West 8	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Dar Al-Handasah	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓	✗
KCAP	✓	✓	✗	✗	✓	✗	✓	✗
Grimshaw	✗	✗	✗	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓

The approach towards the transportation system is an important factor in the development of the city. Its efficiency determines to a certain extent the success of the masterplan. The comparison table 11 depicts what priority each studio has given to different groups of people and different methods of movement.

From all proposal, the approved Grimshaw plan, is the only one which doesn't include a tram or a light rail. The inclusion of the rails in the transportation scheme is not embraced from all the studios, and is somewhat left aside. KCAP studio doesn't include in its project brief proposal the dedicate bus lanes, while West 8 is the only one which emphasis the use of electric cars. Bicycle lanes are present in all the proposals with slight variation on the importance given.

The comparison table provided a clear view of the elements that each studio could have included in their project proposal, with the aim of improving the current problematic transportation system that the capital is facing.

3.9 Boulevard extension

One of the main decisions that had to be taken from each studio was the approach for the extension of the historical boulevard. The southern boundary of the masterplan has a 2km straight axis, combining 2 boulevards and 2 major squares. Taking in consideration the historical and political importance the boulevard has had, the studios have taken different approaches for its extension.

3.9.1 What determines the presence and the width of a boulevard?

A boulevard is a wide urban street with tree-lined sidewalks and often multiple lanes of both fast- and slow-moving traffic. They are usually accompanied by monumental architecture and provide a variety of street types, connecting important points within a city. They date back in 16th century in Europe, where city loosened their fortified walls and switched to open spaces boulevards. In the mid-19th and early 20th century, the presence of the boulevard became a key element of large-scale urban planners. (Allan B. Jacobs, 2002)

A boulevard is generally composed of vehicles/bicycle/tram/bus lanes, greenery/tree lines and pedestrians walk paths. Its presence and width are determined from several factors:

- Physical urban context:

Up until the beginning of the 20th century, Tirana was an organic town with narrow curvy streets and low-rise buildings. The first attempt to modernize the city was in 1923, when King Zogu I contracted Italian architects to design a masterplan for the city with contemporary features such as: wide boulevards, new square in the center of the city, orthogonal road system with orthogonal neighborhoods, wide streets lined with buildings of contemporary architecture and ring radial road network. (Aliaj, 2003)

- Economical context:

Due to the political dogma that the country had to rely on himself, Tirana was in very bad economic position. Funding was a problem in itself, while construction work was solved through “volunteer” work.

- Political context:

The buildings of the boulevard were rather a political move than an urban design necessity for the city. In the 1930 the auto-mobility was very limited. (Dalakoglou, 2017). The boulevard width was not justified for the use of pedestrians or cyclist only. It was mainly used for the political agenda, marching, parades, or political meetings. At the same time, its grandiose appearance served as a show-off.

During the time the concept of capitalism didn't exist, therefore the state had full control to expropriate families to make room for the boulevard project. Similarly, the project of the extension of the boulevard was favored by the law, where families and neighborhoods can be displaced but towards a payment.

3.9.2 Boulevard as a park

This approach proposes a continuation of the boulevard in the form of a linear park. Emphasizing the need for open public spaces that will serve the community and limiting the use of vehicles use.

West 8- Their design is visualized in figure 76. It provides a continuation of movement from the existing boulevard, but shifts the attention from vehicles to pedestrians. It also uses curvilinear shapes as a way of providing a flexible and natural design, which is sensible to the existing built environment and limiting unnecessary expropriation. (West 8, 2012)

DAR- It provides a top-down approach and the masterplan implementation is more rigid. It maintains the straight character of the axis but prioritizes sustainability.

Figure 77 shows a series of open green parks with various functions. Towards the northern end it proposes water features, aiming the use contextual potential of Tirana River. (DAR, 2012)

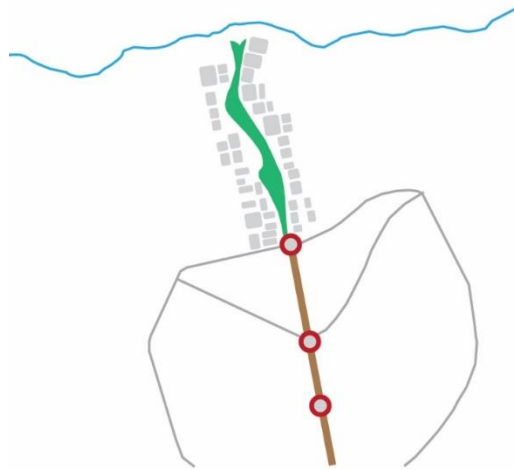


Figure 76. Boulevard extension proposal of West8.

