

CREATING MORE LIVABLE CITIES: THE CASE OF VLORA

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Approval sheet of the Thesis

This is to certify that we have read this thesis entitled “**Creating More Livable Cities: The case of Vlora**” 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

CREATING MORE LIVABLE CITIES: THE CASE OF VLORA

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If you ask me today what the image of our cities looks like, I will immediately think of a series of worn-out panoramas. And this is exactly how the real experience of the cities is, that even though they do not speak, they truly need to live. It is difficult for a city to survive if it has to face the consequences of urban devastation every day. Roads congested with vehicles, which seem to frighten pedestrians along the ridge and open spaces which are losing their importance as they are reduced to parking lots, are images repeated often and everywhere. In general, urban spaces are increasingly detached from sustainability, accessibility and the friendly element. And while negative experiences are offered every day, new models of improving urban life strive to become the buzzword of our cities. Simple and successful models that directly affect the environment, the individual and the quality of life.

This article examines exactly the need to have these role models, and their importance today. It describes the evolution of concepts that have made us have these user manuals in our hands. Special attention has been paid to their subjectivity and interpretations, with these theories being seen by various specialists in the field. The final goal of this dissertation has been the contextualization of concepts, to a smaller scale than the examples we are used to see, specifically in a coastal city, in constant need for the improvement of urban life, such as the city of Vlora. In order to realize the complete framework of a livable city, two interventions have been realized: Intervention in urban scale (study and conception of a tram line in the city) and Intervention in architectural scale (idea and design of a national museum for the city navy) Decisions and interventions are explained and strengthened with theoretical and practical details, aiming to apply the principles of a livable city to a

smaller scale.

Keywords: *livability, sustainability, urban devastation, urban model, public transportation,*

ABSTRAKT

TË KRIJOJMË MË SHUMË QYTETE TË JETUESHËM ÇËSHTJA E QYTETIT TË VLORËS

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Nëse më pyesni sot se si duket imazhi i qyteteve tona, menjëherë do të mendoj për një seri panoramash të lodhura. Dhe pikërisht kjo është përvoja e vërtetë e qyteteve, që edhe pse nuk flasin, ata vërtet kanë nevojë të jetojnë. Është e vështirë për një qytet të mbijetojë nëse i duhet të përballet me pasojat e shkatërrimit urban çdo ditë. Rrugët e mbingarkuara me automjete, të cilat duket se i frikësojnë këmbësorët dhe hapësirat të cilat po humbasin rëndësinë e tyre pasi reduktohen në parkingje, janë imazhe të përsëritura shpesh dhe kudo. Në përgjithësi, hapësirat urbane janë gjithnjë e më të shkëputura nga qëndrueshmëria, aksesueshmëria dhe elementi miqësor. Dhe ndërsa përvojat negative ofrohen çdo ditë, modele të reja të përmirësimit të jetës urbane përpiqen të bëhen kryefjala e qyteteve tona. Modele të thjeshta dhe të suksesshme që ndikojnë drejtpërdrejt në mjedisin, individin dhe cilësinë e jetës.

Ky artikull shqyrton saktësisht nevojën për të pasur këto modele dhe rëndësinë e tyre sot. Ai përshkruan evolucionin e koncepteve që na kanë bërë të kemi në dorën tonë këto manuale përdorimi. Vëmendje e veçantë i është kushtuar subjektivitetit dhe interpretimeve të tyre, me këto teori që shihen nga specialistë të ndryshëm të fushës. Qëllimi përfundimtar i këtij disertacioni ka qenë kontekstualizimi i koncepteve, në një shkallë më të vogël sesa shembujt që jemi mësuar të shohim, konkretisht në një qytet bregdetar, në nevojë të vazhdueshme për përmirësimin e jetës urbane, siç është qyteti i Vlorës. Për të realizuar kuadrin e plotë të një qyteti të jetueshëm, janë realizuar dy ndërhyrje: Ndërhyrje në shkallë urbane

(studimi dhe konceptimi i një linje tramvaji në qytet) dhe Ndërhyrje në shkallë arkitektonike (idejimi i një muzeu kombëtar marine për qytetin). Vendimet dhe ndërhyrjet shpjegohen dhe forcohen me detaje teorike dhe praktike, duke synuar zbatimin e parimeve të një qyteti të jetueshëm në një shkallë më të vogël.

Fjalët kyçe: jetueshmëri, qëndrueshmëri, shkatërrim urban, model urban, transport publik

Dedicated to my family!

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To professor Julian

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Along with all other hard working and respected
Professors

“Fortune favors the brave”

My humble effort I dedicate to my sweet and loving family

Mom & Dad

Rejdi & Marjo

Whose affection, love, encouragement and prays are the reason of what I become today,

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 The case of Vlora

Writing an appropriate introduction to a diploma thesis is a difficult task, even for those with experience in academic writing. Writing the introduction of a diploma topic, for the future of urban planning, for the hometown is twice as difficult. I chose to compose my diploma thesis about Vlora, the city where I was born and raised, and of course, I have a special sensitivity.

But before I dwell on the concept - my idea specifically, I must describe what Vlora is in the eyes of a young architect like me. To contextualize the morphology of this settlement as well as its history. It is inevitable not to start my study focusing on the geography of this settlement. Vlora is a settlement which lies on a coastal plain with a moderately low geographical altitude. However, the southern and eastern frames of the city take on a quote rising to the relief of the gentle hills and then the horn mountains of the Shushica River. The coast of Vlora is affected by the bay of the same name, surrounded by the Akrokeraune Mountains, which also form the Karaburun Peninsula, Sazan Island and extending further in north, with the Narta lagoon complex. Numerous formations with limestone but also sedimentary sand and rock formations of sandy origin determine the morphology of the terrain of Vlora. This area is also the coastal area with the largest number of freshwater springs in Albania, including aboveground and underwater springs. But the greatest gift that nature has given to this settlement is the positioning at the junction between the Ionian Sea and the Adriatic.

Precisely this geographical position and the accompanying climatic conditions have been the impetus for the population of this area since before the Bronze Age. Mentioned in Homer's epic "Iliad", as inhabited by Nosto's descendants, since its genesis, Vlora has been conceived to be a hub in the major trade routes of the Mediterranean. Despite the fact that politically, Vlora has passed under the rule of many civilizations, the neuralgic significance as a crossroads between east and west

has been cardinal throughout its existence. The Pelasgians-Illyrians, the ancient Greek settlers, the Romans, the Byzantines, the Normans, the Venetians, the Ottomans, the new Greeks, the Italians, the Germans and even the late Soviets of history, all passed through Vlora and left their mark on the architectural worldview. of urban planning of the city. Even other communities, such as the Jews who came from Spain in 1426, still have their trace in the urban planning of the city of Vlora.

The inhabited center of Vlora has moved during different eras of history. Throughout the classical period, Aulona has been stretched along the sandy coastline. Where Flag Square is today, in antiquity were the surrounding walls of ancient Aulona. With the collapse of classical civilization and the approach of the Middle Ages, the need for more protected and fortified settlements led to the gradual abandonment of classical Aulona and the founding of the Kanina fortress along with the village of the same name. The transition between these two periods, from an urban point of view, was accompanied by the abandonment of the maritime and urban economy, the transition from the wide streets of antiquity, large squares and classical buildings, to narrow streets, dwellings built side by side and fortified without a geometric planning in layout.

The Ottoman period again recognized a re-concentration of the population in the urban area, which can be called the forerunner of the historic area of the city of Vlora. From the urban point of view, the buildings were placed according to a defined urban plan, with access roads paved with cobblestones. The first floors of buildings were conceived for the production of crafts and the trade of material goods and services. Regarding the influence on the style of construction, we can mention the nuances of Ottoman, Italian, Spanish, etc., which can be distinguished even today in some of the buildings.

In the later modern period, as in all major cities in Albania, the most important influence was that of fascist Italian urbanism. Vlora, like other cities in Albania experienced in this period of history rapid and important developments. The projection of the city as an important trade hub and as the capital for the south of Albania inevitably required a modern approach to its urban planning. In the twentieth century, Vlora was designed for the automobile era, passing through the alleys of the historic area of the neighborhood "Muradie" in the wide boulevard Vlorë - Skelë, by road and direct access to the port of the city. The conception of this boulevard primarily served the city's economy and strategic goals for harbor access. However, the side effect has

been the direct access of workers on the road to the largest producer of jobs for the city, the port of Vlora.

This continuity of access to wide roads, sidewalks, greenery, urban lines and a disciplined urban planning continued during the communist regime, despite the influential architecture from the Eastern Bloc. In what can be called the era of chaos for the urban planning of post-90 'Albanian cities, Vlora was one of the cities that came out with less losses. However, with the strengthening of state institutions and the reconceptualization of large urban and architectural projects, already in the face of the fact carried out with numerous investments such as the project of the promenade "Lungo Mare", Boulevard Vlorë - Skelë, Muradie, the rehabilitation of the Port and Transballkanike Street, none of the questions raised by professionals in the field were answered. Preliminary systematization, geometric games with vegetation in the promenades, roads, palm trees and pines, make it difficult to find the big problems that today are posed to the urban planning of the city of Vlora, but for convenience we will take them step by step.

I will call the following text "The Big Question Box", because such question marks bother anyone who has a minimum of education in urban planning or architecture, or who simply loves the balance between beauty and functionality.

Have the designers studied the effect of narrowing the roads in a city that aspires to become the most important tourist hub of Albania? Have they considered any studies on the mode of transport in similar tourist cities? Have state institutions conducted any study on the impact that these projects have on the daily life of the citizens of Vlora, access to school, work, business? Have they conducted a study on the average time of passing by car on the Boulevard "Vlorë - Skelë"? Has the average vehicle parking time on this boulevard been measured? Have they conducted studies on the need for cyclist tracks? Are the authorities aware that the population of Vlora is constantly aging and that the elderly has more and more difficulties in using the bicycle? Are the state institutions and the Municipality of Vlora aware that the urban buses are in the most depreciated condition possible? Are they aware that the city's hilly surroundings make it difficult to use a bicycle or walk? Have they ever thought to ask the citizens of Vlora what they really need? Have Vlora urban planners and engineers ever asked what solution can be given to these needs?

In this dissertation I do not pretend to answer these big questions at all, but I aspire that my work, as the crowning of academic studies, serve as an impetus for the

professional not to shrug his shoulders in ignorance and incompetence in the face of choices that create effects, which probably last all life and seal the rise or fall of a city in the annals of history. I want this diploma thesis to serve Vlora, my hometown, and its citizens. And exactly for this, I have submitted some interventions in the urban planning of this city, in order not to turn it into a passageway for the tourist and a dormitory for the resident of Vlora.

The conception of the Maritime Museum of Vlora as the most basic identity of a coastal city, but also as an exhibitor of a rich maritime history, is the prelude to adding value to the city through very basic concepts. The elected in Albania do not need to invent the wheel and nothing else, because others have invented it. Enough to give way to professionals and interest groups. Again with a very basic concept I conceived to give a solution to the problem of urban transport in Vlora. A tram that would give access to everyone. A tram that if it had been built in the "Beautiful Era" of the 30's, today would be not only the most optimal solution for transport in this city, but would offer the tourist and resident of Vlora, a walk in an art gallery in movement around this beautiful Mediterranean city.

Fortunately, Vlora still allows the physical space for the implementation of the two projects that I have submitted in the future. Of course for me as a young architect, the selection of this topic presents the greatest difficulty, but the difficulties go hand in hand with my aspirations. Fate helps the brave, Bonaparte sculpted in his diary. Through these projects, for the country I love so much, I chose to dare to combine in a diploma study my two biggest passions: Architecture & Vlora!

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1.1. Global Urbanization & Sustainable Communities

The enormous scale of the global urbanization is leading to reduction in agricultural land, destruction of biodiversity and ecosystem, more fuel utilization for transport, cost of community life, disorder health and less social integrity. From 13% world urban populace at the beginning of twentieth century, to 50.5% in 2010 shows the urbanization trend, which is more rapid especially in the developing world. For those reasons there is an insistence to incorporate sustainable development and urban development to decrease the impacts of human activities on environment and at the same time creating the urban lives through adjustment of better job opportunities, health and well-being, housing, social facilities, etc. (Ritchie & Roser, 2018)

Since the release of the Brundtland Commission's report "Our common future" in 1978, we have seen an increasing focus around sustainable development in planning, where the term incorporates the environmental, financial and social sustainability. At first, the environmental sustainability was the fundamental concentration for a long period, however there has now been an expanding emphasis on the social aspect. (Brundtland Commission)

In coherence with the Sustainable Communities Plan, these communities are spaces where people are supposed to engage in life and work activities, in the present and the future. These communities are created to meet the needs that residents, today and tomorrow, will have. Among their other contributions, undoubtedly important are also: the improvement of the quality of life itself and the high sensitivity they have towards the environment. They are secure and comprehensive, well planned, built and run, and offer coordination of opportunities and great administrations for all. The greatest achievement of urban sustainability is the realization of environmental sustainability. To achieve this goal, several components are important: maximizing the productivity of land use through the protection of natural terrain and energy, maximizing the efficiency of land use and

improvement, and minimizing pollution, through the formation of natural parks, open spaces and green areas. All this constitutes a passive circulation framework for recycling and natural ventilation and as a result creates a comfortable environment. If we consider the long-term impact of becoming urban, there is undoubtedly a great need to evaluate and use ecosystems effectively, as the only sources of natural supply, on which life in general depends. The revitalization and maintenance of the natural environment is the key to everything. The emphasis on sustainable urban planning has brought about the idea of a new design concept related to sustainable urban forms, including: neo-traditional development, urban containment, eco-city and the compact city idea. (Zec, Colakoglu & Erem, 2018)

2.2 Compact City Theory

2.2.1 Compact City against Urban Sprawl

Internationally the compact city has been dependent upon an expanding focus and has been supported as the best strategy choice to guarantee a more sustainable urban development. Different districts have embraced the densification strategy, which expresses that the future population development ought to be managed by the compact city strategy, focusing new development inside the current boundaries of the city. As indicated by (Neuman, 2005) there is no official definition of the compact city, notwithstanding the term being broadly used and generally accepted. It is contended that the compact city is the opposite of urban sprawl and a large part of this interest identifies with the negative consequences related with urban sprawl.

There are a lot of motives why urban sprawl is presented as an inappropriate and unsustainable way of life. As a start it leads to increased use of private transport, for fulfillment and various human needs and consequently it leads to increased traffic. At the same time, has been observed that it destroys biodiversity, has no effectiveness in use of energy and infrastructure and exploits natural resources much more than compact urban areas. Many experts have proven that the factors that are most influencing environmental sustainability are urban forms and human preferences regarding their settlements as well as the acceptance of dense living.

The highest interest in urban planning seems to be strongly related to the severe consequences of urban sprawl, which comes as a result of the belief that dense living can reduce the negative environmental effects. It is therefore thought that the best solution to alleviate densification and its negative consequences is to create compact urban areas. (Wegener, 2019)

2.2.2. The Ideas Behind the Compact City

The idea of a compact city includes several methods that aim to make it denser in order to avoid urban sprawl. The compact city can be portrayed by dense urban areas, clean boundaries between the city and its surroundings, ideal urban transport, stimulation of walking and cycling, as well as mixed land use. In order to guarantee a more sustainable development as well as to manage the urban development, the main strategy is precisely this increase of density in urban areas. To support this theory there are obviously used different concepts; the idea of a compact city claims to reduce dependence on vehicles and consequently reduce fuel emissions, make good use of energy and building materials, include diversity at the housing level, protect green urban areas, create a sustainable infrastructure and provide services and industrial purposes by enabling as short distances as possible.

In addition, the European Commission emphatically claims that the compact city and its sustainability, convincingly improves the quality of life, as sustainable development itself has always been linked to the concepts of subjective well-being, living and its quality. Contemporary urban planning seeks to enable a strong link between livable urban areas and the improvement of compact cities, as the creation of sustainable cities requires much more than simply expanding residential densities. The great desire for life quality enhancement in these urban areas is a crucial agenda for planners.

Quality of life happens to be often confused with the concept of standard living, which in essence depends on income, mental and physical well-being, social belonging, leisure time and built environment. Quality of life in itself has to do with personal satisfaction in relation to the intellectual and cultural conditions in which the individual lives. Improving the quality of life in urban areas, in other words, is a form of human fulfillment in various urban aspects such as: the quality of public spaces and

urban transport, preservation of cultural and historical identity, and well-thought-out planning, in this way promoting the use of mixed housing, spatial facilitation, and respect for local landscapes to meet the diversity of needs.

The European Commission's Green Paper promoted the compact city as the most accomplished urban form especially for effective transport. The creation of the compact city has been inspired by the dense patterns of many historic European cities. These cities are a profound experience not only for urban designers and architects, but also for the large influx of tourists queuing up to enjoy them. If you look at them from the outside, they are definitely perfect places, where the experience of livability and diversity in urban life is very high. The biggest fear is that it is very likely that this vision, which calls for the beginning of a golden urban era, bringing about a sustainable and good civilization, will be a vision immersed in romance. Perhaps in this situation it makes sense that the biggest promoter of this model is the European Community itself. (European Union, 2011).

2.2.3 The Counter Arguments

Despite all this, everything proposed remains a hypothesis, and the fact that there is an ongoing debate makes the theory itself questionable. There is a form of ideology, which envisages the mixing of social groups and the reduction of the need to travel, which consequently brings about vehicle emissions. While promoting public transport, walking and cycling continue to stay in the capital. On the other hand, there are claims that this compact city can degrade into overcrowding and experience a loss of urban quality and open spaces, increased congestion and pollution, and basically seems unable to speak with certainty about the types of environment in which everyone would like to live by choice. Precisely based in these speculations, which are conflicting in most of the cases, what is urgently required is a synthesis of information, accompanied by facts, in order to reach a clearer conclusion of this complex reality.

Voices against the theory of the compact city still make noise. There is evidence that the concepts of this city model are somewhat dangerous, as they do not reflect at all the hard reality of economic demands, social trends and environmental sustainability. The main conflict with the compact city is that it requires us to ignore the causes and consequences of decentralization and the benefits we may find in them.

Thoughts are also skeptical about the benefits of compact cities, if they will be greater than the loss it can bring.

One of the aforementioned theories of the compact city has to do with reducing fuel consumption as well as pollution caused by traffic. The problem is that in reality the situation is quite the opposite, as in cities with high concentration the congestion is too great. And it is this congestion, accompanied by traffic that make the pedestrian environment unsafe. The fierce battle between the types of vehicles is a daily panorama: traffic jams, public transport strengthened to maintain beyond its capacity and retail parking space. Studies have shown that reducing the speed of travel and increasing its time, lead to higher fuel consumption. In addition, congestion inevitably leads to a lot of noise and pollution, thus reducing the quality of life.

In the ideals of the compact city, it is assumed for individuals to give up their cars and make full use of other modes of transportation, such as walking, cycling and public transportation. But can people be forced to give up their cars? Studies clearly speak for this part as well, proving that in overcrowded cities, people have a greater tendency to use a personal car and not only that, but statistics show that society is being pushed every day towards the mass purchase of cars. Thus, it is worth mentioning that in the developing countries, cars are carefully used as a visible symbol of life well-being. (Bramley et al. 2009).

If we analyze the density, according to the theory of the compact city, it is assumed that the higher the density, the more sustainable a city becomes. But the main question is: is there a mass limit regarding the density of compact cities that is characterized as high or low? 500, 1000, 5000 people per km²? The answers will obviously be different, especially between the developed countries and developing countries.

There is also a constant conflict between high density and open space. While in the process of urban development, this balance must always be taken into account, as otherwise the growing number of buildings would block the space that is supposed to give greenery to the land. But this ambiguity between the promotion of skyscrapers and open spaces at the same time, is really great, as urban space seems to be insufficient to achieve both.

Multiple land use is considered as another important element of the compact city. This new spatial concept seeks to counterbalance inefficiency in land use inside and outside built-up areas. The new land use extends to several important dimensions:

high efficiency in specific parts of the land and several functions within a space, which will specifically mean to build multi-story buildings and leave space to explore the underground. This mixed land use is thought to reduce the need for transportation, as there are plans to locate the business and service areas close to residential areas. Multiple land use analyzes them in two aspects: in its horizontal and vertical form. The first one involves a wide range of activities in different buildings, while the second one implies the extension of all activities in a single building. (Lo, 2009)

What should be given the highest attention is the size of a compact city, which is missing in the urban planning literature. We mentioned above the main elements of a compact city, but it is worth mentioning that its initial image was a medieval city, extremely small compared to the metropolitan cities we have today. So when it comes to big cities, how should the principles of the compact city be applied? What should these cities do to prevent the current situation in which they live?

2.2.4 Getting a Point

Researchers argue that the compact city should be located within the existing built-up area and focus on their regeneration and revitalization, without the need for major interventions. Also considering the complexity of the circumstances, regeneration policies in fact vary from city to city. The compact city is not a genuine urban model, but it is a guiding principle that can be used to create a good sustainable development.

To conclude, the compact city is known for its high-density developments, mixed land use, and strong public transportation systems. Despite its promotions regarding environmental life, the extent to which living in such an environment is required by the community is unclear and uncertain. Living in a compact city often takes a direct link to less livability, as the urban form does not have the ability to challenge the idealized image that people have created of life in the suburbs. In many Western cultures, it is almost impossible to undo the ideal image of detached suburban houses with their ideal garden, as for them high-density living is seen as not attractive at all. Overcrowding, noise, air pollution and everything negative, usually are directly addressed in the inner areas of the city thus producing a less strong environment compared to the suburbs. (Howley, 2009).

The great contrasts between cities themselves, must imply that the concept of a compact city cannot be effective only if it is based on specific urban forms, as a sustainable city is not built only on the idealization of past settlements, or be given a fanatical departure from his particular economic, physical and cultural identity only to experience an urban change. And this is exactly what makes us ask: Can we be satisfied with the ideas of a compact city that is not known if it is a romantic ideal or a genuine road to the urban future.

2.3 Livability

2.3.1 The Concept of Livability

While allusions to urban sustainability solutions continue to grow, so does the need for new, efficient solutions. Despite the constant conflicts of opinions on the functionality of the compact city, researchers do not stop searching for new methods that create aspirations for our cities, as these cities need to become livable for themselves and their individuals. The compact city came as the latest urban solution and despite the many contradictions it has within its concepts, it remains a theory that cannot be easily dispelled. Therefore, looking positively and trying to preserve some important principles of this city, experts in recent years have stopped at a more modern concept than the compact city. This well-structured concept, which leaves the possibility of different adaptations for each specific city, is the livable city theory. (Satu & Chiu, 2017).

In addition to the ongoing debate about the compact city, livability has been progressively used by planners and policymakers as an appropriate rule in urban planning for a long time. The terms of life and quality are inseparable from each other and involve similar issues. Livability itself remains an ambiguous term as it does not specify what it carries within itself. It is claimed that a livable city is a space of high quality, in which individuals always need to live. Various theorists use objective market indicators to measure livability, such as housing costs or income, and at the same time argue that an accurate conception is based on an individual's definition and fulfillment. (Pacione, 2003).

