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Architettura  
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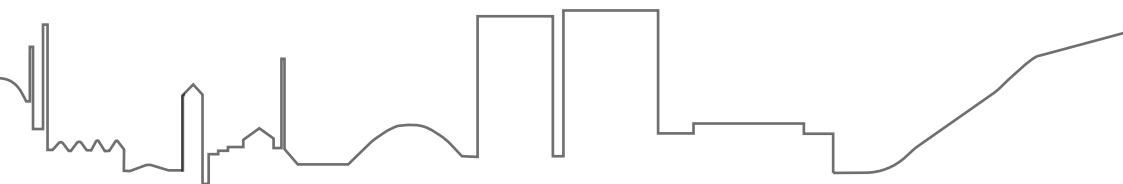
# BOOK OF ABSTRACTS

2nd INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON  
HOUSING, PLANNING, AND RESILIENT  
DEVELOPMENT OF THE TERRITORY

TOWARDS EURO-MEDITERRANEAN PERSPECTIVES

16th-17th OCTOBER 2025

ISBN: 9789928347190



CIP Katalogimi në botim BK Tiranë

Towards Euro-Mediterranean perspectives : 2nd international conference on housing, planning, resilient development of the territory : 16th-17th October 2025 : book of abstracts . - Tiranë : Universiteti Polis, 2025.

ISBN 9789928347190

1.Urbanistika 2.Planifikimi i qytetit 3.Konferenca  
711 (062)



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## **2nd International Conference on Housing, Planning, Resilient Development of the Territory Towards Euro-Mediterranean Perspectives**

### **Conference Theme and Rationale**

This conference returned for the second time within the Albanian and Mediterranean academic context, aiming to build a tradition of collaboration centered on scientific research and academia. Following the success of the first edition held on October 13–14, 2023 where proceedings were published in the Book of Abstracts, Albanica journal, and various international academic platforms, POLIS University and the Academy of Sciences of Albania relaunched this important event. The 2025 edition focused on housing, urban planning, and resilient territorial development, offering a platform for researchers, policymakers, and experts from the region and beyond.

Albania and the Western Balkans have faced major transformations in urbanization, spatial planning, and environmental management. Demographic changes, economic pressures, and environmental challenges created a need for new strategies in architecture, planning, and governance. This conference brought together diverse voices to explore these themes and promote resilient and sustainable development.

Key topics included architecture and the city, with emphasis on urban form, housing typologies, and the role of cultural heritage in modern urban design; urban mobility, addressing traffic challenges, public transport, and the use of technologies like GIS and AI in planning; and new housing models, focusing on affordability, energy efficiency, and innovative materials.

Discussions also covered demography and economy, exploring territorial governance, smart cities, social enterprises, and digital technologies such as AI, VR, and the Metaverse in urban management. Finally, the urban and natural environment was addressed through topics like pollution, adaptive planning, and nature-based solutions for climate resilience.

Through this conference, POLIS University and the Academy of Sciences of Albania aimed to foster a broad interdisciplinary debate on these pressing issues, combining academic and practical perspectives to offer concrete recommendations for future urban and territorial development policies and projects.

## Organizers' Announcement

The International Scientific Conference on Housing, Urban Planning, and Resilient Territorial Development: Toward Euro-Mediterranean Approaches was held on October 16–17, 2025, in Tirana, Albania. Organized by POLIS University in collaboration with the Academy of Sciences of Albania and supported by national and international partners, including the University of Ferrara and Co-PLAN, Institute for Habitat Development, the event brought together researchers, academics, policymakers, and professionals to address key challenges in urban development, with a focus on resilience and sustainability in the Euro-Mediterranean region. The first day of the conference took place at the Academy of Sciences, while the second day was hosted at POLIS University.

The conference explored five main themes:

- (1) Architecture and the City, which investigated the typological and morphological dimensions of urban form, the evolution of collective and individual housing types, the relationship between architectural design and urban identity, and the role of historical and cultural heritage in shaping contemporary cities;
- (2) Urban Mobility and Resilient Cities, which addressed traffic congestion, infrastructure challenges, and public transportation, while also promoting the redesign of public spaces—such as streets, squares, and pedestrian zones—to improve accessibility and mobility; it also explored the integration of digital technologies like GIS, AI, and simulation tools to enhance planning, automation, and infrastructure management;
- (3) New Housing Models, which examined innovative approaches to affordable and social housing in response to demographic shifts and technological change, along with energy efficiency strategies, passive energy systems, and the application of new sustainable materials and construction technologies;
- (4) Demography and Economy, which focused on macro-regional and national dynamics impacting territorial development, including urban governance, disaster risk reduction, and the rise of smart and inclusive cities; it also explored how emerging technologies—such as AI, VR, and the Metaverse—along with social enterprises and circular economy practices, could foster more equitable and adaptive urban systems; and
- (5) Urban and Natural Environment, which analyzed environmental degradation in urban settings, including air, water, and soil pollution, and promoted nature-based solutions, ecosystem-based planning, and adaptive strategies to enhance environmental sustainability and climate resilience.

The conference was conducted in English and Albanian (with self-translated texts where applicable) and was free of charge, with all registration fees fully covered by POLIS University in support of open academic exchange. Key deadlines included abstract submission by June 15, acceptance notification by June 30, first draft of papers by September 15, and final submissions by October 31. Accepted papers will be published in December 2025 in the official Conference Proceedings with ISBN.



## **Scientific Committee**

Prof. Emeritus Sherif Lushaj / POLIS University

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## **01- Architecture and the City-Architectural, typological and morphological aspects of settlement form**

**From building to city form: Tools and approaches in shaping the urban fabric, in relation to new constructions and historical/urban heritage.**

**Typologies of collective and individual housing / History of cities and architecture / Architectural design: Morphology and form.**

**Urban regeneration and conservation / Cultural and historical heritage / Regenerative approaches to design and adaptive reuse of spaces.**

# THE MORPHOGENETIC AXES THAT GIVE LIFE AND ROOTS TO CITIES

## The case of ancient Aulona

**Prof. Asoc. Dr. Sotir DHAMO**

**POLIS University, Albania**

### **Abstract**

Where and how do cities begin? How do the initial traces that mark the beginning of the city arise? Why do they emerge in a certain place and become fixed there? As Poete argues (in Rossi, p. 56), once the city emerges in a certain place, it is the road that keeps it fixed to the axes of development. These traces that the city “wraps” within itself are the beginnings of the urban fabric. Although the origin of cities is never limited to a single reason, this article examines the role of the road as a significant generative factor for the emergence of cities, as it exposes a specific territory to historical events, and anchors the city to that place where it begins. Roads and other related artefacts are similar to a kind of nucleus around which the developments and variations of urban form gather and mesh. The article explores and analyzes these aspects in the case of ancient Aulona. Thus, the initial strategic crossroads, the fortress and the old pier of Aulona, their connecting axis, and its later extension, are considered the primordial artifacts that underlie the generation of today's Vlora. Historians and archaeologists bring evidence that supports a more holistic perspective on morphogenetic aspects, which date back to that period in space-time that explains the emergence of Aulona from the interaction between regional centers that existed before Aulona (Amantia-Kanina, Bylis-Tripport, Orik); or when Aulona became an important crossroads after the Roman conquest; or when the old pier and fortress of Aulona suddenly found themselves removed from the coastline because of geomorphological events, etc. These events express the primordial self-generative interactions, important imprints contained in the today's city, still rooted in the same historical crossroad, despite historical and natural events the city went through.

### **Keywords**

*Aulona, Generative factor, Historical events, Morphogenetics*

**CONTEMPORARY USE OF HISTORICAL BUILDING TYPOLOGIES**  
**The case of architectural variations to the Northern Albania housing typologies**

**Dr. Ledian BREGASI**  
**POLIS University, Albania**

**Abstract**

The typological approach in architectural design is a tool that should be used with adequate awareness. When used carelessly, it can become a rigid prison that freezes architecture and doesn't allow novelty, or in worse cases, it can create monstrous copies of the past that wear only the physical appearance of historical buildings, forgetting the deeper meaning that architecture brought in each historical period. The following work analyzes historical housing and proposes design variations based on an operative approach towards typology, building on the work of architecture scholars like Aldo Rossi and Peter Eisenman. The presented historical housing typologies can be found in the northern Albania territories and they are organized and cataloged by Emin Riza in *Qyteti dhe Banesa Qytetare Shqiptare Shek. XV-XIX*, Published by "Dita 2000", Tirana in 2009. The historical typology is considered to represent the idea that a specific community shares about dwelling. It is the common knowledge that has evolved generation after generation. So, the present work will try to build upon this knowledge, believing that the meaning of historical typologies is not related to the mere appearance of the building rather to the idea of space organization. The following work presents a collection of twenty architectural projects, designed as variations to the historical Albanian housing typologies.

