

**IMPACT OF LIBERAL ECONOMY ON THE URBAN
PATTERN OF TIRANA: PRE AND POST
TRANSITIONAL URBAN DYNAMICS**

**M.Sc. Thesis by
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Department : Interdisciplinary

Programme: Urban Design

JUNE 2007

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**LIBERAL EKONOMİNİN TİRAN KENTSEL
DOKUSU ÜZERİNDEKİ ETKİLERİ: TRANZİSYON
ÖNCE VE SONRASI KENTSEL DİNAMİKLER**

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SUMMARY

The aim of this study is to assess the effects of liberalism in the socio-spatial composition of the Tirana city. In order to scientifically approach the problem the hypothesis that: "Under economical transition conditions, the liberal economy factors lead to a change in the urban pattern" was formulated. Here, "liberal economy" is the independent dummy variable and "urban pattern change" is the dependent variable, which will be assigned various attributes to prove the hypothesis in the study's course by using urban planning analyses.

The study itself benefited from primary data gathered on the field by on site surveys and observations as well as direct and back mail interviews, and from secondary data obtained from various governmental and non-governmental organizations. The analysis will be two-dimensional; the social dimension in which primary data from interviews as well as secondary statistical data will be used and the physical dimension in which mainly primary data from surveys will be used.

The methodology followed was that of a hierarchical comparison. Firstly, Albania was compared to Ex-Socialist Bloc neighboring countries of similar characteristics. Afterwards, the region of Tirana was compared to the other regions in Albania to assess its place and importance within the country. For the detailed urban analyses, three representative case study areas were selected within the city. The final step of the comparison was made between the three case study areas to assess the changes and to evaluate possible differences in the degree of change.

Detailed field study consisted of interviews and surveys performed in the three case study areas. The surveys were made for buildings and infrastructure including all the buildings in the areas. It included building height, building condition, usage by floors, Floor to Area Ratio (FAR), amount of public area and open spaces. The interviews based on simple random sampling were of two types; direct face to face and by back mail. With respect to socio-economic features, the study focused on population, change in origin, occupation status, income education and awareness of the surroundings.

The outcomes of the analyses showed that liberal economy condition have changed the communist patterns of the urban fabric as well as the socioeconomic composition of all case study areas. The findings from the analyses showed that there was a general increase in the post 1990 value of all the attributes assigned to the dependent variable “urban pattern change”. Therefore, it proved the hypothesis stated in the beginning of the study.

One important result includes the degree of change experienced in each area. The study further showed that change is not equal in all the parts of Tirana. In fact, each area has experienced various degrees of change depending on the area’s location within the city, pre transitional urban pattern of the area and socioeconomic composition of the area’s inhabitants.

ÖZET

Bu çalışmanın amacı, liberalizmin Tiran şehrinin sosyo-mekansal yapılandırması üzerindeki etkileri değerlendirmektir. Konuya bilimsel olarak yaklaşmak üzere, “Ekonomik geçiş şartları altında, liberal ekonomi faktörleri kentsel doku değişimine yol açmaktadır” başlıklı hipotez ortaya konulmuştur. Bu bağlamda, “liberal ekonomi” bağımsız değişken, “kentsel doku değişimi” ise bağımlı değişkendir. Bağımlı değişkende çalışmanın devamında şehircilik analizleri doğrultusunda, hipotezi ispatlamak üzere çeşitli özellikler kullanılmıştır.

Çalışmada, anket ve gözlem yoluyla elde edilen birincil veri, resmi ve özel kurumlardan elde edilen ikincil veriler kullanılmıştır. Analiz, iki boyutlu olarak düzenlenmiştir. Sosyal bölümünde anketlerden elde edilen birincil veriler ve istatistiksel ikincil veriler kullanılmıştır. Fiziksel bölümde ise genellikle gözlemlerden elde edilen birincil veriler kullanılmıştır.

Çalışma içerisinde hiyerarşik karşılaştırma yöntemi kullanılmıştır. Öncelikle, Arnavutluk, benzer nitelikleri taşıyan Eski Doğu Bloğu komşu ülkelerle karşılaştırılmıştır. Sonrasında ülke içerisinde önemini ve yerini belirlemek üzere, Tiran Bölgesi Arnavutluk'taki diğer bölgelerle karşılaştırılmıştır. Detaylı kentsel analizler için şehir içinden üç temsili çalışma alanı seçilmiştir. Son aşamasında bu üç çalışma alanı karşılaştırılmıştır. Bu bölümde değişim ve değişimin boyutlarının arasındaki farklılıklar belirtilmiştir.

Detaylı alan araştırması, üç çalışma alanında yapılan anket ve gözlemlerden oluşmaktadır. Gözlemler, alanlardaki altyapı ve tüm binalar için yapılmıştır. Bina yüksekliği, bina durumu, zemin kat arazi kullanımı, Taban Alanı Kat Sayısı (TAKS), kamusal ve açık alanlar olarak, konu beş başlık altında ele alınmıştır. Basit rastgele örneklem üzerine belirlenen anketler, yüz yüze ve geri dönüşlü olarak yapılmıştır. Sosyo ekonomik özelliklere göre çalışma; nüfus, hanehalkının kökeni, iş durumu, gelir, eğitim düzeyi ve çevre farkındalığı gibi konular üzerinde odaklanmıştır.

Analizlerin sonuçları liberal ekonominin tüm çalışma alanlarında kentsel yapının komunizm dönemindeki dokusu ile birlikte sosyo ekonomik yapısını da değiştirdiğini

göstermiştir. Analizlerin sonucunda oluşan bulgulara göre “kentsel doku değişimi” bağımlı değişkende belirlenen tüm özelliklere göre 1990 sonrası değerlerde genel bir artış olduğu gözlemlenmiştir. Böylece yukarıda belirtilen hipotez ispatlanmıştır.

Diğer bir önemli sonuç her alanda yaşanan değişimin boyutunu ilgilendirmektedir. Çalışmada değişimin Tiran’ın çeşitli bölgelerinde eşit olmadığı ifade edilmiştir. Her alanda, o alanın kent içindeki konumu, alanın ekonomik geçiş dönemi öncesi kentsel dokusu ve alanın sosyo ekonomik yapısı gibi faktörlere bağlı olarak farklı değişim boyutları gözlemlenmiştir.

1. INTRODUCTION

Tirana, Albania's capital is a city of enormous dynamics in both socio-economic and urban contexts. Under communist control it was a compact and comprehensively planned city. Following the 1991 governmental reforms the city grew rapidly in size and population (Felstehausen, 1999). Such a growth ended up in the "metamorphosis" of the city. In the spatial-physical aspect a completely different layer was superimposed to the existing, compact communist capital. This new layer of urban fabric was driven by the liberal market forces, which followed the centralized communist economy before 1990. The prolonged economic transition period in which Albania still finds itself affected to the most especially the capital. Free markets, speculative expectations and the city's status as the capital drastically changed the urban pattern of Tirana. The most prominent features of this change being a significant rise in the city's silhouette (skyline), and in the strictly preserved FAR quotient as well as change in ground floor land use. This study will focus on these changes in urban fabric as an end product of the transition from centralized to liberal economy.

1.1. Purpose

The aim of this study is to assess the effects of liberalism in the socio-spatial composition of the Tirana city. While under communist regime the city accounted for a decreasing share of total population in Albania. Immediately after the regime change, the population movement was frenetic to the point of chaos (King and Vullnetari, 2003). During the early stages of transition political instability and the free market economy had a devastating impact on the city. After a period of repeated crises, recovery at a slow pace began which was marked by an increase in security as well as political and economic stability. This triggered foreign capital mainly from emigrants outside the country. At the period Tirana developed under the sign of a boom in the construction sector. This new agent ended up in changing the face of Albanian cities and Tirana was the city with the highest rate of change.

At this point the study puts forward the hypothesis that: “Under economical transition conditions, the liberal economy factors lead to a change in the urban pattern”. Here it is of great relevance to point out that the study is of urban and not economic characteristics. For this reason the “liberal economy” variable will be a dummy one by taking the value 0 when Albania is under the centralized socialist economy (before 1990), and the value 1 while in the transition period (from 1991 onwards). Then the study will try to prove the hypothesis i.e. to show that Tirana has experienced changes in urban pattern while the Albanian economy shifted from centralized to a liberal one.

1.2. Scope

Following this introduction the study is formulated in three main parts. In the first one a hierarchal comparative evaluation of Albania with other Central and Eastern European Countries, and Tirana Region with other regions in Albania will be made. Meanwhile, a general picture of Albania as well as Tirana city will be drawn. This will include geographic, demographic, economic and development figures. The second part of the study will focus on the city itself. Here representative examples from field case studies in Tirana will be given. Afterwards a comparative evaluation of the results will be presented showing the common and different characteristics of the three case studies. The final part includes the results of the study in the form of concluding remarks together with a future vision for the urban and social progress of the city.

1.3. Method

In order to scientifically approach the problem of urban transformation in Tirana a hypothesis previously stated, was formulated which will be tested in the following parts of the study.

The study itself will benefit from primary data gathered on the field by on site surveys and observations as well as direct and back mail interviews, and from secondary data obtained from various governmental and non-governmental organizations. Some of these are INSTAT (Institute of Statistics), ISPU (National Planning Institute), Central Technical Archive of Civil Engineering, Tirana Greater Municipality, Municipalities of units 5 and 8, United Nations Development Program UNDP Albania, World Bank Country Reports.

Urban planning analytical methods will be used in the study. The analysis will be two-dimensional; the social dimension in which primary data from interviews as well as secondary statistical data will be used and the physical dimension in which mainly primary data from surveys will be used.

For simplicity's sake, three representative areas within Tirana were selected for a close study. The first one is the area near the old Medrese (Islamic school), an area of old characteristic Tirana houses laid out in organic pattern. The second area is the Ex-Leadership's Block adjacent to the main central axis of the city with old garden villas and new high-rise. The last area is the block on the "Irfan Tomini" Street showing features of socialist planning in the 1980s immediately before the regime change.

The case study area choice was made to represent the most characteristic *urban* areas in Tirana that have experienced notable changes in transition and to possibly compare the different dimension as well as spatial differentiations of change. Field study consisting of interviews and surveys was then performed in the three areas. The surveys were made for buildings and infrastructure including all the buildings in the areas. It included building height, building condition, usage by floors, Floor to Area Ratio (FAR), amount of public area and open spaces. The interviews were of two types; direct face to face and by back mail. With respect to socio-economic features, the study focused on population, change in origin, occupation status, income and education.

Interviews were performed based on simple random sampling. Since the areas do not represent a municipality division and knowing the lack of accurate demographical data at this scale, sampling was made for the total of municipality units 5 and 8 (where the case study areas belong to). In 2003, municipality unit 5 is reported to have 20069 families for a total population of 55.334 inhabitants (Njesia Bashkiake Nr 5, 2003). According to information obtained from municipality unit 8, the 2006 population was around 37.500 inhabitants. The total number of families registered in this unit was around 11.160.

As a basis unit for the sampling family number was used. The two municipality units have approximately 31.200 families. It was aimed to obtain a sufficient number of interviews and by taking under consideration that the study areas do not represent the whole municipality units, a sampling of 5‰ was found appropriate to be applied to the total family number in the study areas.

By this calculation a total sample size of 156 households (interviews) was determined, out of which 133 could be completed for a 85,25% completion rate. Distribution of the obtained interviews according to the study areas is as follows Area near Medrese 41 interviews, Ex Leadership's Block 43 interviews and Block near "Irfan Tomini" Street 49 interviews. Systematic random sampling was used to select the interviewee in all the three areas. Data was gathered by face-to-face and back-mail interviews. Back-mail interview was performed only in the Block near "Irfan Tomini" Street. A total of 17 questionnaires was distributed and a 100% response rate was obtained. All the other interviews were performed face-to-face.

Interviews also aimed to qualitatively assess the opinion of the interviewees about the difference in the surroundings and *urban* life quality between the two periods. For this reason the study was made with people able to perceive and state the change between the two periods. Put in other words, sampling was made with people of 35 and above years old. This fact also counts for the difficulty of the study itself.

Since the study has no special interests on gender issues, it was aimed to achieve equal proportions of gender division between the interviewees. Out of 133 interviewed persons 67 or 50,40% were males and the remaining 49,60% females.

Following the analysis for a single area, that area synthesis was obtained to be later compared to the other case study areas. A general opinion with future implementations is then presented in the results and concluding remarks part.

2. LARGE SCALE INTERACTIONS FOR THE STUDY IN TIRANA

This part of the study will focus on drawing a general picture of Albania by giving a short historical preview and its economical path under certain development trends. It will further try to unfold some important demographic changes of the transition period with direct effects on the capital city, Tirana. Here Albania will be compared with other former Eastern Bloc and Balkan countries in order to better evaluate its economic development and spatial dynamics.

Furthermore, this part will explain also the study area, the city of Tirana both in socio-economic and in spatial contexts. This will include a short history of the city's development as well as the main decisions, economic conditions, and development plans shaping the city for a period over one hundred years.

2.1. Albania within the Balkans and the East Bloc

Central and Southeastern Europe, otherwise known as The Balkans, represents a region of former communist countries in transition. The region has been changing in a very fundamental way since the collapse of the totalitarian regimes. Under the impact of various interacting forces of economic integration and transition a new European economic landscape is being shaped (Petrakos and Totev, 2000). Such forces of economic character are the main factors of the urban dynamics in the cities of transition countries.

Table 2.1 General data about the studied countries

Country	Area (sq km)	Population (2005)	Population Density (people/sq km)	Population Growth Rate (% annual)
Albania	28,748	3,129,678	108	0.52
Bulgaria	110,910	7,740,928	69	-0.86
Macedonia	25,333	2,034,060	80	0.26
Poland	312,685	38,165,404	122	-0.05
Romania	237,500	21,632,148	91	-0.12

Source: (publications.worldbank.org), (www.cia.gov)

This section will deal with Albania as part of the former Eastern Bloc by comparing it to other Central and South Eastern European countries. The specific countries chosen for this study include Poland, Romania, Bulgaria and the Former Yugoslavian Republic of Macedonia. These are all former communist countries in transition showing similar development characteristic to Albania (Table 2.1).



Figure 2.1 Location of Albania within Southeast Europe (source: www.southeasteurope.org)

2.2. Evaluative comparison of the countries in transition

The rapid successive collapse of communist regimes within the Eastern Bloc which culminated in the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991 (Campos and Coricelli, 2002), left behind countries struggling with the new politic and economical forces to live up to the standards of their Western neighbors. The newly formed medium was one of economical transition and instability. Certainly, as not all the countries had the same level of development in the communist era, their level of response to these changes were different. Response and ability to establish a *status quo* in their development rate in a period of such economic transition counts for their economical growth. Here the performance during transition of Albania will be compared to that of its Balkan neighbors Bulgaria, FYR Macedonia and Romania and to Poland from Central Europe. This comparison will benefit from secondary data obtained from the World Bank's World Development Indicators (WDI).

Table 2.2 Basic economic indicators of the studied countries during transition (1990-2005)

Country	Year ^a	Real GDP growth (%)	GDP Index (1990 = 100)	Unemployment (% of total labor force)	Price Inflation
Albania	1990	-10	100	-	-
	1992	-7	74.21	26.9 ^b	226
	1993	10	80.6	29 ^b	85
	1996	9	107.58	-	13
	1997	-10	98.31	-	33
	1999	10	125.26	-	0
	2000	7	136.48	-	0
	2002	3	156.4	-	8
	2005	6	200.35	-	2
Bulgaria	1990	-9	100	-	24
	1992	-7	84.14	16.4 ^b	91
	1993	-1	84.92	21	73
	1996	-9	87.47	14	122
	1997	-6	83.48	14	1,058
	1999	2	89.23	14	3
	2000	5	97.24	16	10
	2002	5	109.64	18	6
	2005	6	137.36	-	5
Macedonia	1990	..	100	-	-
	1992	-7	94.61	24.8 ^b	1691 ^b
	1993	-7	88.75	25.6 ^b	349.8 ^b
	1996	1	91.64	42 ^b	2
	1997	1	94.79	36	3
	1999	4	104.55	-	-1
	2000	5	111.83	32	6
	2002	1	111.55	32	2
	2005	4	133.5	-	1
Poland	1990	-	100	-	555
	1992	3	97.18	13	45
	1993	4	102.72	14	37
	1996	6	129.35	12	20
	1997	7	140.87	11	15
	1999	5	158.37	13	7
	2000	4	169.05	16	10
	2002	1	180.6	20	2
	2005	3	224.72	-	2
Romania	1990	-6	100	-	174 ^b
	1992	-9	84.7	-	211
	1993	2	88.13	-	255
	1996	4	108.78	7	39
	1997	-6	103.93	6	155
	1999	-1	100.52	7	46
	2000	2	104.42	7	46
	2002	5	121.08	8	23
	2005	4	157.4	-	9

Source: World Bank – World Development Indicators ()

^a interval of years is arranged based on major development phases of transition^b adapted from data and estimations in a similar study by (Petrakos and Totev 2001)

Examining the basic economic indicators for all the countries (Table 2.2) it is noticed that all transition countries in experienced a deep recession in the post 1989 period. The basic characteristics of this recession are a significant drop in output, soaring inflation rates during the initial years of the transition and unprecedented high and increasing unemployment rates (Petrakos and Totev, 2000).

It is clearly seen from the table that especially the Balkan countries had a difficult recovery period from the transition. Albania has managed to reach its 1990 GDP level in 1996 only to experience another fall in 1997 due to the pyramidal (Ponzi) schemes, which swept away over US\$ 1.2 billion from the Albanians' savings. A steady slow increase is recorded by Bulgaria and Macedonia, countries that could fully restore to their 1990 GDP level in approximately a decade's time. Romania and Poland have showed the best performance in this field with a relatively rapid recovery to their initial GDP levels. Moreover, Poland has showed a somewhat impressive performance in terms of economic development with respect to the other countries included in this study (its recent EU membership being the proof).

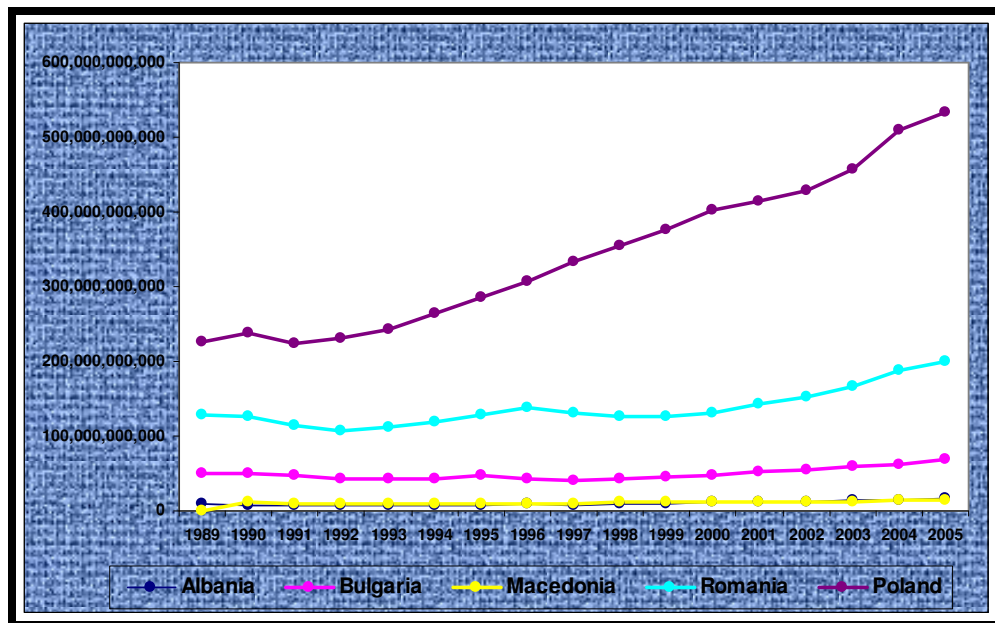


Figure 2.2 Current DGP of the studied countries at Purchasing Power Parity (PPP) in the period 1989-2005 (Source: publications.worldbank.org/subscriptions/WDI/)

Figure 2.2 shows the GDP development of all the interested countries in the study. Albania groups together with Bulgaria and Macedonia in the bottom of the graph showing similar development speeds whereas Poland tops the list with a relatively high initial GDP level and an impressive development rate. Poland recovered to its 1990 GDP level in 1993 and in a decade's time has doubled its output.

The transition period in the studied countries was also characterized by an immediate and sharp increase in the inflation rates (early 1990s) as a result of market liberalization. After the first shock, all the countries have somehow brought inflation under control up to year 1997. In this specific year Albania and Bulgaria experienced oscillations in their trends due to delayed economical reforms and political instability. Macedonia and Poland are the most successful countries dealing with inflation although plausible figures were only recorded in the late 1990s. Especially at the turn of the new century, all four countries with the exception of Romania could be reported to have brought inflation under control. Romania was able to bring its inflation under the 10% rate only in 2005 (Table 2.2).

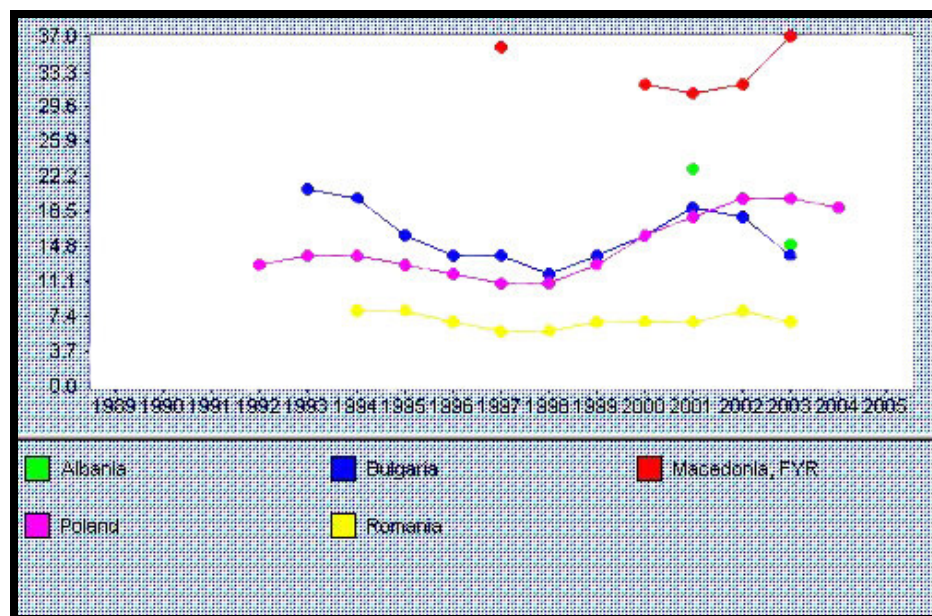


Figure 2.3 Total unemployment in the studied countries (% of total labor force) during the period 1989-2005 (Source: publications.worldbank.org/subscriptions/WDI/)

Declining GDP levels and high inflation unavoidably led to serious unemployment problems. Although this part of study lacks continuous data from Albania and Macedonia it can be seen that still this two countries have the highest unemployment rates (Figure 2.3). While Albania, Bulgaria, Poland and Romania show a decreasing trend in their unemployment rates, unemployment in Macedonia is increasing. One interesting fact is that despite its economic development Poland still maintains a high unemployment rate. Another most interesting fact regards the liability of these data especially in Albania. A survey conducted in Tirana in 1993 showed that the number of really inactive people i.e. people that do not look for work, although they are within working age, was twice as great as that of the recorded unemployment (Gedeshi and Mara, 2001).

In order to give a better picture of the development of these countries in Table 2.3 a series of development indicators at the last comparable year is given for each country. The first and most important indicator presented is GDP per capita at purchasing power parity (PPP). Most recent available data for all the countries are of the year 2005. Moreover, year 1995 is added for broader comparative options. The data are clear and speak by themselves. Fifteen years after the introduction of liberal economy, Albania has the lowest GDP per capita among the five countries with 5318 US\$ per capita. Like half a decade after the collapse of communism, Poland tops the list again showing an increase from 7407 US\$ in 1995 to 13980 US\$ in 2005. Bulgaria, Macedonia and Romania group between Albania and Poland with per capita GDP levels varying around 7000 US\$ and 9000 US\$ (Table2.3).

Table 2.3 Development indicators of the studied countries

Country	GDP per capita in PPP US\$		Personal computers (per 1000 people)	Telephone mainlines (per 1000 people)	Mortality rate (infant per 1000 births)
	1995	2005	2002	2003	2000
Albania	2565	5318	12	82	22
Bulgaria	5551	8794	51	360	13
Macedonia	4915	7146	46	259	16
Poland	7407	13980	107	322	8
Romania	5719	9208	83	199	19

Source: World Bank – World Development Indicators (publications.worldbank.org/subscriptions/WDI/)

Other indicators showing the development level of the countries that the study deals with are number of personal computers, telephone lines and the mortality rate measured by infant deaths per 1000 births. Personal computer possession is an indicator of population welfare and technological development whereas number of telephone lines gives the development of the country in telecommunications. Mortality rate indicates the health care service that the country is able to offer. By comparing these other secondary indicators the picture remains still the same: Albania appears as an extreme case of underdevelopment. In the year 2002 personal computer ownership in Albania is only 11% of that in Poland, 23% of the ownership in Bulgaria, 26% of the ownership in Macedonia and 14% of the ownership in Romania. The picture is not so different with telephone mainlines. Albania has a figure of only 22 % of the Bulgarian and 25% of the Polish ones. The last indicator mortality rate only reinforces conclusion drawn from the previous ones.