Due to the lack of a clear framework or a uniform definition of livability, the term has been applied and administered in different ways. This diversity of ways is based on distinctive urban contexts and dimensions, emphasizing the different characteristics of living. However, many specialists are constantly looking to create a clear user manual on the basic concepts of livability, which will resist over time, although livability can be shifted into different groups and spaces. Livability itself is not only a tangible result of attractive urban conditions, but more than that, it comes as a result of people's perception of urban life.

Since it is so challenging to come up with a final definition of livability, we can at least say that this concept is relative to the place, the time and the values of the evaluator. And yet the efforts to characterize livability in urban planning are great. It is emphasized that livability is not only a matter of housing quality, but is now a matter of context and wider location. (Ruth & Franklin, 2014).

2.3.2 Definitions of Livability

A large group of researchers have given their versions of the definition of livability and the elements in which this concept can be analyzed. These subjective versions, obviously go in different spheres from each other, but manage to describe beautifully and leave behind a theory full of meaning, which basically has only one purpose: achieving livability and improving the quality of life. Below, we will find some of the areas in which different researchers analyze the concept of livability. (Howley, Scott & Redmond, 2009).

Researcher Rolf Barlindhaug describes livability as a concept that cannot be fully understood without taking into account the surrounding environment and the neighborhood, as they address life in the built environment in relation to the quality of the building and its external area. For him, the perceived quality of life is directly dependent on the area. Laurie Buys and Evonne Miller strengthen this idea by stating that the built environment, both of the dwelling and of the neighborhood features have a relatively large impact on the physical character and quality of life of a country. Harpa Stefansdottir and Jin Xue consequently define livability as a combination of human needs and subjective well-being in the built environment. This definition further highlighted the importance of interaction in determining livability. Another expert who supports this theory is Michael Pacione, who thinks that livability can be

an unnatural quality of the environment, as it is likely to be a result of interaction between environmental characteristics and personal tendencies. This definition is very comparable and is directly related to social welfare concerns. Jasmine Leby and Ahmad Hashim argue that this concept focuses mostly on subjective assessments of residents' living environment. They say that livability not only depends on contextual characteristics, but also on the time and different preferences of people. (Leby & Hashim, 2010)

In his paper Okulicz-Kozaryn emphasizes that many of the measures of livability are measured impartially because what really matters is the perceived quality of life. People and families at different stages of lives may define life differently, due to their age, individual needs and preferences which change with time. And for this reason, what is characterized by the living environment will not be consistent over time. People will have different attitudes towards dense living and livability precisely because of their personal characteristics. (Okulicz-Kozaryn, 2013)

The ideal of living in the suburbs, in a small dwelling for a family has long prevailed, but some experts prove that recently a change has been observed in certain groups of individuals, who seek to move to denser urban areas. The results of studies show that the perceived quality of life of an area and the stage of family life is vital to determine livability. And yet livability can be characterized in a way by three important assertions: Perceived quality of life is based on subjective well-being and human needs; Livability is determined by the qualities and characteristics of a wider environmental context; Livability will vary depending on time, life stages and social level. Briefly summarized, livability is a strong socio-physical connection, or more precisely the characteristic of the physical environment and the degree of individual satisfaction. Shammi Satu and Rebecca Chiu conclude the concept of livability, saying that it has to do with the degree of satisfaction that residents experience with their environment, measured by objective and subjective indicators. Therefore, livability is a suitable concept to use when studying the pleasure of living in different environments, such as dense living. (Constanza 2007).

2.3.3 Dense Living and Livability

As we saw at the beginning, the compact city has protested for massive support of dense living and livability, promoting them as the main maintenance policy options. But there has never been a lack of discussion about the negative consequences of this densification. Most of these concerns are particularly related to the social sustainability of the compact city and are based on the high-density negative environmental impacts on quality of life. This proposal has come from many experts. Michael Neuman introduces for the first time the expression "the compact city paradox", which reflects the perception that the built environment of dense urban areas includes less livability. So the challenges in urban areas are the guarantee of a high standard of living and at the same time the dense living. Proponents of the compact city theory have advocated that dense environments are livable environments, but there has been no adequate empirical evidence to deny or confirm these concerns. Even today, there is not enough information to conclude that dense living has negative impacts on livability, and research studies themselves show quite mixed empirical results on this impact. (Neuman, 2005)

However, some strong studies confirm that density has a negative impact on livability and that dense living continues to be seen as an undesirable long-term alternative. A study of recent years shows that people most of the time favor life in periphery over dense living. Most residents say that dense living is negative due to lack of green space, limited parking, lack of privacy and being too busy, so they preferred a more spacious and quiet apartment, as if compared, these elements would be more important to them than being close to the service units, and it is to be expected that this group of individuals were generally families with young children and people of retirement age.

There is a tacit agreement which shows that most of the inhabitants in dense areas are young professionals, who start their lives with a thirst for dense areas and then end up moving to the periphery. However, during the time of living in this density, the greatest taste remains the culture that they manage to get from the urban lifestyle. This theory is supported by the fact that many of those young adults are attracted by the downtown lifestyle as well as proximity to employment or other services. The relationship between urban forms and social sustainability has been researched and it has been found that urban forms and types of dwellings tend to be associated with

resident frustration compared to outlying environments and people favor low-density living. It is worth mentioning that this study addressed medium and not large cities with different forms of housing, which may not have all the characteristics of a compact city. (Stuve, 2018)

2.3.3 Livability in a Nutshell

In simple words, livability consists of an urban framework that brings physical, social and mental well-being and total improvement to the city. It is about extraordinary and attractive urban spaces that offer and reflect the cultural and spiritual faces. Interpretations of livability combine a set of distinctive issues supported by a common set of guiding standards: accessibility, equity and participation that give content to the concepts of livability. The quality of life experienced by the individuals of a city is more directly related to their capacity to access infrastructure, food, clean air, affordable housing, meaningful employment, green spaces and parks. Differential entry of individuals within a city into infrastructure and other amenities highlights issues of equality. The livability of a city is determined by the access that its inhabitants have to participate in decision-making to meet their needs.

There is not yet a proper theoretical system or final definition of livability, even the livability literature is formed as a result of empirical studies, which cover a comparison of different geographical regions. Although a livable city cannot be precisely defined, yet the components that contribute to its composition are distinct, in the same way as one might recognize the city when it is dysfunctional, has no social life and no cultural capacity. In this way the subjective version of livability remains: a livable city depends on the allure of an area in which individuals have the desire to work, invest and live.

Therefore, we can say with conviction that a livable city is also a sustainable city, a city that plots the demands of current residents without reducing the capacity of future generations to meet their needs. In the livable city, both social and physical factors must have a strong relationship for the good of the community and of individuals as its members. A livable city can be that city where common spaces become the centers of social life and the hearths of the whole community. A livable city must be built or restored, as a continuous network from central areas to more distant settlements, where pedestrian paths and bicycle lanes connect together all the

destinations of community life and social quality. (Dempsey, 2011).

2.3.4 Livability in a Nutshell

Place-based analyzes are essential for livability planning, especially for transport-related aspects of life, despite the fact that the associations between people and places are complex and hard to measure. Below we will find the concepts that guide the work of the committee, which provide assistance, describe the conclusions and suggestions provided by the report on integrated planning in the country. But first, let me start by clarifying some specific terms:

PLACE

Definition of Place

Places are physical areas with clear environmental characteristics and specific social developments, where individuals interact with each other and with nature.

Place and Scale

Places can be in multiple scales, ranging from macro (state, nation) to micro (home as country). Decisions made at different spatial scales (nation, region, neighborhood) come together to form specific places at specific scales. At the same time, the relationships between places that are comparable in scale, form a unique place for example, a city. In this way, a place like a city is connected through the influx of people and goods to other cities.

Spatial Dependence

Since places consist of their vertical and horizontal connections in space: places of similar scale (city to city) or places with higher or lower scales (city to state), this shows that they are dependent on space. In this way, any decision of a specific place can have an impact on the neighboring place to various scales. This means that livability of a place here will be associated with the livability of a place there.

Role of the Natural Environment

The natural environment of a place: topography, flora and fauna, natural resources as well as natural hazards, constitute a great force in creating the character of a place, the way individuals perceive and interact in these environments and the way how places change with the passage of time. The natural environment evolves, due to ecosystem dynamics, extreme geophysical cases, and anthropogenic changes in the environment.

Role of Structure, Institutions and Agency

The economic, social and political structures influence on economic activities and the flow of goods. Institutions can be large firms, state or local governments. Structures also vary in different scales and include the political, financial and social frameworks that affect the character of a place and its lifestyle. Institutions intervene between social structures and personal life in a specific country and these decisions may transform a place.

Role of History

Discrete historical events, as well as historical evolution of standards and cultural values, economic organization, and technological change, can shape places. Many countries have changed their character as a result of the developments occurred in a specific period.

Pace of Place Change

Place making usually include the big change of natural environment and control of fixed durable capital. This implies that a few characteristics of places alter relatively slowly and their course of change may be path dependent. Path dependence refers to the impact of past development decisions on present possibilities. There is a specific model, that comes as a result of combining the market processes, public investments and public policies, and this model makes it costly to switch to other alternatives.

Places and Boundaries

Places are characterized by regional boundaries of different types (administrative, political, environmental). Such boundaries may or may not be

coincidental with residents' perceptions of the local place, but they can nevertheless form a sense of place instead of identity.

People-Place Interactions

People live at the same time in a variety of places to a distinctive degree. An individual can be a resident of a neighborhood, a city and a region. All of these are places where the inhabitants have reciprocal relations with others and with the environment.

Time-Geography and Place-Scale Definition

A good way to conceive the hierarchy of places is to take in consideration the individual activities or time-space prisms. For some people, there is a limited number of regular interactions with other people or features of the natural environment that occur at specific nodes.

Sense of Place

Over time, places create a "sense of place" for residents and guests, which stems from history, geography and contemporary place in the larger world. This sense of place forms the personal identities of the inhabitants and the degree of "rootedness" in that special place.

Reading and using Places

People use the physical features of the place to "read" or learn its pattern and at the same time to explore the place effectively. Basic physical characteristics include nodes, paths, edges, districts, and reference points. Exactly those features gain a role in place legibility.

Place and Community

The place is not the same as the community, as a community can exist with or without closeness between its members. Community can be a fundamental element of the sense of place, and indeed forms a critical part of the "social capital" of most places.

Moving through Places

People move in and out of places. Those movements have to do with

generational changes within the population. In addition, over time, the attraction of each place changes for particular people or when they experience changes in personal circumstances. In this way, the well-being of a place is distinct from that of the people who at a specific moment lived or worked there. (Leach et al. 2016)

2.3.5 Key Dimensions of Livability

Livability at Multiple Scales

Livability is an experience of individuals who live and work in one place, yet our current decisions about lifestyles, modes of transportation and environmental convenience immediately affect the lives of many places over different scales.

Measuring Livability

The special characteristics of people and places are essential to value the livability of a place. But even though these two factors are important, they still change over time. So no kind of indicator captures the full picture of livability.

Key Dimensions of Livability

Livability consists of three important circles of social life: economy, social well-being and the environment. The economy directly provides employment and wages, which makes it essential for the well-being of residents. At the same time the economy must make the best use of the materials obtained from the environment, in order to guarantee adequate resources for all generations. The key to social well-being is undoubtedly justice: a social and spatial distribution of economic and environmental assets must be reasonable and well managed by management systems, bringing about the involvement of all residents. Individual freedom and opportunity are also fundamental elements of social well-being.

The environment itself is the source of natural goods as well as the connection of individuals with it. If this network stops functioning, human settlements can be destroyed, resulting in population loss, poverty, social war, and major environmental problems.

The "Golden Trio" is treated autonomously, but is seen as an important framework for achieving health, justice, and efficient communities. This, perhaps, is

the main approach for the diversity of life dimensions, with only one main goal, livability.

Both perspectives sparkle over conflicts among objectives related with the three circles, and neither proposes the complexity of interactions among circles. This recognizes the fact that the environment is, unpreventably, the basic infrastructure without which neither an economy nor a society can survive. There are diverse cases, ranging from urban advancements to local "intelligent development" orientation and sustainability plans. These bring a package of political and social initiatives that are applied in specific places. (Girardet, 2004)

2.3.6 Livability and Indicators

How is it that new living ideas are directed at a set of practical rules for policy-making? Usually, the main dimensions of livability tend to change over time. These trades have long been used by politicians and planners to profile populations and communities, as well as to track economic, social and environmental changes. They are only used to measure and track livability. However, in any case most of them have questionable value for analysis and planning purposes.

Lace and Space: Connections between Places

Horizontal links between places are formed from the flow of people, goods and data from the common needs due to differences found in the same political jurisdiction. Comparisons and connections between them are ubiquitous. People as economic actors, constantly make comparisons with other places as well. In a society that allows and empowers mobility, it is essential that individuals have access to life data and its dimensions, as sometimes livability here only matters when compared to livability there.

Kinds of Linkages between Places

Transportation links include personal travel, competent and competitive links in economic trade, capital movements and shared experiences in a political country. In this way, transportation remains an important factor in livability.

Personal Travel

People travel between places for various reasons, economic, touristic and social ones. The convenience and cost of travel can be a valuable factor in an individual's livability. Over time, as amplified families continue to disperse, long-distance personal travel has become progressively critical. Therefore, travel options are important implications for livability.

Economic Trade and Complementary Connections

There are also allusions to the exchange between input producers and producers of final products. The quality of freight transport affects financial competition, and still, modes of transportation are extremely important.

Movement of Capital

The quality of communication is important for connections in capital flows, but these flows are not as sensitive as other flows to the quality of transport. However, both require occasional contact thus bringing the need for travel.

Common Experience in Political Places

Connections between places are constantly crated from political boundaries and a common government, even when there is no interaction or movement. The quality of public services, environmental safety, impact and effect, are decided by the political places that surround many other smaller places.

Regional Identity

The special characteristics, taking into account the identity of large places such as metropolitan regions, depend on the relations and connections between their smaller places. The final character of a large region itself comes as a result of the interdependence that it has with large cities, small cities, rural areas, financial centers and agricultural areas. Sometimes a smaller place is critical to the memory of a region's history. That is why we say with conviction that the variety of scales is important for legibility.

The connections between these small places may change over time. The great changes they undergo at certain moments, make their own character to take a different course. An example of this are roads and ways of transportation, which can create a strong character not only in a specific place, but throughout the region. (Giap et, al.. 2014)

2.3.7 Measuring Accessibility

Accessibility is an essential element, which clearly reflects many dimensions of livability. Accessibility is closely linked to policies that intentionally or unintentionally affect livability. Many livability measures claim that the resources and opportunities of a place should be in the hands of individuals who are close to that location. Even new policies that try to affect livability confirm this assumption. But there are other factors that affect the ability of individuals to get opportunities. This result clearly shows that the measures can overestimate livability and effectiveness of the respective policies by masking individual variations in the benefits actually received from the resources. As accessibility is important to urban theory and policy, there is a long history of attempts to measure this concept. Accessibility can be analyzed in potential or in results. Possible measures attempt to specify the ability of locations or individuals to interact with other locations or individuals. Another and important issue is that of the differences between accessibility and mobility. Motion-based measures simply determine the amount of movement within the environment, including travel time and distance. Other conceptualizations address mobility as the only component of a broader travel context, which includes opportunities at travel destinations and overall costs.

Space-Time Accessibility

Accessibility measures also include other assumptions about what can be accessed, by whom, and how. These measures must be sensitive to the needs and resources of different social and demographic groups. Individuals' daily, weekly, and monthly activity programs vary substantially by socioeconomic class, life cycle, culture, and gender roles. Measures of accessibility that are sensitive to different social and demographic contexts should also include the spatial and temporal limitations of individuals' activities as well as their ability to overcome these limitations.

While communities, transportation planners, and decision makers have expressed the link between transportation and livability, there is no doubt that the list of questions that will be asked as a result of choosing transportation is long, as the decision directly affects community life and requires a large number data, in order to offer efficiency. (National Research Council, 2002)

2.4 Context of Current Practices

2.4.1 The Role of Transportation

Good transportation has been known over the years as an important element of a successful society, from Roman roads, that helped unite an empire, to farm roads that help bring products to market. More than that, the physical development of a community is formed precisely by the transportation technology that have existed during each period, from the most primitive to the most modern. The importance of transportation for society and the economy, not only has a great importance, but also has managed to become a superpower. This great importance has resisted over the years, so transportation continues to be an important function of federal, state and local governments. Railways and highways reshaped population patterns and the distribution of goods in the domestic and world markets.

Throughout history, the process of urban transportation planning has been called to address a constant stream of new issues such as, methodological developments, advances in technology and changing attitudes. The list of issues includes a lot of components: security, citizen involvement, protection of natural areas, equal opportunities for disadvantaged people, environmental concerns, energy conservation and revitalization of urban centers.

Transportation models are designed to predict the origin and possible destinations of travel, as well as the use of different modes, based on assumptions where would people live and work. Just like livability, travel appraisal requires data on both people and places. Once such information was not available, so planners had to generate this supposed data themselves. As a result, decision-support tools were not created for all parties and stakeholders involved in livability planning. Instead, they developed inputs for transportation models in different geographical scales than were common for urban planning data. (Jones, 2006)

Transportation plans are best realized in the broader context of the long-term goals of the community, state or region. This long-term vision should also include thinking about factors such as population growth, economic change, transportation

needs and maintenance requirements, as well as the potential impact on natural and human environments.

Transport decisions involve a wide range of issues, but generally major transportation projects are undertaken for a variety of purposes, including improvement, reducing congestion and boosting them economically. However, with sufficient support at the federal level, livability remains one of the specific points that will be addressed in transportation planning.

A movement known as "context-sensitive design" aspires to minimize the negative effects of past roads through living areas and promote the restoration of a sense of place for the community. Transportation projects can also be designed with imagination, creativity and collaboration to protect and improve the character and quality of community without sacrificing transportation mobility and safety.

Transportation decision-making should be the foundation of an integrated approach that reflects the scrutiny found in the transport relationship to achieve the vision of a livable community. The decision-making process is complex and involves a variety of tools, a potentially large and wide-ranging body of relevant information with different participants. Necessary information that leads to livable communities often includes other spatial data, such as: specific locations of service areas or data about the relationship between one place and another, including public transportation links between the city and its surroundings. Information needs to be incorporated into multidimensional social and economic data, so it is imperative to recognize the limited experience of decision-makers and techniques that assist in the interpretation of existing use and data. (Vougioukas, Karkavitsas & Sammer, 2008)

2.4.1 The Role of Transportation

Defining "Arts and Culture"

With the term "culture", we can refer to a way of life, a set of values, products and services, which undoubtedly have specific economic characteristics. Cultural products and services are divided according to their artistic meanings. The promotion of culture is directly related to the issue of livability in urban spaces. But to have a clearer understanding of the terminology used, with art and culture we will understand: Performing arts (music, theater, dance), Visual arts (paintings, sculptures), Literature (books, magazines) and Cultural Heritage (museums, historical spaces, collections).

As mentioned above, the term "livability" consists on several factors, including the "character" of a place, quality of life, sustainability, and various social, economic, environmental, and cultural attributes. It is precisely the combination of these factors that turn a specific space into an attractive place to live. These include tangible features such as public spaces, urban transit, health and education services or the effective disposal of waste. As well as intangible features, which include a "sense of place", distinctive local identity, and well established social networks.

The "Identity" of a place in general has more to do with the quality and diversity of its culture, as well as with its activities and services, than with its economic or commercial functions. At the same time, a vibrant cultural sector and a good place for residents, in which they can work, live and have fun, seen from an economic perspective is a place "to invest and make money". (National Research Council, 2002)

Arts and culture contribute directly to "livability", especially through liveliness and diversity in various activities such as cultural events and celebrations. Arts and works of public art, contribute to the well-designed public space, thus creating attractive and accessible places, where people want to meet and create new social connections.

Public art and good urban design can be a positive economic impact, identifying various landmarks, which serve as attractions for tourists and residents, thus helping urban regeneration and contributing to the marking of cities and suburbs.

Engaging in the environment and local communities helps in modeling of public art works as well as ensures strong ownership and pride in public spaces. The given researches has shown that a public space is well-designed, where artists deal with local communities and contribute positively to a social society.

The best examples of urban design have shown that through a cultural variation and public art, a response to the local environment can be created, introducing indigenous heritage, cultural diversity, history and urban interface. The final result has been the creation of an attractive environment for the inhabitants of this country.

In the face of an increasingly globalized economy, every country must continue to transform itself economically and culturally. Except for the conventional assistance in the "hard" infrastructure of cities and regional areas, the main features should give "soft" arts and cultural infrastructure, as services and activities that encourage expressions of cultural specifics, affect their network formation and creativity.

There are more and more proofs that arts and culture make a positive

contribution to the livability of a city or region. The relationship of art and culture to both 'livability' and economic competition is a set of basic concepts. As a start we can say that art and culture can be transformed into a determined product and services that undoubtedly bring social and economic values to a country. Governments themselves have the space to honor in the arts and cultural markets to facilitate social benefits. Second, it has been proven that the impact of culture on livability is attractive to young residents, and especially to the creative class and business investors. Investing in the cultural area, along with supporting diverse art programs across the country, are two ways to increase a country's reputation and attractiveness in a potential place, to work and invest for the future. (Arts Victoria, 2008)

2.5 Empirical Study – The Case of Vlora

2.5.1 General View of Vlora

Livability is seen as the highest aspect of urban planning and as the first and only solution that has come closer to individuals, who choose to live and develop in a certain place. The peculiarity of this concept is that it allows the necessary space to adapt to the needs of individuals and countries, without the need to follow a specific urban rule, which would occupy a forced place in life.

Each prism of livability is used in context according to the specific needs that a country has, so before this project begins to be applied, it is essential to analyze the current state of space, its strengths and weaknesses, the aspect in which it needs to be improved and also the basic needs of individuals are important.

