CITIZENS AS CO-DESIGNERS: URBAN DESIGN THINKING POTENTIAL TO
FOSTER COLLECTIVELY-PREFERRED NEIGHBORHOODS IN TIRANA

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Approval sheet of the thesis

This is to certify that we have read this thesis entitled **"Citizens as co-designers: Urban Design Thinking potential to foster collectively-preferred neighborhoods in Tirana"** and that in our opinion it is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a thesis for the degree of Master of Science.

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ABSTRACT

CITIZENS AS CO-DESIGNERS: URBAN DESIGN THINKING POTENTIAL TO FOSTER COLLECTIVELY-PREFERRED NEIGHBORHOODS IN TIRANA

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The way how urban environments are being used and understood is habitually changing. The complexity of political, environmental, social, and economic aspects has affected them going through a reconstruction designing process different from the traditional one. The recent bottom-up approaches to designing urban spaces involves residents among other stakeholders in the design process. However, integrating them appropriately in the design process is considered critical. Further exploration on effective and successful involvement of the citizen designers is mandatory. This stands for the subject matter of this thesis.

This thesis highlights the potentials of *Urban Design Thinking*, a human-centered approach that tackles and redefines problems, understands the users, and provides sustainable solutions, might be a practical approach to engage citizens in the early stages of the urban design process.. Through implemented case studies, this thesis concludes that urban design thinking provides tangible solutions through a methodological framework for continuous co-creation and user participation in urban area development, which allows identifying the problem holistically. Co-creation enhances citizen's impact on their environment, promoting individual and shared values.

Finally, I contextualize co-creation dynamics within an ongoing project 'The Open doors' which aims to generate potential co-creational scenarios for sustainable

urban development. The study employs a qualitative method following the grounded theory as a research strategy. The co-creation elements identified from the case studies analysis are as well explored within the case project. After analyzing the semi-structured interviews, the result are evaluated as a lengthy explanation that recognizes elements divide and intersect.

ABSTRAKT

QYTETARËT SI BASHKË-DIZENJUES: POTENCIALI I 'TË MENDUARIT URBAN PËR TË NXITUR LAGJE TË BASHKË-PREFERUARA NË TIRANË

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Mënyra sesi mjediset urbane konsiderohen dhe përdoren po ndryshon. Kompleksiteti I aspekteve politike, ekonomike, mjedisore dhe sociale I ka ndikuar që këto mjedise ti nënshtrohen një procesi riorganizimi, të ndryshëm nga ai tradicionali. Diskursi nga poshtë-lart I të dizenjuarit të hapësirave urbane përfshin, përvec të gjithave, banorët dhe palët e tjera të interesit në procesin e dizenjimit. Gjithsesi, integrimi I tyre në mënyrën e duhur është kritik, arsye për të cilen le vend për eksplorim mbi metodologjinë që duhet përdorur në mënyrë që procesi të rezultojë efektiv.

Kjo tezë propozon se, 'Të menduarit urban', një përgjasje ku në qendër pozicionon njeriun, trajton dhe ripërcakton problemet, kupton përdoruesit dhe siguron zgjidhje të qëndrueshme, ka potencialin të jetë një përgjasje praktike për të angazhuar qytetarët në fushën e dizenjimit urban. Nëpermjet rasteve studimore të implementuara, kjo punë kërkimore del në përfundimin që të menduarit urban siguron zgjidhje të prekshme nëpermjet metodologjisë të strukturuar e cila aplikon bashkë-dizenjim të vazhdueshëm duke identifukuar problemet në tërësi të tyre. Bashkë-dizenjimi zmadhon impaktin e qytetarëve në mjedisin e tyre, duke promovuar vlerat e përbashkëta dhe individuale.

Si hap të fundit, dinamikat e bashkë-dizenjimit I kontekstualizoj brenda një projekti në vazhdimësi, në qytetin e Tiranës, 'Dyert e Hapura'. Ky projekt ka për qëllim të gjenerojë skenare bashkë-dizenjuese për zhvillim urban të qëndrueshëm. Studimi përdor metodën cilësore të kërkimit. Elementët bashkëdizenjues të identifikuar nga analiza e rasteve shembull studimore, eksprolohen gjithashtu tek projekti 'Portat e Hapura' në një serë intervistash të gjysmë-strukturuara. Rezultatet më pas vlëresohen si një shpjegim I tërësishëm elementësh që divergjojnë dhe ndërlidhjen. Kjo tezë ka gjithashtu për qëllim të shërbejë si një rast studimor shembull për implementim të mëvonshëm në hapësirat urbane të Tiranës.

*Fjal*ë *kyce:* bashkë-dizenjim, qytetar dizenjues, mjedise të bashkë-preferuara, të menduarit urban, ndjesia e vendit, vlerat e dizenjimit.

Dedicated to my family.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Cities are real-life contexts that require collaboration to share disciplinary knowledge to explore visions and better deal with emerging complex issues. This thesis aims to discover urban design thinking as a new explorative methodological framework that fosters co-creation. Namely, the post-social Tirana is suffering a rapid, haphazard urban development focused on anything; polycentrism, biodiversity, geopolitics, mobility, green corridors, and tree planting, but social dimension. The current chapter consists of the context of the study through a brief introduction of Tirana at present, as a complex but expanding capital city during its most active urban regeneration chapter that is in due course to host contemporary practices of urban development. It provides the setting for the problem statement, aims of the study, and the characteristics of the scope.

1.1 A city in transformation: Tirana at large

The most livable cities, such as Rotterdam [1] [2], Helsinki [3], and many other developing cities [4], show their willingness to provide the right tools to consider their city as a place where everybody is part of the co-design process by experimenting with bottom-up approaches.

In contrast to the above-mentioned successful examples, Tirana is turning into "a kaleidoscope metropolis," as the Italian architect Stefano Boeri describes it. According to the General Local Plan "Tirana 2030," as illustrated in Figure 1, an orbital forest of three million new trees will stop the city growing beyond its current boundaries. Although, the project looks grandiose, it keeps building up instead of accommodating the growing population.

Boeri's forecast reduces the demographic development by two-thirds for a greener city on the contrary to the demographic distribution results of INSTAT published in January 2021, which show that 32% of the population live in Tirana (see Figure 2). Until 2031, it will most probably host 35% of the people by reaching 950.000 inhabitants (see Figure 3).

Figure 1. Stefano Boeri Architetti, Tirana 2030: General Local Plan. Source:e-flux architecture [5]
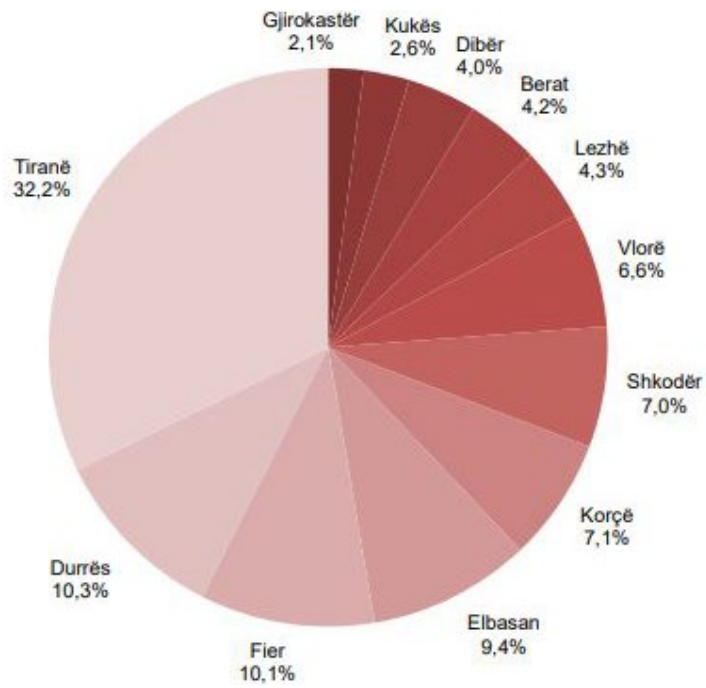
Figure 2. Albanian national demographic distribution. Source: INSTAT [6]
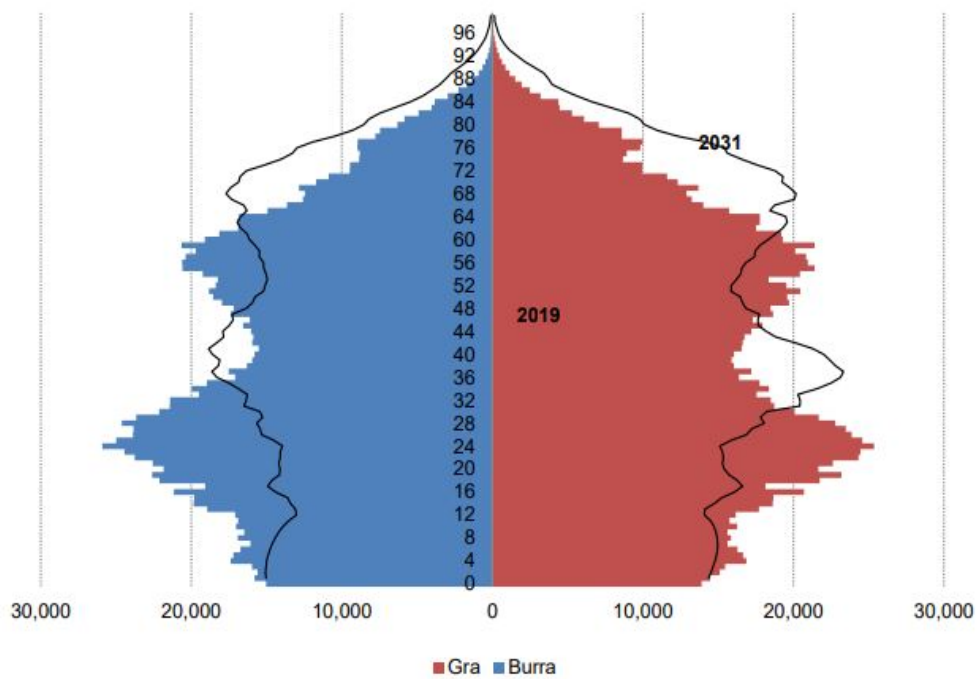
Figure 3. Population pyramid according to the updated population projections.
Source: INSTAT [7]

Tirana is a vibrant city on the flip side, and there is a whole history of urban transformations behind its chaos. After Albania won independence from the Ottomans in 1912, it was then occupied by Italian fascists in 1939, followed by 45-years of isolation by the communists under the regime of Enver Hoxha. The freedom of 1992 brought the construction boom. All they did was build out of order with no private land, anywhere, and anything kicking off with houses, building up to kiosks. During this long transitional period, architects and urban planners had the power of owning total freedom to transform Tirana the way they imagined it. Inevitably, it hosts traces of each period's popular tendencies, which marks an original pattern different from other European cities. Such traces are spread everywhere, primarily in between neighborhoods.

From this perspective, the incoherent Tirana can be considered an open framework to test new concepts that combine forming new urban spaces while maintaining values and ethics. In this way, community engagement is significant because it inherits the past, the knowledge of the place, and the relationship between land use and its exchange value.

1.2 Transitions: Small is not small; in the net

Cities need to improve their planning and designing practices implied by urban transitions and the rapid diffusion of several tensions found in urban contexts. Recent perspectives of sustainable transitions address cities as stimulating places of community engagement. On a macro scale, the territory is the historical outcome of the processes in the long-term joint evolution of the human settlement, the environment, nature and culture. This definition given by the Italian Territorialist School [8] [9] elaborates the concept of local self-sustainable development. It emphasizes the balance between human requirements, self-reliance, and enhancement of environmental quality. It is essential to go along with the human constructs as the identity and the character of the places we live. Referring anew to the Territorialist School [8] [9], territories are ecosystems "made up of places." On the other hand,

places are shaped by the communities that have maintained their existence and grown their identity, history, and values over time. Therefore, we can conclude that a territory is a collaborative ecosystem between places and communities that become more livable when communities produce places and keep them alive.

Considering the place as the small piece of the net, the implications in this shift to the small and local are pretty beneficial. In today's increasingly challenging environments, the most promising move to operate is starting from small. Around 40 years ago, what E. F. Schumacher saw genuinely small and utopia in his book "Small Is Beautiful" [10] favored the small and local ethically and culturally; today, the small is no longer small. In a world where ideas communicate rapidly, our living contexts are no longer isolated. Creative communities are now a good reference of ideas and solutions to more extensive, global nodes, no matter the smallness. Thus, circulating ideas of multiple 'smalls' in a global and connected world, the network effect increases the shared values, in the net.

1.3   Whom do we empathize with first?

As illustrated in Figure 4, the empathic understanding of the problem is the first one on the design thinking cycle. According to the Oxford dictionary, empathy is "the ability to understand and share the feelings of another" [11]. It involves engagement and empathizing with people to gain their understanding and experience of urban life. Citizens stand in the first line as restless stakeholders because they are perpetually connected to the rapid changes in their living area. From the standpoint of urban development, empathizing is applied as a strategy to appeal to those directly affected by such changes. Cities evolve with their residents, and progress arises in everyday life: with people in their day-to-day opportunities, obstacles, and ultimately, the meaning of life [12]. Are their concerns reconsidered if they are not considered in the first round? We see how these people are increasingly (re)discovering the power of collaboration to expand their capacities and how this (re)discovery gives rise to new forms of approaching solutions. As a result, it demands a new design mode, looking at

the world as a place that creates conditions for social development to flourish; and what design can accomplish with and for people who live in it.
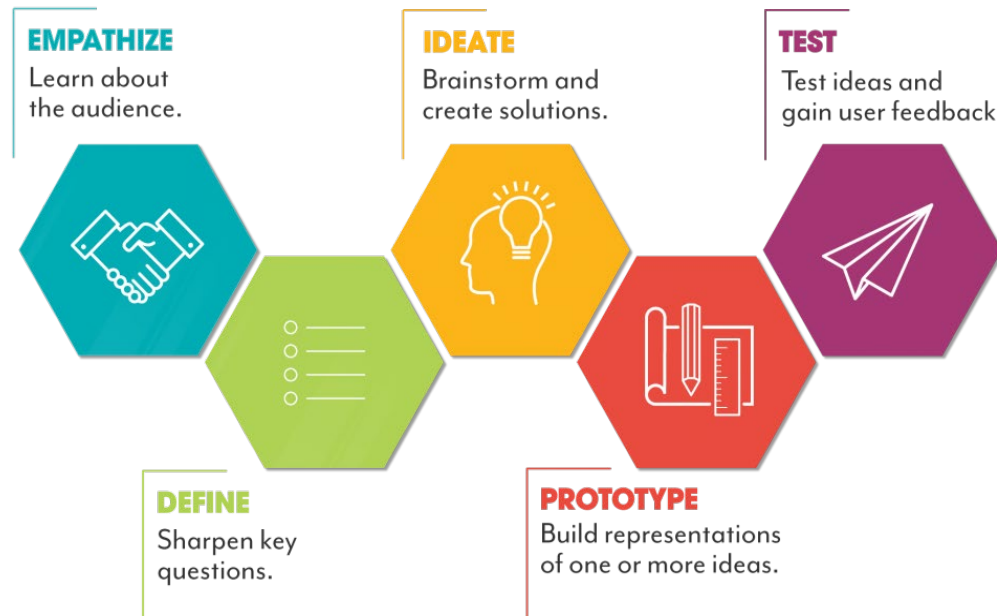
Figure 4. *The five stages of design thinking. Source: Catalyst Education **[13]***

1.4   Problem Statement

Urbanism is the reflection of many layers of society. Rapid urbanization, where more than 55% of the world's population lives in urban areas [14], has entangled the interaction of people with the built environment and cities are transformed into complex living laboratories, a solution for environmental, social and economic challenges is hard to be addressed. These multilayered contemporary issues that cities are facing nowadays demand a more holistic design approach.

As the complexity of urban centers and environments act as a phenomenon, urban design should host new creative solutions of its future that surpass traditional planning visions that tend to disadvantage or exclude certain groups of the society in all of the design and planning stages. Integral to this emerging way of developing

urban environments is a comprehensive, open-ended process rather than a one-time vision of a master plan. According to the UN World Cities Report, a city that plans, in contrast to the old planning pattern which reflected only the views of national leadership, it also embraces the views of residents and other stakeholders to build a community with collectively preferred environments" [15]. In this context, we may consider urban design thinking as a potentially, problem framing and problem-solving approach to the complexity of the challenges of urban environments.

Tirana on the other hand, is facing difficulties finding the right strategy to urban development due to the rapid population, continuous transformation and historic transitional periods. Yet, it hosts valuable traces which mark the history of urban transformations.

From this perspective, Tirana's incoherence may be viewed as a test bed for new frameworks that integrate the formation of new urban areas with the preservation of values and ethics. Community participation is important in this sense because it inherits the past, local knowledge, and the link between land use and values.

1.5   Thesis Objective

This thesis undertakes urban design thinking as a strategy that arrives at an appropriate design solution having at its core target the users' needs. However, it aims to explore what contribution brings this new creative problem-solving approach to how urban environments should approach effectively to overcome the complexity of challenges. Furthermore, can we, through design thinking, deliver better collaborative design decisions and healthier environments for the users? Why is it so important at times living? With particular attention on the users, it highlights their importance as non-designers as an added value to the design process and discusses further development insights. Urban Design Thinking theorizes design as an alternative problem-solving process that can address complex issues, and works as a catalyst for co-created urban systematic solutions. Thus, introducing users to such an approach

and involving them to the design process strengthens the ecology of relationships between people and their environment.

Additionally, this thesis aims to discuss the theoretical framework contextualized on a real case project in Tirana, 'The Open Doors'. It outlines the potential that co-creation dynamics have to be further considered as a way to define and solve Tirana's urban wicked problems.

1.6   Scope of works

This study aims to uncover new urban methodologies to tackle emerging complex issues in urban environments. The focus of the study is Urban Design Thinking, explained as an adequate methodological framework that identifies urban wicked issues and provides effective solutions. The potency of it relies on the iterative process that accommodates

The focus of the study is ' The Open Doors' project, which aims to provide possible co-creating scenarios for sustainable urban development for a historically significant Tirana area that has numerous historic buildings, but is deteriorating due to a recent tendency of high-rise development.

First, 20 case studies are selected to explore collaboration in real-life settings, based on the scale of the project, co-creating actors, socio-spatial contexts, methods, and their respective purposes. The determinant identified elements are: 1) project scale; 2) the intent of the co-creation; 3) level of participation; 4) methods and tools; 5) roles and contributions; 6) interests and motivations for co-creation.

After, the research employs grounded theory to analyze the identified elements in a case project which shares similar aims to the case studies. The research is done to emphasize the potentiality of this initiative to make a significant change while maintaining the neighborhood architectural, urban, social and cultural values. 11 designers and the representatives of the neighborhood are interviewed. The reason why

I chose to interview the designers and citizen-designers, how they are denominated, is because they are the most important contributors of the design process.

1.7   Organization of the thesis

This thesis is organized in three main parts: The first section focuses on the creation of theoretical arguments and research strategy, while the second section focuses on grounded theory as a research strategy that informs the data collection and analytic technique used, followed by a discussion of the findings of the analysis. Finally, the thesis closes with some identified elements on the issue worth considered for further researched and implementations. As a result, the chapters corresponding to these components are arranged in the following order:

In the first chapter, within the theoretical framework of the needs for the cities to improve their planning and designing practices implied by urban transitions and the rapid diffusion of several tensions found in urban contexts, the reason for the research is contextualized via the transformation that Tirana has recently had. Thus, this chapter introduces the reader with the research questions.

In Chapter 2, through a general overview of the different methodologies in urbanism, the background of the research topic is further expanded and contextualized. After acknowledging cities wickedness and the fact that traditional methodologies need to improve their strategies to tackling the issues, the literature review brings forward Urban design Thinking as an adequate methodological framework starting from problem framing to problem solving.

Chapter 3 outlines the approach to the research method which is twofold. First, the research uses case study methodology to investigate a co-creation in real-life settings. The elements of co-creation identified from the case studies will be the basis for the case project analysis. Grounded Theory is the research approach for the second part of the analysis, which is done within an ongoing project 'The Open Doors'.

Structured and semi-structured interviews are conducted with the two key groups of stakeholders: the designers and the residents, that in this study are named citizen-designers.

In Chapter 4, the outcomes are conveyed through the concepts of purposes, advantages, co-creation, values and other new themes. Charts, maps, and participant statements are used to depict the findings.

Chapter 5, compares the themes findings by delving deeper into the different perspectives of designers and citizen-designers. This chapter seeks to give answers to the research questions, as well as insight into the study's significance and next steps for future researchers.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Design methodology in urbanism

The rational city's plan vision made by the Scottish urban theorist Patrick Geddes in 1915, as an outcome of a systemic survey and analysis, is still a core reference for modern planning's rational formulation. The Geddesian approach 'survey before plan,' considers the city an evolving organic city, stating that cities and towns' urban design problems are solved by gathering data and comprehensive information [16]. Unlike the former perception of the design process as intuitive, Geddes presents it as a rational problem-solving activity following a linear process that starts with a systematic examination of the environment and ends with contextually optimal solutions.

Later in the late 1960s, the "master plan' town planning method was gradually opposed by identifying planning as a behavioral spatial system rather than a physical product. In terms of urban design and systems planning, 'design' does not imply creating a physical form but rather the socio-spatial management of the system. In this context, no design operation performs without a sound understanding of all actors. Wilson [17] shares a similar framework on planning by relying on prediction system models before it is designed. His concept dwells on a relevance tree, presenting each task in phases.

Levin [18], following the same cyclical process, explicitly structured the process in a series of activities. The entire process should result in the ideal solution from a complete identification and selection process while keeping the same design process assumption based on the sequential activities as illustrated below in Table 1. Before arriving at a design solution, the process involves a considerable time of data processing to identify variables and parameters. Accordingly, this model provides a different viewpoint than its predecessor by prioritizing the process of designing.

Table 1. *The design process in planning according to Levin. Source: Levin (1966, p.*
9) [18]

The design process in planning according to Levin

1	The identification of design parameters.
2	The identification of independent variables.
3	The identification of dependant variables.
4	The identification of relationships among parameters and variables.
5	The identification of values of independent .
6	The identification of constraints governing dependant variables.
7	The identification of constraints governing designparameters.
8	The identification of values of the design parameters.
9	The identification of values of the design parameters.
10	The investigation of the consistency of values, relationships and constraints.
11	The comparison of, and selection from, alternative sets of parameters values.

Unlike Levin, Lynch [18] prioritizes research before design. His view supports a design-oriented planning approach similar to that of the design methods movement. The design, according to him, is generated by qualitative site analysis, specifying the objectives, and providing a detailed program.

After analyzing all of the critical viewpoints on design techniques and processes, Shirvani [19] proposes a radical method, as illustrated in Figure 5, that goes along with the movements of the 1960s, arguing that the formulation of goals and objectives for urban design should be based on facts rather than on a designer's interests and values [20].
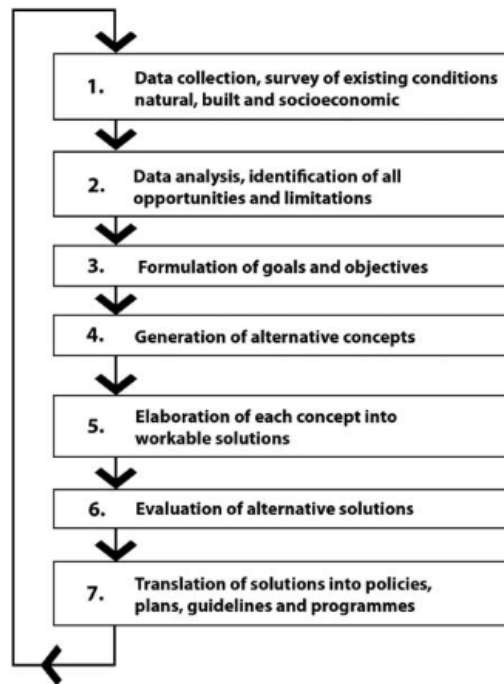
Figure 5. *The 'synoptic' urban design method by Shirvani. Source: Shirvani (1985, p. 111) [20]*

The major takeaway from this examination of urban design procedural models is that the lasting notion is primarily founded on a firm conviction in analyzing design and planning process, historically anchored in the design methodology school's early viewpoint. In this way, the shifting paradigms of contemporary design and science challenge the positivist ideology of induction and verification. Hillier et al. (1972) [21] introduced a new way of thinking about design epistemology, replacing the positivist research paradigm. Because of the paradigmatic shift in scientific philosophy, the link between knowledge and design cannot be viewed in the same manner it was previously. According to their major point, designers begin by approximating the first answer to their knowledge of the problem to create a cognitive map. The information is then utilized to test the preliminary assumption established at the beginning of the design process rather than building a solution.

