



**INNER-NEIGHBOURHOOD
BLOCK OF FLATS, SHOWING
TRANSFORMATION OF THE
FOOTPRINT DURING THE YEARS**


**VNÚTORNÁ ČASŤ OBYTNÝCH
BLOKOV ODHAĽUJÚCA PREMENU
PÔDORYSU V PRIEBEHU ROKOV**

Photo Foto: Blerta Dino

Tirana: Its History and a Post-Socialist Perspective on Urban Growth and Transformation between 1991–2016

Tirana: História a postsocialistická perspektíva rastu a transformácie mesta v rokoch 1991 – 2016

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História albánskej Tirany sa odvíja ako podmanivá tapiséria tvarovaná rôznymi vplyvmi a ideologickými premenami, ktoré formovali jej architektonický a urbanistický charakter. Mesto, ktoré vzniklo počas osmanskej nadvlády v 17. storočí, prešlo transformačnými obdobiami za monarchie kráľa Zoga a za komunizmu Envera Hodžu, ktoré znamenali centraizovanú kontrolu, ideologickú jednoliatosť a rýchly, neplánovaný rast.

Éra socializmu (1945 – 1991) so sebou priniesla plánovaný model bývania a monumentálne priestory odrážajúce socialistickú hrdosť. Verejné priestory slúžili ako nástroje propagandy a dohľadu komunistickej ideológie. Postsocialistická éra od roku 1992 znamenala pre Tiranu prechod na kapitalizmus charakterizovaný neregulovanou expanziou, nelegálnou výstavbou a dynamickým rastom.

Históriu urbanizácie Tirany možno rozdeliť do troch období: predvojnové, ovplyvnené talianskou architektúrou; socialistické obdobie, ovplyvnené sovietskym plánovaním; a postsocialistické, charakterizované neregulovaným rastom. Obdobie monarchie (dvadsiate až tridsiate roky 20. storočia) zaviedlo ortogonálnu sieť ulíc, Tirana sa zmodernizovala a zviditeľnil sa rozdiel medzi historickým charakterom Starej Tirany a modernou zástavbou Novej Tirany.

Počas komunistickej diktatúry sa Tirana rozvíjala rozptýlene a neplánovane, výstavba bytových jednotiek spočiatku prebiehala bez ucelenej stratégie. Šesťdesiate roky znamenali príchod plánovačov vyškolených v Sovietskom zväze, ktorí nahradili tradičné profily sériovo realizovanými obytnými blokmi. Rozľahlé verejné priestranstvá mali za účel propagovať socialistické ideály a rovnostársku urbanizáciu.

Postsocialistická éra priniesla radikálne zmeny a znamenala prechod Tirany na kapitalizmus. Rozšírilo sa neformálne osídľovanie a zaberanie pozemkov, čo prispelo ku vzniku squattov. Morfológické premeny mesta v rokoch 1989 až 2016 ukazujú výrazný rast, pokiaľ ide o rozlohu, dĺžku cestnej siete a počet obyvateľov.

Porovnávacia štúdia parametrov hustoty mestskej zástavby medzi socialistickou a kapitalistickou Tiranou odhalila výrazný nárast zastavanej plochy, dĺžky cestnej siete a počtu obyvateľov. Analýza na obyvateľa ukázala 30 % nárast zastavanej plochy a 18 % skrátenie dĺžky cestnej siete, čo odráža zmenu priestorovo-funkčnej organizácie.

Pretrvávajúci zápas Tirany o vytvorenie osobitnej identity uprostred radikálnych zmien z nej robí jedinečné urbánne laboratórium. História Tirany v sebe zahŕňa rôzne vplyvy a predostiera tak presvedčivú prípadovú štúdiu, ktorá odhaľuje zložitú dynamiku mestského rozvoja v premenlivej politickej krajine.

Introduction

The built environment of contemporary Tirana, Albania, emerged through the city's dialogue with many external influences, from the strong Ottoman influence in its earliest years to Italian Fascism, Soviet totalitarianism, and even the Chinese Cultural Revolution. The influence of these cultures on Tirana, its public spaces, residential areas and governmental buildings has been considerable.

Tirana is the capital and largest city in Albania. While the origins of settlement date back to antiquity, Tirana was established as a town only during Ottoman rule around the 17th century. Until it became the capital of Albania in 1920, Tirana's population only numbered 17,000 inhabitants' even though its area of 3 km² suggest a larger settlement. Historical Tirana was 'organic' town with narrow curvy streets and low-rise buildings. It had two main functions separated with a sharp spatial divide: the centre as the socio-economic hub with the mosques and the bazaar, whereas the rest of the built form consisted of purely residential units (detached houses).



TIRANA, EARLY 1920S

TIRANA, ZAČIATOK DVADSIATYCH ROKOV 20. STOROČIA

Source Zdroj: Municipality of Tirana



TIRANA, 1921

TIRANA, 1921

Source Zdroj: Blerta Dino

In 1928, Albania became a monarchy under the rule of King Zog. It was in this era, during the late 1920s, that real interest about architectural and urban planning issues began to appear for the first time in an Albanian city. Italian and Austrian architects were contracted by King Zog to engage in developing what would become the first-ever plan for the new capital city of Albania². The objective was clear and closely linked to attempts to “westernize” Albanian society and Albanian architecture, using an architectural style predominantly inspired by the Italian Renaissance. Three Masterplans were produced (called Regulatory Plans) for the city of Tirana from mid-1920s until 1940s, in which the main proposals were:

- a. a wide boulevard in the north–south direction;
- b. a new square in the centre of the city;
- c. a quadratic road system with quadratic quarters (1920s);
- d. systemization of the Lana River;
- e. the introduction of “garden–city” ideas (i.e. plots of 1000–1500 m² which allowed considerable garden spaces);
- f. new paved and wide streets, lined with buildings of contemporary architecture; and
- g. a ring radial street system (1930s).