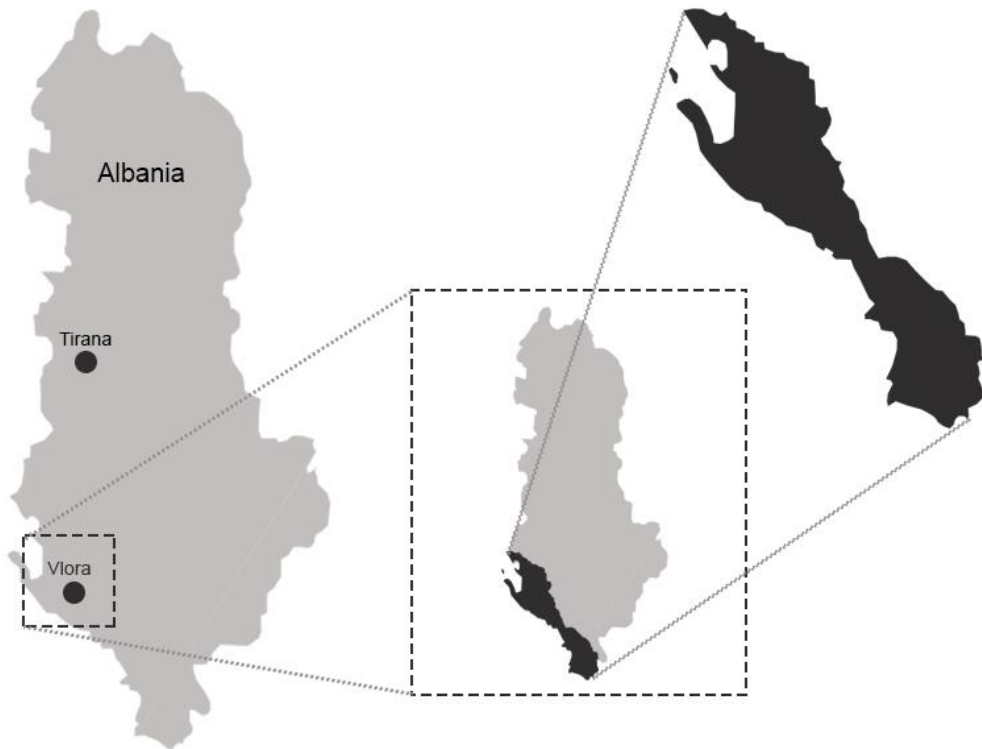


Figure 1: "Map of Vlorë"

Given that the examples of livability, which we are fortunate to see today as implemented, have come as experiments in cities of a larger scale and worldview, I would like to contextualize these concepts in a smaller space, whose needs are not often heard, such as the city of Vlorë in the region of Albania.

But before I dwell on the concept - my idea specifically, I must describe what Vlorë is in the eyes of a young architect like me. To contextualize the morphology of this settlement as well as its history. It is inevitable not to start my study focusing on the geography of this settlement.

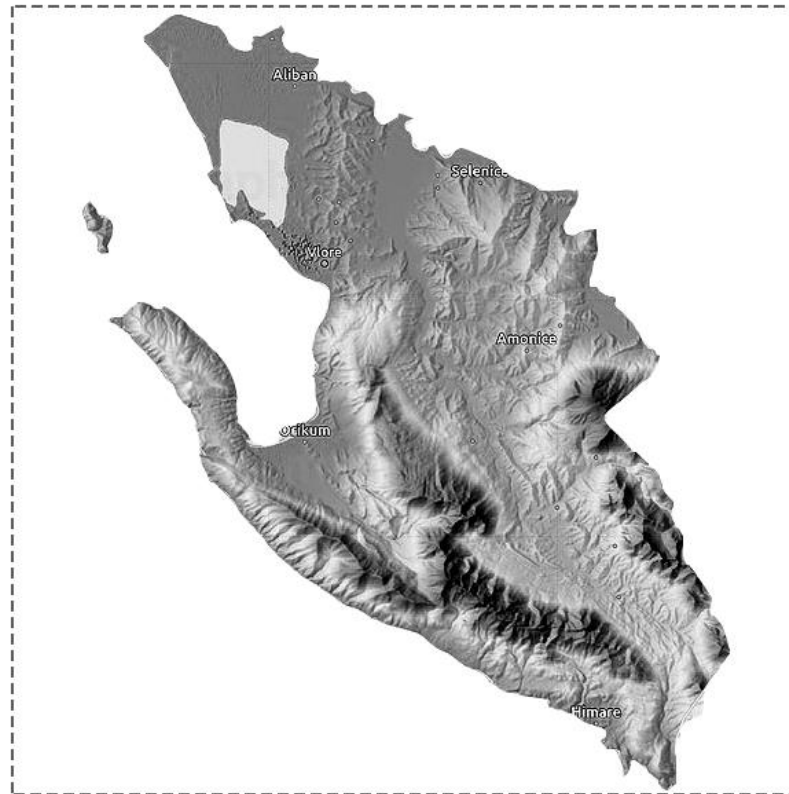


Figure 2: "Relief of Vlorë" (Retrieved from: 2011 Maphill)

Vlorë is a settlement which lies on a coastal plain with a moderately low geographical altitude. However, the southern and eastern frames of the city take on a quite rising to the relief of the gentle hills and then the horn mountains of the Shushica River. The coast of Vlorë is affected by the bay of the same name, surrounded by the Akrokeraune Mountains, which also form the Karaburun Peninsula, Sazan Island and extending further in north, with the Narta lagoon complex. Numerous formations with limestone but also sedimentary sand and rock formations of sandy origin determine the morphology of the terrain of Vlorë. This area is also the coastal area with the largest number of freshwater springs in Albania, including aboveground and underwater springs. But the greatest gift that nature has given to this settlement is the positioning at the junction between the Ionian Sea and the Adriatic.

Precisely this geographical position and the accompanying climatic conditions have been the impetus for the population of this area since before the Bronze Age. Mentioned in Homer's epic "Iliad", as inhabited by Nosto's descendants, since its genesis, Vlorë has been conceived to be a hub in the major trade routes of the Mediterranean. Despite the fact that politically, Vlorë has passed under the rule of many civilizations, the neuralgic significance as a crossroads between east and west

has been cardinal throughout its existence. The Pelasgians-Illyrians, the ancient Greek settlers, the Romans, the Byzantines, the Normans, the Venetians, the Ottomans, the new Greeks, the Italians, the Germans and even the late Soviets of history, all passed through Vlora and left their mark on the architectural worldview. of urban planning of the city. Even other communities, such as the Jews who came from Spain in 1426, still have their trace in the urban planning of the city of Vlora. (Albanian Studies)

The inhabited center of Vlora has moved during different eras of history. Throughout the classical period, Aulona has been stretched along the sandy coastline. Where Flag Square is today, in antiquity were the surrounding walls of ancient Aulona. With the collapse of classical civilization and the approach of the Middle Ages, the need for more protected and fortified settlements led to the gradual abandonment of classical Aulona and the founding of the Kanina fortress along with the village of the same name. The transition between these two periods, from an urban point of view, was accompanied by the abandonment of the maritime and urban economy, the transition from the wide streets of antiquity, large squares and classical buildings, to narrow streets, dwellings built side by side and fortified without a geometric planning in layout.

The Ottoman period again recognized a re-concentration of the population in the urban area, which can be called the forerunner of the historic area of the city of Vlora. From the urban point of view, the buildings were placed according to a defined urban plan, with access roads paved with cobblestones. The first floors of buildings were conceived for the production of crafts and the trade of material goods and services. Regarding the influence on the style of construction, we can mention the nuances of Ottoman, Italian, Spanish, etc., which can be distinguished even today in some of the buildings.

In the later modern period, as in all major cities in Albania, the most important influence was that of fascist Italian urbanism. Vlora, like other cities in Albania experienced in this period of history rapid and important developments. The projection of the city as an important trade hub and as the capital for the south of Albania inevitably required a modern approach to its urban planning. In the twentieth century, Vlora was designed for the automobile era, passing through the alleys of the historic area of the neighborhood "Muradie" in the wide boulevard Vlorë - Skelë, by road and direct access to the port of the city. The conception of this boulevard primarily served the city's economy and strategic goals for harbor access. However, the side effect has

been the direct access of workers on the road to the largest producer of jobs for the city, the port of Vlora.

This continuity of access to wide roads, sidewalks, greenery, urban lines and a disciplined urban planning continued during the communist regime, despite the influential architecture from the Eastern Bloc. In what can be called the era of chaos for the urban planning of post-90 'Albanian cities, Vlora was one of the cities that came out with less losses. However, with the strengthening of state institutions and the reconceptualization of large urban and architectural projects, already in the face of the fact carried out with numerous investments such as the project of the promenade "Lungo Mare", Boulevard Vlorë - Skelë, Muradie, the rehabilitation of the Port and Transballkanike Street, none of the questions raised by professionals in the field were answered. Preliminary systematization, geometric games with vegetation in the promenades, roads, palm trees and pines, make it difficult to find the big problems that today are posed to the urban planning of the city of Vlora, but for convenience we will take them step by step.

2.5.2 Ismail Qemali Boulevard Analyses

Given that in recent years Vlora has been the topic of new state urban projects, and the voices around them have created a lot of noise, I would like to analyze one of the most discussed projects of this city, such as the regeneration and reconceptualization of "Vlore-Skele" Boulevard.



Figure 3: "Ismail Qemali Boulevard" (Retrieved from: BOOM Landscape)

Ismail Qemali Boulevard is the heart of the southern city of Vlora, on the coast of Albania. In this space is everything you can look for in a city: from colorful shops, luxury restaurants and bars, beautiful parks, university, theater, hospital and football stadium. The problem was that this place did not match many aspects of livability. The hot days were almost impossible to cope with when traversing the boulevard. Its daily image was totally unpleasant, gloomy and disturbing for everyone, so the great need for change made the eyes of the government turn from Vlora.

In the new project that was designed and implemented on this boulevard, the entire length of the boulevard was conceptualized, thus creating a space that gave priority to pedestrians and cyclists as well as an attractive road that connects people with facilities.

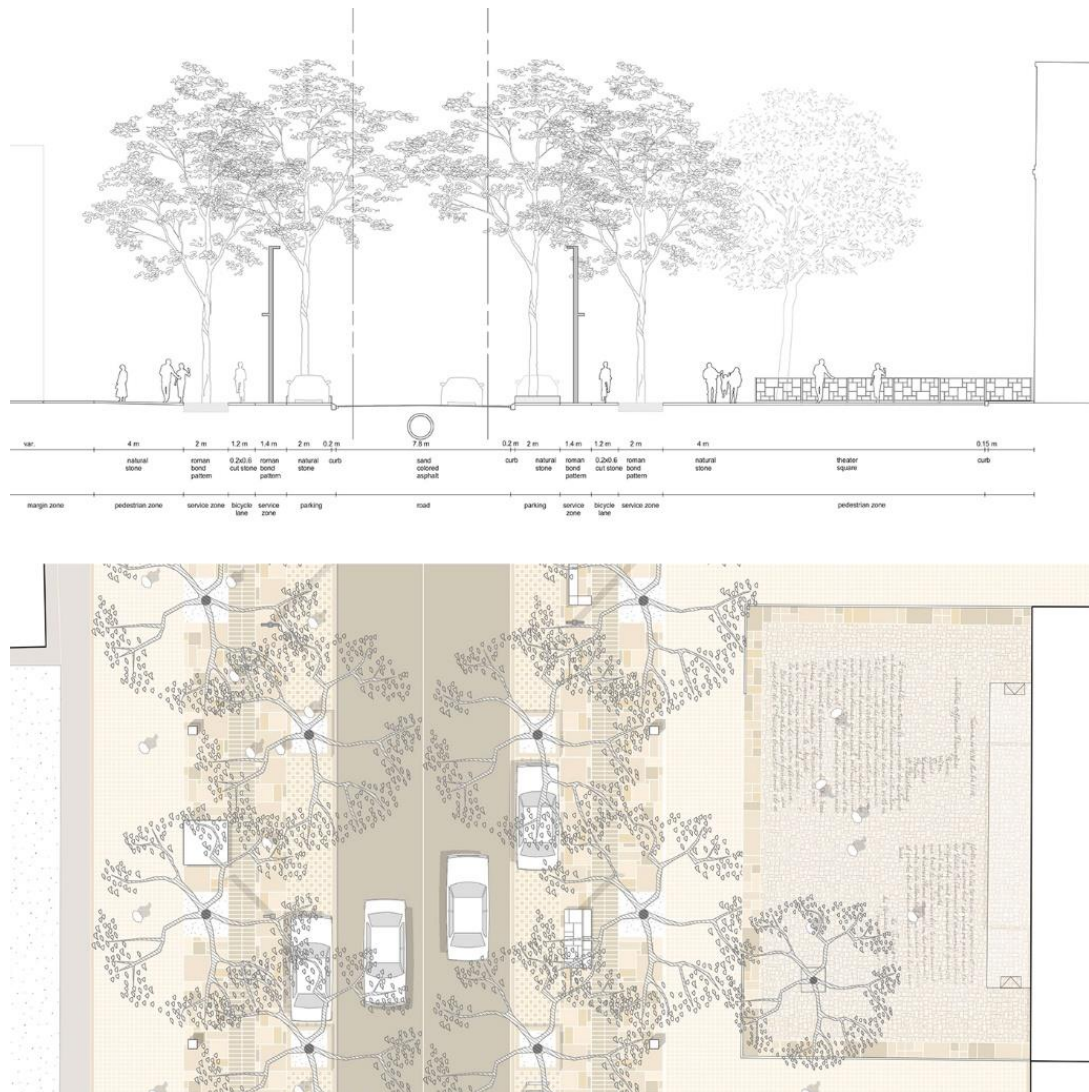


Figure 4: "Boulevard Top - View" (Retrieved from: BOOM Landscape)

This redesign of the space, led to the creation of parallel lines on the roads which were named as new zoning, which will be felt by all users of this space. Each lane of the boulevard definitely has a specific use. In the center of the main road there are two lanes of car movement, which are followed on both sides by parking spaces. Then comes the construction of sidewalk lines, where they are positioned in turn: bicycle lanes, wide and unobstructed pedestrian space and finally businesses with their show spaces. The passage between the areas is legible due to the different patterns that are used in the paving.



Figure 5: “Pedestrian Area” (Retrieved from: BOOM Landscape)

In addition to the passageway, the entrances of shops and restaurants were renovated, as they had once been occupied by their owners for the purpose of excessive promotional displays of their businesses. This results in messy sidewalks and a chaotic pedestrian experience. In the new project, businesses were given a new space, speaking the same language everywhere and allowed to be used as desired by the business owners themselves.



Figure 6: “Free Obstacle Sidewalk” (Retrieved from: BOOM Landscape)

The purpose of this project was for pedestrians and cyclists not to be hindered and to flow freely from the beginning to the end of the boulevard. A good tree configuration definitely completes the profile. The whole space of the boulevard is accompanied on both sides by rows of trees, which create high aesthetics, road safety but also favorable environmental conditions. In certain areas, pieces of parks with low vegetation have been designed.

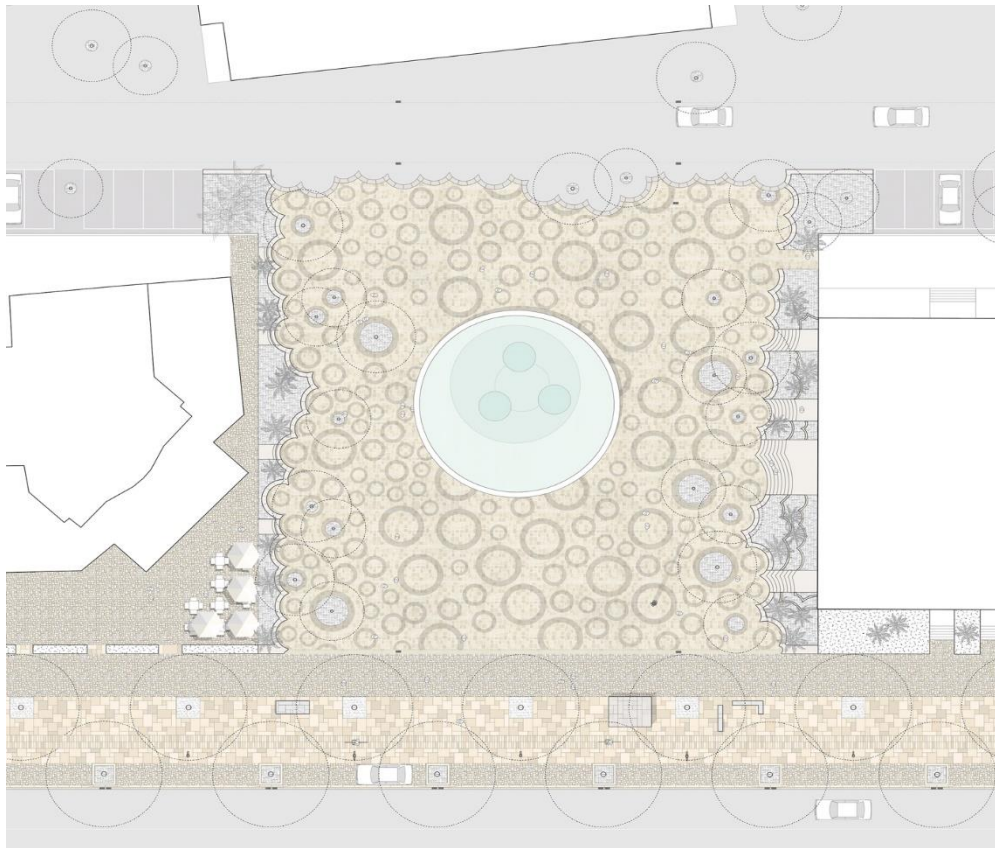


Figure 7: "Squares" (Retrieved from: BOOM Landscape)

Large squares, which are the most social spaces today, are not missing even on the boulevard of Vlora. They are designed as a game of circles and other figures, defining different public spaces. These squares also integrate the biggest source of the city's pride: faces with authentic details engraved in various elements. (Boom Landscapes)



Figure 8: “Green Spaces” (Retrieved from: BOOM Landscape)

“Vlore-Skele” Boulevard is definitely a big noise, a beautifully maintained balance between aesthetics and urban standards, a spacious and modern area, a radical transformation of the outdated image of the city. This boulevard has undoubtedly been a great response to the model of Albanian cities, to the residents of Vlora and its tourists, and even to the leaders of our country. The only dilemma of this innovation is if there were ever any questions waiting to get this answer?

Today the future of urban planning is following exactly this example: urban regenerations taken as a template by successful models. A user manual that is created to be applicable everywhere, because even if it cannot be included in the framework of functionality, at least it will remain a deep aesthetic experience.

Ironically, extraordinary government financial incentives have been sought to achieve this degree of monotony, sterility and vulgarity. Decades of preaching, writing and encouragement by experts have convinced us and our legislators that this should be good for us, as long as it is paved with grass.

There is an even lower quality than ugliness or outright disorder, and this lower quality is the dishonest mask of feigned order, achieved by ignoring or suppressing the true order that is struggling to exist and be served. What moralists have said for thousands of years: Handsome is as handsome does. All that glitters are not gold.

I would like to share with you an impressive and unfortunately realistic story that stuck in my mind during my research in the famous book "The Death and Life of Great American Cities". In New York East Harlem there is a housing project with a

visible rectangular lawn which became the object of hatred for the project tenants. A social worker often on the project was amazed at how often the topic of the lawn came up, usually for free, as far as she could see, and how much the tenants despised her and urged her to remove it. When she asked why, the usual answer was, "What good is it?" or "Who wants it?". Finally, one day a tenant made this statement: "Nobody cared what we wanted when they built this place. They threw our houses down and pushed us here and pushed our friends somewhere else. We do not have a place here to borrow a cup of coffee or a newspaper, or to borrow fifty cents. No one cares what we need. But the big men come, look at the grass and say, "Isn't it wonderful! Now the poor have everything!" (Jacobs, 1961).

2.5.3 The Big Question Box

But let us return again to the issue of Vlora and this time we will try to hear more deeply the voices of the needs of this city. I will call the following text "The Big Question Box", because such question marks bother anyone who has a minimum of education in urban planning or architecture, or who just loves the balance between beauty and functionality.

Have the designers studied the effect of narrowing the roads in a city that aspires to become the most important tourist hub of Albania? Have they considered any studies on the mode of transportation in similar tourist cities? Have state institutions conducted any study on the impact that these projects have on the daily life of the citizens of Vlora, access to school, work, business? Have they conducted a study on the average time of passing by car on the Boulevard "Vlore-Skelë"? Has the average vehicle parking time on this boulevard been measured? Have they conducted studies on the need for cyclist tracks? Are the authorities aware that the population of Vlora is constantly aging and that the elderly has more and more difficulties in using the bicycle? Are the state institutions and the Municipality of Vlora aware that the urban buses are in the most depreciated condition possible? Are they aware that the city's hilly surroundings make it difficult to use a bicycle or walk? Have they ever thought to ask the citizens of Vlora what they really need? Have Vlora urban planners and engineers ever been asked what solution can be given to these needs?

The irony of fate in the meantime is that Vlora has been pampered by nature giving everything to be a livable city, it is pampered with big words and claims that it

is becoming day by day a livable city, when in fact it stays away the living requirements of its citizens as well as the minimum standards to be truly called a livable city.

Just sit one day on the boulevard, in one of the modern benches full of patterns that have been positioned there lately and within ten minutes you will begin to understand the real needs of the city. You will realize that it is difficult to enjoy the colorful facades of the shops as the view will be immediately blocked by the parking barricades on the sidewalks as well as the long queues of traffic that cars create every day, it is just as difficult to feel the aromas of cafes or restaurants, as more than that you are likely to smell the aroma that the fuel emits when it burns. You can see people rushing to get to their destination as soon as possible, because somewhere there, they have badly parked their personal car. You can also see elderly people, who are reluctant to enter the door of the room where they are receiving service, because they need to recover from the fatigue that walking has caused them. It often happens that you see tourists wandering in the faces of citizens asking for help for attractive destinations and how they can access them. And while you are seeing all this, there is definitely a bus passing by here, even more tired than all the aforementioned faces, even though it runs only two short lines, the main ones for the whole city. And while this is a panorama that appears free for every day of the year, no one has thought of a possible solution that unites all the problems at one point.

If we leave behind the subjectivity and the emotional view, I would summarize the current picture of Vlora objectively with a few words: The population density of the city of Vlora has increased in the center as well as in the new strategic spaces of the city, where services and commercial activities are concentrated. However, the city faces acute traffic jams, especially during the summer, when the population nearly doubles due to the influx of tourists. The way of land use has a great impact on the traffic conditions in the city. The dominant means of transport is undoubtedly the private car, while the use of bicycles does not facilitate anything in the current conditions. Public transport is carried out by a co-owners of bus owners, which has recently been transformed into an urban transport monopoly. In general, the main characteristics of the public transport system are: low level of service, long travel times accompanied by permanent delays, as well as weak connections with suburban areas. All of these have a huge impact on individuals' use of the bus network.

But is the importance of genuine public transport in our cities really so

invisible? Is it difficult to understand that the key word for solving all the above-mentioned problems is just one phrase: PUBLIC TRANSPORT?

2.5.4 Public Transportation

Public transport in urban areas has gained tremendous attention in recent years for improving the sustainability and quality of urban life. The economic and environmental performance of cities can be improved by linking resources to destinations effectively and facilitating mass movement. Over the past two decades, a large increase in population has been recorded in developing countries. Population growth has caused an increase in demand for movement. If the transport infrastructure is not able to meet the requirements, this causes an increase in waiting time and blockage in public and road transport. Public transport can be more attractive by providing "door to door mobility" and the development of transport services is an important factor of social quality.

The sustainability of transport, the environmental conditions of an area, the public health and the economic situation of the inhabitants can be increased by switching from private to public transport, not leaving behind walking and cycling. This relocation will take place under conditions that public transport is widely available and accessible to the public.