**Keywords**

*Typology, Variation, Heritage, Architectural Design*

# **THE STRUCTURE OF TIRANA FROM 1614 TO 1943**

## **Continuities, Discontinuities and Relation with Western Cities**

**Dr. Genti AVDIJA**  
**POLIS University, Albania**

### **Abstract**

This work explores the structural changes of the city of Tirana from its beginnings around the XVII century to the end of World War II, putting them in relation with the development and paradigms of the development and planning of the western civilisation urbanisation. In the development of Tirana in this period we have individuated three different phases of development of the city. In the first phase the development is characterised by the ottoman influences. In the second, that coincides with the creation of the state and the becoming of Tirana the capital of Albania, we can denote a certain tendency to westernisation. And lastly, the consolidation of the urban structure during WWII, under the Italian influence. When we talk about resilience is important to note that certain urban elements introduced during this period still persist in the structure of the city to this day, and therefore characterise the city. The research output is a perspective on the development of Tirana until 1945 that extrapolates the urban elements of development and relates them with western cities. The development of Tirana is not a linear development, but is characterised by fractures as a result of a complex interaction of cultural, political and geographic factors. These fractures contain elements that disappear, and elements that persist that characterise the structure of the city today. The development itself oscillates between spontaneity and plan, morphology and typology, urban and territorial. The relation of planning and urbanism in Tirana with the western civilisation is very peculiar, because of the early ottoman influence and the late application of western urban design principles. Lastly, the Italian plan (1939 – 1943) constitutes the first complex structuring of the city, and the last substantial structural modification of today.

### **Keywords**

*Urban structure, Medieval city, Modern urbanism, Resilience*

**FROM KASBAH TO MODERNITY**  
**A historical analysis of street patterns, building typologies, and public spaces in the 'kala' neighbourhood"**

**Adea KULLA, Dr. Artan KACANI**  
**POLIS University, Albania**

**Abstract**

This study explores the evolution of the historic "Kala" neighborhood in Durrës, Albania, over the past century by analyzing changes in street patterns, building types, and public spaces across three significant historical periods. Situated on a hilltop overlooking the Adriatic Sea, Kala represents the city's cultural and architectural heart, once known for its Ottoman-style courtyard houses and vibrant public life. Through the analysis of historical maps, contemporary satellite images, and field surveys, the research traces Kala's transformation during the post-independence reconstruction of 1928, the socialist urban planning of the 1970s, and the post-socialist era from 1990 to 2025. The findings reveal that since the 1990s, unregulated development and unauthorized construction have significantly eroded Kala's historic character, disrupting traditional street networks and replacing many historic structures with incompatible modern buildings. In comparison to other historic neighborhoods such as Gjirokastër and Dubrovnik, Kala faces more acute challenges in managing change and enforcing heritage protections. Nonetheless, successful restorations of key monuments, including historic mosques and churches, illustrate the potential for effective heritage conservation when proper resources and expertise are applied. The study concludes that stronger planning policies, active community involvement, and sustainable tourism strategies are essential for safeguarding Kala's remaining heritage while accommodating modern needs. These insights offer practical guidance for urban planners and policymakers seeking to balance preservation and development in historic neighborhoods across post-socialist contexts.

**Keywords**

*Urban transformation, Heritage conservation, Historic neighborhoods, Durrës, post-socialist cities, urban planning*

# **VERTICAL GROWTH AND URBAN MORPHOLOGY**

## **High Rise Towers Reshaping Tirana's City Form**

**Eneida MUHAMUÇI**  
**POLIS University, Albania**

### **Abstract**

Tirana has rapidly changed in the last few decades, with a growing trend toward vertical construction. High rise towers signifies a dramatic shift in the morphological makeup of the city, particularly in central and highly sought-after urban areas. This paper explores the spatial and structural consequences of vertical growth on the urban form of Tirana, focusing on the interaction between the development of tall buildings and key elements such as street networks, public spaces, skyline composition and overall urban continuity. The study investigates how the concentration of towers in selected areas affects the historical urban structure, often disrupting established patterns of connectivity, pedestrian access and socio-spatial coherence. Drawing on mapping analysis, field observations and selected case studies, the paper critically examines the morphological fragmentation caused by inconsistent vertical interventions, many of which lack integration with wider planning frameworks or infrastructural capacity. The change of the skyline as an expressive layer of urban identity is given special consideration. Tall buildings represent ambition and economic advancement, but their unregulated expansion creates visual clutter issues. The study also looks at the effects of tower-induced densification on public space, emphasizing how verticalization frequently results in less civic permeability and the privatization of ground-level spaces. The study highlights patterns of spatial inequality and sheds light on the difficulties in balancing vertical growth with resilient, inclusive, and historically conscious urban design by placing Tirana's experience within the larger Euro-Mediterranean urban dynamic. In order to guarantee that the construction of high-rise structures enhances Tirana's changing urban form while maintaining its spatial legibility and cultural identity, the paper concludes by suggesting strategic urban design and policy tools.

### **Keywords**

*Urban Morphology, High-Rise Development, Vertical Growth, Tirana, Public Space, Skyline Transformation*



# **GAME OF TOWERS**

## **Vertical growth - Horizontal tensions**

**Erjon ÇOBANI**  
**POLIS University, Albania**

### **Abstract**

Tirana's urban landscape has undergone significant changes in recent years, transitioning from a spread-out, low-rise style to a more concentrated, high-rise approach. This change affects not only the city's appearance but also its overall architectural look. This transformation has led to increased population density and a more modern aesthetic. But it also raises concerns about preserving the city's cultural heritage and addressing infrastructure challenges, such as traffic congestion and inadequate public spaces. The increase in high-rise buildings reflects changes in culture, economics, and design, as housing and public spaces are rethought to accommodate rapid city growth, market demands, and global architectural styles. These buildings aim to create a modern city image but often clash with its history and traditional building styles. The completion of the 85-meter-high TID Tower in 2016 symbolizes Tirana's shift towards modernity, but has sparked debates about developing the city while preserving historic sites. However, some argue that the construction of high-rise buildings like the TID Tower represents progress and economic development. They believe these modern structures attract investment, create jobs, and provide much-needed housing for a growing urban population. While preserving historical sites is important, they argue that cities must also evolve to meet the demands of the future. As high-rise buildings have changed Tirana's structure and appearance, the purpose of this paper is to examine how they have affected public spaces, created a new identity for the city, and been integrated into the existing city structure. It questions whether these buildings help create a unified city or break up its structure. By placing this within the larger discussion of urban renewal, the research suggests ways to balance modern architectural goals with the need to protect historical heritage and maintain consistent building styles.

### **Keywords**

*Urban Morphology, Vertical Urbanism, Heritage and Continuity, Fragmented Fabric, High-rise Architecture*

# **THE LOST COURTYARD**

## **Exploring the Disappearance of Traditional Urban Interiors in Tirana's new Typologies**

**Kejsi VESELAGU**  
**POLIS University, Albania**

### **Abstract**

As Tirana continues its accelerated transition from a low-rise, socially embedded urban fabric to a high-density landscape of speculative development, one spatial typology has silently disappeared: the courtyard. This paper explores the loss of the courtyard as a central architectural and social element in Tirana's evolving residential typologies, tracing its transformation from a site of communal life to a vestigial or entirely omitted feature in contemporary housing models. Traditionally, the courtyard functioned not only as a climatic and architectural device, but as a deeply cultural space hosting domestic rituals, multi-generational interactions and neighborly exchange. From Ottoman-influenced dwellings to socialist era housing blocks, variations of the courtyard once played a crucial role in mediating public and private life. Today however, new typologies driven by profit-maximization, density and verticalization have systematically eliminated this interior void in favor of privatized balconies, enclosed stairwells and underground parking. This spatial erasure is not neutral but it reflects a deeper reconfiguration of urban life where the notions of community and leisure are being reshaped by market-driven urbanism. The paper employs a comparative typological analysis examining courtyard presence and form across three key periods: pre-socialist vernacular homes, socialist-era apartments and post-1990 developments. Drawing on site surveys, satellite imagery, architectural drawings and interviews with residents it will reveal how the disappearance of the courtyard reflects not only a spatial change, but a shift in socio-cultural values and urban imaginaries. Ultimately this research argues that the vanishing courtyard signals a broader erosion of shared spatial practices and collective urban memory of shared spatial practices and collective urban memory. In replacing inward-facing, socially generative spaces with fragmented and privatized living units, Tirana's new urban fabric risks becoming spatially efficient but communally impoverished. The courtyard, once a quiet stage for everyday life, has become an absent figure and its disappearance a symptom of deeper transformations in the way space, community and domesticity are conceived in the contemporary city.

### **Keywords**

*Courtyard, Typology, Collectivity, Urban Transformations*

**PUBLIC SPACE AND URBAN IDENTITY**  
**Tracing the Shifts of Epidamn Boulevard, Durres**

**Arjola SAVA**  
**POLIS University, Albania**

**Abstract**

This research aims to investigate the transformation of urban public spaces in the city of Durres, with the main focus on “Epidamn” Boulevard – one of the main axes of public, social, and cultural life of the city. Since its beginnings in the early modern period, the boulevard has undergone a series of formal, functional, and symbolic changes, dictated by different historical contexts and political approaches toward the public space. Through a morphological and comparative analysis of the boulevard across different historical periods, including the Ottoman period, the Italian invasion, the communist regimes, and the transition after 1990, this study identifies how the relationships between built structures and open public spaces are shaped. At the core of this analysis is the examination of how urban and architectural interventions have influenced the usage, perception, and social perception of public space. The findings suggest that “Epidamn” Boulevard reflects the dynamic urban development of Durres and serves as a key case study for understanding the interaction between urban form, local identity, and pressures from modern growth. By examining changes in form and function, this research aims to highlight the sustainability and vulnerability of urban public spaces in times of transformation. Besides contextual analysis, this research relies on contemporary literature about public spaces and urban form, including Kevin Lynch’s theories on the image of the city and Jan Gehl’s approaches to human behavior in public spaces. While grounded in these theoretical frameworks, this study aims to place Durres within a broader discussion on urban form and spatial transformation, focusing on maintaining the identity of Mediterranean cities facing rapid urban growth and fragmented interventions. In conclusion, the research proposes a regenerative approach that balances the preservation of historical and cultural values with the improvement of public access and reorganization of public space as a vital key component in civic life.