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2.1.1. Addressing wickedness

Design epistemology also relates to the connection between analysis and design. The design was viewed as a problem-solving activity in the early stages of design theory [22]. With their arguments on the wicked (ill-defined) nature of planning and design, Rittel and Webber [23] fundamentally changed this concept. In contrast to the systems method, which presupposes a sequential process of gathering, analyzing, and synthesizing data for the planned solution, they take a different approach arguing that: *'For wicked problems, however, this type of scheme does not work. One cannot understand the problem without knowing its context; one cannot meaningfully search for information without the orientation of a solution concept; one cannot first understand, then solve (p. 162)'.* [23]

Their recognition expanded to account for a wider range of systemic networks that are interacting, open, and linked. Nonetheless, the vocabulary of 'wicked' advanced dramatically. Different authors developed similar concepts using adjectives like messy, unsolvable, disorganized, and contested to describe difficulties. In the 1990s, Frank Fischer was the first author in the Policy Sciences field to use the wicked issue idea significantly, claiming that wicked or intractable situations seem only to react to greater doses of involvement [24]. Fischer associated the wicked issues with stubborn, undisciplined, and unmanageable difficulties. He proposed that citizen-expert collaboration may be the key to overcoming a specific category of modern urban problems. The 2000s generally recognized the 'wicked environment' of current societal issues. Similar to Fischer [24], Rittel and Webber [23], Roberts [25] identify collaborative strategies with power distributed but not challenged, setting the foundation for a new wave of collaborative analysis, which is equally applicable to urban design and architecture.

2.1.2. Solving wickedness

Every attempt to build planning as a scientific subject is thoroughly dismantled by Rittel and Webber's (1973) landmark essay "Dilemmas in a General Theory of Planning" [23]. They demonstrated that planning issues are fundamentally distinct

from scientific problems, necessitating a fundamentally different approach. As a result, linear techniques that seek definite answers are inapplicable to planning issues. Instead, Rittel and Webber offered a planning model as an argumentation process where the issue and solution evolve progressively among the participants as a process of constant judging.

Today, wicked thinking is proving to be beneficial to planning theory. Wicked issues need unique working methods to frame and solve them. It is a vital juncture when fast change is driving designers to consider new ways of addressing problems and new ways of thinking about problems. We won't be able to do it alone, because individual understanding is just partial [26]. Rather, various fields' combined expertise must be channeled toward a shared objective, namely, solving the wicked issue.

Many engagement methods tend to focus on offering answers, but this desire may fall short of addressing the most pressing challenges at hand in a society filled with so-called wicked problems. Collaborative processes may create socially useful outputs while adapting to the possibilities and constraints of their unique and changing setting. They are founded on social negotiation and involvement and a thorough examination of current development problems and possibilities to achieve this goal. Thus, establishing new forms of co-creation provides a greater chance to better grasp and describe the complexity of the issues at hand to make them (more) practical. When residents are invited to a public hearing to debate a city plan, we have all heard the criticism that participation is reduced to simple tokenism. While this may be true in many cases, it seems worthwhile to shift the conversation to discuss different types of participation that serve other purposes. Identifying the various needs for participation and co-creation and catalyzing new ways of working and collaborating are crucial to address the significant challenges that urban societies face.

2.2 Tackling urban "Wicked Problems"- The Potential of Design Thinking

Due to the inherent ambiguity, complexity, and inevitability of normativity, planning issues are wicked problems [27] [23]. The co-creating city strategies are proliferating to address the complex and wicked issues that have arisen as a result of increasing urbanization challenges. They raise expectations for cities to quickly transition to a new paradigm when most cities and countries lack defined goals and strategies. As a result, cities, municipal planners, and other urban decision-makers must discover methods to align the parties' current expertise to recognize new opportunities that achieve long-term development to improve residents' quality of life. According to this interpretation, it should be established a holistic approach that identifies wicked and complex problems in which human interaction is employed to address the city's inherent urban and social issues.

Because it reframes these sorts of challenges in human-centric ways, design thinking has become a technique for tackling ill-defined or unrevealed difficulties (wicked problems). Although it is less known as a method in urban design and planning, its empathic, iterative, and innovative processes figure out ways to balance different demands and interests to better answers. Furthermore, design thinking involves visual techniques for processing and expressing complex challenges; creating visual diagrams, objects, and prototypes facilitates collaboration across heterogeneous teams. Indeed, the entire process contributes to building common values in our urban societies.

2.2.1. A new Design Methodology; Major perspectives on Design Thinking

Design Thinking was derived from the rationality of theory and practice incorporating science, human needs, creative and modern technology. There are many different accounts on Design thinking which might be categorized as a general theory of design, cognitive style, and organizational resource (Kimbell, 2011) [28]. As IDEO'S Tim Brown describes [29], DT is a human-centered approach to innovation.

Successful innovations can only be promoted by understanding the users' actual needs while balancing other elements. Understanding users means observing the utility behavior, examining what they like and what they do not, their demands and expectations for products and services, not leaving behind the obstacles they face. Brown defines this as a 'human-centered design ethos' [29], which achieves innovation through expertise, experiment, empathy, and collaboration. Therefore, DT does not develop linearly. A human-centered approach is a middle ground of organization-centered strategies and traditional technology [28]. It runs in iterative loops of hypotheses, applications, prototyping and testing. In his book *Introduction to Design*, Asimov [30] introduced the concept of iteration in the design process and gave a significant viewpoint on the perception of design thinking. Accordingly, analysis formulates the criteria and defines the goal, which is the key to the problem statement. Hence, a well-developed problem statement is followed by practical design problem-solving.

Design Thinking is an interdisciplinary process as well [31]. Not surprisingly, it has crossed the boundaries of being used only in the product's design process. Stimmel [32] argues this with the idea that DT comes in line with urban citizens' needs-sustainability transitions, new technologies, and, added to that, social inequalities. This multidisciplinary nature of DT allows public-private collaborations, building new co-design practices.

2.2.1.1 The five stages of Design Thinking

Design thinking is a non-linear, iterative approach that allows teams to understand their customers better, challenge assumptions, reframe issues, and develop and test creative solutions. The design thinking process, as illustrated in Figure 6, is divided into five distinct stages: empathy, definition, ideation, prototyping, and testing considered as the most effective for tackling challenges that are ill-defined or uncertain. It's crucial to notice that the design thinking phases are not always followed

in a straight line. Different stages in the user experience may stimulate fresh ideas or reveal new facts, inspiring new versions of previously completed phases.
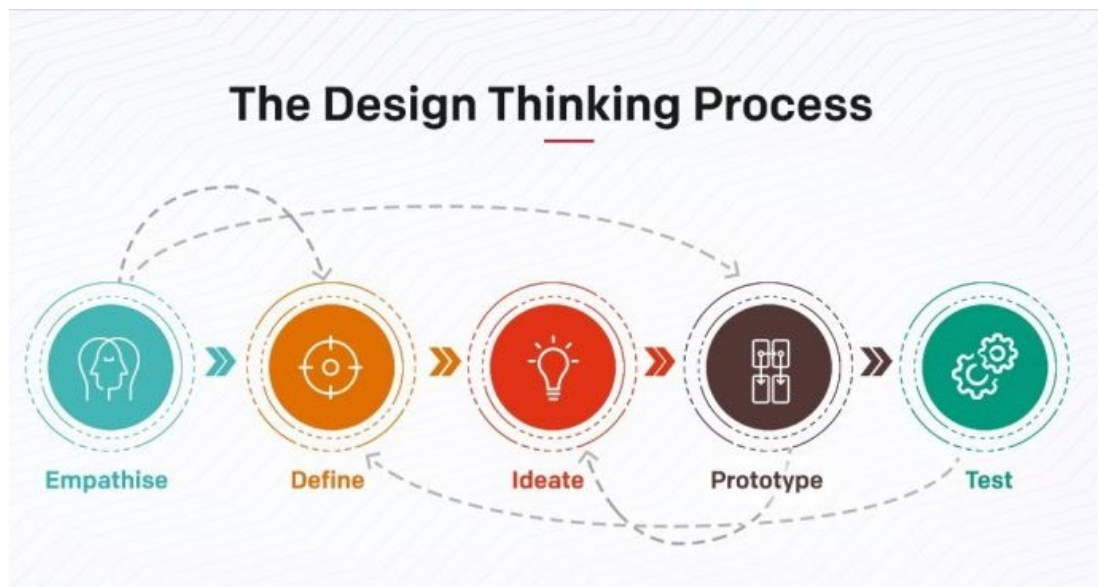
Figure 6. *The 5 Stages of Design Thinking. Souce: Interaction Design foundation*

The first stage of design thinking is **empathy**. This step is about absorbing users' points of view, worldviews, and introspections without bias. When tackling human-centric challenges, designers face an uphill battle if they don't try to grasp empathy. Empathy in design thinking creates a critical and required connection between the intended user and the product or service designed.

The following are some of the actions that are frequently done at this stage of the design thinking methodology:

- Inquiring about the opinions of subject matter experts.

- Taking a more personal approach to a problem to acquire a deeper grasp of a user's perspective.

- Having in-depth discussions with other designers regarding the subject.

- Immersion in a physical world is a method of learning.

Empathy is an essential step in the design thinking process because it helps identify the audience's motives and experiences, eventually interacting with the outcome. It is virtually difficult to solve a user problem without going through the empathy stage.

The defining stage follows the processes. This phase begins with creating a concise issue description that assures a human-centered approach by concentrating on the end-user. After empathizing, a designer applies what they have learned from their study to the human-centric challenge at hand, forming the problem statement. Designers will examine their findings from the empathy stage and focus on synthesizing that knowledge in this step. They articulate the issue or problem they must tackle with their design in this stage of the process.

Next is **the ideation stage**. The ability to innovate plays a significant role in the ideation stage. Designers who have thoroughly grasped the human experience during the empathy stage go on to brainstorming innovative solutions to the challenge at hand. Since there is no such thing as a "bad" concept in this process, designers develop solid habits of confidently presenting their ideas. The more ideas a team may generate at this stage, the more opportunities to research and test them to determine if they answer the user's problem.

The process continues with **the prototyping stage**. The objective of the prototype stage is to thoroughly comprehend any consequences or barriers associated with bringing the idea to reality. Prototyping should, in theory, reveal more user experience issues and provide designers with a better understanding of user behaviors, emotions, and expectations. Designers would have a difficult time fixing the problem thoroughly without testing a novel concept. The prototype of a concept is necessary at this stage, but the consequences are still open. Sketches, models, and digital representations of a concept are all examples of prototypes. Prototyping generally entails the production of low-cost, small-scale prototypes of the product. Specific features can be included to target specific problem-solving scenarios and create the environment for decision-making discussions about what works and what does not.

Testing is the last stage that finalizes the loop of the process. Actual users must create accurate data throughout the testing step of the design thinking process. Because

design thinking is based on iteration, many designers create numerous prototypes to evaluate various change aspects within their concept. It is common for testing to be an iterative process. During the testing stage, designers may expect a sequence of modifications, adjustments, and improvements. It is unusual for the testing phase to "restart" other design thinking stages like ideation or testing, as novel ideas may stimulate other possible solutions that necessitate a whole different approach. [34]

2.3. Design Thinking in urbanism

Design Thinking is user-centric and a problem-solving approach. Tim Brown [29] recognizes it as the convergence of *"what is desirable from a human point of view with what is logically feasible and economically viable."* Tom and David Kelley [33] defines DT as *"a methodology for innovating routinely."* While Dorst [34] defines it as *"an exciting new paradigm for dealing with problems in many professions".* Despite definitions and focuses, innovation and co-creation are the fundamental principles of DT. Urban Design Thinking follows the same innovation, co-creation processes and transfers them into an approach for co-creational urban development. If co-creation lacks in recent urban development methodologies, why not build a collaborative living environment?

A DT project starts with a significant design challenge that clarifies what, how and why to design for a target user profile. UDT furthermore analyzes the context and the stakeholders. UDT can help unlock the potential for co-creation of solutions that meet the unique needs of urban areas and their stakeholders. It involves identifying the needs of different urban actors, designing and implementing innovations through iterative development on a small-scale level, and allocating stakeholder resources.

By testing and iterating it addresses the obstacles of the issue at hand. Involving the users' perspectives, UDT fosters rapid user adaption by observing their lifestyles, behaviors, and habits and promoting their opinions, attitudes and values.

2.3.1 Synthesizing urban design thinking

Problem framing is frequently regarded as an essential aspect of problem-solving. The UDT method provides a methodological framework for continuous co-creation and user participation in urban area development, which allows identifying the problem holistically. It obtains a deep knowledge of the user's views and values, lifestyles and habits, behaviors and motivations, and achieves the highest likelihood of success by embracing the users' perspective right from the outset of the innovation activities.

In addition to previous general perspectives on Design Thinking, Norman [37] suggests that the design process should be more aligned with people and their requirements for the design to be effective. The d.school's philosophy, on the other hand, emphasizes spending time with potential users to understand their needs – primarily through ethnographic discussion and first-hand observation – and rapidly prototyping and testing options to learn from each iteration rather than create the final solution.

By emphasizing empathy, this thesis admits that 'Urban Design Thinking' embraces a user-centric, co-creating design approach and attempts to systematically lay out a series of 'spaces' or iterative steps that can lead to innovative designs that satisfy user needs. It is essential to consider this systematized method as worth analyzing the emerging views on the co-creation side of the Urban Design Thinking applied in urban design and planning.

2.3.1.1 Sense of place

Co-creation is intended to promote urban and territorial innovation through multi-actor processes, potentially becoming the instrument of long-term transformative arenas by strengthening the relationship between people themselves and people in the place. A place is a field of care [28], it is an essential source of individual and communal identity [29] and mainly is "the collection of meanings, beliefs, symbols, values, and feelings that individuals and groups associate with a

particular locality" [30]. In these lines, (re)creating connections and implications can enhance the sense of place implanted in the socio-physical context. It implies that relations among individuals and place rise out of their materiality; what assets are in a particular spot [31] are how they are utilized. Relations among individuals and places would thus give hints to sustainability and opportunities regarding progress/change. Urban co-creation strategies further contribute to new collective relations of people and places based on their transformative visions. Multiple narratives of place can be combined among community members revealing various understandings of place attached to their experiences. The meaning of the human experience, the emotions, and the thoughts accompanying it provides the foundation for place attachment [32]. In short, enabling co-design, explicit place strategies connect a concept of change/transformation by creating new stories about places, giving them knowledge about new habits and new relationships between people and places. Thus, the place turns into an attractor and a mode for advances by assembling changes in perspectives and relationships. It explicitly does by seeing how place changes in implications, connections, actual attributes, and connections set up among place and individuals. It also serves as a process of change. It implies that it is necessary to understand sustainability's standardized principles and investigate change dynamics. A dynamic understanding of place comes additionally following the agreement that urban areas are "transitionscapes" and, this way, open and capable of sustained change and development.

2.3.1.2 The value of Design

The common perception of architects and urban designers is to achieve aesthetic and social values, thereby forcing their ideals on users and society rather than enabling them to acquire buildings and spaces that suit their needs and improve their societal values. Matters need to be discussed explicitly when they still have the power to make a difference before or during the design process. The focus is how and why user-centered approaches that include the users in the design process distinguish values and what is meant by value.

There is a growing concern about 'value added' by urban design practices in the last 15 years. The majority of those who exchange views about value in urban Design often use the everyday vocabulary of economic value found in real estate and environmental economics. On the other hand, the value may occur in various settings, not all of which are best explored economically. It is essential to define and focus the discourse as a societal value attached to physical spaces. If the design process enables the emergence of values and definitions of use, the product or the output leaves space for exploring different modes of using it [33]. Thus, the values that emerged by the design process are inscribed in the designed product. When the design context differs from the user context, the script will not be powerful enough to reflect user behavior in the way that it was intended [34]. In accordance with this, the outcome will likely correspond to the values and beliefs of the future users if they were involved as co-designers in the process. As such, the values embedded within the design are also communicated to the socio-cultural fabric of a city. The social value of public space is determined by the amount of information given to people to increase their commitment to the community, translated to social trust, mutual understanding, shared beliefs, and positive behaviors [35]. In this respect, creating places that strengthen the user-space relationship by growing the sense of place shapes the attitude of a community.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

This chapter outlines the approach to the research method developed in two phases. First, the study employs the case study methodology apt to analyze a phenomenon regarding real-life environments. Studying what works in practice is considered appropriate to find answers to why and how questions. The case studies are reviewed from a methodical perspective, approached as an action research case, aiming to uncover methods used, strategies, experience, interpretations, challenges, limitations, and reflections, using multiple sources because of their explorative nature. This qualitative analysis is the first step to empathizing with the problem. It aims to review the design process of such projects according to the co-creation methodology and discuss the link between user participation and collectively preferred environments.

Second, this study focuses on 'The Open Doors' project that falls in the scope of this thesis research because of the collaborative approach followed for the developing urban zone. Structured and semi-structured interviews are conducted with the two key groups of stakeholders: the designers and the residents, that in this study are named citizen-designers.

3.1 An introduction to the case study methodology

Apart from the literature review that raises the main concerns related to the research topic, in cases of newly emerged approaches such as Urban Design Thinking, which urban design practices hardly mention explicitly, it is needful to review models in practice. A case study as a research approach is helpful to employ an in-depth, multi-faceted understanding of a complex issue in its real-life context. Table 1 illustrates multiple definitions of the case study research approach.

Table 2. Case study definitions. Source: BMC [42]

Author	Definition
Stake [36]	*"A case study is both the process of learning about the case and the product of our learning" (p.237)*
Yin [37]**,** [38]	*"The all-encompassing feature of a case study is its intense focus on a single phenomenon within its real-life context...[Case studies are] research situations where the number of variables of interest far outstrips the number of datapoints" (Yin 1999 p. 1211, Yin 1994 p. 13)* *"A case study is an empirical inquiry that* *• Investigates a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real-life context, especially when* *• The boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident." (Yin 2009 p18)*
George and Benedett [39]	*"...an instance of a class of events [where] the term class of events refers to a phenomenon of scientific interest...that the investigator chooses to study with the aim of developing theory regarding causes of similarities or differences among instances (cases) of that class of events" (p. 17)"*
Miles and Huberman [40]	*"...a phenomenon of some sort occurring in a bounded context" (p. 25)*
Green and Thorogood [41]	*"In-depth study undertaken of one particular 'case', which could be a site, individual or policy" (p. 284)*

A case study is defined in multiple ways, as illustrated in Table 2, depending on the variable interests of the researcher. However, captured overall, it offers insights on 'how,' 'what' and 'why' questions. That being the case, this study relies on the case study methodology to examine co-creation in real-life applied projects and obtain familiar and comparing elements for further analysis.

3.2 Case studies selection

The output is taken from the theoretical exploration of Urban Design Thinking (see Chapter 2). The universal element, co-creation, that collaboration in real-life settings brings, is further understood through case studies. The first step in the research goes through each project mentioned in the literature to design and make something together. In a total of 50 case studies, only 20 of them, as mentioned in Table 3, are chosen for further analysis as the most appropriate project implementations to the aim of the research. The basis for the selection is the scale of the project, co-creating actors, socio-spatial contexts, methods, and their respective purposes.

Furthermore, another notable highlight while evaluating the case projects was the location. There could have been a whole table of reference projects found in The Netherlands as the country with the most applied co-creation practices; nevertheless, the project location association to the motivations for citizens' participation was compulsive.

Figure 8, shows that the developed countries' primary motivations to be involved in the design process are gaining knowledge about planning or roleplaying. That stated, their role is significant in design decision-making. On the contrary, as illustrated in Figure 7, the projects such as in Kenya, Ecuador, or other South African countries aim to bring better living conditions and a more developed social economy. The residents are primarily involved in providing inputs to the professionals about the struggles they face in the public services, where there is, in their daily life.

Figure 9, shows all of the case studies geographically distributed to their respective location on the world map.