Generally, accessibility is labeled as physical access to goods, services and destinations. In the context of urban economics and geography, accessibility, which is one of the most important outcomes of the transportation system, is characterized as facilitating access to a specific area or location. Good access to public transport improves access to other services as well.

The main purpose of assessing public transport access is to provide better people-location connectivity in order to reduce road congestion. Simply put, mobility through public transport provides an opportunity to reduce the harmful effects of car use on the environment and health. The level of mobility of a city can be improved by providing a well-organized transportation system. Therefore, the possibility of access to public transport stops, the connection of public transport modes and the mobility of the system should be considered to ensure a user-friendly public transport system. (Giannopoulos, 2010)

The diversity of modes of transportation is great and obviously adapting the type to the chosen context is a total challenge. But fortunately, the studies and analyzes that we have the opportunity to acquire today, have left us, as urban planners and architects, ready-made models and easily suitable. With the development of technology, everything has taken space to improve and of course there is room for new modes of public transport. The tendency to modernize the type and techniques used, gives us the opportunity to realize large projects, thus creating facilities and space for us to think with vision for the future of everything. The need for the same vision is experienced even today in our cities and the foresight of a specialist is definitely the detail that makes the difference.

A livable city serves as a link between the past and the future: it respects the traces of history (our roots) and respects the needs of those who have not been born yet (our descendants). A livable city is a city that preserves the signs (places, buildings, appearances) of history. When livability became the key word in our regional planning, we all knew we would have to find effective ways to deal with many problems. Preparing a plan and regulation would not be enough, and for this we will have to deal with long-term livability in the future, but also with the continued satisfaction of people and their daily experience of living in the region. Tomorrow's livability needs as much attention as achieving a better future. "The proof of planning would be in the living." (Vuchic, 2017)

2.5.5 Transportation Systems

The operation's idea was initiated by the City of Volos, which is the first Greek city to consider developing a lightweight tram system, to address the growing problems of traffic jams and mobility for both: car users and not car users.

In recent years, everywhere in Europe are considering the introduction of the Rapid Transit system that includes: Tramway, Light Rail or Guider Busways. Many such schemes have been implemented and evidence has shown that they have been highly successful. The introduction of such systems is a costly investment, which also needs a complete reorganization of town planning, road network and in most cases an operating subsidy, therefore cities face many difficulties in implementing and operating such systems. However, there is a strong belief that such systems have indirect socio-economic benefits and urban regeneration, in addition to improvements in transportation and direct movement. In addition to the direct transport and

environmental benefits of these systems, there are usually other advantages related to urban regeneration, city aesthetics, job creation, social and economic development.

However, Light Rail /Tramway/GuiDer Bus systems tend to be costly investments and the process of developing and implementing them is usually lengthy. The long and arduous process, development and implementation can be facilitated if indirect benefits are considered from the outset. However, our goal remains to examine the development and functioning of new transit systems, through innovative strategies, towards sustainable development, cohesion and urban regeneration. (Vougioukas et. al, 2008)

More detailed analysis statistics for the tram speak of a series of advantages that its implementation brings to a city:

- Encourages people to leave their cars behind.
- Reduces congestion in city centers.
- Reduces road traffic by up to 14%.
- Helps in climate change.
- Makes cities more livable.
- Improves the image of a city.
- Contributes to economic regeneration. (Campaign for Better

Transport)

For small, coastal towns, such as Vlora, it has been studied that the most efficient mode of transport remains the tram line. External mobility in Vlora shows that most of users use transport with small cars that perform interurban movements and the others use a private vehicle. In the internal movement, the trips are made to a certain extent on foot, but what is worth noting is that there is intensive use of private vehicles, and very little use of public transport (mainly the elderly). This behavior of car addiction brings the necessity for change, seeking innovation in modes of transport, to promote the transition from private cars to public transport.

2.5.6 The Implementation of Tram Line in Vlora

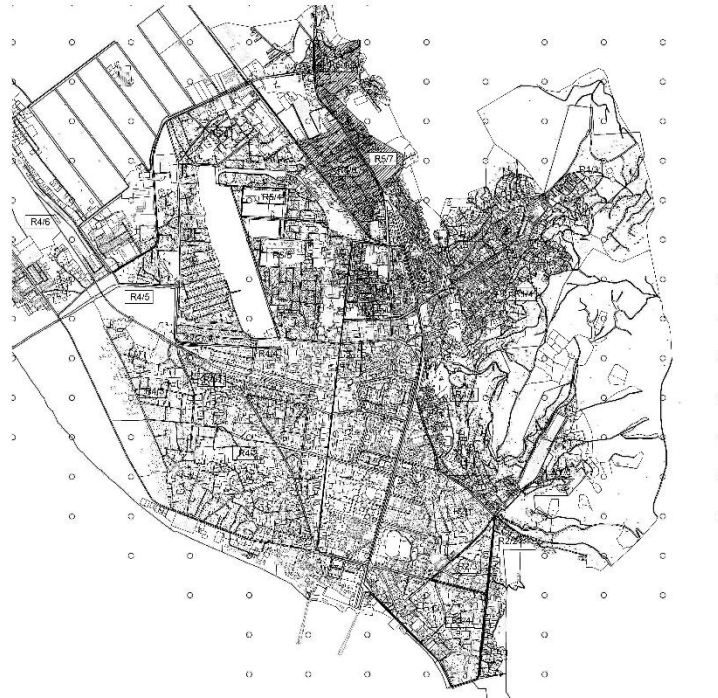


Figure 9: “General Map of Vlora”

The proposed tram system in this city, aims to connect new urban developments with the services of the railway station, improving the possibility of access for passengers and communications with services within the country. The advantages of a city like Vlora, are that: to the extent of 70% all services offered in this city (service units, schools, hospitals, theaters, stadiums, museums, etc.), have direct access to the main boulevard or Lungomare area. At the same time, the concentration of most of the industrial area is created with the same direct access, at the junction of the Trans-Balkan road which comes as a continuation of the Levan-Vlora Highway inviting the entrance to the city.



Figure 10: “Tram Trajectory”

The map above shows the entire trajectory that the tram will travel through the city. Within this range of motion, the tram line will aim to create a strong communication between residents and services, as well as tourists with the points of attraction. The reason why this trajectory has been chosen, is that the city itself, as mentioned before, summarizes the services and facilities in such a space, where as a consequence the concentration of people and the flow of movement are higher. This trajectory makes the best use of all the social, economic and tourist potential of the country, giving at the same time, direct access from residents and tourists. The spot itself shown on the map, shows that the city of Vlora, which is known as a vast city, can be accessed faster and easier, thus bringing a sense of well-being and a higher standard of living.

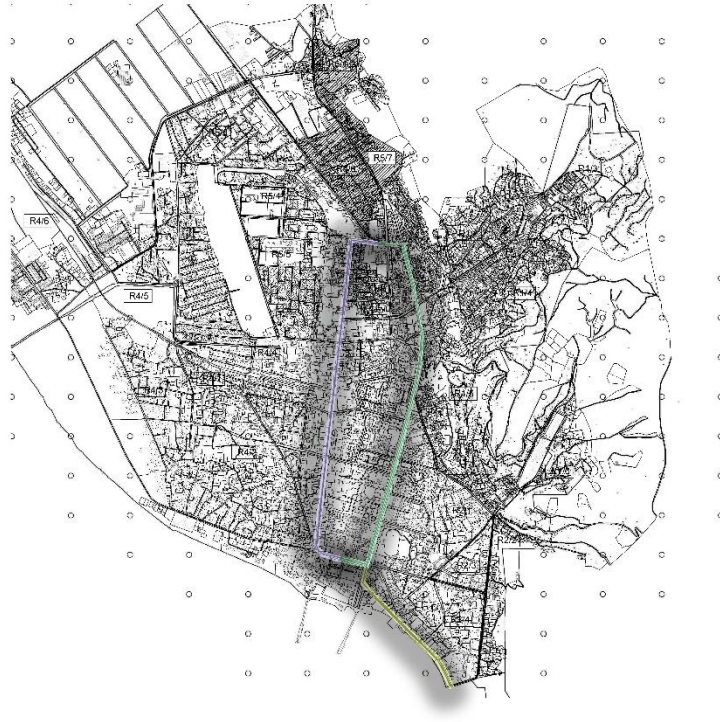


Figure 11: “Areal of Vlora”

In order for the whole concept to be as understandable as possible, on the map presented above, the exact location of the service areas, areas with tourist potential, as well as the industrial areas of the city has been identified through different colors.

Specifically, the Trans-Balkanik area in the city of Vlora is presented in blue, where along its entire length, it is used for industrial purposes. This area is characterized by multi-storey buildings, where the first floors are always used for industrial purposes.

On the right side of the map, in green, is the area where the main services of the city are concentrated: shops, schools, bars and restaurants, museums, hospitals, stadiums, mosques, etc. This area is the most frequented in the city, as the need for services that are stationed here, is very high.

The last wing, displayed in yellow color on the map, is the masterpiece of the city, known as the Lungomare area. Throughout its surface, high-rise multi-storey buildings have been erected, the first floors of which are used for bars and restaurants services. Lungomare is the most strategic potential of the City, due to its proximity to the sea, the impressive view that nature itself offers, as well as the entertainment

opportunities it offers for people.

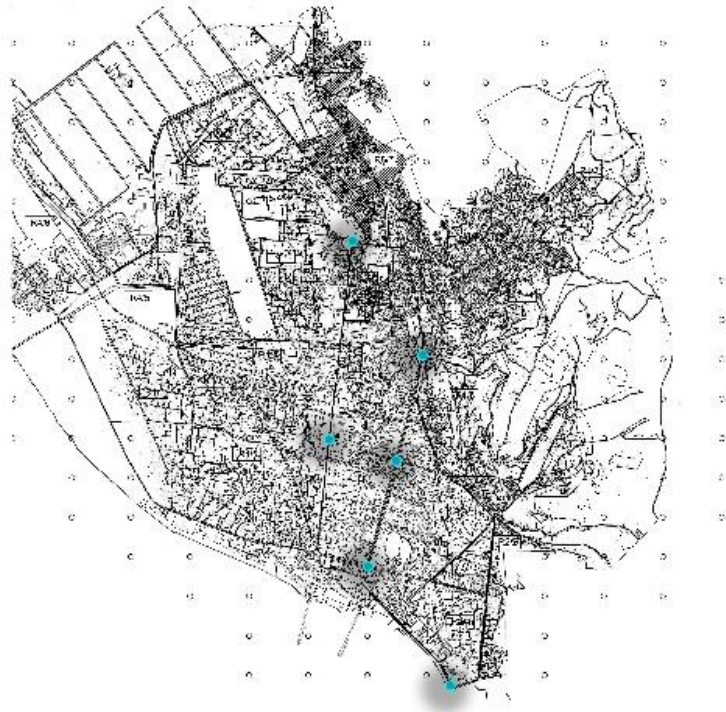


Figure 12: "Potential Tram Stations"

The tram route (which is supposed to describe a trajectory with frequencies between 10 minutes) appears as one of the most convenient ways to be implemented, because it is environmentally friendly, has a large capacity and modularity. At the same time, it is accessible to all and attractive for this touristic city. According to the examples studied in other European cities, it is predicted that the tram will move in the city at a speed of 30km/h and according to calculations, within a time of 10 minutes, it is thought to travel a length of 18km. Based on the calculations made, the stations seem to be frequent, enabling direct access of residents and tourists to more service units, and at the same time avoiding other modes of movement.

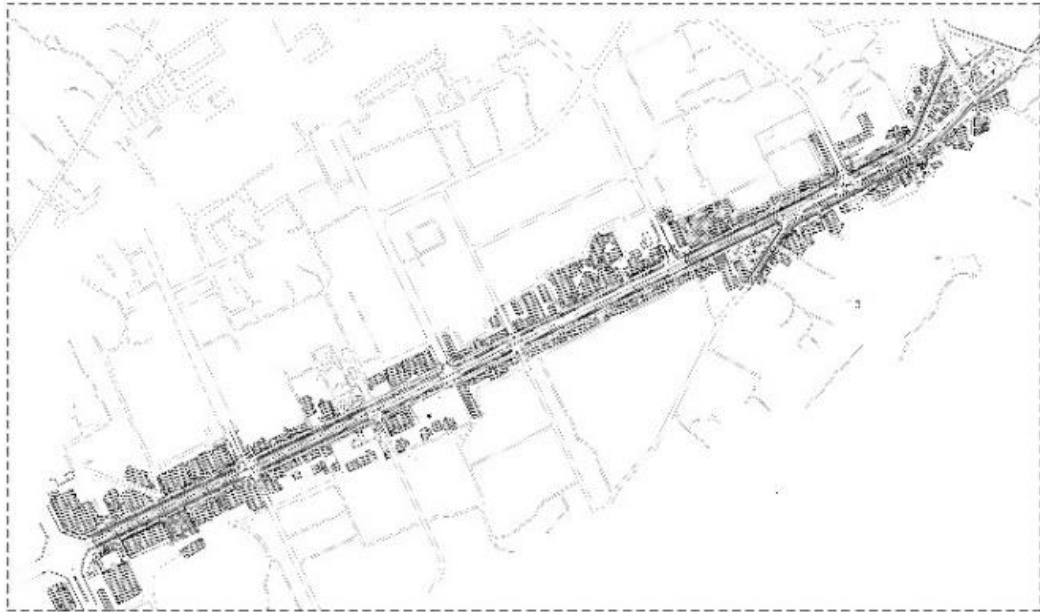


Figure 13: “Landmarks of Boulevard”

As it appears on the map, the concentration of service units on Ismail Qemali Boulevard is very high and strangely all these activities take place in the first line of the facade. The proximity and frequency of businesses or services is just as great, but strangely everything goes in harmony in this space. At first glance, it can be understood that it is a well-thought-out and well-organized area, which seems to flow from the parallel lines, which preserve its harmony and aesthetics. In this boulevard, undoubtedly part of the first line are also the high palaces, which have used their first floors, in service of these activities.

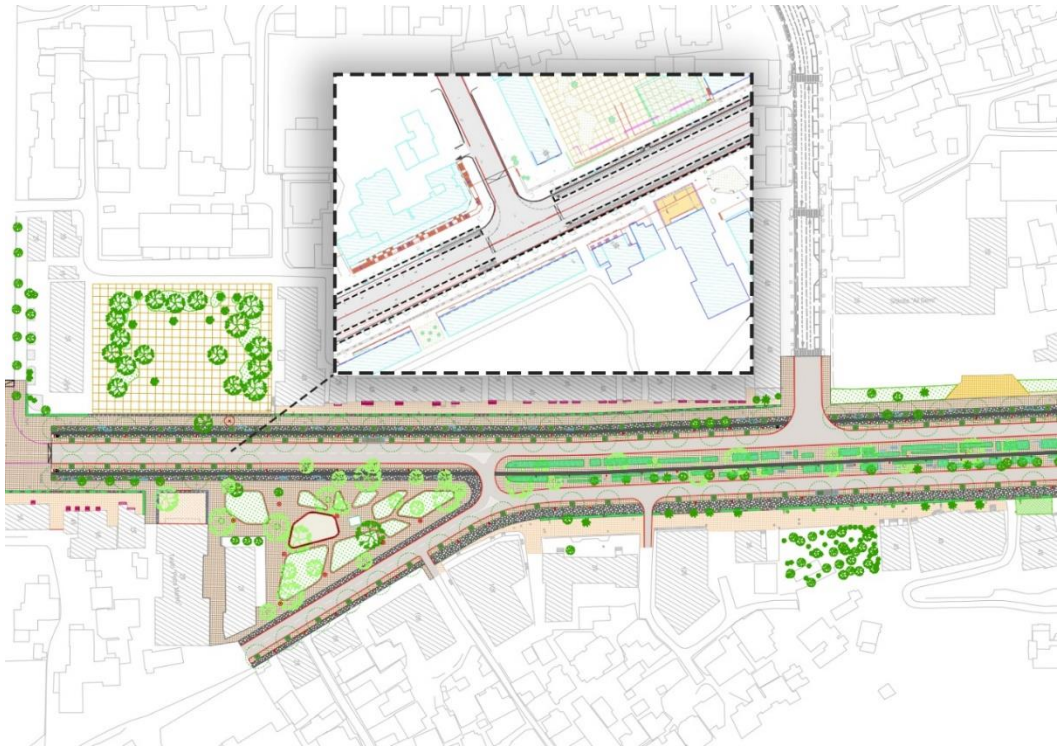


Figure 14: "Boulevard actual state"

To dwell on further analysis, a section of this boulevard, which has the same character as the other areas, has been considered. It is clear that the new government project has given an aesthetic spirit to the whole space. A long green road seems to harmoniously separate all these services. This road creates the same parallel lines with all other zoning. The road of cars enables their movement in both senses of direction, creating round-trip movement and distributing the flow of the boulevard to other important areas of the city.

The lanes along the car road are used for parking in the boulevard area. Actually, they are elevated spaces, as they have been designed for aesthetic areas and covered with greenery. Therefore, with its transformation into a parking space, the city experiences a large concentration of traffic in this area, as due to the difficulty, a long and slow maneuver is required to complete the parking.

The long parade of cars, accompanied by the long queue, as well as the chaotic appearance of the parking lot, makes this boulevard an area that needs to breathe and that needs an efficient solution to help disperse the flows.

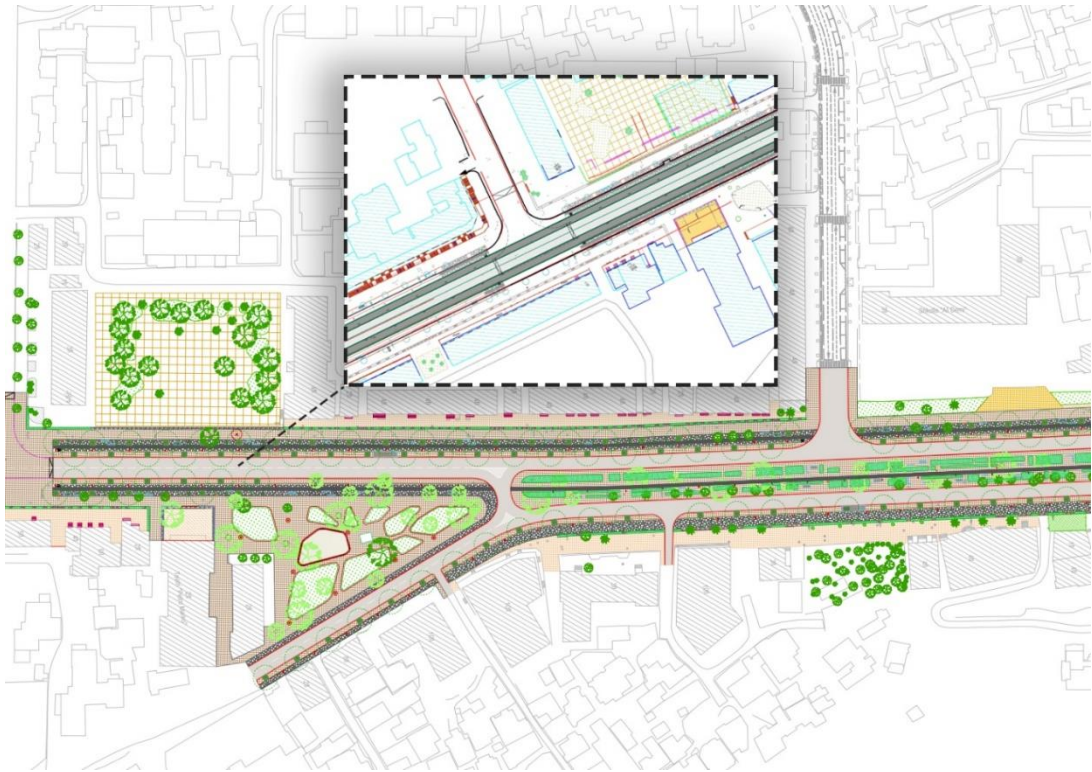


Figure 15: "Potential Solution"

With the new proposal of the tram line that will pass on this boulevard, a calm traffic flow is foreseen, as the number of public transport users will reduce the use of personal cars. One concept of a possible space solution is to move the parking lanes on this boulevard to another area, and use them as lane for tram circulation on both sides of the road.

It is thought that the tram will pass alongside the cars following both lines of departure and arrival. Without the need to delve into engineering solutions, which belong to experts in the field, it is clear that the large width of this whole area can be transformed into a new concept, without the need to intervene in the newly completed project of this boulevard.

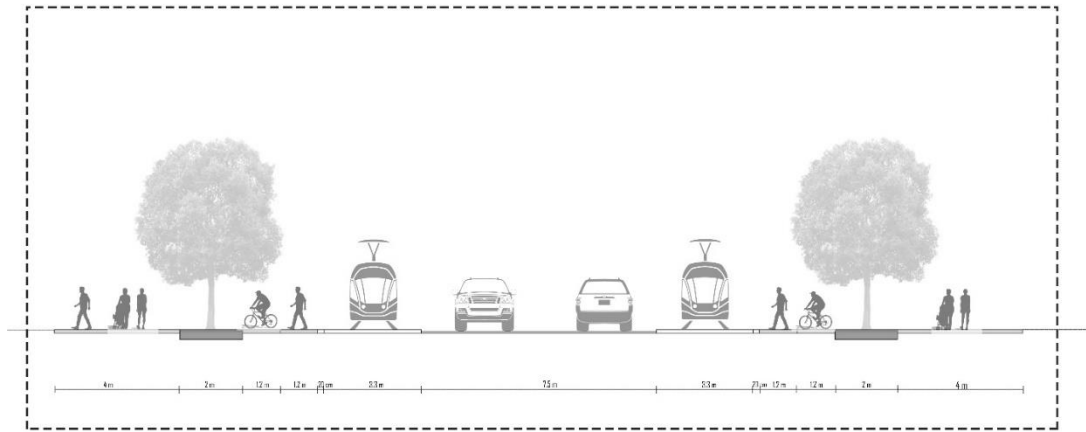


Figure 16: "Section of Boulevard"

Easily, the parking lane can be turned into a lane for the tram, as their width corresponds to 100%, because the width of 3.4m is enough for the tram. Thus, public and individual transport will continue their flow in full harmony. It is worth adding that in the space of the tram crossing, cars can also pass, so on specific days that the tram will circulate less, this lane can be easily used by cars, thus bringing more opportunities for traffic and how consequently, less traffic in the city.

This conceptual intervention is also presented in the section, where the given dimensions are of the current condition of the boulevard. With these dimensions, a new use of space has simply been realized, in function of the new service that will come to the city, to show me more that this logic remains in the current situation. genuine elections after, I am looking for experts in the field of engineering. The real solutions then, belong to the experts in the field of engineering.



Figure 17: “Potential Parking Space”

Parking lanes obviously cannot be undone as if they never existed, because not only the need for parking is very large in every city, but it is also worth mentioning the fact that the residents of Vlorë have a lifestyle parking trend near the spaces where they receive services.

But, in recent years, the examples that come to us from urban cities, show that in specific areas, such as the main boulevards, there cannot be such large parking spaces, as this space should come to the aid of other urban needs.

