

TRANSFORMATION OF SPACE BETWEEN DWELLINGS IN THE CITY OF TIRANA FROM 1920 TO EARLY 1960s

CASE STUDY: The existing situation and regulatory plans of Tirana from its establishment until 1960

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Abstract

The geographical position of the city of Tirana, the way it has been founded, the wars, the foreign invasions, the changes in the governing systems, are all factors that have strongly been affecting in the transformation of the capital city. The development of urban spaces and thereby the life of the inhabitants were also being changed. The transformations that the city of Tirana has gone through since its foundation are represented by different stages, which have influenced the urban development of the city. This research makes an overview of some of the regulatory plans of Tirana, some topographic situations from 1925 to 1960, and tries to evaluate their impact on the residual spaces between the buildings in the city of Tirana. Due to this, the “50-Vjetori” complex located in the south-west of the center of Tirana, in the north of Lana River is taken as a case study. The aim of this research is to identify the transformations that have been occurring in the spaces between the buildings, the problems that have risen from them, and their influence on the inhabitants of Tirana. The research is based on the comparative and analytic method, applied on the regulatory plans of that period, by analyzing the transformation of the spaces between buildings since the beginning of the creation of the city of Tirana from 1920 to the beginning of the 1960's. The first step was the analysis of the existing situation in the years 1920 until 1960, by addressing the spaces between buildings and their components, like green areas, inner roads, children's playgrounds, sidewalks and squares. The second step was the comparison between these two situations, by taking into consideration the urban design standards of that period. The conclusions that have been resulted from this comparison indicated that, since the 1960's, the technical indicators and the designing standards have undergone many significant changes. In the 20's the city of Tirana had a more spontaneous development, whereas in 1960 the urban situation was determined by the regulatory plans of the year 1942 and 1957.

Keywords: *space between buildings, urban development, urban centralisation, urban social transformation, adaption of urban spaces.*

Introduction

Tirana, the capital that changes every day. Its history development from the creation up to nowadays shows that it has undergone radical transformations not only in socio-economic terms but also in urban terms. From the study of existing topographical stages and regulatory plans of the 1920 - 1960 period, this research analyzes its conditions and its regulatory plans until the Austro - Hungarian occupation, analyzes urban development, regulatory plans in the period of King Zog regime, the period of Italian occupation and the period after the release till the 1960.

Aim of research

The main objective of the research is to analyze the space between the buildings in Tirana, Its existing situation of 1920-1960, the urban design rates of that time and the transformation undergone from the transition of a monarchical system, under Italian occupation until the establishment of the centralized socialist system.

- Analysis of residential areas and the elements constituting it, the Regulatory Plans of the 1920s to early 1960s.
- The identification of spaces treatment and their functioning.
- Identification of problems related to changing design rates.

Research questions

- What is the story of the space between buildings? Is this heritage being remembered by the current generation and conveyed to the next generations through time?
- What makes this a fascinating space? Does it provide a sense of security and comfort for its users and other people?
- Does this space ensure a friendly and hospitable atmosphere? Does it encourage interaction between residents and visitors?
- What makes this space functional and what makes it memorable.

Scientific methods

- A. The type of the research is descriptive, it identifies data and regulatory plans for the housing complex.
 - B. The research approach it realized through the study of spaces in different historical stages of Tirana.
 - C. Data collection is conducted through the questionnaires drafts for the housing complex, exploitation of materials in the construction archive, library and other institutions.
- Analysis of maps and regulatory plans in years, the space between the housing and the elements that constitute it as: parks, inner roads, sidewalks squares and service facilities.
 - Comparison between these two existing conditions taking into account the urban design rates of the period.

Data analysis

Case study

The existing situation and regulatory plans of Tirana from its establishment until 1960.

- **THE PERIOD BEFORE AND DURING THE AUSTRO-HUNGARIA OCCUPATION**

Analysis of existing state and regulatory plans of Tirana, from creation till the Austro - Hungarian occupation.

From an inhabited center, Tirana began receiving the physiognomy of an Oriental City with the construction of buildings, mosques, shrines, furnaces and bathing in 1614 by Sulejman Pasha Bargjini. Tirana's Position is in the heart of the country, at the junction of commercial arteries linking north to south and east to west. This resulted in the development of a radial road system. This road system creates the possibility of expanding the city by developing later the ring road.