Table 3. *Case studies selection. Courtesy of the author*

No	Case Sudy
1	People Make Parks/ NYC
2	Post-it-note city/ Toronto
3	The community arena in Finkenstein, Austria
4	The community arena in Carnisse – Rotterdam, The Netherland
5	The community arena in Agniesebuurt – Rotterdam, The Netherlands
6	The Dashilar renewal project- Beijing
7	Panevezys Former Air Base Urban Game
8	Delft City Game
9	La foresta Unilmited cities DIY, Ecuador
10	Urban Think Tank low cost housing, South Africa
11	Informal settlement upgrading in cities in Kenya
12	Storytelling Cafe: A Media and Storytelling Workshop
13	Sunday Salon Series with Clayton Patterson
14	Case Study: Citizen Proposals in Linz
15	Lommel uses Citizenlab to involve citizens in urban planning decisions
16	How to Reach 25% of Your Population at the Platform Launch
17	The Queen's Market Good Growth Programme
18	Case Study: 10,000 citizens partake in Kortrijk's digital referendum
19	Strathmore, Let's Make A Park!
20	Concept House Village Lab
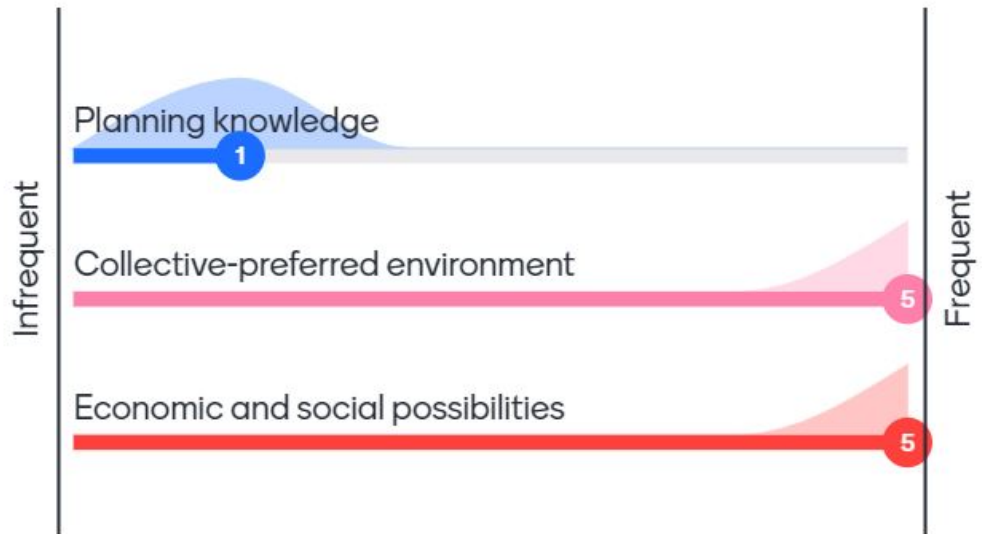
Figure 7. Poor developed countries. Citizens' motivations chart to participate.
Courtesy of the author
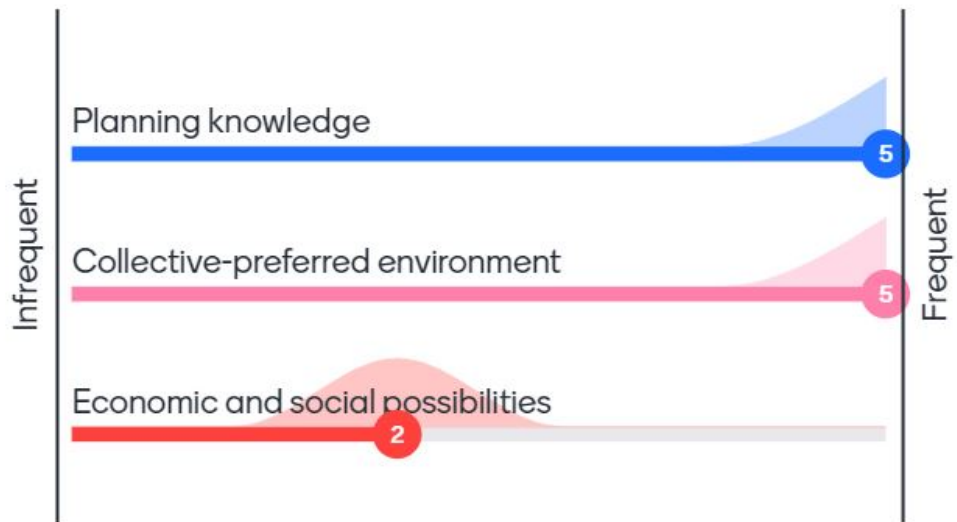
Figure 8. High-development countries. Citizens' motivations chart to participate.
Courtesy of the author

CASE STUDIES MAP DISTRIBUTION

2 TORONTO	4 THE NETHERLANDS	6 BEIJING	8 THE NETHERLANDS	10 SOUTH AFRICA	12 NEW YORK	14 POLAND	16 BELGIUM	18 BELGIUM	20 THE NETHERLANDS
1 NEW YORK	3 AUSTRIA	5 THE NETHERLANDS	7 LITHUANIA	9 ECUADOR	11 KENYA	13 NEW YORK	15 AUSTRIA	17 BELGIUM	19 AUSTRALIA
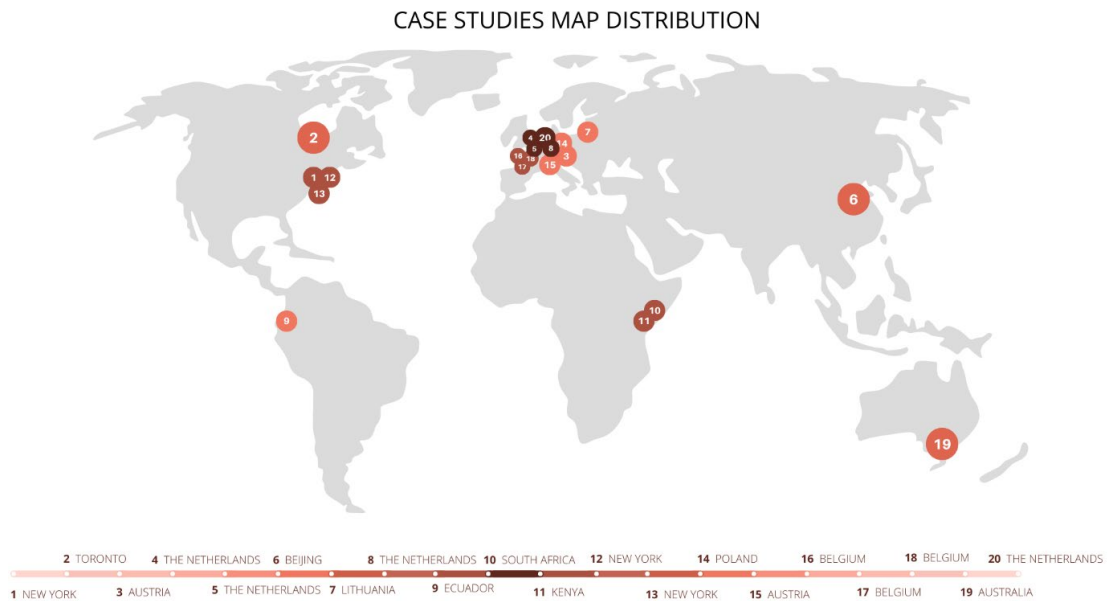
Figure 9. *Case studies location map. Courtesy of the author.*

3.3.1. Case study analysis: six common elements of co-creation

In search for identifying 'how' and 'what' questions of the case projects, the attention shifted to the elements that all of them intersect: they either converge or diverge within the category. The determinant identified elements are: 1) project scale; 2) the intent of the co-creation; 3) level of participation; 4) methods and tools; 5) roles and contributions; 6) interests and motivations for co-creation.

Given the diversity of the application contexts, the project scale is the first element identified. The need for user's manifestation in practice is crucial for a successfully implemented initiative in urban contexts, especially when their Involvement is decisive for the continuity of the process. Despite their importance, this task remains a challenge. In practice, results show that it is difficult finding the right people. There is usually observed a decreasing level of interest, lack of motivation and interaction and difficulties understanding their role. Projects on a neighborhood scale are thus more common compared with those on a city scale.

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While the purpose is the cornerstone of co-creation, findings show that applying the suitable methods according to scale factors leads to more effective outcomes. Consequently, the purpose of co-creation mainly counts on these three factors, shown in the schema of Figure 10. A commonly accepted description of co-creation is making something together, a situation where people collaborate towards a goal. It can be learning together, a situation where they share and build knowledge. In many instances, both goals merge mutually.

Figure 10. *Case Studies; Influencing elements of purpose of co-creation. Courtesy of the author*

However, one crucial element to keep the project going and make it meaningful is introducing effective methods and tools to receive a growing recognition of the process. A tool here needs to be understood in the broad range. The methods and tools vary from actions, thoughts to signs and things, depending on the scale of the project, level of participation, and purpose.

Results show that there are tools for shaping interactions, implementing actions, facilitating thoughts, evaluating and anticipating outcomes. The word cloud illustrated in Figure 11, presents an overview of physical, digital, and socio structures methods and tools that are used in the 20 selected studies. As shown, workshops, meetings, printed visual tools and web platforms are the most iterated.

Figure 11. *Case studies; methods and tools word cloud. Courtesy of the author.*

It is stated that producing knowledge 'in the real world' and 'for the real world' can catalyze rapid transformations [43]. The active involvement of the users from the early stages provides specific knowledge based on their needs, experiences and expectations. Knowledge is provided by giving feedback as storytellers, answering questions of interviews and surveys, posting notes; voting by using voting boards or digital platforms; and contributing to the decision-making via stimulating software, APPS or virtual mappings. All the methods mentioned above and tools ensure a co-created vision and promote the users to be the process shapers rather than just responders — eventually, their contribution role shifts to a co-creation position. Furthermore, analysis reveals that different project scales require different levels of participation and methods, as previously illustrated in the schema in Figure 8. Taking up this conclusion, I uncover the dynamics of these three elements.

3.3.1.1 Case studies: elements dynamics

The interaction of the three elements is interrelated. Figure 10 illustrates the dynamics of the variables. The space of interaction varies from the neighborhood scale to the city scale. I refer to limited project interventions within a particular block with neighborhood-scale, such as playgrounds, small plazas and parks, zone revitalization, and housing upgrading. At the same time, city-scale case studies are more significant areas that belong to everybody, such as main squares, central parks, city centers, commercial market zones, and significant district transformations.

Results show that the bigger the project's scale, the higher the level of participation (see figure 12). A big-scale project is more complex, the use purpose is vast and it requires broader interactions. Eventually, more people are involved. In contrast to a neighborhood playground, for instance, that engages only the users living within the block.
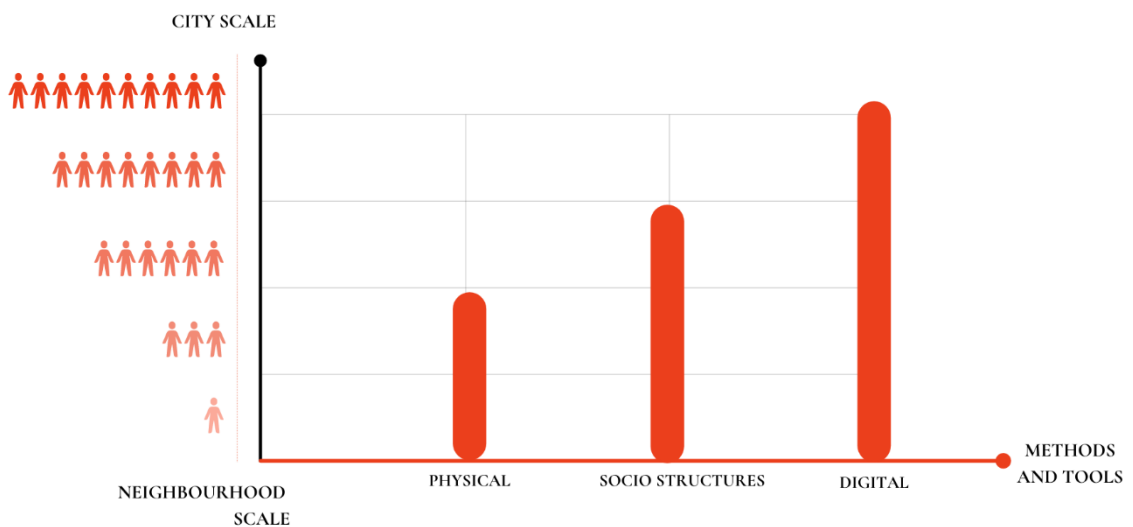
Figure 12. *Case studies; Purpose elements dynamics. Courtesy of the author.*

What is notable here are the methods and tools used according to the project scale. For a more comprehensive analysis, I grouped them into three main categories, according to Table 4, conforming to the mode of the approach: physical, socio-structural, and digital. All of the neighborhood-scale projects involve the residents

physically. First of all, because the level of participation is low, secondly, the process is easily manageable, and third, it builds stronger community relationships. Socio structures are implemented physically and digitally, and they usually follow a hierarchical approach, divided into groups. Each of the groups is responsible for their role only.

Table 4. *Case studies; Sub categories of methods and tools. Courtesy of the author.*

MODE OF THE METHODS AND TOOLS

PHYSICAL	SOCIO-STRUCTURAL	DIGITAL
Meetings	Community forum	Simulating software
Interviews	Community center	APPS
Storytelling	Community newspaper	Virtual mapping
Workshops	Urban games	Digital referendum
Post-it notes	Housing testing	Community websites
Printed visual tools	Sociocratics elections	Web-based platforms
Voting boards		
Audio techniques		
Video techniques		

Different from small-scale interventions, particular emphasis is given to digital methods and tools (see figure 13). The focus here is using the citizens' digital footprints for inclusive data-driven planning. Widespread use of the Internet, smartphones and other digital devices allows everyone to share their points of view at any time. Therefore, it is frequently regarded as a way to deal with the flaws that traditional processes have.

Examples indicate that the digital technology tools increase the number of participants and represent socioeconomic groups and expand the volume and diversity of data available. The digital referendum in Kortrijk, Belgium, had an impressive involvement rate of almost 10,000 of all 60,000 citizens, where 62% of them used smartphones, 31% desktops, and 7% used their tablets. These active users voiced their ideas and concerns in no less than 4.829 votes, 462 ideas, and 371 comments.

On the lower level, the citizens act as receivers, meaning they access public projects through different digital platforms. As contributors, they act when they are using these tools for sharing opinions. The highest level involves them as stakeholders. They discuss ideas, decide on multiple configurations, propose other options and vote on them.

The case study in Lommel, Belgium, is noticeable. The city council aimed to transform the station environment into a high-quality residential neighborhood with good access to the city center in the future years. That is why she desired to include as many folks as possible. The users were invited to share their ideas with other citizens via a website platform. Within 45 days, the platform had 2,100 monthly visitors, 81 registered citizens, 15 ideas, 168 votes, and 19 comments.

Figure 13. *Case studies; Poste- it note city. Sidewalk Labs's generative design tool enables visitors to change design parameters and evaluate the resulting neighborhood. Source: Places Journal [81]*

The 'Post-it notes city' project at Quayside, Toronto, experimented with high-tech data collection, applied in-person. They built an installation of "colorful, rolling, modular, stackable, playful interactive tools," illustrated in Figure 14, which generate "input + discussion + experimentation + new ideas + action," according to exhibit designers Daily Tous Les jours [44]. Visitors interact with a generative map of a virtual neighborhood. They alter building shape by turning large wooden knobs according to height variation, density, the street grid, and the distribution of green space. When the desired parameters are set, mapmakers push a happy- or sad-face button to give their feedback.

The last elements observed are interests and motivations for co-creation. Several sorts of costs are involved in co-creation processes (i.e., time, knowledge, management). Individuals weigh the expenses of participating in such procedures against the rewards they will get. The goals, resources, and expectations about the value of the outcomes all influence the desire to participate. It encompasses variables other than monetary motivations: social, cultural, technological, and psychological considerations play a role. Incentives can be genuine and apparent for all stakeholders, but there are also times when the advantages are less tangible, ambiguous, or not equal for all. The plurality of interests counts in such circumstances. It may be challenging to inspire individuals whose advantages are less apparent when the interests or benefits are diverse when co-creation is used as feedback or a test circumstance. For example, when there is no shared ownership or no immediate visible improvement for all participants. In the studies cases, engagement motivations are frequently related to building better connections with the community and having a collective preferred space. The context factor is the predominant element for determining the incentives for co-creation. The word cloud in Figure 14 presents the incentives mentioned in the studied cases. To summarize, these six factors have an impact on the entire dynamics of co-creation when considered collectively. Their dynamics does never stand alone; they interact, relate, and affect one another.

Figure 14. *Case studies; Co-creators incentives for participating word cloud.*
Courtesy of the author.

3.3 An introduction to the Epistemological Approach to Research

A qualitative method, especially the grounded theory research strategy, is best suited to a study centered on the experience. The grounded theory technique is a qualitative research method that uses a collection of methods to construct an inductively derived grounded theory about a phenomenon. The main goal of grounded theory is to explain a phenomenon by defining its essential parts and classifying their links to the environment and process of the experiment. The objective moves from broad to particular without losing sight of what makes a study's subject distinctive. [55]. It specifies the procedures of asking questions and drawing comparisons to inform and guide investigation and promote thinking. The research questions, for example, must be open and broad rather than created as particular hypotheses, and the emergent theory must account for a phenomenon that is important to participants.

Data collection is conducted by theoretical sampling, based on theoretically relevant notions. In the early phases of many investigations, open sampling techniques of identifying persons, objects, or documents are used. In the subsequent stages, systematic relational or variational sampling is commonly used to discover data that either supports or restricts the application of the categories. This method of combining data gathering and analysis is also intended to improve insights and explain the parameters of the emerging hypothesis.

The specific 'phenomena' that I focused on is the experience of co-creation and the dynamics that derive in the 'Open Doors' case project. Located in a centerpiece, significant neighborhood of Tirana, it aims to generate potential co-creational scenarios for sustainable urban development. The result is a lengthy explanation that recognizes where co-creation themes between designers and citizen-designers divide and intersect.

3.4. Case project 'The Open Doors'

The project area is located in one of the most significant neighborhoods of Tirana, 485 m distance from "Skënderbej" square, a centerpiece of the city dedicated only for pedestrians. Four central axes encircle it: toward North-West by the old Dibra Street; to the east by the Saraçëve Street; toward the west by the Ali Begeja Street; by Qemal Stafa Street the southern front. This neighborhood represents an urban fragment with one of the last remaining parts of Tirana old Town, a compound of old ottoman houses, glimpses of the famous Tirana's extensive gardens, and modern pre-WW2 western-inspired villas. Nearby, it has the newest one of the most visited destinations of Tirana's urban life, the New Bazar.

'The Open Doors' project aims to generate potential scenarios for sustainable urban development for a very significant neighborhood of Tirana that hosts several historical buildings (like the Begeja family house) but faces deterioration and a recent trend for high rise development. Therefore, the neighborhood needs to be

reconceptualized by following today's city demands while introducing a high spatial quality for the area and preserving the cultural heritage.

3.4.1. Scope of intervention

The proposed interventions are not limited to the site. Still, they should include the entire site of the project, indicating the accessibility and the connection paths of the site with the surroundings. It is also crucial for them to show how the proposed porosity will be managed and how it will affect the actual borders, remaining proportional to the extension of the parcels indicated in the Cadastral Map provided in the Site Database.

There should be at least one primary connection to the New Bazar. The level of accessibility should be differentiated together with the various landscape function (gardens, pathways, and squares), indicating the materials and type of vegetation and paving. The new interventions should highlight the architectonic and historic qualities of the existing buildings, standing to recollect past experiences. It is strongly suggested that the new proposals be contemporarily reinterpreted, bearing in them the character of the traditional architecture and the genius loci.

The interventions should indicate the proposed functions, and the volumetrics adapted to them specifying the activities. There should be at least one building reserved for cultural activities as a Francophonie Center and an Exhibition Space; Meeting Space and a place for Tourism Information.

The new densification scheme for the area should be indicated considering:

1.   The need for preserving the contained scale of the neighborhood

2.   The need of the inhabitants for new spaces to host new commercial activities such as small hotels, shops, bars, restaurants.

3.   An equilibrated ratio in between build form /outdoor space privileging the second one.

The proposed interventions should schematically indicate the new buildings:

1. Quantified (square meters & cubic meters) and clearly delineated volumetric extension (The underground included)

2. Architectonic Characters: materiality, the porosity of the skin, skyline.

3.4.2. Goals and ambitions

The intervention intents to:

1. Revive the neighborhood, by transforming the area into an essential and attractive pole with a mix of traditional and contemporary services.

2. Preserve a part of the history of the city.

3. Bring into focus the local inhabitants for the real value of their properties (historical, cultural, anthropological and economic values).

4. Treat the built environment as a dynamic space that is open to change but responds to the needs of the landowners for additional space for housing or commercial use.

5. Enhance the connectivity with the rest of the city, the Skanderbeg Square, Pazari i Ri, Medreseja, and win back the permeability of the area by introducing new connecting itineraries.

3.4.3. The social dimension

One of the project's main goals is to have a social impact, enhance the sense of the community, and bring into focus the local inhabitants for the actual value of their properties. Having face-to-face interaction and collaboration with the landowners and

the neighborhood has been an innovative framework that has hardly been applied in projects of the same kind in the capital city and at the national level. The Francophonie Embassy and the organizers have first informed the landowners about the organization of the competition. Then, they have followed several meetings involving them as a critical component of having a sustainable, human-centered development of the area. The aim is to grasp more of their daily lives, understand their actual needs and desires, and express their wishes and demands for the neighborhood.

The first meeting (see Figure 15) with the locals was a general introduction of the central concept that generated fruitful discussions, collaboration, and suggestions, all considered for the project design brief and guideline. The locals, who are the landowners of most buildings and the neighborhood area, favored a more economic development strategy for long-term benefit. These benefits can be more sustainable than its redevelopment with high rise housing, especially while tourism thrives and requests authentic experiences.

Figure 15. 'The open doors' project first meeting with landowners. Source: TUY C Instagram page [41]'

A second meeting (see Figure 16) was organized with the neighborhood to inform them of the evolution of the competition, which also had high interest and participation.

Figure 16. *'The open doors' project second meeting with landowners. Source: TUY C Instagram page [41]*

3.5 Grounded Theory as a Research Approach

The Grounded Theory scheme applied in this study is first supported by an empathic   stage. As adapted from the Design Thinking stages, empathy is the first stage to gaining a greater understanding of the context, users, and interconnections between the various stakeholders. Pointedly, due to the complexity of 'The open doors' project, as described in Chapter 3.4, it was crucial to go through a long empathic process to understand the context, the project and its purpose, and precisely the unitedly aim of the project residents' proposal for developing their neighborhood.

I was a potential participant in the TUYC21 competition organized by the French Embassy in collaboration with Polis University for accepting project proposals. As such, I did a close observation of the neighborhood, which was advantageous for understanding on-ground needs, requirements, and the strong relations of the residents to their neighborhood. Surprisingly enough, I encountered an urban context strongly driven by the community. This observation underpins the statement that the citizen voice, needs, demands, and collective ideas are vital in the co-creational processes of urban developments.

Moreover, one of the competition's noted dates, valuable to mention for the relevance of this study, was the 17-th of March, in which I was also involved. All of the participants had the opportunity to join the 1-st webinar, structured as a workshop. The 'GET TO KNOW DESIGN THINKING' was a one-day online workshop, whose agenda is illustrated in Figure 17, organized by the Hellenic Design Centre. HDC is the first and most experienced provider of complete Design support services to private and public sector organizations, assisting them in problem-solving and pushing innovation into services and processes by placing people at the center. The workshop aimed to introduce the competing teams Design Thinking as a creative and sustainable problem-solving methodology focusing on the final user's needs.

17 MARCH, 2021
Zoom & Miro Platform

AGENDA	
WEDNESDAY, MARCH 17TH 2021	
13:30 - 13:50 CET	WELCOME & INTRODUCTIONS
13:50 - 14:15 CET	INTRODUCTION TO DESIGN
14:15 - 14:25 CET	COFFEE BREAK
14:25 - 14:45 CET	PHASE 1 - EMPATHIZE
14:45 - 15:05 CET	DESIGN IN ACTION – USE OF A DESIGN THINKING TOOL Via Miro platform
15:05 - 15:15 CET	PHASE 2 - IDEATION
15:15 - 15:35 CET	DESIGN IN ACTION – USE OF A DESIGN THINKING TOOL Via Miro platform
15:35 - 15:45 CET	PHASE 3 - PROTOTYPE
15:45 - 16:00 CET	PHASE 4 - IMPLEMENTATION
CLOSING REMARKS	

Figure 17. 'GET TO KNOW DESIGN THINKING' Workshop agenda. Souce: Hellenic Design Center.

The workshop covered the four stages of Design Thinking by introducing design thinking tools. The empathizing stage was done by using the stakeholder map tool split into 4 steps as illustrated in figure 18, by placing notes on the stakeholder map scale according to the ranking. The scale, which included the core, direct and direct stakeholders, determined the level of importance.
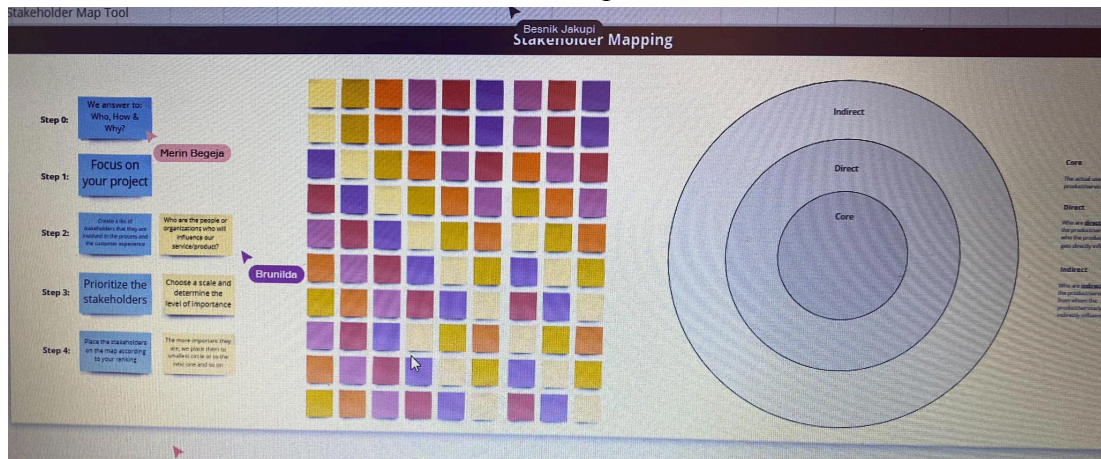
Figure 18.'GET TO KNOW DESIGN THINKING' ; Stakeholder's scale mapping. Courtesy of the author.