Source: West 8, elaborated by author.

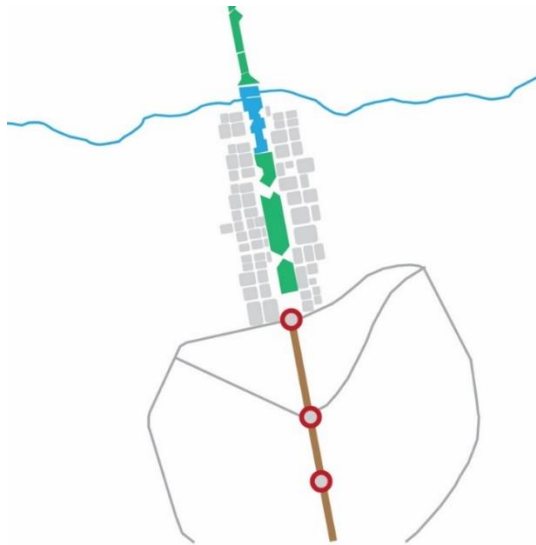


Figure 77. Boulevard extension proposal of DAR.

Source: DAR, elaborated by author.

3.9.3 Boulevard + park attached

These proposals consider the linear continuation of the existing monumental boulevard and they reinforce the importance of the axis in the layout of the city. The extended boulevard provides a connection between Parku I Madh and Parku I Paskuqanit. In contrary from the strength a linear clarity of the historical part, they propose a series of open areas or parks attached to the extended boulevard with the aim of providing more quality, social spaces.

KCAP - the studio base concept (fig.78) is a straight-line continuation where triangular green parks are attached. The shape and position are heavily based on the Albanian culture and tradition. (KCAP Architects, 2012)

AS & P – Design presented in figure 79. It consists in a more organic and free-flowing design. The main axis is left uninterrupted but the design is represented as a curvilinear shape due to the attachment of parks. Therefor the project breaks the geometrical character of the existing boulevard.

Cino Zuchi Architetti -Their design approach is based on designing voids and providing a formal continuity of them. Therefor the boulevard design is an outcome of contextualization and studies done on it (fig. 80). As such the studio offers a careful modification of the existing urban fabric. (Cino Zucchi Architetti, 2012)

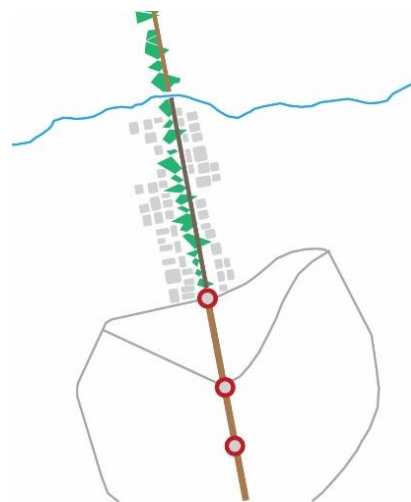


Figure 78. Boulevard extension proposal of KCAP.

Source: KCAP, elaborated by author.

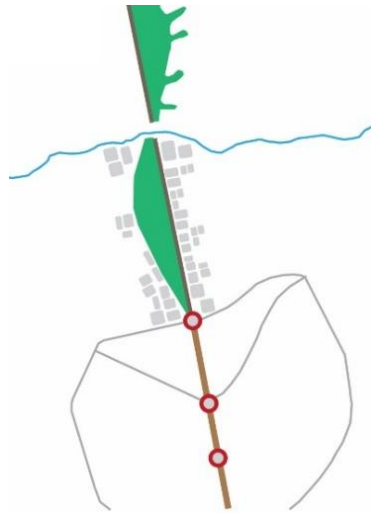


Figure 79. Boulevard extension proposal of AS&P.
Source: AS&P, elaborated by author.

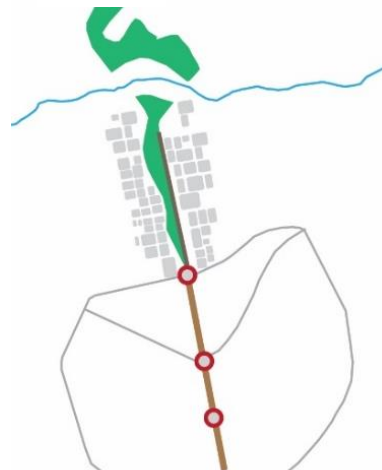


Figure 80. Boulevard extension proposal of Cino Zucchi.
Source: Cino Zucchi Architetti, elaborated by author.

3.9.4 Boulevard extension

This design approach replicates the identity of the existing boulevard: straight axis, monumental appearance, bounded by relatively high-rise buildings that emphasize its importance.

