

A Project of the Joint International PhD Program IDAUP  
POLIS University Tirana, Albania – Ferrara University, Italy

## International PhD Workshop-Project 10<sup>th</sup> – 20<sup>th</sup> December 2024

Tutors: Prof Dr. Besnik Aliaj, Prof Asoc. Sotir Dhamo, Prof Pantoleon D. Skayannis, Prof.  
Asoc. Skender Luarasi, Dr. Lllazar Kumaraku, Dr. Malvina Istrefaj, Dr. Doriana Musaj, PhD  
Genti Avdija, PhDc Marsela Demaj

Advisors and invited guests: Prof. Roberto Di Giulio, Prof. Theo Zaffagnini, Dr. Ledian Bregasi

### The Mitigation of Traffic in Tirana through the Formal Reconceptualization of the City



Image by Lorisa Mano, Sara Shehu, Arzhen Brari, Lediano Hasanaaj

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### The Aims and Structure of the PhD Workshop

This doctoral research workshop is organized under the framework of the International “Double Degree” PhD by POLIS University (Tirana Albania) & Ferrara University (Italy), in the fields of Architecture and Urban Planning. This is an interdisciplinary workshop and builds on the ongoing research work undertaken under the Department of the Scientific Research within the Faculty of Research and Development and the Observatory of the Mediterranean Basin (OMB) research unit, at POLIS University. This workshop focuses on the rehabilitation, preservation, and transformation of built environment on a regional, urban, and architectural scale. The research initiative is structured by 3 moments throughout the first academic year.

1. The annual Workshop in Albania/Polis, after 2 preparatory weeks in Tirana, which concludes with strategic drawings and concepts regarding the selected site.
2. The annual research project after the workshop, where PhD researchers work independently on individual articles.
3. The summary of work via an annual publication/journal: OMB Journal of Polis/Unife.

Each year this workshop’s research activity is aimed at a specific topic. Students develop their capacity to operate critically and creatively within a given architectural and planning context by developing theoretical tools and research paths. This workshop of the 40<sup>th</sup> PhD cycle, will focus on the mitigation of traffic in Tirana through a formal conceptualization of the city.

### Practical Research Problem

Tirana, the capital and largest city of Albania, is experiencing significant traffic congestion due to a combination of rapid urbanization and population growth on the one hand and inadequate infrastructure, inefficient public transport, and poor traffic management on the other. The existing infrastructure, which was designed and built for a smaller population, is unable to cope with the increase in the number of vehicles, leading to longer travel times and increased pollution. A limited public transport on the one hand and the intense urbanization concentrated toward the center on the other hand has led to an unsustainable urban congestion. One way to address this problem would be to expand the current road network, improve public transport and parking. However, while recognizing the necessary utility of such solutions, in this workshop, we will focus on the mitigation of traffic through the reconfiguration of the urban form. Such a strategy does not oppose or disregard the above-mentioned solutions, but rather *precedes* and *frames* them, thus providing an urban *background* or *context* for their implementation. The result of this workshop is *this* context.

### Theoretical Research Problem

The problem is not simply quantitative, but, more importantly, *qualitative*: it is not one of having too many cars in Tirana, but of having too many cars going in *one* direction, toward *one* center, toward the historic center of the city. And it is not simply a matter of cars but also of *money*, *investment*, and *consumption*, among other fluxes, going only in one direction. The theoretical problem, then, becomes one of reconfiguring these flows – enhancing some while dimming others; “turning on” some while “shutting off” others - through the formal reconfiguration of the urban form. Addressing such a theoretical problem goes beyond the particular traffic problem, by furnishing different strategies of urban qualification, rehabilitation, adaptation and sustainable urban development in general.