Figure 1: Topographic situation. April 1917.

The first topography situation (Fig. 1) made by the Austro Hungarians in 1917 clearly shows that the development of the city has a disorganized and irregular shape. Road's pass through the town center (the market) but do not have a regular geometric shape. Downtown are the main buildings as: The State Command, The Oven, The State Gendarmerie, The Post, The Prefecture, etc. Apartments have mainly an altitude of 1 and 2 storey, positioned along the roads and alleys wandering without any urban rule. The 304 ha area of the city is composed mainly of buildings. 98% of the flats are mainly in the northern and eastern side. There is a lack of shared surfaces such as green gardens, parks and recreational areas. There is only one sports field. The neighborhood streets are often impasse. The space between dwellings contained no particular order. The apartments were located in different positions without any rule regarding property.

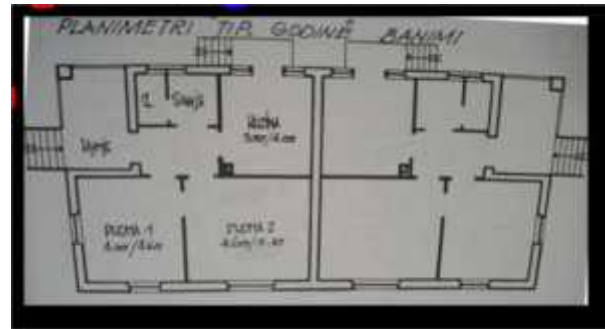


Figure 2: Existing condition of Tirana in March 1921.

In 1921 the area of the city grows to 350 ha (Figure 2), Tirana has the same radial road system while buildings tend to develop to the southwest side of the city, mostly private residences with altitude up to 2 storeys. Tirana's typical medieval dwellings were characterized by the organization of rooms around a common environment that had the height of two floors and was called the fire house. Aristocracy apartments usually were made with high walls built of adobe and inside their space was organized the garden with trees and flowers. Private dwellings were organized on neighborhoods but without urban rules. This because of the feudal land management and the lack of specialists in the State Administration. The space between the apartments did not follow any urban condition. It continues to feel the lack of common recreational areas. There were several small squares, before mosques where the prayer ritual was conducted. Located in the center of Tirana near the bazaar, were the places which served for selling goods. On the south side of Tirana lays the loose river "Lana".



Figure 3: The first regulatory plan in 1923.



Project of a typical household. Ark. Kohler 1929

The first Regulatory Plan of 1923 was realized (Fig.3) by an Austrian architect and engineer. The Plan contained a quadratic road system and later was accompanied by the partial plans of the Austrian architect Wolfgang Köhler but agreeing the main Regulatory Plan. This plan preserves some directions of the existing streets and roads and it consists mainly of a radial road ring type.

During the Austro - Hungarian occupation, the Regulatory plans and partial studies of 1926 which followed, the road network had improvements. Extensions of several roads were made as: "Kavaja Street", "Dibra Street", "Road of the Barricades", "Durrës Street" etc.

- **Period of monarchical system**

Analysis of regulatory plans and existing conditions in the period of King Zog regime.

In 1924, with the election of prime minister Ahmet Zogu, the regulatory plans that were developed at his request, contained a tendency for the development of a Western-oriented culture. Kohler Wolfgang Austrian architect designed 1 storey apartments roofed type which had an organization that did't fit Tiranas' original dwellings. These flats were built in the early 1929. Following the regulatory plans of the Austrians the italian architect Armando Brasini and later the urbanist architect, Florestano di Fausto transformed radically the plans in their urban structure. (Fig.4). The 1929 Regulatory Plan does not take into account the existing roads of Tirana.



Figure 4: The 1929 Regulatory Plan.