**Keywords**

*Epidamn Boulevard, Historic Transformation, Public space, Urban Identity, Urban Morphology.*

**DURRËS AFTER TRANSITION:  
Urban Identity at the Edge of Time, Tourism, and Transformation.**

**Vjola ZIU  
POLIS University, Albania**

**Abstract**

Durrës has been a city in constant transformation since the 1990s, particularly following the fall of communism in Albania. Uncontrolled construction, particularly in the tourist zones, especially along the coastal zone extending to Kavaja, was triggered by this important historical turning point. Throughout this entire period, extending from the 1990s up to the present day, the city has experienced an uncontrollable and ongoing era of urban transition, losing some essential aspects of its historic identity and gradually becoming a hybrid city that combines elements of tourism, informality, and endangered history. Once recognised widely as a clear representation of a city with a history spanning thousands of years, Durrës is now increasingly a site of conflict between urban expansion, cultural heritage, mass tourism, and real estate investment. All these transformations have significantly and visibly affected the character of the city, overshadowing its historical core and its valuable cultural heritage, thereby deeply impacting its image and the values it embodies. Despite the fact that Durrës has undergone substantial physical and social changes over the years, it has consistently managed to attract a large number of tourists and investors from around the world. Through a variety of targeted and multifaceted marketing strategies intended to highlight and promote the city's attractive features, this phenomenon has effectively sparked major reactions on social media platforms. However, this promotional approach tends to overshadow the deeper and underlying issues that the city is currently facing, positioning it as an urban space in a transitional state between modernity and postmodernity. The aim of the research is to carefully analyse how the city's physical and symbolic image has changed over time to reflect its current situation and what this transformation ultimately represents in relation to the broad social and economic context in which it is taking place.

**Keywords**

*Urban identity, City Image, Cultural heritage, Tourism*

**The Sustainability of Urban Form Through the Reinterpretation of Non-sites:  
Projects of the Design Thesis Studio**

**Prof. Asoc. Dr. Skender LUARASI**  
**POLIS University, Albania**

**Abstract**

During the last thirty years Tirana has undergone vast urban transformations, which evince the proximity of extreme conditions of contemporary cities, such as urban gentrification and degradation, sprawl and erasure, star-architecture in the center and unbridled growth in the periphery. At the same time, however, such urban transformations have also revealed or rather caused potential sites or urban dispositions, yet still invisible and latent in their form. Let us call these non-sites. What form could these non-sites take, and how the materialization of their urban latency could further transform the larger urban agglomeration of Tirana? This paper is a collection of five attempts, developed in the context of the architectural design studio and thesis, where the students read, interpret, and speculate on potential architecturalizations and urbanizations of these non-sites. These architectural projects consist of a research and speculative, projective component. They empirically map and investigate different modern cities and urban theories of the nineteenth and twentieth century. Then they use this mapping as a hypothesis to formally read and reconfigure these sites. It is not a matter of starting from a truth-statement, or one of applying an urban theory or precedent on a new situation, but rather of investigating how these theories may be falsified under the conditions of a concrete a non-urban situation, or non-site. The latter includes different typologies, such as infrastructural nodes or intersections, termini or ends of urban axes, undefined swaths of undeveloped urban leftovers, as well as adjacencies of historical areas with non-urban extensions.

**Keywords**

*Urban Form, Sustainability, Non-sites*

**BETWEEN IDEOLOGY AND IDENTITY**  
**A Comparative Study of Socialist Hotel Architecture in Albania and the Balkans**

**Dr. Malvina ISTREFAJ (KOLICI)**  
**POLIS University, Albania**

**Abstract**

This paper examines the ideological foundations and architectural development of Albania's socialist-era hotels, placing them in the Balkan context and Eastern Europe's reconstruction following World War II. It explores how communist governments used tourism infrastructure, especially hotels, as a sociopolitical instrument to support ideological narratives through architectural form in addition to promoting state-approved leisure. The study looks at common typologies that reflected global modernist tendencies while incorporating regional socialist values, all while drawing on comparative case studies.

The study focuses specifically on Albania's "Rational Period" and highlights important architectural traits that indicate the rigidity and control of the communist state. In terms of design, usage, and ideological function, the paper identifies both common trends and distinctive national adaptations through comparison with those in other communist regimes, such as Bulgaria's state-run Black Sea hotel zones and Yugoslavia's mixed-economy resort models.

During the Rational Socialist Era in Albania, hotel design placed a strong emphasis on geometric repetition, formal austerity, and practical clarity—elements that were strongly associated with the regime's ideology. In cities like Tirana, Gjirokastra, Elbasan and Shkodër, hotels had two purposes: they were places of political control and foreign diplomacy, as well as tangible symbols of socialist advancement. The seaside typologies along the Adriatic and Ionian beaches, on the other hand, reflected pan-European experiments in leisure architecture by emphasizing mass accommodation and spatial collectivism.

The research advances our understanding of how architecture was used to create a communal identity—one that was both unified and contested—across the socialist Balkans by interpreting the spatial and symbolic language of socialist tourism infrastructure.

In its concluding section, the paper calls for a re-evaluation of socialist hotel architecture not as obsolete or politically burdened relics, but as vital components of the region's architectural heritage.

**Keywords**

*Socialist Architecture, Hotel Typologies, Ideology, Form*

## **02 - Traffic crises in cities and new models of sustainable and resilient cities**

**Infrastructure and public transport in relation to urban crises: The impact of urban form on circulation and mobility.**

**Public space design (squares, streets, sidewalks) and the reduction of architectural barriers for free movement.**

**New technologies in planning (GIS, AI, etc.) / Modeling, simulation, and digitalization / Co-progress in regenerative urban development / Automation of planning, architectural, and engineering processes.**

# **TRAFFIC ALLEVIATION THROUGH THE RESTRUCTURING OF PUBLIC TRANSPORT: The Case of Tirana**

**Megi DAJKO**  
**POLIS University, Albania**

## **Abstract**

The rapid urbanization and continuous increase of private vehicles in Tirana have placed significant pressure on the city's existing infrastructure, causing severe traffic congestion and highlighting the weaknesses of an underperforming public transport system. This paper analyzes the current state of public transport in Tirana and proposes a restructured model based on a polycentric urban form. The model aims to strengthen connections between new urban centers and existing ones, improve access to peripheral areas, and reduce dependency on the city's historic core. The study methodology includes the analysis of population distribution, traffic, infrastructure, existing public transport lines, and the accessibility level of residential areas. These analyses were carried out using ArcMap and QGIS software. The analysis was complemented by a theoretical review of the relationship between urban form and public transport. Based on this data and proposals for a polycentric Tirana, a public transport network connecting eight urban centers is proposed, optimizing accessibility and circulation. Findings show that implementing a polycentric approach, supported by building a transport network hierarchy that combines radial, diametrical, tangential, and ring lines, can ease pressure on the city center, distribute traffic flows, and improve urban mobility. The creation of new urban nodes outside the historical center and their connection to efficient public transport networks is expected to reduce congestion and enhance the quality of urban life. Furthermore, the implementation of dedicated lanes is expected to increase the speed and efficiency of service, encouraging public transport use and reducing dependence on private vehicles. In conclusion, the study demonstrates that a decentralized public transport network balances internal movements, effectively distributes inbound and outbound flows, and will avoid overloading the center and main roads, contributing to a more accessible city.

## **Keywords**

*Urban traffic, Road infrastructure, Public transport, Polycentric city, Sustainable transport*



# **FROM TRAFFIC CHAOS TO WALKABLE COMMUNITIES: Can Tirana Embrace the 15-Minute City and Superblocks?**

**Ilirjana HAXHIAJ, Jeta BEJTULLAHU**  
**GDAŃSK University of Technology, Poland**

## **Abstract**

In the face of climate change, rising inequality, and rapid urbanization, cities must adopt transformative planning strategies to ensure sustainable mobility. The 15-minute city and Superblock models have emerged as innovative approaches to reducing car dependency, enhancing public spaces, and promoting equitable access to urban services. However, in Tirana, where chaotic high-rise expansion, traffic congestion, and limited public spaces characterize urban growth, implementing such models presents unique challenges and opportunities. This study evaluates whether Tirana's urban form, mobility policies, and land use strategies can support the implementation of the 15-minute city and Superblock models. It explores how high-density development, inadequate pedestrian infrastructure, and car dominance influence the feasibility of these models and identifies policy shifts necessary for transformation. Using a case study methodology, this research analyzes land use distribution, mobility networks, and public space allocation in Tirana. Data is gathered through GIS mapping, transport assessments, and stakeholder interviews, with comparative analysis of successful 15-minute city and Superblock implementations in Barcelona, Paris, and Latin American cities to identify lessons applicable to Tirana. Findings indicate that while Tirana's central areas, such as Blloku and Pazari i Ri, exhibit elements of the 15-minute city, rapid high-rise expansion without integrated infrastructure undermines widespread implementation. Meanwhile, the city's efforts to pedestrianize key areas and promote cycling show promise but are fragmented and lack citywide integration. Superblocks, which prioritize traffic calming, public space creation, and local accessibility, could be adapted to Tirana's urban fabric, but require stronger regulatory frameworks and mobility restructuring. Tirana's case demonstrates both the challenges and the transformative potential of applying 15-minute city and Superblock principles in rapidly growing urban environments. To succeed, the city must address unregulated development, enhance public transit, and reclaim space for pedestrians and cyclists. The study highlights policy and design strategies that could enable these models to function as tools for equitable, sustainable urban mobility in Tirana and similar fast-growing cities.