GMP- The studio main focus is shifted to its “green roots” design which spread from Lake Paskuqani into the urban fabric of the masterplan, displayed in figure 81. Therefor the boulevard extension becomes of secondary importance and serves as a main vehicular artery for the area.

Grimshaw – The studio maintains and further emphasizes the importance of the existing boulevard by extending it (fig 82). It becomes the main developing driving force of the project. (Grimshaw Architects, 2012)

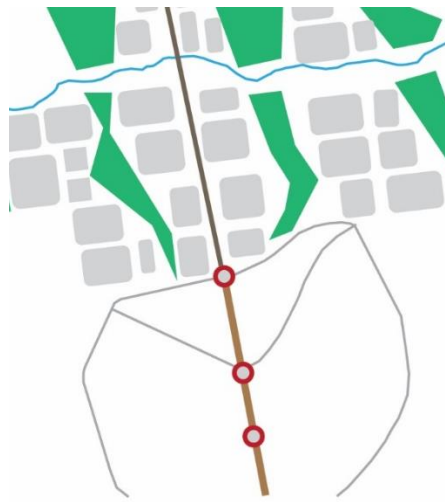


Figure 81. Boulevard extension proposal of GMP.

Source: GMP, elaborated by author.

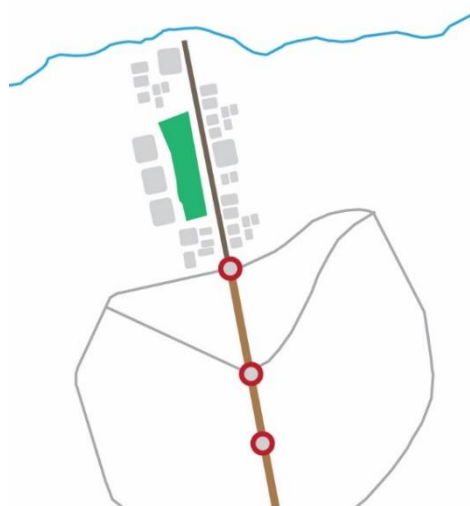


Figure 82. Boulevard extension proposal of Grimshaw.

Source: Grimshaw, elaborated by author.

3.10 The relationship of the historical boulevard, Grimshaw proposed and Grimshaw modified

The boulevard, was originally envisioned with a width of 42m, the same as “Deshmoret e Kombit” Boulevard but with a different configuration. The proposal included two tram lines, bicycle lanes and walking paths, visualized in the road section of figure 83.

In figure 84, there is the modified version, which got expanded to 70m, more than double than the connecting “Zogu I” Boulevard. It includes 6 vehicular lanes + 2 bus lanes. In addition, the tramline got removed. Mobility priority is now shared between pedestrian and vehicles. Overlooking into urban scale, the boulevard takes a monumental scale, becoming even more noticeable than its preceдер.

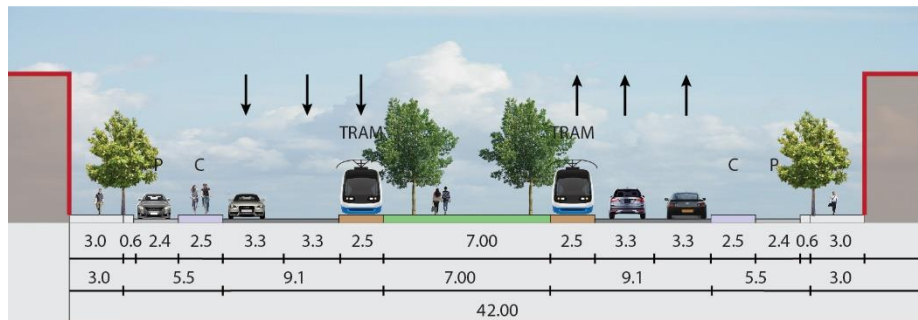


Figure 83. Original proposal of Boulevard section.

Source: Grimshaw, elaborated by author.