After all of the stakeholders were identified, the participants categorized them according to the three selected scales, as figure 19 and 20 illustrates.
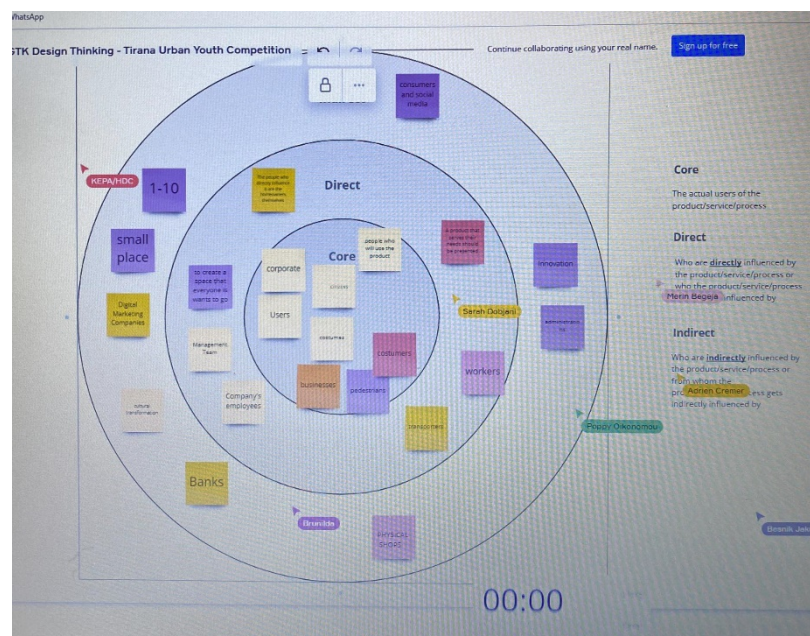
Figure 19. 'GET TO KNOW DESIGN THINKING' ; Identifying the stakeholders. Courtesy of the author.
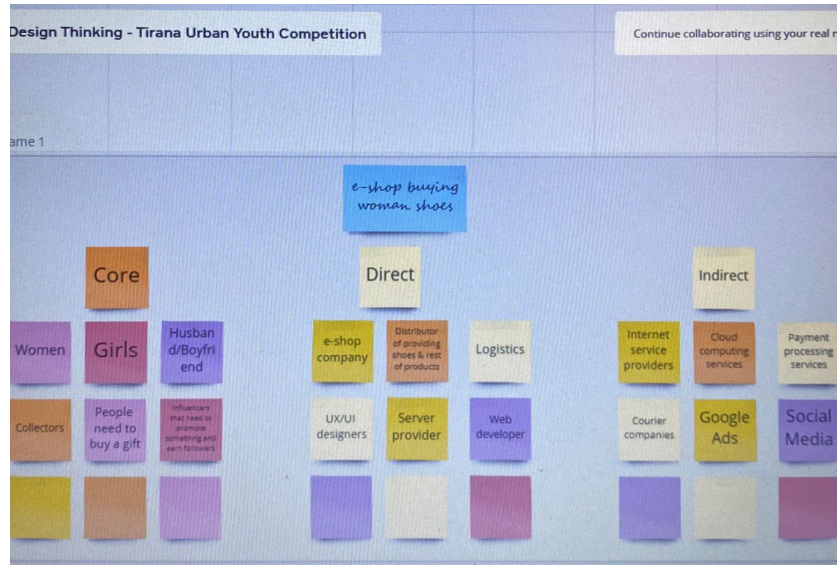
Figure 20. *'GET TO KNOW DESIGN THINKING'; Stakehloders categorization. Courtesy of the author.*

All the elements identified in the empathizing phase were later used in the user journey map as a practical tool for the ideation phase. Figure 19 illustrates that a user journey map is built up of 4 elements: the user profile, user experience, time and cost.

The prototyping and implementation phase were theoretically explained through different examples.

Although the hypothetical case was that of the e-shop woman buying shoes, the process and the approach is the same, even if applicable in larger-scale projects, in this case, 'The Open Doors.' Moreover, both of the tools, the stakeholder scale map, post-it notes, as well as the user journey map are tools emphasized in the case studies analysis.

Comparing both project scales and purposes, we may anew conclude that Design Thinking arrives at a reasonable design problem solution because of its iterative and multidisciplinary nature.

GROUNDED RESEARCH METHODOLOGY SCHEME

1	2	3	4	5	6
EMPATHIZING	INNITIAL PURPOSIVE SAMPLING	DATA ANALYZIS	THEORITICAL SAMPLING	DATA ANALYZIS	CO-CREATION DYNAMICS ARE IDENTIFIED

Methods

• Context knowledge • 'TUYC 21' Competiton potential participant • ' GET TO KNOW DESIGN THINKING' Workshop participant	• Participant observation	• Open coding	• Individual, open-ended, semi-structured interviews with citizen representatives. • Individual,structured interviews with the design professionals	• Axial coding • Descriptive analyzis	•
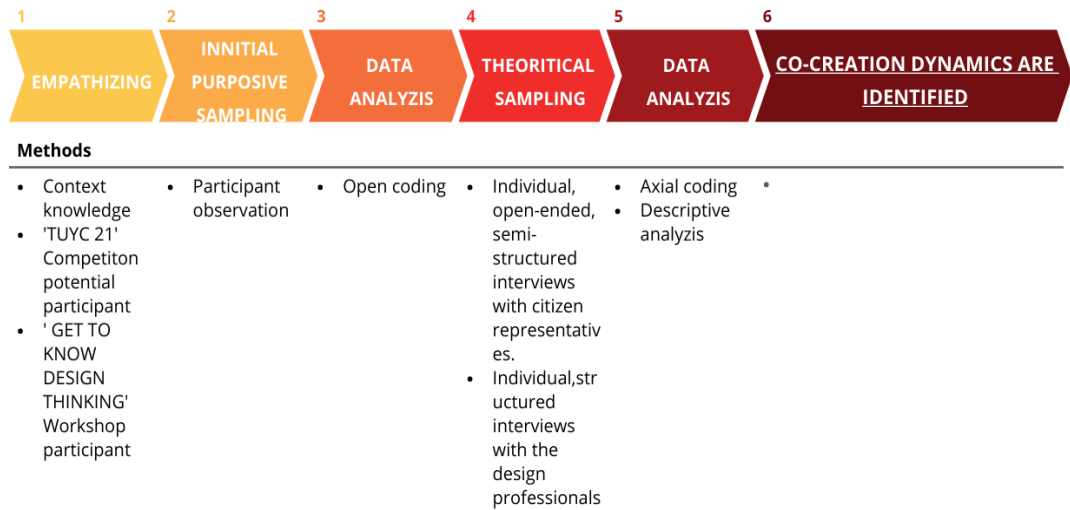
Figure 21*. Grounded research methodology scheme. Courtesy of the author.*

Referring to the Grounded Research Methodology scheme in Figure 21, the first step in the research is the initial purposive sampling. The intent is to uncover the main aims of the project and the implicit co-creation initiatives. I prioritized Merin, as my appropriate fit for initial sampling, because his stand towards the project is diverse. His profile and interests towards the project are as illustrated in table 5.

Table 5. Initial Sampling interviewee; Merin's profile. Courtesy of the author.

INITIAL SAMPLING INTERVIEWER
Merin's profile
Student in the third year of Architecture at Polis University.
Resident in the neighbourhood.
His family owns Begeja house (cultural heritage building).
Participant in the neighbourhood's developing discussions.
Participant in TUYC21' Competition.

The method for data collection was several face-to-face and Zoom meetings because it allowed for more interaction and more in-depth questions. During the meetings, I asked semi-structured how, what and why questions about elements that emerged from the case study analysis: the intent, participation level, roles and contributions, and their interests and motivations. Examples of the questions are as followed:

'How did your initiative start?'

'Why are you taking it? What is your primary purpose?'

'What other ideas emerge from in-neighborhood meetings?'

'How was your idea accepted by the organizers? '

'What was your exact contribution? '

'Did you find the neighbor's contribution collaborative? How did it shape the process?'

'Would you be interested in continuing the collaboration in further processes?'

The first step in data analysis was coding the interviews in NVIVO, as illustrated in Figure 22, a qualitative data analysis software that allows manual analyizs of unstructured text audio, video, and image data, including (but not limited to) interviews, focus groups, surveys, and journal articles

Figure 22. *Snapshot from NVIVO showing the interviews listing. Courtesy of the author.*

The transcription informed the theoretical sampling of the meeting with Merin in which the common themes and the criteria for the people interview selection were identified.

The attributes that determined the selection of theoretical sampling are as follows in table 6.

Table 6. Theoritical sampling interviewing groups. Courtesy of the author.

THEORITICAL SAMPLING INTERVIEWING GROUPS

---

1. THE DESIGN PROFFESSIONALS
   different fields of design, architecture and urban planning.

2. THE RESIDENTS' REPRESENTATIVES
   involved the most during the process.

The themes that emerged through open coding were: Participating actors, co-creating interests and motivations, benefits of collaborating, potentials of resident's contribution, involving design stages, added values of the design process, potentials and limitations, sense of community and place, expected outcomes.

The Grounded Theory scheme applied in this study is first supported by an empathic   stage. As adapted from the Design Thinking stages, see figure x , empathy is the first stage to gaining a greater understanding of the context, users, and interconnections between the various stakeholders. Pointedly, due to the complexity of 'The open doors' project, as described in Chapter 3.6, it was crucial to go through a long empathic process to understand the context, the project and its purpose, and precisely the unitedly aim of the project residents' proposal for developing their neighborhood.

I was a potential participant in the TUYC21 competition organized by the French Embassy in collaboration with Polis University for accepting project proposals. As such, I did a close observation of the neighborhood, which was advantageous for understanding on-ground needs, requirements, and the strong relations of the residents to their neighborhood. Surprisingly enough, I encountered an urban context strongly driven by the community. This observation underpins the statement that the citizen voice, needs, demands, and collective ideas are vital in the co-creational processes of urban developments.

Moreover, one of the competition's noted dates, valuable to mention for the relevance of this study, was the 17-th of March, in which I was also involved. All of the participants had the opportunity to join the 1-st webinar, structured as a workshop. The 'GET TO KNOW DESIGN THINKING' was a one-day online workshop, whose agenda is illustrated in Figure 23, organized by the Hellenic Design Centre. HDC is the first and most experienced provider of complete Design support services to private and public sector organizations, assisting them in problem-solving and pushing innovation into services and processes by placing people at the center. The workshop aimed to introduce the competing teams Design Thinking as a creative and sustainable problem-solving methodology focusing on the final user's needs.

17 MARCH, 2021
Zoom & Miro Platform

AGENDA	
WEDNESDAY, MARCH 17TH 2021	
13:30 - 13:50 CET	WELCOME & INTRODUCTIONS
13:50 - 14:15 CET	INTRODUCTION TO DESIGN
14:15 - 14:25 CET	COFFEE BREAK
14:25 - 14:45 CET	PHASE 1 - EMPATHIZE
14:45 - 15:05 CET	DESIGN IN ACTION – USE OF A DESIGN THINKING TOOL Via Miro platform
15:05 - 15:15 CET	PHASE 2 - IDEATION
15:15 - 15:35 CET	DESIGN IN ACTION – USE OF A DESIGN THINKING TOOL Via Miro platform
15:35 - 15:45 CET	PHASE 3 - PROTOTYPE
15:45 - 16:00 CET	PHASE 4 - IMPLEMENTATION
CLOSING REMARKS	

Figure 23. 'GET TO KNOW DESIGN THINKING' Workshop agenda. Souce: Hellenic Design Center.

The workshop covered the four stages of Design Thinking by introducing design thinking tools. The empathizing stage was done by using the stakeholder map tool split into 4 steps as illustrated in figure 18, by placing notes on the stakeholder map scale according to the ranking. The scale, which included the core, direct and direct stakeholders, determined the level of importance.
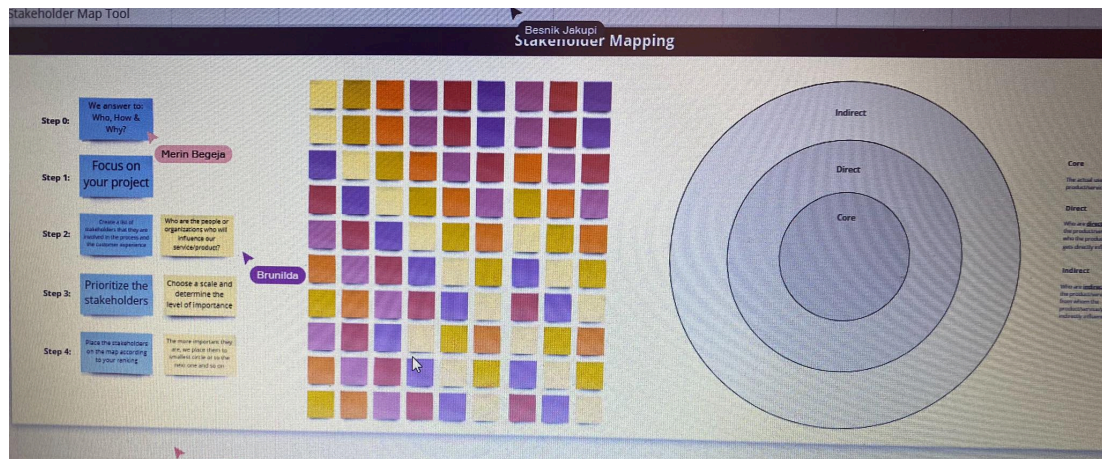
Figure 24.'GET TO KNOW DESIGN THINKING' ; Stakeholder's scale mapping. Courtesy of the author.

After all of the stakeholders were identified, the participants categorized them according to the three selected scales, as figure 25 and 26 illustrates.
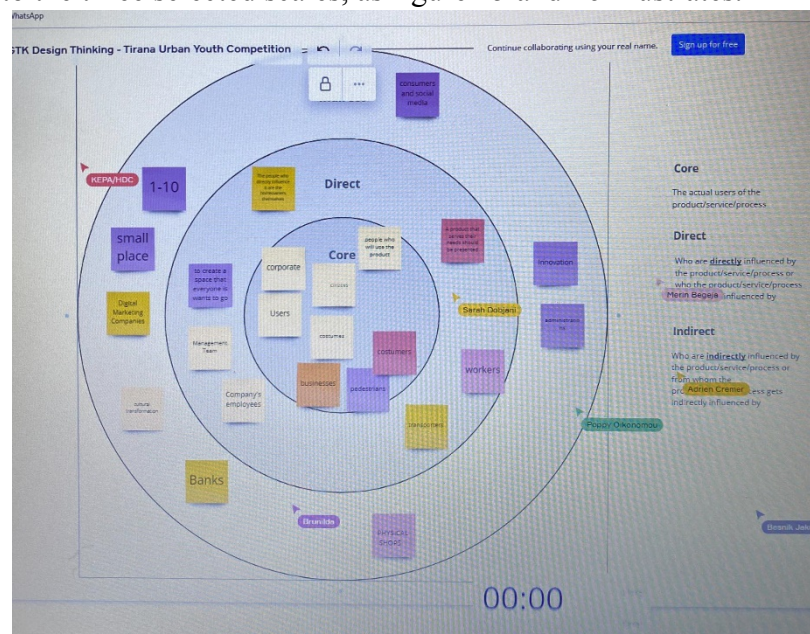
Figure 25. 'GET TO KNOW DESIGN THINKING' ; Identifying the stakeholders. Courtesy of the author.
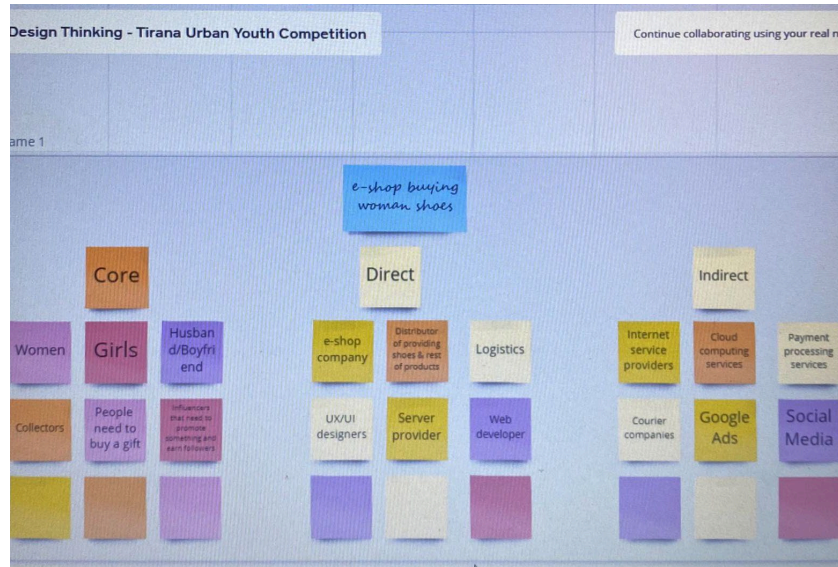
Figure 26. 'GET TO KNOW DESIGN THINKING'; Stakehlolders categorization. Courtesy of the author.

All the elements identified in the empathizing phase were later used in the user journey map as a practical tool for the ideation phase. Figure 27 illustrates that a user journey map is built up of 4 elements: the user profile, user experience, time and cost.
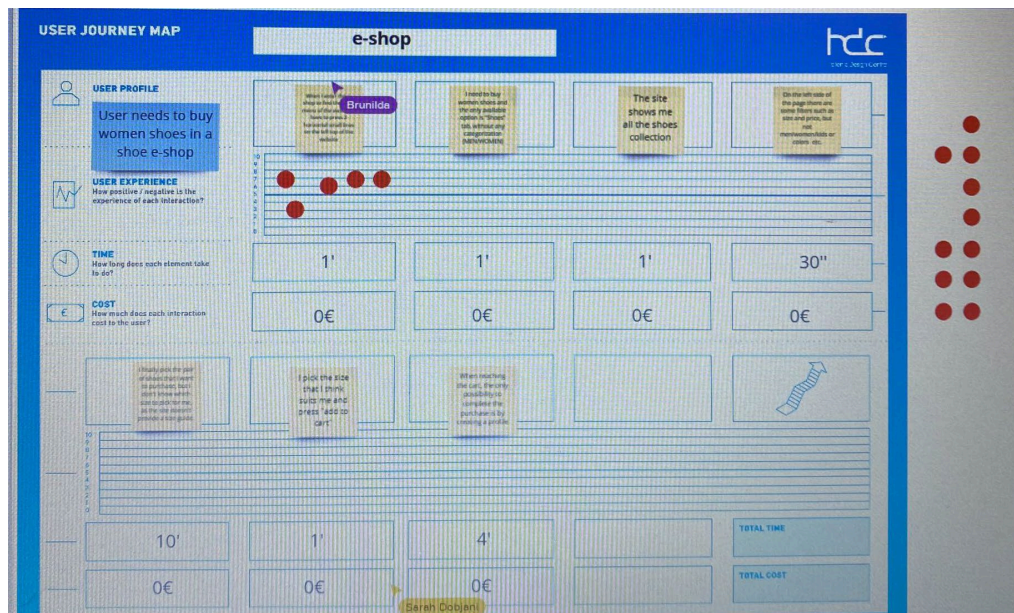
Figure 27. 'GET TO KNOW DESIGN THINKING'; User Journey Map. Courtesy of the author.

The prototyping and implementation phase were theoretically explained through different examples.

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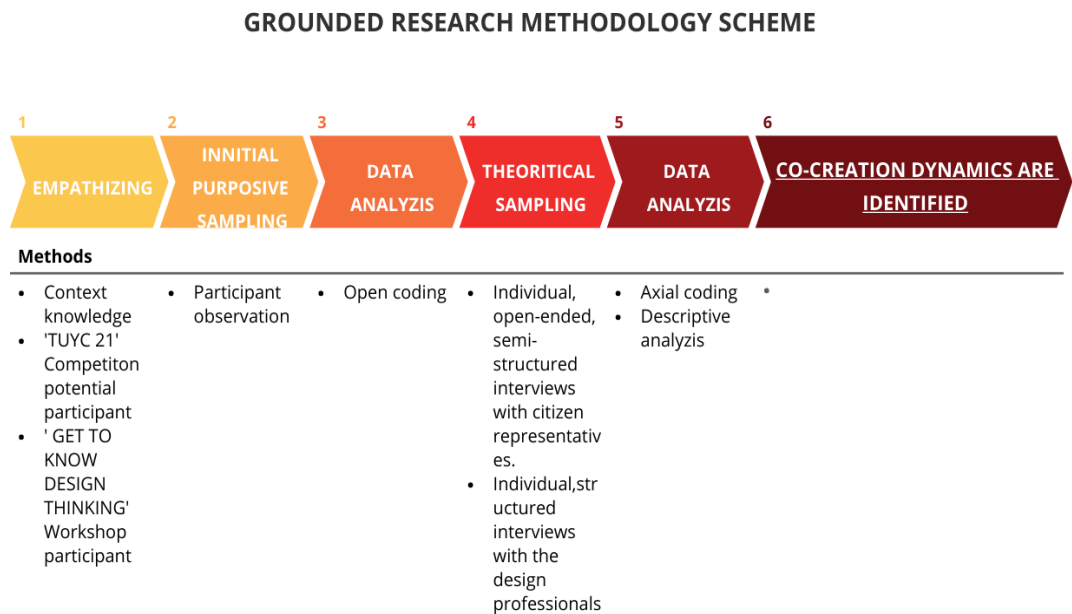
Figure 28. Grounded research methodology scheme. Courtesy of the author.

Referring to the Grounded Research Methodology scheme in Figure 21, the first step in the research is the initial purposive sampling. The intent is to uncover the main aims of the project and the implicit co-creation initiatives. I prioritized Merin, as my appropriate fit for initial sampling, because his stand towards the project is diverse. His profile and interests towards the project are as illustrated in table 7.

Table 7. Initial Sampling interviewee; Merin's profile. Courtesy of the author

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Merin's profile
Student in the third year of Architecture at Polis University.
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His family owns Begeja house (cultural heritage building).
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'Why are you taking it? What is your primary purpose?'

'What other ideas emerge from in-neighborhood meetings?

'How was your idea accepted by the organizers? '

'What was your exact contribution? '

'Did you find the neighbor's contribution collaborative? How did it shape the process?'

'Would you be interested in continuing the collaboration in further processes?'