After World War II, the Albanian Communist Party (PPSH – or *Labour Party of Albania*) took over the country and ruled for almost five decades. In terms of the built environment, the communist government exerted highly centralized control, making sure that everything was planned in detail to fit the party’s ideology and strictly dictating the architectural style. During the communist period, the city’s population composition was strictly planned, and free internal migration was forbidden. Planning and restrictions were not only exerted in the realm of the built environment but with respect to basic human needs as well: food consumption, mobility, religion, and freedom of expression were all constrained. By the end of the 1960s, strong restrictions on religious practices meant that Albania was officially declared by the state to be the world’s first atheist country³. As a result, many religious buildings were either demolished or converted into warehouses, gymnasia, or workshops. Albania grew increasingly isolated from the rest of the world and after the late 1960s, it suffered from unstable diplomatic relations even with the ‘sister’ communist countries in the Soviet Union and the People’s Republic of China.

Through building up the country, the Communist Party led by Enver Hoxha (1945–1985) intended to discard the past and create the illusion that the creation of Tirana as a city corresponded to the communist government coming to power. This aspiration was demonstrated when, in 1957, the regulatory plan of Tirana was redrawn, dismissing and overturning all previous plans⁴. The prevailing city-planning models included: abolition of private ownership at all levels, the introduction of zoning, provision of social housing, and a monocentric city model⁵. For the Communist regime,

**HAND-DRAWN REGULATORY
PLAN, 1989**

RUČNE KRESLENÝ REGULAČNÝ
PLÁN, 1989

Source Zdroj: Municipality of Tirana



the centre was the most important area of the city: a monumental space to host all its parades and manifestations was introduced in the 1976 masterplan, where emphasis was on the central zone. Vast open spaces were scattered all around the city, at a time when motorization in the country was a luxury only open to a narrow stratum of the privileged.

As the main issue of Albania's urbanisation was the provision of housing, large housing complexes were built where the majority of the apartments had almost the same layout and amenities. The model used has been described as the 'original Stalinist model extended with harsh controls over mobility'⁶. The amount of living space, as well as the units of basic public services each family unit had access to, was meant to be precisely equal and the population of the new housing complexes was socially mixed. The layout of the new housing estates mainly consisted of semi-perimeter or freestanding prefabricated blocks with entrance points positioned from the inside of the block rather than from the outside, a feature that corresponded to access from the less integrated, quieter streets. A refined version of the extensive zoning of the city was envisaged in the final masterplan drawn in 1985, ratified in 1989, *see Figure 3*⁷. At the time, Tirana was planned as a self-reliant city and was viewed as the pride of Albania during the totalitarian regime. Some of its spatial features were expressed through strong axial streets, residential areas developed in prefabricated blocks, and collective housing built through purportedly volunteer labour. The centre possessed the most distinctive characteristics as the focus of all political, administrative, educational, and recreational activities of the city, whereas the urban periphery consisted of agricultural lands and industrial sites.

By the end of the 1980s, Tirana's urbanized area covered 12 km² and its population was about 250,000 inhabitants. Regardless of the significant increase in population for the nation's urban areas, three quarters of the Albanian population still lived in rural areas⁸.

Since Tirana became a city in 1920, there have been three distinct ideologically influenced periods of urbanization: a) the pre-war period, 1920–1945, which was mainly influenced by Italian architectural styles and planning models; b) the socialist-era development, 1945–1991, influenced by Soviet architecture and planning practices, and c) post-socialist development since 1992, a period characterized by unregulated urban expansion and illegal construction.

Political Milestones in Albanian History from the Perspective of Built Form

It is important to explain how contrasting political ideologies and political circumstances have shaped the spatial organization of Albanian cities. The research presented here approached the growth of Albanian cities from a spatial perspective grounded in distinctively different social, political, and economic models- starting from 1920 to the late 2010s. In general terms, the morphological histories of cities are distinguished by a concern for understanding morphological transformation in the social context of identifiable morphological 'events' – in other words, historical occurrences with a direct bearing on the evolution of urban form⁹.



TIRANA'S MASTERPLAN, LATE 1930S, PLAN BY GHERARDO BOSIO
 ÚZEMNÝ PLÁN TIRANY, KONIEC TRIDSÍATYCH. ROKOV 20. STOROČIA, PLÁN GHERARDA BOSIA
 Source Zdroj: Municipality of Tirana

The Monarchy

The first ever regulatory plan for the city of Tirana was developed in 1923 by Austrian architects and engineers¹⁰. The main aim of the plan was to reach a compromise between the construction of a new orthogonal street network and the upgrading of the existing street network, implying that through the masterplan, an orthogonal grid would be superimposed atop the original, organically developed network. The first plan developed a rectangular street network to the south and east of the bazaar, areas that had previously remained almost free of development. What this plan also took into account was the continuation of the main lanes departing from the bazaar, reaching out towards the north and east of the central part (the bazaar). The regulatory plan considered the widening and straightening of the already existing radial streets, while also retaining the bazaar in its original position, essentially at the centre of Tirana. At the time the plan was said to be a successful proposal, mainly due its feasibility¹¹.