Boundaries of Tirana. 193

In this plan are defined the development limits of the town and the separation of residential areas from those administrative. The plan provides Lana river's systematization and the separation of residential areas by regular quadratic system. The city is projected to develop in the eastern side with a quadratic road system. The population in this period is around 30000 thousand inhabitants in an area of 12 km². There is an improvement of existing roads. The north-south axis opens as the main boulevard which will settle administrative facilities. This quadratic treatment of residential organization transforms the perception of urban residential area and includes all Tirana's inhabitants not just its elites. The 1928

Regulatory Plan Designed by Austrian architect Wolfgang K lher brings innovation in treating the area of New Tirana almost deserted, with concentric ring road system dividing it into regular plots with 1200 – 1500 m² areas. This will create the possibility of dealing with these green spaces and diverse garden. Adjustment plans of 1929, 1934 and later in 1939 created the possibility of constructing private villas with an architecture that would resist in time.



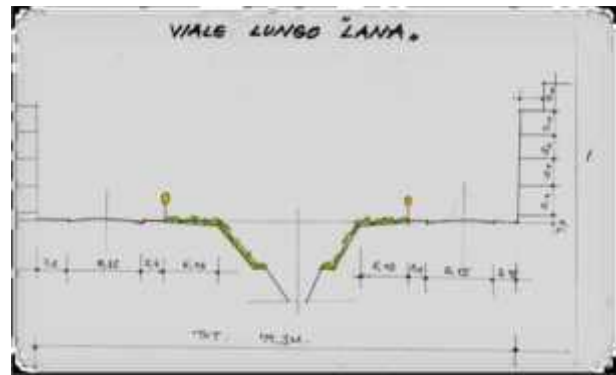
Excerpt of the regulatory plan of Tirana, 1938



Figure 5: Excerpt of the 1942 Master plan.

Analysis of regulatory plans and existing conditions in the period of the invasion of fascist Italy.

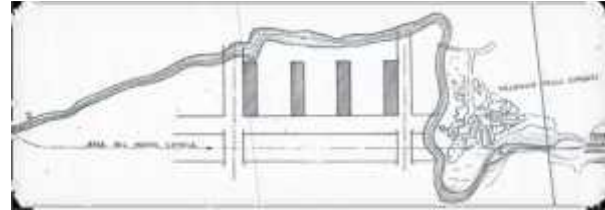
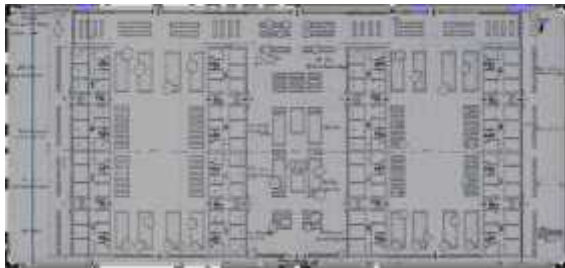
The Invasion of Albania from Italy, had an impact on architecture and urban development of the country. A long-term regulatory plan was designed to cope with the capital population growing until 100 000 inhabitants. The architects Gerardo Bosio, Ferdinando Poggi and Ivi Lambertini besides “Skanderbeg Square”, at the foot of the southern boulevard created another plaza, today called “Mother Teresa Square”. In 1937 Tirana occupied an area of 607 ha while in 1944 amounted to 720 ha. The master plan drawn up by the group of architects and planners paid special attention to the greenery in residential areas. It was predicted that the expansion of Tirana would become on its northern side near the Tirana river (Fig. 5). The plan gave importance to the regulation of Lana river, the prediction of hospital and industrial areas and structures that lay the foundations of a modern capital and helps its growing and transformation rapidly.



Regulatory Plan ,1942

This masterplan was supposed to be completed in stages so as it could be without hesitation the first regulation of design rates. The map clearly defined all types of roads, the pavement widths, types of lighting and their heights, conditions of housing along, their heights with or without stores. Residential areas are divided in different construction intensities. This plan preserved the radial system regulated by the junction of the ring systems which created enhanced space provided for an increased traffic. During this period the regulatory plans have been amended

several times and are accompanied with different partial studies. This plan in conjunction with the road system was not implemented. Accessible circulation became the chariot, phaeton, engines and a small number of vehicles. Tirana in 1944 occupied an area of 720 ha.