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## Hypothesis and Research Question(s)

The research hypothesis of this workshop is that improving the existing urban centers or sites peripheral to and around the historic center, transforming the emerging urban centers, or creating new ones, will decrease the *driving* “drive” toward the historical center, thus *liberating* the latter from increased traffic. *What urban form would these centers take? Which leads to a series of corollary questions: what formal elements of these sites need to be emphasized or dimmed? What formal elements need to be activated or deactivated? What new formal element need to be introduced, or what existing elements need to be erased?*

## Methodology

Such questions marks a methodological moment, which is the very possibility of urban form as an *epistemic category*, in history. To design an urban form one has to know how to read one. The reading involves two interrelated conditions: the *phenomenological* moment of recognizing urban form and a *drawing know-how*, in an expanded sense, that leads to such a moment. To transform specific sites into urban centers, the workshop will first read these sites, through different drawing techniques. The aim is not only to design *an* urban form, but speculate what might constitute urban form *as such*. To this effect the workshop will refer to different epistemes of urban form, in history (refer to the literature review below). For example, how might a particular site be read in terms of Kevin Lynch’s “Image of the city,” Aldo Rossi’s notion of the “urban artifact,” Colin Rowe’s collage, Christopher Alexander’s notion of the “overlap,” Keller Easterling’s concept of “active form” or in terms of Bernard Cache’s concept of “solidarity without proximity,” among others. In other words, methodology is not only what will lead to a result; it is itself the *result* of the workshop.

## Sites

The groups will deal with *strategic sites that evince not simply a traffic problem, but rather the potential to mitigate or liberate the the center of Tirana from traffic by being reconfigured urbanistically*. The sites will consist of existing urban centers peripheral to and around the historic center, potentially emerging urban centers, or mostly new ones. The sites will be of different typologies, such as centers that consist of a *main street*, like Sauk, districts that are at the *edges* of urban development, like Shkoza, or potential emerging centers at the intersection of thoroughfares like the end of the New Boulevard of Tirana. The groups will select, learn and gather information about these sites through site visits, in-class presentations and lectures, and research, as well as by *interpreting them through drawing*, such as sketching, diagramming, collage, parametrics, or a combination of them. The groups will, then, find and focus on a particular *potentially “active form”* (Easterling, 2012), whose transformation or rearrangement might re-configure an existing urban situation.

## Results/Deliverables

1. *One 3D physical model/diagram*
2. *One planimetric representation*
3. *One altimetric representation*
4. *One Perspective*

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## Calendar/Topics

- **10 December, Tuesday**
  - 08.30 – 08.45 | Welcome by Prof. Besnik Aliaj
  - 8:45 – 09:15 | Prof. Skender Luarasi & Prof. Llazar Kumaraku: lecture on the methodological aspects of the workshop.
  - 9.15 – 10.00 | Prof. Godiva Rembeci: Social economic, demographic trends of Albania and Tirana Municipality.
  - 10.00 – 10.15 | Coffee break
  - 10:15 – 11.15 | Presentation of the third-year Urban Planning students on the *the Mitigation of Traffic in Tirana through the Form of the City*.
  - 11:15 – 12.15 | Presentation of the fifth-year architecture students on the *the Mitigation of Traffic in Tirana through the Form of the City*.
  - 12.15 – 13.15 | Lunch Break.
  - 13.15 – 14.15 | Prof. Skender Luarasi, lecture on *the Sustainability of Urban Form, vis-à-vis the Urban Transformations of the City of Tirana, in History*.
  - 14.15 – 14.30 | Coffee break
  - 14.30 – 15.15 | Prof. Panteleon Skayannis: "The possibility of a MetroPolitan the Case of Athens"
  - 15.15 – 15.45 | Sadmira Malaj –Publications done by IDAUP / OMB
  - 15.45 – 16.30 | Discussion on the workshop, Q & A, & conclusion of the 1<sup>st</sup> day
- **11 December, Wednesday**
  - 08.30 – 9:30 | Prof. Sotir Dharmo: "Tirana the missed City"
  - 09.30 – 09:45 | Coffee break
  - 09:45 – 10:30 | Lecture by Mariateresa Giammetti
  - 10.30 – 10.45 | Coffee break
  - 10.45 – 11.45 | Lecture by Prof. Skayannis on the topic of transportation.
  - 11.45 – 13:00 | Lunch Break
  - 13.00 – 16.30 | Trip to the center of Tirana.
- **12 December, Thursday**
  - Site Visits in Tirana
- **13 December, Friday**
  - 08.30 – 16:30 | Project development and desk crits
- **14 December, Saturday**
  - 08.30 – 16:30 | Project development and Intermediate review
- **16 December, Monday**
  - 08.30 – 16:30 | Project development and desk crits
- **17 December, Tuesday**
  - 08.30 – 16:30 | Project development and intermediate review
- **18 December, Wednesday**
  - 08.30 – 16:30 | Project development and desk crits
- **19 December, Thursday**
  - 08.30 – 16:30 | Project development and desk crits
- **20 December, Friday**
  - 13:00 – 15:00 | **Final Presentation**