## **Keywords**

*15-minute City, Superblocks, Sustainable Mobility, Land Use Policy, Urban Transformation, Tirana*

# PERIPHERAL JOURNEYS: YOUTH MOBILITY, URBAN MARGINS AND SOCIAL INEQUALITY IN NAPLES

The everyday experiences of student commuting and spatial injustice in a euro-mediterranean city

**Domenico Salvatore GALLUCCIO, Luca AMATO, Alessio CRISCUOLO,  
Francesco DE NIGRIS, Emanuele MAURO ABRIOLO  
University of NAPLES FEDERICO II Italy**

## **Abstract**

In Naples, Italy, the urban traffic crisis is not merely a technical or infrastructural issue it is a multidimensional social phenomenon that reflects and reinforces existing inequalities in education, access, and opportunity. Among the most affected populations are students living in peripheral urban areas, who face long, fragmented, and often unpredictable commutes to reach educational institutions across the city. This sociological study adopts a qualitative methodology based on semi-structured interviews and field observations to investigate the everyday mobility experiences of high school and university students in Naples. The aim is to explore how transport inefficiencies shape young people's educational trajectories, emotional well-being, and spatial perceptions of the city. As Salmieri (2019) points out, youth mobility in Naples is both constrained by systemic barriers and animated by informal strategies of adaptation and social navigation. Recent research on student choices in the Campania region of southern Italy confirms that mobility patterns are significantly shaped by socio-economic background and urban geography (Santelli et al., 2022; Rondinelli et al., 2024). The findings of this study complement this literature by highlighting students' lived experiences, their everyday forms of resilience, and the structural limitations of current urban transport policies. Drawing on the concepts of spatial justice (Soja, 2010) and the right to the city (Lefebvre, 1968), the paper argues that access to education in Naples is mediated by mobility systems that often exclude rather than include. For many students, public transport becomes a space where inequalities are not only experienced but reproduced, challenging their full participation in urban life. This contribution advocates for mobility planning that transcends technocratic approaches by embedding citizens' lived experiences into inclusive, participatory, and socially resilient urban strategies. While rooted in the specific case of Naples, the study reflects broader tensions within Euro-Mediterranean urban contexts, where spatial fragmentation and uneven infrastructure continue to shape the daily geographies of opportunity and exclusion.

## **Keywords**

*Right to the City; Peripheries; Youth Mobility; Spatial Justice; Urban Inequality*

## **TACTICAL URBANISM AS A CATALYST**

### **Shaping people-centred mobility in Malta through experimentation**

**Dr. Antoine ZAMMIT**  
**University of MALTA, Malta**

#### **Abstract**

As Euro-Mediterranean cities grapple with traffic congestion, limited public space and rising climate vulnerabilities, there is growing interest in adaptable, citizen-led solutions to reframe urban mobility. This paper explores the role of tactical urbanism — temporary, low-cost and participatory interventions — as a strategic tool for testing and transitioning towards more resilient and sustainable mobility systems, centring on the Maltese Islands. Malta's long-lasting car-centric culture has posed significant barriers to mobility transformation. At the same time, its compact urban form offers potential for tactical experimentation. This paper presents some key case studies that have attempted to push the tactical urbanism agenda. These include the Slow Streets project, which positioned tactical urbanism as a key mobility strategy. Other examples include initiatives within the Vjal Kulhadd projects, sustainable mobility guidance for Local Councils and efforts to establish temporary play streets and weekend street closures. These endeavours have aimed to reimagine urban streetscapes as shared, flexible and inclusive spaces, though not without challenges. A notable case is Mosta Square, where pedestrianisation during weekends sparked political and community controversy but also demonstrated how temporary closures can challenge car dominance and reclaim civic space. Localised play street projects — facilitated through short-term road closures and signage — have generally been well-received, fostering social and recreational functions. The paper explores why some projects are more successful than others, suggesting that the interventions' temporary nature might influence community acceptance. Ultimately, the research argues that these modest interventions generate valuable data, influence behavioural changes and promote institutional learning. They serve as prototypes for longer-term spatial and policy shifts. The conclusion calls for formalising tactical urbanism as a core component in mobility planning across Euro-Mediterranean regions, emphasising its potential to address spatial constraints, promote civic engagement and enable low-risk experimentation to drive sustainable urban transitions.

#### **Keywords**

*Tactical Urbanism, Malta, Sustainable Mobility, People-centred mobility, Slow Streets*

# HOW DOES THE FORM OF ROAD INFRASTRUCTURE IMPACT THE PROPAGATION OF TRAFFIC-INDUCED NOISE IN URBAN AREAS OF TIRANA?

Kelvi PETI, Dr. Fiona IMAMI  
POLIS University, Albania

## Abstract

Over the years, Tirana has undergone rapid development, particularly after the 1990s, when at least one third of the country's population migrated from peripheral and rural areas toward the capital and larger urban centers. This phenomenon, combined with the fast pace of globalization, the introduction of a market economy, and the increasing accessibility of private car ownership, has gradually led to a significant rise in road traffic — now the main contributor to urban noise pollution. The level of acoustic pollution (which exceeds the standards set by the EU) is not only a current reality in Tirana but also a growing concern, directly affecting the quality of life and the health and well-being of those exposed to it. While many studies have explored the impact of mobility on noise pollution levels, few have examined the influence of road infrastructure design and form on noise propagation. This study aims to analyze the extent to which the urban road infrastructure form influences the level of acoustic pollution in high-traffic areas in Tirana. By combining quantitative and qualitative measurements, the study investigates the distribution of acoustic pollution in these traffic-dense zones. The areas are compared through a Multi-Criteria Assessment (MCA), using key criteria such as road infrastructure form, presence and typology of noise barriers, height and distance of surrounding buildings, among others. The results reveal significant differences between urban forms in how noise spreads. The study concludes with a set of strategic and specific proposals for improving infrastructural and urban design elements, showing that certain urban forms and road designs can be more effective than others in containing noise pollution within urban spaces.

## Keywords

*Sound Propagation, Urban Noise, Acoustic Landscape, Urban Morphology, Traffic, Multi Criteria Assessment – MCA.*

**03 -New housing models and innovative architectural-urban forms to adapt to demographic, technological and development trends/challenges**

**Housing affordability / Housing and land markets / Social housing / Housing policies and challenges.**

**Passive energy strategies / Energy efficiency in buildings / Heating and cooling loads / Indoor and natural ventilation / Natural lighting / Building materials and technologies.**

**Circular economy in the construction sector.**

## **CULTURAL DIMENSIONS AND ENTREPRENEURIAL INNOVATION IN CO-WORKING SPACES: Socio-Spatial Insights from Tirana**

**Belma AJAZI, ADVOCACY ARCHITECTS, United States of America**  
**Prof. Asoc. Dr. Xhimi HYSA, POLIS University, Albania**  
**Gennaro MAIONE, SAN RAFFAELE University of Rome, Italy**

### **Abstract**

This paper investigates the socio-cultural factors influencing innovative entrepreneurial behavior within co-working spaces in Tirana, Albania—an emerging urban setting marked by a nascent but rapidly developing startup ecosystem. Grounded in Hofstede's 6-D Model of National Culture, the study explores how cultural dimensions such as power distance, individualism, and uncertainty avoidance shape entrepreneurial dynamics and innovation processes in shared work environments. Co-working spaces have increasingly become integral to urban transformation, acting as nodes of knowledge exchange, collaboration, and innovation. Despite substantial investments in education and early-stage tech ventures, Albania has yet to produce startups with international visibility and sustainable growth. This research analyzes survey data collected from four co-working spaces in Tirana (using purposive sampling) to assess how national cultural values manifest in these spatial environments and impact the scalability of entrepreneurial initiatives. Findings reveal specific cultural barriers embedded in the daily practices and social interactions of co-working communities, which may constrain or delay innovation. The paper concludes with strategic recommendations for enhancing the socio-spatial design and cultural adaptability of co-working ecosystems in developing urban contexts. By situating co-working spaces within broader urban and territorial frameworks, this study contributes to the discourse on how socio-cultural innovation can drive inclusive and resilient urban development in low-to-medium income countries.

### **Keywords**

*Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions, co-working spaces, entrepreneurial innovation, Albanian startup ecosystem, urban transformation, national culture and entrepreneurship*

# COOPERATIVE DWELLING AND PARTICIPATIVE GOVERNANCE

## The Wogeno case in Zurich

**Dr. Luca LEZZERINI**  
POLIS University,

### **Abstract**

Zurich's dwelling costs are very high, and it seems that many city centres are facing the same issue. According to the Smart City Index 2024 from IMD, one of the most recurring issues is the high cost of housing in cities, not only in Zurich, which has been ranking first in this index for many years, but also in many other cities. However, it is precisely in Zurich that a significant, long-running case study exists about cooperative and affordable housing. The research examines the case of Wogeno cooperative housing, investigating its governance model and its integration into a broader network of similar experiences. Started in 1981, it cannot be called a new model, but it is undoubtedly a reliable one, ensuring lower costs for housing and effective management of complex condominium facilities, which include not only apartments but also commercial and professional spaces. The research is based on a literature review and direct on-site evaluation, as well as discussions with key players and ordinary people who are stakeholders. The research summarises all these materials and defines a SWOT analysis, as well as a simple roadmap to replicate the experience elsewhere. Additionally, the impact on urban planning and urban policies is examined, and summary guidelines are provided for both.