Albania has a mortality rate nearly three times that of Poland and nearly twice that of Bulgaria. Romania and Macedonia show figures closer to Albania (Figure 2.3).

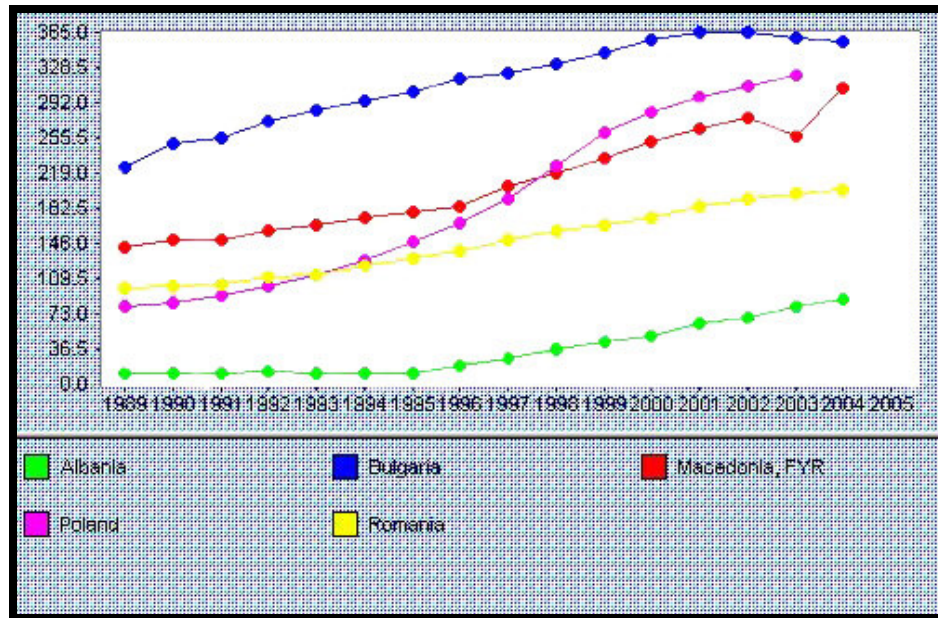


Figure 2.4 Telephone mainlines per 1000 people in the period 1989-2005 (Source: publications.worldbank.org/subscriptions/WDI/)

At this point of study it is important to draw a picture of the economical composition of the five countries. The study will examine the sectoral composition of gross domestic product of these countries. The division of the labor force into three main sectors completely lacks the WDI data from Albania.

The countries were examined in five points of time. The years 1990 and 1993 represent the first period of transition immediately after the communist period (year 1990 shows the situation that existed before the reforms' process and year 1993 shows the immediate impact of the reforms). The year 1997 is taken as a midpoint or halfway to transition; years 2000 and 2004 represent the most recent data supposedly closest to the current composition. The general characteristic for all transition economies in the first period is an artificially high share of industry and low share of services in GDP (Petrakos and Totev, 2000). All the countries have shares of industry approaching to the value of 50%. Moreover, all the countries with the exception of Poland show a high share of agriculture with Albania topping the list. Tracing the immediate impacts of liberalization in the structuring of the economies in the 1993 data, interesting results are obtained with respect to the countries' performance and type of response to the impact factors (Table 2.4).

Table 2.4 GDP composition of the studied countries

Country	Year	Agriculture	Industry	Services	Total
Albania	1990	36%	48%	16%	100%
	1993	55%	23%	22%	100%
	1997	34%	18%	48%	100%
	2000	29%	19%	52%	100%
	2004	25%	20%	55%	100%
Bulgaria	1990	17%	49%	34%	100%
	1993	11%	37%	52%	100%
	1997	26%	28%	46%	100%
	2000	14%	30%	56%	100%
	2004	11%	30%	59%	100%
Macedonia	1990	9%	44%	47%	100%
	1993	12%	35%	53%	100%
	1997	13%	34%	53%	100%
	2000	12%	34%	54%	100%
	2004	13%	29%	58%	100%
Poland	1990	8%	50%	42%	100%
	1993	7%	40%	53%	100%
	1997	7%	33%	60%	100%
	2000	5%	32%	63%	100%
	2004	5%	31%	64%	100%
Romania	1990	24%	50%	26%	100%
	1993	23%	42%	35%	100%
	1997	20%	39%	41%	100%
	2000	1%	36%	51%	100%
	2004	14%	35%	51%	100%

Source: World Bank – World Development Indicators (publications.worldbank.org/subscriptions/WDI)

Petrakos and Totev (2000) noted that structural change in all the CEE countries is associated with a reduction in the absolute and relative size of the secondary sector. Furthermore, they defined as “forward type of adjustment” i.e. positive reaction showing successful adaptation to the new economic environment, the shift of GDP shares from secondary to tertiary sectors. The “backward type of adjustment” is the shift of GDP shares from secondary to primary sector otherwise defined by as a defensive reaction showing difficulties in dealing with the new internal and external economic forces.

Such a backward type of adjustment experienced Albania in 1993 when its first sector GDP share rose from its 1990 year 36 % to the 55 % level. Practically all the other four countries involved in the study have made forward adjustments although Macedonia showed a slight increase in the primary sector as well as in the tertiary one. Well inside the transition period, Albania records other striking developments. As expected for all the countries, the GDP share of the industry has declined with Albania showing an extreme case of industrial collapse. In 1993 Albania's share of industry was less than half the share of 1990 and in the year 1997 it fell to 18 %

from its initial 48 % level in 1990. The phenomenon is primary linked with several internal factors. The “shock therapy” and lack of capital gave rise only to small and medium enterprises leaving the large-scale industry and factories to their fate. No investor would risk capital in the out-of-date machinery and technology of the post-communist Albanian industry. Another major factor is insecurity for the foreign capital created by the political instability especially in the specific year 1997. Bulgaria also experienced a backward adjustment in its GDP structure in this year due to its economical instability. Approaching the present time all the countries seem to restructure heir GDP in favor of the service sector thus giving a forward adjustment to the surrounding politic and economic environment.

Table 2.5 Division of the labor force in the three main sectors

Country	Agriculture	Industry	Services
Albania*	58%	15%	27%
Bulgaria	10%	33%	57%
FYROM	22%	34%	44%
Poland	18%	29%	53%
Romania	35%	30%	35%

*September 2006 estimates from CIA (www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/al.html)

Table 2.5 indicates the division of labor force for the studied countries with data from WDI of the year 2003. The 58% of its labor force involved in agriculture and only 27% occupied in the services sector further reinforces Albania's image as a country of farmers with a ruined industry (15% of the labor). Romania and FYROM seem to be on the right path with their restructuring whereas Bulgaria and Poland have a more stabilized division of labor with over 50% occupied in the services (Table 2.4).

Overall, the study indicated that the Balkan countries could recover to their initial (year 1990) GDP levels at approximately a decade's time whereas Poland recovered in a three yeas time. Therefore, the recovery process was slower in these countries. The highly accelerated recovery process in Albania and Bulgaria had a negative effect resulting in either repeated crisis or significant delays in implementing successful reforms. Although at the current time, the Balkan countries show a forward adjustment trend in their economies they are still far from that of Poland (now an EU member). The path to such a restructuring was harsh and with negative economical implementations. In this field, Albania still has a very high agricultural share of its GDP counting for a delayed development. In addition, Albania has experienced a deep industrial collapse. Moreover, development indicators showed that Albania represents an extreme case of underdevelopment within the studied countries.

2.3. Albania – Country in figures

According to the CIA World Fact Book Albania is a Southeastern European country, bordering the Adriatic Sea and Ionian Sea, between Greece and Serbia and Montenegro. It lies within the 41 00 N, 20 00 E geographical coordinates with a total area of 28.748 sq kilometers. Albania's border lengths are Greece 282 km, Macedonia 151 km, Montenegro 172 km and Serbia 115 km for a total borderline of 720 km. The country has a coastline of 362 km over Adriatic and Ionian Seas.



Figure 2.5 Detailed Country Map of Albania (www.intute.ac.uk/sciences/worldguide/html/803.html)

Albania has a mild temperate climate with cool, cloudy and wet winters and hot, clear and dry summers. Because the smothering effect of the sea is lost, the interior is cooler and wetter. Lowest point is at the Adriatic Sea at 0 m and the highest elevation is Maja e Korabit at 2,573 m above sea level in Golem, Korab. The terrain in Albania is mostly mountains and hills though small plains are found along the coast around the major rivers. According to 2005 data, land use composition in the country is as follows: arable land: 20.1%, permanent crops: 4.21%, other: 75.69%. Total irrigated land is 3,530 sq km (www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/), (INSTAT, 2005).

Population at the last relevant census in 2001 was 3,066,367 (INSTAT, 2004a) and the 2006 estimate is calculated to be 3,581,655 (www.cia.gov). Population density as per 2001 census is 106 people per sq km. According to the same census, age group population composition is as follows: 0-14 years 30 %, 15-64 years 63% and 65 years and over 7%. Albania has an ethnic group composition of 95% Albanians, 3% Greek and 2% other that counts for one of the most homogeneous populations in Europe.

2.4. Major development forces and factors

Following Albania's general economic picture drawn in the previous sections, this section will deal with the major forces that led to such outcomes. First, a short historical background of Albania since its independence, the beginning of the 20th century including main turn points will be given. The second part will deal with Albania's transition period in more detail. The last two parts of the section will focus on socio-economic and spatial outputs of migration and the shock therapy in Albania as the two main forces giving shape to its transition period.

2.4.1. Historical background

Albania gained its independence from Ottoman rule in 1912 and was internationally recognized when it joined the League of Nations in 1920. The years until World War Two were dominated by the conservative leadership of Ahmed Bey Zogu. Zog's dictatorial rule was marked by economic stagnation, although he helped create a modern school system and the country became more stable. Zog failed, however, to resolve the question of land reform, and the peasantry remained impoverished. During the later years of Zog's rule, Italy exercised increasing influence over Albanian affairs so that the country was already *de facto* an Italian protectorate by

the time that Italy invaded in 1939. Albania remained under Italian occupation until 1943, when German forces took it after the Italian surrender.

During the war, nationalists, communists and monarchists in Albania resisted the German and Italian occupation with varying degrees of zeal and effectiveness. The nationalists and monarchists were least committed in this, so the communists eventually prevailed, seizing power and ousting the Germans in November 1944. Enver Hoxha was installed as the country's new leader, a position he held, with absolute and commanding authority, until his death in 1985.

The Hoxha regime launched a radical reform program that destroyed the power of the landlords, nationalized all industry, banks and commercial properties, and created a state controlled socialist society. Under Enver Hoxha, leader of the Albanian Party of Labor from 1941 until his death in 1985, Albania experienced one of the most oppressive and isolated communist regimes in the world. Economic and political contacts with other countries, even communist ones, decreased to a minimum as Albania broke first with the Soviet block in 1961, and then with China in 1977 (King and Vullnetari, 2003).

Between 1990 and 1992, Albania ended 46 years of Communist rule and established a multiparty democracy. The transition has proven challenging as successive governments have tried to deal with high unemployment, widespread corruption, a dilapidated physical infrastructure, powerful organized crime networks, and combative political opponents. Albania has made progress in its democratic development since first holding multiparty elections in 1991, but deficiencies remain. Although Albania's economy continues to grow, the country is still one of the poorest in Europe, hampered by a large informal economy and an inadequate energy and transportation infrastructure.

2.4.2. The transition period

Of the East Bloc countries Albania is the country that gave the worst response to transition and liberalization, its rank as the poorest country in Europe being the proof. As can be drawn from analytical results in the previous sections of this study, the country's struggle in transition was one of rises and falls. The prolonged transition from 1990 up to now can be divided into periods according to main events, trends and performance.

The first period from 1990 to 1992, shows the immediate impact of the liberalization of economy on very tense political environment. The main characteristic of this period is an unprecedented mass migration to western countries following the

opening of Albania after a 48-year claustrophobic closure to the world. The first impacts as expected resulted in a high price inflation and unemployment.

Following the first shock of the regime change, Albania faced economic depression marked by fall of general output, collapse of industry, price inflation and high unemployment rates (Table 2.2). Under these conditions, two concepts emerged regarding the transition paths towards the market economy. The first one supported the beginning from the “zero level” with accelerated reforms whereas the second one suggested a more gradual process. The new government lead by Democratic Party opted for the first concept. Under the advice of international organizations, Albania undertook its economic reform by applying the famous “shock therapy”. Its main elements were prompt liberalization of prices, trade, the exchange rate and restrictive monetary policy (Gedeshi and Mara, 2001). Such a reform had plausible immediate effects but its long-term outcomes still comprise the main problems for the current Albanian government.

The second part of transition in Albania marks the period 1993 to 1996. During these years, Albania initiated the most free market policies in Europe. By the mid-1993, it could be claimed of Albania that it was the only country in Central and Eastern Europe to meet every IMF criterion. Successful economic performance under transition (traceable in Table 2.2) made Albania to be considered by many a model country in its transition reforms (Bezemer, 2001).

The successful trends could be applauded until the shock of early 1997. This specific year marks a drastic turn point on Albania’s history and the third period under transition. Pyramidal schemes, otherwise known in economic literature as Ponzi Schemes, led to the collapse of the country’s economy, major internal disorders and inevitably government change. Bezemer (2001) claims that the high incidence of this schemes was fostered by the combination of restrictive monetary policies, lack of market regulation, large capital inflows and weak governments. In the following years Albania was involved with recovering from this crisis.

The last period in transition starts from the beginning of the new century and continues to the present days for Albania is still in a transition period. During this period Albania has recorded a steady output increase and has brought inflation under control but still remains the least developed country in the ex-communist bloc.

2.4.3. Emigration to western countries – Capital accumulation

Transition in Albania left deep social wounds in the population. The soaring inflation rates and the high unemployment rates led the Albanians to “seek their fortune

towards the new lands” – the forbidden West. Given that emigration had been banned for so long, and reflecting the obvious economic divide between East and West, the opening of the borders was widely anticipated to be a precursor of mass migration. Therefore, starting in 1990 Albania has witnessed one of the great emigrations of recent times. Within the three years 1991-93, a mass flight of approximately 200,000-300,000 Albanians took place seeking refugee and work abroad. The majority of this exodus was towards Italy and Greece, Albania’s richest neighbors. Following this large politic, social and economic depression, after the 1992 elections and with the new reforms Albania began an impressive progress. This attracted a large number of emigrants to turn and invest in their home country. After the Ponzi schemes collapsed in 1997 a new wave of disorders stroke the country leading to another major exodus (King and Vullnetari, 2003).

Nevertheless, by the end of summer 1997 order and stability was established to certain extends and with the following governmental turnover a period of political stability and modest rebuilding began in Albania. Emigration still takes pace on a steady pace though, with new destinations being exploited.

When compared to the other countries in this study, Albania is seen to immediately follow Romania as the countries with the largest emigration numbers. Macedonia is the country experiencing the lowest emigration whereas after the first shock, Bulgaria and Poland seem to have brought emigration under control. Although in much smaller numbers, it is a fact that emigration continued. Another interesting fact is that while in all the countries emigration is decreasing, Macedonia shows increasing figures (although in small numbers). Decreasing emigration counts for the improvement of economic conditions in all countries (Table 2.6).

Table 2.6 Net migration

Countries	1990	1995	2000	2005
Albania	22,868	-423,285	-267,190	-100,000
Bulgaria	-286,754	-308,924	-50,000	-50,000
Macedonia	-14,960	-27,472	-5,000	-10,000
Poland	-201,587	-77,463	-70,779	-80,000
Romania	-120,968	-529,210	-350,000	-150,000

Source: World Bank – World Development Indicators

As can be seen from the diagrams in Figure 2.6 in the years 1950, 1960 and 1969 the pyramids’ shapes are quite regular indicating a young population. In the years 1979 and 1989, the pyramids begin to swell at their basis indicating a rapidly growing population. The year 2001 is a complete abnormality in the composition of

the Albanian population. Migration has resulted in aberrations of the pyramid greatly disrupting the population and natural increase equilibrium. Migration mostly stroke Albanian youth by significantly decreasing the economically and sexually active part of the population. This can be traced in the last pyramid graph where the population bars of 0 – 4 and 25 – 40 age groups have shrunk significantly when compared to the same group age bars of the 1989 graph bars.

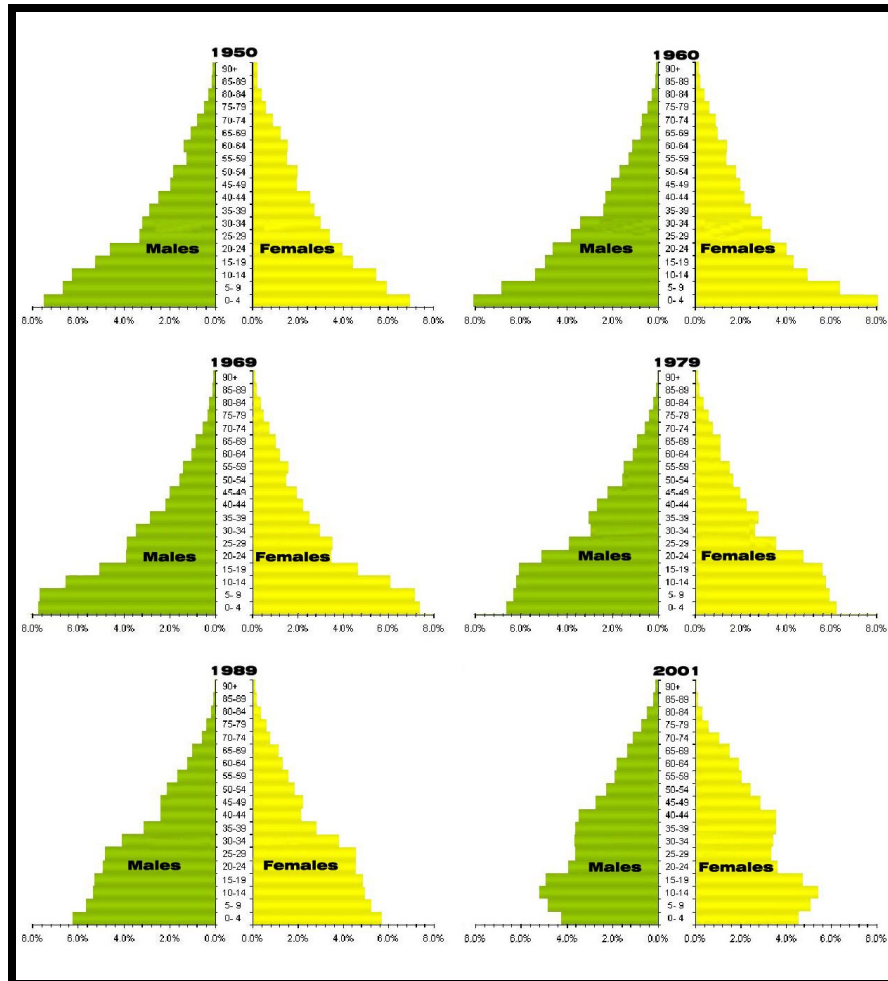


Figure 2.6 Age pyramid of Albanian population at different censuses (source: www.instat.gov.al)

Emigration from Albania had one major output that will later shape the country – capital accumulation. In the early years of the reform in Albania, foreign aid and the private remittances of Albanian emigrants covered the difference in extroversion i.e. much higher local consumption than production. Despite the lack of accurate data during the period 1991-1998 it may be assumed that this remittances have reached on an annual average the amount of 400 million US\$ (Gedeshi and Mara, 2001). Later this capital sometimes in the form of “black money” was to be invested in the

construction sector (the easiest and fastest way to whiten money), thus largely changing the face of urban Albania.

2.4.4. Spatial outcomes of liberalization, “shock therapy” and internal migration

The essence of this study lies in the spatial outcomes of liberalization. Here this issue will be dealt within the large scale i.e. the country. Moreover, comparisons of Albania to the other countries included in the study will be made wherever possible. As previously stated, liberalization had major effects on the economy of ex-communist countries. Spatial dimension of economic change in Albania is a topic requiring further focus and quantitative and qualitative study. This section will deal with the most prominent features of such a change in Albania during transition.

First, liberalization was not a “friendly” notion to Albania. This was mainly because Albanians had a very wrong concept of liberalization and reforms. Private property strongly prohibited for half a century was now the center of existence. The way people approached property was really a fatal one. “What is not mine is not worth preserving” was the main concept under which many parks, public open spaces, mostly local institutional buildings and facilities were either damaged, ruined or occupied. Such was the effect that mentality change of people suppressed for half a century had on *their own* space.

Second, the shock therapy as an immediate transition means was a successful implementation. Same thing cannot be said for its long-term effects though. “All to the private sector” was the motto of the Albanian government. This privatization was characterized by high speed and total privatization of the economy. At a time when capital was scarce and speed was accepted as a primary criterion the implementation of this strategy would also condition the choice of the main privatization method especially of the privatization of large state enterprises. (Gedeshi and Mara, 2001). Lack of capital and foreign investments made efficient privatization of large enterprises almost impossible resulting in large industrial buildings abandoned within urban areas whereas small and medium enterprises struggle for better location. Another setback leading to vast empty buildings sometimes close to the center of the urban areas was the lack of a clear law on property rights.

Third, the strictly controlled movement of population during communism nowadays is occurring at a frenetic pace so that it is hard to trace and generate reliable data. Albania generally shows two migration trends, the first being the one outside the

country (emigration) and the second being a migration from rural (especially the isolated north) to urban areas. Notwithstanding the high-speed internal migration, Albania still has a very low rate of urban population. (King and Vullnetari, 2003).

By examining Figure 2.6, it is clearly seen that Albania has the lowest percentage of urban population of all the five countries involved in the study. While Bulgaria, Poland and even Macedonia group together around the 70 % value Albania hardly reached the 40 % level in 2005.

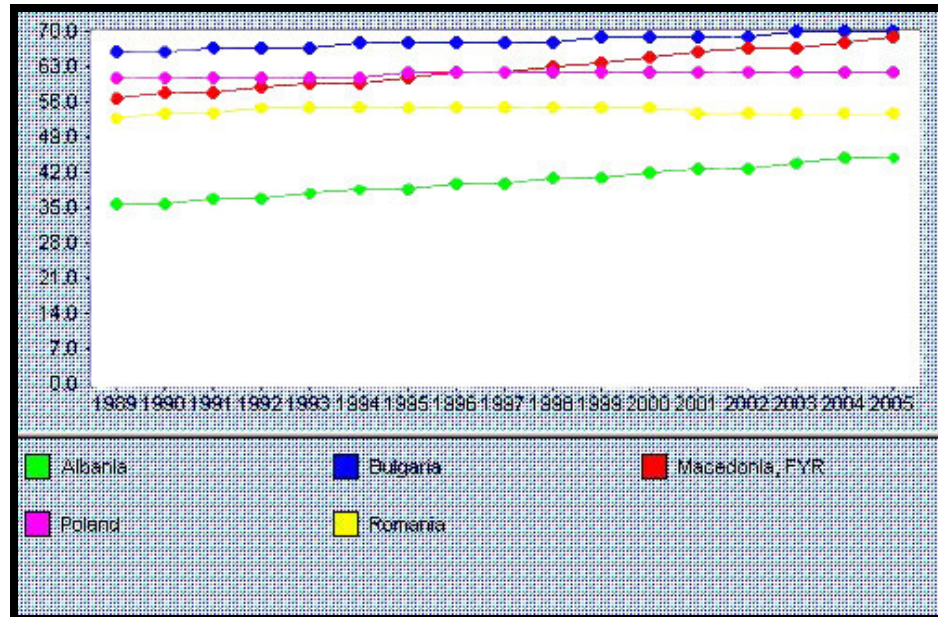


Figure 2.7 Percentage of urban population in the period 1989-2005 (Source: publications.worldbank.org/subscriptions/WDI)

Internal migration in Albania is an ongoing pattern of demographic change with the largest cities in the country like Tirana, Durrës, Shkoder, Fier, etc. being the main targets. It is hardly traceable and the “laissez a faire” Albanian concept has rendered it a much painful process. The new comers occupy agricultural lands near the periphery and develop in squatters. The term occupy is literally justifiable because they settle without caring for the owner and the absence of a proper law facilitates their position. Moreover, entire families settle in former crèches occupying public spaces and the like.

Overall, it can be said that the liberal economy had negative spatial outcomes the condition being facilitated by the incapacity of the government to exert power. Although official figures tell of a relatively high rural population the finite socialist urban of Albania is being pushed to the limit. The Albanian city is crowded, dirty and resembles a construction yard in a never-ending construction process. Privatization

left huge empty spots on the industrial cities. Emigrants bought capital in form of foreign currency (sometimes of dubious origin). Afterwards all over Albania the construction sector boomed imposing new dynamics. Urban land has never been so precious, so rentable and so scarce. The new forces of liberal economy changed spatial concepts of urbanity in Albania. These forces affected all the urban sites but their impact was reflected most in the capital. The following section of the study will deal with the description and development of the capital for a later analysis of the spatial outcome of liberal economy trends.