Thus, this parking lot, which is supposed to be removed from the main boulevard, is foreseen to be transferred to strategic points of the city, which are close to the service units.

In the map above, through the red markings, are presented the areas with potential for the use of the parking lot. These areas are generally large and unused spaces, or are illegally constructed spaces, which will be demolished soon by the municipality. The choice of these areas is due to the fact that they cover a large range of facilities nearby, so these spaces will serve as collection points for car users, then bring the distribution to destinations.

The same logic, followed on Ismail Qemali Boulevard, applies to other areas of the city. But furthermore, let us analyze another important area such as the Lungomare area. This zone, which stretches along the Ionian coast, is the best place for walking, shopping, meditation, yoga, cycling and other sports. This 5 km long road, with entrance to the city and the beach, it is the most modern part of this coastal city. Dressed in palm trees and typical Mediterranean plants, it sits in perfect harmony with the surrounding space.

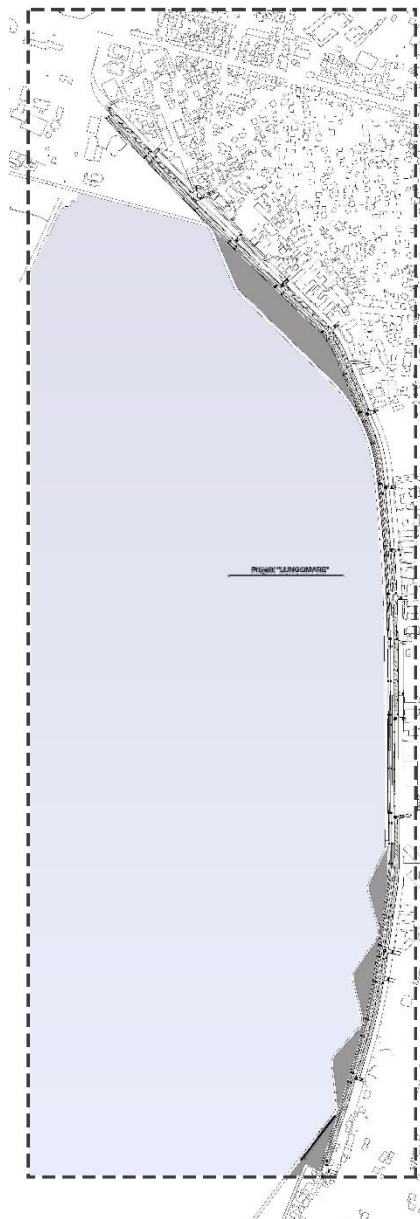


Figure 18: “Lungo mare landmarks”

On the road that winds between Lungomare, on one side stands the sea, while on the other side, as a contrast, are erected the high-rise buildings, which have turned their first floors into bars and restaurants. These spaces traverse the entire length of the promenade, thus bringing large flows of residents and visitors, who spend their time in a magnificent way in this area.

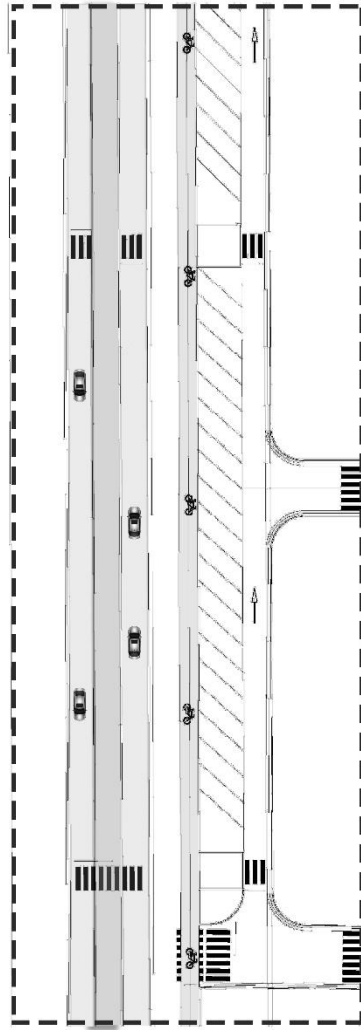


Figure 19: "Actual State of Lungo Mare"

The map above clearly shows the current division of the width of Lungomare. Starting with the sea area and the pedestrian boulevard on this side, the car road immediately stands out, created for 2 sense of direction with one lane, which is divided in the middle by an inexplicable space, and without any function, that has a considerable width and that could be best used for other functions. This mysterious space adds even more weight to the traffic that is caused every day in the Lungomare area, especially in the days of the tourist season, where the long queues are scary. Then in the pot the same parallels continue: the green line, the bicycle lane, wide sidewalk of pedestrians as well as colorful facades of bars and restaurants.

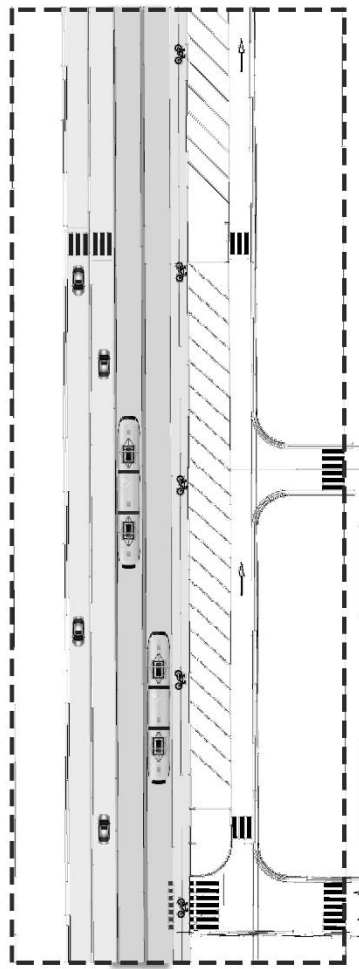


Figure 20: "Potential Solution"

The new concept that is supposed to be applied in this area is also presented in the map above. Based on the reviews made from the surface data, it is thought that the unused space between the car lanes, along with a part of the green area, will be turned into two lanes for tram movement in this area. Thus, the new layout of the space will be, two lanes for cars, two lanes for the tram, the green area that will serve as a safe area accompanied by its entire surface with tram stations,

then the bicycle lane, the trail of pedestrians and business facades.

These conceptual schemes have been created for experimental purposes, seeing different perspectives on how this new application can work in the city, in different areas. And from the analysis, considering that not only does this concept best fit the current situation of the area, but at the same time it is projected to release the biggest traffic jam, to bring an attractive presentation of the city, as well as increase livability in Vlora, facilitating the lives of citizens to access facilities.

2.5.7 The Cultural Heritage of Vlora

The province of Vlora is not only known for the wars fought in different periods of its history and the country, but also for the variety of cultural monuments that it has spread throughout its territory. Over the years, careful work has been done to identify and preserve this rich cultural heritage, both in the deepest areas and inside the city of Vlora. Hundreds of archeological expeditions, dozens of archaeologists, historians, but also various collaborators, have worked to create heritage, to create museums where these values are preserved, to publish articles and books in order to recognize them by generations.

In the editorial of the magazine, "Art & Heritage", the former Mayor of Vlora, Mr. Shpëtim Gjika states that Vlora is "the foundation of the Albanian state". 100 years ago, Vlora was the right land to sow the seeds of independence, sovereignty, prosperity of the Albanian habitants. This is an indisputable historical fact. The roots of the Albanian state were laid in Vlora and to us after 100 years, despite the strong storms we have gone through from the invasions to the terrible anarchies, we are still standing because this land knows how to hold strong this tree called Independence.

Today, the cultural heritage of Vlora, despite the efforts made by people who work to maintain it, has been left in oblivion, is in agony and in many cases has either disappeared or is in danger of disappearing. Former museum directors, archaeologists,

historians, researchers and cultural heritage enthusiasts, express regret over the situation in which the cultural heritage of Vlora is located, cultural monuments, museums and any other value inherited over the years.

One of the most painful examples that I would like to share with you is the tragedy that the maritime history of Vlora has suffered over the years, disappearing and destroyed by the thirst for property and the lack of smell for culture.

Sami Frashëri had a bequest "The ship school should be on the side of Vlora", but it seems that the Albanians who have ruled us were not able to keep the bequest of the great scholar! (Alushi, 2017)

2.5.8 The Beginning of the Naval Academy

The School of Naval Officers, later called the Naval Academy, would open on September 4, 1961. It was opened in Vlora, as a testament to the well-known scholar and renaissance scholar Sami Frashëri, of who once wrote: "The shipbuilding school should be by the sea, where the warships should be, in Vlora". The opening of that school at that time was a great event, not only for Vlora, but for the entire Albanian state, also for the fact that at that time our country had dozens of ships of the Navy; the Merchant Navy and the Fisheries Fleet were strengthened, for the direction of which it was required, first of all, to be completed with capable personnel, with the respective maritime education. The first students of the school would be 70 students, who due to the breakdown of relations with the Soviet Union, in May 1961, their studies would be interrupted and they would return to Albania. In the history of its operation, this school would graduate more than one thousand officers, who have served in various sectors of the navy. (Alushi, 2018)

2.5.9 The End of the Marine Academy

However, in recent years, property restitution for alleged landowners in the territory of the Naval Academy, as well as the project for the construction of the coastal promenade, known as Lungomare, are two of the many reasons that have led today to the closure of the Naval Academy. Although the events of 1997 did not pass without damage also in this school, again its staff managed to rebuild the school and put it in

full operation. The closure of the school in another period was accompanied by the construction of palaces in a part of its territory, while some of its facilities were made available to the University of Vlora. The Lungomare project, launched in 2014, seems to have dealt the final blow to hopes for the resumption of naval high school operation. According to the decision of the government, the "Academy of the Navy", located in Skelë, Vlora, according to the plan attached to this decision, will be given to the Municipality of Vlora to use for urban needs, for implementation of projects for the construction of the road "Lungomare" and for the construction of the ring road of the city of Vlora. (Alushi, 2018)

Today, every time someone passes by this school, which is located in the heart of the sea panorama of the city, the view you see is painful. The buildings have been abandoned and at the mercy of fate. On both sides of the central building, multi-storey buildings are erected, stealing and fragmenting its courtyards full of space. This is the situation today of the former Higher School of the Navy or the Naval Academy in Vlora. No one constantly knows the fate of what is left of the building complex, as its territory has begun to shrink wildly in recent years.

It is even more painful the fact that in our cities, the feeling of destruction is stronger than that of preserving and conserving the resources we have. History shows that a country that does not know how to protect and promote its culture is dying slowly every day. And when I look at the current situation of many works in Vlora, I have this feeling for my city as well. However, as a young architect with more aspirations to serve my country, I decided today to give my contribution, even though a small one, to create a new concept of protection and conservation of Vlora's culture, and specifically of the space towards which no one is looking into: The Naval Academy of Vlora.

2.5.10 The Marine Academy Building and Territory

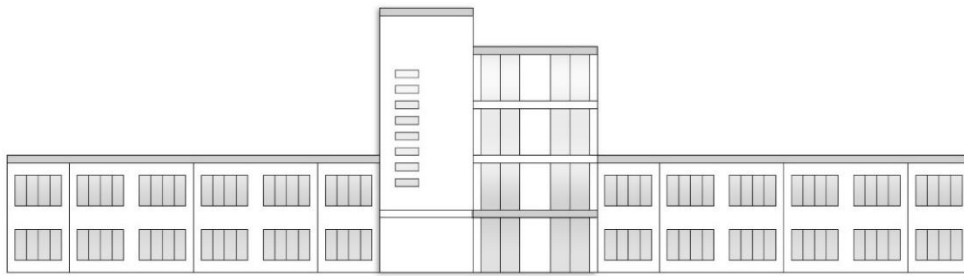


Figure 21: “The Marine Academy Building”

The Marine Academy is an elegant building, created as a puzzle of several pieces. Seen from above, this building resembles the shape of the letter T, where on both sides on the left and right rise two-storey buildings, while in its front space, stands a vertical four-storey building. The two side buildings are used as learning development spaces, while the central building is used to accommodate the administration and other necessary functions of this academy.



Figure 22: “Naval Academy Territory”

The map shown clearly presents three zoning of the territory of the Naval Academy: the space of the Academy building itself, and two large empty spaces on both sides, which were once used by students for training activities or as relaxing

spaces, but at the same time they also served as an invitation and transition area for entering the academy.

Given the above situations, we can say with conviction that such a large space and with potential as the Marine Academy and its surroundings, look forward to be part of an urban regeneration and reconception, given the environmental circumstances of this environment, are extremely favorable for the development of the culture and its maritime history.

To develop the concept of livability in the city of Vlora, in addition to new implementations in the public transport network, another important aspect that I have decided to focus on, is the development of the culture of this city, as a basic principle of livability, bringing an intervention in architectural scale to create the Maritime Museum of Vlora.

2.5.11 The Importance of Maritime Museums

The museums themselves play a fundamental role in the preservation of local culture, by carefully documenting facts and preserving meaningful objects. A culture can be preserved and remembered, facing the challenges of the future. The culture built within the walls of a museum aims to be shared and understood by all individuals, even those with different cultural backgrounds, as museums themselves have the power to create a unity at different social, political and local levels.

Local museums have the opportunity to offer a sense of community, promoting collective heritage in an excellent way. They have the potential to offer a lot to the community, increasing the sense of well-being, making us feel proud of our background, and at the same time stimulating us to feel healthier. Nowadays, when the problems we face the most are poverty, inequality, intolerance and discrimination, museums can be a great impetus for us to understand more and to challenge these problems. (Carlsson, 2021)

Surprisingly, the Maritime Museums are not at the top of the list of "necessities" for anyone, not even those who claim that salt water flows in their veins, while the importance of this museum is almost vital. It serves the purpose for which it was founded. There are excellent resources of data and examples, which help people to understand previously unknown concepts about the aquatic world. Maritime museums are masterpieces of any country that is fortunate to have them as part of its cultural

heritage and the interesting fact is that these museums have the ability to include a wide world of elements, without restrictions on admission, because there is no exact definition for them, to be accepted in museum registers. But it can be easily understood that a naval museum includes museums dealing with the diversity of aquatic life, seaports, all kinds of waterways and sailing vessels as well as the marine art itself. Today in the world, there are listed almost 1120 naval museums, all described as excellent achievements of a country's culture. (Davies, 2012)

Inspired by these reasons, I ask that the history of more than 3000 years of the city of Vlora, be ascended to the pantheon of Mediterranean history. Given the fact that our country lacks a maritime museum, its creation in the most protected port of Albania, would be an added value and a real tourist attraction for the city of Vlora.

Vlora's Region represents a region with ancient history and a cultural heritage of special values. These historical and cultural values make this region more attractive for foreign and Albanian tourists. All these elements are an important potential in the development of the field of cultural tourism, where it is worth mentioning that there are many traces of early settlements that prove the ethnoculture of the inhabitants of this region and where the folkloric elements are still kept alive. Cultural tourism aims to highlight exactly all these special values that characterize the Vlora region and to increase the interest of historical and cultural values, always keeping in mind their antiquity.

The organized development of cultural tourism can create opportunities for the local population to learn more about themselves, at the same time increasing interest, as well as the discovery by new generations of cultural, historical, natural and tourist resources thus increasing the sense of pride for their cultural heritage and for a higher perception of their value. The culture, archeological and historical museum centers of this Region serve as a geographical and cultural potential in the service of tourism. The favorable geographical and strategic location, in the center of Europe, as a bridge connecting the Eastern Mediterranean, is a factor that can help to create a faster development of tourism. It should not be forgotten that the Mediterranean is the most developed tourism area in the world. (Vlore Municipality)

2.5.12 The Maritime Museum of Vlora



Figure 23: "Top View"

To conceive of the formation of this museum, I wanted to analyze in detail each of its constituent elements, and the first constituent element that would be the essence of this museum, is undoubtedly the selection of its location, since location itself is the identifying element in any space. It lifts him to the pedestal or hides in oblivion the importance of everything. Undoubtedly for this high work of culture, everyone will choose an attractive location, which will create noise and will be remembered. And where better than near the naval academy, would the construction of the naval museum have excelled.

The design of the Maritime Museum consists of making two essential spaces. The first space will be the construction of the Museum Building itself in area 1 of the academy yard, which will be joined on one side by the existing academy building, while zone 2, will be transformed into a completely new and visionary space, such as the conception of an Open-Air Museum

The new building of the Maritime Museum is conceived to be a one-storey building, with direct access from the street and extended in width to accommodate all activities that will take place inside its doors. The decision to be a one-story structure comes not only with the intention of being gentle with the surrounding environment, but also as an irony for the multi-storey buildings that are constructed by the sea. The

greatest magic of this building is left to the view provided by nature itself, such as the great proximity to the sea and pedestrians.

Inside this building, spaces have been created, in the form of rooms which are in accordance with the standards of construction of a naval museum. This zoning fulfills the needs of the staff that will work inside the museum, but especially the visitors who will explore this museum. In addition, on the north side of the building, a crack will be created, which will serve as direct communication with the old building of the academy, thus inviting visitors to touch more closely the space, which has been left in oblivion.

The other creation in zone two, definitely remains a far-sighted concept and a unique experience for the visitors of this museum. Building a good part of it in the open air is a lively and tangible experience of culture by all. Today, people need more and more to feel and enjoy special experiences, and how better than to touch these experiences up close, the final goal of an initiative can be realized.

This open-air museum will be distributed throughout the courtyard of the naval academy, taking place within a green forest, to provide the necessary security and privacy. It will implement some of the most significant objects in the world of maritime history, including: old ships, seedlings, sailor busts, watercraft, and even busts of the flora and fauna that are underwater.

Various tourist and educational expeditions will find this place as the biggest point of attraction in the city of Vlora. And not only that, but the information and experiences gained from this experience, will be as unique as the space itself. It is worth mentioning, once again, the immediate communication that this open museum will have with the sea and visitors, giving the picture a sweet color, as well as the union of the most important natural elements; water, soil and air.

In the days foreseen as loaded by visitors, this open museum will also serve as a "waiting" space, making the waiting hours more beautiful and at the same time easing the blockages from the flows of people.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Due to the difficulty, the work of this thesis belongs to a high level of complexity. The theoretical and practical level of literature and best practices that have been considered require a methodology of scientific analysis. Always keeping in mind the nature of the selected topic, the methods selected in the processing of literature, facts and opinions are as follows:

Ex Post Reasoning

Ex Post reasoning is the interpretation of the present based on facts that occurred in the past. Qualitative and quantitative data on urban planning, architecture, history, geomorphology, social impact, urban mobility and the purpose of this dissertation have been processed taking into account the Ex Post reasoning to draw conclusions on the current situation.

Ex Ante Reasoning

Ex Ante reasoning is the interpretation of the present based on the theory, analysis, predictions and good practices on future projections. Qualitative and quantitative data on the new urban thinking, architecture, social impact, urban mobility and the purpose of this thesis, have been processed taking into account the Ex Ante reasoning to draw conclusions on the current situation.

Logical Deduction Method

Deduction is the process of reasoning from one or more statements (premises) to reach a certain logical conclusion. So it's a logical method. It is a form of indirect conclusion in which the final judgment or conclusion goes from the general to what is particular or individual. When a deductive conclusion has exactly two (premises) initial judgments and one conclusion then it is called reasoning (syllogism). Depending on which conclusions are drawn, they can be: irrefutable (categorical), conjectural (hypothetical) and double (disjunctive).

The deductive method is a systematic and worthy application of the deductive way of inference, where from general attitudes is passed to specific ones; from general findings to specific concrete conclusions; many verifications define any new verification which results from the preliminary truths. In science, these types of conclusions are of great importance, because based on general judgments, reports and logical features, definitions of specific judgments, special conclusions, verifications and special truths are enabled, respectively knowledge and knowledge about it are discovered and achieved. verify and reflect new facts, new legalities and new scientific truths. Deduction always presupposes the knowledge of general attitudes, of principles, the possession of general knowledge, on the basis of which one understands what is special, special knowledge. In deduction most often it starts from the general truth to come to the special, individual knowledge. The most important elements of the inductive method are: attitudes, analytical method, synthetic method, abstraction method, generalization and specialization. The deductive method in the broadest sense serves the sciences for a variety of issues

Questionnaires

Vlora

yesterday, today and tomorrow

Read the prompts below and respond by filling each space.

Interviewer/User profile

- Age: _____
- Gender: ___ male ___ female
- Education: ___ elementary ___ middle ___ high
- For how long do you live in Vlora:
___ less than 5y ___ 5-10y ___ 15-20y
___ more than 20y
- In which area of the city do you live?
___ center ___ suburb

Questions

- How would you evaluate the latest projects implemented in the environment of the city of Vlora?
___ good ___ very good ___ average ___ bad ___ very bad
- How would you evaluate the existing environment before the implementation of new projects in the city of Vlora?
___ good ___ very good ___ average ___ bad ___ very bad
- If you had the opportunity to choose, would you prefer living in the existing or current environment of the city of Vlora?
___ existing environment ___ current environment
- In your opinion, are these urban interventions the best solution to the problems of the city of Vlora?
___ yes ___ no
- Why?

Figure 24: "Questionarie 1"

How has the overall condition of the city been affected by these urban interventions?

Physical factors

- Environment: __dirty __ cleaned
- Greenery: __ missing __ added
- Air: __ polluted __ cleaned
- Music: __ high __ normal
- Public spaces: __ lost __ added __ irregular __ regular
- Sport areas: __ lost __ added
- Traffic: __ heavy __ regulated
- Parking: __ heavy __ regulated
- Sunlight: __ not enough __ enough
- Fading: __ not enough __ enough
- Urban conditioning: __ not enough __ enough
- Sidewalks: __ lost __ added __ irregular __ regular
- Bicycle lanes: __ unnecessary __ necessary
- Public transport: __ missing __ added

How has the overall condition of the city been affected by these urban interventions?

Socio - Cultural factors

- __ unknown social environment __ compact social environment
- __ unsafe area __ safe familiar area
- __ loss of old culture __ maintaining of old culture
- __ loss of previous social activities __ maintaining of previous social activities

How has the overall condition of the city been affected by these urban interventions?

Emotional factors

- __ former meeting landmark is missed __ former meeting landmark is saved
- __ childhood spaces are lost __ former childhood spaces are saved
- __ poor communication between center and suburbs
- __ strong communication between center and suburbs

If it were for you, what would you add, remove or change in the environment of Vlora?

Figure 25: "Questionarie 2"

In order to help this study, a total of 100 interviews were conducted. As a target group of individuals, no random selection was made based on age, gender or class differentiation, but seen in a well-intertwined perspective within the frameworks of objectivity and subjectivity, were selected to be interviewed, different

residents who are directly or indirectly affected from the implementation of the new projects in the environment of Vlora.

The content of these questionnaires consists of three essential divisions, where: The first part aims to categorize and collect general information of respondents, such as: age, gender, education and also the period of time during which they have been residents of Vlora. In the second part of this questionnaire, the focus is on the personal opinion and evaluation of the respondents, regarding: the once built environment compared to the existing built environment. And in the third part of the questionnaire, residents are asked to choose between the negative and positive impacts that the projects implemented in Vlora, have left on the physical, socio-cultural and emotional aspect.