Subsequently, regulatory plan number two was assigned in 1925 to the Italian architect Armando Brasini¹². He was asked to develop a masterplan that would allow extensive rearrangement of the centre of Tirana. Part of his design was a central, eclectically styled boulevard that would be defined by the six buildings for governmental ministries to be allocated on them. Brasini proposed a new centre which would serve as a connecting link between the old town and the modern part of the city intended for construction in the immediate future. In terms of spatial-morphological elements, the regulatory plan suggested a wide boulevard with a North-South orientation that, within Brasini's vision, created a division between the existing city and its periphery. The plan completely obliterated the Oriental character of Tirana; the main argument in its favour was the need for the capital to be developed into a new autonomous city as per the communist model, hence monumentality was an important feature of the new governmental centre¹³. Later, Gherardo Bosio was commissioned to finalise the Tirana masterplan proposal.

In 1928, the third regulatory plan of Tirana was designed by the Austrian architect Wolfgang Köhler, bringing new features like a quadratic road network into the newly developed parts of the city. Again, in this project the city was developed further out in areas that were previously uninhabited¹⁴. The fourth regulatory plan prepared during this period was that of 1929, with a primary focus the north-south boulevards, starting north from where today the railway of Tirana is (at the time still unbuilt), all the way to the Royal Palace to the south. In this proposal, the boundaries of the city cover an area of 4,5 km², where the centre and the main axes were clearly defined. The aim

of this plan was to create a contemporary capital for Albania where wide paved streets would be aligned with modern buildings¹⁵.

In the 1930s, because of the economic development of the city and its greater role as an administrative centre, new boundaries were defined for Tirana.¹⁶ The extension of the boundaries enabled the growth of the residential area, the landscaping of the eastern part of the city, and the growth of industry on the western side. In parallel, during the same decade Tirana sustained major changes in the town planning area. Regarding private dwellings, they developed in two directions: one in the territory of old Tirana, the other in the uninhabited area of what was called New Tirana. New Tirana, which until then was state property, was divided into plots sold at favourable prices to the new citizens, these being mainly functionaries of the Albanian state. Now, modern residences along straight streets began to arise, as outlined in the regulatory plan, with buildings in the newly developed areas of the city required to be at least two floors high. On the contrary, in Old Tirana there were few urban interventions, leaving it true to its character as an organically grown historic town. Gradually, over the years the difference between these two parts of Tirana grew sharper, making them distinctive urban entities.

From 1929–1938, Tirana's built form and its architectural aesthetic witnessed a significant improvement. New roads were built, which then were lined by modern buildings of various functions: ministries, offices, social and cultural venues¹⁷. By the end of the 1930s, Tirana was composed of two major components: Old Tirana, which remained almost as it was before 1920, and its counterpart the New Tirana.

The Communist Dictatorship

In 1945, when Albania turned into a socialist (or communist) dictatorship led by Enver Hoxha, the boundaries of Tirana contained vast areas of unoccupied land, and only a few main streets located centrally were sided with relatively low-rise buildings. Upgrading Tirana from a town into a contemporary city had occurred only as a slow phase of regeneration, a process that started in the early 1930s but had to be stopped due to national and international circumstances shaped by World War II¹⁸. Now, on the national level Tirana was the primary recipient of new development projects. The new political regime had to boost socialist pride and Tirana was the focus for this aim, as the national capital. Yet most of the new structures were hastily built without any coherent planning strategy or development framework.

To ensure necessary housing units, across the country buildings started to arise everywhere – in a process that entirely lacked planning. The result of these developments was a scattered landscape where buildings were positioned *ad hoc*: whether single-family dwellings or apartment blocks, they were constructed without clear street alignment¹⁹. This building practice, where state enterprises or individuals occupied empty plots and built their homes, became common for several years until the 1950s. At an infrastructural level, it meant that the newly constructed buildings had to be provided with basic services such as water pipes and electricity, which were missing from these areas. Roads also had to be laid out to integrate and connect all these areas to each other and to other parts of the city. At a governmental level, there were a number of reasons why informal growth in Albanian cities was not checked: during those years, the country genuinely lacked planning professionals and institutions that could formulate and design any kind of development strategy or regulatory plan for cities across the country²⁰.

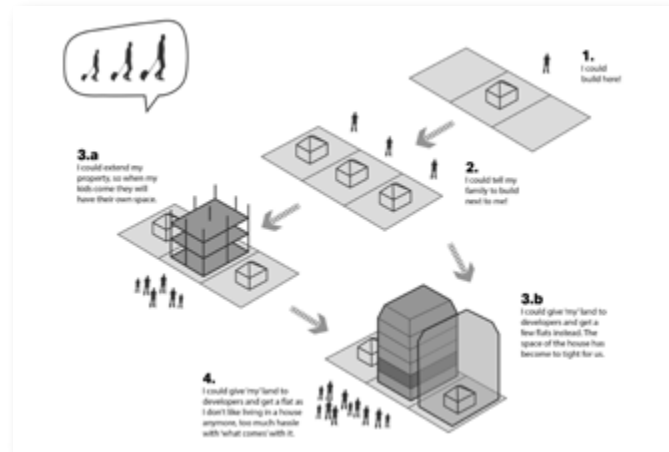
In 1955, the urban planning sector of the 'Projekti' design enterprise had an overall staff of two architects and one planner, one economist and four surveyors²¹. Five years later the same departments counted eight architects, four planners, two economists and fifteen surveyors. These architects were among the first generation of Soviet-trained planners staffing the Albanian institutions, replacing the older generation of architects and planners dismissed after the socialist party took charge of the country who had studied in Germany, Austria, or Italy and took an essentially different approach to architecture and urban planning due to their Western European influence. The new group that took over in the 1950s had studied only in the Soviet Union; *Arkitektura SSSR* was the only available journal and students were only treated to images of Soviet architecture. Although the Soviet-trained built environment specialists were highly respected and did have a good level of professional authority, they often clashed with other colleagues who lacked an equivalent training. In particular, the Soviet-trained specialists were sought after for major industrial projects, since they had a higher level of expertise than the specialists trained locally. Beyond the diffused



TIRANA, BIRD'S EYE VIEW,
CIRCA 1980S

TIRANA, POHLAD Z VTÁČEJ
PERSPEKTÍVY, PŘIBLIŽNE
OSEMDESIATE ROKY 20. STOROČIA

Source Zdroj: Municipality of Tirana



THE EVOLUTION OF ILLEGAL
CONSTRUCTION IN ALBANIA

VÝVOJ NELEGÁLNEJ VÝSTAVBY
V ALBÁNSKU

Author Autor: Blerta Dino

scarcity of skilled personnel, and therefore lack of knowledge in regarding urban planning issues, there was also a persistent and widespread shortage of basic tools such as drafting instruments, drawing boards or even materials as basic as paper²².