2.5. Tirana region

Administrative division of Albania is of two ranks. There are 36 districts (*rrethe*) grouped in 12 counties (*qarqe*). The Region of Tirana, constituted as a local government unit on November 30th 2000, includes two districts –Tirana and Kavaja consisting of five municipalities and 24 communes with a total area of 1,652 km² (UNDP Albania, 2004a).

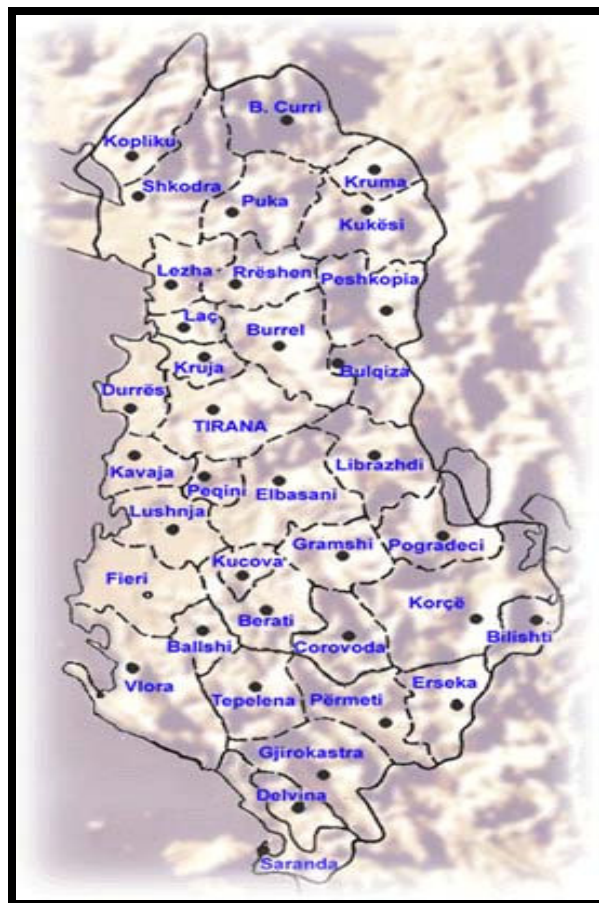


Figure 2.8 Administrative map of Albania showing the 36 districts

Source: www.culturprospectiv.ch/regions/albania.html

2.5.1. Location and importance within Albania

The region is located in the middle of Albania. The terrain is mostly comprised of hills with rivers spanning through. Altitude from the sea level increases east and northward so the district of Tirana has a higher elevation than that of Kavaja. One characteristic for the urban settlements of the area is their location on flat, non-sloppy sites. During the last years though, due to population increase urban Tirana is climbing the slopes of the hills surrounding it.

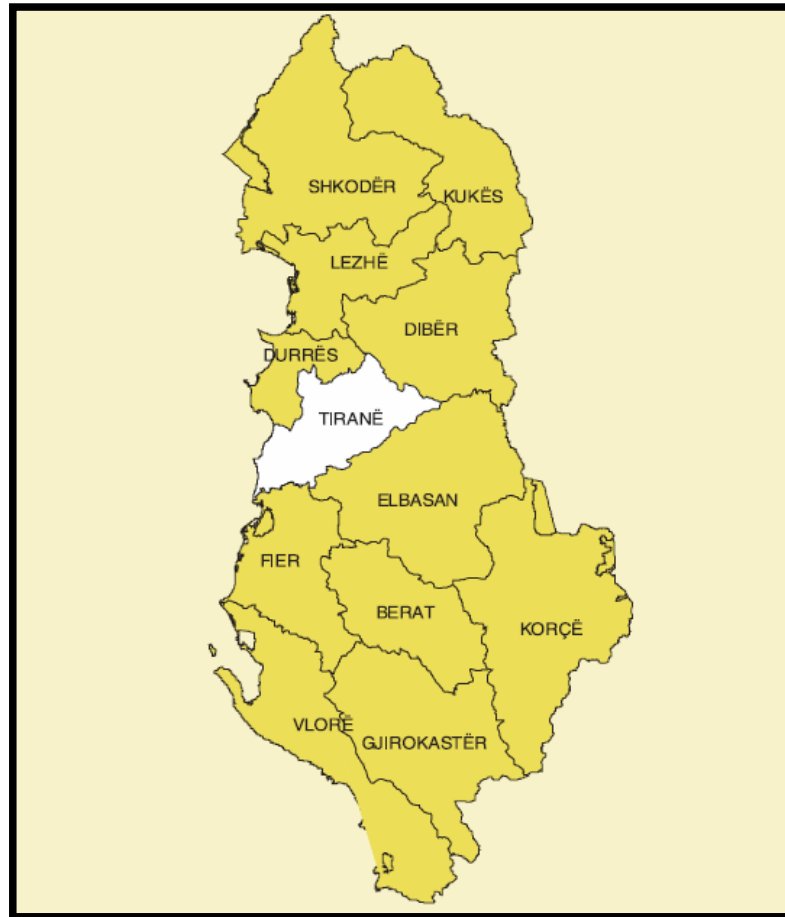


Figure 2.9 Location of Tirana region within Albania (source: www.undp.org.al)

Demographically the region has largely increased in size since it gets the highest internal migration flux in all Albania due to the location of the country's capital within the region. The 2003 population of the region was 853,192 and the density 516 people/km², which is approximately 5 times that of the country. Population in the region of Tirana is mainly urban because of large urban settlements and small scale scattered rural centers. The region counts for one of the highest urban population percentage within Albania. Actually, its 69.6% share of urban population in 2003 was approximately twice that of Albania (INSTAT, 2004), (UNDP Albania, 2004a).

Economically Tirana region is the engine of the country. As Albania is on the go of adjusting its GDP composition in favor of the tertiary sector, companies involved in the services tend to “conquer” the capital first. The timid revival of the secondary sector is taking place along the Tirana – Durres highway, since this axis offers best location, land prices and infrastructure within the capital.

2.5.2. Tirana and other regions in Albania – A Comparison

Table 2.7 gives a comparison of Tirana region to some of the other regions in the country and Albania as a whole. Tirana is the region with the largest population in Albania it also has the highest population density more than 5 times the population density of the country. Population in Tirana is located mostly in urban areas. Therefore, Tirana has the highest share of urban population among all the other regions and Albania itself. Tirana’s 70% figure in share of urban population over the regions population is almost twice that of the Shkoder region. The region closest to Tirana in this aspect is Fier with an approximate share of 60% urban population. Fier is a developed region in southwest Albania and the city of Fier is the fastest growing city in the country (UNDP Albania, 2003). On the other hand, the northern region of Shkoder has the largest rural population of all the compared regions.

Table 2.7 Comparison of the regions in Albania

Region	Area (km ²)	Population	Density	Urban Pop. (% of total)	Average Age	Unemploy- ment (2001)	Expenditure per Capita Leke/Month	(%) Pop. Below Poverty Line*
Tirana	1652	853192	516	70	32.9	24	8201.84	23.44
Vlore	2706	343035	126	54	28.6	25.5	9817.49	18.26
Fier	1894	382544	202	60	-	-	7365.17	29.71
Durres	766	351899	459	54	-	13.4	8412.58	24.77
Shkoder	3572	256473	71	38	-	26.7	7025.02	32.77
Albania	28748	3093700	108	44	31.4	23	-	25

*4891 lek/capita/month

Source: UNDP, MDG regional reports (www.undp.org.al)

Economically Tirana Region is said to be the locomotive of the country although regional data from the above table give some contradictory figures. Firstly, Tirana has a slightly older population than the regions with available data and the country. Most of its increasing population comes from internal migration and this phenomenon counts for a high level of unemployment slightly higher than that of Albania. The only region with decent unemployment rates is Durres nearly half of the other regions and Albania. The economic welfare data tell of some distinct characteristic for these regions of Albania. It can be seen that Vlore and Durres

have higher per capita expenditures than even Tirana, which is explained by the large number of emigrants in western countries from these regions (UNDP Albania, 2004b, 2005a). Emigrant remittances especially in the Vlore region made it rank among the regions with the lowest percentage of population below the poverty line. It can be said of Tirana to have almost 25% of its population living in poverty thus approaching the country poverty figures. On the other hand, the region most north of Albania, Shkoder shows high poverty records (Table 2.7).

Overall, it can be said for the Tirana Region to be the densest region in Albania. Moreover, the country is reported to show trends of grouping its population in the triangle Tirane-Elbasan-Durres. Durres region has the second population density in Albania 459 people/ km² (UNDP Albania, 2005a). Internal migration has slightly aged the regions capital. Economically though it can be said that emigration plays a major force than internal migration as regions supported by emigrants show lower poverty rates even than Tirana. Internal migration rates are very high though especially in Tirana resulting in relatively high unemployment rates.

2.6. Tirana – The city

Tirana is located in the foothills of the Southern Alps 35 km from the Adriatic Coast. The city lies on a plain surrounded by Dajti Mountain in the East, hills of Krraba and Sauk in the South, hills of Vaqarr and Yzberisht in the West and those of Kamza in the North. This counts for the wet, Mediterranean climate of the city with an annual rainfall average of 1247 mm.

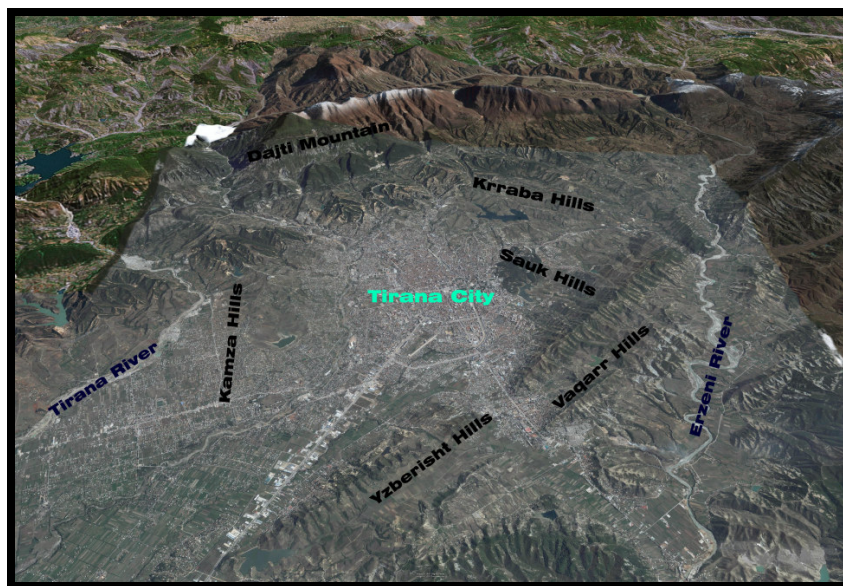


Figure 2.10 Map representation of Tirana city and its surrounding relief (Source: Google Map)

Tirana lies 110 m above the sea level and the average annual temperature is 15° C. Lana River spans the city in east-west direction. Internal migration and rapid population growth is a truth that creates forces exerting pressure on the edges of the city. In reaction to such forces the city continues to expand vertically and horizontally. Although precise on site measurements are missing, the area within the *yellow line* (border dividing urban and rural) of the city is reported to be 41.8 km². This area is organized into 11 administrative units called municipality units. Tirana municipality counts 585,756 inhabitants or 75% of the districts population hence, being the largest municipality in the country (INSTAT, 2005).

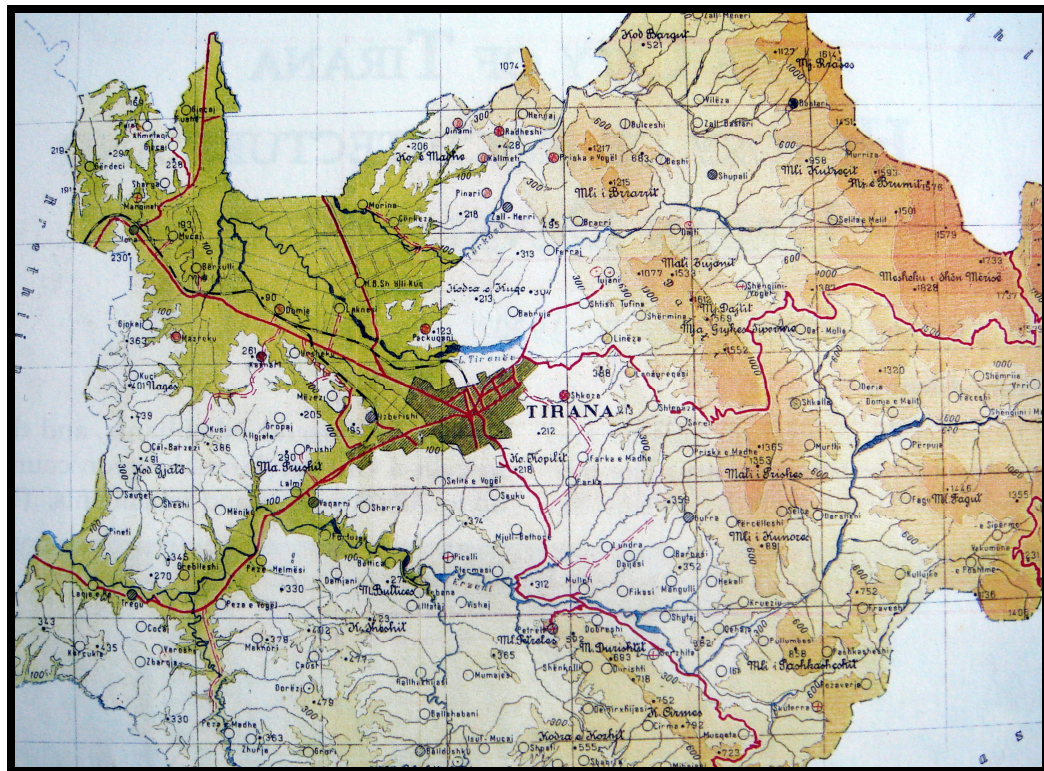


Figure 2.11 The city of Tirana within Tirana District

2.6.1. Development and history

Most of the Albanian cities like Durres, Shkoder, Berat, Gjirokastr have an *urban* history more than 2000 years old dating back to the Illyrians. The founding of Tirana as a city dates back to 1614, when under the auspices of Sulejman Pasha Bargjini, the first nucleus was founded. At the time, Albania was under Ottoman rule and due to its favorable geographic position served as a bridge towards West for the Ottoman Empire. Tirana at this stage was an important crossing point for the main transportation routes for both the Balkans and the country itself. This status as an important transition point was considered a setback in the urban development of

Tirana because of the very transitory nature of the development purposes. Following the above stated scenery Tirana's first steps towards urbanism were of Islamic character. Around the mosque of Sulejman Pasha, buildings of the feudal lords together with a bath, a bakery and an inn were erected. These three services triggered the development of the bazaar thus marking the first nucleus of the city (Tirana Municipality, 2003, Aliaj, *et. al.*, 2004).

Development in the forthcoming years was mainly of Islamic character. The city continued its slow growth in a prevailing organic pattern and the most important feature was "zoning" division into the commercial and residential areas. The first nucleus now expanded with the bazaar counted for the commercial zone and dwellings were scattered around it in a completely irregular pattern.

The turn of the 20th century marked an important phase in the development of Tirana. After the independence from the Ottoman Empire in 1912, Albania established its own government. These years went under the mark of World War I where Austro-Hungarians invaded parts of the country. On January 20 1920, the Congress of Lushnja declared Tirana the country's capital thus turning an important page on the city's history. At that time Tirana stretched over a space of 3 km² and counted 17,000 inhabitants. Years until World War II were characterized by the first attempts of planned development. The ruling of Ahmet Zog first as president and then as self-proclaimed king brought the country into political chaos but on the other hand, brought also the western influence in the developing patterns of Tirana. The city continued to expand and in 1930 it counted 25, 079 people within an area of 8 km². In 1950 the area increased to 10.6 km² and in 1970 it reached 31 km² (Tirana Municipality, 2003).

Under communist control Tirana was designed for a high degree of self-sufficiency. The structuring proposed urban edges reserved for horticultural and food production while mountain slopes were protected for water supply. In the 1950s Tirana created the concept of a large Central Park with a water reservoir and native trees to enrich the rocky landscape (Felstehausen, 1999). Thus, the buffering zone for the capital was created clearly drawing the yellow line. The communist era marked a very contained and strictly controlled development of the capital.

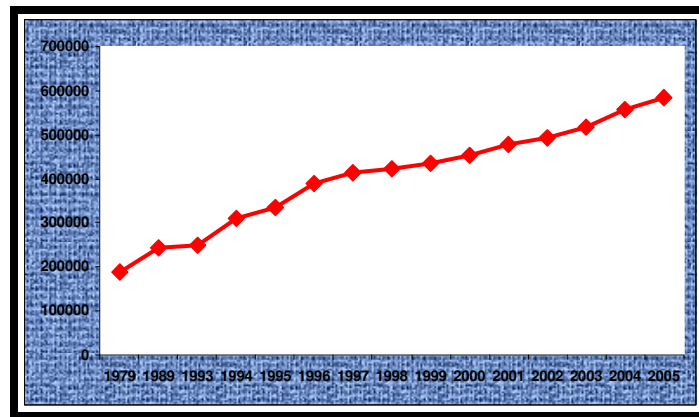


Figure 2.12 Population of the Tirana city during years 1979-2005 (Source: INSTAT, 2006)

As it can be seen from Figure 2.12 population increase was steady during the period 1979-93 (only by natural growth) and experienced a sharp increase (almost doubled due to internal migration) in the period 1993-97. By the end of year 1997 the population had doubled the figure of 1979 and by the end of 2005 the population was more than 3 times that of the year 1979.

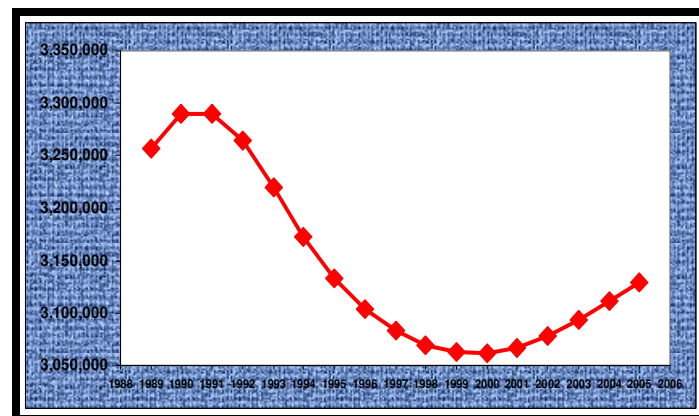


Figure 2.13 Population of Albania during years 1989-2005
(Source: publications.worldbank.org/subscriptions/WDI)

On the other hand, the population graph of Albania counts for a very different type of demographical change. During the communist period represented by the years 1988-1990 the country had a sharp increase in population due to natural growth (highest rate in Europe). After the regime collapse, overall population gave significant losses due to emigration. The steady population decrease went on until 2000 and a continuous increase is seen ever since. As a conclusion, while the overall population of Albania experienced significant losses from emigration in the transition period, its capital was facing an unprecedented population increase due to internal migration.

2.6.2. Shaping Tirana – Outcomes of different forces

During its urban development path Tirana has experienced the influence of different cultures. Its roots are of Islamic character with narrow roads in organic pattern and public places around religious and economic activity (mosque, bazaar). Traces of this development can still be found in the regions near the Medrese, and the New Bazaar. Narrow streets in organic pattern and low-rise residential areas are the proof.



Figure 2.14 Aerial view of Old Bazaar (1930s) **Figure 2.15** Satellite view of the area (present times)

The planned development begins after the declaration of the city as the country's capital. This is a period marked by western influence of Austrians and Italians hence the affiliation of the country to Italy during the period. In 1923 Austrian architects and engineers developed the first regulatory town plan of Tirana. The main aim of the plan was to create a regular orthogonal street network by improving and adjusting the existent one. Put in other words sweep off the organic Islamic pattern for the gridiron one. Afterwards began an era of great importance in the urban history of the capital. The Italian school guided by the principles of renaissance and baroque was to shape Tirana. Names like architect Brasini, de Fausto and Bossio contributed in the formation of the New Tirana. Their vision was of westernizing the city and this was reflected in the shaping of north south axis (nowadays the main boulevard) and the construction of garden houses in gridiron pattern near Lana River. The axis was designed in pure renaissance style with its first draft taking after the St. Peter Square in Rome and was meant to link the old bazaar with New Tirana. Italian influence continued in the World War II when after the occupation Italy planned of developing and enlarging Tirana by bringing settlers from the other coast of Adriatic. After Italy capitulated Germans invaded the country and this marked the end of urban development in Tirana. Actually, the National Liberation War largely destroyed it (Aliaj, *et. al.* 2004).

After the liberation of the country, the communists took control and an isolation period that would last for half a century began in Albania. During this period Tirana as the capital received special attention and was conservatively developed under central planning principles. Private property was nonexistent and housing was provided in apartments raised up by volunteer work (Magnusson, 1990). As internal migration was strictly controlled, the city increased in population mainly by natural growth. The governmental buildings were restored and the north-south main axis was preserved to be later used for pompous exhibitions. The leadership established themselves in the garden villas of New Tirana helping in their preservation and building new ones.



Figure 2.16 Residential Blocks in the Street of Kavaja

The urban development concept and vision for Tirana favored the high density in order to eliminate private property so the horizontal growth of the city was not encouraged. Commercial, institutional and most non-residential buildings were gathered around the main axis. Residential development was made in fringes around the existing radial axis Rruga Durrës, Rruga Kavajës and Rruga Dibrës. Urban fabric was featured in maximum five stores prefabricated or brick apartment blocks arranged in isles encircling recreational areas (Figure 2.16).

Development accelerated after the years 1970 along the east-west direction (Figure 2.17). There were two main reasons for this. First, the north-south direction was defined by the main institutional axis and its extremities ended with significant buildings buffered south by the park and foothills and north by arable land. Second, area east and west of the city suited most the centralized planning establishment concept: almost flat and clear site in good geological conditions in which to build satellite towns.

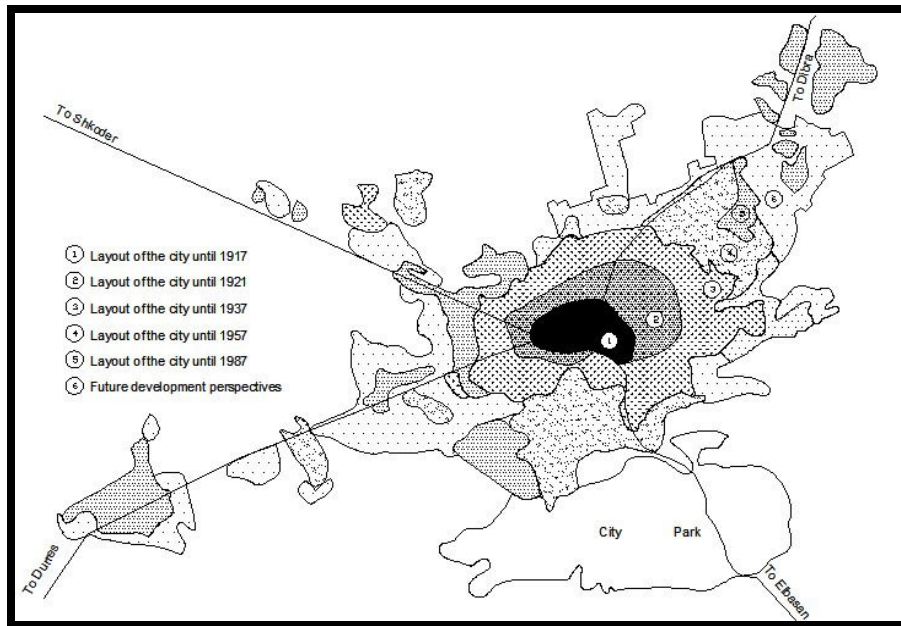


Figure 2.17 Phases of extension of Tirana from 1917 until 1987 (adapted from Aliaj, *et. al.* 2004)

As a result, at the beginning of the 1990s Tirana showed a mixture of textures in its urban fabric adjoining rather than superimposing each other. Lana River divides the city into two parts as per pattern composition. North lays the old city in organic pattern low-rise single-family houses and south lays the planned New Tirana in a dominant grid pattern. Planned development is also seen along major axes and around the city's ring road, this belonging to the socialist planning era (Figure 2.18).