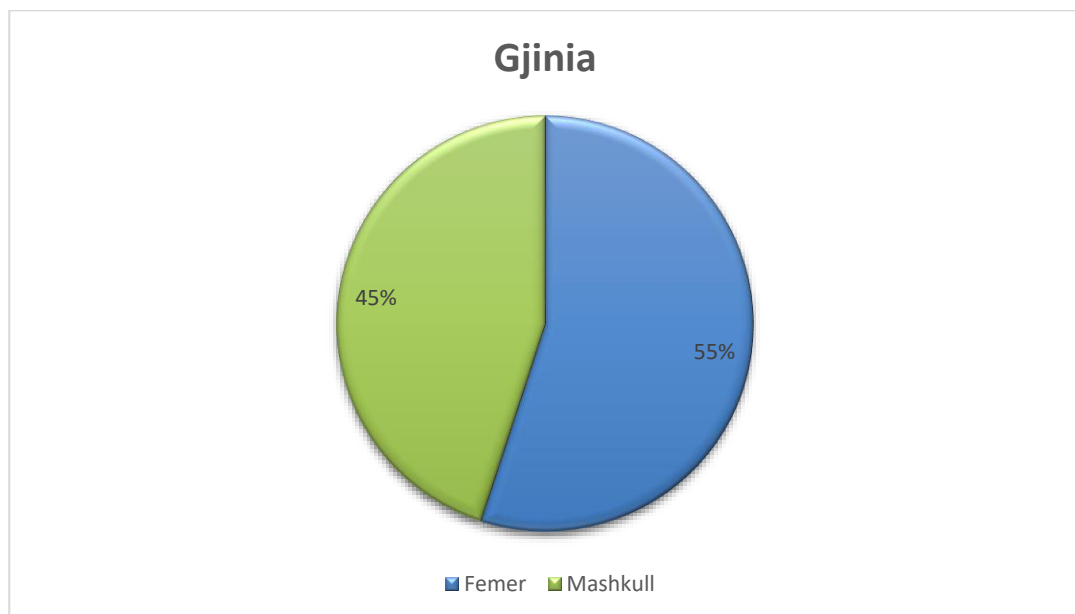


Figure 26: "Gender graph"

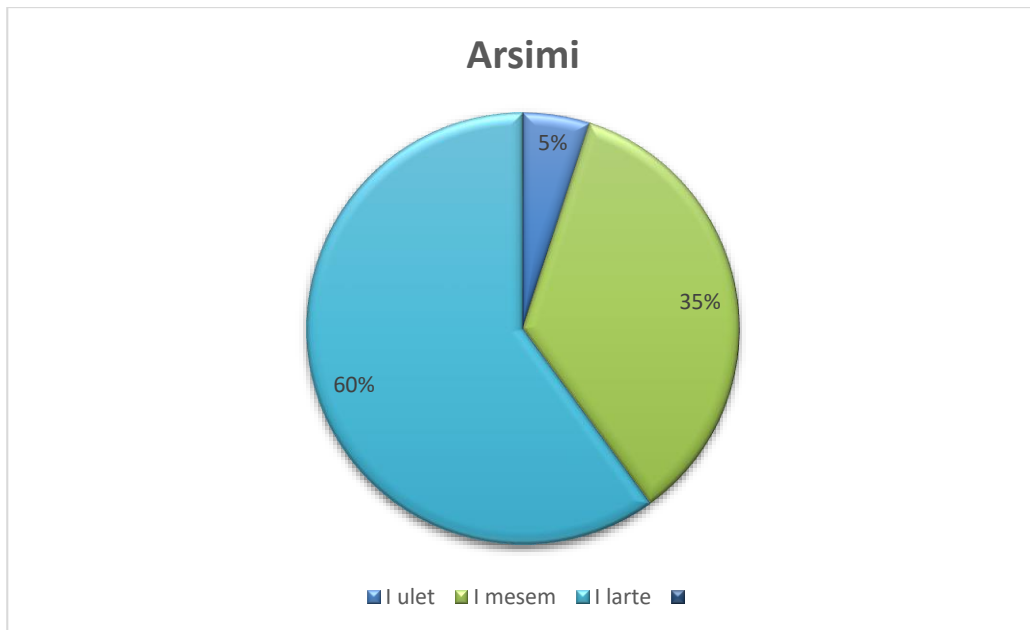


Figure 27: "Education graph"

In the survey, interviewing locals and passers-by who experience daily contact with the city, the majority of respondents 55% were female and 45% male. Most of them had higher education (60%).

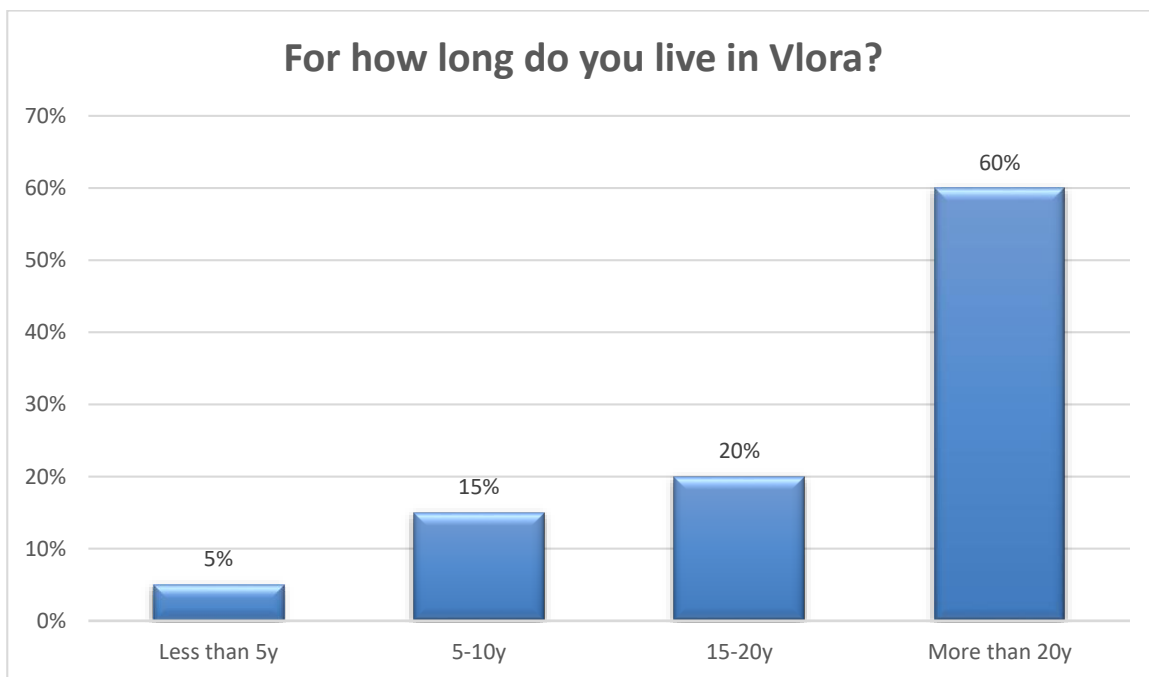


Figure 28: "Living graph"

A significant percentage of residents have lived in Vlora since birth (60%) and the rest (35%) have come in the last 20 years. (5%) of them were young residents who had moved in the last 5 years.

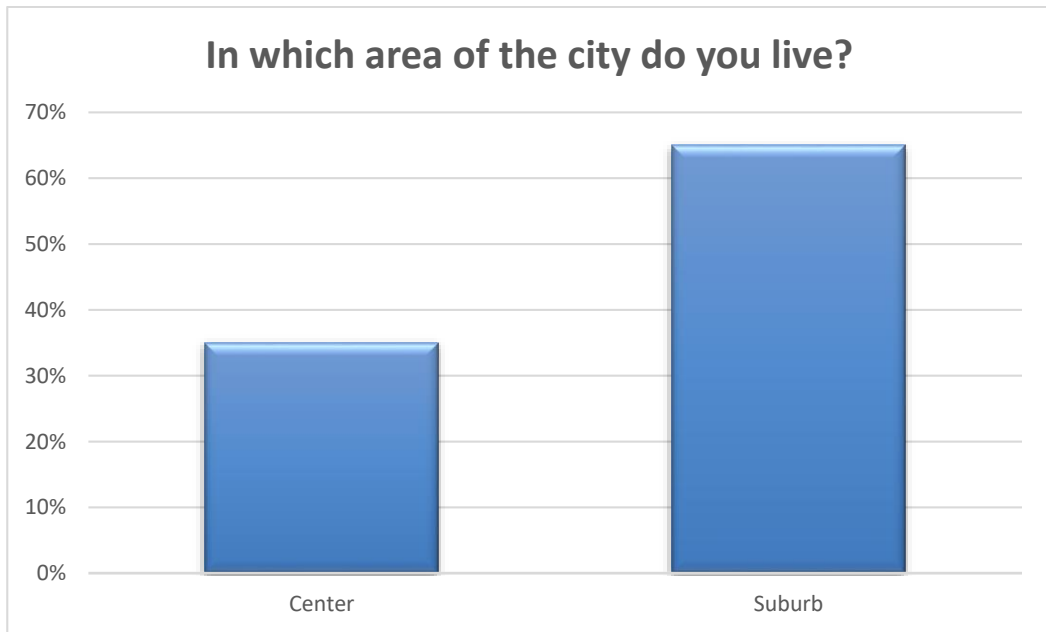


Figure 29: "Area graph"

Most residents lived in the suburban areas of the city (65%), and a relatively small percentage lived in the center (35%).

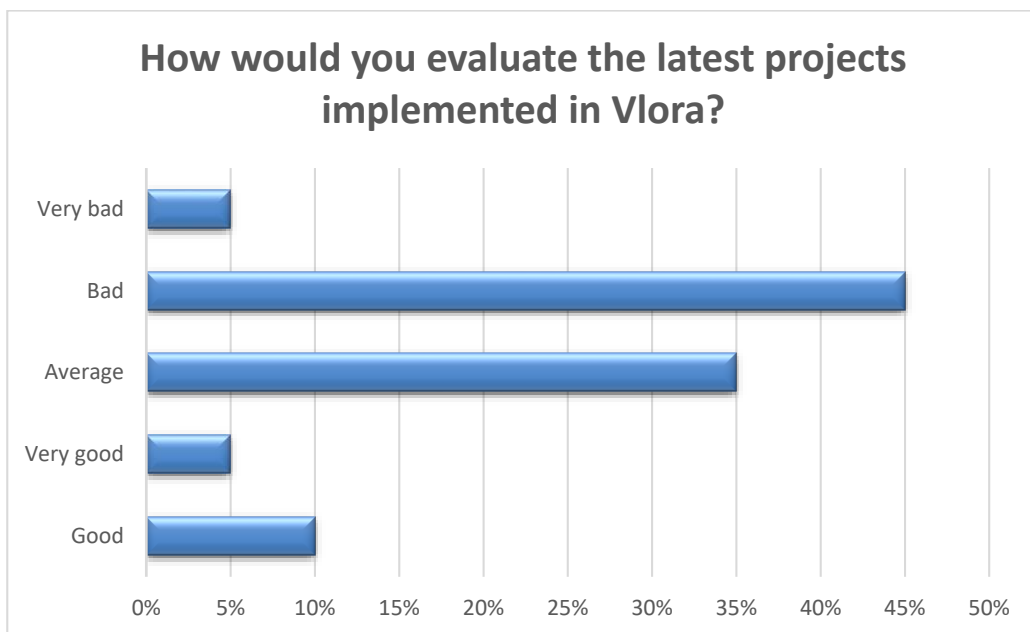


Figure 30: "Evaluation graph 1"

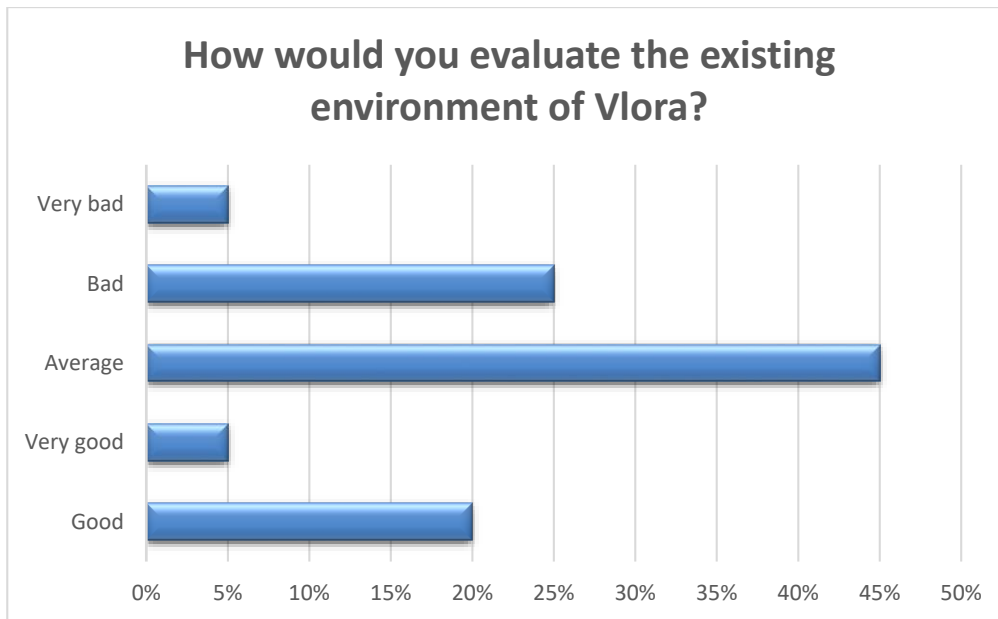


Figure 31: "Evaluation graph 2"

A big percentage of the respondents had a negative assessment of the current built environment (45%), while holding a neutral attitude, to the existing environment (45%).

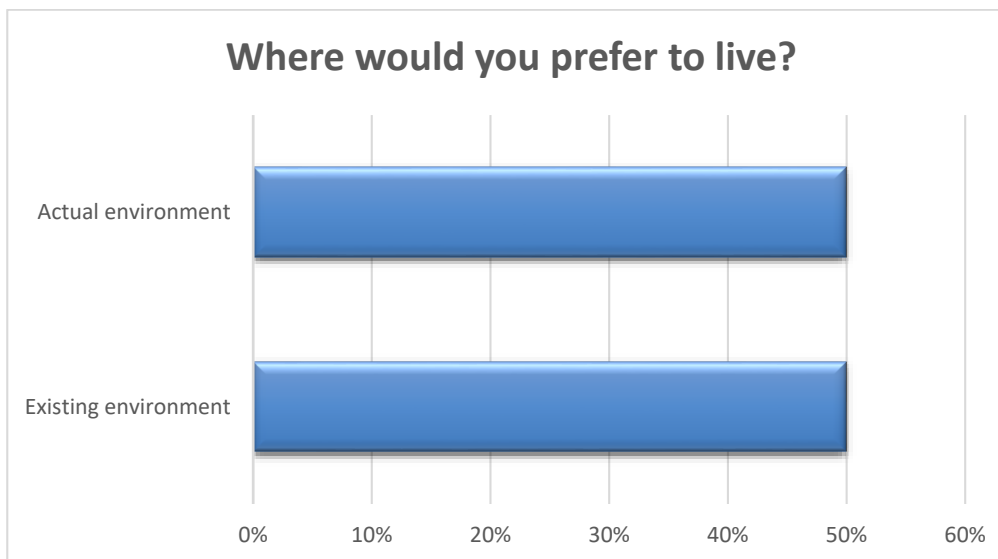


Figure 32: "Preferences graph"

While being asked for a comparative assessment, some of the residents appreciated the former Vlora (50%) and the others were dissatisfied with the way these spaces in the city were being used and built (50%).

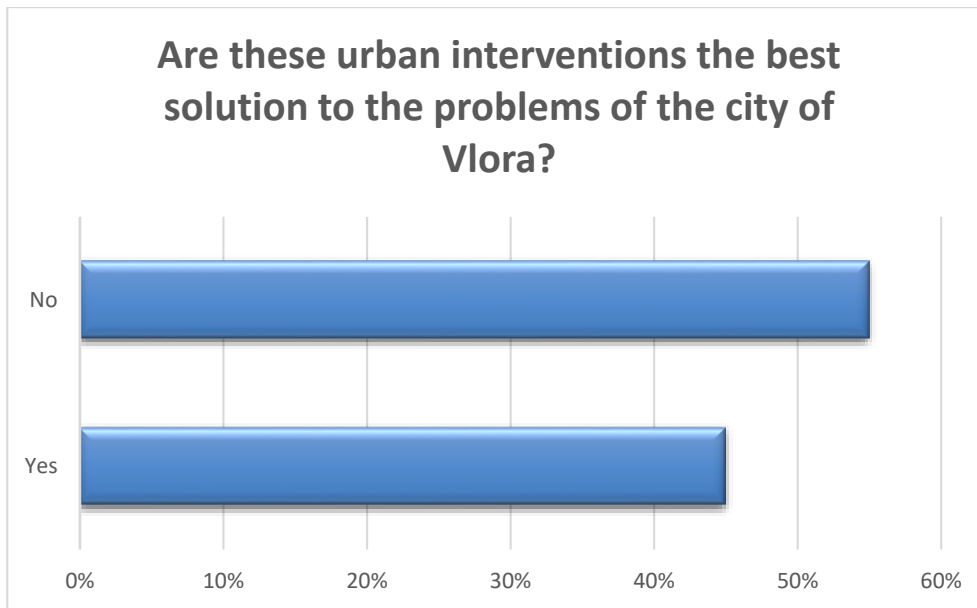


Figure 33: "Solutions graph"

Asked if these urban interventions are the best solution to the problematics of the city of Vlora, the majority of the residents (55%) answered with no and the other (45%) with yes. Asked again for a subjective answer as to why they share these negative thoughts, the residents' reasons were many and varied; they replied that these implementations were just beautiful but not functional, and also they find difficulties to access services offered in the city because of the lack of public transportation. How has the overall condition of the city been affected by these urban interventions?

The physical environment, although seemingly insignificant, has a very real long-term or immediate impact on the behavior, mental and physical health of people. The overall quality of these environments is measured by the physical comfort they provide, safety or other criteria listed in the survey.

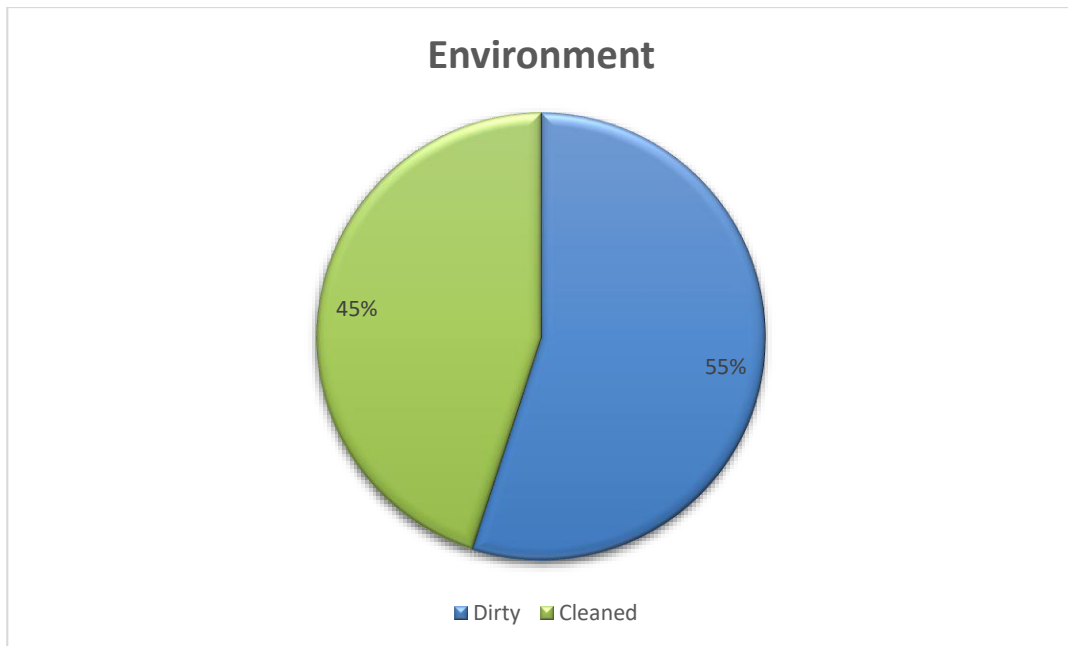


Figure 34: "Environment graph"

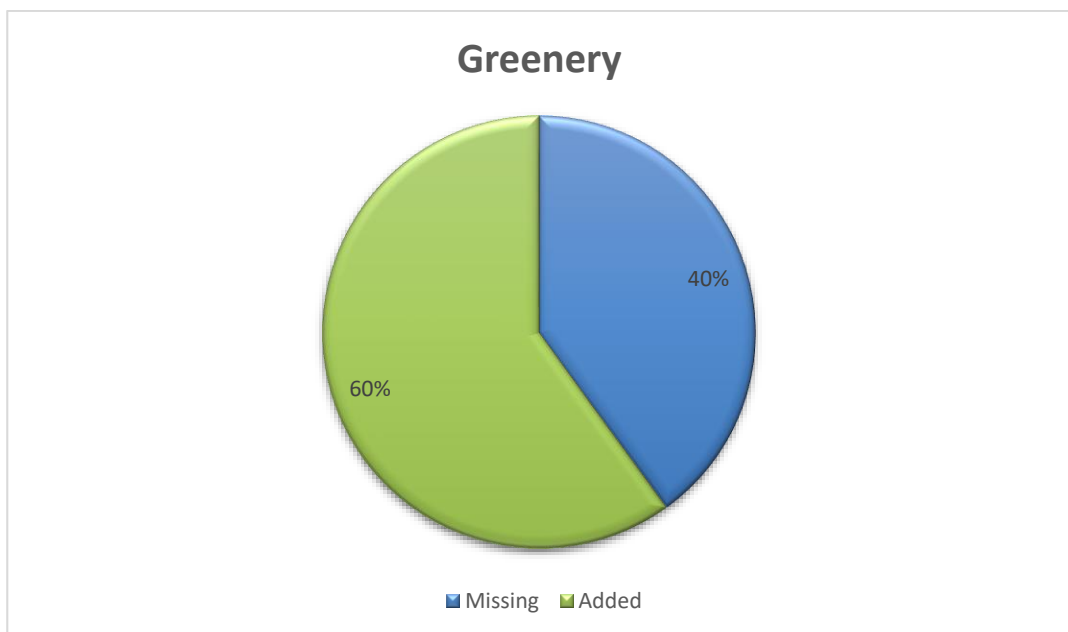


Figure 35: "Greenery graph"

A considerable percentage (45%) of respondents would say that the environment in Vlora is clean, as the majority of them would consider it polluted (55%), and they hold the same attitude to greenery (60%) think it is missing, and only (40%) of them think it has been added.