The first step in data analysis was coding the interviews in NVIVO, as illustrated in figure 29, a qualitative data analysis software that allows manual analyizs of unstructured text audio, video, and image data, including (but not limited to) interviews, focus groups, surveys, and journal articles.
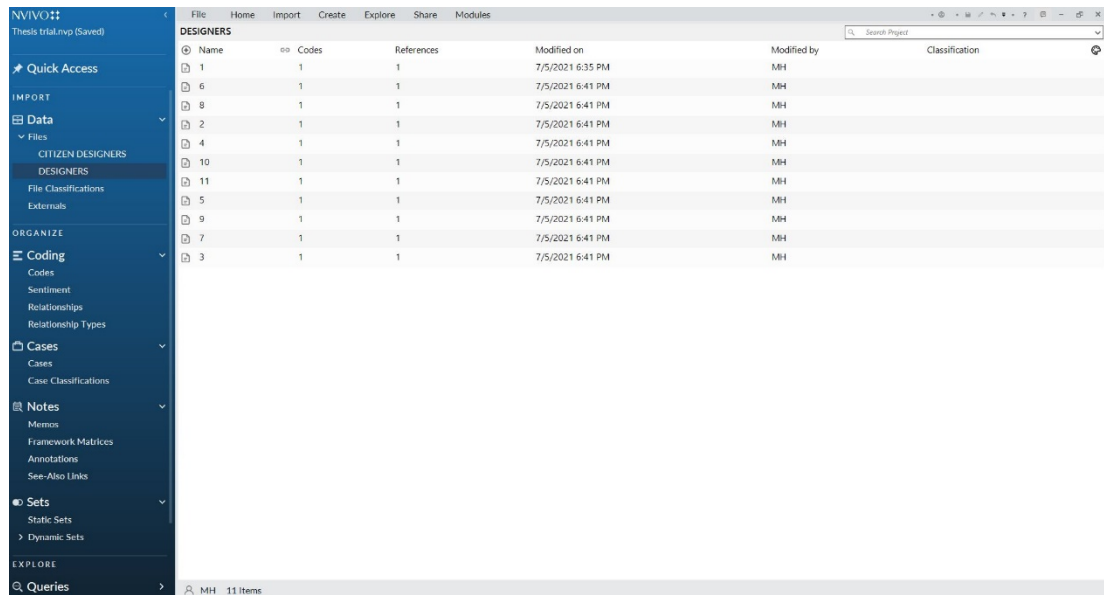
Figure 29. *Snapshot from NVIVO showing the interviews listing. Courtesy of the author.*

The transcription informed the theoretical sampling of the meeting with Merin in which the common themes and the criteria for the people interview selection were identified.

The attributes that determined the selection of theoretical sampling are as follows in table 8.

Table 8. *Theoretical sampling interviewing groups. Courtesy of the author.*

THEORITICAL SAMPLING INTERVIEWING GROUPS

---

3. THE DESIGN PROFFESSIONALS

    different fields of design, architecture and urban planning.

4. THE RESIDENTS' REPRESENTATIVES

    involved the most during the process.

The themes that emerged through open coding were: Participating actors, co-creating interests and motivations, benefits of collaborating, potentials of resident's contribution, involving design stages, added values of the design process, potentials and limitations, sense of community and place, expected outcomes.

3.6 Theoretical sampling

I chose homogenous sampling as a technique for the theoretical sampling. To me as a researcher, it was useful to get perspectives from samples that share similar traits. This allowed me to explore deeper into the recurring themes that arose.

In this study, I have two categories of interviewing groups: the designers and non-designers that in my study are the residents' representatives of the neighborhood, to whom I refer as citizen-designers.

The criteria for the design professional is their professional profile. Professionals coming from different specialization fields of design, architecture and urban planning were chosen. Eleven design professionals were chosen from which; 4 of them are Urban planners and architects, 1 Urban manager and transportation

specialist, 1 lecturer, 1 Architect in child-friendly scenarios, 1 Restorer Architect, 1 Neuro-science Architect and 2 Architecture students. Their detailed professional profile is better described in table 9.

The non-designers, namely the citizen-designers who in my study are the neighborhood representatives, are the most active residents of the initiative. The first one is the concept proposal for the development of the neighborhood initiator, while the owner of Begeja house. He is an economist and tourist guide. His neighbor, the other citizen-designer interviewed, owns and maintains a historic property that his family bought in 1922 when they first immigrated from Shkodra to Tirana in 1922.

Table 9. *Design professionals' profile. Courtesy of the author.*

No	DESIGN PROFESSIONALS PROFILE
1.	I am an architecture graduate but always had a particular preference in Urban Design. Had a few different work experiences in architectural studios, and currently I am working at the Urban Planning sector of the Municipality of Tirana.
2.	Senior Architect and urban designer with 6 years of experience in different typologies of projects including surpervision of building during construction, organizing the work in site and clients meetings.

3. I am trained as an architect. I did a 5 year degree at Epoka University but later on pursued a more different field which is urban management and planning. I've worked a lot in Albania with rural development and basically sustainable sector related to cultural heritage and tourism and then I have done a Masters in the Netherlands focusing in urban management and development but more detailed in transportation issues. I now work as an adviser at GIZ and financing focusing in the city of Tirana and I am in charge of base modernization system.

4. I am an urban planner and lecturer at the department of Architecture, Epoka University.

5. Architecture student

6. I am a young architect, currently working on street repurposing to fit more interactive and child-friendly scenarios.

7. Architecture student in the final year of my studies

8. Architect in Urban Planning and Design fields

9. I'm a the co-founder and managing director of NEUAR and senior architect with more than 10 years of experience in architectural design and construction management. Nevertheless my background expands the construction industry. Since 2013 I'm a human rights activist and the co-founder of two NGO working in Albania, Europe and Central Asia, while designing and implementing several social projects with key stakeholders like USAID , CoE, ect.

10. Urban Planner & Architect

11. Restorer Architect

3.7 Data collection methods

I was flexible with the methods for data collection. The individual, open-ended, semi-structured interviews are conducted with the design professionals are conducted mainly face-to-face. A couple of interviewees were unavailable to meet in person, so I used the audio recording method. I was also given to them a google forms interview questions link where they could answer writably. The process lasted three weeks. The interview was structured in 3 parts; warm-up questions, where I asked questions about their professional background and their general opinions regarding the ' Open Doors'project; the core questions which aimed to get answers of the identified themes from the case studies analysis and the open coding results of the initial purposive sampling; and the closing part. `

The interviews of the citizen-designers was conducted more as a discussion between the two residents' representatives. I was invited by them to conduct the interview in the courtyard of Begeja family. We met at the outdoor table as illustrated in figure 30, where they usually gather to drink beers and discuss the future of their neighborhood. I prefer to call this special place 'The table of great ideas', as they showed me a fun fact that their idea of collaborating together to develop the neighborhood emerged from the exact table while drinking beers as per usual.

I conducted their interview on the 22-nd of June, right after finishing collecting the designer's interviews for perspectives comparison purposes.

Moreover, the question purposes are the same for both categories. I only made interview structure changes according to their stands. The interviews questions are all recorded and transcribed (given in Appendix A and B).

Figure 30. *Citizen-designers interview. Outdoor meeting table. Courtesy of the author.*

3.7.1 Ethical Considerations

The interviews agreed to participate in this study of their own will. The majority of them were made familiar with the thesis beforehand. In the few cases when we couldn't meet in person with the interviews, via email, I attached them a set of materials including the project brief, the aim of the study, their contribution and relevance to it. Furthermore, I explained that they would be anonymous and this study is done for the purpose of my Master Thesis research.

In the google forms document interviews, this explanatory statement was included:

'This questionnaire aims to discuss the answers to the research questions of my Master Thesis about co-creation and collaboration between citizens and designers in the design process, the transformative potential of shared urban spaces and possible challenges to such approach.

The study area is one of the most significant urban fragments of Tirana encircled by Dibra Street, Saraçëve Street; by the Ali Begeja and Qemal Stafa Street, close to the New Bazar. This study is a further research to a recent project/competition organized by the French Embassy whose one of the main goals is to have a social impact, to enhance the sense of the community and to bring into focus the local inhabitants for the real value of their properties. Aiming the best of input by their daily life, the true needs and demands, they have applied an innovative framework of having face to face interaction and collaboration with the landowners and the neighborhood.'

The other introducing statement of in-person interviews was as follows:

'Hello (name). Thank you so much for taking the time to meet with me today. I really appreciate it. Before getting started, there are a couple of things about the purpose and process of the session that I would like to cover.As you know, I am interested in discovering the co-creation dynamics emerged from the citizens involvement in the design process.I am particularly interested in the transformative potential of shared urban spaces and possible challenges to such approach. That is really the focus of what we are going to talk about today. Everything you share in this interview will be kept in strictest confidence, and your comments will be transcribed anonymously —omitting your name, anyone else you refer to in this interview, as well as the name of your current institution and/or past institutions. Your interview responses will be included with all the other interviews I conduct.

To help me capture your responses accurately and without being overly distracting by taking notes, I would like to record our conversation with your permission. Again, your responses will be kept confidential. If at any time, you are uncomfortable with this interview, please let me know and I will turn the recorder off." "Do you have any questions for me before we begin?'

3.8 Data analysis
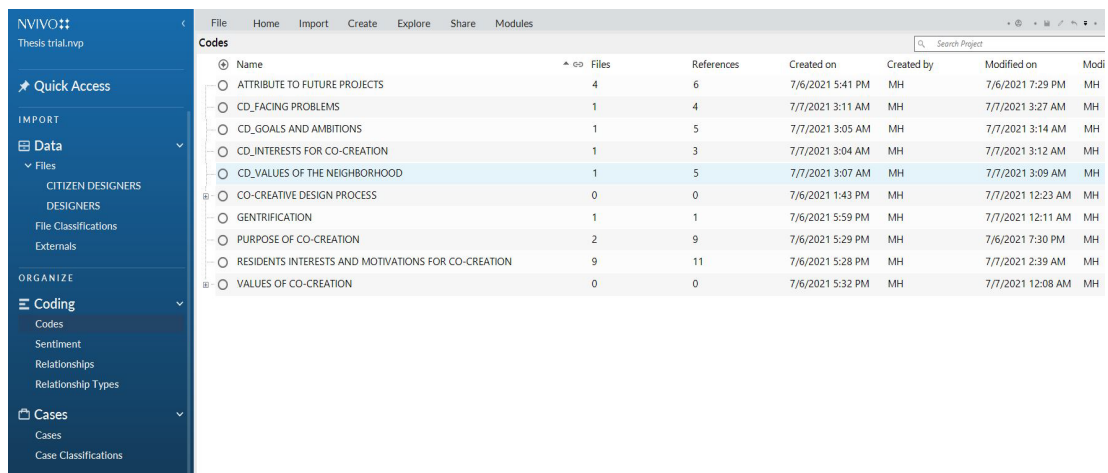
The interviews were transcribed and coded on NVIVO according to the predefined themes from the case studies analysis and the open coding results of the initial purposive sampling. Yet, the themes are adapted according to a brief manual analysis.

During the selective coding process, subcategories emerged, and two new categories were added: gentrification and attributes to future projects. Figure 31 illustrates all the coded themes and subcategories.

The themes are described and discussed within the category and then compared with relevant themes.

Furthermore, the data from the coding matrix is run through a descriptive analysis that gave me the data's major features. All data is aggregated rather than individual. I was more interested in looking at a accumulated level which means I didn't watch each individual's response to each component; instead, , what their answers were to a certain element. As a result, I conducted a descriptive analysis to see what the data's key features were.

Due to the qualitative character of the study, mainly based on correlation of elements, the analysis is presented as a discussion of the themes. However, when possible, diagrams and charts are visualized by using Vizzlo, an easy and graphical visualization platform that creates high quality charts and infographics.

Figure 31. Interviews coded themes in Nvivo. Courtesy of the au

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

4.1 Overview of the findings

Following selected coding of the designers' interviews, the findings are influenced by the study themes:

- Co-creative design process

- Purpose of co-creation

- Residents interests and motivations for co-creation

- Values of co-creation

- Gentrification

- Attribute to future projects

A cumulative table of themes identified from the designers' interviews is as follows:

Table 10. *Cumulative table of identified themes from the Designer's interviews.*
Courtesy of the author

CUMULATIVE TABLE OF IDENTIFIED THEMES FROM DESIGNERS'
INTERVIEWS

THEME	DEFINITION	EXAMPLE
Co-creative design process	The effectiveness of the process approach, the important actors, the design phase they think the involvement of the residents is most effective, advantages, challenges and limitations.	'It will bring an new meaning for the development understanding in Tirana. To develop it means to preserve to. 2. Social cohesion. 3. Local product and family business. 4. Enrichment of turism and turistic offer. 5. Paradigm for other cities and locations' 'I see how enthusiastic this project could be considered from both the residents and the local authorities; however, the ownership is a big issue right now in Tirana/Albania that is why I consider this as a substantial limitation for the success of it.' 'There are 3 main interest groups in this context: stakeholders, residents and the local authority (in this case the Municipality of Tirana). All three must have some synergy so that they can work together to achieve common goals. The stakeholders are important since they can make an investment in the area; the residents are important because they can give availability of their properties to further improve the area; and the local authority is important on the other hand since

they are in charge of the develoment of the territory.'

Purpose of co-creation	Their opinion on the reasons why co-creation should happen.	'Citizen participation, Sustainable design, Historical conservation, Enhanced connectivity, Community cohesion'
Residents interests and motivations for co-creation	Identifying the interests of the residents	'I think the main interest is in economic aspect. Secondly it is about the their attachment to this places, their memories, identity and their past.
Values of co-creation	Designers view on the values that the residents involvement in the process bring.	' Better understanding of the context. 2. More practical solutions. 3. More complex solutions'
Gentrification	Not asked, but was identified by the designers themselves.	'So every investment that you do in the neighborhood, everybody living there has a direct benefit in their property values for example. However, we also need to think about gentrification. If you invest in a certain area you

		need to make sure that the people living there won't be relocated because now can not pay for the rent, or can't pay for higher taxes so that is also very important to consider. And then they said they would be very interested to profit from it, I don't know if there is a shop nearby, a caffe, I think it is different interests and we need to consider all of them.'
Attribute to future projects	Whether they think that this design philosophy is appropriate to be implemented in further and larger urban projects.	'Tirana lack not only democratic participants and communication between actors, but also spaces to breathe'

I followed the same method for the citizen-designer's interviews coding. The themes identified from the coding are as follows:

- Citizens' interests for co-creation

- Citizens' goals and ambitions

- Values of the neighborhood

- Faced problems

Table 11 lists the four identified themes along with their definition and a citied quote.

Table 11. *Cumulative table of identified themes from the Citizen-Designer's interviews. Courtesy of the author.*

CUMULATIVE TABLE OF IDENTIFIED THEMES FROM DESIGNERS' INTERVIEWS

THEME	DEFINITION	EXAMPLE
Citizens'interests for co-creation	What are the main interests that motivate them to participate in the development design processes actively.	'The first is economic. The second is the preservation of the character of the neighborhood, The preservation of the surname. It is very important that if these are deleted, it is called Selvia and not the Begeaj house. A mayor comes and he destroys everything. They are removing the Tirana clock, not a neighborhood like ours. The value as part of the city, as a monumental traditionCultural heritage.'
Citizens' goals and ambitions	Their common goals for a collectively preferred neighborhood.	'We aim to transform it into a landmark where you find multiple of destinations. A neighbourhood of culture 'houses'; art galleries, museums, canteens. ' 'Here the concept of separation will be removed; everything will be shared. The gates and courtyards will give space for more pedestrian roads in which you can walk and explore the historic neighborhood.'

Values of the neighborhood	What type of values do the neighborhood has, ex, community, historic, cultural.	'This neighborhood has had the sense of community since long ago.' 'What you see now, we have been preserving for 300 years, the other building has 200, and the next one has 150. In this backyard you have the whole stage of urban development of Tirana.'
Faced problems	The problems they face with related to the neighborhood and the process.	'The municipality has not started anything yet, it lied to the embassy as well. If it was for them, they should have done something already. They keep postponing the meeting'

4.2 Co-creative design process

The themes identified with the code 'design process' are: first, the most important actors of the design process, followed by the advantages. All of the designers view this approach to developing as an advantage, the perspectives of whom are discussed on a separate theme. Challenges and limitations are also well mentioned during the interviews. The designers were also asked to identify a design stage that the resident's participation would be a potential value in the design team. The answers are coded as a different theme under the 'design phases. These topics will be developed via the use of code and key takeaways using Vizzlo a high-quality graphs and infographics platform. In Figure 32, the five themes are shown as a Ven Diagram illustrating the interrelation that all the identified subcategories have.

Figure 32. *Co-creation design process themes. Courtesy of the author.*

4.2.1 Important actors

It is noting that in collaborative approaches of design processes, multiple actors co-operate for better design solutions. In 'The Open Doors' project, this is especially important due to the project's complexity. The designers answered the following question:

'Who do you think are the most important actors, people, partners in this project? Why?'

Apart from identifying the most important actors according to their opinion, I was more interested in knowing why they prioritized these actors. The majority of the designers believe that the only and most important actors are the residents and landowners themselves. Few feedbacks share the importance between the residents and designers. Less frequent but mentioned are as well the municipality and the city managers and stakeholders. Figure 33, illustrates the overall percentage distribution of the actors in the co-design process according to their importance.

IMPORTANT ACTORS OF CO-DESIGN PROCESS

41.1

5.8 CITY MANAGERS
5.8 MUNICIPALIY
5.8 STAKEHOLDERS
17.6 11.7 ALL OF THEM
11.7 DESIGN PROFESSIONALS
PROPERTY OWNERS
RESIDENTS
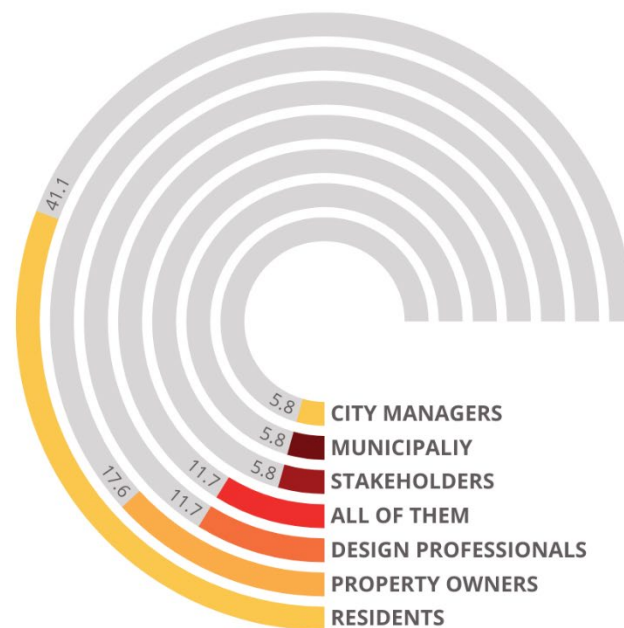
Figure 33. *Important actors of co-design process. Courtesy of the author.*

In between the answers, the answer of interviewee 5 shares a disparate opinion as cited below:

INTERVIEWEE 5 :

'The most important actors in this project are the people owning parcels in the area and the main investors. If the people have the spaces and know exactly what is missing, the big investors are the key of making these important changes happen not only financially speaking but also because of their position on the market by making their target group ,part of the community - bringing life to it.'

Considering them as prominent investors does reduce the role power of construction companies, which significantly influence the urban development processes because of the economic profit.

4.2.2 Design phases

One of the elements reviewed in the case studies analysis was the level of participation according to the ladder of participation in the design phases. It was observed that the active involvement of the users from the early stages provides specific knowledge based on their needs, experiences and expectations.

Asked in the form of a multiple-choice question about the ' The Open Doors' project, more than half of the designers would choose to involve the residents in the preparatory phase, as illustrated in Figure 34. The dynamics of this result compared with the resident's representatives' answers will be further discussed in the discussions and conclusions chapter.

RESIDENTS INVOLVEMENT ACCORDING TO THE DESIGN STAGES
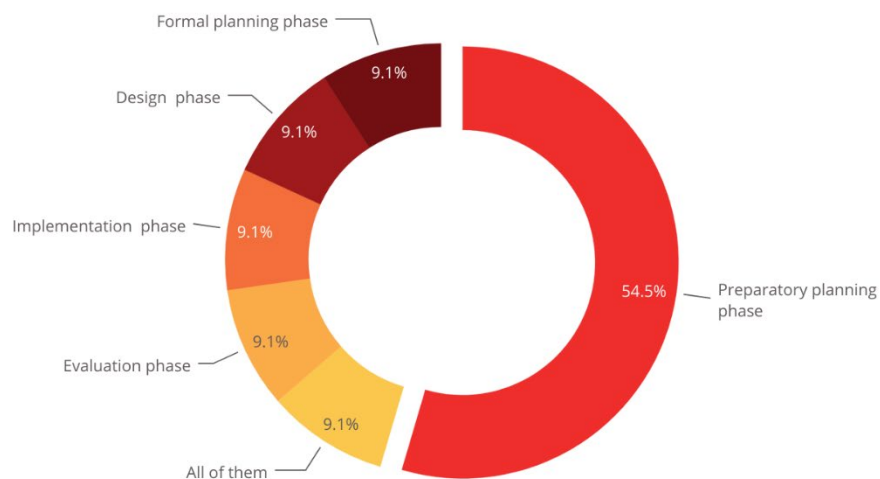
Figure 34. *Residents' involvement according to the design stages. Courtesy of the author.*

4.2.3 Advantages of co-creation in ' The Open Door Project'

I am referring once again to the literature review and the life-happening projects. The co-creation process does not indicate any disadvantage, apart from facing limitations and challenges along the way. However, the advantages are discussed widely.

In this study, I accept ' The Open Doors' project to be a highly promising approach, not only because it is one of the few cases, if not the only one, that a democratic process is really happening, but it may serve as a very good example for future projects if certain elements are identified: for example, the advantages. They always emerge as multiple beneficial aspects within the category. That being the case the designers are asked to list five benefits of the collaboration in the case I am studying. The benefits are limited to the meaningfulness and effectiveness and outcome of the development process.

I started the core questions section of the interview with the following question:

'Co-creation is applied in several sectors, including that of design, planning and innovation. Referring to 'Portat e Hapura' project, would you list five benefits of this collaboration that you think will make the development processes more effective and meaningful?'

The Nvivo code results illustrate that the advantages under the theme 'Co-creation process' are the most coded, with a total of 47 times. The coding frequency of the themes and subcategories is shown in Figure 35.
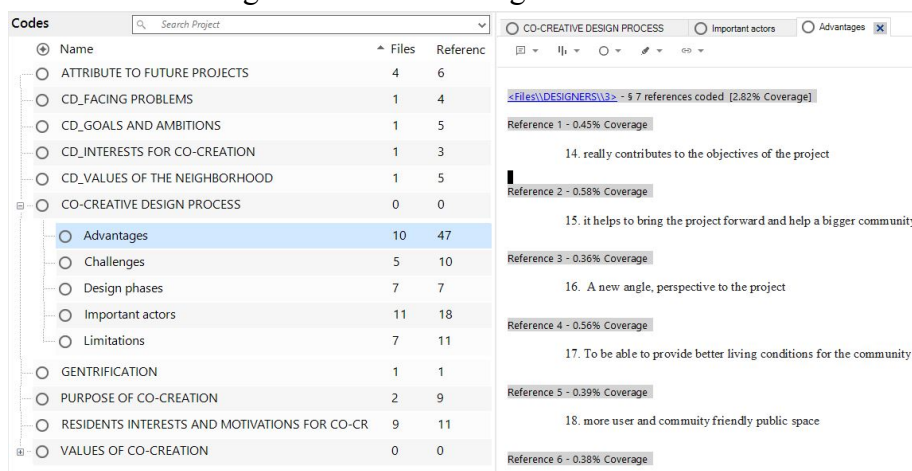
Figure 35. *Nvivo coding frequencies according to themes and categories. Courtesy of the author.*

In Table 12, I first present the raw answers of each interviewee. Then, for analyzing purposes, I categorized them into subcategories.

Table 12. Designers' interview answers according to the question on the benefits of collaboration. Courtesy of the author.

DESIGNERS ANSWERS ON 5 BENEFITS OF COLLABORATION

INTERVIEWEE NO	ANSWER
1.	1. Direct feedback and support by the residents during public discussions; 2. Great social impact in the neighborhood, thus creating a harmonious atmosphere between residents and investors; 3. High possibility to maintain typical/unique architectural and urban elements; 4. Deliver concrete results regarding the main needs of the residents; 5. Serve as an example/project pilot for other areas of the city to implement the same principles of design.
2.	1. The development would be an innovation in how the project is designed and build in Tirana. 2. The development would be more acceptable from community, designers, municipality. 3. The collaboration would bring the real need of the society in the center of attention, every solution from professionals would be in their benefit . 4. Sense of the community would be more powerful for the citizens.