Despite these material shortages and bureaucratic complications, Albanian cities acquired new features in the 1960s. Serially produced housing blocks and boxy concrete structures began to replace the characteristic adobe and limestone outlines of older neighborhoods. Socialist planning also became recognizable through its height; by 1959, almost 90 % of all the country's dwellings had no more than two floors. Indeed, only 59 buildings in the whole country had as many as four storeys²³. Yet even though Albanian authorities never replicated the heights of prefab housing blocks elsewhere in the Eastern bloc, the move from the ground to the upper floors was a new experience of urban living for many inhabitants²⁴. Similarly new was the experience of inhabiting an apartment, which was quite different to living on the ground floor of a detached house.

At the city scale, a centrally planned egalitarian urbanisation took place all over the country²⁵, inspiring equalized living conditions on the national scale extended to the smallest unit of housing. The housing units built during this period had almost identical layouts and amenities. This meant that the amount of space and the units of basic public services each inhabitant received were equal and the population of the new complexes was socially mixed. Configurationally, the cities were designed to make it easier to establish and control propaganda for the masses²⁶. The vast public spaces in which the residential units lay scattered were the main tool designed to fulfill such purposes of state control.

Capitalism

Although chronologically a new city, Tirana has witnessed a succession of radical changes in very short intervals of time, initiated by the dominant ideologies of each respective era. As a consequence, it is today a city struggling to develop an identity of its own. As the capital city of a small country, Tirana had the symbolic position of a flagship, and at the same time had served as a laboratory for trajectories of urbanisation for nearly 70 years. New patterns of urban development first been applied in the capital later came to be adopted at lower levels of the urban hierarchy.

This is how Felstehausen²⁷ describes the process of a typical squatter settlement claim in peri-urban Tirana:

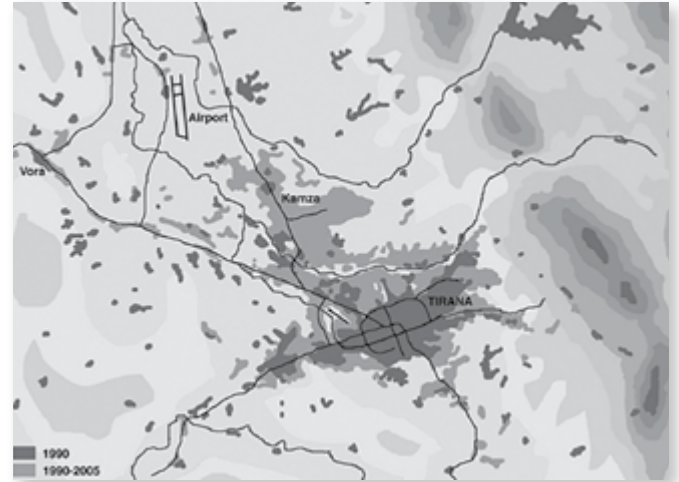
.... 'The head of a family locates an unoccupied piece of land (men were the only ones observed to engage in land claims). The interested party asks existing neighbors if they have any objection to having a new family mark out a house plot. If there are no objections or serious warnings about conflicts, the new claimant "places the stones," a ceremony marking the four lot corners, usually with white rocks. This ritual is



CONVERSION OF LAND USE ON THE GROUND-FLOOR LEVEL, FROM DOMESTIC TO NON-DOMESTIC, ALSO EXTENSION OF NON-DOMESTIC USE ON THE SIDE OF THE BUILDING (ALTERING ITS ORIGINAL FOOTPRINT)

ZMENA VYUŽITIA PRÍZEMIA Z OBYTNÉHO NA NEBYTOVÝ PRIESTOR A ROZŠÍRENIE NEBYTOVÉHO VYUŽITIA NA STRANE BUDOVY (ZMENA JEJ PŔODORNÉHO PŔODORYSU)

Photo Foto: Blerta Dino



TIRANA'S URBAN GROWTH

RAST MESTA TIRANA

Source Zdroj: Co-Plan

conducted in the presence of witnesses. By placing the stones, the new claimant has established a personal and family right to a homestead – a place to live. Customary rules give some protection to new citizens of the community. [...] Hundreds of unauthorized claims like these are created every month. It is unclear how they will be ultimately resolved.

This short passage gives a ground-level insight into how the occupation of available land occurred during the early post-socialist years in Tirana. A common practice all over the country, it was, as Felstehausen describes, one in which no formal documents were signed or ways perused during the process of establishing a new family dwelling. The UN Habitat report²⁸ states that at the initial stage most informal settlers' building activity was in, or around, Tirana and settlements were only built and used for housing purposes.

