Graduation Plan

Master of Science Architecture, Urbanism & Building Sciences
Graduation Plan: All tracks
The graduation plan consists of at least the following data/segments:

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Personal information</th>
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<tr>
<td>Name</td>
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<tr>
<td>Student number</td>
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<td>Telephone number</td>
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<td>Private e-mail address</td>
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<th>Studio</th>
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<tr>
<td>Name / Theme</td>
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<td>Teachers / tutors</td>
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<td>Argumentation of choice of the studio</td>
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<th>Graduation project</th>
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<th>Goal</th>
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<td>Location:</td>
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with physical and social dimensions while improving the livability which would harmonize governance, democracy and community. Furthermore, a greater integration of Albania towards European Union organizations would open the aspirations of Tirana to become a leading city in the Western Balkans concerning innovation and cultural consumption issues. There is a need for alternative visions which parallel to growth-oriented models aim to improve quality of life for city dwellers and make Tirana more internationally competitive.

This project intends the transformation of Tirana’s highly skilled labour force, its resident population and the built environment. While developing an active counter-strategy which draws support from the majority of Tirana’s residents, it proposes a restructuring of the inner city on different scales: from the neighbourhood improvements towards Tirana’s perspective as a “world city”. Considering the current problematic, the vision works as a strategic plan which extends its implication beyond neighbourhood scale.

### Research questions and

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<th>Main research question</th>
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<td>- What can be the urban regeneration strategy which can represent a sustainable design for future urban development of Tirana city centre?</td>
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<th>Subresearch questions</th>
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<td>- Why Tirana city centre should be transformed into an innovative environment and what can change the condition of production economy towards creative economy?</td>
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<td>- How to propose a strategy which do not transform the city centre into a museum, but where historical and cultural heritage harmonize without any conflicts with contemporary daily life? What role can it play in finding the balance between the human scale and the inherited monumentality?</td>
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<td>- How to emerge together different kinds of urban innovation while avoiding the non-adequate placement of new architecture? How can we discover qualities that need to be proclaimed among a mixture of political ideology approaches, shapeless newly interventions and a democratic attitude which tend to protect the private investments beyond the level of city needs?</td>
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### Design assignment in which these result.

The general design proposal introduces the light rail as the leading mode of public transportation in Tirana. This mobility intervention goes parallel to the elongation of the main city’s axis which comes naturally as a need for transforming the northern
informal area and making it an integrated part of the dynamic city life. Altogether, the project focuses on five design interventions accompanied by separate light rail stations, which on the other hand transform the main axis into a city backbone. This proposal came as a product of an intensive research based on sustainable development, creative economy, housing demands, public realm and architectural heritage.

The detailed design assignments are focused on two different locations defined by two different patterns of urbanization. The first one is developed through a research by design approach and aims the revitalization of an informal area not far away from the city centre. The second one was focused on the urban regeneration of the historical core of Tirana. Taken together, these consecutive design interventions appear to be located in the middle of the main axis coincide with the light rail station 2 and 3 and try to embrace the most striking issues of urban regeneration in Tirana.

### Process

#### Method description

**Questionnaires**

A significant part of the research process was developed in December 2015. It consisted of field surveys and graphic data collecting. Surveying as a process of examining the area and the features was the first socio-analytical activity which imposed a mere implication of the community in the research participatory process. The data and records from the community discussions were structured in two main sections: Spatial and environmental issues and community behaviour. The local residents were vocal on addressing their arguments and this information was documented digitally after sequential surveying and applied questionnaires. Besides, different methods were applied on communication with the residents. These techniques of observing were focused on the individual interviews, discussions in small groups and conceptual games with the children from the community. The selection of the groups was made based on the employment criteria (unemployed/employed/entrepreneur), incomes, ages, religions and ethnicities.