3.	1. A new angle, perspective to the project that it might didn't have before, it might be for the best, it might be for the worst but you never know, more options is still benefit.
	2. To be able to provide better living conditions for the community, more user and community-friendly public space.
	3. The feeling of ownership and sense of place. They are involved; afterward they will maintain it, new developments will proceed.
	4. The resources. If you involve more people, you'll eventually have more resources, in terms of knowledge and ideas more than money.
	5. It is a benefit for the whole city because it creates big precedence. When this project comes to life it will be an example for other areas. It is also fairly important to say that it is acting as a role model for other projects.
4.	1. has the potential to built a complex order/solution which is very difficult to be reached by top-down one man/group design methods.
	2. Provide more feasible solutions.
	3. Provides a chance for a step by step process, flexible for changes, reflections and adaptations.
	4. The final product is more matured, based on an accumulated knowledge, which is broader and healthier than the inspirations, creativity or knowledge of just a small group of designers.
	5. The process of implementation can be easier.
5.	1.New creative ideas coming up.
	2.The improvement of social impact.
	3. Louder voice, spread of spaces usage and functionality.
	4.Better economy.
	5.Direct way of involving citizens and costumers
6.	Since it is a bottom up initiative, from the beginning up to the competition idea, it has a enormous chance to succeed. Still I

	think there are a lot to do on the translation of the winning idea. Their initiative has little risk since it is not starting as business entrepreneurship. There are a couple of good examples around Albania.
7.	1.Engaging locals. 2.Working with them. 3.Empowering them to generate ideas. 4.Making it easier for them to admit to the idea that their houses will be open to the public.
8.	1.Early interviews and focus groups. 2.Co-defining common strategies. 3.Co-designing common "tactics". 4.Involvement in implementation and materials provision (reuse and recycle). 5.Involvement in the "post" (maintaining the new conquered places)
9.	A more in depth evaluation is needed but i can say that this project will increase the sense of belonging of the citizens to that specific area.
10.	1.Citizen participation. 2.Sustainable design. 3. Historical conservation. 4.Enhanced connectivity. 5. Community cohesion.
11.	1.It will bring a new meaning for the development understanding in Tirana. To develop it means to preserve to. 2. Social cohesion. 3. Local product and family business. 4. Enrichment of turism and turistic offer. 5. Paradigm for other cities and locations.

4.2.4 Limitations and challenges

Apart from the numerous advantages that co-creation brings, the process is hard to manage. Thus, the limitations and challenges are inevitable. In a context such as this study area which is first a historic neighborhood of Tirana, it involves the residents that most of them are the owners of the properties and multiple actors that have different and usually conflicting interests, operate within the same environment, makes even more challenging. So, considering the limitations and the challenges that these interrelating elements bring, was reasoned to be discussed. Although all of the designers were very positive for the approach, their concerns lied on the limitations and challenges. When reviewing the interviews for coding, both categories were coded separately. However, they are analyzed simultaneously as limitations become challenges and vice-versa.

In this section I was particulary interested in identifying how and where do the obstacles come from. Therefore, the source of the limitations and challenges is identified.

The residents, the process and public insitutions are recognized as the potential sources that may hinder the process.

Table 13. Sources of limitations and challenges for co-creation. Courtesy of the author.

LIMITATIONS AND CHALLENGES SOURCES		
RESIDENTS	THE PROCESS	PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS
Lack of willingness	Follow up problems	Corruption
Lack of confidence to speak up	Duration	Bureaucracy

Mentality	Complex network of information
Ownership	Implementation phase
Financial capability	Move of direction
	Results can be poor, folkloric, and ordinary.

The designers believe that ownership issues are a big challenge in ' The Open doors' project, which is a delicate topic to get fast solutions that satisfy all landowners. According to them, lack of willingness and confidence to speak up, mentality, and financial capability are as well limitations to the design coming from the residents. Such limitations identified by the designers are opposed by the interviews of the residents' representatives as they are willing to get involved and they do not have speaking up issues. In contrast, they were the initiators of this idea. The comparison of both perspectives will be discussed in the results chapter. On the other hand, both the designers and citizen-designers ideas converge at the same conclusion, that, public institutions are the real challenge in this process.

4.3 Purpose of co-creation.

In the literature review and the case studies analyisis, co-creation was described as ' making something together ', a situation where people collaborate towards a goal, as well as it can be ' learning together', a situation where they share and build knowledge.

This standpoint is relevant in ' The Open Doors' case project study. Accordingly, the purpose of co-creation analysis is reviewed from the 'learning' and 'making' catego

The coded results from Nvivo, show that 40% of the answers support that co-creation is done for learning purposes and the remaining 60% for making, as illustrated in Figure 36. Learning is maininly related to gaining knowledge about the context and the needs of the residents.

PURPOSE OF CO-CREATION
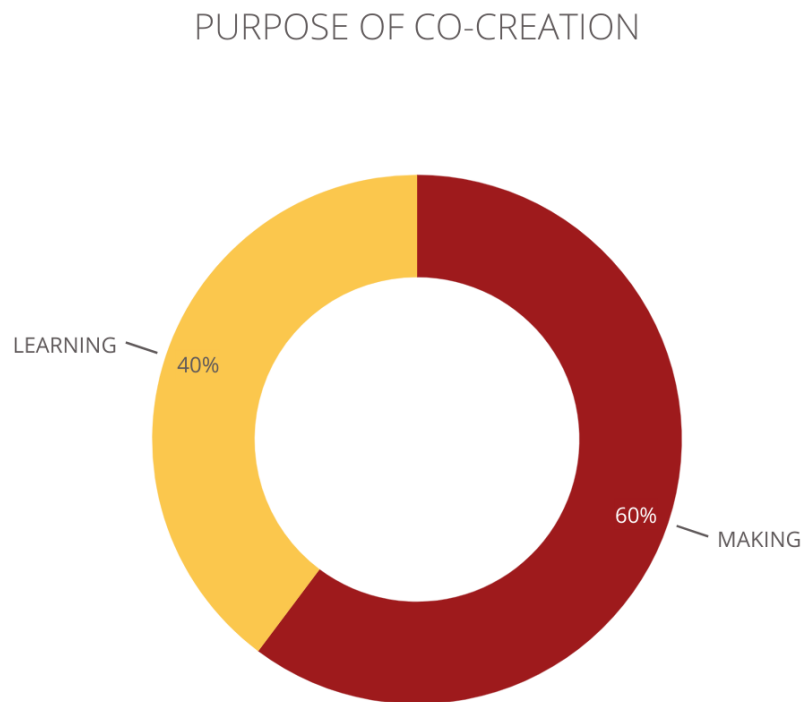
Figure 36. *Pupose of co-creation results of Designers interviews. Courtesy of the author.*

Interviewee 3 notes:

> *'The collaboration would bring the real need of the society in the center of attention, every solution from professionals would be in their benefit '*

While the 'making' purposes are related to delivering better concrete results that meet the interests of all the actors. The effectiveness of the 'making' purpose is related to how well the knowledge gained is interpreted

4.4 Residents' interests and motivations for co-creation.

On the residents' side, their interests and motivations for getting involved in the design process are clear. Economic profit is the primary interests, as they are aware of the values that their neighborhood has. The representative of the residents states:

'The economic benefit percentage is the same in both options; restoring a cultural monument has more value. The value is even bigger when it is developed as a whole neighborhood. As time passes, the value increases.'

'Gold is right under our feet, but no one knows the value.'

The residents agree that the interest of them all is profit. However, their motivations extend beyond monetary worth. They are highly interested in preserving the cultural heritage and the sense of the community they have had for years. The interview transcription notices:

'What you see now, we have been preserving for 300 years, the other building has 200, and the next one has 150. In this backyard you have the whole stage of urban development of Tirana.'

'.The relationship that I have with Xhimi's uncle is of another level. We were only 10-12 years old when his uncle taught us French. Here have been the most luxurious shops of Tirana.'

'You should understand that this neighborhood is everything to us. I tried to live somewhere else and came back. And we come to what I said at the beginning, 'breakfast coffee and dinner beer taste nowhere else except where you were born.'

On this theme, the answers of the Designers and Citizen-Designers converge.

In Figure 37, is shown the ratio of socio-cultural and economic interests results from coding in Nvivo. We may conclude that the socio-cultural interests such as preserving attachment to these places, their memories, identity and their past; preventing and avoiding the almost inevitable transformation of their neighborhood into a high rise residential complex; maintaining social bonds is as important as economic values

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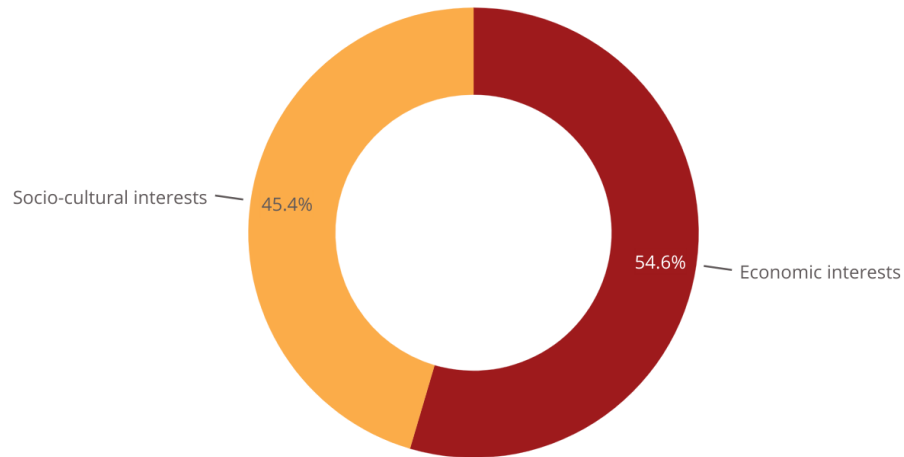
Figure 37. Residents' interests and motivations for co-creation. Courtesy of the author.

4.5 Values of co-creation

The second most coded theme after the 'Design Process' in Nvivo are the values of co-creation. The two sub-categories analyzed are the 'elements that foster values' and 'what values'.

Table 14 shows the identified elements emerging values and the type of values the designers refer to. The discussion about values is treated as a comparison with the Citizen-Designers answers for the same theme in the Results Chapter

Table 14. *Values of co-creation. Courtesy of the author.*

VALUES OF CO-CREATION	
ELEMENTS EMERGING VALUES	WHAT VALUES
Connecting residents and stakeholders	Create a harmonious atmosphere
Clear and active relationship between parties	Community cohesion
Exchanging ideas in social, economical and professional aspects	Build a future together
Trust	New opportunities for valuable collaboration and a common, rational and reasonable outcome
Communication	Better space distribution
Sharing the common wishes	Better living conditions
	Sense of ownership
	Sense of place attachement
	Sense of belonging
	Sense of community
	More practical solutions
	Quality of the local spaces

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

5.1 Discussions: Co-creation themes in 'The Open Doors' project

The findings include an examination of the most common themes of the experience of co-creation from the perspective of the designers and citizen-designers. This chapter situates the findings in the context of current similar strategies, accepting co-creation processes as a suitable strategy to define, solve and develop Tirana's urban spaces. The study uses the grounded theory approach, to interpret the semi-structured interviews of the designers and citizen-designers.

The themes that exemplify the co-creation experience, for both designers and citizen-designers are associated to the knowledge of place, adopting co-creation as a guiding principle, slenderizing the gap of apathy, identifying the gaps of the process and other specific themes. Through exploring their perspectives on such strategy, it is evident that both interviewed categories are highly positive. Apart from considering 'The Open Doors' project as very valuable for developing the neighborhood while preserving the local cultural heritage, the interviewees believe that this project will bring a new meaning for the development understanding in Tirana overall. On the other hand, it is unavoidable that the challenges and gaps during the process are also constantly present.

The results are discussed in the following sections by situating them in the current research to investigate the dynamics underlying the experience of co-creation. These parts are divided into five categories which apply to both designers and citizen-designers, as a comparison of both perspectives.

Conclusions are a synthesis of the results and an outlining of the key themes of the research. The main components that can be further expanded are included in the recommendations for further study.

5.2.1 Accumulated knowledge of place

One of the themes that emerges from the experience of co-creation, regardless of having a design background is the accumulated knowledge of place. From the coding results it is apparent that both designers and citizen-designers recognize the knowledge of place as the key element that induces advantages related to the purpose, outcome and values of the design process. For designers the direct feedback and support by the residents during public discussions will deliver concrete results regarding the main needs of the residents.

From the professional's side, when asked to choose one element from the citizens' contribution to the design process that would be valuable to them as designers, most the answers coincide to the same opinion, the knowledge of the place. They refer to knowledge from different perspectives such as: historic, memories, spirit of the place and identity of the neighborhood, for which the designers have little information but is crucial for them to consider prior to the design process.

For example, referring to the first designer interviewed according to Appendix A, he/she believes that residents inherit the traditional elements from their relatives. Provided by the residents this is a valuable architectural input for the designers. Designer 1 notes:

> *'The most important part of the participatory design is the input that the residents give on traditional architectural elements, that they inherited from their relatives, which become strong typical elements of the area.'*

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The second designer, for example, related the knowledge of the residents to the memory for the urban space, which relates to the answer of the designer number six that mentions identity which is particularly important to preserve the remaining traditional urban neighborhood. Moreover, the last interviewed designer, formulates clearly the importance of accumulated knowledge of the place. He says:

'The project will remind the people that is still a common ground that they can build a future together, that is cultural heritage.'

Similarly, the knowledge of place is further highlighted by the citizen-designers whose perspectives follow the same path of that of the designers. Their good motivations relate to being a potential to the design process and serving as a good source to the designers. Conducting the interviews as a storytelling session was worth noticing especially this theme. One of the citizen-designers at the same time, a long-time residents, the owner of one of the historic buildings notes:

'This neighborhood has had the sense of community since long ago. These are the stories that my father and my mother have told me. They have imparted us the spirit of the place. This path (shows the path) was closed with a door, and the whole neighborhood had two doors; a big door and a small one. All the neighborhood men had a key with which they could go in and out whenever they wanted. All the people here have been like a community. That is why we try, with all our anachronism, to preserve this tradition.'

His neighbor follows:

'What you see now, we have been preserving for 300 years, the other building has 200, and the next one has 150. In this backyard you have the whole stage of urban development of Tirana.'

'All the families that have lived here have left traces in the history and city of the formation of Tirana and Albania.'

'Here is a great interplay of civilizations. We have built this system ourselves.'

'These are cultural monuments of the second category and the state should contribute. So far, I have invested myself. For a very simple reason, as my neighbor Pero said, this neighborhood is not for that group of people who do not value traditions, history and culture.'

As previously stated, also supported by the literature, the residents are the first-hand informatory source of the knowledge about the place they share every day. The site in which this research study is made is especially unique. As cited above from the interviews of the citizen-designers, they provide rich knowledge starting from history, culture, traditions and citizenship culture.

What's worth noticing is the citizen-designers way of responding: their cumulative response results from complementary answers of each other. Purposely, the theme was named after 'Accumulated knowledge of place.' This is also similar to the perspectives of the designers who mention that in a neighborhood where co-

creation happens, all opinions are valuable and the responsibilities, the outcomes, the values belong to each and every voice. The attitude of the designer is mentioned as particularly critical in this situation. It is no surprise that the citizen-designers' knowledge, ideas, and needs may be neglected, misunderstood, or not considered. The second and fourth designers answer respectively:

> *'They should be great managers of the process because it may even be a total failure. Sill, I find it a great advantage getting ideas from the citizens.'*

> *'If there is no balance between the needs and ideas of the community and the knowledge of the professionals, the results can be poor, folkloric, and ordinary.'*

According to it, a new requirement comes evident: the design professionals have to be well-knowledgeable and good managers of the process. Designer no.11 mentions:

> *'Follow up is a key to success. If is missing then it turn to be a problem.'*

The multiple perspective answers are a result of the multi-disciplinary design professionals I decided to interview. Relating to the accumulative knowledge theme, it was also recognized that there should be a knowledge dynamics exchange between design professionals themselves for a better outcome.

Worth to conclude, recalling the literature and sharing knowledge is the initial step to the empathy stage for both designers and citizen-designers. In 'The Open Doors' project, the co-creation examined according to this theme is likely to be a successfully achieved step due to a highly collaborative context, in this case, the residents. However, the challenges are still present and the designers are considered as the balancing medium of it.

5.2.2 Slenderizing the gap of apathy

Co-creation processes in urban developments are not very common in Tirana. Thus, there is a sense of apathy; residents are not generally involved. The results from the interviews recognize that co-creation happening in ' The Open Doors' project is a case of contributing significantly to scale down the gap of apathy. This is implicitly recognized through sub-themes such as sense of community, sense of place, and sense of ownership. The three sub-themes do not stand alone; they are interrelated.

5.2.2.1 Sense of community

This sub-theme is discussed widely by the third interviewed designer. The designer, who was trained as an architect and later on pursued a more different field: urban management and planning, states that she doesn't see many communities in Tirana. She argues by saying that even her international friends there are really surprised that there are no communities of some sort. At the same time she believes that an architect or urban designer can not design a community. What can be done is to push people to be more close to each other. Hence, 'The Open Doors' project serves as a different, much effective strategy from what Tirana has faced so far. The designers states:

'I hope that things are becoming better but we need to push from all sides, not just getting people together to discuss about public space because that might also backfire, people are also tired. For example, the government has done public hearings but they were not really public hearings. People were just gathered, asked about something, sorry, not even told that something was happening and they could even say anything about it. And even if they did, they were never heard, so if that happens for a long time people loose trust and if you don't have trust people can't collaborate.'

Thus, getting people heart, paying attention to their opinions and need enhances the sense of community.

The same idea is also supported by other designers who strongly believe that louder voices of the residents and being directly involved also is promising. This can be explained by the fact the surroundings will anytime, in any good or bad case impact the community they are inhabited by. The fifth interviewed designer states:

'Society will always long for spaces they can feel each other, see each other and stay...gather!'

Moreover, the designers provide another argument for why this project has high possibilities to positively influence the sense of community. Knowing that Tirana has applied top- down approaches to developing urban spaces, the social dimension is neglected. Thus, the citizens miss the feeling of togetherness in new neighborhoods. Referring to the Appendix A, the seventh interviewed designer states:

'They miss the sense of community and togetherness and this project will be a great contribution to it.'

Another designer is more skeptical about its effectiveness. His argument is supported by the idea that the residents only should lead all the stages of design processes. His opinion is as follows:

'The project can foster community cohesion only if all stages of design and planning are led by the residents, with the other actors working as technical experts that inform the residents about their choices.'

On the other hand, citizen-designers argue that they do not miss the sense of community. Indeed, they are trying to inherit the same community bonds they have had for years. They do neighborhood meetings, drink beers all together and share new ideas for their neighborhood. The context of ' The Open Doors' project is an example of a good collaborating community. The citizen designer says:

'First of all, the citizenship should be taken as an example, which has impressed the embassy as well. It has never happened that way, that they have seen other projects. But the communication we made, with the idea we proposed, surprised them a lot. We as a community, have made peace with each other. We want everyone to get what they truly deserve. So we're trying to do something like that. We want to give a lesson to all

of Albania, that we can develop our own property. There is no need for someone else, a skilled or unskilled, to come and implement and build whatever he wants.'

To summarize, both designers and citizen designers perspectives intersect that this strategy is beneficial to preserving and enhancing the sense of community.

5.2.2.2 Sense of place

The sense of place emerged as a sub-theme by the response of one of the designers who raises a significant problem. The designer states:

> *'Through the years, people's sense of belonging has changed and with the latest development in Tirana, all the feelings associated with "home" and "my neighborhood" have lost. The statement is most definitely true, but time is needed to reshape our realities and social cognition.'*

If this is an issue related to place attachment, the designer's responses result to consider 'The Open Doors' project as a strategy to improve the place-community relationships.

The sense of place was a standard answer of the designers when they were asked about the advantages of involving the residents in the design process. A generalized reply of their comments on the sense of place is supported by the fact that if they contribute to a collectively preferred neighborhood, they will be more involved, afterward they will maintain it, new developments will proceed. As such, the residents will be better attached to their place. The designers also relate the sense of place with memories and its identity. However, there are concerns, for example, that the sense and the spirit of the place may be lost in favor of a more accessed, touristic area. The sixth designer relies on that by arguing that:

> *'The risk of having a totally opened neighborhood is the lost of the place spirit, in favor of the open area.'*

The designers also consider the residents as long-term co-creation actors, including that of the implementation stage. If we refer to the eighth interviewed designer in Apendix A, the perception of being part of the co-place raises parallel to the quality of the place. He states:

> *'When a group acts as a unique and really motivated team in raising the quality of the local spaces, starting from sharing a common vision and following on with a common implementation; also the perception of being part of a co-place raises in parallel. The so call the feeling of "place attachment".'*

5.2.2.3 Sense of ownership

As previously stated, the three sub-themes do not stand alone; they are interrelated. The sense of ownership is the outcome of building better community relations and enhancing the place's attachment. When all the residents share a common vision of their place, the sense of belonging increases. Also, the responses conclude that getting people heard and involved does not only build better community relations but it also creates a sense of ownership.

We may conclude that the three sub-themes analyzed are the core identified dynamics of co-creation, which improves the gap of apathy that is highly present in co-creation processes. The apathy indeed depends on the socio-cultural aspects. The context in which this research is conducted is one of the almost ideal communities to involve in the co-creation design processes because of their status and family history.

5.2.3 Adopting co-creation as a guiding principle

Adopting co-creation as a guiding principle is unanimous accepted by both, designers and citizen designers. From the results, it is apparent that both categories consider 'The Open Doors' project as a positive pilot project for further implementations, despite the challenges that may occur along the process. What is evident from their responses is their fondly way of speaking. The first interviewed designer for example, concludes the interview as follows:

> *'I really would like to see this project come true and use it as a great example of co-design in an urban context.'*

Followed by the third designer:

> *'When this project comes to life it will be an example for other areas. It is also fairly important to say that it acts as a role model for other projects.'*

> *' This could be a project as a precedent for other projects. I see this project taking off and becoming a very nice example. I hope to see people working on that form of community and organization that distributes the knowledge in other parts of the city as well.'*

When asked about how they imagine the project involving in the future, the designers do not give a specific answer related to the 'Open Doors' project, this is also influenced by the challenges they take into account as design professionals. Instead, they imagine this strategy being implemented beyond this specific neighborhood. One of the designers states:

> *' A pilot project- I foresee other projects in the remaining human-scaled, traditional neighborhoods of Tirana following the same philosophy.'*

Moreover, the citizen designers share the same opinion. Their good initiative also relates to making this project come to life and make it an example of urban development process initiated and led by the residents of the shared neighborhood. Both interviewed resident representatives argue:

> *'We want to give a lesson to all of Albania, that we can develop our own property. There is no need for someone else, a skilled or unskilled, to come and implement and build whatever he wants.'*

Different opinion has the first designer who is the only one that believes that Tirana is not yet prepared to implement such a strategy. According to him, this project can only work as an experimentation. The designer's full interview is found in Apendix A and his answer on the matter follows as below:

> *'I think Tirana is not yet prepared for this approach. I believe it is still early to implement such a thing, but it has great potentials to be experimented with.'*

To conclude, there is no doubt that the co-creation strategy being applied in 'The Open Doors' project may be adopted as a guiding principle.

5.2.4 Addressing the real gap

Designers has responded a lot about the challenges that this strategy might have. Such challenges is solving the ownership issues, which is still utopian in Albanian contexts; the collaboration might lose its focus, the willingness of the residents to actively participate in the design process etc.

Yet, they believe that the gap is the local authority. Their role is unavoidable as they are in charge of the development of the territory. They do not hesitate to outline the municipality as a serious obstacle.