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## Literature Review

- Charles Waldheim and James Corner, *Landscape Urbanism*
- Leonardo Benevolo, *The Origins of Modern Town Planning*, (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1971).
- Kurt W. Forster, "From Rocca to Civitas: Urban Planning at Sabbioneta," *L'Arte*, (1969)
- Arturo Soria Y Puig Ed., Cerdà: *The Five Bases of the General Theory of Urbanization*, trans. Bernard Miller and Mary Fonsi Fleming, (Madrid: Electa, 1999).
- Camillo Sitte, *The Art of Building Cities: City Building According to Its Artistic Fundamentals*, trans. Charles T. Stewart, (Martino Fine Books, 2013).
- Le Corbusier, *The City of Tomorrow and its Planning*, trans. Frederick Etchells, (New York: Dover Publications, 1987).
- Jane Jacobs, *The Death and Life of the Great American Cities*, (New York: Modern Library, 2011).
- Kevin Lynch, *The Image of the City*, (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1960).
- Christopher Alexander, "The City is not a Tree," *Architectural Forum*, Vol. 122, No 1, April, (1965).
- Rem Koolhaas, "Salvador Dali, The Paranoid Critical Method, Le Corbusier, New York," in *Delirious New York* (New York: Monacelli Press, 1994).
- Aldo Rossi, *The Architecture of the City* (1966), trans. Diane Ghirardo and Joan Ockman (New York and Massachusetts: IAUS, MIT Press, 1982), Chapter I, pp. 29-29-61.
- Anthony Vidler, "The Third Typology," *Oppositions* 7 (Winter 1976): 1-4.
- Oswald Mathias Ungers, "Architecture of the Collective Memory: The Infinite Catalogue of Urban Forms," *Lotus*.
- Sotir Dhamo, Gjergj Thomai, Besnik Aliaj, *Tirana - Qyteti i Munguar*, (Tirane: Polis Press, 2016).
- Keller Easterling, "Take-away," in *Perspecta 45: The Yale Architectural Journal*, (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2012).
- *Zero Piranesi*, Ed. Peter Trummer, *SAC Journal* 5, (Spurbuch Verlag 2019)
- Bernard Cache, "Solidarity without Proximity," *Projectile*

## Previous Applied Research activities developed within the Polis University and specifically Applied Research Department, Observatory of the Mediterranean, OMB Unit

- DHAMO, Sotir. Understanding emergent urbanism. Springer 2021.
- ALIAJ, Besnik, Keida LULO, Genc MYFTIU. *Tirana the Challenge of Urban Development*. Slovenia: Ceti edition, 2003.
- DI RAIMO, A., LEHMANN, S., MELIS, A. (2020) (eds) *Informality through Sustainability Urban Informality Now*, London: Routledge.
- ALIAJ, Besnik, Eranda JANKU, Ledio ALLKJA, Sotir DHAMO. *Albania 2030 Manifesto. A national spatial development vision*. Tirana: POLIS Press, 2014.  
[https://issuu.com/polisuniversity/docs/albania\\_2030](https://issuu.com/polisuniversity/docs/albania_2030)
- KUMARAKU L, PRIFTI J. (2024). Investigating the Formal Relationshi between Infrastructure and the Urban Form in Albanian Settlements. *Civil Engineering and*