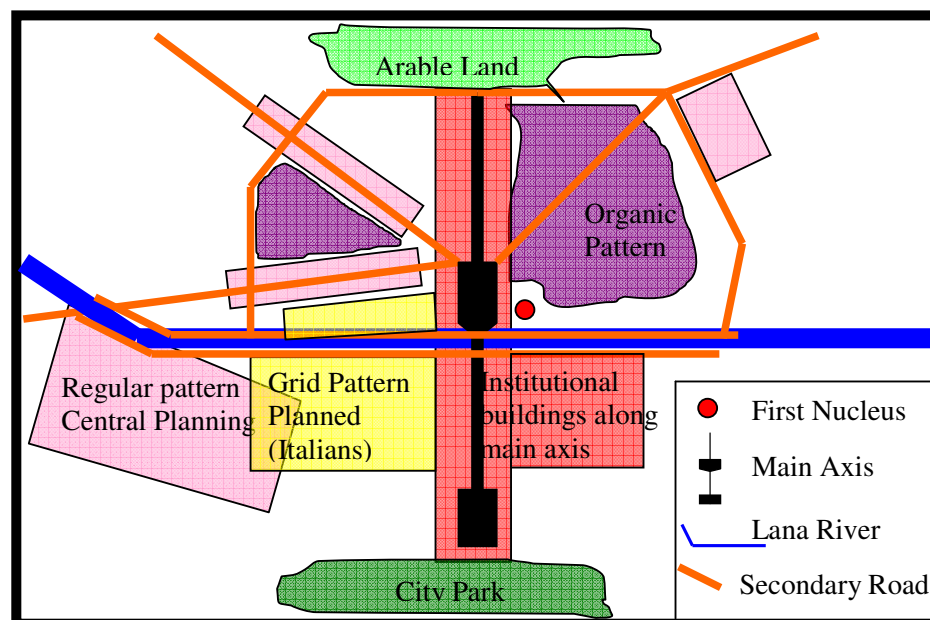


Figure 2.18 Schematic representation of the urban pattern distribution in Tirana before 1990

2.6.3. Transition in Tirana – Spatial Outcomes of Liberalization, “Shock Therapy” and Migration

The beginning of the 1990s found Tirana as the stage of the student revolts that led to collapse of communism. The capital hosted historical events and was at some extent the arena where Albania embraced democratic pluralism. The newly introduced market economy had major effects on the city by largely changing its spatial layout as well as its social composition.

Early stages of transition were characterized by an overall deep regression. High inflation and unemployment rates (Section 2.2) all over the country had their effects on the capital's life as well. At the transition's dawn Tirana was facing a very high rate of informal economy. Spatially this phenomenon was accompanied by the rapid building of illegal constructions and kiosks (Figure 2.19-2.20). Although exact data are still unavailable it is thought that more than 70% of the constructions made in Tirana following 1990 did not possess a building license. This situation was worsened by the political instability in the country.



Figure 2.19 Aerial view of peripheral Tirana



Figure 2.20 Illegal Construction over Lana River

At this specific period Tirana was in a chaotic state and the new phenomenon of internal migration did nothing but worsen the situation. The new comers tend to settle in the periphery by occupying the agricultural areas – a no man's land to their opinion. The capital once fanatically preserved for sustainable growth was now facing its bitter truth marked by sprawl and informality. Two major trends were seen related to the topic. First, illegal residential construction mainly in the outskirts of the city began to “eat up” agricultural area. Second, illegal construction for business purposes started to suffocate the city's center (Aliaj, *et. al.* 2004).

Another major feature of transition in Albania previously stated is the shock therapy. Early in this study the long term effects of the shock therapy were considered to have negative spatial effects on the industrial Albanian cities. As Tirana was planned for self-sufficiency in socialism and knowing communism's ideological dependence on industry, the capital of such a country cannot be thought of without its share of factories. Prompt massive privatization launched by the shock therapy could not be applied to the large-scale factories due to the lack of internal capital and security for the foreign investments. The old factories in Tirana were left to their fate thus resulting in big openings in the compactness and wholeness of the urban fabric (Figure 2.21).

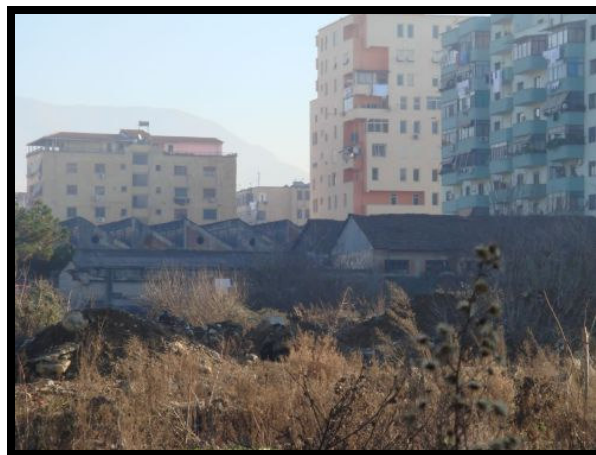


Figure 2.21 Actual view of the "Enver" Factory

Following the big depression after the collapse of Ponzi schemes Albania entered a slow recovery period. Meanwhile, Tirana recorded some timid improvements after turning from the verge of collapse in 1997. The beginning of the new century found the capital striving for identity trying to get back its space from informality. This period was marked by demolition of illegal constructions and kiosks in almost all the parts of the city. Restructuring of the center and landscaping of Lana River after the demolition process were two major tasks the city successfully fulfilled (Figure 2.22, 2.23).



Figure 2.22 Degradation of the bed and banks of Lana (left) and occupation of the “Rinia” Park (right) by illegal constructions



Figure 2.23 Landscaping of Lana River bed (left) and “Rinia” Park (right) after demolition of illegal constructions

Internal migration from all over the country to the capital greatly enhanced the housing sector in Tirana. This fact combined with speculative expectations over urban land and the inflow of “black money” from emigrants triggered the boom of construction sector. Real estate prices in Tirana are reported to be very high considering that the average salary in the country doesn't exceed \$130 a month. There has been an increase of 30% in prices of apartments in 2004 compared with 2003 (Nepravishta, 2005). On the other hand, Tirana Municipality recorded a significant increase in the issue of building licenses. In 2002 the number of licenses almost doubled that of 2001 and went on increasing to peak the value 155 in 2003 followed by a slight fall in 2004 due to local government elections (Figure 2.24).

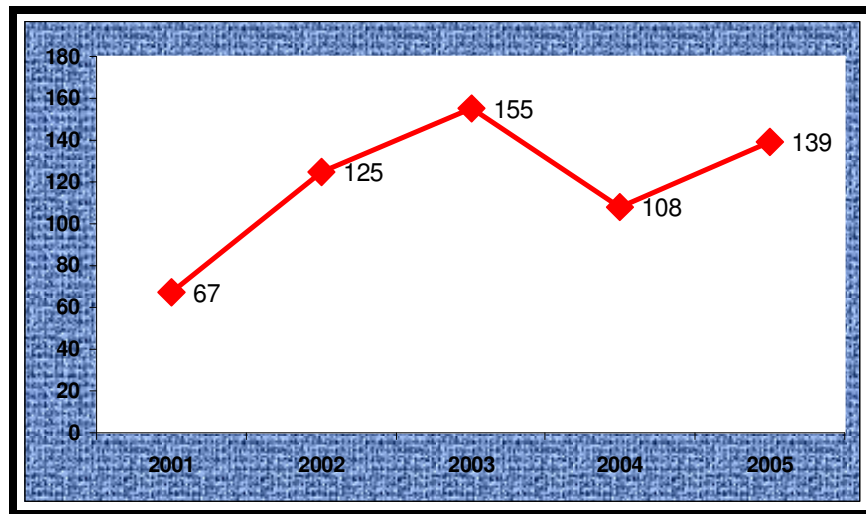


Figure 2.24 Building licenses issued by Tirana municipality (Source: Tirana municipality, 2005)

Overall, nowadays' Tirana is perhaps the most dynamic city in Europe. Socio-economic dynamism has reflected itself in the built-up environment of the city. Spatial changes undergone by Tirana under economical transition can be synonymous to chaos. The urban texture formed by this ongoing process was characterized by a loss of identity. While repeated urban stereotypes during socialist planning counted for a spatial monotony and stuffiness in Tirana, the frenetic rhythms of a miss-used liberalism raised to the point of "killing *the urban*".

The type and degree of these changes between the two periods will be analytically studied in the following section. Three case study areas representative of the development stages in Tirana selected for this comparison are the area near medrese (organic development), the ex leadership's block (planned development under Italians), and the block on "Irfan Tomini" Street (planned development under socialist planning).

3. THE CASE STUDIES

3.1. Short description of the selected areas

On-field study in Tirana focused upon three different study areas. It was aimed to represent only urban development and so the areas were selected within what can be defined as the urban core of Tirana. Selection was made upon the area's characteristics, neglecting the administrative division of the city.

3.1.1. Location within Tirana

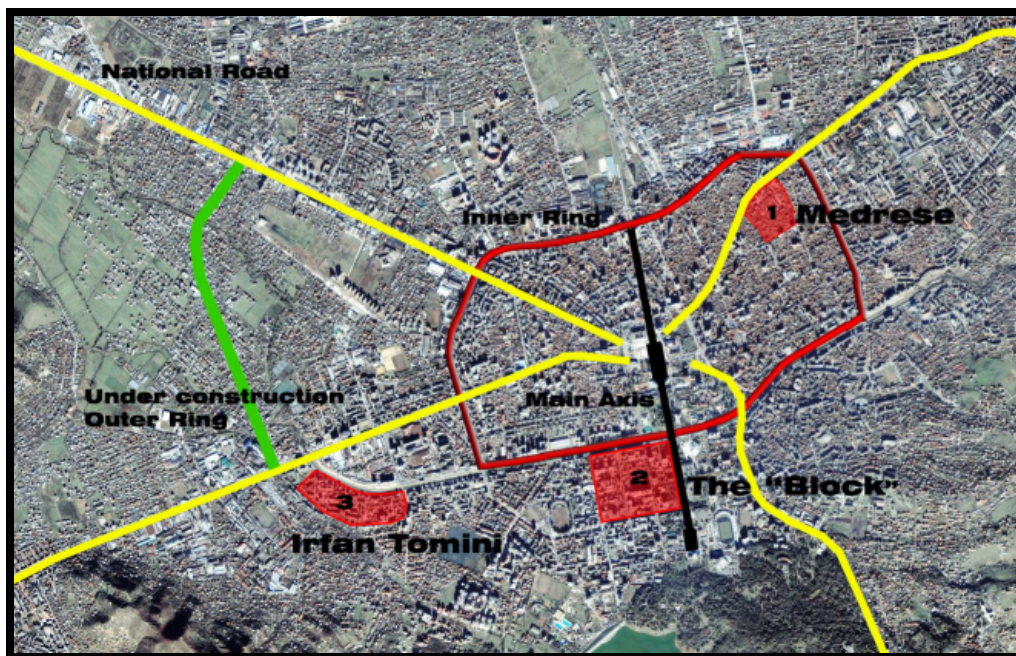


Figure 3.1 Location of the study areas in Tirana

The first selected area is located in the northwest of Tirana near Medrese (Islamic school). The area is on the national road leading to Dibra. “Riza Cerova” Street east, “4 Deshmoret” Street south and “Thanas Ziko” Street west further define its borders. The second case study area is the one known as the ex (communist) leadership block. The area is located at the intersection of “Deshmoret e Kombit” (main axis) and “Zhan d’Ark” (part of inner ring) Boulevards. The area is on the south side of Lana River between the two stadiums of the city. “Abdyl Frasheri” and

“Sami Frasheri” Streets complete this area’s borders respectively in the south and west direction. The third area is located east of the city’s urban core and is known as the “Irfan Tomini” block, named after the street spanning it in the east west direction. The north border is defined by Lana River and “Bajram Curri” Avenue whereas south and southwest it stretches to “Frano Bardhi” Street.

3.1.2. General urban features and importance of the study areas

As previously stated, the case study areas were selected in order to represent different patterns of the urban fabric built up in Tirana during the crossing of various cultures. The main reason for choosing this number of case studies lies in the fact that spatial heritage of these cultures added up adjoining rather than superimposing. Therefore, no single area could be representative of all features in spatial composition.

“Medrese Region” has a typical organic pattern characteristic of Islamic culture. Urban fabric consists mainly of single or two-storied houses built of brick or stone dating back to the beginning of 19th century. Building heritage in the area is mainly from the period 1930-1940. Streets are narrow, winding and often in the form of cul-de-sacs (Figure 3.2). Walls taller than human height rise on the street front of the courtyards to ensure a high level of privacy, a concept shaping most of the Islamic settlements.



Figure 3.2 Figure-ground layout in the area near Medrese

During the World War II, the area was shelter to the communists. Indeed, in one of the houses (now non-existing) the Albanian Communist Party was founded. Several other houses in the area have served as communist bases during the National Liberation War.



Figure 3.3 Views from the case study area near Medrese

The area's past was one of the main reasons for which it was carefully preserved during the communist regime. Most of the houses were restored and marked to show the importance they had during the war. The house where Communist Party was founded was later transformed into a museum thus giving major importance to the area. Moreover, apartment houses were built along major axes. This development, made to give an urban appearance to the area, did not pass the four stories though. On the other hand, the interiors were preserved in their former organic pattern.

Additionally, communist regime prohibited religious belief and a massive demolition of religious buildings all over the country took place in order to ensure its abolition. Fortunately, the Medrese found just north of the area was one of the few buildings to resist the massive demolition. Its function certainly changed but physically the building is currently preserved in good condition.

The ex leaderships' block is the proof of western influence in Tirana. It is laid out in strict gridiron pattern on a flat site (Figure 3.4). It has clearly defined blocks and street widths. Destined to be a garden city of low-density single-family housing it was built under Italians at the time the "Modern Movement" was shaping the world. The area also had street frontages defined by 5-6 storied high buildings planned for commercial and office use. During the communist regime these buildings were residential in function and some other villas were build in the inner parts of the area destined for the new leadership.

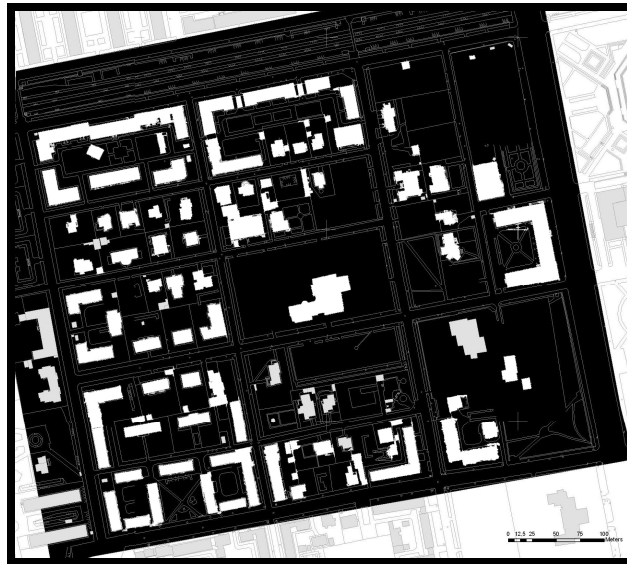


Figure 3.4 Figure-ground layout in the ex leaderships' block



Figure 3.5 Views from the ex leaderships' block case study area

“Irfan Tomini” block has the shortest history of all the three case study areas. It was build in the late 1970s and 1908s, when Tirana was under communist ruling. As such, clearly represents the ideas of socialist planning. It has blocks of single type, mostly prefabricated apartments grouped in islets encircling recreational areas (Figure 3.6). The layout is typical of a centralized economy, an economy where land market is a non-existent concept. Huge empty spaces encircled by five-storied multifamily apartment housing constitute the main urban feature of the area.



Figure 3.6 Figure-ground layout in “Irfan Tomini” block



Figure 3.7 Views from the “Irfan Tomini” block case study area

3.2. Pre and Post transitional physical features of the study areas

The physical part of the study is based mainly on secondary data from maps provided by Tirana Municipality, ISPU, GIS-Albania and other sources. Due to the rapid construction pace in Tirana and lack of complete data on the existing maps, in certain areas primary data gathered by on site surveys and observations was added. The survey was made under five topics namely Building Height, Building Condition, Usage by Ground Floor, Floor to Area Ratio and Public and Open Spaces. A broad digital database was later created for computer simulation modeling upon which the majority of this comparative study is based.

3.2.1. Case study area near Medrese

The 9,5 hectares case study area is located northeast of the city's center and is bounded by two major and two secondary axes. This is the smallest of the three case study areas but due to the dense organic pattern, it does not show major differences in building count.

3.2.1.1. Building height

This analysis will aim to show differences in the skyline between the conservative period before 1990 and the more dynamic transition period.

Before 1990 area near Mederese was a low rise single family residential area. Multifamily apartment housing is only seen on the national road and in the northwest part of the area. These are divided in two parts according to building height. Four floor apartments are located on the main axis and three floor apartments are grouped in the northwest part. Totally the 3-5 storied buildings constitute only 6% of the whole fabric in the area. The remaining 94% of the fabric is of 1-2 storied buildings as the other height categories are not present in this period (Figure 3.8).

After 1990 dynamics in the area are seen in two different patterns. First, high-rise development on the side of Dibra national axis counts for a more organized type of development although all constructions are spontaneous as no urban plan exists. Buildings higher than 5 stories constitute only 1.2% of the fabric. Second, the inner parts of the area are being in some way "renewed". This type of development is completely individual by rising single-family villas on single parcels. Those who have the financial means tear down their old one-storied stone houses and build new ones, this time mainly three to four storeys high. As a result, the share of 3-5 storied houses has increased to 15.2% from its 6% share before 1990. Consequently the share of 1-2 storied buildings has decreased to 83.6%.

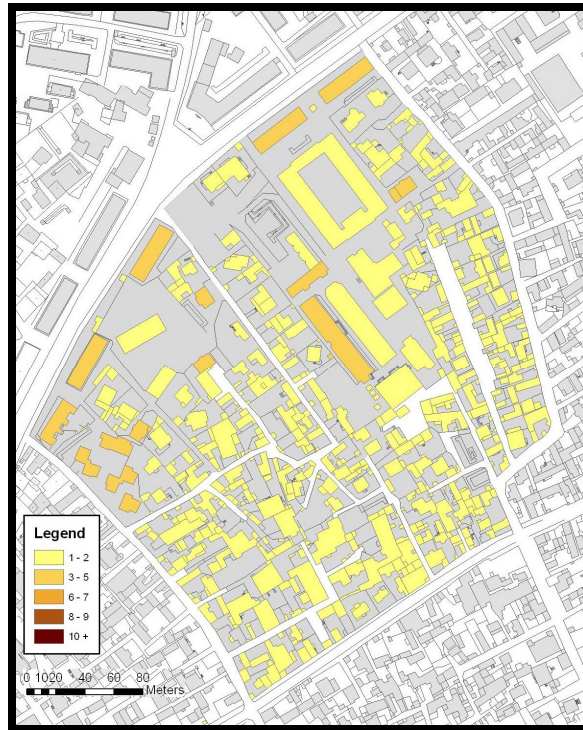


Figure 3.8 Building height in the area near Medrese before 1990

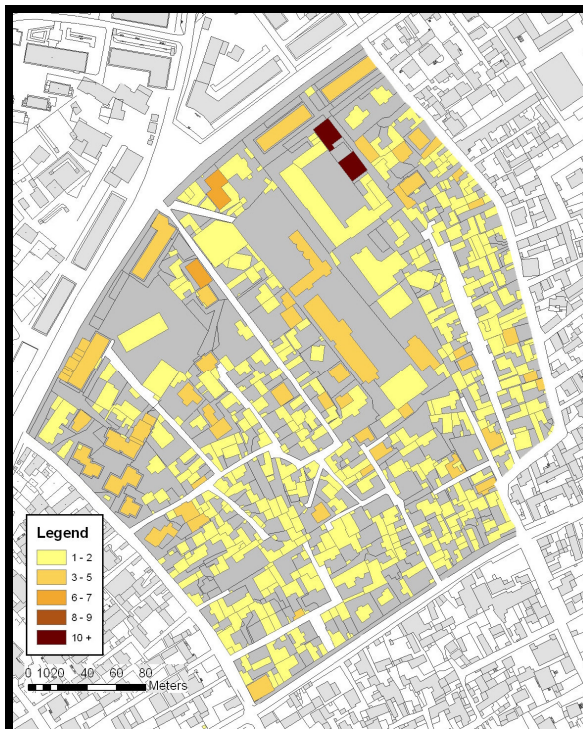


Figure 3.9 Current building height in the area near Medrese

3.2.1.2. Building condition

In this section, by analyzing the current condition of buildings, it was aimed to see the degree of neglect in the pre 1990 urban fabric. A five-degree decreasing risk scale of the building condition was made giving grade 5 to the buildings with the lowest risk or in best condition and grade 1 to the buildings in the worst condition.

The general conclusion drawn by the analysis shows that the old urban fabric is completely neglected. The statement is supported by the fact that only 9% of the buildings show lowest or low risk condition. These are either buildings built After 1990 or reconstructed schools. The buildings located in the middle of the scale with an average condition constitute 12% of the area's built up fabric. This category includes mainly the pre1990 apartment buildings. The remaining 79% of the urban fabric is either in bad or very bad condition. The category includes one pr two storied pre1990 buildings of brick or stone (Figure 3.10).

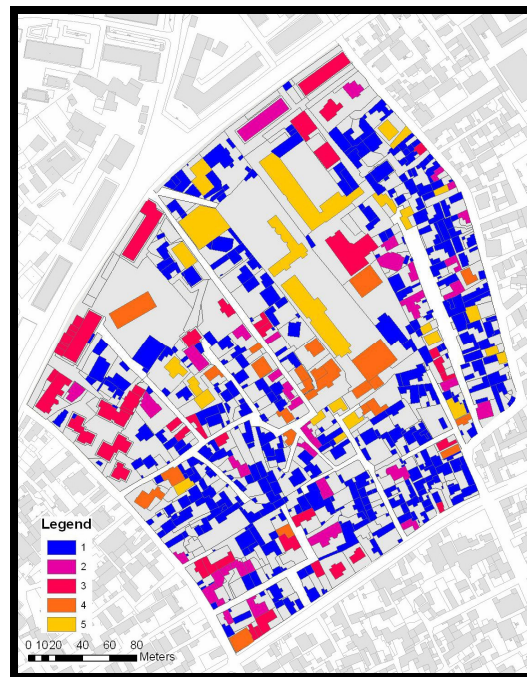


Figure 3.10 Current building condition in the area near Medrese

3.2.1.3. Usage by ground floor

During the communist period, services and retail had specified location mainly near the center or on main axes. Although there were some services and retail in the area, they were scattered and, occupying only a small part of the floor so that the whole usage of the ground floor of the building remains residential. Therefore, apart

from some isolated retail serving the neighborhood like bakery, grocery, tailor shop and the like the whole area was residential in function before 1990 (Figure 3.11).

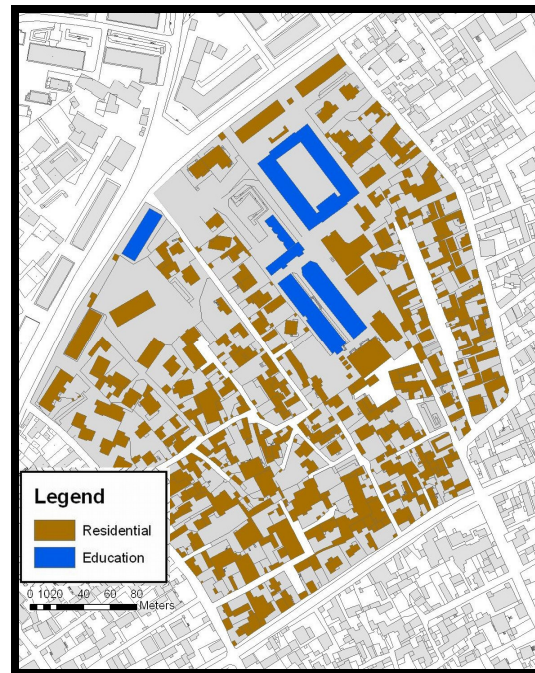


Figure 3.11 Usage by ground floor in the area near Medrese before 1990

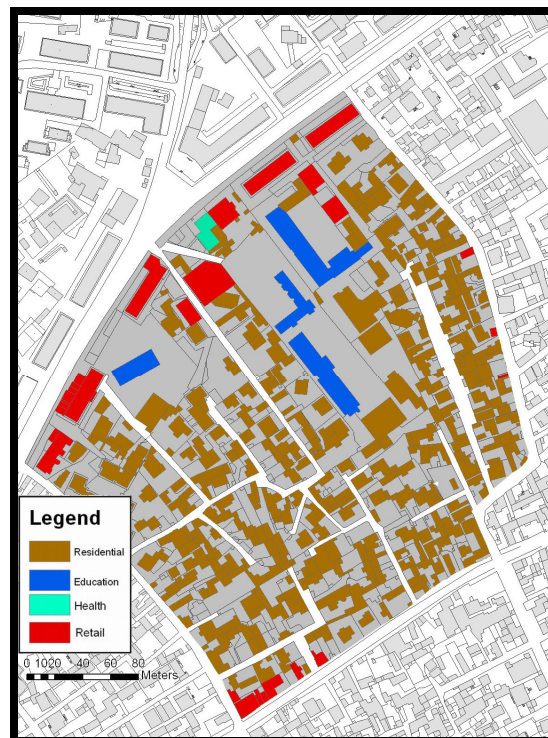


Figure 3.12 Current usage by ground floor in the area near Medrese

When under liberal economy the area experienced some changes in its ground floor usage type. The amount of change was not so significant though when compared to the whole urban fabric. Only 6% of the buildings in the area have changed function from residential to commercial. Again, the phenomenon expressed itself in different patterns. First, all the ground floors of existing buildings facing Dibra national road changed function to commercial (retail and wholesale). Second, all the new buildings were projected in advance for a complete commercial use of the ground floor. Third, some of the single storied houses on “Riza Cerova” and “4 Dëshmoret” streets either built small annexes on the road or converted previous ones to groceries or other daily services (Figure 3.13).



Figure 3.13 Examples of small retail annexes in the area near Medrese

Spatially two were the main outcomes of the usage change. First, due to the lack of space in the old fabric, shops on the Dibra national road added frontal annexes to earn space thus occupying public spaces. Second, households “embracing” the liberal economy added commercial annexes on street frontages within their parcel limit. Consequently, this whole scenario counted for a constrained increase in FAR of the area.