Urban-Scale Morphological Transformations of Tirana between 1989 and 2016

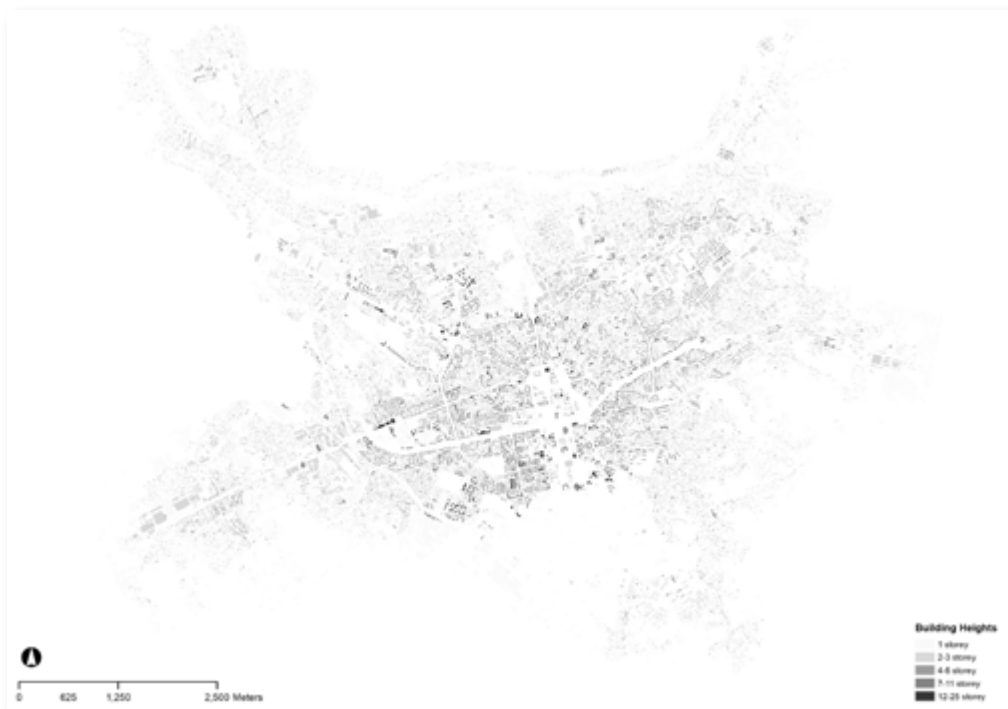
This section provides an account of Tirana's built environment and socio-economic composition at an urban scale for two key periods in its post-war history. The data comprises a) built-form data (footprints), b) demographic data (census results for both periods) and c) network data to describe the city's spatial morphology.

The digital data for the 1989 period was created from a scanned copy of the 1989 Tirana Masterplan, overlaid on the 2007 built form originally obtained from ALUIZNI *Agency for Legalization and Integration of Informal Urban Buildings/ Dwellings* and corrected by the author to reflect the contemporary built form of Tirana [2016]. The data file is created as a shape file layer in the ArcGIS platform. Initially, all the buildings that did not exist in the earlier period were deleted through switching the map layers on and off between the two study periods. After deleting all the buildings constructed after the regime change, the second phase of the work consisted of redrawing the buildings that existed during the socialist periods but were either demolished or transformed during the latter period. During this phase, the only background layer used was that of 1989, to recreate the historic built form. This process produced a novel dataset for the analysis of Tirana's urban fabric comparatively across historical periods. Accurate footprints of Tirana's built form have yet to be analysed: there has been an attempt to draw out the urban growth of Tirana by Co-Plan (see Figure 8), but it does not include building footprints, only highlighting areas of growth in the two-phase time-series. This type of fine-grain urban form study enables us to understand Tirana's growth and change in urban density at a comparative level: in other words, with measurable figures of transformation between the two study periods regarding the urban form footprint, population, and road network.

**BUILDING HEIGHT ANALYSIS
FOR TIRANA, 2016**

ANALÝZA VÝŠKY ZÁSTAVBY
V TIRANE, 2016

Author Autor: Blerta Dino



**OVERLAID URBAN GROWTH MAP
OF TIRANA, 1989 AND 2016
(AXIAL MAP REPRESENTATION)**

PREKRYTÉ MAPY RASTU MESTA
TIRANA Z ROKOV 1989 A 2016
(OSO VÉ ZOBRAZENIE MAPY)

Author Autor: Blerta Dino



**SKYLINE VIEW OF CENTRAL PARTS
OF TIRANA, 2016**

POHLAD NA PANORÁMU
CENTRÁLNEJ ČASTI TIRANY, 2016

Photo Foto: Blerta Dino



Urban Growth Dynamics from Socialist to Capitalist Tirana

Albanian cities constitute a special sub-group within the post-socialist area associated with the dramatic collapse of the political, social and economic structures of European communism in the early 1990s²⁹. Throughout the 1990s, Albanian cities followed a significantly unregulated model of development, characterised by limited official capital investments, significant investments by the local population in the informal economy, differentiated incomes, and weak public control over land, planning and the construction sector³⁰.

Tirana has been described as one of the most unique post-socialist growth examples³¹. During the 1990s, the city experienced extremely rapid population growth that can be called an “East European type of suburbanization”, in other words the growth of the suburbs (and of the population of the city itself) from outside, because of a positive migration balance from the rest of the country³². This striking population increase inside and around the city was a net result of high birth rates and inward migration, despite the mass population migration towards other European countries during the same timeframe. Research into post-socialist European cities has shown how significant differences exist between cities in the different sub-regions³³. For example, in Central Europe, both demographic and migration data show population losses³⁴. However, in Tirana and other south-eastern European countries, it has been observed that the opposite phenomenon happened, where both categories show increasing numbers. Figures 10 and 11 show the overlaid data of the street network (spatial morphology) and built form of Tirana for two periods, that of the socialist period represented through year 1989 and that of the post-socialist period represented through the year 2016.