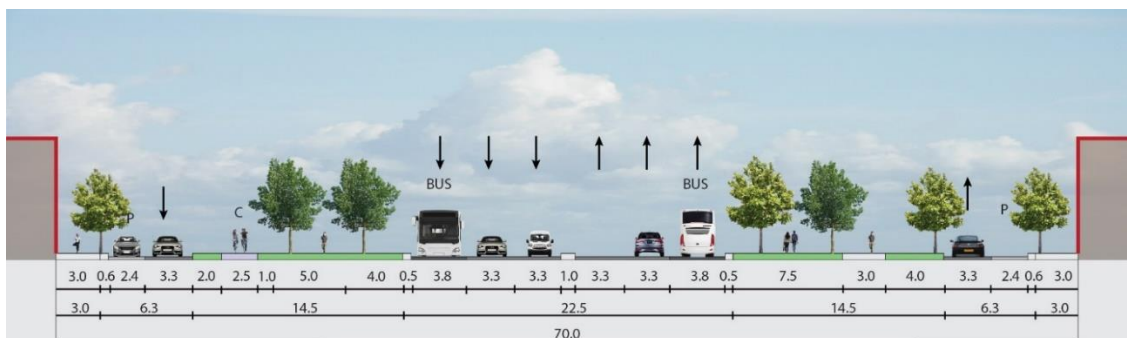


Figure 84. Modified Boulevard section.

Source: Tirana Municipality project brief, elaborated by author.

“Deshmoret e Kombit” Boulevard starts at “Mother Tereza “Square and ends at “Scanderbeg” square with a length of 1km and a width of 42m. Construction started on 1939 following the Italian invasion in Albania, and got completed on 1941. It was originally named after King Zog and then *Viale del Impero* (Avenue of the Empire). King Zogu placed great emphasis on the construction of roads, as a way of extending his direct control from the city to the entire country. (Vickers, THE ALBANIANS: A modern story, 1995) . During the communist area, the boulevard as heavily used for political reasons. Marching and parades were held on a regular basis. Some of the events were “Liberation Day” and “International Workers Day’

‘Zogu I’ Boulevard begins at ‘Scanderbeg’ square and ends at Ish Stacioni I Trenit, with a length of 1.1 km and a width of 30m. Built during monarchy period, under the rule of King Zogu, the boulevard followed the political use as ‘Deshmmoret e Kombit’ During communism period, it was named *Viale Vittorio Emanuele*. This was a political movement in order to pay respect to Albanian’s ally at the time: the Soviet Union.

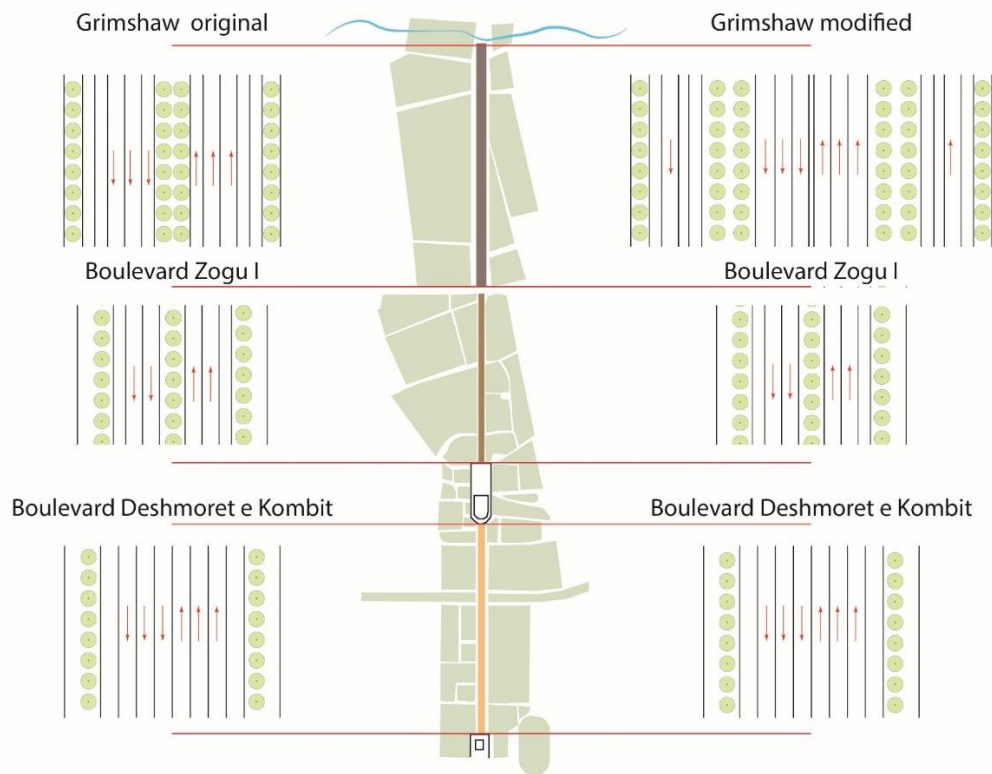


Figure 85. Boulevard's width comparison.

3.11 Landscape strategy

One of the main objectives of the competition was to provide a sustainable and green approach. This analysis takes in consideration the green spaces such as parks throughout the master plan, River Park and the area around Paskuqani Lake. It doesn't include small open spaces located in the residential superblocks



Figure 86. Cino Zucchi Landscape strategy.