3.2.1.4. Compared Floor to Area Ratio between the two periods

Except for the north part where mainly institutional buildings are located, the area is built in organic pattern with a relatively high FAR. Under socialist planning, the area preserved its characteristics and the major difference in pattern was the apartment housing on Dibra national road and the northwest part of the area. This final shaping counted for a total FAR value of 0.41 (Figure 3.14).

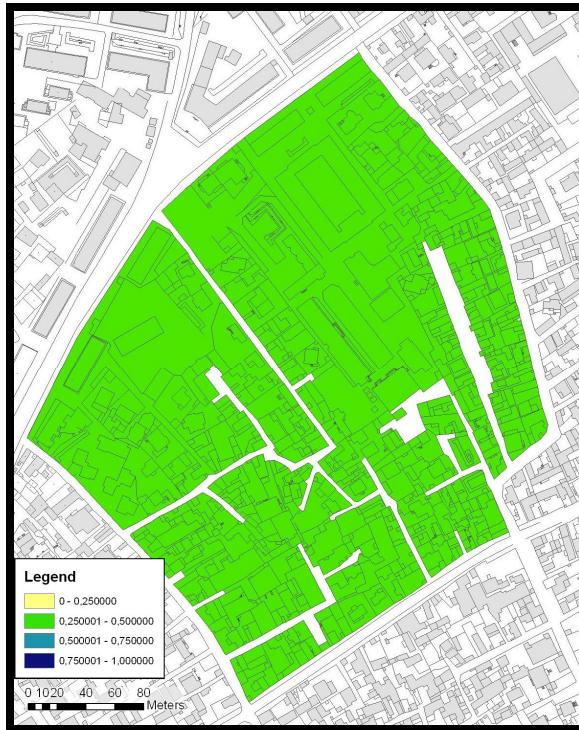


Figure 3.14 FAR in the area near Medrese before 1990

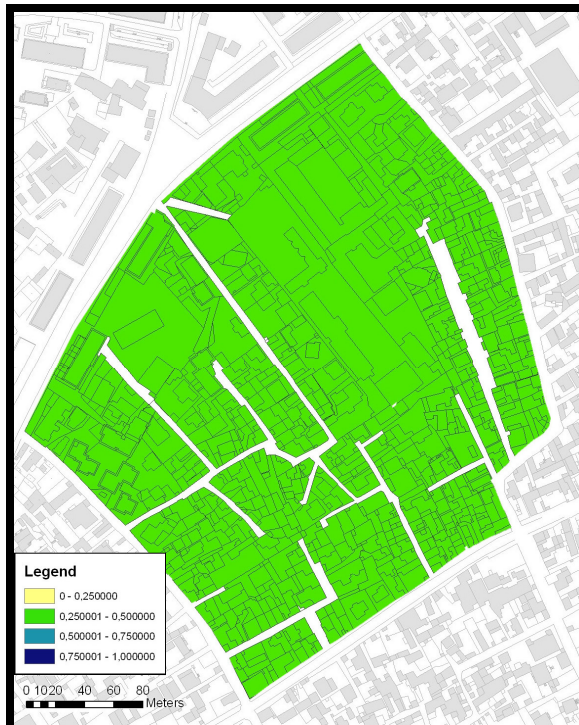


Figure 3.15 Current FAR in the area near Medrese

Following the stationary communist period, after 1990 the area entered a more dynamic period of urban change. With respect to their effect on FAR the new buildings are divided in two groups, new buildings on empty parcels or sites and new buildings replacing existent ones. The first group, which has a direct effect on the FAR, consists mainly of multi storied apartment housing. Another less visible type of development increasing FAR in the area is the building of annexes by single storied houses. After the strict prohibition of such a practice during communism, with the introduction of private property and liberal economy concepts, people felt free to build haphazardly on *their* land. The second group consists of new buildings replacing the old single storied ones. This is a less traceable type of change and does not affect FAR like the first type of development. To sum up, the area has become denser in buildings after 1990 but this did not have a visible change in FAR according to pre1990 condition since its value increased to 0.43 from 0.41 in the pre1990 period (Figure 3.15).

3.2.1.5. Public and open spaces

This analysis will show in a more detailed way the transformation of open spaces as Tirana proceeds onto liberalization. As previously mentioned, this concept was misunderstood by the Albanians at the expenses of state property. In the outer skirts of Tirana this phenomenon was characterized by “eating up” agricultural land (Felstehausen, 1999), (Aliaj *et. al.*, 2004), while in the city’s core it took other dimensions: people began to occupy public spaces. Initially, the process was a timid one with single remote examples. Afterwards, it grew at an outstanding pace almost suffocating the city.

Before 1990, public and open spaces counted for 12% of the total area. A duality in the division of open spaces due to the urban fabric layout is seen in the area. It can be pointed out from Figure 3.16 that the north part of the area has a high concentration of public open spaces. Public spaces in this part are in the form of pavements and green areas. On the other hand, in the organic inner parts, private space in the form of courts has prevailed over public space. In this part public space is represented only by narrow streets and cul-de-sacs.



Figure 3.16 Public spaces in the area near Medrese after 1990

Due to its characteristics, case study area near Medrese has experienced the public space occupation mainly in its northern part. There are two specific examples from the Dibra national road frontage. The first one is of the place near today's orthodox polyclinic. The area is reported as green in the map showing conditions before 1990 whereas today the ruins of demolished illegal constructions pile up (Figure 3.17-3.18). The second example is of annexes to old buildings on the Dibra national road occupying the whole pavement (Figure 3.19). The inner parts of the area have not experienced the phenomenon due to the organic pattern.

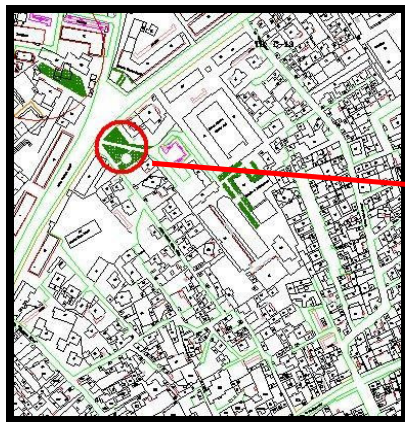


Figure 3.17 Map representation of the place adjacent to Orthodox Polyclinic before 1990

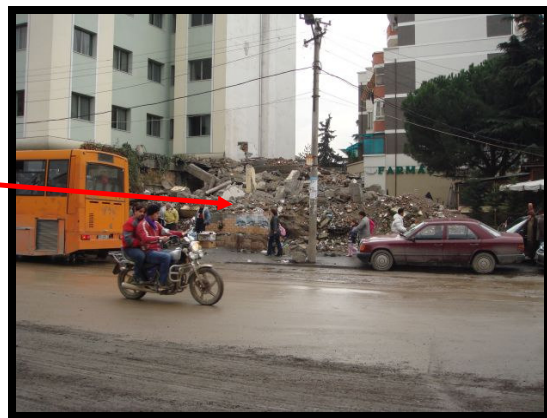


Figure 3.18 Current condition of the place adjacent to Orthodox Polyclinic

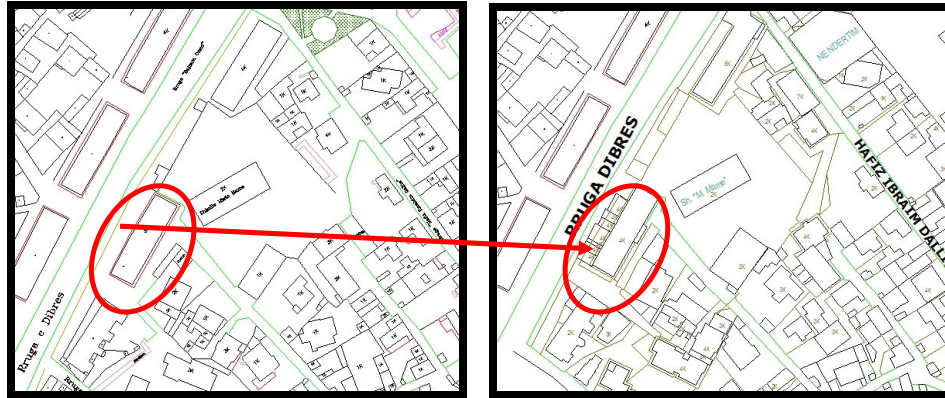


Figure 3.19 Pre1990 and current map representations of a segment in Dibra national road

3.2.1.6. Area synthesis

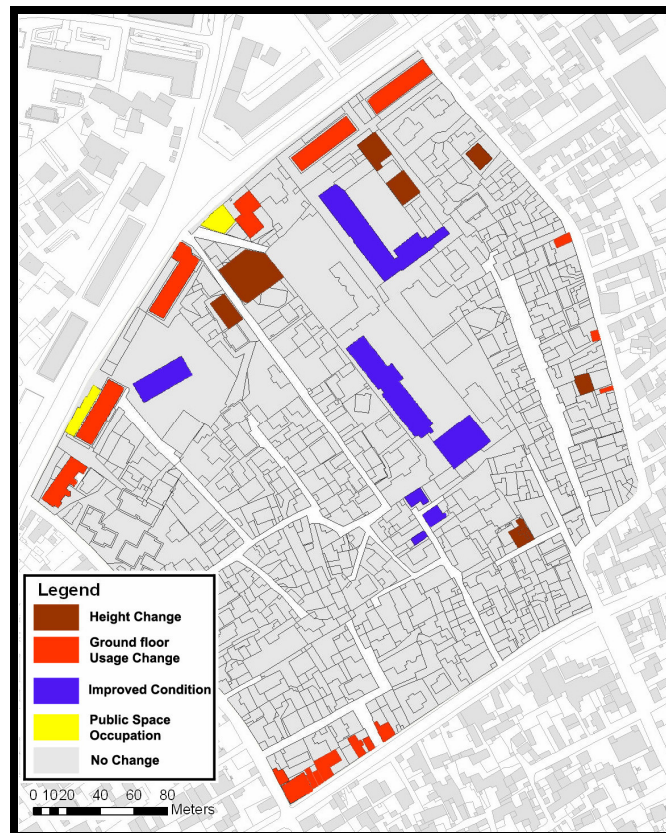


Figure 3.20 Synthesis of changes in case study area near Medrese

Overall, case study area near Medrese shows urban dynamics due to liberal economy conditioned by its organic urban pattern. This condition has produced a spatial duality in the area. The outer parts show a higher degree of change when compared to the inner parts of the area. Besides the degree, type of change also differs between the two areas (Figure 3.20).

Table 3.1 Compared changes for each attribute in case study area near Medrese

Period	Buildings over 5 stories high (% of total fabric in area)	Buildings within or lower than average condition (% of total fabric in area)	Non-residential Ground floor Usage (% of total fabric in area)	FAR	Public Spaces (% of total area)
Pre1990	0%	-	2%	0.41	12%
Current	1,2%	21%	6%	0.43	8%

Table 3.1 shows a summary of the changes for each attribute of the urban pattern change variable. It can be pointed out that a slight rise in the silhouette, slight FAR increase and change in ground floor usage has occurred in the area. The area is characterized by a deteriorating pre1990 urban fabric each passing day threatened by the superimposed post1990 development. Liberal economy conditions have also triggered the consumption of public space thus creating an urban chaos that starts at the courtyard door and hardly ends.

3.2.2. The ex-leadership's Block case study area

The 22,5 hectares case study area is centrally located within Tirana at the intersection of "Deshmoret e Kombit" (Main Axis) and "Bajram Curri" boulevards. It is located in the southern side of Lana River and has a rectangular shape laid in gridiron pattern.

3.2.2.1. Building height

Before 1990 the area was home to the ex leadership with a very low density especially in the inner parts and had a somewhat restricted traffic. It is characterized by a duality in built up fabric. First, the area has an Italian architecture heritage of 5 – 6 storied apartments located on the two main boulevards and two storied villas located in the inner part. Second, there is also a 4 – 5 storied, single type residential development under socialist planning located along the two secondary axes in the southwest part of the area. Therefore, the area shows a general pattern of a five to six storied silhouette encircling low-rise two storied villas. Put in figures the 1-2 storied buildings constitute 57% of the total built up fabric, the 3-5 storied buildings 39% and the 6-7 storied buildings 4%. Along the Main Axis the skyline experiences a discontinuity due to relatively large green areas.

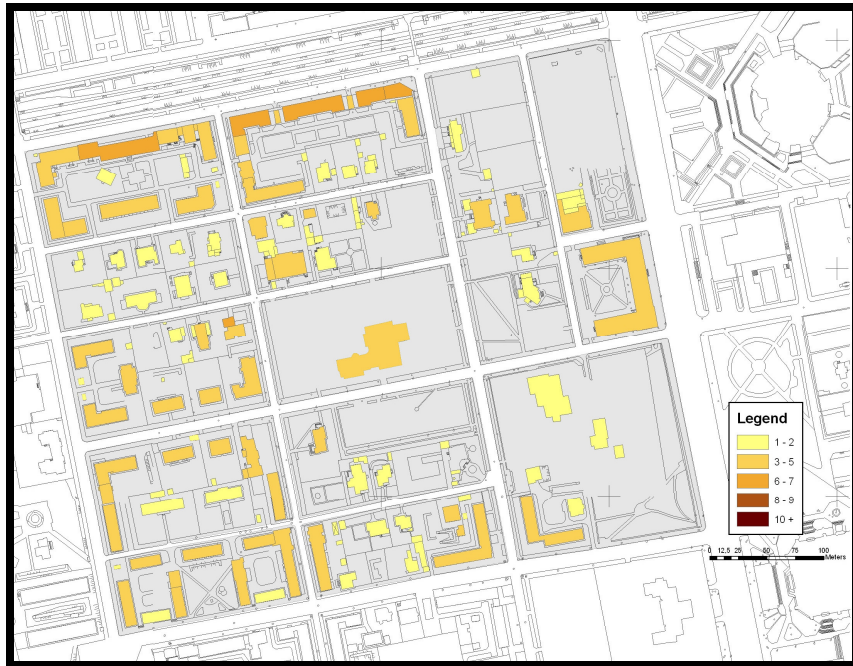


Figure 3.21 Building height in the “Block” case study area before 1990

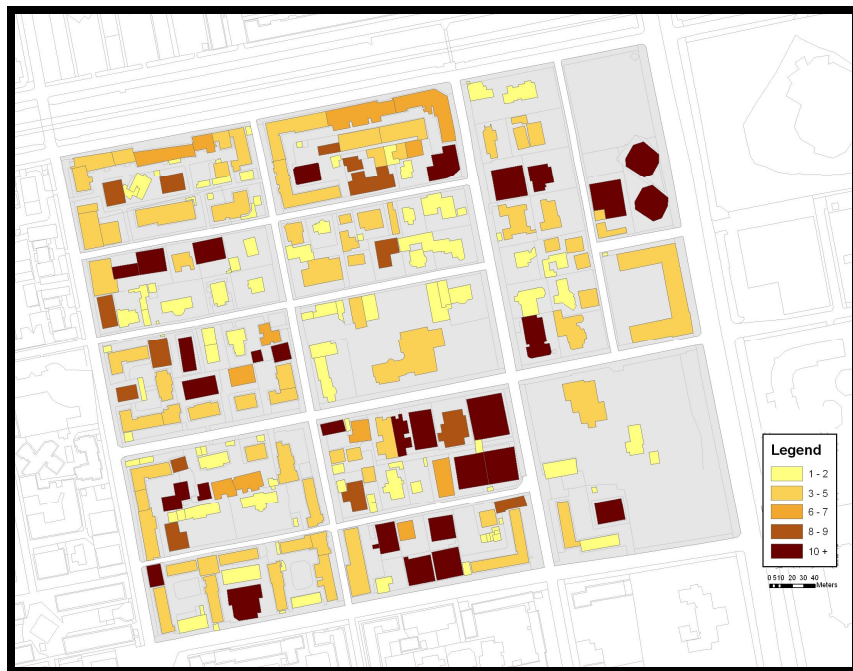


Figure 3.22 Current building height in the “Block” case study area

After 1990, the area became the target of most developers. Liberal economy and the formation of a land market counted for a high increase in the skyline of the area. New buildings were erected wherever possible: in the middle of the existing building blocks, in the space between two buildings on street frontages and on empty land

around the villas (Figure 3.22). Consequently, the share from the total urban fabric of 1-2 storied buildings fell to 39% while the share of 3-5 storied buildings increased to 35%. The 6-7 storied buildings' category increased slightly from 4% to 6%. Moreover, the new categories of 8-9 and 10+ storied buildings appeared with respective shares of 6% and 14%. The part of the area facing the Main Axis was firstly invaded by kiosks but later after their demolition it was mainly preserved as green. Certainly the so called “Twin Towers” built opposite to the “Pyramid” Cultural Center are an exception. Height of the new buildings in the area completely neglected the existing fabric thus creating a new topography in the skyline.

3.2.2.2. Building condition

Under communist regime the area received special attention and care. Formation of the land market shifted attention towards the new development and cared less about the old urban fabric. The latter experienced deterioration so that it made a disturbing visual contrast with the new buildings. Recently municipality has refurbished the buildings on “Bajram Curri” Boulevard eliminating visual pollution to some extents.

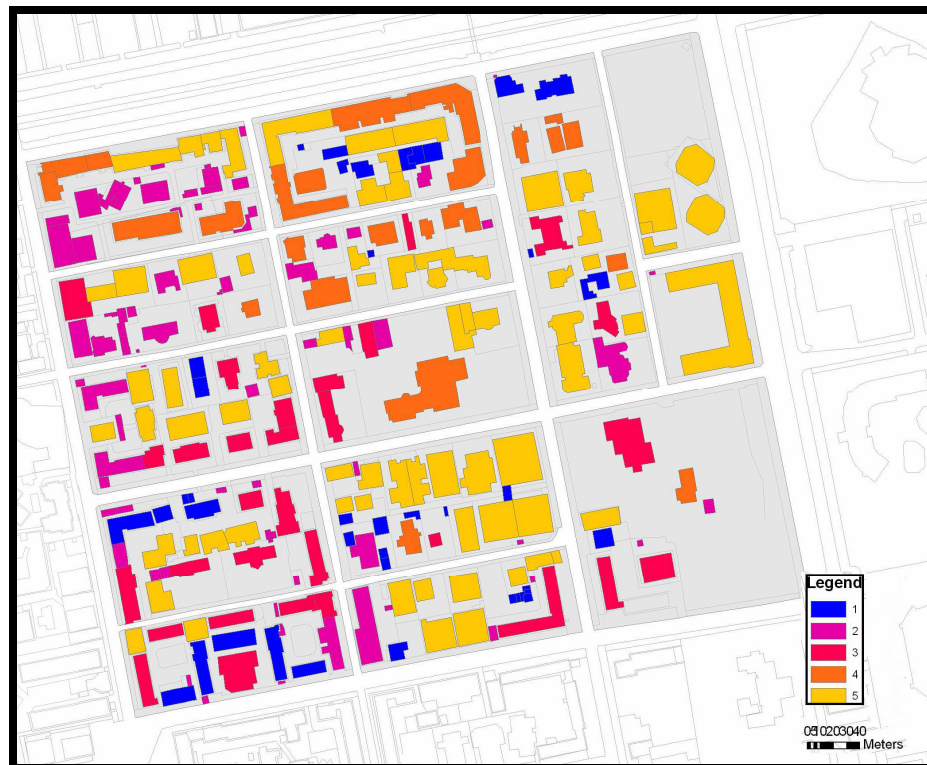


Figure 3.23 Current building condition in the “Block” case study area

The general conclusion drawn from this analysis is that the old fabric like in case study area near Medrese receives very little attention. Difference stands in the fact that apartment buildings belonging to the Italian period and facing important axes have been restored. On the contrary, villas belonging to the same period have received less attention because of their inward location and apparently ownership problems. Buildings of the communist era are the ones in the worst condition. Because the area has doubled in building count according to the pre1990 period, it has a 61% of its total fabric within or lower than the average risk level (Figure 3.23).

3.2.2.3. Usage by ground floor

Of the three case study areas, the “Block” is the one showing the highest degree of diversity in the ground floor usage before 1990. This is mainly due to its central location and frontage on the Main Axis. Although mainly residential, the area shows commercial usage in the north on the “Bajram Curri” Boulevard frontage. The other non-residential area is on the main axis where green area and a large institutional building constitute the land use. Other different land uses scattered throughout the whole area are crèches, neighborhood polyclinics, and a single bookshop known as “University Bookshop”. The whole of these non-residential functions counted for only 4% of the area’s urban fabric.

After the 1990 the area became the city’s commercial center and so very few buildings were reported residential in function (less than 10% of the area’s built up fabric). The dominant ground floor usage is retail in the form of cafés and boutiques. Important international institutions also have settled their residences in the villas along “Deshmoret e 4 Shkurtit” Street (Figure 3.25).

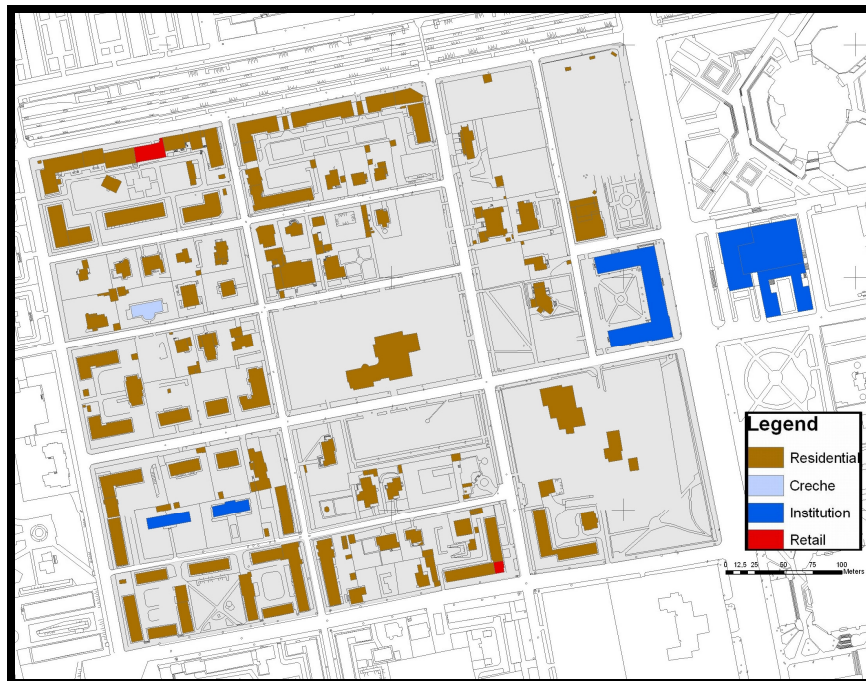


Figure 3.24 Usage by ground floor in the “Block” case study area before 1990

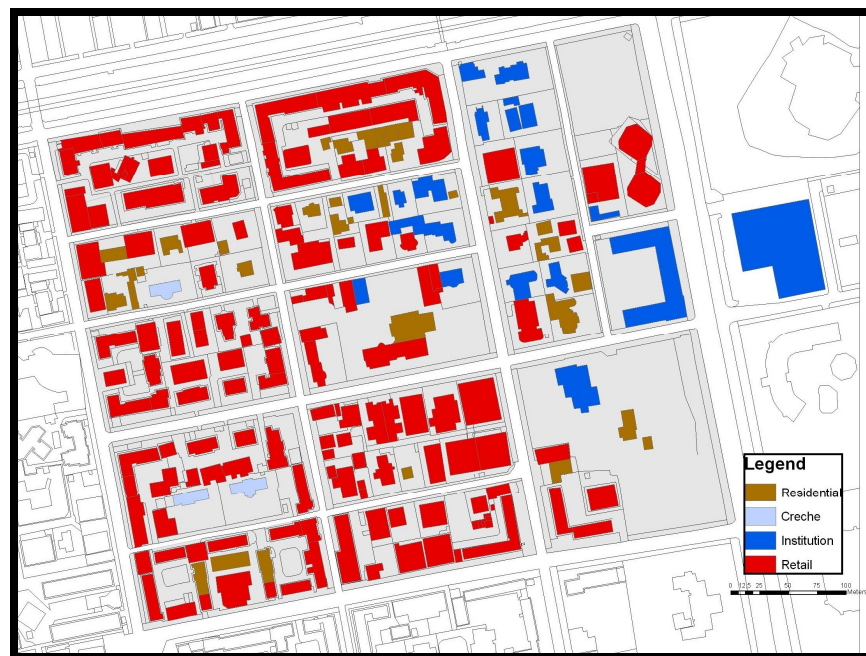


Figure 3.25 Current usage by ground floor in the “Block” case study area

3.2.2.4. Compared Floor to Area Ratio between the two periods

Since its beginnings the area was planned as a “*Citta Giardino*” meaning garden city in Italian (Aliaj *et. al.*, 2004). Therefore, the building density has been low ever since. Under socialist planning the main features of the islets were preserved and

FAR was slightly increased by apartments built on the south and west part of the area. Nevertheless, despite its central location, before 1990 the “Block” was one of the *urban* areas with the lowest FAR in Tirana. Indeed, the 0.17 FAR value of the area is characteristic of a rural settlement rather than a nation’s capital. Especially the inner parts are characterized by an extremely low building density.