Figure 10 shows an overlaid map of Tirana for the two historic periods to express transformation of the road network. Except for the western, south-western, and southern sections of the city, Tirana’s topography is relatively flat. Nevertheless, the road layout tends to be crooked and twisting for most of the time. The reason for this is that road design or the planning of new roads rarely occurred during the first two decades of post-socialist Tirana. Instead, road location was a situational, almost derivative, outcome of the available land and the way that individual builders arranged their dwellings within the plot assigned to build on. This tendency is more obvious in such parts of the city that already had been built up to a certain extent, rather than in areas completely free of construction. As Figure 10 shows, the central part of the city is made up of dense, short paths (roads) added to an already existing part of established (built-up) part of the city. This characteristic of urban development in post-socialist Tirana shows a clear lack of planning for new roads.

**OVERLAID URBAN GROWTH MAP
OF TIRANA, 1989 AND 2016
(BUILT FORM)**

PREKRYTÉ MAPY RASTU MESTA
TIRANA Z ROKOV 1989 A 2016
(ZÁSTAVBA)

Author Autor: Blerta Dino



**OVERLAID URBAN GROWTH OF
BUILDINGS FOR 1989 AND
2016 – RANDOM CHOICE OF AREAS**

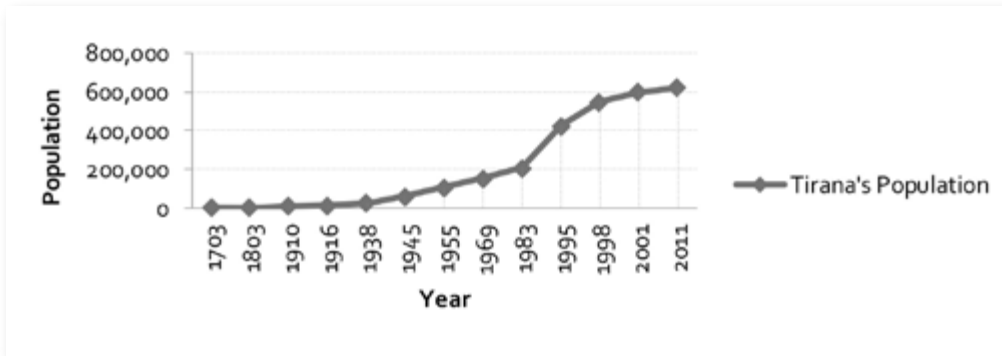
PREKRYTÉ MAPY NÁRASTU
MESTSKEJ ZÁSTAVBY Z ROKOV 1989
A 2016 – NÁHODNÝ VÝBER OBLASTÍ

Author Autor: Blerta Dino



Tirana's Urban Growth: Analysing Migrant Patterns and Demographic Data through the Historic Periods

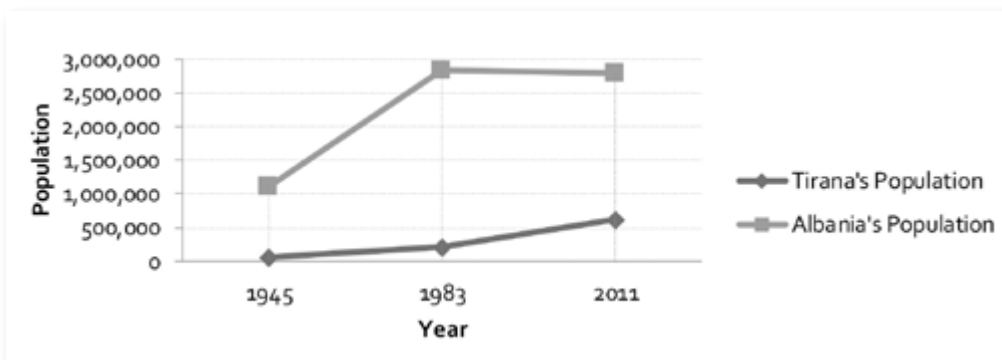
Official records for the population of Tirana state that a population increase occurred from 368,000 in 1989 to 520,000 in 2001³⁵. Unofficial sources estimated that the district already had a population of 800,000 by 2002³⁶, and had approached 800,986 inhabitants by 2015, see graphs below.



TIRANA'S POPULATION GROWTH, 1703–2011

RAST POČTU OBYVATELOV TIRANY V ROKOCH 1703 – 2011

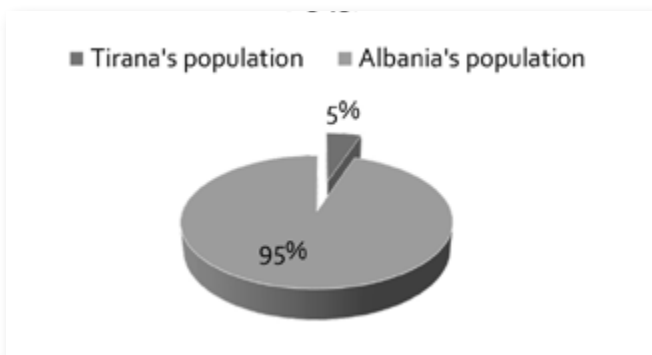
Source Zdroj: INSTAT, 2011



TIRANA'S VS. ALBANIA'S POPULATION, 1945–2011

POČET OBYVATELOV TIRANY V POROVNANÍ S POČTOM OBYVATELOV CELÉHO ALBÁNSKA V ROKOCH 1945 – 2011

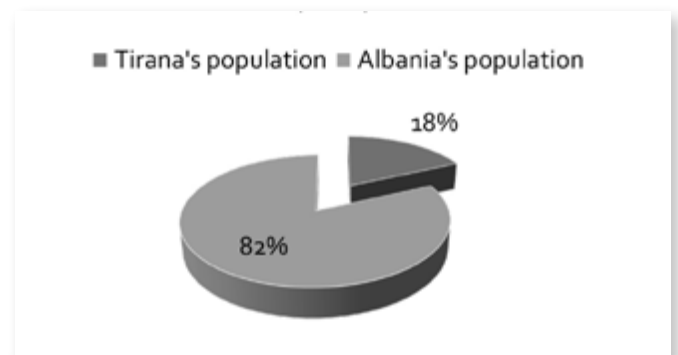
Source Zdroj: INSTAT, 2011



POPULATION RATIO LIVING IN TIRANA (1945)