Source: Cino Zucchi Architetti, elaborated by author.

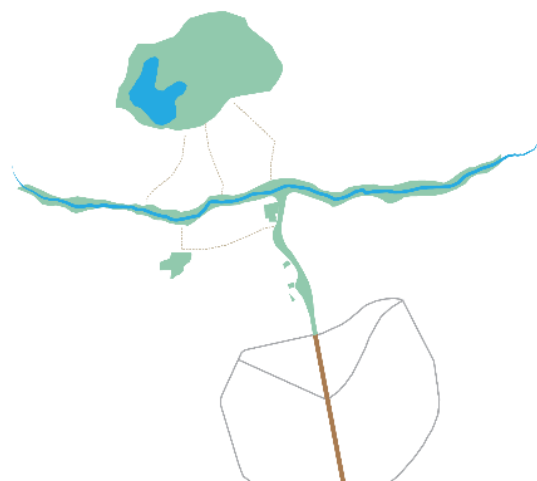


Figure 87. West 8 Landscape strategy.

Source: West 8, elaborated by author.

Cino Zucchi Architteti – Figure 86 shows the extended boulevard, which blends the formal qualities of a lively urban promenade with the environmental qualities of the landscape of the hills, the river, and the mountains surrounding Tirana.

A green “wedge” penetrates and gives quality to the new area, gradually assuming the character of the inner city. The new spaces will “graft” on the existing ones creating a larger unity where urban and natural environments will find a new fruitful balance. (Cino Zucchi Architteti, 2012)

West 8 - The boulevard is a chain of public green spaces which facilitate the connection between the heart of the city with the surrounding landscape. The green axis shown on figure 87, forms the natural counterpart to the dense urban center and the chaos of the city. The surrounding landscape is accessible by means of a highway for cyclists. This makes it possible to travel from the Tirana River to the Skanderbeg Square in just 10 minutes and from the University to Paskuqani Lake in 30 minutes. (West 8, 2012)

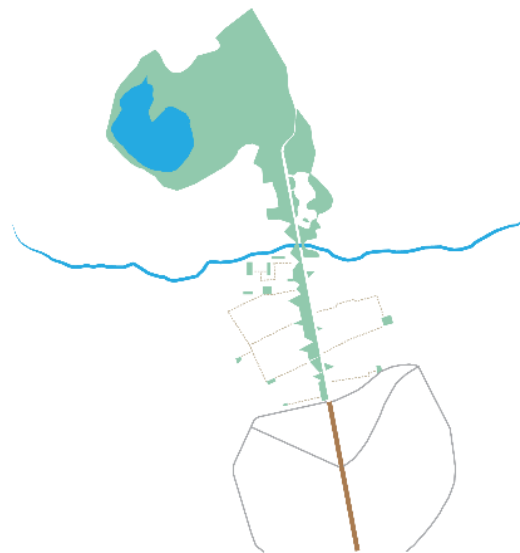


Figure 88. KCAP Landscape strategy.
Source: KCAP, elaborated by author.



Figure 89. DAR Landscape strategy. Source: DAR, elaborated by author.

DAR – Figure 89 displays the studio design, developing a linear park as a choice of extending the boulevard. In addition they propose a defined green belt strengthened by natural topography surrounding the urban area. They present an opportunity to create a green spine within the city connecting the Big Park Lake and Lake Paskuqan and integrating with a new green corridor along the Tirana River. (DAR, 2012)

KCAP - The existing sequence of squares along the boulevard are proposed to be enriched with 3 new places (fig. 88). An urban balcony at the end of the existing boulevard is added. The height difference makes the balcony a place in the city from which a clear view to both, north and south of the axis can be cast. Attention is also paid to the visual aesthetic of the landscaped axis designed, taking inspiration from the local tradition. (KCAP Architects, 2012)

AS&P – A green axis is proposed to be the main axis of the masterplan (fig.85), with several park placed as centers of neighborhoods. Paskuqani Lake and Tirana River are seen as important points in developing the landscape strategy.

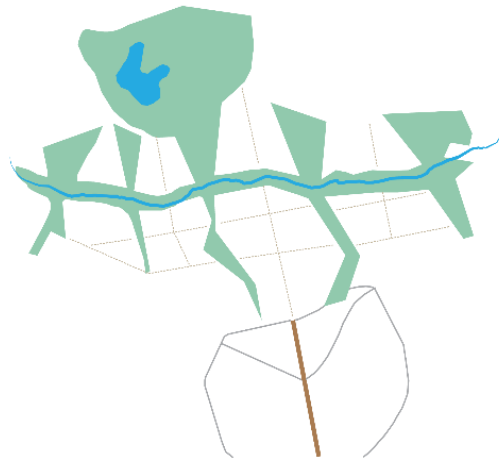


Figure 85: AS&P Landscape strategy. Source: AS&P, elaborated by author.