The group discussions gave a clear insight on how the people conceptualise the living environment. The role-playing methods were the next step of gaining insights regarding the community behaviour. An example of games applied was the mental mapping of the quarter. Additionally, making intentional interviews was one of the most important methods applied on this surveying. These interviews were divided into chapters considering the age and the incomes. The data summary showed that different ages were able to answer the questions from different perspectives.

The interviewed people were willing to share their personal experiences and memories with a focus on the comparison of two different political eras: the communist period and the current one. To some extent, the socio-economic processes which interfere into the way how different groups of people negotiate, understand and navigate the variety of transitions, remain persistent influences on their later socio-cultural behaviours. These experiences, which were examined through individual narratives, formulated a sociological panorama of post-communist transformation in Tirana.

**Expert Interviews**
Considering the difficulties of finding data online, a specific attention was paid on visiting the institutions which could provide digital and hard copies of the necessary documents:

The Central Archive of Construction was the first institution which to support with hard copies of original drawings. This office contains the majority of construction projects conducted during the communism era and it is eligible to provide the requested information upon an application fulfilment and signed by the mentors.

The Institution of Statistics INSTAT (the Albanian organization which owns the majority of the data on local and national scale, regarding the population, migration and economy growth) provided the most important data about the population and their average incomes. However, according to the officials, a large portion of the apartments are rented by students and other citizens who do not prefer to change the domicile. In these circumstances, they do not guarantee a clear representation of the real situation).

Tirana Municipality – The urbanism officials were the most important data providers which also offered their vision and strategy for the future changes. Figures and visuals regarding the population and economical activities located in these areas were also provided.

Retired architects who have been involved on these projects were the last professionals contacted in person during the data collection visits. They supported with original drawings (hard copies), old photos during the construction period, and subjectively, their professional impression after the projects were implemented.

Theoretical Framework and Reading

The theoretical framework provides the rationale for conducting the research and later the design to investigate a particular problem within the study location. It helps on identifying the limits of generalizations and can specify which key variables influence a phenomenon of interest. In addition, articulating the theoretical assumptions can help on addressing questions of why and how and it allows the transcending from simply describing that phenomenon. The theoretical framework is connected to the review of literature, which allows presenting the research problem in light of a summary of a previously tested knowledge.

The theory chosen directed my research methods and as a result, the design proposals illustrate conclusions that are compatible with the theoretical definitions. While establishing a sense of structure on guiding the research, the literature review helped on finding gaps in the explanation of some phenomenon. Besides, journal articles and academic papers which treat urban issues within the study location received a special attention.

Analysing through Mapping and Model Making

Urban analysis and mapping offered a very good way of considering the complex urban condition, including infrastructure, social activity, the implications of the city in the landscape and landscape in the city. This process of drawing and analysing was developed from the basis of abstract research towards a more design-oriented one. Mapping of the urban form aims to convey a professional opinion derived by data-driven analyses of economic activity, urban perception, human behaviours and mobility patterns. This process of targeting the intervention spots on the study location was generated by using the existing maps of different times and scales that were gathered during research period.

Besides, physical model making is recognized as a method that influences the design process and has an impact on the design outcome. These miniature constructions are necessary for obtaining practical information with regard to what the interventions will look like within existing urban context. Principally, the physical architectural model is closer to reality than other kind of illustrative tools. Instead of trying to imagine it, the model allows us to perceive a three-dimensional experience, which on the other hand, is more accessible to a wider range of people such are the tutors or the public. Moreover, compared to architectural drawings, physical models can provide information of a particular phenomenon more than an infinite number of perspective views.
**Comparisons**

Comparisons to capital cities of countries that are members of European Union or have it on their own integration perspective highlighted some basic differences with respect to both urban issues and urban regeneration policies. These parallelisms led to new viewpoints and gave very interesting insights how democracy as a political system influences the city centre shaping.