POMER POČTU OBYVATELOV ŽIJÚCICH V TIRANE (1945)

Source Zdroj: INSTAT, 2011



POPULATION RATIO LIVING IN TIRANA (2011)

POMER POČTU OBYVATELOV ŽIJÚCICH V TIRANE (2011)

Source Zdroj: INSTAT, 2011

In 2014, Tirana had an estimated population density of nearly 11,000 inhabitants/km², whereas in 2016 it is believed that the density has increased further³⁷. Vullnetari believes there to be six main factors responsible for the vast demographic changes in post-socialist Albania:

- a. poor living conditions in villages by the end of the 1980s as a definite push factor for population flight from the villages and seeking better life opportunities elsewhere, whether internally or abroad;
- b. traditional consideration in Albania of urban life as superior to village life, not only for better socio-economic opportunities, but also because of an urban lifestyle offering more time and opportunity for leisure and pleasure, and less conservatism and gendered oppression;
- c. after four decades of controlled mobility, Albanians were finally free to move and decide for themselves where to work and make a living;
- d. once it was clear that the regime was on the brink of collapse, a widespread disregard for law and order ensued, as the pent-up frustration at decades of close surveillance and for many – oppression – exploded on a massive scale;
- e. it soon became obvious that the state's ability to enforce the law and restore order was also rapidly dissolving; and the privatisation in 1992 of what had been until then public property was the final nail in the coffin of socialism, signaling the turning point of large-scale moves³⁸.

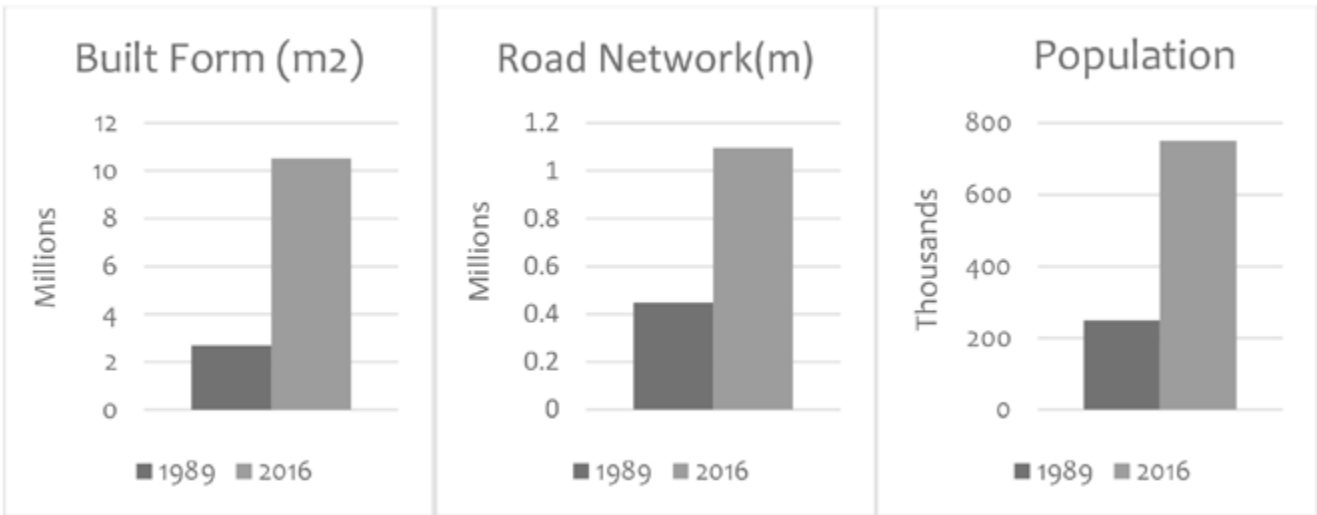
Most of the 1990s were thus characterised by large-scale internal movements, land-grabbing in urban and peri-urban areas followed by squatter settlements, especially in the Tirana-Durrës conurbation, and a frightening contraction of common space, as the 'private' began mercilessly to unleash its revenge on the public. Second, within the coastal area of in-migration, the Tirana-Durrës conurbation was where most migrants relocated, with census records showing that more than two-thirds (72%) of inter-censal internal migrants moved to this area³⁹. This mass flux of newcomers, especially towards the capital, contributed to a re-distribution of demographic, economic and social resources country-wide in a process directly contradicting the centrally planned economy of the communist years. Internal migration has emerged as a key component of this re-constitution, not least through its role in the country's increased urbanisation⁴⁰.

5.4 Urban Density Parameter Study for Socialist and Capitalist Tirana

This section aims to shed some light on the proportion of growth through such parameters as road network (length), built form (surface) and population. Comparisons are drawn between two successive chronological periods: that of the late-socialist city for the period of 1989 and that of the most recent post-socialist city, i.e. that of 2016. The reason for choosing these two periods relates to the purpose of this study, to understand what the bottom-up development process has brought for Albanian cities when compared to the top-down planning models that strictly designed the country for nearly five decades. The three parameters are selected so that the different dimensions of growth could be compared proportionally to the reality of the growth. In figures, the growth of these parameters is:

- a. Total surface of built-up fabric grew from 2,700,699 sqm in 1989 to 10,517,699 sqm in 2016,
- b. Total length of the road network grew from 447,796.8 metres in 1989 to 1,095,122 metres in 2016, and
- c. Total population grew from 250,000 inhabitants to 750,000 inhabitants.