### **Keywords**

*Cohousing, sustainable dwelling, urban planning, urban policies, governance*

## **REIMAGINING URBAN LIVING:**

### **Affordable, Sustainable, and Innovative Housing Solutions**

Adapting to urban change, demographic and environmental challenges through energy-efficient design and inclusive housing policies to build resilient communities.

**Erez ELLA**

**BEZALEL ACADEMY of Arts & Design, Israel**

#### **Abstract**

In response to rising housing needs, changing demographics, and climatic challenges, we acknowledge the need to challenge the standard Housing typology. Housing, usually synonym to dull and standard design, one that is unimaginative, made to basic living standards and often associated with building types such as the mundane, contextually isolated tower blocks. As architectural scholars and practitioners, we strive to develop innovative architectural and urban models that combine affordability, community, and sustainability. The intention here is to create engaging architecture that responds to the diverse needs of a wide demographic and be effortlessly part of urban context, embracing topography and climatic conditions, proving both a sustainable and humane environment for dwelling, while at the same time acknowledging the market demands and system as well as align with the developer's perspective. Overall housing is part of a multi-layered system that needs to be approached simultaneously and work together with multiple stakeholders and bodies, on which housing is made of and made for. This paper, through housing and planning projects, seeks to demonstrate how challenging the housing typology and embracing a wider design vision, has the ability to create quality housing resilient, inclusive neighbourhoods by linking architecture with social, economic, and environmental ambitions.

#### **Keywords**

*Housing, Sustainable, Mixed-Use Development, Inclusive Urbanism, Residential*



## THE RIGHT TO PROPERTY AND THE ALBANIAN DILEMMA OF URBAN DEVELOPMENT

Jon KOLA  
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### Abstract

As Albania undergoes rapid urban transformation, tensions between individual property rights and public interest have become increasingly visible. This article explores the legal and constitutional dimensions of the right to property in the context of urban development, with a focus on expropriation and informal housing. Drawing on Article 41 of the Albanian Constitution and Article 1 of Protocol No. 1 of the European Convention on Human Rights, the paper debates whether current legal frameworks and practices strike a fair balance between the state's need to modernize cities and citizens' right to enjoy secure ownership. Case law derived from recent urban projects in Tirana illustrate how property owners, especially those in informal or marginalized areas, often face legal uncertainty, inadequate compensation, and limited participation in decision-making. The article argues for more transparent procedures, just compensation and inclusive planning to ensure that Albania's urban future does not come at the cost of constitutional rights.

### Keywords

*Property, constitutional rights, ownership, urban development, informality, expropriation*

**FROM INFORMAL SPRAWL TO GATED COMMUNITIES:  
Evaluating Spatial and Functional Integration in Southeastern Tirana**

**Alba GORA  
POLIS University, Albania**

**Abstract**

This study examines urban sprawl in southeastern Tirana, focusing on post-2007 developments along the Outer Ring Road and the Tirana–Elbasan highway, areas dominated by newly formalized, gated residential communities. The aim is to assess whether these interventions contribute to a more functional and integrated urban structure or represent a continuation of previous uncoordinated expansion. The central hypothesis argues that recent formal developments do not mark a shift toward cohesive urban transformation but instead reproduce spatial fragmentation and monofunctionality in a different form. Methodologically, the research integrates GIS-based spatial analysis with functional assessment, using structural indicators (Patch Density, Compactness Index, Built-up Area Ratio) and evaluating service accessibility through a 15-minute walking threshold. Findings show that these new developments remain disconnected from both the urban core and surrounding informal settlements, offer limited access to basic services, and lack functional diversity. While older informal areas show relatively better connectivity due to their proximity to central networks, they too lack integration and are not functionally sustainable. Overall, the study concludes that urban sprawl in southeastern Tirana has not been resolved but reshaped through formalization, reinforcing existing spatial inequalities and calling for a more coordinated and inclusive urban planning approach.

**Keywords**

*Urban Sprawl, Formal Development, Informal Settlements, Gated Communities, Spatial Fragmentation, Service Accessibility*

# **UNDERSTANDING THE CHALLENGES WITHIN NEW MODELS OF POST-DISASTER, SMART URBANISM:**

## **The Case of the Tirana Riverside Project**

**Ervin GOCI, University of TIRANA, Albania**

**Suzanne HARRIS-BRANDTS, CARLETON University, Canada**

### **Abstract**

Durrës has been a city in constant transformation since the 1990s, particularly following the fall of communism in Albania. Uncontrolled construction, particularly in the tourist zones, especially along the coastal zone extending to Kavaja, was triggered by this important historical turning point. Throughout this entire period, extending from the 1990s up to the present day, the city has experienced an uncontrollable and ongoing era of urban transition, losing some essential aspects of its historic identity and gradually becoming a hybrid city that combines elements of tourism, informality, and endangered history. Once recognised widely as a clear representation of a city with a history spanning thousands of years, Durrës is now increasingly a site of conflict between urban expansion, cultural heritage, mass tourism, and real estate investment. All these transformations have significantly and visibly affected the character of the city, overshadowing its historical core and its valuable cultural heritage, thereby deeply impacting its image and the values it embodies. Despite the fact that Durrës has undergone substantial physical and social changes over the years, it has consistently managed to attract a large number of tourists and investors from around the world. Through a variety of targeted and multifaceted marketing strategies intended to highlight and promote the city's attractive features, this phenomenon has effectively sparked major reactions on social media platforms. However, this promotional approach tends to overshadow the deeper and underlying issues that the city is currently facing, positioning it as an urban space in a transitional state between modernity and postmodernity. The aim of the research is to carefully analyse how the city's physical and symbolic image has changed over time to reflect its current situation and what this transformation ultimately represents in relation to the broad social and economic context in which it is taking place.

### **Keywords**

*Smart Urbanism, Sustainable, Resilient Construction, Pandemic Proof Design*

## **04 - Demography and Economy**

### **Demographic challenges and models in Albania and beyond**

**Territorial governance and systematic management / Cities as sustainable service systems / Smart city management / Social enterprises as drivers of territorial development / City-verse and new cybernetics: AI, VR, AR, and the Metaverse.**

**Circular and regenerative economy practices in the Western Balkans / Implementation of the Green Agenda for the Western Balkans: challenges and opportunities for resilient communities.**

**PLANNING FOR RESILIENCE:  
experiences in DRR and Planning in Albania**

**Dr. Ledio ALLKJA, Prof. Emeritus. Dr. Pantoleon SKAYANNIS  
POLIS University, Albania**

**Abstract**

Resilience has now become a guiding concept for policy-making related to spatial development and especially with regard to disaster risk. The question of disaster risk reduction requires a new vision of planning that breaks away from traditional views and schools of thought. This new approach to planning necessitates several prerequisites to transform or break through traditional deterministic thinking, which operates under a paradigm where planners aimed to control the future, towards a paradigm of living with the future. On the connection of these two, concepts that may be useful come to be articulated, such as a) resilience, b) understanding complexity and wickedness, c) the use of prospective investigation, i.e. foresight, etc. In other words, when making a plan and having to deal with the climate crisis and disasters, we must deal with the uncertainty that exists by taking planning risks. Risks are not only about whether we will have and what kind of disasters in the future, but also about whether our decisions on scientific techniques for dealing with undetermined future phenomena will be effective. This paper focuses on the concept of resilience within planning. Following a theoretical discussion leads to a framework for analysing planning and Disaster Risk Reduction systems. Albania is used as a case study to test the framework and illustrate the challenges and potentials of planning in achieving and building a resilient (territorial and institutional) system.

**Keywords**

*Resilience, Spatial Planning, Disaster Risk Reduction, Uncertainty*

# THE IMPACT OF DEMOGRAPHY CHANGES TO THE NATIONAL ECONOMY, CASE STUDY ALBANIA

**Prof. Asoc. Dr. Godiva REMBECI, Armela REKA, Leonora HAXHIU**  
**POLIS University, Albania**

## **Abstract**

Demographic changes are necessary and important to be measured and followed, because they are associated with major implications in economic development issues and directly influence labor markets, productivity and long-term economic growth. Challenges such as low birth rates, internal and external migratory movements, population displacement from rural to urban areas, increasing urbanization rates, increasing demand for housing, etc. are some of the major issues that must not only be assessed in quantitative terms but also taken care of to minimize their negative effects. An aging population may strain pension systems and healthcare infrastructure while reducing the labor force, whereas a youthful population can present a demographic dividend if accompanied by sufficient investment in education and job creation. Furthermore, migration can offset labor shortages but may also raise concerns about social integration and wage competition. Demographic changes also have a direct impact on key sectors of urban planning, particularly social housing and public transport, which are fundamental to ensuring sustainable and inclusive development. Increased urbanization and internal migration, mainly from rural to urban areas, are creating a new housing demand profile. The elderly population increasingly seeks accessible and affordable housing solutions, while young families often face difficulties in accessing the private housing market due to rising property prices and rents. This has led to growing demand for social housing and underscored the need for revised housing policies that reflect demographic shifts and ensure equal access for vulnerable populations. Additionally, urban population growth places significant pressure on existing transport infrastructure, calling for more inclusive and adaptive public transport systems that meet the evolving mobility needs of diverse demographic groups. This paper aims to examine the impact of demographic changes on key economic indicators, highlighting both opportunities and challenges. Data from population's censuses of 2011, 2023 and macroeconomic statistics published by INSTAT will be used as a source of information to measure and analyze the demographic changes and its impact to the development of national economy. Geographic Information Systems (GIS) will also be used to spatially analyze the relationship between demographic trends and housing demand, with a particular focus on social housing. Through GIS-based mapping, the study will identify areas with high population aging, internal migration influx and housing affordability gaps, helping to highlight spatial disparities and support evidence-based policy recommendations for more inclusive and targeted housing strategies.