> *'Another important factor is the approach of local institutions, especially municipality towards this process. They can relieve the burocratic procedures and support the process, even in the financial means, they can be indifferent, or they can make the process even harder.*

> *' Mostly, the urban development is defined by the interest of developers and the public institutions are mostly corrupted.'*

Citizen designers confirm the assumptions that the designers have made that the local authorities might be a serious gap to further proceedings of the project.

> *'The municipality has not started anything yet, it lied to the embassy as well. If it was for them, they should have done something already. They keep postponing the meeting'*

> *'Yes to present to them the idea and to show the concept. Look what they did, they postponed it to September. Most probably they are on the process of developing a project paralel to us and will make us choose.'*

It may be concluded that the municipality is the only actor which is blocking the process so far.

5.2.5 Other themes

5.2.5.1 Gentrification

There is one diverging theme that has not come across as an identified issue or element during the literature review or case studies, but is worth considering.

'Gentrification: the residents can look to diverse, authentic economic activities that are more native to the context they recognize and are nostalgic about. There are enough bujtina and cafe in this city. The Selvia area should not be another kalaja.

' However, we also need to think about gentrification. If you invest in a certain area you need to make sure that the people living there won't be relocated because now can not pay for the rent, or can't pay for higher taxes so that is also very important to consider. Overall I would say gentrification. I would mention the New Bazaar, you can see that, I don't base it on a detailed study of course, but this area is quite gentrified, because a lot of people moved there that could pay more rent so a lot of others had to move out.'

5.2 Conclusions and Recommendations

This research identifies and analyzes urban design thinking as a strategy that through its iterative process emerges co-creation. The dynamics of co-creation are further explored in different implemented case studies in order to better comprehend the 'how' and 'why' questions.

The dynamics identified in the case studies are further contextualized in 'The Open Doors' project, in Tirana. On the other hand, the grounded theory identifies and compares the intersectionality of co-creation themes.

Also, this research serves as a starting study of this strategy which, despite its numerous advantages, is still under studied. In addition, the structure and the content of the interviews outlined in Appendix A and Appendix B can be utilized to guide future interviews, or other studies with similar aims. Future researchers may be addressing the effectiveness of this strategy in further stages of the design process.

Research into Urban Design Thinking as a strategy should be conducted, along with circumstantial context study, to empathize with the wicked issues of Tirana's urban development and to test practices that involve the users. This thesis argues that due to its multidisciplinary nature, it unlocks the potential for co-creation of solutions that meet the unique needs of urban areas and their stakeholders. The diverse methods and tools that the design thinking process hosts, which proceeds from exploitatory to exploratory to ambidexterity and concludes in a prototype illustrating how new and current knowledge might aid in addressing wicked challenges.

In addition, design thinking was also viewed as a useful tool for increasing collaboration and promoting more open communication, as well as assisting decision-makers in adopting the end-perspective user's and better understanding their expectations, therefore improving the usability of the space.

According to the results, the ideal way to apply design thinking starting from small scale and to train professionals to look at their operations through the lens of design thinking, since user demands are increasingly influencing urban transformations.

On an individual level, a closer examination reveals that such strategy may be applied at the community level. From the perspective that Tirana is facing a long transitional period this thesis finds best suitable applying strategies that are opened to test new concepts that combine forming new urban spaces while maintaining values and ethics. Therefore, community involvement is important because it inherits the history, local knowledge and common values. Correspondingly, communities that have survived and expanded their identity, history, and values over time have shaped neighborhoods, regarded as the small in the whole net, Yet, the network effect enhances shared values on the net by disseminating ideas of multiple 'smalls' in a global and linked society. Thus, the most promising strategy is to start small, collaborate and co-design with the stakeholders that hold the knowledge and are in the first line connected to the place.

On the other hand, this thesis, is not intended to be generalized. On the contrary, it provides as a conceptual strategy for exploring and considering co-creation and urban design thinking processes as a way to better identify and solve wicked issues by taking into account the context of Tirana, and specifically the case project 'The Open Doors'. This research identified context as a key component on the effectiveness of the process. Therefore, future studies should consider surveying on the elements that determine the willingness of the communities to collaborate for a collectively-preferred space for example: socio-economic status, education, interests and motivations. 'The Open Doors' project is one of the most positive and promising community scenarios suitable to the research topic but that can not be generalized. The designers' interviews' findings identify the context as a big gap which future researches may consider. Thus, working on creative communities is crucial for a blossoming Tirana, with all the challenges that it takes. Of course, these changes are still in process, but the rise of the Creative Class is reflected in powerful and significant shifts in values, norms, and attitudes [56].

In addition, another area of interest for the study is the process itself. Due to the complexity of covering all the stages that design thinking employs and with regard to the Tirana context, this research is mainly focused on the early stage, empathy. From the standpoint of urban development, empathizing is applied as a strategy to appeal to those directly affected by persistent changes and it is the crossroad of design thinking

with co-creation. A closer inspection of the empathic understanding of the problem delivers better collaboration, bonds of the stakeholders and results. On the other hand, the process is long, it may lose focus during time and this strategy may only be applicable during certain stages and specific contexts, but that is to be further explored. Yet, the findings and lengthy-analyzed real life case projects, show that complex relationships can be identified by applying the right methods and tools to co-produce sustainable solutions.

Finally, one of design thinking's most significant responsibilities may be to aid in the formulation of value frameworks and visions. Likewise in co-design, every stakeholder adds value to the overall end result. This way, designers and non-designers can co-built knowledge and innovative strategies for collectively-preferred neighborhoods. Then as well, Tirana may accommodate sustainable, well-defined urban solutions preserving the historic traces and its original pattern, maintaining values and ethics.

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APPENDIX A

DESIGNERS' INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

WARM UP QUESTIONS

1. Can you briefly describe your professional background?
2. How do you find this competition approach? Do you think that collaboration happens in real-life settings and contributes significantly to the objectives of the project?
3. Who do you think are the most important actors, people, partners in this project? Why?
4. What do you think the main interest of the neighbors is in relation to the development of the context?

CORE QUESTIONS

1. Co-creation is applied in several sectors including that of design, planning and innovation. Referring to 'Portat e Hapura' project, would you list five benefits of this collaboration that you think will make the development processes more effective and meaningful?
2. If you had to choose 1 element from the citizens' contribution to the design process, what would be a great potential to you as a designer?
3. If you were part of the design team, would the neighbors be in the list of the multi-stakeholders design developers? Could you identify a design stage that their participation would be a potential value?

   - Preparatory planning phase
   - Formal planning phase
   - Design phase
   - Implementation phase
   - Evaluation phase
   - Other

4. List 3 aspects that make residents' participation in the design process an added value.

5. Could you mention some potentials and limitations of this approach? Do you see this collaboration as an advantage or disadvantage of the design process?

6. Describe in a single sentence of how you think this project approach would enhance the sense of community and change the sense of place.

7. One of the citizens that initiated the idea mentioned: "Elementi kryesor është që lagjen ne do ta kthejmë të komunikueshme, me rrugica, me labirinthe, njerëzit të jenë bashkë, nuk do të ketë porta, nuk do të ketë mur, nuk do të ketë gardhe" Do you have a comment 0211 kjhgfdon this?

CLOSING

1. What is next? How do you imagine the project evolving in the future?

2. From your point of view, from 1-5, how real and effective do you find this collaboration?

3. Is this a design philosophy that Tirana's urban development lacks? Why or why not?

4. Is there anything else you would want to say, or something I have not asked you that you would like to add?

DESIGNERS' INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT

1-ST INTERVIEW

1. I am an architecture graduate but always had a particular preference in Urban Design. Had a few different work experiences in architectural studios, and currently I am working at the Urban Planning sector of the Municipality of Tirana.
2. I find the concept of TUYC21 competition to be really interesting and challenging at the same time. Such kind of initiatives are worth a try, specifically when students or young professionals are involved, but in most of the times the process results to be difficult. The design itself can produce new ideas on how to deal with these areas in a sustainable way, without losing unique features of the already existing architectonic and urban elements. However, usually the challenge stands on the implementation phase. Ownership and economic issues usually become a problem which then stop entirely the process.
3. There are 3 main interest groups in this context: stakeholders, residents and the local authority (in this case the Municipality of Tirana). All three must have some synergy so that they can work together to achieve common goals. The stakeholders are important since they can make an investment in the area; the residents are important because they can give availability of their properties to further improve the area; and the local authority is important on the other hand since they are in charge of the development of the territory.
4. One of the most important key points of interest for the residents is the economic profit they can have in long term. They see the intervention in micro-scale and consider how this affects their property and/or their investment. On the other hand, the stakeholders and the local authority sees the intervention in macro-scale. The common goal of the three parties is to achieve the sustainable development of the neighborhood and to transform it in a landmark.
5. 1. Direct feedback and support by the residents during public discussions; 2. Great social impact in the neighborhood, thus creating a harmonious atmosphere between residents and investors; 3. High possibility to maintain typical/unique architectural and urban elements; 4. Deliver concrete results regarding the main needs of the residents; 5. Serve as an example/project pilot for other areas of the city to implement the same principles of design.
6. The most important part of the participatory design is the input that the residents give on traditional architectural elements, that they inherited from their relatives, which become strong typical elements of the area.
7. Preparatory planning phase

8. Involve the residents in the first phase of the design; problem solving approach connecting residents and stakeholders; clear and active relationship between parties involved.

9. As positive this approach can be, there are some limitations which affect the process of co-design. First and foremost is the willingness of the residents to actively participate in the design process, since this is a "contemporary" method to design public/private spaces, people can be suspicious of the benefits they can get from it. Then, another important issue is the consideration of the stakeholders regarding the Involvement of the residents, since they can see it as an obstacle to their business and profit plans. However, this could help to change how people (residents) see public and shared spaces, because, during communist period people where deprived of having private spaces that could be shared with their neighbors.

10. Including the residents in the project would create a harmonious atmosphere for the three parties involved in this project: the residents, as key actors; the stakeholders, as investors; and the tourists, as beneficiary group.

11. One of the main issues regarding the private property is the ownership, this is why I consider this concept as utopian and somehow a bit 'romantic'.

12. I see how enthusiastic this project could be considered from both the residents and the local authorities; however, the ownership is a big issue right now in Tirana/Albania that is why I consider this as a substantial limitation for the success of it.

13. 4

14. In the last years, the urban development of Tirana has been overly centered and focused on the private property. The approach of co-design would help to reduce somehow the gap between local authorities, the stakeholders and the residents, which could collaborate for common goals and benefits.

15. I really would like to see this project come true and use it as a great example of co-design in an urban context.

2-ND INTERVIEW

1. 6 years of experience in different typologies of projects 2. Surpervision of building during construction, organizing the work in site. 3. Clients meeting 4. Project manager

2. I think that collaboration in each process of realizing a project , from concept to construction is a vital thing .

3. The most important actors in the project are of course the proffesional because they now which the best direction to be follow

4. In general i think yes, few of them might have more personal interest more than others, sometimes because they have unclear their situation with the property .

5. 1. The development would be an innovation in how the project is designed and build in Tirana. 2. The development would be more acceptable from

community, designers, municipality. 3. The collaboration would bring the real need of the society in the center of attention, every solution from professionals would be in their benefit . 4. Sense of the community would be more powerful for the citizens.

6. Their memory for the urban space.
7. Preparatory planning phase
8. 1- Their knowledge about the past value of urban space. 2- Knowing their issues regarding urban space. 3- The way how they wanted the urban space to be used, the function.
9. It is an advantage overall. The only disadvantage is that if the professionals aren't knowledgeable enough, the citizens' opinions and needs may be misunderstood. They should be great managers of the process because it may even be a total failure. Sill, I find it a great advantage getting ideas from the citizens.
10. Exchanging ideas in social, economical and professional aspects gives offers new opportunities for valuable collaboration and a common, rational and reasonable outcome.
11. No way he framed their idea in such a way! He might like the idea of such a neighborhood but if you'd ask him if he liked his property to have no separating walls, I believe he wouldn't agree.
12. It is a good methodology model to be experimented if it will work out or not, but, everything that happens in this urban space should be monitored and restudied/evaluated after (let me say) 3 years. The space finds itself, it adapts with peoples' behaviour.
13. 3
14. I think Tirana is not yet prepared for this approach. I believe it is still early to implement such a thing, but it has great potentials to be experimented with.
15. It should be paid special attention to the selection and evaluation of the ideas of each actor that participates in such project. Ideas should be carefully considered and effectively implemented.

3-RD INTERVIEW

1. I am trained as an architect. I did a 5 year degree at Epoka University but later on pursued a more different field which is urban management and planning. I've worked a lot in Albania with rural development and basically sustainable sector related to cultural heritage and tourism and then I have done a Masters in the Netherlands focusing in urban management and development but more detailed in transportation issues. I now work as an adviser at GIZ and financing focusing in the city of Tirana and I am in charge of base modernization system.

2. I think that the approach is very interesting. It is new, it is very good that we are doing this. I think Yes. It is collaboration in the real life setting, I think there has always been there in a way, even before people collaborated a lot. Now we see this as fancy, exotic new term but I don't think that we invented it. I mean, the society of nowdays, before, you can see collaboration everywhere, villages being built through people helping each other. If you study ancient settlements you can clearly see that. I think it really contributes to the objectives of the project, it helps to bring the project forward and help a bigger community because if it were only in the hands of the designers it wouldn't be the same impact and effect. However, everything has its pros and cons. It is important to have collaboration but not just for the sake of having collaboration which means to fit to the purpose and sometimes you see this a lot in different projects. The initiators, the designers, the actors just invite a bunch of people and they argue they have done it in a collaborative way but that is not the case, so we have to be very careful as well.

3. I wouldn't say the most important. I would say every actor has its own importance and it depends on different moments, steps, stages of the project so I think everyone is of the same importance, like the people living there or the owners of the property. Maybe if you'd like to extend it the people living in Tirana and of course the designers, the municipality is very important and maybe other professionals who'd like to give an opinion about that, maybe the cultural heritage professionals, the civil society. So I think, I wouldn't frame who is the most important, I believe everyone has an angle that the other don't have, so it is very important and necessary to be able to include everyone because it is almost important to reach the moment you say this is the most important collaborative I could get to but it is still worth to try. This is related a lot to the network governance concept. I wouldn't pick a single most important actor.

4. This is.. umm. I am not sure. It depends a lot to the type of neighbors, on their social background, on their economical background, economical background which we often oversee, but it is very important. But I would assume, since I was asked it is has first of all a lot to do with the public space so it is important to them to have public area around their space, so that they can use it, which is not privatized but it is also economical. So every investment that you do in the neighborhood, everybody living there has a direct benefit in their property values for example. However, we also need to think about gentrification. If you invest in a certain area you need to make sure that the people living there won't be relocated because now can not pay for the rent, or can't pay for higher taxes so that is also very important to consider. And then they said they would be very interested to profit from it, I don't know if there is a shop nearby, a caffe, I think it is different interests and we need to consider all of them. Overall I would say gentrification. I would mention the New Bazaar, you can see that, I don't base it on a detailed study of course, but this area is quite gentrified, because a lot of people moved there that could pay more rent so a lot of others had to move out. Of course this is not the same like it happens in more developed countries for

example in the US, Belgium, The Netherlands, UK, but still it is something we need to make sure there is no disparity between the people living there and the newcomers of this development

5. 1- A new angle, perspective to the project that it might didn't have before, it might be for the best, it might be for the worst but you never know, more options is still benefit. 2-To be able to provide better living conditions for the community, more user and commuity friendly public space. 3- The feeling of ownership and sense of place. I they will they are involved, afterward they will maintain it, new developments will proceed. 4-The resources. If you involve more people, you'll eventually have more resources, in terms of knowledge and ideas more than money. 5- It is a benefit for the whole city because it creates a big precedence. When this project comes to life it will be an example for other areas. It is also fairly important to say that it is acting as a role model for other project.

6. The public space distribution. When it comes to space it is always a negotiation. How much space to allocate for the pedestrians, for the bikers, who rides. It is really a negotiation, you can never give an arbitrary decision.

7. Other # They should be present in all phases of the design process. What I don't like is when people are chosen at the end to be briefed about the project , when they have no information at all. And that is not really public Involvement, that is just digging the box by just saying , yes I did that, what is called, umm.. the public hearing, but they were never heard.

8. 1- Better space distribution 2-Better living conditions 3-Sense of ownership

9. As I said before, everything you do in life has its positive and negative aspects, there is no arbitrary truth or axiom. So the thing is that whenever you decide to involve citizens, and I know this from first hand experience, there is a problem that sometimes you get lost in details, especially in Albania because people are hardly heard and whenever they get the chance to be heard the is a chance that the discussion move to a direction that you don't wanted to, basically you loose the focus. Often when you do collaborative processes, I remember in the Netherlands there was often an issue that took months, do you need to draw the lines at some point. So there is a need for a network leader who takes decisions which is also tricky because that person may be very authoritarian and decide whatever suits them best. I think that collaboration is never complete. How do you make sure that everybody is heard? Like, it is difficult. If you go to a rural area and you invite a bunch of people there women don't usually speak, men speak for them unfortunately but this is the society we live nowadays so when you think about it, although you think they have been heard because men spoke on behalf of them, they were never heard. There are many cases when we spoke to them one by one and we were told different stories. So it is important that you use different tools and approaches. There are people who don't like to speak up in front of a crowd, there are people who love to speak in front of a crowd and they should be stopped to. It is important to have a comprehensive approach and you know the approach and you try to

with all different means and still it wont be a complete collaboration I have to say. As I said it is a negotiation.

10. Getting people heard and involved creates a sense of ownership which creates a sense of community.

11. Interesting, very good, however we need to consider the fact that. It is very nice, I am very glad to hear this but walls and gates and fences are also important. They are at some point part of the culture, it doesn't mean that the sense of community is lost. In the contexts, if it suits them, it is pretty fine but I wouldn't say that the only solution to have the sense of community is not having gates or walls. The paths, labyrinths are important and necessary but I don't support the idea that architects and designers are taking off the fences, because the fences create the sense of security which some people need, but of course that depends on the context.

12. This good be a project as a precedent for other projects and I see this project taking off and becoming a very nice example and I hope to see people working on that form of community and organization that distributes the knowledge in other parts of the city as well. There is a case like this in Amsterdam. A couple of people got together and they built floating houses in water and now they have a community, they have their own rules. And what is interesting to me is that they become like knowledge hub. They share their ideas and knowledge for other people to learn, so I would like this to become the future of this project as well.

13. 4

14. Yes, a lot. In general in Albania it is the sense of apathy, people are not involved. I personally believe that comes a lot from communism and the fact that people were obliged to have that sense of community and collaborate. That coupled with the transition period where people have a sort of lack of trust on institutions and each other creates the lack of compactness and cohesion in the society. You don't see a lot of communities. I often hear it from the internationals coming and saying that there are really surprised that there is no communities of some sort, that is very difficult. The thing is that, no matter how much we push it from the designers side, it is strictly, inherently a socio-economic-political problem, so we should collaborate with other professionals to discuss and to push this forward because it is not just about collaborating for designing spaces but it is for collaborating for everything. It is bigger than design and architecturary or planning, it has to do with socio-economic-political factors and in Albania and that is a big problem. I remember reading that research paper, in UN there is a sense of apathy in Albania which is not allowing us to form that community.

15. I'd like just to say that I don't know if this contradictory but I think that the community can not be designed. You can push people to be more close to each other, but it can not be designed. It is not an architects job. It is very important to work with other professionals and to understand that the problems why we don't get together and work for our common areas and collaborating has a lot to do with social factors and social developments of

a country and it is much bigger than design. I don't mean that we should not try but we need to realize some things are out of the reach of us as designers. I hope that things are becoming better but we need to push from all sides, not just getting people together to discuss about public space because that might also backfire, people are also tired. For example, the government has done public hearings but they were not really public hearings. People were just gathered, asked about something, sorry, not even told that something was happening and they could even say anything about it. And even if they did, they were never heard, so if that happens for a long time people loose trust and if you don't have trust people can't collaborate. Trust is the baseline that you need to need to form, to work on, to co-create. If you don't have that you can't collaborate.

4-TH INTERVIEW

1. I am an urban planner and lecturer at the department of Architecture, Epoka University.
2. The approach of the competition to include young professionals/students in the process of the development [revitalization] of an historic zone, in a different way from the current urban developments in Tirana, is to be appreciated very much. In this project it seems that there is a kind of consensus among the inhabitants, a crucial factor for the project to be a reality. I do not think that such processes are very common in Albania, not to say they are inexistent.
3. I think the most important factors are the owners/community living there because the future of this houses depends on their approach, mentality and their financial capabilities. Based on these factors, the old area might be revitalized in a creative/smart way, it can be sold to developers and cleared out or it can be left to a deterioration process. Another important factor is the approach of local institutions, especially municipality towards this process. They can relieve the burocratic procedures and support the process, even in the financial means, they can be indifferent, or they can make the process even harder.
4. I think the main interest is in economic aspect. Secondly it is about the their attachment to this places, their memories, identity and their past.
5. 1. has the potential to built a complex order/solution which is very difficult to be reached by top-down one man/group design methods. 2. Provide more feasible solutions. 3. Provides a chance for a step by step process, flexible for changes, reflections and adaptations. 4. The final product is more matured, based on an accumulated knowledge, which is broader and healthier than the inspirations, creativity or knowledge of just a small group of designers. 5. The process of implementation can be easier.
6. Their knowledge about the spirit of that place.
7. Preparatory planning phase

8. 1. Better understanding of the context. 2. More practical solutions. 3. More complex solutions

9. I think this approach is an advantage to the design process, if it is managed properly. Some risks of this approach are: 1. process can be extended to much if there is not a consensus among the stake holders. 2. If there is no balance between the needs and ideas of the community and the knowledge of the professionals, the results can be poor, folkloric, and ordinary. 3. There might be many difficulties to avoid populist design ideas.

10. If the project is implemented in way that keeps a balance of economic benefits, publicness and privacy/tranquility it can enhance the sense of community. But if it will be transformed to place having in focus the tourist/visitors it might damage the sense of the place.

11. I think that the permeability on certain spaces, axes is important but a total opening, without a balance of publicness and privacy would not be the best solution.

12. I hope it evolves in easy process but, considering the Albanian context, it might face many difficulties.

13. 3

14. Yes, this is a philosophy that is not embraced by responsible actors [institutions, developers, public] in Tirana. Mostly, the urban development is defined by the interest of developers and the public institutions are mostly corrupted.

15. No

5-TH INTERVIEW

1. Architecture student

2. The approach is interesting indeed, because of site location, its undeveloped potential and the missing social interaction as it's main problematic to be solved.

3. The most important actors in this project are the people owning parcels in the area and the main investors. If the people have the spaces and know exactly what is missing, the big investors are the key of making these important changes happen not only financially speaking but also because of their position on the market by making their target group,part of the community - bringing life to it.

4. It is for sure to have qualitative spaces and profitable spaces in terms of self economy.

5. Advantages: New creative ideas coming up The improvement of social impact Louder voice, spread of spaces usage and functionality Better economy Direct way of involving citizens and costumers

6. Their identity and the social inequality

7. Formal planning phase

8. Valuable information on the state of well being Actuall situation analysis Creative interventions proposed
9. Hard to avoid the one side point of views but this is a postive collaboration indeed
10. Ska
11. The sense of the community is always impacted by the surrounding, good or bad that is.
12. I hope there are pedestrian streets turned into pop up parks for children and old people. Green spaces also!
13. 4
14. Ska
15. Society wil always long for spaces they can feel each other, see each other and stay,..gather! Enjoy this project kinge.