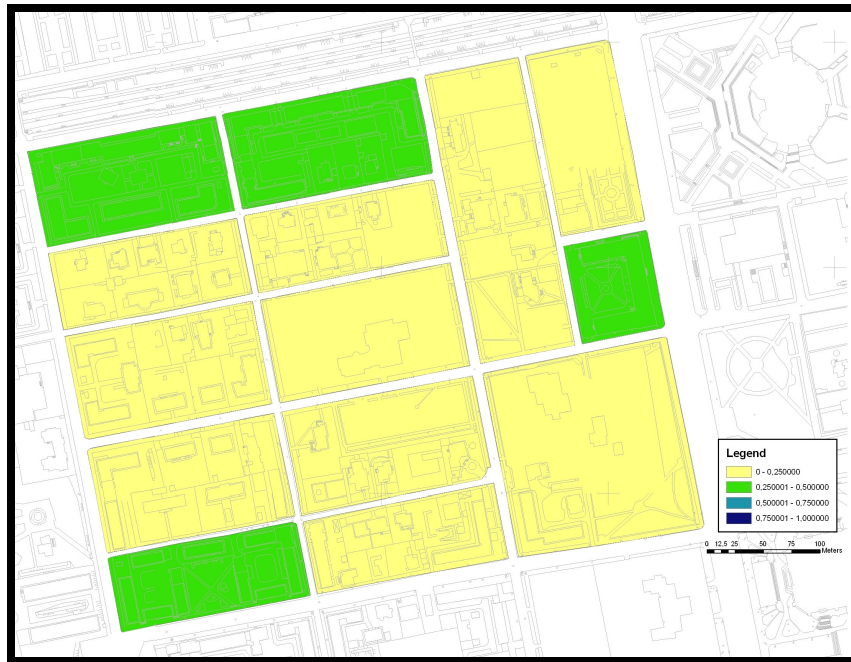


Figure 3.26 FAR in the “Block” case study area before 1990

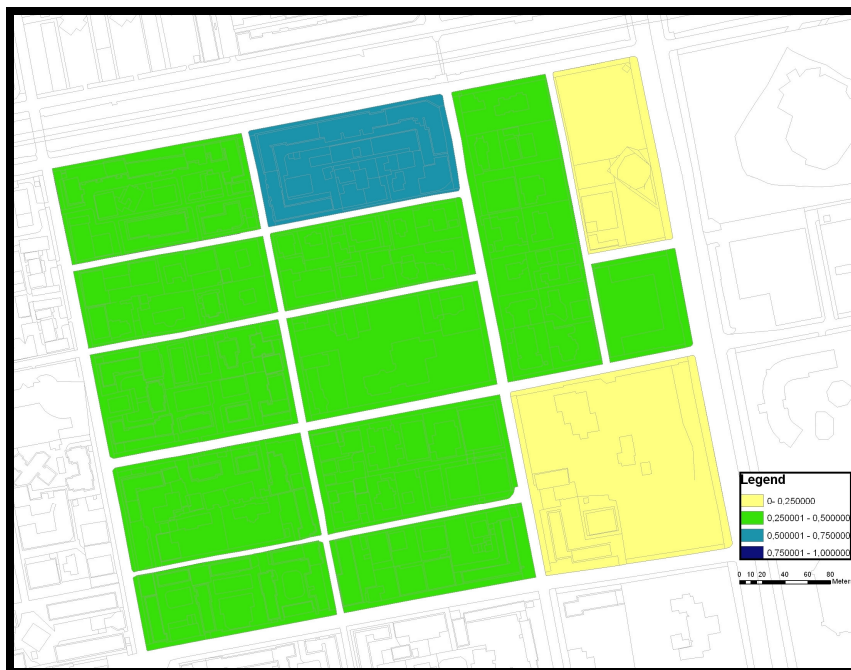


Figure 3.27 Current FAR in the “Block” case study area

During transition, the area grew rapidly in importance and economic activity especially after the demolition of illegal constructions on the “Rinia” Park. Cafés and bars located here crossed the Lana River and began occupying ground floors in the “Block” area. Shortly after, the land value in the area increased further triggering new constructions. A typical site for the construction of the new buildings was the inner parts of the existing planned islets. The almost empty inner part of the area near the luxurious villas was crowded with new buildings whose style and dimensions completely neglected the existing fabric. The only islets conserving at some extent their pre1990 building density are the green areas in northeast and southeast parts of the area. As a result the area’s FAR doubled to reach the 0.35 level from its initial 0.17 value during the pre1990 period (Figure 3.27).

3.2.2.5. Public and open spaces



Figure 3.28 Public spaces in the “Block” case study area

During the communist period, almost 50% of this low-density area was formed by open and public spaces. There were mainly recreational green areas in the form of neighborhood parks. The inner parts of the islets also were designed for recreational purposes with sportive courts and rest places (Figure 3.28). Consequently, most cases of public area occupation in the “Block” are via buildings constructed in the middle of the islets. This is seen in the north and western parts where these islets are clearly defined by apartment buildings. On the inner part of these islets previously used for recreational purposes, now rise nine storied

buildings. Another important case of public area occupation is the building of “Twin Towers” on the small park located northeast of the area. Considered the highest new development on the Main Axis it has nearly halved the park previously located there. In conclusion, the share of public spaces from the total area has decreased from its 50% pre1990 value to 11% (Figure 3.22).



Figure 3.29 Condition map representation of the “Block” case study area before 1990



Figure 3.30 Current condition map representation of the “Block” case study area

3.2.2.6. Area synthesis



Figure 3.31 Synthesis of changes in the “Block” case study area

Under liberal economy conditions, the “Block” was transformed from a quiet low-density elite residential area to the city’s busiest and most crowded activity center. Actually, it may be classified as the most valuable piece of land in Tirana due to its central location and the prestige inherited from the communist regime. Therefore, the area’s own characteristics counted for its high degree of transformation. Physical change had one major development trend: building on every available empty area. This type of *pseudo* urban infill doubled the built-up fabric. (Figure 3.31)

Table 3.2 Compared changes for each attribute in the “Block” case study area

Period	Buildings over 5 stories high (% of total fabric in area)	Buildings within or lower than average condition (% of total fabric in area)	Non-residential Ground floor Usage (% of total fabric in area)	FAR	Public Spaces (% of total area)
Pre1990	4%	-	4%	0,17	50%
Current	26%	61%	90%	0.35	11%

Table 3.2 shows a summary of the changes for each attribute of the urban pattern change variable. It is clearly seen that the area has completely changed function. Additionally, the post-1990 developments have doubled the FAR of the area. Moreover, the unusual heights applied on the new buildings increased the area’s skyline resulting in a new artificial relief more dynamic than the pre1990 one. Finally, new development consumed most of the area’s public spaces and indirectly led to neglect of the old fabric.

3.2.3. The “Irfan Tomini” block case study area

Located on the western limits of the urban core, the area is the last planned development of the pre1990 period. It stretches along the east west direction on a total area of approximately 20 hectares.

3.2.3.1. Building height

Before 1990 the area had a five storey constant height characteristic of socialist planning residential developments. This counted for 49% of the built up fabric in the area. The other 51% was constituted by some two-storey apartments and single family houses all one or two storey high. Additionally, three storied educational institutions and sport facilities occupied the northwest part of the area (Figure 3.32).



Figure 3.32 Building height in “Irfan Tomini” block case study area before 1990



Figure 3.33 Current building height in “Irfan Tomini” block case study area

After 1990 the area experienced an increase in its skyline due to new buildings' construction. The new buildings were mainly six to seven storied and concentrated in the eastern and central part of the area. Higher buildings up to 15 stories were further built in the northwest part of the area apparently most suitable location as it previously served as a football field. Besides the high-rise apartments, the area is

experiencing a new type of slum-like development. This phenomenon is registered on the southwest part of the area behind the educational complex and along the “Frano Bardhi” street. Behind the last line of apartments a new ghetto of one or two storied single-family houses has developed. Low-rise single-family houses are also scattered throughout the whole area, on the “abundant” spaces socialist planning had left for them. As a result, the urban fabric composition according to building height shows a new configuration. Buildings of 1-2 stories high have increased their share of urban fabric to 60%, the share of 3-5 storied buildings has fallen to 29% and higher height categories were introduced. Actually, 6-7 storied buildings count for 7% of the total fabric and buildings of 8 and higher stories have a 3% share.

3.2.3.2. Building condition

With respect to the condition of buildings, this area shows some singular differences from the previous ones in two aspects. First, the majority of its old urban fabric is relatively in good condition. Exceptions to this are only single family and two storied apartment houses. Second, this is the only area where deterioration of post1990 buildings was spotted. These are the apartments found in the southern part of the area (Figure 3.34). Consequently, the area has a 50% share of its total fabric within or lower than the average risk level.

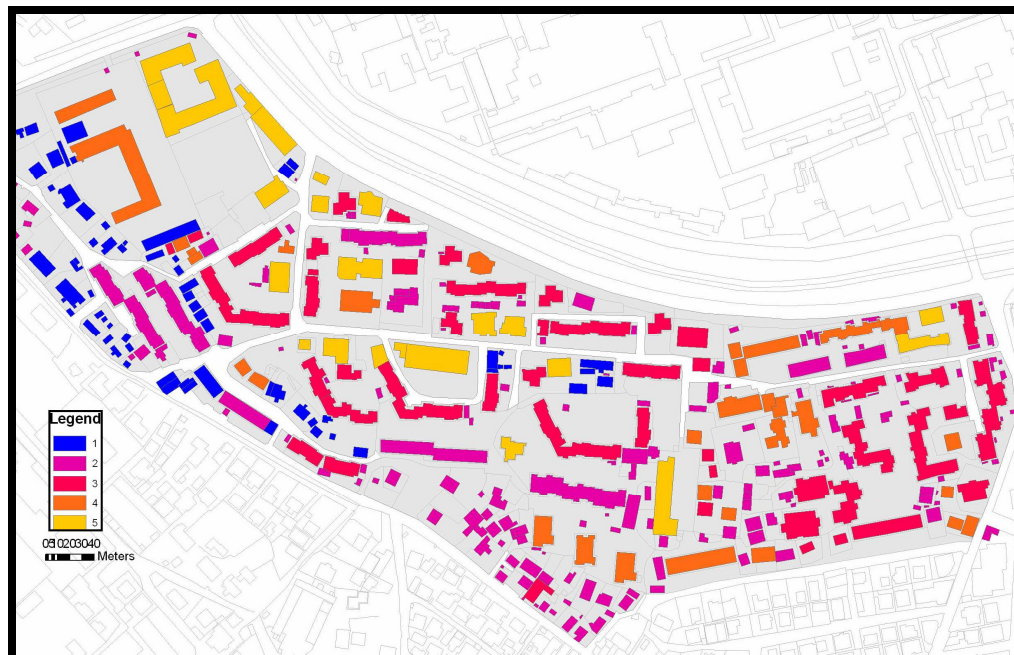


Figure 3.34 Current building condition in “Irfan Tomini” block case study area

3.2.3.3. Usage by ground floor

Under socialist planning, the area was a low to middle density new residential development. Therefore, the main ground floor usage before 1990 was residential. Exceptions to this are institutions and retail at the neighborhood scale like crèches, polyclinics, groceries and bakeries. The educational complex in the northwestern part of the area occupies a considerable space counting for a 6% non-residential ground floor usage of the built up fabric in the area (Figure 3.35).



Figure 3.35 Usage by ground floor in “Irfan Tomini” block case study area before 1990

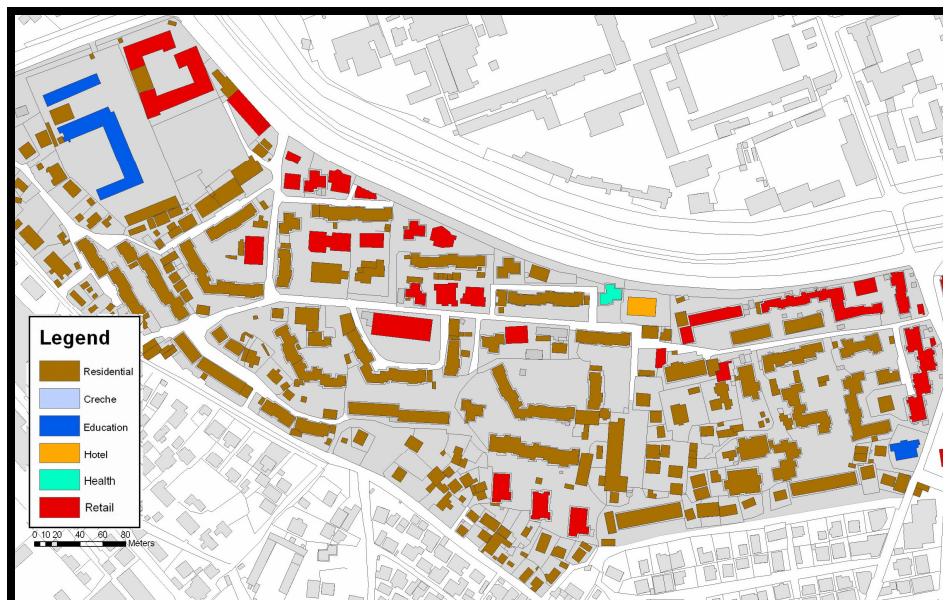


Figure 3.36 Current usage by ground floor in “Irfan Tomini” block case study area

After 1990 the area became a target of developers due to its large “empty” areas. Liberal economy conditions also favored the conversion of ground floor usage from residential to commercial. This usage change was seen in two patterns. First, all the ground floors of buildings facing main streets directed themselves towards these frontages by altering the façade via openings. Due to the individuality of such enterprises, the area shows a mosaic of tents and frontages on the ground floor even within same buildings. Second, all the new buildings were previously designed for a commercial use of the ground floor, certainly with implications on pricing.

The only buildings of unchanged ground floor usage remain the two storied apartments and those single-family houses that do not have a main street frontage. To sum up, liberal economy conditions have changed ground floor usage in the “Irfan Tomini” block case study area as actually 15% of the ground floors in the build up fabric are reported non-residential in function (Figure 3.36).

3.2.3.4. Compared Floor to Area Ratio between the two periods

During the communist period, the area was a low-density new residential development. The centralized planning principles created an area of abundant public spaces on almost very neatly defined islet. On the whole the area had a far of 0.24 (Figure 3.37).

After 1990 the area experienced a significant increase in building count. The phenomenon resulted in an increase in FAR of the area. Figure 3.38 shows that the FAR has change in all the area and in some parts of it has increased up to the 0.5 level from an almost empty area. Overall, FAR value increased from the 0.24 pre1990 level to a 0.36 level.

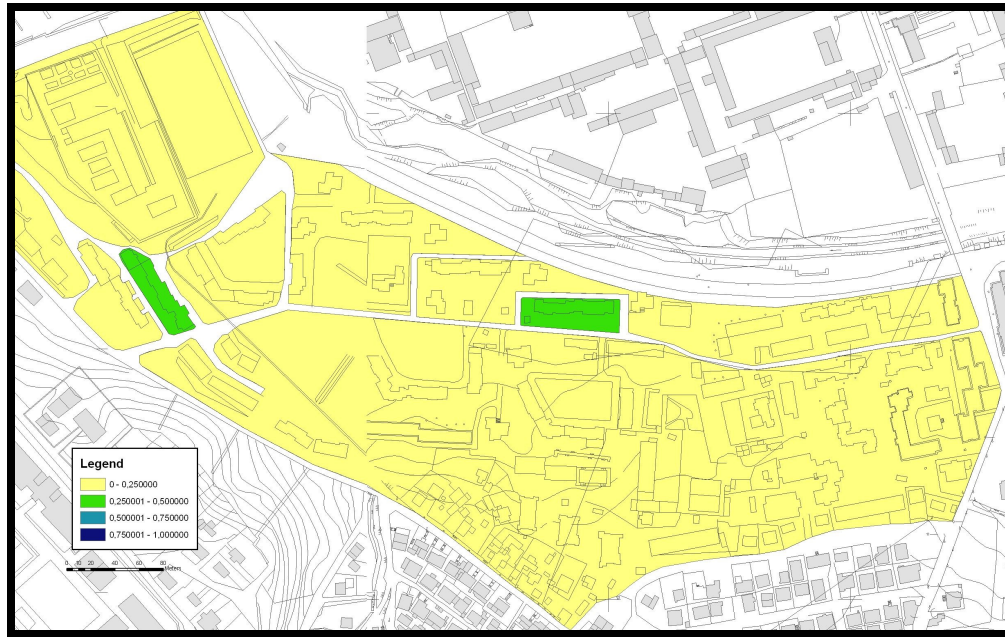


Figure 3.37 FAR in “Irfan Tomini” block case study area before 1990



Figure 3.38 Current FAR in “Irfan Tomini” block case study area

3.2.3.5. Public and open spaces

Since this case study area had the largest public spaces (nearly 86% of the total), it also had the highest incidence in their occupation by post1990 development. Three were the main features of public space occupation in the area.

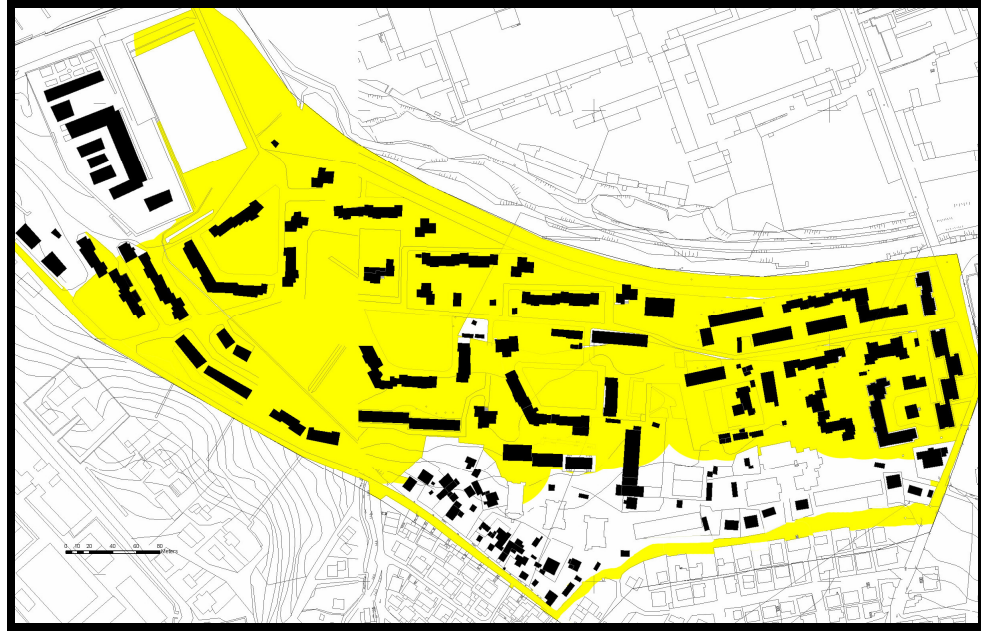


Figure 3.39 Public and open spaces in “Irfan Tomini” block case study area

First, the recreational spaces in the middle of the existing islets were occupied. Liberal economy introduced Albanians to a concept strictly banned during communism: private car ownership. The private car was considered a valuable asset and as such had to be kept in a secure place or watched constantly. Therefore, the most characteristic type of building occupying these areas were single storied garages later modified to groceries serving the nearby apartments. In other cases, buildings of even four stories were constructed obviously competing with the existing fabric. There was also another type of occupation that can otherwise be considered a function change. The previous green areas in the middle of the islets now are being used as massive parking (Figure 3.40). This is a way to “keep an eye on” the car. It also is a better practice than the garages as during daytime it leaves at least open spaces for children to play.



Figure 3.40 Examples of islet center occupation in “Irfan Tomini” block case study area

Second, a considerable number of apartments built side annexes in order to expand their insufficient living areas or earn completely independent flats. Despite the different features, the outcome was mutual: occupation of public open spaces. This time the targets were pathways and pavements thus limiting movement of pedestrians and endangering them.



Figure 3.41 Examples of pavements and paths occupation in "Irfan Tomini" block case study area

Third, a more hidden type of occupation is seen where the ground floors could not be used for retail. Out of the authorities' eyes, the ground floors of the buildings in the inner part of the area have fenced considerable amount of land around their homes thus providing themselves with small gardens (Figure 3.42). This land appropriation was certainly made at the expenses of public space. As a conclusion, the share of public spaces from the total area fell to the 32% level.



Figure 3.42 Examples of land appropriation by ground floors in "Irfan Tomini" block case study area

3.2.3.6. Area synthesis

Overall, “Irfan Tomini” block case study area has experienced significant changes due to liberal economy conditions. The major field of these changes has been the public open spaces. The characteristics of this study area have counted for the type and high degree of change (Figure 3.43).

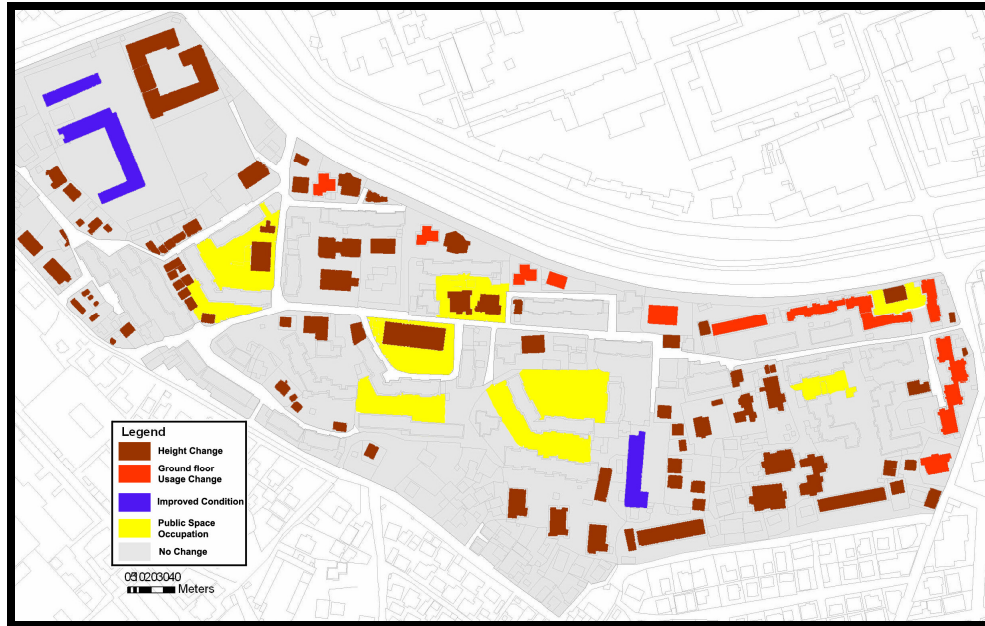


Figure 3.43 Synthesis of changes in “Irfan Tomini” block case study area

Table 3.3 Compared changes for each attribute in “Irfan Tomini” block case study area

Period	Buildings over 5 stories high (% of total fabric in area)	Buildings within or lower than average condition (% of total fabric in area)	Non-residential Ground floor Usage (% of total fabric in area)	FAR	Public Spaces (% of total area)
Pre1990	0%	-	6%	0,24	86%
Current	10%	50%	15%	0.36	32%

Generally, the area has increased in FAR due to a considerable increase in its built up fabric. This new fabric has also affected the skyline of the area by increasing it with at least two floors. In the northwest part of the area, new development is even of a higher floor number due to its national street frontage. Some other singular high-rise developments are seen near this part of the case study area. Liberal economy also counted for the change of usage in the ground floors of the main axes. The area has experienced its main change in public spaces where their share from the total area decreased approximately 2.5 times (Table 3.3).

3.2.4. General synthesis of the physical features

Case study areas have shown differences in their physical features for all the attributes of the variable. Table 3.4 makes a summary of the pre and post transitional values of the attributes for each case study area.

Table 3.4 Compared changes for each attribute in all the case study areas

Area	Buildings over 5 stories high (% of total fabric in area)		Buildings within or lower than average condition (current % of total fabric in area)	Non-residential Ground floor Usage (% of total fabric in area)		FAR		Public Spaces (% of total area)	
	Pre1990	Current		Pre1990	Current	Pre1990	Current	Pre1990	Current
Medrese	0%	1.2%	21%	2%	6%	0,41	0,43	12%	8%
The "Block"	4%	26%	61%	4%	90%	0,17	0,35	50%	11%
IrfanTomini	0%	10%	50%	6%	15%	0,24	0,36	86%	32%

First, it is shown that the case study area near Medrese has experienced very little change in its skyline when compared to the other two areas. Its dense organic pattern has restricted the share of buildings higher than five stories to only 1.2%. On the other hand, the "Block" and "Irfan Tomini" case study areas have experienced more significant skyline increases with respective share of buildings higher than five stories of 26% and 10%.

Second, the current condition of buildings shows that the old urban fabric is generally above the average risk level. Given that the new fabric is mainly below the average risk level, it is seen that the case study area near Medrese has a 79% share of deteriorating pre1990 urban fabric. The 61% share of buildings within or lower than average risk level in the "Block" shows that this area is being literally renewed. A similar picture exists in "Irfan Tomini" area as well. Here half of the buildings are above the average risk condition though.