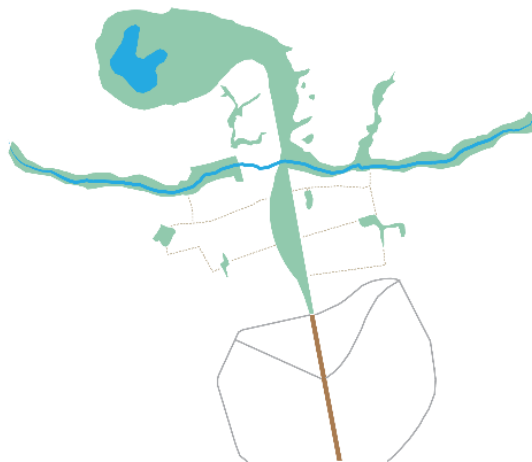


Figure 86: GMP Landscape strategy. Source: GMP, elaborated by author.

GMP – The studio is the only one which bases its entire design concept in a landscape element: the roots (fig.86). The urban layout is spread in between “the roots”, giving the landscape the highest priority in the city development.

Grimshaw – Masterplan envisions the placement of “Central Park” as a gathering point and a key element of the environmental strategy of the area (fig.87).

Regeneration of Tirana River is also included in the landscape strategy. Further north, the potential of Lake Paskuqani comes in attention as driving force for future developments. In addition, several parks of smaller size, are to be located in between residential blocks. Depending from urban layout, pocket garden, playgrounds or public open spaces will be implemented. (Grimshaw Architects, 2012)

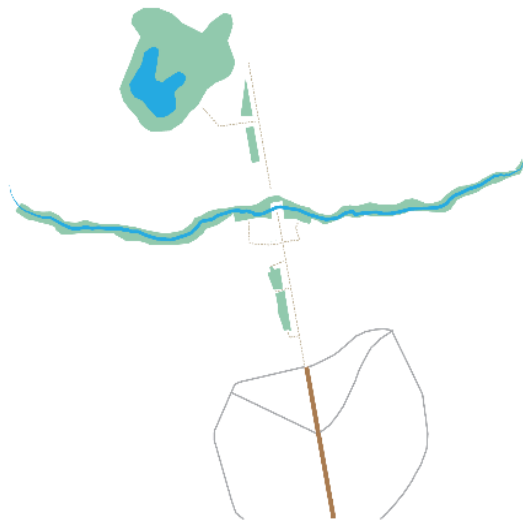


Figure 87: Grimshaw Landscape strategy.
Source: Grimshaw, elaborated by author.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

4.1 Results

Due to the topic broadness, the result of the research paper affects various dimensions. The primary scope of the study was to analyze and understand the complicated relationship between politics and urban design/architecture. The paper provides a theoretical framework and analysis which brings in the spotlight politics as one of the main contributors in the architectural field. Data gathering and historical analysis of various cities indicate that politics doesn't simply affect the design, but actually it is design.

The most obvious result of this research paper is the fact that politics and design are and have always been part of a tight relationship. Politics affects design, architecture or urban design regardless of political system. We have seen this displayed in republican France of Napoleon III, Nazi Germany of Hitler, communist district of Nowa-Huta, communist Romania of Ceausescu, democratic Washington and through various regimes of Albania. Political power got exerted through people directly commissioned from the government or from the government themselves. All these examples vary in different timeframes and across continents. The paper proves that this notion is applied through decades, in various urban scales, through different government systems.

Politics as design is displayed as a top-down approach, which gets applied either through major expropriation and destruction of existing city fabric, or in complete open spaces. This rigid approach caused the majority of an existing community to displace, usually with improper compensation and with insufficient legal protection. Hausmann's renovation of Paris is perhaps the most notable case of expropriation and city transformation. While Brasilia is a good representation example of a city build from scratch. Politics is embodied in the buildings and urban shapes of the cities. It takes control of the shape, concept design, architectural features, and

choice of materials, and even method of construction. As such we have an outcome design that is aimed at the regime, rather than at the people and the community itself.