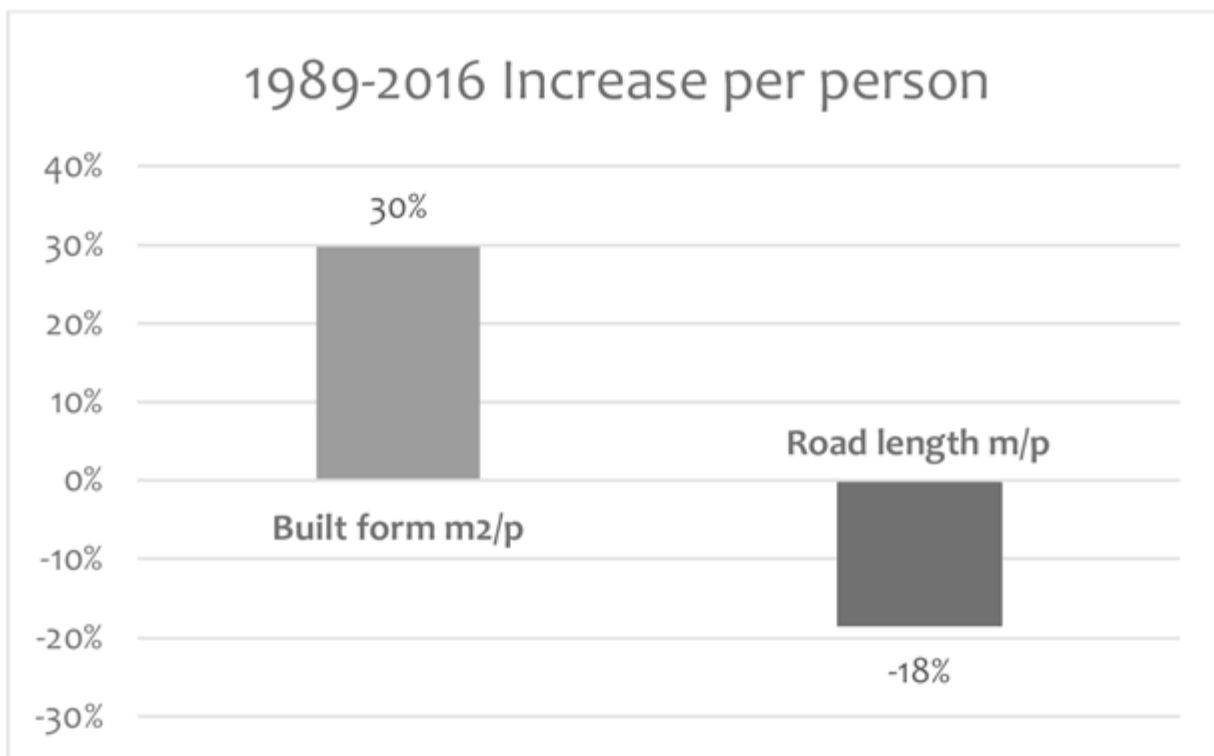
As a result, if the three parameters for growth rates are compared, the road network during the studied period grew by 244%, the built-up surface area grew 389%, and the population grew by 300%. Proportionally, the biggest rate of growth was that of built form, which most clearly reflects the changes underway in Tirana. Before the regime change in the early 1990s, in all settlements-built form was strictly planned along with assigned land use to the buildings, whether for domestic or non-domestic land use. Additionally, non-domestic land uses were equally planned according to a centralized model. Since the collapse of the socialist regime, however, land-use distribution is exclusively assigned 'bottom-up' from the inhabitants themselves, enabling a new pattern of spatio-functional organization to emerge in Tirana. As the market economy was introduced into Albania, recently



URBAN GROWTH PARAMETERS OF TIRANA, 1989-2016

PARAMETRE RASTU MESTA TIRANA 1989, 2016

Author Autor: Blerta Dino



URBAN GROWTH PER PERSON 1989-2016

URBÁNNY RAST V PREPOČTE NA OSOBU 1989 - 2016

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unemployed citizens soon started to take action and open their own businesses, which mostly had to be operational in a building separate from where they lived.

The opening of thousands of businesses presented a similar story, as they needed to secure an appropriate site to run their activity. Of course, this finding does not mean that all businesses had to go through the process of building their own building, since in cities there were: a) already existing amenities running as non-domestic land use, and b) it was also possible to convert apartments on the ground floor to fit their purposes. In this situation, for a certain number of inhabitants, rather than just satisfying domestic needs, there was an added unit that fitted the purpose of running a commercial business so that they could support their families with the income. And the numbers reflect this result: is the presence of an estimated 300% growth of population in Tirana and an estimated 389% of growth of the built fabric both reveal that per capita, there is more sqm of built form (for living, working, worshiping or recreational purposes). Hence, if measured to display post-socialist growth quantified per capita, based on our analyses, Graph 7 shows that there was a 30% increase in built form (footprint) per person, supported by a 18% decrease in road network (length).

Demographic data for Tirana's population figure comes from INSTAT⁴¹, whereas data for the other parameters comes from the digital spatial model. Road network and building form footprints have been calculated for all segments and building contained within the yellow line (City of Tirana's administrative boundary). Finally, it should be mentioned as a limitation that, due to lack of building height data for the 1989 historic period, it was impossible to calculate densities for subsequent comparison between historic periods, reflecting how much habitable space or built form has been available per person under contrasting socio-economic conditions.

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