## **Keywords**

*Population, Demography Indicators, Economy, Urban Planning, Social Housing, GIS*

## URBAN TRANSFORMATION AND REGIONAL DISPARITIES IN ALBANIA - From Transitional Chaos to EU-Oriented Cohesion

Dr. Fiona IMAMI, Anila BEJKO, Prof. Dr. Besnik ALIAJ  
POLIS University, Albania

### Abstract

Over three decades, Albania has undergone profound socio-spatial transformations shaped by systemic transitions, institutional reform, and evolving development paradigms. This paper traces the trajectory of urban development in Albania from 1992 to 2025 and situates these processes within the broader political economy of European integration and cohesion policy alignment. The paper builds on the key urban development typologies and governance, illustrating how informal urbanism, migration flows, remittance economies, and state-led territorial reforms have co-produced fragmented spatial outcomes. From the collapse of centralized planning and chaotic sprawl in the 1990s, to partial formalization in the 2000s and speculative densification in the 2010s, Albania's urban landscape has undergone successive waves of restructuring marked by fragile governance and enduring disparities. These are reflected in socio-economic inequality, environmental degradation, uneven service provision, and spatial injustice—raising critical questions about Albania's capacity to align with EU Cohesion Policy frameworks and absorb structural funds. While the EU's 2021–2027 Cohesion Policy promotes inclusive growth, territorial convergence, and climate resilience, it simultaneously demands strong administrative capacity, transparency, and long-term strategic vision. Yet the future of cohesion policy itself is becoming increasingly uncertain. Mounting geopolitical instability, shifting EU priorities in response to security, migration, and energy crises, and a more restricted multiannual budget have led to growing pressure on cohesion allocations, especially for newer and prospective member states. At the same time, competition for funds is intensifying, accompanied by stricter performance-based conditionalities. For Albania—where urban and regional development is shaped by fragmented political cycles and weak institutional continuity—these dynamics present significant risks. Cohesion readiness thus extends beyond technical capacity, demanding deep governance reform and a shift from short-termism to long-term, shared territorial strategies. As such, building on a combination of spatial analysis, institutional review, and regional comparative perspectives, the paper argues for the urgent need to shift toward a shared territorial development vision that transcends sectoral fragmentation and municipal isolation.

### Keywords

*Disparities, Cohesion Policy, Urban Transformation, Governance Challenges*

# **FRACTURED JUSTICE, CONTESTED SPACE**

## **Mapping Tirana's Post-Socialist Urban Transition**

**Anila BEJKO, Prof. Dr. Besnik ALIAJ, Dr. Fiona IMAMI,**  
**POLIS University, Albania**

### **Abstract**

This paper examines the spatiotemporal dimensions of justice in Tirana, Albania, a city emblematic of the volatile urban transitions shaping the post-socialist Balkans. Three decades after the collapse of state socialism, Tirana's urban landscape is a palimpsest of competing ideologies—from chaotic, informal growth to ambitious, globally oriented master plans promoting sustainability and densification. While these new plans espouse ideals of greening and public benefit, their implementation often deepens existing inequalities and creates new forms of exclusion. This paper argues that understanding these contradictory dynamics requires a methodological approach capable of capturing both the structural patterns of injustice and their lived, temporal experience. We present a mixed-methods framework integrating (1) critical analysis of planning documents, (2) spatial analysis using Geographic Information Systems (GIS) to map environmental and developmental inequalities, and (3) qualitative interviews with residents and key stakeholders. Our initial findings reveal three key contours of injustice: the inequitable distribution of environmental amenities and hazards, the temporal displacement of communities and memories through rapid, top-down development, and the persistent gap between the rhetoric and reality of public participation. By layering GIS data with narrative accounts, we demonstrate how spatio-temporal justice is not a static outcome but a continuous process of contestation. The case of Tirana thus offers critical insights into the challenges of forging just and sustainable urban futures in a landscape marked by profound historical ruptures and the encroaching pressures of neoliberal urbanism.

### **Keywords**

*Spatial Justice, Post-Socialist Urbanism, Tirana, Mixed-Methods Research, Sustainable Transitions*



**URBAN PLANNING IN THE POLYCRISES ERA AS “THE SUBSTANCE OF THINGS HOPED FOR”:  
Scientific Research, Teaching, and Spatial Design in the Context of POLIS University**

**Prof. Asoc. Dr. Llazar KUMARAKU**  
**POLIS University, Albania**

**Abstract**

This presentation approaches urban planning as a process that transcends technical logic, evolving into an act of collective hope. Drawing upon Edoardo Persico's notion of architecture as “the substance of things hoped for,” as interpreted by Franco Purini through the theological lens of Saint Paul's definition of hope – something unseen but awaited with faith – the paper reflects on how universities, and in particular POLIS University, can serve as active platforms for mediating urban futures. An international, interdisciplinary, and inter-sectoral approach – shaped by research experience within the doctoral program in “Architecture and Urban Planning” – intertwines scientific inquiry, pedagogical practice, and spatial design to explore how sustainable and inclusive urban models are generated in contexts marked by compound challenges. The analysis integrates POLIS's concrete practices in urban studies, teaching methodologies, and scientific research, treating each as distinct forms of knowledge and spatial production. Through a critical reading of institutional experiences and a hermeneutic approach to planning as concept and practice, the paper argues that urban space is not merely the outcome of projects, but a field of action where education, research, and interaction with non-academic institutions contribute to the enhancement of spatial quality and to a shared hope for improved habitats—and thus, for a dignified life. This contribution aims to stimulate dialogue on the transformative role of higher education and urban planning in facing the era of overlapping crises (Polycrises), such as war, climate change, social tensions, and migration in today's and tomorrow's cities.

**Keywords**

*POLIS University, Polycrises Era, Resilience, Research, Teaching, Urban Planning*

# **MAPPING THE INVISIBLE BOUNDARIES**

## **A Data-Driven Approach to City Delineation**

**Andia VLLAMASI, Tamara LUARASI, Luca LEZZERINI**  
**POLIS University, Albania**

### **Abstract**

According to estimates, 67% of the world's population is expected to live in urban and peri-urban areas by 2040, primarily due to ongoing migration from rural areas. This pattern is also very noticeable in Albania, where a highly populated metropolis that frequently stretches beyond its administrative borders is the result of rapid urbanisation.

For a long time, researchers and policymakers have struggled to define urban areas. Some of the traditional methods rely on administrative borders, which often fail to capture the actual economic and spatial dynamics of cities. Others depend on urban morphology, missing the population behaviours and needs. To better understand and manage the urban dynamics, this research aims to try a different method for calculating Tirana's borders. This method will be based on population distribution, utilising a density-based clustering technique in conjunction with a digital representation of the urban form. In comparison to the original administrative boundaries, can a digital, data-driven, density-based algorithm provide a more functionally correct and policy-relevant delineation of metropolitan areas in a mid-sized city like Tirana? And how can we encode the urban morphology in a digitalised representation that can be both fed into an algorithm and understood by urban planners?

This project aims to develop a machine learning-based approach that clusters buildings into urban zones defined by metrics such as density, urban morphology, and geographic distribution. This approach will lead to the identification of a group of strongly interconnected urban clusters that better represent the physical environment and distribution of economic activity in Tirana. These groups will reflect the real functional extent of the city, taking into account its urban form, and excluding low-density, outlying zones. Additionally, we believe that the vertical land indicator will provide fresh perspectives on Tirana's urban polycentricity and compactness, which will influence the design of spatial policies and infrastructure development.

These newly drawn lines will serve as a foundation for further study, enabling more accurate plans for sustainable development, more focused urban planning, quick detection and reaction to change, as well as novel opportunities for economic analysis and policymaking.

### **Keywords**

*Rapid Urbanization, Clustering, Urban, Machine Learning, Density*

## LAND DISTRIBUTION AND CONTROL IN URBAN AREAS

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### **Abstract**

The distribution and control of land in urban areas remains an ongoing challenge in the spatial development of Albanian cities, particularly in the metropolitan area of Albania, Tirana. This study addresses the dynamics of land use in the capital city, analyzing the interplay between property ownership structures, informal urban development, and efforts toward integrated planning. Tirana, as the largest urban center in Albania, has experienced rapid urban growth since the 1990s, accompanied by high property fragmentation, uncontrolled construction, and difficulties in implementing urban plans.

The research highlights the challenges associated with the lack of coordination between local authorities and private landowners, informal property registration, and the absence of effective mechanisms for land readjustment or control. Through the analysis of planning documents and specific case studies in Tirana's urban periphery, the article argues that sustainable land control requires deep institutional reforms, digitization of the cadastral system, involvement of local communities, and the development of policies that balance public interest with private property rights. This study contributes to the literature on Albanian urban geography, emphasizing the need for a more flexible, data-driven, and participatory approach to land management in the country's urban areas.

### **Keywords**

*Property fragmentation, Urban land management, Land distribution, Urban planning, Informal development*

## **Urbanization and Inclusive Mobility The Challenges of Marginalized Groups in Accessing Public Transport**

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### **Abstract**

Recent migratory movements and economic growth have caused several Albanian cities to undergo rapid urban expansion. While this urbanization has contributed to economic and social progress, it has also produced challenges related to inequality and limited accessibility. Despite Albania's notable development, certain segments of the population remain marginalized due to race, religion, ethnicity, or occupation. These groups often face difficulties in accessing essential public services, including healthcare, housing, and particularly public transport, which is a key factor in ensuring social inclusion and equal opportunities.