All the analysis of this thesis result in a common architectural element: a central axis which becomes the most important driving force for each city. The axis is designed either as a 3-way intersection or as a straight line. In either case it always leads to an open space, green park, public square, where an important structure resides. The axis is always of a monumental appearance, highlighting the best of the city. To its service, important buildings are located alongside it. Their typology varies from governmental, economic to cultural and social. Architectural elements and details are also chosen in correspondence to this idea. The use of exterior design of buildings, choice of colonnades, colors, and overall appearance empower the grandiose character of the axis. Additional accompanied elements are superb block housing, grid road systems, lack of easily accessible green areas, lack of mixed-use areas and are usually directed towards the urban design of the compact city.

Cities design are also representation of the political goals of the governments. Firstly, they wanted to build a cityscape and structures that would be better than that of other countries. This desire becomes an almost obsession in totalitarian regimes, with projects of construction buildings with the sole purpose of them being the largest, tallest or heaviest in the world. All in all, it's a display of power. Secondly, such designs are used to control the population or enforce a political ideology. Wider roads and boulevards allow easier access for troop patrol and public square become gathering hotspot for propaganda.

On chapter 4, the analysis of projects for Tirana Northern boulevard, provide quantitative and qualitative results on comparison base. The results show which studio offered better results based on analysis of expropriation level, solid-void, density, buildings height or landscape. Results show that Tirana municipality has made many modifications to the original proposal of Grimshaw. All the proposals included a tram line or a light rail, a concept explained in linear city theory. This would have been a key factor in reducing vehicular traffic while improving and encouraging people to use public transportation. The analysis of compact cities details that dense, high residential zone need short walkable distances. Therefore, they pay great importance to walking lanes for pedestrians and put into focus bike lanes. The modified version of the

masterplan doesn't include a tram line, nor does it include any sustainable approach to reduce traffic. On the contrary, it duplicated is vehicular lanes, while leaving out of focus any bike line nearby.

Original studio proposal included relatively high residential buildings to achieve densification, while still offering large open square / green areas. This concept it's supported by compact city design. In the case of Tirana, the urban masterplan has maximized construction space by removing any proposed open space. Linear city theory emphasizes the need for a community to have close access to green open spaces. Grimshaw originally proposed a discontinuous park strategy along the boulevard. Instead, it got modified to a Central Park for the whole zone. Such decisions are seen to be risk and unsuccessful. Jane Jacobs argues that having one single park for a large urban area offers unequal access for its inhabitants. They also have the potential of becoming risk zones or no-go zones during the night or they become preferable for risk individuals. It also falls short of the objective of competition: Buildings Tirana Green Future.

The interviews conducted with architects (questionnaire in appendix), were a match the results of this thesis. All recognized the importance that politics continues to have in design. Most of them answered that this relationship should be limited to certain levels only, that aim a positive outcome to the community. When asked about the expropriation happening in Tirana, the answers were mainly related to faulty design and poor management. While the municipality intervention in Northern Boulevard had mixed answers. Some justified those actions, while the rest deemed them negative.

Analysis of the competition projects concludes into the integration of missed used zoning throughout the masterplan. That would comply with the short distance principle of the compact city where the inhabitants can get basic services they need within a walkable distance. This urban approach improves and enhances life quality. The under-construction project applies this principle almost vaguely, paying great attention to shaping the boulevard with its most important civic, cultural, and commercial buildings. It follows the previous pattern of the historical boulevard while skipping the theoretical base.

4.2 Discussions

While we have established that cities, we live nowadays have been heavily affected by politics, it's worth investigating the hypothetical scenario where design was completely free of politics, where design would have been created through in-depth contextual analysis, community integration and theoretical information. Would there still be the magnificent structures and boulevards in our cities? Probably not, or maybe not in such a large scale. While its undeniable that they have been used for a political agenda, we must also admit that they pose an important driving force for the city and its population, in addition to their aesthetic appearance. While discussing on this question, we have to take in consideration the politics can also be used for positive outcomes. Regulatory laws for construction offer a base for a good implementation of a project in a city fabric. It could also be used to ensure the quality of life and enforce regulations towards sustainable approaches. Another useful application of politics is towards the gentrification issue. Large-scale designs are always faced with the dilemma of their approach for the existing structures. Building schemes in support of the existing communities with social and economic support would be a great help of large-scale projects. An example of this type of regulation is explained by Jane Jacobs. The proposal establishes a connection of 3 entities: government facility, private enterprise, and the community. The theory is based on the notion of subsidized housing with the guaranteed-free rent method. In this case, politics would be a catalyst for improving the outcome of a major urban intervention.