Third, the "Block" with its current 90% share of non-residential ground floor usage has established itself as the new activity center of the city. The other areas due to their more peripheral location have shown modest increases in non-residential ground floor usage. This share in case study area near Medrese increased from 2% to 6% while in "Irfan Tomini" from 6% to 15%.

Fourth, the areas showed differences in FAR increase as well. While the "Block" and "Irfan Tomini" increased from 0.17 to 0.35 and from 0.26 to 0.36 respectively, the case study area near Medrese showed an increase to 0.43 from its previous 0.41 level. Although this area remains the densest one, it has experienced the least amount of FAR increase.

Fifth, parallel to FAR increase the areas have experienced public space occupation. Again here the “Block” and “Irfan Tomini” areas count for the major change due to their abundant pre1990 public spaces. While case study area near Medrese has experienced a drop to 8% from its pre1990 12% share of the public spaces, the “Block’s” share fell to 11% from its initial 50% and “Irfan Tomini” block’s share fell to 32% from its initial 86% share over the total area.

Overall, the physical features’ analyses have shown that the introduction of liberal economy has changed the overall urban patterns of the case study areas. The amount of change differs for each area though mainly depending on the area’s location, pre1990 urban texture, and their overall area. Therefore, case study area near Medrese is the one with the lowest amount of change for most of the attributes due to its dense organic pattern. Although it is nearer to the city’s center than “Irfan Tomini” block, it has shown a smaller change in ground floor usage due to its shorter main street frontage. Additionally, the “Block” was the area with the highest amount of change for all the attributes showing typical features of a city center.

3.3. Socioeconomic composition of the study areas

This part of the study is based on primary data gathered by the interviews performed in each of the areas. Data was later elaborated by simple statistical methods for comparison purposes. (See Appendix for a detailed content of the questionnaire). The study encountered difficulties in gaining detailed information about household structure, origin and income structure of the interviewee due to the driven mentality of the population.

3.3.1. Case study area near Medrese

3.3.1.1. Sample Population

Out of 41 interviews in the area 19 were performed with males and 22 with females. Interviewees reported a total population of 144 people approximately 10% of the area’s estimated 1500 population, which meant that the household size of the sample was 3.5.

3.3.1.2. Time of settling in the area

The question “How long have you been living in your current house?” aimed to assess the change in social composition of the area during the transition period. Results are shown in Figure 3.44.

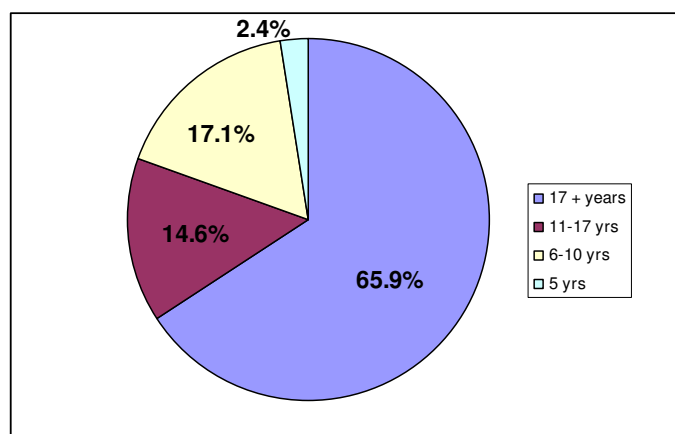


Figure 3.44 Population in the area near Medrese according to settlement period

The graph in Figure 3.5 shows that more than 35% of the population has settled in the area after 1990. On the other hand, a considerable 65% portion of the population has been living in the area for more than 17 years i.e. since the communist era. Settling in the area appears to be a stationary one as 80% of the interviewee stated that the area was their first location in Tirana with “born here” being the main reason to the condition.

3.3.1.3. Occupation status

At the time of interview, 73% of the interviewee declared to be working and 27% were not involved in work. Of these persons it is difficult to determine an unemployment rate because most of them despite being in active age, were not working willingly. Out of 30 persons currently working, 70% were working in administration and the remaining 30% was in the private sector (Figure 3.45).

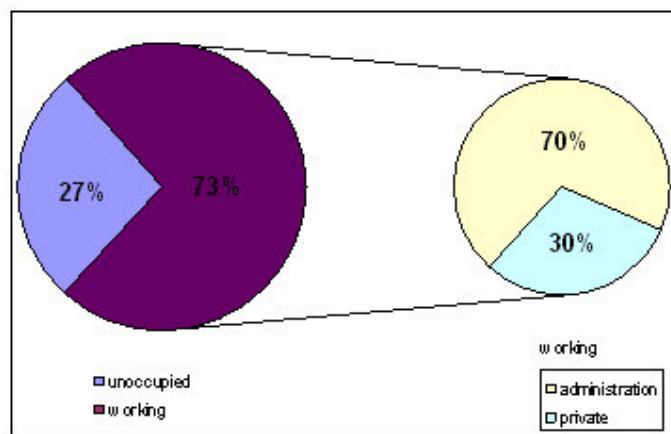


Figure 3.45 Detailed occupation status of the interviewee in the area near Medrese

3.3.1.4. Education

Inhabitants of the area show a relatively low education rate with only 22% of the interviewee graduating from university or the like. The remaining 78% of the population did not graduate from a higher education institution. In fact, 34% of the population had only attended 8-year school (obligatory in communist regime) and 44% have finished high school or the like. No one is reported to have finished or even attending postgraduate studies (Figure 3.46).

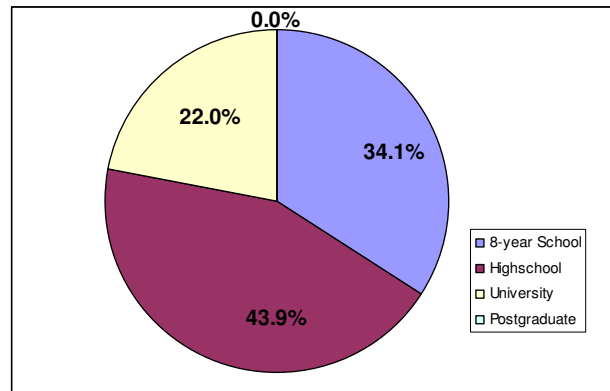


Figure 3.46 Education status of the interviewee in the area near Medrese

3.3.1.5. Financial status

In order to compare and scale the socioeconomic status of the three areas, the study aimed to achieve a detailed picture of the financial status of interviewee and their families as well.

First, number of working persons within the households was asked. Approximately 10% of the interviewee reported none working within their families. The remaining 90% was divided into 32% of families with only one person working, 46% had two persons working and 12% had three or more persons working (Figure 3.47).

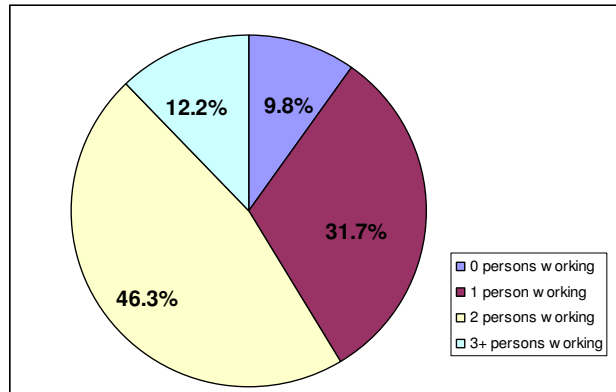


Figure 3.47 Number of persons working in the family in the area near Medrese

Second, private car and landline ownership of the family as welfare determinants were assessed. Investigation pointed out that 39% of the families possessed private cars and 49% had landline telephones in their homes (Figure 3.48-3.49).

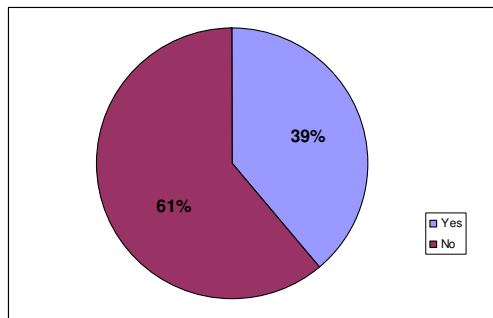


Figure 3.48 Private car ownership in the area near Medrese

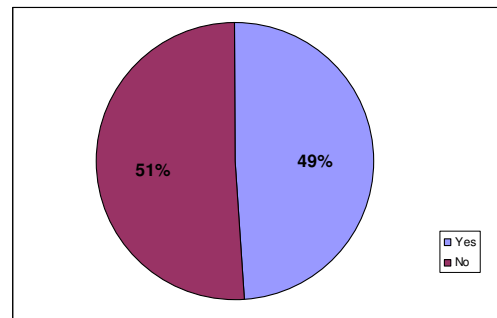


Figure 3.49 Landline telephone ownership in the area near Medrese

Third, the monthly income of the interviewee was assessed. The wage range was scaled at three intervals. The scaling categorizes people earning 0-50,000 Lek/month as low and middle low, those earning between 50,001 and 100,000 Lek/month as middle and middle high, and those earning more than 100,001 Lek/month as high-income class (Albanian Central Bank exchange rate on 29.12.2006 was 1 US\$=94,14 Lek). Out of the 41 interviewee none reported to be earning over 100,001 Lek/month. Approximately 83% of them earned between 0 and 50,000 Lek/month and only 17% reported to earn more than 50,001 Lek/month.

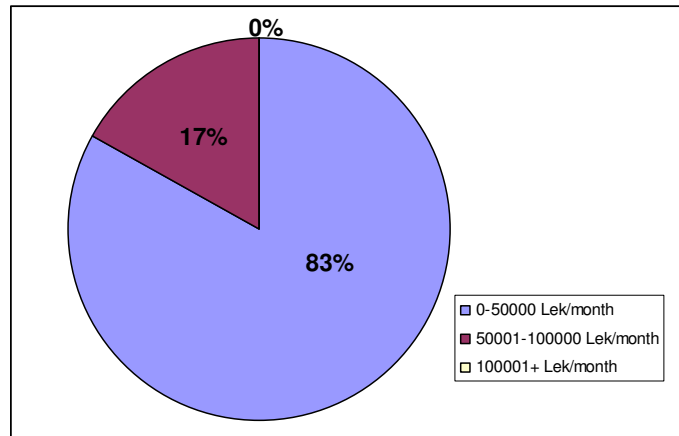


Figure 3.50 Population according to monthly earnings in the area near Medrese

Fourth, personal computer and cell phone ownership as individual welfare determinants were assessed. While 43% of the interviewee owned cell phones, only 5% of them reported to possess personal computers (Figure 3.51-3.52).

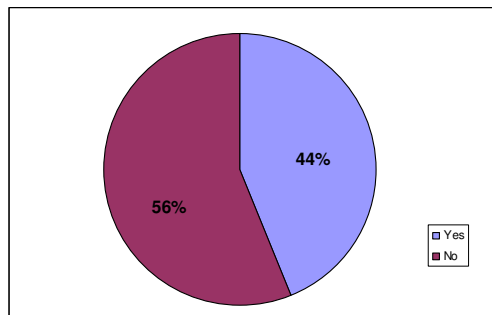


Figure 3.51 Cell phone ownership in the area near Medrese

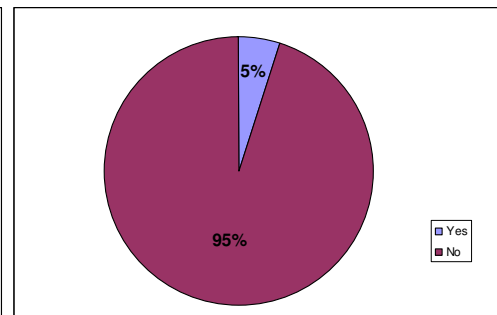


Figure 3.52 Personal computer ownership in the area near Medrese

3.3.1.6. Awareness of the surroundings and area perception

This part of the study aimed to qualitatively assess awareness and perception of the interviewee and to see the mental change transition has caused. Generally, all the interviewees were able to guess the period of construction of the building they lived in. Especially people living in single-family houses gave more precise construction years. Almost all of the interviewee 85% used street name and number to direct people to their homes. Only 15% used additional descriptive references. One most interesting fact is that none of the interviewee mentioned Medrese (the Islamic school adjacent to the area) as a reference point. They would rather use the former school of communist party, located at the time in the area.

Furthermore, when asked to list 5 most important buildings or areas in Tirana the ex-leaderships' block appeared in almost 50% of the answers. Since the range of answers to this question is very broad, a grouping of the buildings into pre and post transitional ones was made. A considerable 25% of the interviewee mentioned only institutional buildings of no particular archetype belonging to the close surroundings, counting for a very narrow mental map of the city and hence low area perception. Again, only 12% of the interviewee entered Medrese in their list mostly in the last places. Institutional buildings located around the center and main axis of the city topped approximately 53% of the lists. Therefore, when results are compared according to the binary grouping of pre and post-transitional buildings a 60% to 40% prevalence of buildings belonging to the period before 1990 is seen.

Finally, all the interviewees were either unhappy or very unhappy with the urban quality of their surroundings. Improvement of road quality and illumination are the things 56% of the interviewee wanted to change. A common suggestion of those living in single-family houses was demolition of their old houses and building of apartment houses in their lands.

3.3.1.7. Area synthesis

Overall, case study area near Medrese shows a compact social composition of low and middle-low income class. More than 25% of the interviewee were not working and 12% of the households reported none working. People generally are of low education status and show little awareness of the surroundings. None of the interviewee was happy about the conditions of the surroundings and wanted better roads, illumination and green areas. A special suggestion came from those sitting in single-family houses that would gladly exchange their homes and land for apartment houses. Spatial outcomes of the market economy can be said to gradually replace the old urban fabric as 40% of the interviewee gave reference and rated new post1990 buildings before the old ones. It was further observed that little interaction occurred between people living in single family houses (the locals) and those living in apartment houses built after 1990 (the new comers).

3.3.2. The ex-leadership's Block case study area

3.3.2.1. Sample Population

Out of 43 interviews in the area 20 were performed with males and 23 with females. Interviewees reported a total population of 116 people, approximately 2% of the

area's estimated 6000 population which meant that the household size of the sample was 2.7.

3.3.2.2. Time of settling in the area

The question "How long have you been living in your current house?" aimed to assess the change in social composition of the area during the transition period. Results are shown in Figure 3.53.

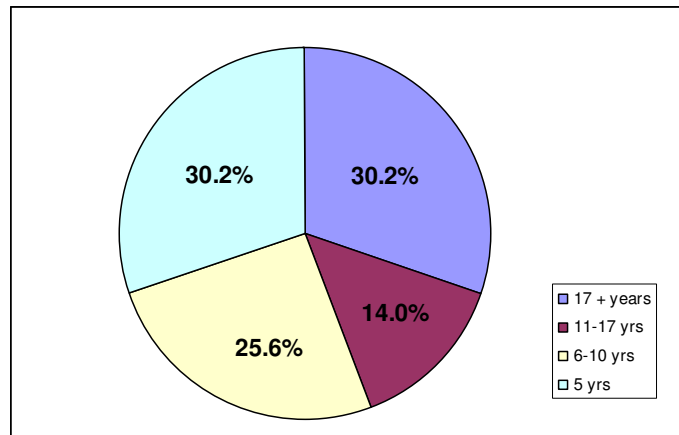


Figure 3.53 Population in the "Block" area according to settlement period

The graph in Figure 3.12 shows that 70% of the population has settled in the area after 1990. On the other hand, only a 30% portion of the population has been living in the area for more than 17 years i.e. since the communist era. Settling appears to be really mixed with the area being the first location to 47% of the interviewee. The other 53% have come to the area from other parts of Tirana. Main reason for choosing to live in the area was the area's prestige and central location.

3.3.2.3. Occupation status

At the time of interview, 65% of the interviewee declared to be working and 35% were not involved in work. Of these persons it is difficult to determine an unemployment rate because most of them despite being in active age, were not working willingly. Out of 28 persons currently working, 64% were in the private sector and only 36% was working in administration (Figure 3.54).

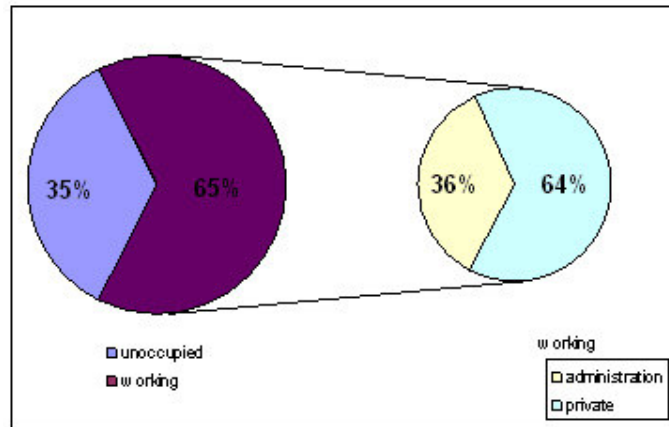


Figure 3.54 Detailed occupation status of the interviewee in the “Block” area

3.3.2.4. Education

There was a high education rate within the inhabitants of the area with 55% of the interviewee graduating from university or the like. Out of these five interviewee or 9% of the population was attending postgraduate studies. The remaining 45% of the population did not graduate from a higher education institution. The high school education level constituted 28% of the interviewee and 16% of the population had only attended 8-year school (Figure 3.55).

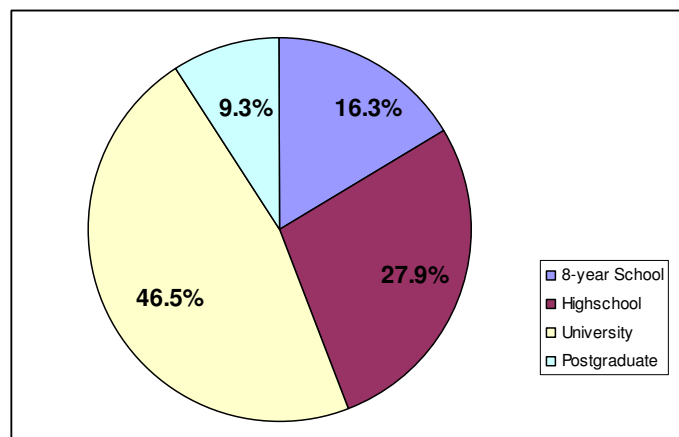


Figure 3.55 Education status of the interviewee in the “Block” area

3.3.2.5. Financial status

In order to compare and scale the socioeconomic status of the three areas, the study aimed to achieve a detailed picture of the financial status of interviewee and their families as well.

First, number of working persons within the households was asked. Only 1 household constituting 2.3% was reported to have none working within the family.

The remaining 98% was divided into 42% of families with only one person working, 49% had two persons working and 7% had three or more persons working (Figure 3.56).

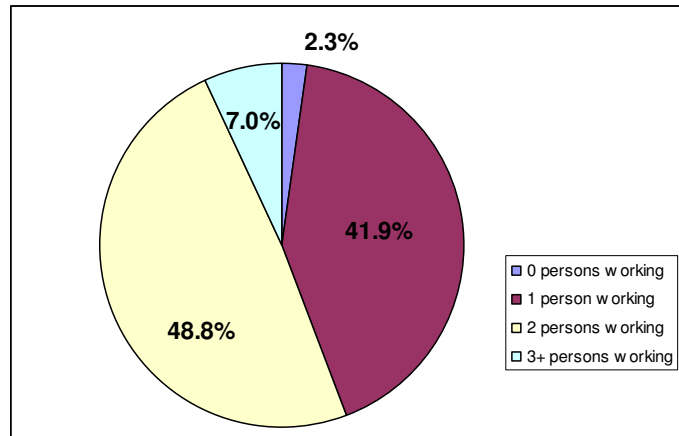


Figure 3.56 Number of persons working in the family in the “Block” area

Second, private car and landline phone ownership of the family as welfare determinants were assessed. Investigation pointed out that 70% of the families possessed private cars and only 33% had landline telephones in their homes (Figure 3.57-3.58).

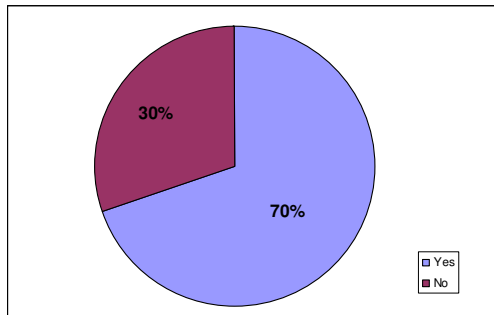


Figure 3.57 Private car ownership in the “Block” area

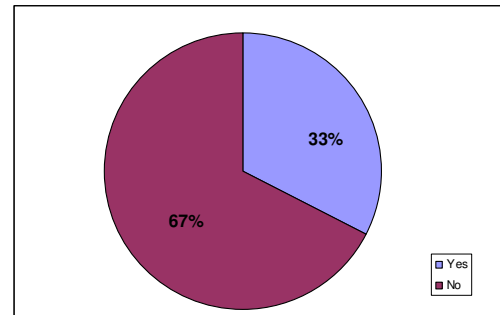


Figure 3.58 Landline phone ownership in the “Block” area

Third, the monthly income of the interviewee was assessed. The wage range was scaled at three intervals. The scaling categorizes people earning 0-50,000 Lek/month as low and middle low, those earning between 50,001 and 100,000 Lek/month as middle and middle high, and those earning more than 100,001 Lek/month as high-income class. The study showed an almost even income level distribution. Out of the 43 interviewees, 35% earned over 100,001 Lek/month, 35% earned between 0 and 50,000 Lek/month and 30% reported to earn between 50,001 and 100,000 Lek/month.

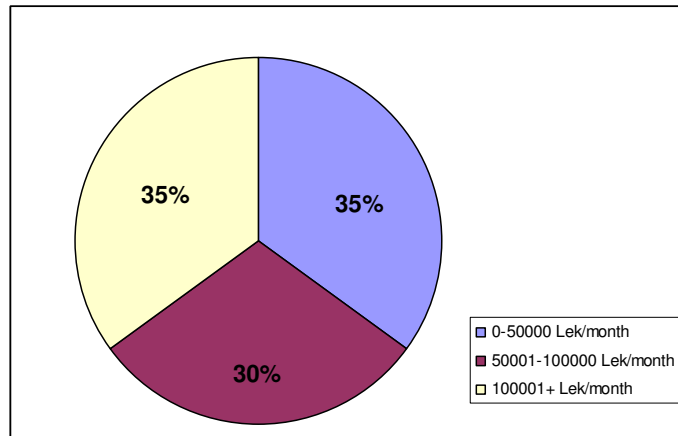


Figure 3.59 Population according to monthly earnings in the “Block” area

Fourth, personal computer and cell phone ownership as individual welfare determinants were assessed. The figures are of high values with 88% of the interviewee owning cell phones and 25% of them possessing personal computers (Figure 3.60-61).

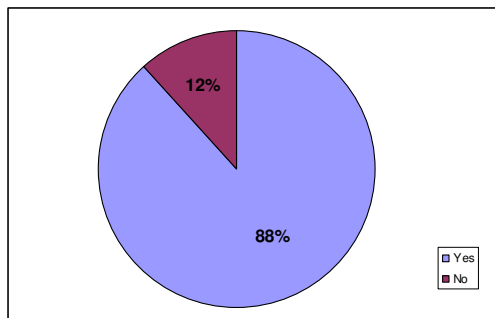


Figure 3.60 Cell phone ownership in the “Block” area

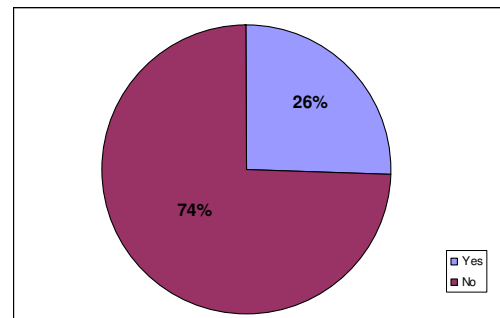


Figure 3.61 Personal computer ownership in the “Block” area

3.3.2.6. Awareness of the surroundings and area perception

This part of the study aimed to qualitatively assess awareness and perception of the interviewee and to see the mental change transition has caused. Generally, all the interviewees were able to guess the period of construction of the building they lived in. New comers (settling after 1990) living in pre1990 houses had more difficulties in stating the year and limited the answer to only “the communist era”. Interviewees living in new houses were more precise about the construction year of their buildings. All of the interviewee used the word “block” to give their home address. Only 10% of them used street name and number to give full address. The other 90% preferred using reference buildings instead. Of these, 60% used café-bar and

other shop or bank names as descriptive reference while the other 30% used only buildings for the purpose.

Furthermore, when asked to list 5 most important buildings or areas in Tirana commercial or office buildings were ranked by more than 60% and only 30% of the interviewee named important institutional buildings. Since the range of answers to this question is very broad, a grouping of the buildings into pre and post transitional ones was made. 86% of the buildings included in the answers were from the center and the main axis. One most interesting fact is that only 10% of the interviewee listed the former king Zog's palace now the presidency building. Therefore, when results are compared according to the binary grouping of pre and post-transitional buildings a 72% to 28% prevalence of buildings belonging to the period after 1990 is seen.

Finally, all the interviewees were either unhappy or very unhappy with the urban quality of their surroundings. More green area was what 35% of the interviewee wanted followed by more parking spaces asked by a 14% portion. Another common complain was the loud noise at late night hours especially in the summer.