Spatial justice and inclusive mobility are central to sustainable urban development. In alignment with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG 9 and SDG 11), this study applies a GIS-based spatial analysis to evaluate accessibility and proximity to major public transport nodes and basic services. By integrating spatial and demographic data, the research identifies barriers that limit equitable access for marginalized communities. The study aims to support evidence-based policies that promote sustainable urban growth, equal investment in public transport, and inclusive spatial planning for all social groups.

### **Keywords**

*Marginalized Groups, Urbanization, Inclusive Mobility, SDG 9, SDG 11, Public Transport, GIS, Spatial Justice.*

## **05 - Urban & Natural Environment**

**Environmental problems, climate issues and other environmental challenges that affect the quality of life in settlements**

**Sustainability and resilience in the natural environment / Adaptive planning / Complexity in territorial development.**

**Air, water, and soil pollution / Ecosystem services for protected and urban areas / Strategic environmental assessments / Nature-based solutions / Urban biodiversity assessment.**

# **ECONOMIC, SOCIAL, ENVIRONMENTAL AND LANDSCAPE VALUES OF URBAN AGRICULTURE AND ITS CONTRIBUTE IN THE SUSTAINABILITY OF THE CITIES AND OTHER INHABITED**

**Prof. Emeritus. Dr. Sherif LUSHAJ**  
**POLIS University, Albania**

## **Abstract**

Urban agriculture plays a significant role in producing agricultural and livestock products, employment and income through the cultivation of urban and peri-urban land. This article will address the development level of urban agriculture in Albania, its opportunities, economic, social, environmental and urban landscape values and the global experience. Globally, urban agriculture is constantly expanding, because provides 10-20% of agricultural and livestock products. This article analyzes the urban land resources available in Albania and explores the opportunities for developing urban agriculture, focusing on its economic, environmental, human health and landscape benefits. The study has been conducted in the cities of Vlora, Tirana, Elbasan, Fier, Orikum and Korça from 2021 to 2024. The findings on urban land production, potential and development opportunities are impressive, especially in the production of olives, oranges, vegetables, vineyards, medical plants, decorative plants, etc. Albania has the terrestrial resources to develop this sector. To ensure the promotion of the urban agriculture, the central and local authorities should develop and implement strategic action plans, ensuring the integration into economic, social, and environmental policies.

## **Keywords**

*Urban Agriculture, Periurban Area, Agricultural Products, Food Safety, Risks*

## ENVIRONMENTAL CHALLENGES FROM CONSTITUTIONAL PERSPECTIVE

### Albanian case

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#### **Abstract**

Environmental and Climate Constitutionalism emerges as an immediate necessity to be at the center of societal focus, as it is, firstly, directly linked to the quality of life and life itself — the most fundamental human value — and secondly, as a global challenge that, if not tackled on local, national, regional, and global levels, cannot be overcome by any society. The Constitution of Albania (1998) provides, in two articles — specifically Article 56, the right to information regarding environmental protection, and Article 59, letters “d” and “dh” — the right to a healthy and ecologically suitable environment for present and future generations, as well as the rational use of forests, waters, pastures, and other natural resources based on the principle of sustainable development. These are defined as social rights or objectives to be realized within the possibilities of the state and are not subject to judicial protection (Article 59/2). The confrontation with these constitutional provisions raises the need for an analysis of whether the right to a healthy environment is sufficiently guaranteed in the Albanian Constitution and whether the judiciary faces normative obstacles in enforcing environmental standards. This paper aims to draw conclusions regarding the national standards required for the right to a healthy environment, as well as the need for the Albanian judiciary to assess and recognize violations of environmental rights (biodiversity, ecosystems, nature). Furthermore, it concludes on the necessity for environmental constitutional amendments, given that the current Constitution does not adequately address contemporary international developments from the perspective of environmental protection.

#### **Keywords**

*Reform, Environment, Court, Rights, Constitution, Environmental Assessments.*

## **SUSTAINABLE APPROACHES TO ENVIRONMENTAL Challenges in the Ibër/Ibar River Basin through Integrated Water Resources Management**

**Gresa FERRI, Damir GASHI, Prof. Dr. Mihone KEROLLI MUSTAFA, Prof. Asst. Afete MUSLIU  
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### **Abstract**

The research addresses sustainable urban development and environmental resilience using integrated water resources management (IWRM) in the Ibër/Ibar River basin in Kosovo. It provides an integrated view of water, soil, and air quality in Mitrovica, Kosovo, with an emphasis on the influence of industrial and communal activities in Mitrovica, a historically known mining area. Based on the traditional sampling of soil and water combined with innovative real-time monitoring, the research evaluates the levels of soil contamination of heavy metals like cadmium, lead, and zinc, from industrial mining waste located within the town limits, the particulate matter in the air and real-time water quality parameters using LoRaWAN network of connected sampling nodes, testing the physical and chemical water parameters - pH, Dissolved Oxygen, Salinity, Oxygen Redox Potential, Conductivity, Salinity and Total Dissolved Solids. Results highlight the critical environmental threats related to water quality and show seasonal patterns in river discharge, underscoring risks related to droughts and floods. Advanced statistical and predictive modelling additionally identifies hotspots of contamination, supporting informed planning and policymaking for the local and central authorities. The research promotes sustainable industrial and communal practices, demonstrating the critical role of technological innovation for resilient urban and territorial development.

### **Keywords**

*Integrated Water Management, Resilient Development, Environmental Monitoring, Sustainable Practices, Real-time Data, Urban Planning*



# **ASSESSING THE IMPACT OF URBAN FORM ON AIR QUALITY**

## **The Case Study of the Ish-Fusha e Aviaconit Neighborhood**

**Dr. Gentjan HYKAJ, POLIS University, Albania**  
**Greta SHEHU, Co-PLAN, Institute for Habitat Development, Albania**

### **Abstract**

Air pollution is a leading environmental and public health concern, contributing to approximately 8.1 million premature deaths annually worldwide. Rapid and unplanned urbanization, particularly in densely populated areas, is a major factor influencing air quality. This study investigates the impact of urban morphology on air quality in the Ish-Fusha e Aviaconit neighbourhood in Tirana, Albania. The area, which has undergone significant development in recent years, presents a valuable case for analysing how urban form affects pollutant concentration and air circulation. By combining air quality monitoring with spatial analysis using GIS tools, the study assesses key factors such as building density, road networks, population distribution, green spaces, and the availability of air corridors. Field measurements were conducted using the Aeroqual S500 device to monitor pollutants (PM<sub>2.5</sub>, PM<sub>10</sub>, NO<sub>2</sub>, and CO<sub>2</sub>), while urban temperature and CO<sub>2</sub> was recorded with a Testo-435. Vegetation coverage was analyzed using NDVI data from Sentinel-2 satellite imagery. The collected data were further processed through spatial interpolation in ArcGIS and statistically analyzed using SPSS to explore correlations between pollutant concentrations and temperature. The results reveal that compact, high-density urban forms with limited vegetation and obstructed air corridors are associated with higher levels of air pollution. Subzones with closely spaced high-rise buildings exhibited the highest concentrations of PM<sub>2.5</sub> and NO<sub>2</sub>, while CO<sub>2</sub> levels were elevated in areas dominated by vehicular traffic and poor ventilation. Furthermore, Pearson correlation analysis indicated a positive relationship between CO<sub>2</sub> concentrations and temperature, suggesting that areas with higher emissions also tend to retain more heat, likely due to restricted airflow and limited green cover. Conversely, subzones with lower building density, greater vegetative cover, and better spatial openness displayed significantly lower pollutant concentrations. Temperature measurements confirmed urban heat island effects, with denser and less vegetated areas retaining more heat. NDVI analysis demonstrated a strong inverse correlation between vegetation density and air pollution levels. These findings demonstrate the strong interconnection between urban morphology, air quality and temperature, reinforcing the need for urban planning approaches that integrate nature-based solutions and prioritize spatial ventilation to promote healthier, more resilient urban environments.

### **Keywords**

*Urban Morphology, Air Quality, Urbanization*

**THE PRICE OF PROGRESS:**  
**Unveiling the Environmental Cost of Urbanization in Tirana through Life Cycle Assessment**

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**POLIS University, Albania**

**Abstract**

Urbanization in Tirana, like in many rapidly growing cities, poses significant environmental sustainability challenges—particularly within the construction sector. This study conducts a cradle-to-grave Life Cycle Assessment (LCA) of a representative residential building to quantify its energy use, material flows, environmental impacts, and external (eco-)costs throughout its life cycle. The analysis reveals that the production phase—dominated by materials like concrete, cement, and bricks—accounts for the majority of the impact, contributing €146.95 per m<sup>2</sup>, or approximately 89% of total eco-costs. The operation phase, including energy and water consumption, adds €6.19 per m<sup>2</sup>, while the end-of-life stage, particularly landfilling of inert waste, contributes €11.99 per m<sup>2</sup>. In total, the life cycle eco-cost amounts to €165.12 per m<sup>2</sup> of gross floor area, representing approximately 13% of the direct purchase cost (€1275/m<sup>2</sup>). These findings highlight the critical environmental burden of current urbanization patterns, emphasizing the need for circular construction practices, energy-efficient building design, and adaptive reuse strategies in Tirana's housing sector. By quantifying environmental externalities in monetary terms, the study supports data-driven policy interventions aligned with Albania's sustainability goals and the broader transition to resilient, low-impact urban development in the Western Balkans.