But why do we encounter the same architectural patterns of the past even nowadays? Tirana is implementing a design rooted in totalitarian regime. It is not only extending a boulevard which was originally used for political purpose, but it's increasing its size and length in the capital's future. So, is it serving a political agenda? The answer if this question is more related to capitalism, rather than politics. Driving city development north, gives Tirana municipality the chance of extending its polycentric design. Widening the vehicular streets is seen as a measurement towards the ever-increasing traffic of the capital, even though that its have already been proven that wider roads bring more traffic. This makes the municipality choice counter-intuitive. Amongst many modifications, we can observe an intention of maximizing the built space. This would be profitable for on the economic aspect and also an option

of controlling the chaotic urban sprawl the capital is facing. But is achieving these two goals worth sacrificing a qualitative design? Lack of a good design brings decreased life quality for the community and as has been proven many times by history, problematic future. On the other hand, green open spaces have been reduced and gathered into a single area, the Central Park. This will create favor zones in the area, with people living far from it less likely to access it.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS

In an overall view, the thesis analyzed the close relationship that exists between design and politics. The first objective achieved was highlighting this very relationship in the design process. That was achieved through various case studies, both in quantitative and qualitative analysis. Throughout the process of examining cases in chapter 2, one main outcome was observed; politics influence in design has resulted in serious problems for the projects and masterplans involved, which we face nowadays in the cities that we live in. As such they present a burden when having to design for the future developments of a city.

Another objective of the thesis was to define patterns on how politics displays itself. The patterns discovered are both tangible and intangible. Firstly, they displayed a common denominator of control and shift of focus from the users. This conclusion was set out from the analysis of the projects in different regimes and from sources of various authors. Secondly, patterns in urban design choice or architectural elements become visible. The most common the monumental axis and superblock of housing areas. This feature was elaborated throughout the thesis in various sketches and diagrams in different contexts.

Focusing in Tirana, we have a city which is a result of various political regimes, with an urban design enforcing any new masterplan that could be further attached to the developing city. In depth review is done for the participants of the project, gathering information directly from the studios themselves and also further elaborated in context of the thesis. Chapter 3 takes a comparative character, setting a set of comparative points, on which each project proposal is faced. Additional consideration is taken from other urban design theories, books and authors, to have a wholesome view. The comparison highlights the best elements of each studio and displays the reason behind it as well. As such it creates the hypothetical situation of how the winning proposal could look like. While Grimshaw studio was declared the winner, its proposal was heavily modified from the municipality. A situation which considering this thesis, begs the question of why in a democratic society, we still have ideologies of the past implemented. This leads to another conclusion of the thesis: political

influence is still present, regardless of the system in power, it just shifts its interest. While in totalitarian regime the political interest was to control the population, display power and majesty to other nations, in democratic society there is the need for profit and providing immediate solutions to fast-growing population of the capital. Regardless of the incentive, the thesis concludes that its outcome always worsen design.

In addition, the research paper points out the fact the while politics is labeled as a destructive force in design, it could also be used purposefully as a positive influence for what could generally be called a good design. A “good design” refers to a project justified in its context with urban design theories, aimed towards its users, serving the community interests and aimed at providing a sustainable approach for increased life quality. Examples given by the thesis include laws and entities related with expropriation approach and regulations in supporting a justified design in compliance with the vision of the city for the future.

The topic discussed by this thesis is of broad nature, and while numerous analyses can be done, there are still limitations. There is no direct way or scale to measure the influence politics has in design. In this instance, analyzing its outcome based on known urban design theories and architectural principles, would be the closest we can get in identifying this relationship. For the same reasons, the conclusion lacks details, considering each case study has its own peculiarities and specific context.

At the same time, this situation makes the thesis interest group in a wider range, since it involves all scale projects, various design theories, political ideologies, political entities. While the thesis is totally based on projects already approved or constructed, it is worth being taken in consideration for future projects. That is because it represents an in-depth review of what could be changed for better, so history doesn't repeat itself. It displays arguments and explanations as to why certain practices should be avoided. As such, the thesis could be taken as a reference as to what extent and in what way politics has to intervene in design.

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APPENDIX

Questionnaire done for the chapter 3 of this master thesis.

Design as Politics

Questionnaire related to the influence politics has in the urban development of Tirana and its architecture.

- 1- Name (optional):
- 2- Tirana has gone through several political systems. According to your opinion, how much has the state and political ideology influenced architecture?
- 3- In your opinion, how has that affected Tirana as the city we now nowadays?
- 4- Do you think its influence is still present nowadays? If yes, how?
- 5- In your opinion, can political intervention bring positive outcome in architecture/urban design? If yes, how?
- 6- For the construction of “Unaza e Re”, the municipality has expropriated hundreds of families. What is your point of view in regards of this phenomena?
- 7- Are you familiar with the Northern Boulevard Extension project? If yes, what is your opinion about it?
- 8- The above-mentioned project was modified from the municipality before starting implementation. In your opinion, has that improved or worsen the masterplan design?