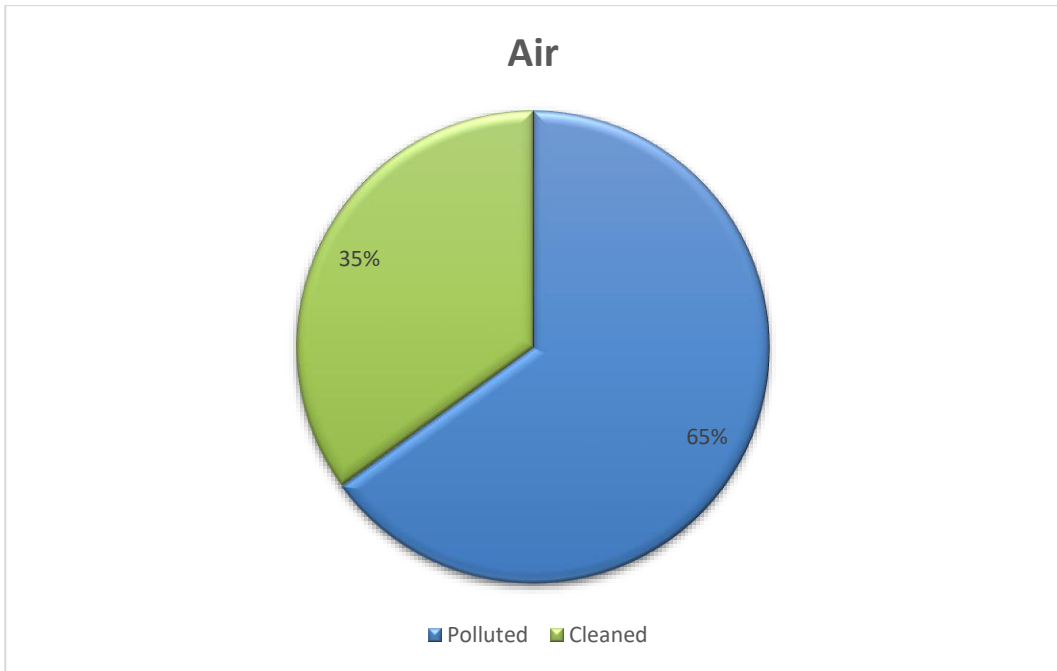


Figure 36: "Air graph"

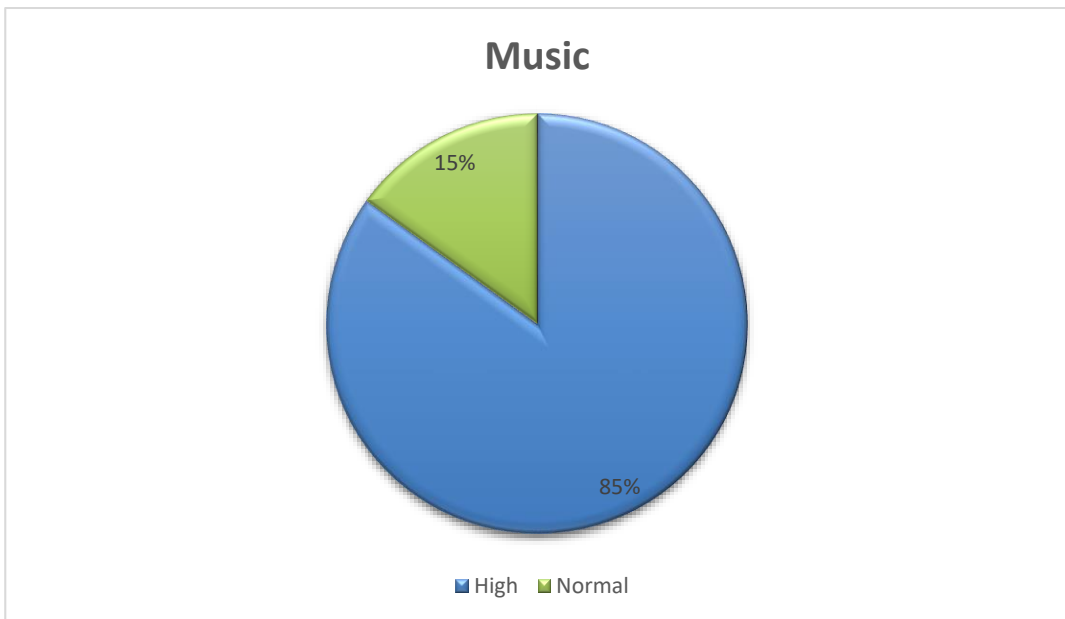


Figure 37: "Music graph"

Almost all those surveyed (65%) would rate the air in the area polluted. While music seem to be such a big problem in the city, (85%).

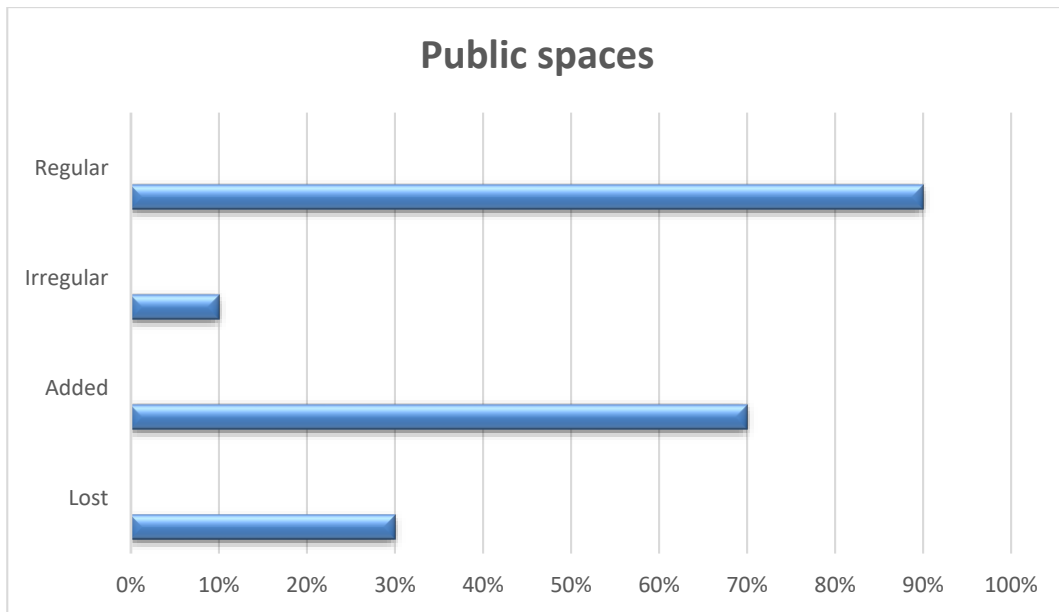


Figure 38: "Public spaces graph"

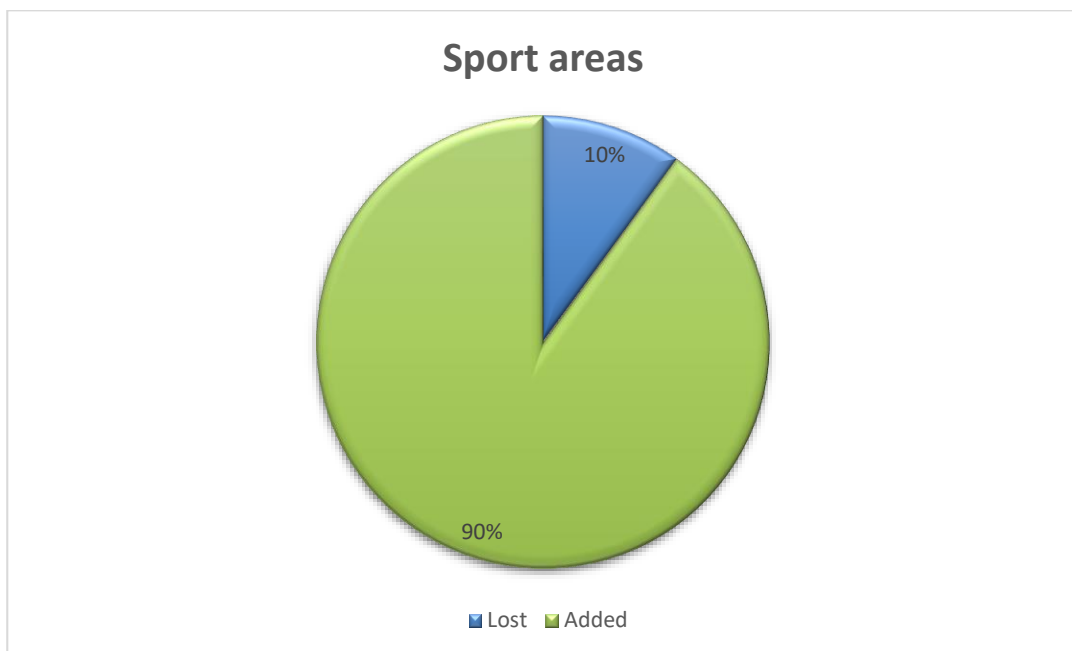


Figure 39: "Sport areas graph"

Public and sports spaces are not a current problem and they are very important for a livable city. Public spaces are considered lost by (30%) of the analyzed answers, in addition only (10%) call them non-aesthetic, consequently unpleasant. They keep the same idea for sports spaces, only (10%) classify them as lost.

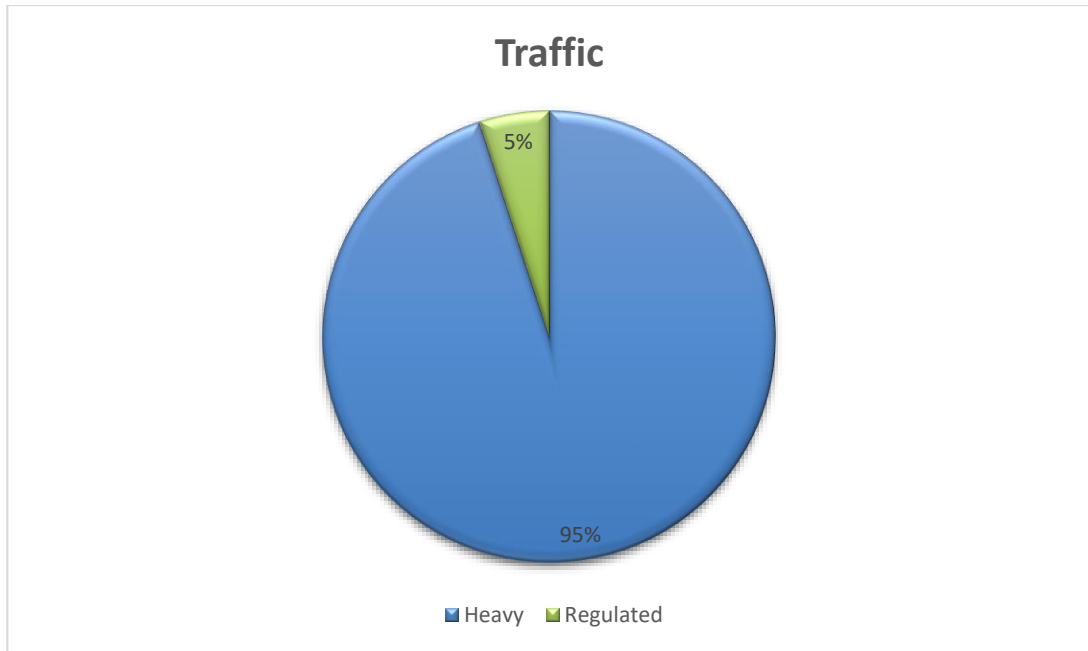


Figure 40: "Traffic graph"

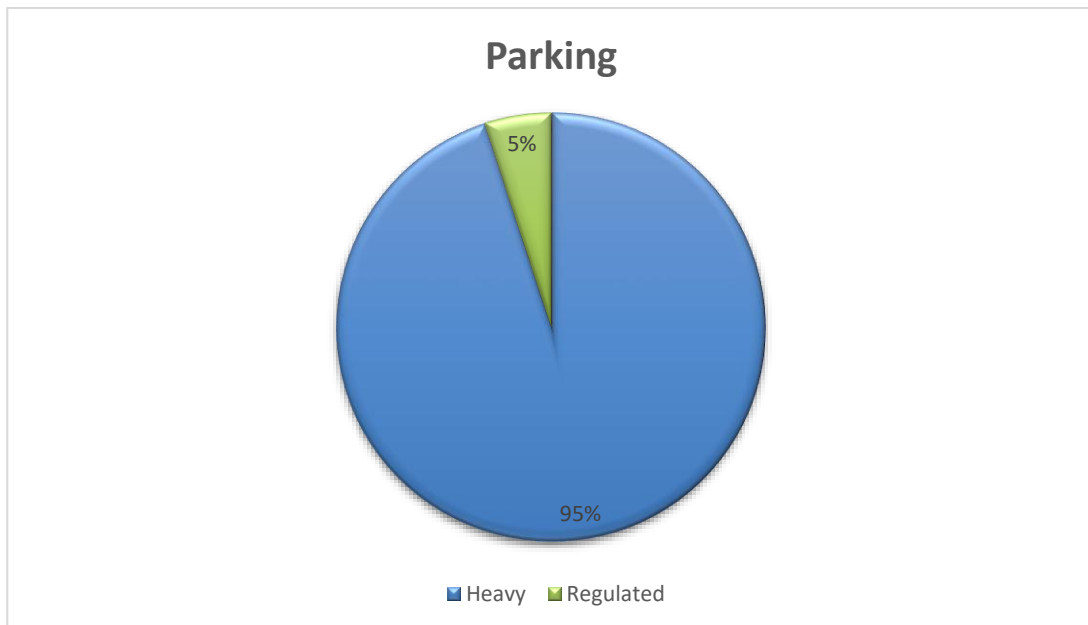


Figure 41: "Parking graph"

A very big and current problem, and generally found in coastal cities is traffic. (95%) of the answers were negative, and felt that the traffic in Vlora was heavy. The same logic went for parking spaces, where (95%) of the residents answered that the parking in the city was heavy.

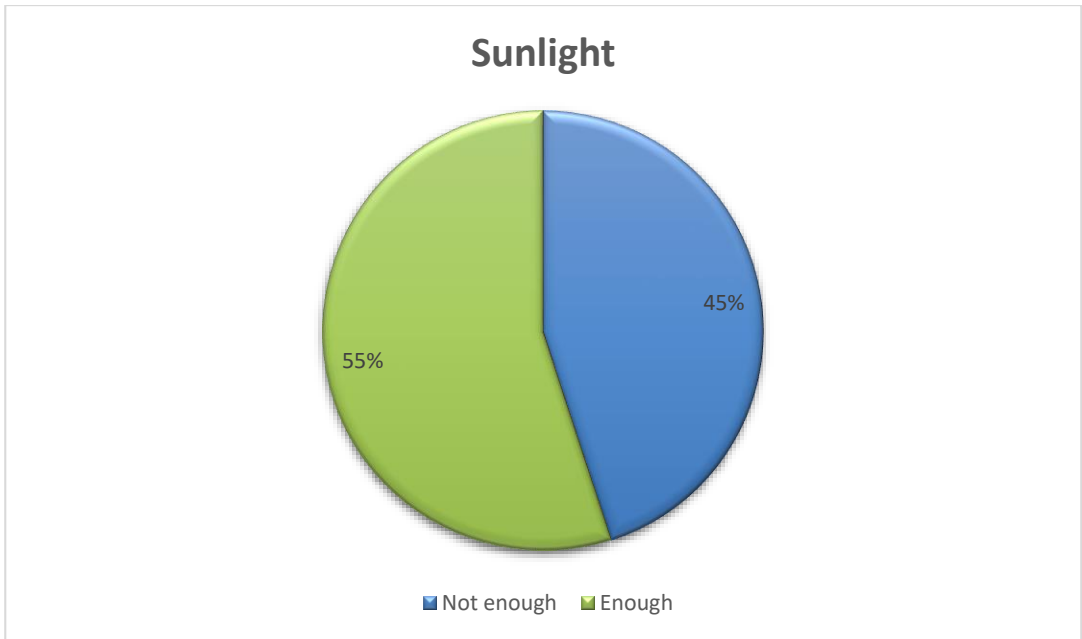


Figure 42: "Sunlight graph"

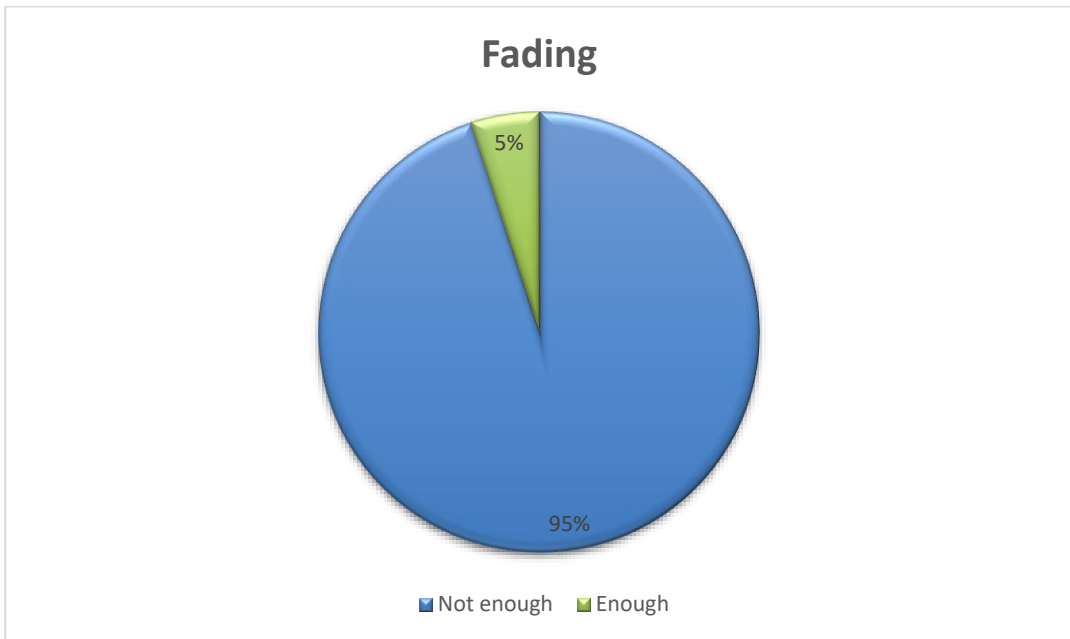


Figure 43: "Fading graph"

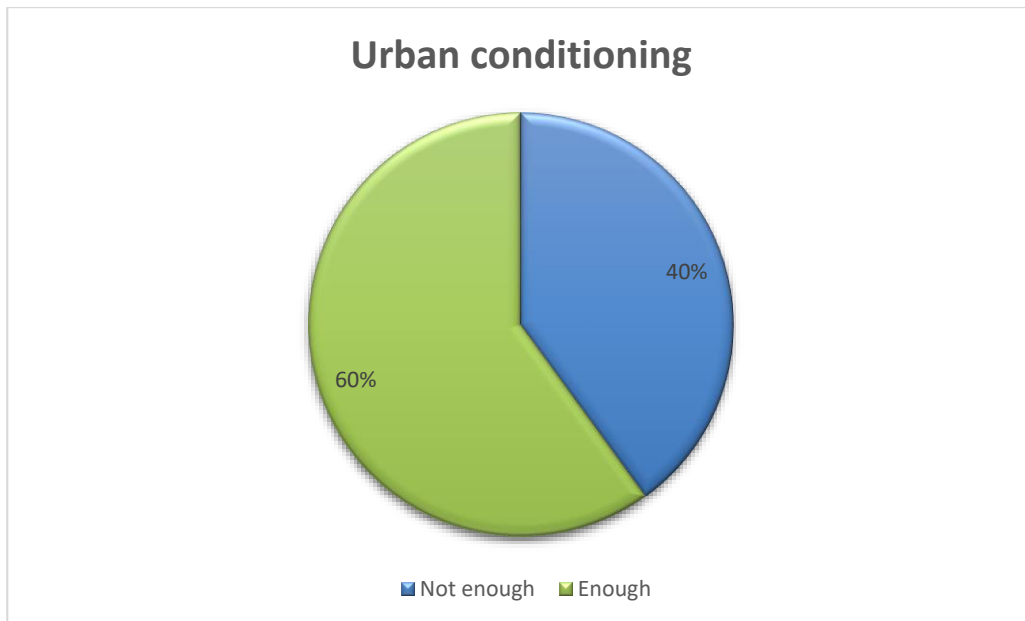


Figure 44: "Urban conditioning graph"

Public spaces play an irreplaceable role especially in the life of the inhabitants living in urban areas. Comfort in these public spaces is greatly influenced by the climate, the presence or absence of architectural elements associated with it. Respectively (45%), (95%) and (40%) of the inhabitants think that sunlight, fading and urban ventilation in the city of Vlora are insufficient.