**Keywords**

*Life Cycle Assessment (LCA), Eco-costs, Urbanization, Residential Construction, Tirana*

## CHILDREN AND PUBLIC SPACE

### The role of urban structure in safety, mobility and play in residential areas of Tirana

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#### Abstract

Rapid urban development and demographic shifts are increasingly transforming the urban environment, both in its physical form and in its social dynamics. Residential areas accommodate a large number of children, who use shared public spaces to spend time together, play and carry out their daily activities. However, the fast pace of development appears to be “pushing” children out of public space, which no longer adequately supports their needs. This study focuses on analyzing public spaces in residential areas to understand perceptions of safety and explore how these spaces can be readapted to encourage the inclusion of children as citizens with the full right to engage with urban space. The methodology integrates three perspectives on public space: that of the researcher, of the parents and of the children. The methods used include structured questionnaires with parents, video recordings from the children’s perspective and open interviews with them, as well as on-site observations based on the theories of Jan Gehl and Jane Jacobs. Based on the questionnaire results, two case studies areas were selected: one residential zone within Administrative Unit 7 and another within Unit 14 in Tirana, where the other methods were applied. The data collected were analyzed to highlight the spatial attributes that make spaces child-friendly and to explore how space can be adapted to support children’s development and independent play. The research identified five key attributes of public spaces that support children’s inclusion: 1) active edges and visual interaction; 2) visibility and continuity of movement; 3) urban forms with pockets, courtyards and transitional spaces; 4) integration of parent’s activities with children’s play; and 5) spatial variety and diversity of elements. These characteristics directly influence the perceived safety, independent mobility and creative play of children. The study argues that urban planning that takes into account children’s physical scale, perspective and creativity can make public spaces more inclusive for all users. The recommendations include concrete interventions related to urban form, materials used and the promotion of mixed-use environments to foster flexible, open-ended spaces within the shared fabric of community life. In this way, public space becomes an environment where children are not merely spectators, but active participants in urban life.

#### Keywords

*Children, Public space, Safety, Independent mobility, Unstructured play, Inclusive planning*

## DECENTRALIZATION OF TOURISM AN INTER-REGIONAL APPROACH

Hamez TREZHNJEVA, Albania  
Dr. Doriana MUSAJ, POLIS University, Albania

### Abstract

This research investigates the relationship between cultural heritage and urban development in the Tirana region, focusing on historical fortifications, ancient trails, human habitats and their surrounding landscapes. It aims to reassess how Albania's rich historical environment—from Antiquity and the Byzantine era to the Ottoman period—has been affected by contemporary urbanization and shifting socio-economic dynamics. Using spatial analysis and on-site documentation, the study examines key heritage sites, including the castles of Ndroq, Petrelë, Krujë, and others, evaluating their historical evolution, geographical significance, and environmental context. The findings highlight the potential of these sites to serve as catalysts for community regeneration and balanced regional development, particularly through the promotion of cultural and eco-tourism, as well as improved digital accessibility. The research proposes a decentralized tourism model that integrates cultural preservation with recreational and sustainable economic uses. By merging historical analysis with urban and tourism planning, it advocates for a multi-scalar policy framework that embeds cultural heritage into broader socio-economic strategies, guiding Tirana toward a more inclusive, sustainable, and culturally aware development path.

### Keywords

*Tourism, Sustainability, Fortifications, Hinterland, Heritage, Decentralization, Spatial Planning*

**ALBANIA FOREST FUTURES**  
**Re-envisioning forests as catalysts for environmental  
resilience and sustainable development**

**Erez ELLA, BEZALEL ACADEMY of Arts & Design, Israel**  
**Dan HANDEL, University of HAIFA, Israel**

**Abstract**

Albania's vast forest areas are facing a serious environmental challenge. Fragmentation, unregulated logging, and weak oversight have resulted in biodiversity loss, land degradation, and the breakdown of essential ecosystem services that support life in both urban and rural areas. Albania Forest Futures is a research and planning initiative that reimagines forests as strategic, multifunctional assets supporting environmental resilience and sustainable growth. Rather than passive, unregulated landscapes, forests are identified as strategic assets in shaping Albania's social, ecological, and urban future. The initiative proposes a multi-level approach combining better forest governance, environmental assessments and certification, and a sustainable timber industry, especially cross-laminated timber (CLT), offering low-carbon alternatives in construction. With approximately half of Albania's carbon emissions resulting from construction, this shift holds transformative potential for environmental impact, and sustainable urban development. Aligned with circular economy principles and EU environmental standards, the initiative envisions the country's forests as key ecological infrastructure that supports environmental resilience and sustainable development through layered strategy integrating improved governance, strategic assessments, and sustainable timber industries like CLT. Aiming to reduce carbon emissions from construction, enhance urban biodiversity, provide innovative building solutions and foster green jobs, it calls for a cultural and policy shift to recognize forests as active agents in Albania's future development and growth. Albania Forest Futures envisions forests not as unused or disused resources but as ecological infrastructure critical to Albania's long-term urban and environment resilience.

**Keywords**

*Sustainability, Resilience, Cross-laminated timber (CLT), Forest, Urban, Architecture*

## ART IN PUBLIC SPACES Creative Cultural Productions

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### Abstract

What is an urban space? What is culture, street art and vandalism? Public art not only brings the audience closer to artistic expression but also enhances the city's aesthetic appeal, which in turn fosters the emotional well-being of its residents and stimulates tourism, ultimately impacting the country's economy. Creating art in public spaces—whether through multidisciplinary festivals like the Festival of Street Performers, book-shaped benches like the “Stolibër” project, urban installations like “Reja – The Cloud”, murals, or initiatives like “The Visual Park” (Car-Free Day transforming neighborhoods into communal engagement spaces)—represents a form of activism. But what is activism? These artistic interventions do not merely entertain or beautify urban spaces; they also serve an educational purpose by addressing themes such as architecture, cultural heritage preservation, environmental awareness, socialization, tourism promotion, economic sustainability, and more. Public space, as a shared domain, should be utilized by and for the community while also being protected by it—yet, it is often vandalized by the very people it serves. But where is the line between activism in public spaces and vandalism? How can an artist make creative use of public space without damaging the city or violating legal regulations? How do we use the space? Do laws governing public art exist? Do we think of public space like a common space and share responsibilities? Let's explore the challenges and opportunities that urban public art offers to artists and communities alike. This analysis will be based on research into personal experiences from the aforementioned projects, as well as insights from collaborators and responsible institutions regarding the authorization, utilization, and preservation of public space for artistic purposes and bring some recommendations.

### Keywords

*Urban spaces, street art, activism, vandalism*

# INTEGRATING LAND-RIVER INTERACTIONS IN THE MARZENEGO RIVER CONTRACT

## A relational approach to water governance

**Sofia BESCHI, Filippo MAGNI**  
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### **Abstract**

Contemporary approaches to river management remain hindered by sectoral fragmentation, insufficient spatial integration, and a persistent separation between land and water governance. Consequently, existing frameworks often fail to adequately address the complex and interdependent environmental, social, and economic challenges posed by river systems. This study explores the operational potential of the land-river interaction framework as an analytical tool to integrate fluvial systems within planning processes. By explicitly clarifying spatial and functional connections between terrestrial and fluvial components, the framework aims to enhance the effectiveness of planning instruments for adaptive and integrated management grounded in a socioecological perspective. The methodology is applied to the Marzenego River in northeastern Italy, characterized by heterogeneous territorial configurations and significant anthropogenic pressures. The case study provides insights into the spatial dimension of land-river interactions and supports ongoing local participatory initiatives, such as the River Contract. The study aims at demonstrating that incorporating land-river interactions enables the identification of latent territorial structures, spatial patterns, and immaterial relations frequently overlooked by conventional sectoral planning. Findings show that this approach supports spatially explicit and context-sensitive interventions that address multifaceted territorial challenges. Ultimately, it contributes to embedding fluvial systems within comprehensive governance frameworks to promote environmental sustainability, social resilience, and adaptive capacity.

### **Keywords**

*Land-river interactions, River contract, Integrated water management, Spatial planning*

# ASSESSING WATER QUALITY AND POLLUTION SOURCES IN THE 'KUNE-VAIN-TALE' LAGOON

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## Abstract

Water resources are of use for all categories in conditions where pollution indicators and toxins are within the approved national and international organisations that enable use as drinking water, agricultural water, or water discharged from economic activities, mainly industrial ones. Other studies, or those taken from the monitoring system at different levels, show that waters of rivers, lakes, seas and reservoirs in the country contain contaminating substances in values that damage the aquatic environment and reduce use values. From analyses performed in drainage pumping station 'Tale', in the city of Lezha, at three monitoring points: before pumping station, after pumping station, and before the sea release for pH inductivity indicators, chlorides, sulphates, phosphates, nitrite, nitrates, ammonia, turbulence, dissolved oxygen, temperature, COD (chemical need for oxygen), coliform, Cu, Pb, Zn, and Cr. It turns out that at the points that we analysed, the parameter content is above the limits allowed for substances such as phosphates and heavy metals. At all three points, they have emerged above the permitted value, as well as high organic loads of BOD and COD. Like physico-chemical parameters and microbiological parameters (e-coli, coliform) indicate considerable faecal pollution. The study performed shows us the impact of urban and agricultural pollution as well as marine salts on water quality.

## Keywords

*Water Quality, Chemical, Biologic Paramters, Physicochemical Parameter, Lagoon*







Tirana Planning Week