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*Architecture*, 2(1), 133 - 140. DOI: 10.13189/cea.2024.12011 (Reviste e Indeksuar ne Scopus)

- Luarasi, Skender. "The Life and Death of Skanderbeg Square: The Chronicle of an Undoing Foretold, In a Hundred Years," *Future Anterior Journal of Historic Preservation, History, Theory and Criticism*, Issue 19.1, 2023, ISSN 1934-6026, Print ISSN 1549-9715.
- Luarasi, Skender and L Lazar Kumaraku. "The Sustainability of the City through (Urban) Form: A Speculative Inquiry along Tirana's Main Axis." Article read at the ICONA conference at the University of Sapienza, Rome, and published in *proceedings: Canon and Code: The Language of Arts in Today's World*, edited by Orazio Carpenzano Et al. Rome: Edizioni Nuova Cultura, 2023, ISBN: 9788833655031, pp 462-469.
- Luarasi, Skender. "Albanian Archipelagos: The City of a Non-normativity Foretold." *Forum A+P, Interdisciplinary Journal of Architecture and Built Environment*, Nr. 22. Tiranë: POLIS University Press 2021, ISSN 2227-7994, pp. 89-93,
- Luarasi, Skender. "A White Pyramid and a Center that Is Not a Center." *Log 47, Overcoming Carbon Form*. New York: Anyone Corporation, Fall 2019, ISBN 978-0-9992373-5-9, pp. 76-84,
- Co-Plan – Regionalization of Albanian 2015: [https://issuu.com/co-plan/docs/2015\\_rajonalizimi\\_i\\_shqiperise\\_-\\_al](https://issuu.com/co-plan/docs/2015_rajonalizimi_i_shqiperise_-_al)
- Durana (2015): <https://issuu.com/polisuniversity/docs/durana>
- Albanian Riviera (2016): [https://issuu.com/polisuniversity/docs/omb2\\_albanian\\_riviera](https://issuu.com/polisuniversity/docs/omb2_albanian_riviera)
- When a River Flows / Projecting Shkodra (2018): [https://issuu.com/polisuniversity/docs/omb3\\_when\\_a\\_river\\_flows](https://issuu.com/polisuniversity/docs/omb3_when_a_river_flows)
- Prishtina: [https://issuu.com/polisuniversity/docs/omb4\\_projecting\\_shkodra](https://issuu.com/polisuniversity/docs/omb4_projecting_shkodra) Prishtina. The new Image of the City (2019)
- Dropull: [https://issuu.com/polisuniversity/docs/rurban\\_sequences\\_dropull](https://issuu.com/polisuniversity/docs/rurban_sequences_dropull) Rurban Sequences (Inquiries on Dropull's states of Liminality) 2020
- Gjirokaster: [https://issuu.com/polisuniversity/docs/omb7\\_rethinking\\_gjirokastra](https://issuu.com/polisuniversity/docs/omb7_rethinking_gjirokastra) RETHINKING GJIROKASTRA. Can architecture and city planning stimulate hope and growth for shrinking cities?
- OSWALT, Büro Philipp, 2002. shrinking cities. [Online] Available at: <http://www.shrinkingcities.com/index.php%3FL=1.html> [Accessed 25 November 2019]

Other materials more specific to the content of the workshop can be found in Google Classroom.



**DA** Dipartimento  
Architettura  
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## Groups

### Group 1

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VLLAMASI Andia  
DOCE Sindi

### Group 2

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