6-TH INTERVIEW

1. I am a young architect, currently working on street repurposing to fit more interactive and child-friendly scenarios.
2. It is interesting to consider the users/benefiters as part of a competition, since it was meant as an idea provider through a different methodology. Usually competitions are a synthetical representation of a concept, regardless of the scale. Owner participation gave it a more implementing character to it, that provided alternative framework.
3. The mediators between the owners and the planners. They are the communication channel that will translate the general idea into a more fragmented offer that probably will meet owners demand.
4. Higher property value (monetary, emotional, status)
5. Since it is a bottom up initiative, from the beginning up to the competition idea, it has a enormous chance to succeed. Still I think there are a lot to do on the translation of the winning idea. Their initiative has little risk since it is not starting as an business entrepreneurship. There are a couple of good examples around Albania.
6. Communication
7. Other: All the above
8. Their knowledge on the neighborhood fluxes Their needs Their collaboration in the implementation phases
9. Gives you fast and detail information (knowledge sometimes). Creates a very complex network of information and generates multilayered problems. It is advantageous depending on the deadline and the competition.
10. You need a lot of time to communicate, get feedback and reflect on the decisions.
11. There is no labyrinth without (gardhe). The risk of this is the lost of the place spirit, in favor of the open area.

12. A long process of talks, workshops, models.
13. 3
14. No. There is an intense pressure and very delicate balance to be maintained in the largest city of the country. Also the stakeholders usually share opposite interests for the same property, not the case mentioned above.
15. No

7-TH INTERVIEW

1. Architecture student in the final year of my studies
2. I consider the bottom-up approach to be the proper way in seeking development through maintained values of existing urban fragments. The contribution of the locals themselves is the main driving force in fulfilling the objectives of such a project.
3. I believe the most important actors are the locals themselves and their willingness to explore and exploit the values their preserved properties have.
4. Their main interest lies in preventing and avoiding the almost inevitable transformation of their neighborhood into a high rise residential complex. They are looking for a way to preserve values and maintain bonds.
5. engaging locals, working with them, empowering them to generate ideas, making it easier for them to admit to the idea that their houses will be open to the public
6. Their experience
7. Preparatory planning phase
8. better analysis of the context, adequate design solutions, faster implementation process.
9. potentials: removing existing barriers between designers and locals, generating new and sometimes unexpected context-based ideas, better outcomes based on locals' desires. disadvantage: The only disadvantage I may think of is time. Due to the frequent feedbacks the design process may last longer. Still I believe the benefits outweigh the advantages.
10. While submitting to the common aim of preserving values, this approach will break the existing boundaries, both physical and non-physical.
11. They miss the sense of community and togetherness and this project will be a great contribution to it.
12. a pilot project- I foresee other projects in the remaining human-scaled, traditional neighborhoods of Tirana following the same philosophy.
13. 5
14. Yes, I believe it is. We're still in time to preserve the remaining traditional fragments of Tirana.
15. No

8-TH INTERVIEW

1. Architect in Urban Planning and Design fields
2. I do not know
3. Locals and city managers
4. The main interest of neighbors is every time to raise the quality/quantity of answers to their needs and wishes within the neighbourhood
5. early interviews and focus groups co-defining common strategies co-designing common "tactics" Involvement in implementation and materials provision (reuse and recycle) Involvement in the "post" (maintaining the new conquered places)
6. Involvement in implementation and materials provision (the project become really common through the co-action!)
7. Implementation phase
8. sharing the common wishes sharing the implementation stage sharing a common vision of their place
9. advantage
10. when a group acts as a unique and really motivated team in raising the quality of the local spaces, starting from sharing a common vision and following on with a common implementation; also the perception of being part of a co-place raises in parallel. The so call the feeling of "place attachment".
11. This would be the main goal! If action is able to stimulate such kind of feeling, it is the whole project process that is going very well
12. No answer
13. 5
14. In the theoretical approach there are not missing in the general philosophy, problem raise in the realization stages. As it happens usually in the comparison with other more powerful stakeholders.
15. none

9-TH INTERVIEW

1. I'm a the co-founder and managing director of NEUAR and senior architect with more than 10 years of experience in architectural design and construction management. Nevertheless my background expands the construction industry. Since 2013 I'm a human rights activist and the co-founder of two NGO working in Albania, Europe and Central Asia, while designing and implementing several social projects with key stakeholders like USAID , CoE, ect.

2. Based on the knowledge i have such approach where people get involved in solving specific needs of a certain area, is beneficial to creating real solutions based on tangible needs. As for the objectives of the project I'm not quite familiar with them.
3. All the actors collaborating have a specific role to play,
4. Economic development of the neighborhood while maintaining some cultural and heritage aspects of the area.
5. A more in depth evaluation is needed but i can say that this project will increase the sense of belonging of the citizens to that specific area.
6. I need a list of elements in order to pick one.
7. Preparatory planning phase
8. The use of space and ownership over a certain area while living there.
9. Multiple factors need to be evaluated, because not all ideas coming from the citizens might be approachable or realistic.
10. As mentioned above.
11. Through the years peoples sense of belonging has changed and with the lates development in Tirana, all the feelings associated with "home" and "my neighborhood" has lost. The statement is most definitely true but time is needed to reshape our realities and social cognition.
12. I'm looking forward to see it completed.
13. 4
14. Tirana lack not only democratic participants and communication between actors, but also spaces to breathe.
15. No.

10-TH INTERVIEW

1. Urban Planning & Architecture

2. I am a fan of co-creation because I believe residents must be involved in all steps of the design process.

3. Current and future residents are the most important actors.

4. The preservation of cultural and architectural heritage.

5. Citizen participation, Sustainable design, Historical conservation, Enhanced connectivity, Community cohesion.

6. I find the resident-led initiative for historic conservation admirable.

7. Design phase

8. Landowners have more control over their land, Landowners have direct economic benefits, Residents can preserve the buildings they were born and raised.

9. Gentrification: the residents can look to diverse, authentic economic activities that are more native to the context they recognize and are nostalgic about. There are enough bujtina and cafe in this city. The Selvia area should not be another kalaja.

10. The project can foster community cohesion only if all stages of design and planning are led by the residents, with the other actors working as technical experts that inform the residents about their choices.

11. No. What did the other residents have to say about the change? This is a considerable transformation from the existing state, so all the voices of the residents should be heard equally, women and men. The planner and the designer should be mediators that help the residents achieve a consensus.

12. Hopefully, the residents are leading all processes of the design and planning.

13. 4

14. Yes, every planning and design project should adopt co-creation as a guiding principle.

15. In my opinion, the questions of this survey are more successful in a structured, or semi-structured interview format. Survey questions should not be this long and tiered.

APPENDIX B

CITIZEN-DESIGNERS' INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPTS

M- Hello (name). Thank you so much for taking the time to meet with me today. I really appreciate it. Before getting started, there are a couple of things about the purpose and process of the session that I would like to cover.As you know, I am interested in discovering the co-creation dynamics emerged from the citizens involvement in the design process.I am particularly interested in the transformative potential of shared urban spaces and possible challenges to such approach. That is really the focus of what we are going to talk about today. Everything you share in this interview will be kept in strictest confidence, and your comments will be transcribed anonymously —omitting your name, anyone else you refer to in this interview, as well as the name of your current institution and/or past institutions. Your interview responses will be included with all the other interviews I conduct.

To help me capture your responses accurately and without being overly distracting by taking notes, I would like to record our conversation with your permission. Again, your responses will be kept confidential. If at any time, you are uncomfortable with this interview, please let me know and I will turn the recorder off." "Do you have any questions for me before we begin?

   A- Alright. No

M- Let's begin with the first question. Can you give me some background information about your age and profession?

   A- What type of answer are you looking for? Like a funny person, foolish one or serious?

M- As it fits best.

   A- Okay. How old do you think I am?

M- Hm, probably 55, maybe 60.

A- Exactly 55. Leave the 60 out and we are cool, don't add my age.

M- Alright. And your profession is…?

A- I am an Economist.

M-What is your relationship to the neighborhood? Are you the owner of the house or you rent it out?

A- I am the owner, this house is inherited generation after generation. I have a good relation with the neighborhood because I have taken over the responsibility, or to say it better I had the idea of making our neighborhood part of a commercial attraction. Social and commercial. Always keeping in mind and maintaining the monumental tradition and values of Tirana citizenship.

M- How many generations is your home inherited?

A- I think that for more than 5-6 generations.

M- How much time do you spend in the neighborhood? Do you prefer spending your free time in your neighborhood or going at another neighborhood or somewhere else?

A- Here.

M- Always here, within the neighborhood?

A- Yes. Let me say something. Morning coffee and evening beer tastes better in the place that you have grown up.

M- That's true.

A- Its not the same in another place.

M- If someone told you that a new project will to be developed, what would be your main interest?

A- In the first place, the interest of all is the profit.

M- I understand, economical profit.

A- Of course. Always keeping in mind the citizenship. In the sense that heritage should be preserved. Like personal heritage such as last name. If the property is extinguished, also the last name is extinguished.

M- You have been part of the primary meetings, held for the development of the area, haven't you?

A- I have.

M- Can you give me a short description about their organization? Who were the people you participated in the meeting with? What have you discussed? What was your role as a citizen?

A- They did not impose anything on us. The idea was mine. Like the two of us right now, sitting around a table with my two French friends who come here often. They like to see the interior of the house. Also, students come here for their thesis and projects. These people have told me that I have done a good job renovating the house. What if you also did this change and that change. All of these have to do with the heritage owners. Social problems that correlate with interest and profit problems.

Let's restore the house. And I told you why we deal with small things. Why don't we do something more significant. Let's propose with a new bazaar, along Selvia and develop it. Some architects who study the area said it could be a beautiful thing as well. And then, drinking beers, we thought, why don't we open a competition,. I told this idea to the neighborhood. They were skeptical at first then we started to do the calculations. Would you choose to get 40 percent here or 40% of the apartment you will get within a high-rise building? The economic benefit percentage is the same in both options; restoring a cultural monument has more value. The value is even bigger when it is developed as a whole neighborhood. As time passes, the value increases.

Moreover, there are other old traditional houses around mine. It is villa Begea Toska Saraci; there are many large families. For example, at the beginning of the building, the value of the building was 1000 euros m2, now it is 500 400

euros. People smell it, and the value is dropping. In opposite, the value of our historic properties is increasing. Why? Because of the cultural value.

M - Because it is a historical and cultural value as well.

    A- The goal is to create a centrifuge so that all people come here from all over Albania. Working day and night.

M- The land regenerates profit itself.

    A- Gold is right under our feet, but no one knows the value.

M- Let's continue with the next question. After you proposed your idea what happened next?

    B- Here I explain. They were skeptical and kind of right. They told me 'These are dreams'. I get that people have many other problems, some people do not share ideas. They do not want to have a house next door to another neighbor.

The third person enters.

    A- Let me introduce you to my neighbor. Are the questions the same for both of us?

M-Yes, the questions are the same.

    A- In our neighborhood, there are only three families who own a house, that immigrated to Tirana. This gentleman, for example, came to Tirana in 1930.
    B- No, no in 1922.

M- So it has been almost, 100 years.

    A- They are the only ones who say we are not from Tirana. They come from Shkodra. They are Catholic families, and the harmony between the Vilaj and Koja families should be taken as an example in Albania.
    B- Let me explain a thing before we continue with next questions please.

M- Definitely, please.

B-We came to Tirana in 1922, 2 years after Tirana was declared as the capital city of Albania. Employment issues. After it was declared the capital, young people were required to be active in various jobs. Tirana would automatically absorb all the actors that would develop the country. Because even though independence was declared in 1912, the state began to function after the Lushnja congress. My dad was a typographer. It was almost the first printing house in Albania. Nikaj Printing House, a businessman from Tirana bought it, and due to the circumstances that existed at that time, craftmen were needed to learn the job. There were 5 people in the beginning. I can introduce you to the names of the children they have, Kel Shiroka, Gaz Preleka, Jake Banda. This is how we slowly moved here, at first it was my dad and my uncle. We were tenants and then we bought the house. This was my presentation. Now I have a question for you. Why do you need it for and how will you use this interview?

M- I'm an architecture student, in my fifth year. This year I graduate and at the same time I work as a full-time architect and I am a project manager in a company here in Tirana. If I could describe it briefly, my thesis topic is involving the citizens in the design process.

B- So, you want this interview for thesis purposes

M- Yes.

B- Because we need to know who we and why are we telling this information about. I do not want my words to be misused in the future.

M- Absolutely not. You are very right.

B- Based on a wise word that the people have said "I do not want to take revenge on any of my fellow brothers, because my word is wise and clever at the same extend to my belonging part." The greater the part, the clearer the word is. The smaller it is, less smart my words are.

M- Interests are less, it is obvious.

B- We must be correct in these things, especially with those we are born with and want to die together.

M- Introducing the purpose of my topic briefly, I have always been that urban architect who thought that citizens are the people who keep and inherit history. I believe that they know how property should be developed better than professionals, as they live it every day. From the moment I heard about the competition, I wanted to enter the competition myself, but due to work I could not participate, I thought of turning it into a diploma topic. My idea is to set this initiative of citizens as a good example of how urban areas should be developed. I think that the history is not in the center, in Skenderbej Square, it is hidden between the neighborhoods where people live and inherit every day. You are a very good example; Mr. Xhimi is a good example as well.

B- This is your work, and we wish you all the best.

M- Thank you.

B- I want to know where it will be used, as many people misuse people's statements. To me, the most important thing is have pure intentions, even it can be at any cost. We may be anachronistic in concept, in thought, but that is how we grew up.

M- I do not judge it that way, professionally. When I first saw the interview of Mr. Xhimi who showed how much he loved the neighborhood, and wanted to have an open neighborhood without separating doors, to welcome all people, I was amazed. This the wish of every urban planner and architect. Not many citizens have this concept of sharing urban spaces.

B- This neighborhood has had the sense of community since long ago. These are the stories that my father and my mother have told me. They have imparted us the spirit of the place. This path (shows the path) was closed with a door, and the whole neighborhood had two doors; a big door and a small one. All the neighborhood men had a key with which they could go in and out whenever they

wanted. All the people here have been like a community. That is why we try, with all our anachronism, to preserve this tradition. The doors are open; you are no longer at the head of the neighborhood at that big door; it is now shattered. We have 'no doors', and this is worth inheriting. Let me say something; Throws a stone goes to 15 floors. Someone has 1 million lek, and 100 thousand lek is 10%, another has 100 thousand and it is as much as 1 million of him. Although someone has more, someone has less, they will both drown equally. This is the basis of this philosophy. Because many times we judge people based on how much they own. But we must know that if somebody's world is small, the other's is big. Everyone has his own mini cosmos.

A- First of all, the citizenship should be taken as an example, which has impressed the embassy as well. It has never happened that way, that they have seen other projects. But the communication we made, with the idea we proposed, surprised them a lot. We as a community have made peace with each other. We want everyone to get what they truly deserve. So we're trying to do something like that. We want to give a lesson to all of Albania, that we can develop our own property. There is no need for someone else, a skilled or unskilled, to come and implement and build whatever he wants.

B- The unskilled people will just make a drama because they know nothing about us. They just have the money.

A- He must live a whole century with us to understand the issue. What you see now, we have been preserving for 300 years, the other building has 200, and the next one has 150. In this backyard you have the whole stage of urban development of Tirana.

B- I entered in this yard when I was a child. The relationship that I have with Xhimi's uncle is of another level. We were only 10-12 years old when his uncle taught us French. Here have been the most luxurious shops of Tirana.

A- There were the shops of Ibraim Begeja, selling luxury items coming from Paris.

B- Let me give you an example. Where the first 9th floor residential unit (9 Kateshi) was, which you can see from here, was the war museum. There was a marble shop. It was the first French perfumery. And in the 40s, when one of the greatest films was going to be shown, a very famous Italian actress came, Anida Vandi. At the time she was here, she was stunned, and amazed, as those perfumes were not even found in Rome. And the other store was at the credins bank, it was the linen store. Here they still made clothes with goat wool.

M- And all these came from France?

B- From Paris, because he studied in Paris. He first studied in Rome, but after his diploma was not recognized internationally, he went to the study again in France, Paris. I spent a lot of time with him.

A- All the families that have lived here have left traces in the history and city of the formation of Tirana and Albania. This alley had mayors, patriots, deputies, artists, people of sports and culture. From this alley there is a lot of value. Look at it from the other side, that of development, the alley is neglected.

M- It is true, it is way too much neglected.

A- Here is a great interplay of civilizations. We have built this system ourselves. You are a young woman and you understand that the vote has a lot of value. That vote destroyed us in 1946, in 90-91, and that vote destroyed us a few months ago. That is why a progeny of their house called the first film he dedicated to Albania "Away from the barbarians".

B- Lirie Begea is the director, granddaughter of the house out there. She left in 1944 with her father, and when she returned, she made the film I mentioned above.

M- Let's continue.

A- You will ask us both questions and we will both answer.

B- Forgive me for interrupting, I know that you have your methodology. It is more interesting to talk like that, and you then collect the pieces and get the information you need.

M- That's what I am doing.

A- You should understand that this neighborhood is everything to us. I tried to live somewhere else and came back. And we come to what I said at the beginning, 'breakfast coffee and dinner beer taste nowhere else except where you were born.'

M- Could you list five benefits that you think will make this collaboration more effective and meaningful? I realized that the first one is economical.

A-
1. The first economic
2. the second is the preservation of the character of the neighborhood,
3. the preservation of the surname. It is very important that if these are deleted, it is called Selvia and not the Begeaj house. A mayor comes and

he destroys everything. They are removing the Tirana clock, not a neighborhood like ours.

4. The value as part of the city, as a monumental tradition
5. Cultural heritage.

These are the basis of it all.

B- We are a metropolis. This happens all over the world, but the world has not allowed unregulated mass constructions. There are no skyscrapers in the center, nor even in Rome, anywhere. The new neighborhoods are created in the suburbs. That's because they have preserved the pigment, that little dot, the taste of everything. And this is the last drop in authentic Tirana. If this last drop demolishes, Tirana can be anything but not the city that we had. That pigment we want to preserve is wholly lost. There is no space for tourism. A significant problem we face with is lacking places that we can take tourists to. They do not want to see the boulevard; they see it online. They want to visit something to experience, they seek traditions, like Korca, Berat. Korça has preserved their city.

A- We think that this area meets all the conditions to become a beautiful tourists ring. And from the tourist point of view if I speak as a tour guide. Starting from the center where tourists can visit the castle, going to the New Bazaar. If these neighborhoods and roads are renovated, they come out beautiful. This way, tourist get lost in wandering, shop and visit places

M- So your main purpose is to developling the whole zone.

A- yes, we want it to be open 24 hours, like Manhattan, Paris. Let me give you an example. The Camet market is opened until 2 o'clock then it closes. We do not want this. We aim to transform it into a landmark where you find multiple of destinations. A neighbourhood of culture 'houses'; art galleries, museums, canteens.

B- This neighborhood will resemble a promenade museum as well as high-end shops.

M- Do you have an image of the neighborhood, how will it look like?

A- We have principles; we will look at things in detail.

B- The reference is foreign tourists. They don't want to see what they see every day. They search for unique places that represent our culture, coming and laying on a rug.

We have slept on wooden boards. They want to experience exactly the same, exactly the way we used to sleep, for example. Have you heard of the great Russian poet Jasmine? When a bird does not sing with its voice, it sounds

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ridiculous. The world seeks its voice. The same happens with the tourists. They need originality, not imitation. Imitation is the ugliest thing.

Creating this kind of environment, this guesthouse, serving the Albanian cuisine, imam bajalldi, pickled cabbage; people will taste it because they are curious. For instance, Mrizi I Zanave is a fantasy that becomes a reality.

M- What do you think your contribution to the design process would be a potential value?

A- The steps we are following are promising. We were lucky to find support by the French embassy gave us. They didn't give the project idea to a certain design studio, they conceived the competition from which 16 applications were received, 12 presentations were presented and the best 6 got selected. The proposals were significant. The winners, the students from Geneva, had this idea of developing the new neighborhood over the old one. The interweaving of the new with the old, preserving the tradition.

Unlike the municipality of Tirana who has had the idea of developing this zone since 2018, unfortunately, all they did was nothing. Our idea was shocking to them. After we did it they asked us present the projects to the municipality.

On the other hand, there are families with economic problems and want to develop their property as soon as possible. They were about to fall into the municipality trap by trusting the construction companies. It was hard for me to make up their mind that preserving the historical buildings and the neighborhood is more beneficial.

Construction companies want to build a Manhattan, a city character that does not fit Tirana We want some kind of a mechanism. With a budget of 50 million euros, you also build high-rise buildings, but they won't generate profit. We are looking for employment opportunities, a moving economy and tourists who come and leave. It is the same as removing the bazaar from Istanbul, the economy. I want to conclude, all this is done by involving the citizens, us.

A- You have to do a striking dissection with this topic that you have captured. Especially since you are interviewing the core of the capital and Albania that

seeks to protect values. At this age we are not interested in profit. I started preserving my historic house 30 years ago.

A- These are cultural monuments of the second category and the state should contribute. So far, I have invested myself. For a very simple reason, as my neighbor Pero said, this neighborhood is not for that group of people who do not value traditions, history and culture. I have a son in Geneva. He says that, in Geneva, every political party must discuss the city's development together with citizens' representatives. They believe that nobody else except the citizens knows the history and traditions better. And this should be done in any city.

M -Would you be more interested in the design process, and how would you get involved?

A- Listen. Designing is the same as telling a blacksmith you will become a dentist. I don't know how to paint, I can't do it. Somebody who knows to do it. will.

Change the question. It would be better to participate in the development concept. The design is the last step. For example, my neighbor Pero and I have an idea. We would collaborate. Let's demolish this one here, and open the alley here, build this here and change this one. There must be unanimity and discussion.

You can't just go to a studio, they sketch a couple of lines and boom, it is approved. That is how the conflict begins. On the contrary, it is achieved and can be done. An urban solution must be found. This is done by communicating with each representative; everyone must know what will be done and how it will be done. Let us all be participants.

B- If you review similar projects, we hold hostile attitudes towards the city. The building that is covering the clock of Tirana is hostile, a criminal behavior. The other models are negative. If a project starts bad, it ends bad.

M- How do you think the project will evolve? What will be next?

B- What will be next? It all starts when you have good intentions. If we do not see the white hearts, this project will not work; it is dead.

M- Has all these communication and interpretation of ideas been difficult?

A- We did not have communication. We only spoke and the embassy and they gave us their contribution. The massive work has not begun yet. We are dealing with a futuristic idea. The municipality has not started anything yet, it lied to the embassy as well. If it was for them, they should have done something already. They keep postponing the meeting

M- To start discussions?

A- Yes to present to them the idea and to show the concept. Look what they did, they postponed it to September. Most probably they are on the process of developing a project paralel to us and will make us choose.

M- What attitude did the embassy hold?

A- The embassy loves the project, they want to develop it.

M- Maybe they are also playing their cards, to change your mind or something like that.

A- There is such kind of tendency. You previously mentioned that you did interviews with the designers. What do the specialists think?

M- As I was telling you, my last question was quoting what you had said in an interview. ''Elementi kryesor është që lagjen ne do ta kthejmë të komunikueshme, me rrugica, me labirinthe, njerëzit të jenë bashkë, nuk do të ketë porta, nuk do të ketë mur, nuk do të ketë gardhe'' .

I was surprised especially by an urban planner who stated that there is no possibility that a citizen said this. Because even we, who are professionals, do not know the context very good and we do not know, that there are citizens who actually take initiatives such yours. Others were happy to hear about it, but they were a bit skeptical. They believe that it is quite challenging in a context such as Albania, where most of the people are not familiar with these types of initiatives. This is a summary of their thoughts.

A- Here the concept of separation will be removed; everything will be shared. The gates and courtyards will give space for more pedestrian roads in which you can walk and explore the historic neighborhood.

M- That was everything, thank you very much for your valuable answers. I really appreciate it.

A- It is my absolute pleasure. I would like to show you the neighborhood and the historic buildings before you leave.