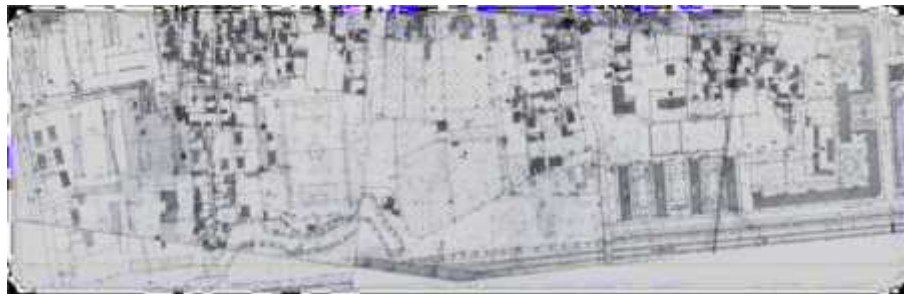


The site-plan and adjustment of space between housing

The first residential block was composed by: green park, parking, recreational inner courtyard. Four story apartments with basement were designed in 1940 by Italian architect Piero Bartolini and were used as Typical Apartments. These were repeatedly implemented in some areas of Tirana creating different planning compositions. Placement on the north south orientation, the blocks had spacious ventilated areas, sunlighted from south. The residential blocks contained contemporary architectural elements, had a height of 12m and 33m distance from each other.

- **Period of socialist system**

Analysis of urban development after liberation and the plan of 1957.



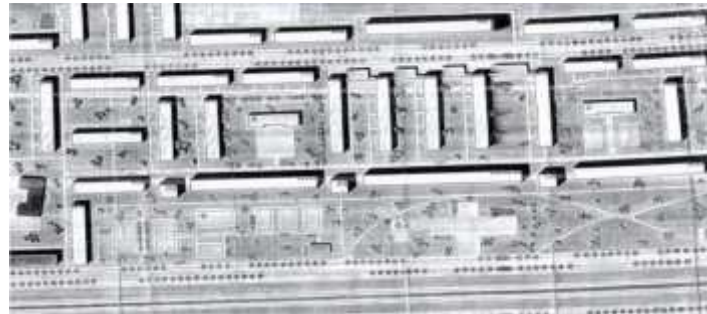
Existing condition of Tirana in 1957

The Regulatory Plan of 1957 plan was drafted by maintaining the existing road. The city was predicted to expand its limits near the today “Ring Road”. (Figure 6). The regulation of Lana river and the two boulevards on both sides were taken into account in this plan. Their implementation was completed in 1965. The 1957 regulatory plan provided individual flats 2 storeys high and collective dwellings 4 stores high with linear arrangement along the main roads, creating open and closed blocks with collective dwellings and standart apartments type.



Figure 6: The Regulatory Plan of 1957.

The plan was designed by albanian architect. This plan cut the road to unplanned construction.. The new 1957 plan envisioned an expansion and extension of the town towards Dajtit mountain, on the eastern side. City road system expected to be radial-ring again, giving importance to the north-south axis boulevard. The Regulatory plan preserved the outer ring, designed in the 1942 plan.



Variants of complex studies 1960

Creating large spaces between the housing and the establishment of kindergartens, yards through blocks and the placement of 8 - year schools across residential complexes enabled the creation of sports fields, green spaces and recreational spaces between buildings. The linear establishment of buildings in the north side of the complex, protected the playgrounds areas from wind, road noise and oriented them on the south side Traffic was realized by bus service, private cars were almost nonexistent. Street movement consisted mostly of state vehicles and bicycles.



Urban situation 1960-65

Residential block had flats arranged on a distance between them of no less than 1.5 height of the building. The complex covered an area of 24ha with a number of approximately 7400 residents on a 12.2 ha residential area. Gross density of the residential area was 308ba/ha. Recreational

squares between collective housing except the relaxing function created the possibility of recognition, friendship, self-control and management of each resident 'life.



Picture of complex 50 Anniversary in 1965

Conclusions

- 1-The right space organization between housing starts to take effect in the first regulatory plan of 1942 designed by Italian architects.
- 2-The residents living in the 50- Vjetori complex still have nostalgia for the greenery and the illuminated sunny areas full of children playing in it. Today this space is mostly transformed losing its originality.
- 3-The complex's indoor spaces are beautifully combined with the linear boulevards along the "Lana" river and are very close to the city center.
- 4-Spaces between the complex's buildings particularly provide a welcoming and friendly atmosphere for the housing.

References

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Central Archive of Technical Construction Nr3. 2000 Tirana – Albania