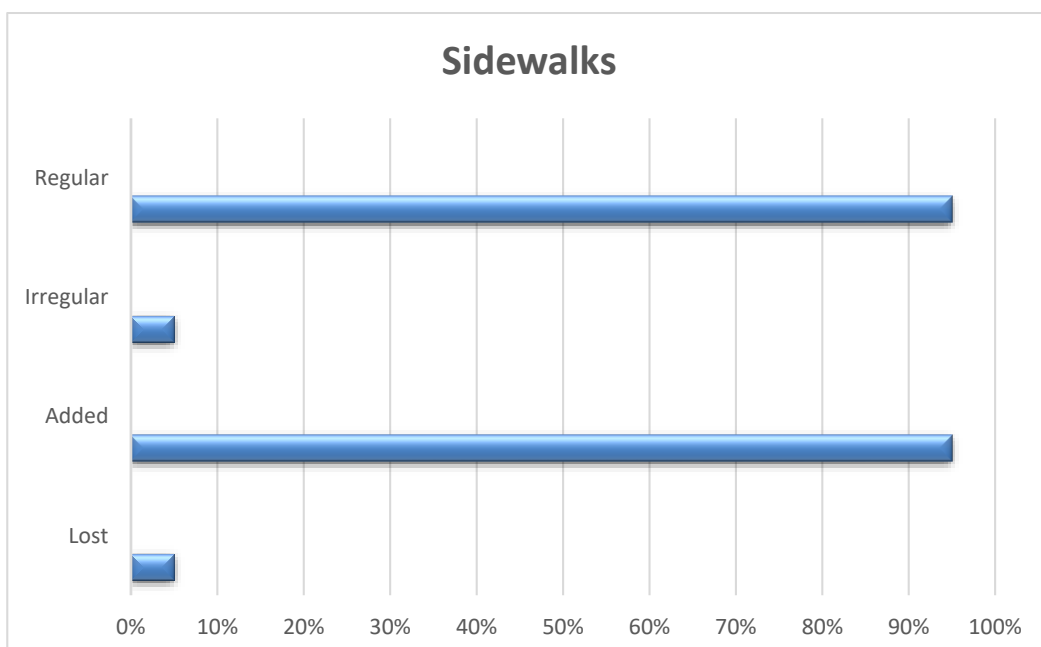


Figure 45: "Sidewalks graph"

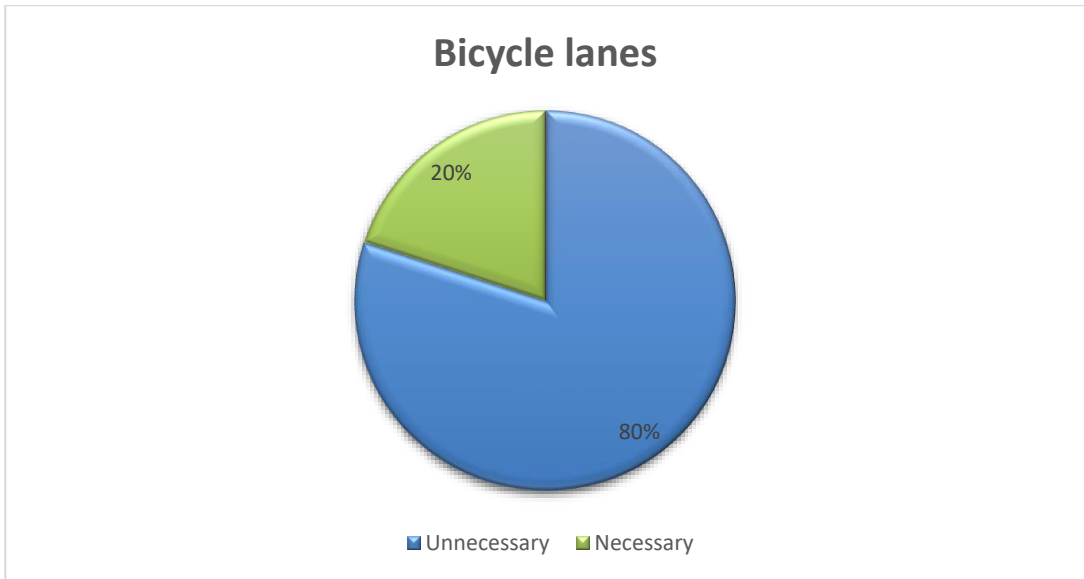


Figure 46: "Bicycle lanes graph"

When asked about sidewalks and bicycle lanes, the majority of the inhabitants of Vlora (95%) were pleased with the added and regular sidewalks in the city, while on the other hand (80%) of them found bicycle lanes as unnecessary because of the aging situation of the residents in Vlora.

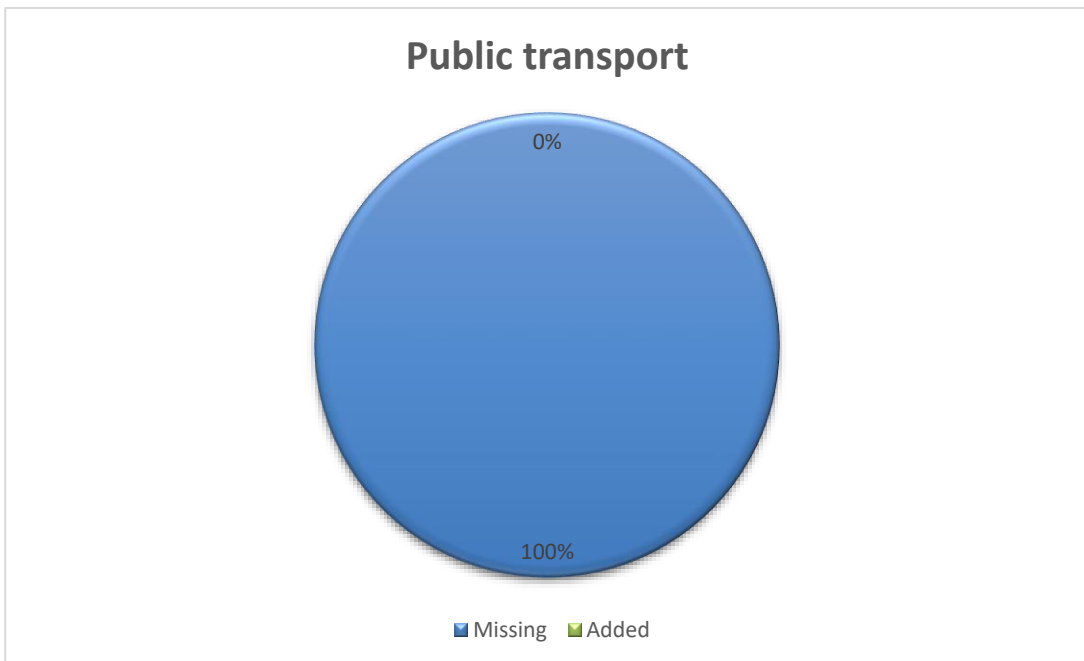


Figure 47: "Public transport graph"

The biggest problem that accompanied the residents, about which they spoke unanimously, was the lack of public transport. They were totally disappointed and dissatisfied with the current situation in the city regarding this urban aspect.

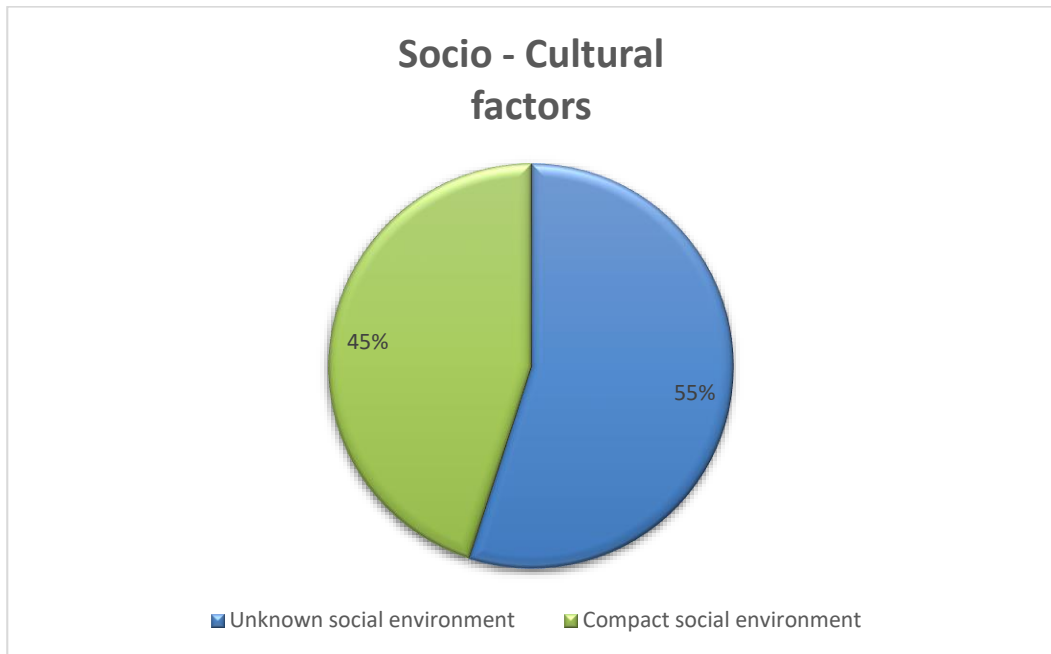


Figure 48: "Socio cultural factors graph 1"

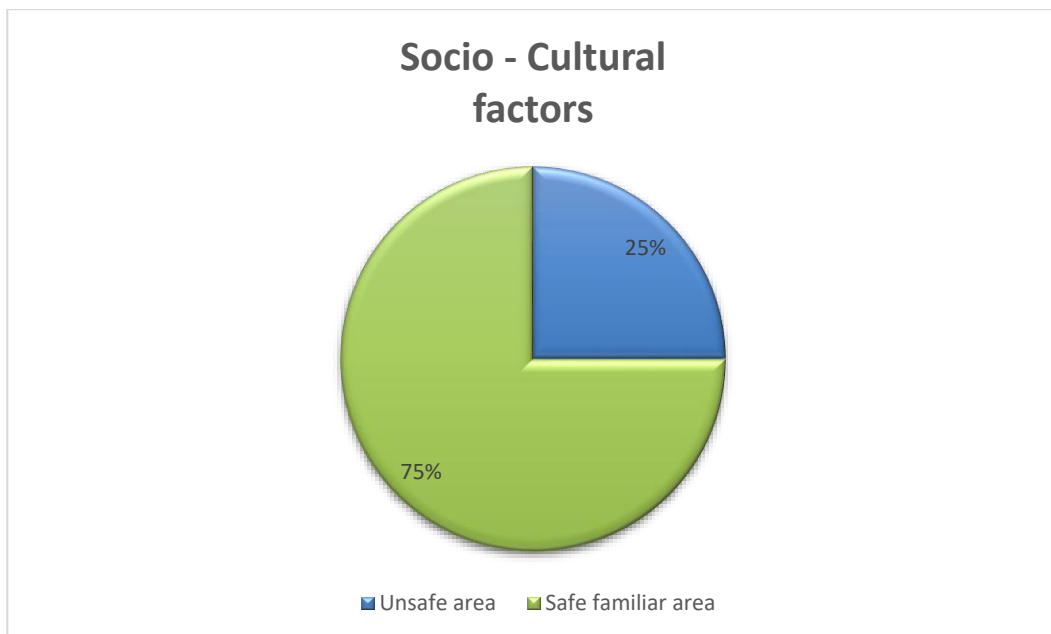


Figure 49: "Socio cultural factors graph 2"

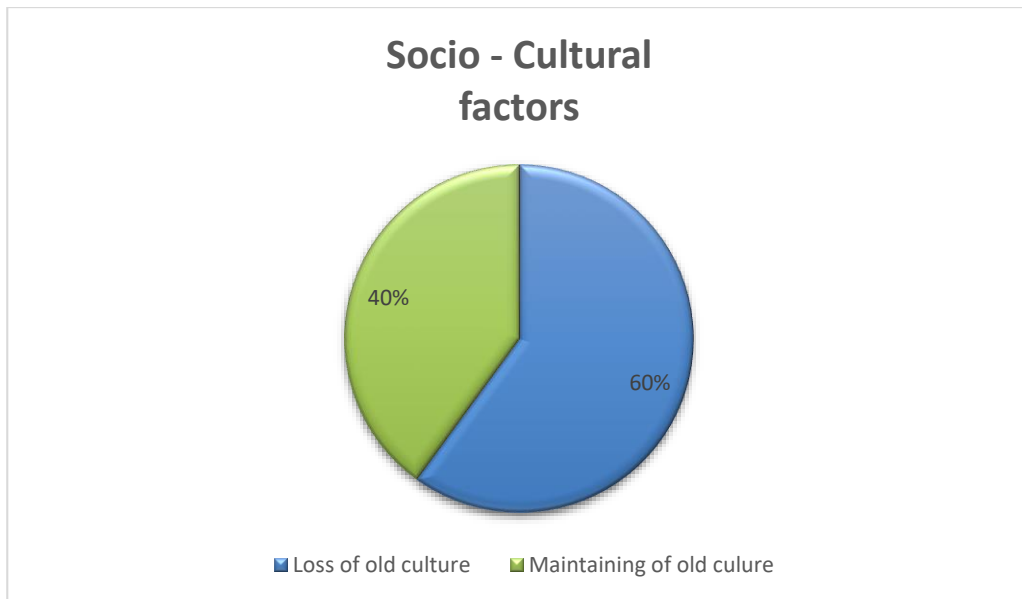


Figure 50: “Socio cultural factors graph 3”

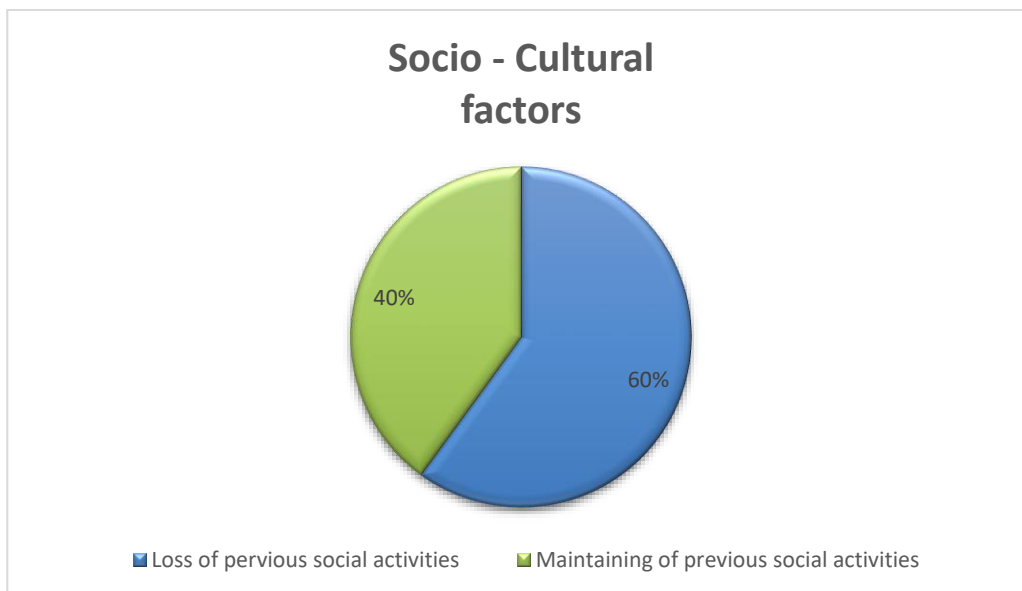


Figure 51: “Socio cultural factors graph 4”

From the results of the interviews, it is clear that the implementation of the new projects has resulted somehow in the creation of a social gap; people claim partly that even though they maintain contact with their relatives and friends (55%), it is created an unknown social environment. (60%) declare the loss of old culture, and (40%) state that they have lost previous social activities, but in overall the majority of them (75%) describe the city as a safe familiar area.

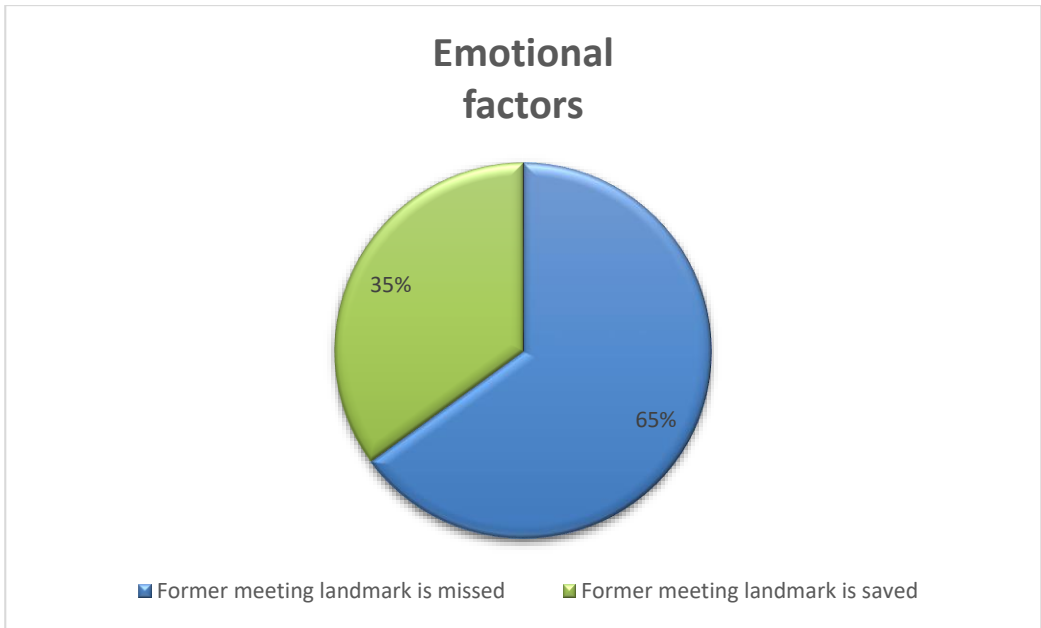


Figure 52: "Emotional factors graph 1"

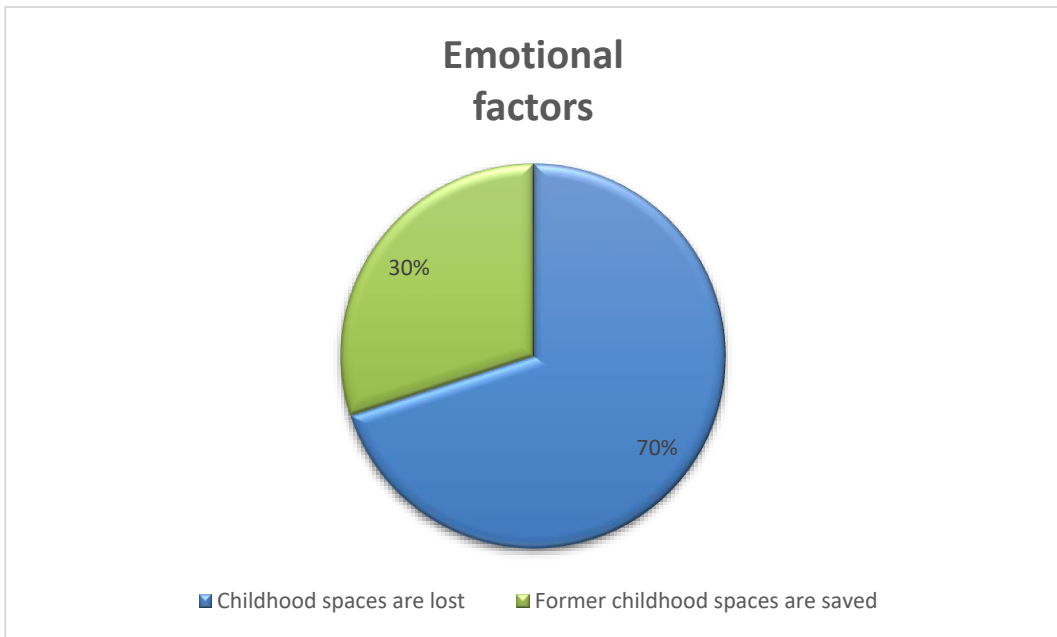


Figure 53: "Emotional factors graph 2"

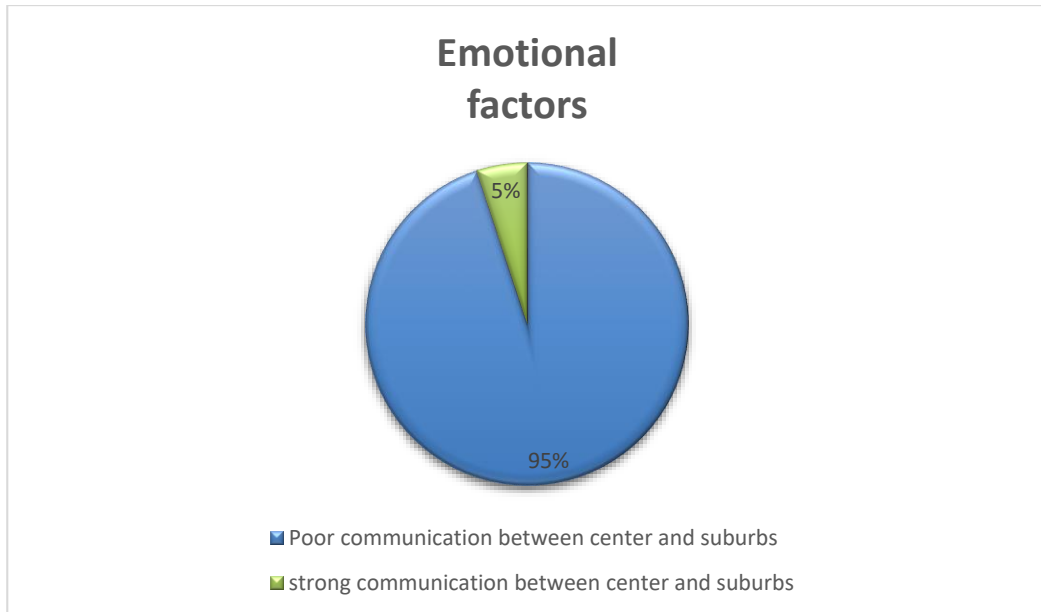


Figure 54: "Emotional factors graph 3"

The connection of the individual with a "place" is greatly influenced by the emotional aspect. Asked to what has happened to the city, the residents of Vlora (65%) of them claim that they have lost the place where they used to meet before with other people, the majority of them (70%) indicate that they have lost their areas of childhood, and almost an absolute of (95%) experienced everyday a poor communication between center and suburbs in the city.

CHAPTER 4

CONCLUSIONS

5.1 Conclusions

Taken together, the above studies for the city of Vlora, lead the planners and the government towards a number of planning guidelines, which can be applied in different scales, starting from the interventions at the urban level and up to those at the architectural level. Undoubtedly, the recent physical development of Vlora has brought the work of social, economic and environmental conditions, and yet these developments required further analysis. The analyzes carried out have examined models of urbanism that led to significant challenges of livability.

The findings suggest that Vlora, as a city, needs intervention in its strategic nodes to improve the essence of livability, which is the quality of life. The ability to create more livable urban spaces seems to be essential for the city, individuals and living itself.

The interventions that are seen as potential for this city, are two: The implementation of a Tram Line in the city, as well as the construction of a Maritime Museum. If we analyze these suggestions, we can say that:

With the reconception of a new urban transport line in this city, a sustainable development is expected and it becomes a standard of living. These expectations come as a result of the developments that the country will experience in the touristic, social, but especially in the economic aspect. From the study, it has been concluded that the use of public transport by the individuals, brings an improvement of not only environmental conditions, but also individual ones, making from health to economic well-being. The tram will influence residents to use less private vehicles, provide more services in less time, reduce living costs, enjoy the environment and increase the quality of their lives.

On the other hand, based on the analysis performed, it has been concluded that the influence of art and culture in a country is one of the most special elements that directly brings the increase of livability. With the suggestion and conception for the construction of a Maritime Museum in this city, the expectations for increasing the

quality of life are high. It is expected that with the construction of this Maritime Museum, Vlora itself as a city will experience an economic and touristic boom. Apart from the fact that it will enjoy the status of the city with the most museums in the country, at the same time the sense of protection of the heritage of this city, which is experiencing a wave of destruction, will increase significantly. As a result of these two components, logically, heritage hunters will label this place and expect an influx of its visits, especially during the tourist seasons. This city, which provides a good part of its income from tourism, with the construction of this museum, is expected to experience high economic growth. As a result, the well-being of the people will be greater, including socio-cultural sustainability.

With the great wave of changes, as well as with the new suggestions addressed to Vlora, it is expected that this city will be ranked among the countries that hold the crown of the most modern concept of urbanism, specifically of livability. The great need that this country and its inhabitants have, to improve their quality of life as well as to increase local and individual well-being, are heard in this scientific paper and concluded with specific urban suggestions. What happens next remains in the hands of decision makers.

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