Besides, with regard to transformation of public spaces during the post-socialist period, a comparison to Alexande Platz in Berlin and Parc de Bercy in Paris delivered multiple ideas. Berlin, like many other European cities, was facing the dilemma of encountering the new century with a new set of growth and development ideas. This was applied to the fragmented urban fabric and particularly to the urban environment surrounding Alexander Platz. This large public square in Berlin’s eastern part was rebuilt in the 1960s as an exemplar of socialist planning, but in the 1990s, it became a problem for urban planners and ordinary Berliners. It is identified as a classical example that demonstrates how attempts to create order can appear to produce the disorder they proclaimed to contain. In addition, the example of Haussmann’s grand travaux was relevant here, which promotional efforts was circulation, primarily of normal daily traffic (Kostof 1991). It is clear, that the street plan and distinctive appearance of the centre of Paris today is largely the result of Haussmann’s renovation. Haussmann was able to transform an entire city in a period of twenty years, and in this context, the Italian architecture in Tirana had a similar impact.

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**Literature and general practical preference**

The bibliography chosen for this project consisted of four major groups:

- Conceptual and Contextual Information
- Urban Regeneration
- Sustainable Development
- Creative Economy

A list of the most used literature:


GUTNOV, A. (1968). The Ideal Communist City


Reflection

Relevance

Relevance, which addresses the value of the graduation project in the larger social and scientific framework, is divided into two main sections: Social and Scientific Relevance. The section of social relevance stresses the cultural and architectural heritage of Tirana and their implication in the city urban composition. The rich cultural framework of the Albanian capital city and its confrontation with the marks of the totalitarian regime on the urban fabric challenges the city's future urban development. Given the fact that similar cities of former Communist Bloc countries show the same problematic, the urban regeneration strategy of post-communist Tirana brings extra relevance to the urbanism field and would serve as an applicable example for their future development.

Due to the topic broadness, the research product on socio-economic issues was multi-dimensional and it gave room for many approaches of further elaborations. These insights were seen relevant on for the conceptualizing of the design proposals. The objective of understanding the contextual complexities of a specific city on western Balkans required an adequate recognition of economic tendencies, cultural dynamics and political approaches. In this context, the generated conclusions can be relevant for many other cases of cities on south-western Europe, which more or less are subject to the same conditions of chaotic urban development and share the same aspirations towards the democratic governance and European Union membership.

Besides, the research process on public realm considered each aspect of Albanian everyday life and assessed them through the frame of historical facts and livability indications. This framework of understanding the behaviorology of Tirana's citizens can be relevant for similar studies on other cities.
of Albania and Kosovo in particular.

The Scientific Relevance section on this project considered the scientific basis for changing the city urban fabric through a sustainable approach. At most, it was focused on sustainability and urban regeneration strategies and the effect that they might have on Tirana’s urban regeneration process. In this respect, the implementation of some quasi-theoretical solution in a fragile context threatened by the informality phenomenon would serve as an interesting case for further studies and elaborations. The transition from post-communism towards a sustainable development appears to be the most important relevance that this research brings to the urbanism scope.

Further, through a multi-dimensional research approach, the scientific relevance reveals the basic conditions for stimulating the creative economy. It offers the strategic steps that similar cities should take in order to progress towards this new trend of economic development. Thereby, the involvement of a variety of scales in urban design and planning was seen crucial and it was considered as a balance between different scopes of the urban design and planning.

Taken together, these considerations document a new model of urban regeneration on post-communist cities. Through analyzing the correlation between Albanian cultural context and the new international tendencies of cities growing and their local economy, social and scientific relevance provides the prognoses for generating a sustainable vision for post-communist cities of south-eastern Europe.

**Time planning**

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Theoretical review

Project Definition & Research Questions

Introduction

Research

Location Analysis

Interpretation

Define Design Tools/Principles

Strategy Development

Vision

Urban Design

Detailed Design

Evaluation & Graphic Visualization

Conclusions / Finalization

Implementation

Presentation

GRADUATION PROJECT Time Planning

P1

P2

P3

P4

P5
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