3.3.2.7. Area synthesis

Overall, the "Block" case study area shows a mixed social composition with an almost even distribution of the income classes. More than one out of three interviewees was not working but only one household (2%) reported no person working. Education status of the people is relatively high with good awareness of the surroundings. The research showed high incidence of private car, cell phone and even personal computer ownership counting for a high income level. None of the interviewee was happy about the conditions of the surroundings and wanted recreational and parking areas. Spatial outcomes of the market economy are very strongly reflected in the mental perception of the interviewee in the area. One most interesting example is the fact that people mostly call the former Enver Hoxha's villa with the name of the café-bar operating on it rather than as it was known in the communist era. Mentally the new urban fabric has strong effects on the interviewee in this area as 70% of the interviewee gave reference and rated new post1990 buildings before the old ones.

3.3.3. The “Irfan Tomini” block case study area

3.3.3.1. Sample Population

Out of 49 interviews in the area 28 were performed with males and 21 with females. Interviewees reported a total population of 152 people, approximately 3% of the area’s estimated 4750 population which meant that the household size of the sample was 3,1.

3.3.3.2. Time of settling in the area

The question “How long have you been living in your current house?” aimed to assess the change in social composition of the area during the transition period. Results are shown in Figure 3.62.

The graph in Figure 3.62 shows that almost 75% of the population has settled in the area after 1990. On the other hand, only a 25% portion of the population has been living in the area for more than 17 years i.e. since the communist era. Settling appears to be rather permanent with the area being the first location to 65% of the interviewee. The other 35% have come to the area from other parts of Tirana. Main reason for choosing to live in the area was the affordable flat prices.

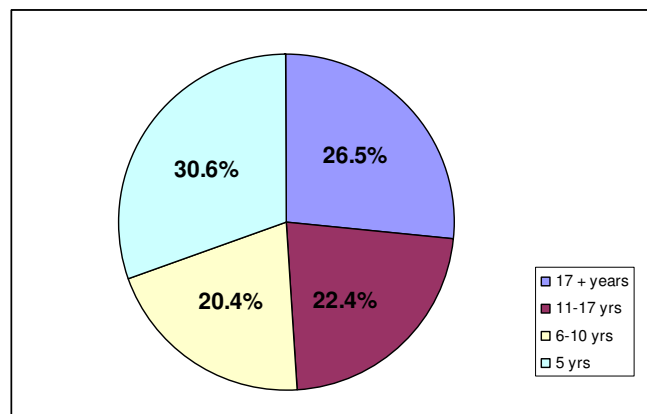


Figure 3.62 Population in the “Irfan Tomini” block area according to settlement period

3.3.3.3. Occupation status

At the time of interview, 73% of the interviewee declared to be working and 27% were not involved in work. Of these persons it is difficult to determine an unemployment rate because most of them despite being in active age, were not working willingly. Out of 36 persons currently working, 64% were working in administration and 36% was in the private sector (Figure 3.63).

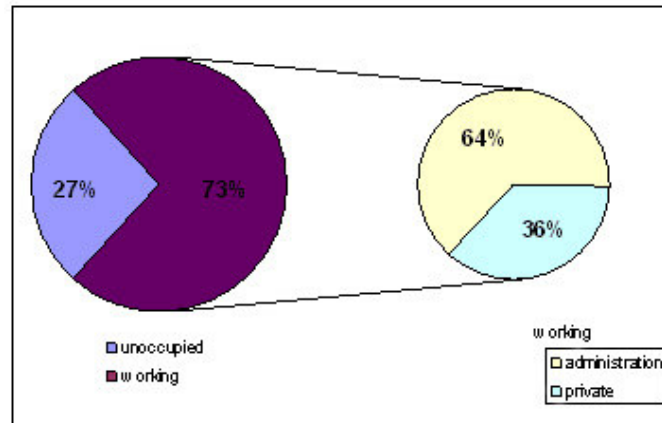


Figure 3.63 Detailed occupation status of the interviewee in the "Irfan Tomini" block area

3.3.3.4. Education

There was a relatively low education rate within the inhabitants of the area with 35% of the interviewee graduating from university or the like. Out of these two interviewee or 4% of the population was attending postgraduate studies. The remaining 65% of the population did not graduate from a higher education institution. In fact, 26% of the population had only attended 8-year school (obligatory in communist regime) and 39% have finished high school or the like. (Figure 3.64).

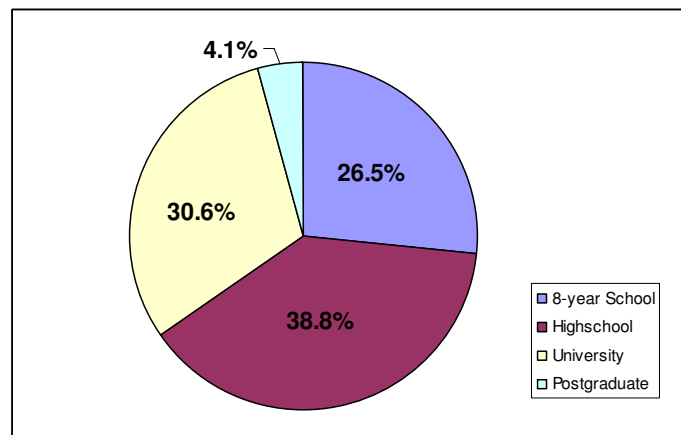


Figure 3.64 Education status of the interviewee in the "Irfan Tomini" block area

3.3.3.5. Financial status

In order to compare and scale the socioeconomic status of the three areas, the study aimed to achieve a detailed picture of the financial status of interviewee and their families as well.

First, number of working persons within the households was asked. Three interviewee constituting 6% reported to have none working within the family. The remaining 94% was divided into 22% of families with only one person working, 57% had two persons working and 14% had three or more persons working (Figure 3.65).

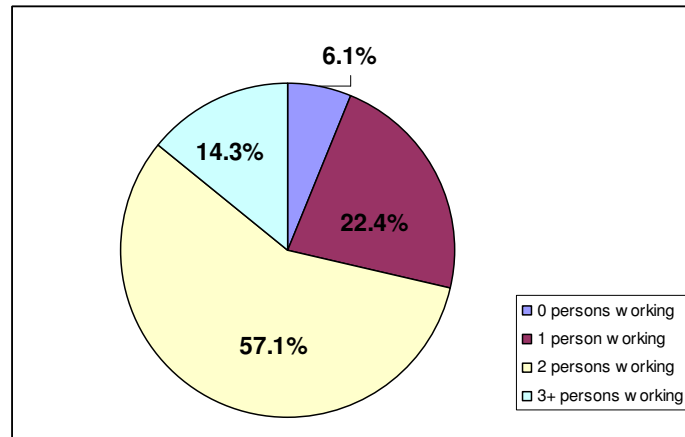


Figure 3.65 Number of persons working in the family in the "Irfan Tomini" block area

Second, private car and landline ownership of the family as welfare determinants were assessed. Investigation pointed out that 43% of the families possessed private cars and only 39% had landline telephones in their homes (Figure 3.66- 3.67).

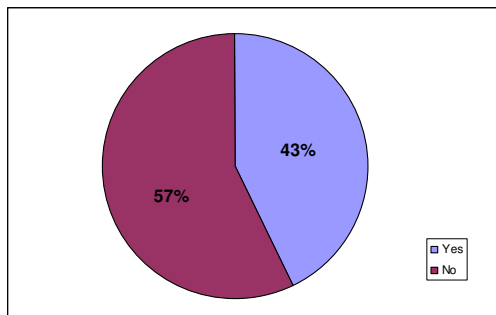


Figure 3.66 Private car ownership in "Irfan Tomini" block area

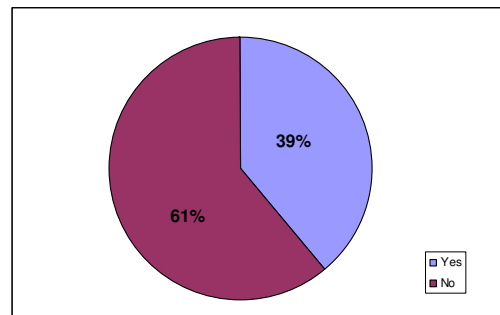


Figure 3.67 Landline phone ownership in "Irfan Tomini" block area

Third, the monthly income of the interviewee was assessed. The wage range was scaled at three intervals. The scaling categorizes people earning 0-50,000 Lek/month as low and middle low, those earning between 50,001 and 100,000 Lek/month as middle and middle high, and those earning more than 100,001 Lek/month as high-income class. Data presented in Figure 3.68 show that interviewees of low and middle low income class in the area are about half of the total. It is also seen that an almost even distribution exists between the remaining half of middle and middle high and high income classes. Out of the 49 interviewees,

49% earned between 0 and 50.000 Lek/month, 27% reported to earn between 50,001 and 100,000 Lek/month and 35% earned over 100,001 Lek/month.

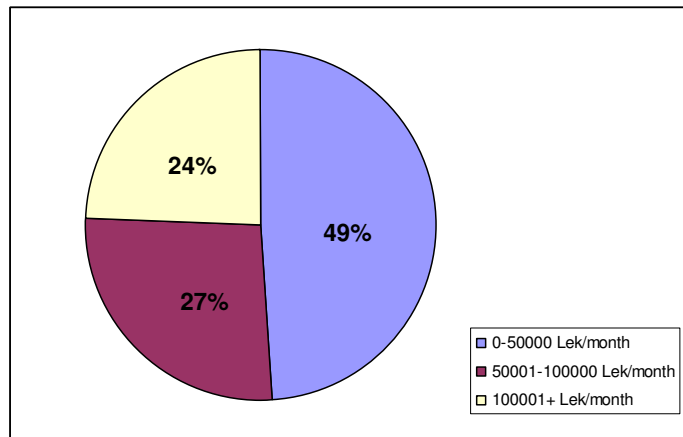


Figure 3.68 Population according to monthly earnings in the “Irfan Tomini” block area

Fourth, personal computer and cell phone ownership as individual welfare determinants were assessed. While 74% of the interviewee posses cell phones only 4 of them, which constitute 8%, reported to own personal computers (Figure 3.69 - 3.70).

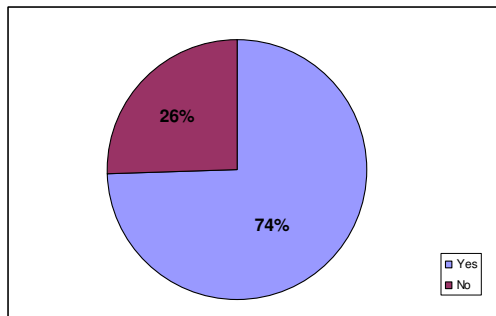


Figure 3.69 Cell phone ownership in “Irfan Tomini” block area

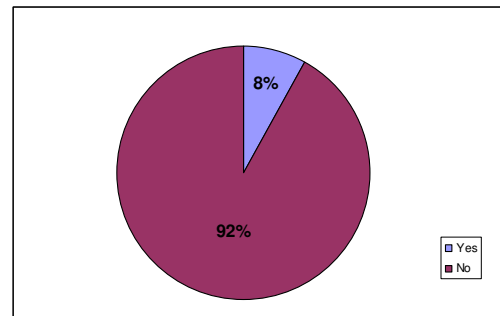


Figure 3.70 Personal computer ownership in “Irfan Tomini” block area

3.3.3.6. Awareness of the surroundings and area perception

This part of the study aimed to qualitatively asses awareness and perception of the interviewee and to see the mental change transition has caused. Generally, all the interviewees were able to guess the period of construction of the building they lived in. Approximately 77% of the interviewee used the term “Irfan Tomini block” to describe their location. A dominating majority of 95% used additional descriptive references. Only 5% of the interviewees used street name and number and they

lived in old buildings on “Irfan Tomini” Street. Most of the people using additional descriptive references preferred new buildings post1990 for the purpose.

Furthermore, when asked to list five most important buildings or areas in Tirana the centre and the main axis bearing main buildings got the highest rate with 63%. Since the range of answers to this question is very broad, a grouping of the buildings into pre and post transitional ones was made. 17% of the interviewee mentioned only institutional buildings of no particular archetype belonging to the close surroundings, counting for a very narrow mental map of the city and hence low area perception. Therefore, when results are compared according to the binary grouping of pre and post-transitional buildings a distribution of 53% post and 47% pre transitional is seen.

Finally, all the interviewees were either unhappy or very unhappy with the urban quality of their surroundings. Children’s playgrounds, improvement of road quality and illumination are the things 62% of the interviewee wanted to change.

3.3.3.7. Area synthesis

Overall, “Irfan Tomini” Block case study area shows a wide range of social composition. Half of the interviewee were of low and middle low income. The other half was divided into two nearly equal parts between middle and middle high and high income classes. Approximately ¼ of the interviewee were not working and 6% of the households reported none working. People generally are of low education status and cannot be said to fully be aware of the surroundings. None of the interviewee was happy about the conditions of the surroundings and wanted better roads, illumination and green areas. Spatial outcomes of the market economy can be said to gradually replace the old urban fabric as 55% of the interviewee gave reference and rated new post1990 buildings before the old ones.

3.3.4. General synthesis of the socioeconomic composition

Socioeconomic analysis of the case study areas showed significant differences between their populations. Differences were present in almost all of the features the study included. All the three areas differed in composition of population according to year of settlement, household size, education level, income class and awareness of the surroundings.

It was seen that people of low income with a low level of education who showed little awareness of the surroundings inhabited case study area near Medrese. Additionally this area showed the lowest rate of car, cell phone ownership and

children going to private schools. On the other hand, the “Block” case study area is considered one of the prestigious sites of Tirana and as such, has a social class of high income (the highest of the three examples). The area counted for the highest percentage of private car, personal computer and cell phone ownership. In this area, education level and awareness of the surroundings were higher than the other examples. In addition, it counted for the highest level of children going to private schools. While the first two case studies can be rated as extremes in income, education and area perception, “Irfan Tomini” Block case study area holds a position between the first two examples showing a more even distribution of social classes but still a considerably low education rate.

When the other features were cross-compared, some most significant results were obtained. The “Block” prestigious area counted for the lowest rate of landline phone ownership and for the highest rate of people living in post1990 buildings. Case study area near Medrese despite being the least developed, counted for the highest rate of landline phone ownership. These facts count for the scarce infrastructure capacity of the city that is not able to provide new buildings with this specific service. By cross-comparing household size with education and income levels, it is seen that the “Block” has the lowest household size (2.7) followed by “Irfan Tomini” Block area (3.1). On the other hand, case study area near Medrese as the poorest and with the lowest level of education had the highest household size of 3.5.

Generally, interviewee in all the three areas indicated that spatial outcomes of liberal economy had changed their mental perception of the built environment. Although some taboos have still deep roots on people’s minds, the overall trend is towards “the new”. Buildings of the post communist era are becoming the new landmarks of the city thus overwhelming the old urban fabric. This phenomenon though is becoming increasingly dangerous to the point of erasing the past. Perhaps most appalling of the whole study is the fact that none of the interviewee mentioned the 15-storied Tirana International Hotel building, Tirana and Albania’s landmark in the communist era.

As a conclusion, it can be said that socioeconomic dynamism in Tirana follows a parallel path with its spatial change. As to the question “who triggered whom?” the answer remains open. On one side, social class differentiation inevitably leads to space partitioning, meanwhile the existing urban fabric of Tirana has mainly influenced segregation of the new comers. The crude truth is that Tirana is changing at a tremendous pace while the positive outcomes of this change are still to come.

3.4. Evaluative notes on the analyses

By cross comparing the socioeconomic features to the physical changes in all the case study areas a general picture of the areas' identity is revealed. Table 3.5 gives a parallel summary of socioeconomic conditions and physical changes in all the three areas.

Table 3.5 Physical changes and socioeconomic conditions in all the case study areas

Area	% of households settling after 1990	Unemployed (% of the interviewee)	Only primary school graduates	% of those earning less than 50000 lek per month	Rise in buildings over 5 stories high	Buildings of lower than average condition	Ground floor Usage change	FAR Change	Decrease in Public Spaces
Medrese	34%	27%	34%	83%	1.2%	79%	4%	0,02	4%
The "Block"	70%	35%	16%	35%	22%	39%	86%	0,18	39%
Irfan Tomini	75%	26%	26%	49%	10%	50%	9%	0,12	54%

First, case study area near Medrese with 66% of its population settling in the area before 1990 shows a more compact social composition than the other two areas. The majority of this population lives in deteriorating single-family pre1990 houses showing a relatively high unemployment rate. Thus, the area is populated by low to middle low income social class with a low education level living mainly in old urban fabric in organic pattern. The physical characteristics of the area have allowed for only a small spatial change. Actually, the FAR has increased only by 0.02, because of a short main street frontage, ground floor usage changed by only 4% and due to the small amount of pre1990 public spaces they had experienced a decrease of only 4%. Moreover construction of new 6-7 storied apartment buildings in the outer parts of the area is creating a kind of "artificial barrier" thus spatially and visually buffering the zone from its surroundings. Additionally, the lack of spatial interaction between the old and the new and social interaction between the "settled" and the "comers" is opening gaps in both dimensions resulting in an *involuntary economic segregation*. This is not to be mixed with the ghettos and cultural enclaves defined by Marcuse (1997), which have different formation character.

Second, the 86% change in ground floor usage, 0.18 increase in FAR, 70% of population settled after 1990, in the "Block" indicate a high dynamism in both socioeconomic and spatial contexts. The area shows the features of a capitalist central business district in miniature. It has a mixed social composition of relatively high-income class with 65% of its inhabitants earning more than 50000 Lek per month. Despite the high education level, the area counts the highest unemployment rate with 35% due to the large number of housewives. Therefore, the area is

inhabited by high-income social class living in relatively high-rise apartment buildings. Additionally, it is the main entertainment and activity center of the city due to the large number of cafés on the ground floor.

Third, “Irfan Tomini” block case study area has a mixed social composition with 75% of its inhabitants settling after 1990 also with mixed income classes. This counts for the variety of urban fabric as well, with half of the buildings under and the other half above the average condition level. The high change in built up fabric supported by a 0.12 FAR increase and 54% decrease in public space, has triggered the variety in social composition. When compared to the other two areas “Irfan Tomini” block can be classified as to be the middle way between a very high change in the “Block” and a more constrained change in case study area near Medrese. Here no particular social or spatial segregation is yet visible, although some slum like development has begun southwest of the area. The area remains mainly residential with only a 9% ground floor usage change largely due to its long main axis frontage.

Overall, the analyses showed that the highest amount of change has occurred in areas of low pre1990 density. More specifically, case study area near Medrese has experienced fewer changes when compared to the other two areas. Moreover, this change is reported to be two-dimensional, both social and spatial. Generally, all the areas experienced an increase in the built up area, a change in ground floor use, an increase in the skyline as well as a change in their spatial composition.

4. RESULTS AND CONCLUDING REMARKS

As a new city under capitalism, Tirana is on a very fast run to transformation. The impressive urban and socioeconomic dynamics have managed to change the capital's face. On the other hand, the apparently never-ending transition period is hampering the city's progress and urban development. What remains certain is a visual change in the built up fabric of the city with respect to its condition in the communist period.

On the light of these observations, the study forwarded the hypothesis that "Under economical transition conditions, the liberal economy factors lead to a change in the urban pattern". The hypothesis would be proved for the attributes of the dependent variable urban pattern change namely; building height, building condition, ground floor usage, floor to area ratio and public and open spaces. Additionally the social dimension would further reinforce and give a full picture of the change.

Testing the hypothesis via the change in value of the dependent variable's attributes was made by urban planning analyses. The above stated attributes were given values for the two different periods under examination. Afterwards, the quantitative change in value between the two periods for each case study area was calculated. Moreover, the physical analyses based on primary data were supported by on field study. It aimed to determine the condition of buildings and by interviews to give an additional picture of the socioeconomic composition of the case study areas. The outcomes are presented below.

First, liberal economy conditions have resulted in an overall increase in the built up fabric a statement supported by the FAR increase in all the case study areas. While the "Block" and "Irfan Tomini" block experienced FAR increases of respectively 0.18 and 0.12, case study area near Medrese had a FAR increase of 0.02. The process was characterized by one major trend, that of occupying public spaces. Since case study area near Medrese had the densest pattern, it also experienced the lowest FAR increase. The phenomenon was triggered by an increasing housing need due to internal migration and on its side, further triggered migration by providing a surplus in the housing stock.

Additionally, formation of a land market revealed the real value of urban land in a country's capital, especially in the core. Two were its main outcomes. Firstly, vertical development was unavoidable resulting in an increase in the city's skyline. From a stationary five stories elevation under socialist planning the skyline began to rise with the introduction of market economies. The "Block" and "Irfan Tomini" block showed respective increases in percentage of buildings higher than five stories of respectively 22% and 10%. Case study area near Medrese instead could show an increase of only 1.2% because of the lack of empty fields. Secondly, liberal economy shifted direction towards the third sector so that ground floors could no longer be residential in usage. Therefore, a general change of ground floors to commerce and services was seen in all the areas. While case study area near Medrese and "Irfan Tomini" block showed changes in ground floor usage of respectively 4% and 9%, the "Block" showed an impressive 86% change counting for its central business district character.

This process showed that the old fabric was inadequate for the purpose and so all of the new buildings were a priori planned for commercial ground floor usage. The whole phenomenon led to the neglect of the pre1990 urban fabric leading to its deterioration. Case study area near Medrese tops the list with 79% of its urban fabric below average condition level. Figures for the "Block" and "Irfan Tomini" block case study areas are 39% and 59% respectively.

Furthermore, the study observed that low or middle-low income classes occupied these deteriorating pre1990 buildings whereas the better off chose the new developments. The study also showed that the areas had lost their social homogeneity of the communist period due to internal migration. In fact the "Block" and "Irfan Tomini" block case study areas had respectively 70% and 75% of their households settling after 1990 while the figure for case study area near Medrese was 34%.

Moreover, it was pointed out that the degree of change differed for each area. More specifically, case study area near Medrese was the one that experienced the lowest degree of change. Whereas "Irfan Tomini" block and the ex-leadership's block case study areas have experienced relatively high degrees of change for almost all the attributes. The study emphasized that the degree of change depends on the area's location within the city, pre transitional urban pattern of the area and socioeconomic composition of the area's inhabitants.

To sum up, the study showed that the urban pattern of Tirana has experienced changes due to liberal economy factors. Actually, spatial outcomes of the liberal economy have had a negative impact on the city. The every day increasing population is forcing the city's limits resulting in sprawl chaos and all that "kills the urban". Nowadays Tirana is characterized by a loss of identity. Moreover, the merciless market economy rules, by putting on a new look to the city, have stripped it bare of its feeling.

Concluding, nearly two decades after the collapse of communism Albania finds itself with a *pseudo*-metropolis at the crossroads. Pertaining to its very dynamics Tirana represents a most interesting area of study. This is a pioneering work on the field, which aims to constitute the basis for further research. Certainly, further research is need to better understand and reveal Tirana's development path with respect to its *urban condition*, the change undergone according to its *urban past*, and the trends determining its *urban future*.

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APPENDIX

INTERVIEW FOR THE SOCIAL COMPOSITION OF THE STUDY AREAS

Personal Information

Name	Age
Surname	Sex

Occupation status

Currently working	If working,	Administration/State
Unoccupied		Privately Owned Job
		Both

Family Composition

Household number
Number of persons working
within the household

Family Education Status (including the interviewee)

Household members

Husband	Wife
8 year school	8 year school
High school or the like	High school or the like
University or the like	University or the like
Post-graduate	Post-graduate

Child 1	Child 2
8 year school	8 year school
High school or the like	High school or the like
University or the like	University or the like
Post-graduate	Post-graduate

Child 3/or elderly	Child 4/or elderly
8 year school	8 year school
High school or the like	High school or the like
University or the like	University or the like
Post-graduate	Post-graduate

If children are studying specify state/private school also specify for higher education if they are studying abroad.

Origin – in detail

How long have you been living in your current home?

5 years (2002 up to now)

6 – 10 years (1997-2001)

11 – 17 years (1990-1996)

Over 17 years (before '90)

If answer is less than 15 years (after '90) then where did you come from and state exact year.

Was this the first location in Tirana?

If answer is yes state reason of choosing this area.

If answer is no then why did you change and left the previous area?

Financial status of family (and interviewee)

Y N

Monthly income (lek)

Private car ownership (family)

Landline phone (family)

Cell phone ownership

PC ownership

Other High-tech devices (specify)

Awareness of the surroundings

Construction year of the building where you live (guess)

After 2000

1995 – 1999

1990 – 1994

Before 1990

Identify 5 most important buildings or sites in Tirana in decreasing order of importance.

1. 2. 3. 4. 5.

How can you shortly direct people to your home or how do you describe it to strangers?

Satisfaction

State your general feelings (or happiness) about the surroundings where you live compared to the pre transitional (pre 1990 or communist) era. Any suggestions or changes you wish to make to the surroundings.

BIOGRAPHY

Ilir Nase was born on 22 November 1980 in Fier, a southwestern town in Albania. After completing high school education in his home country, he earned a scholarship from the Turkish Ministry of Education. He started his university education in 2000 near City and Regional Planning Development Department at Yildiz Technical University where he graduated in 2005 within the first 10 percentile of his course. In the same year he began the Urban Design Program in the Faculty of Architecture at Istanbul Technical University. Meanwhile he has been affiliated to an Istanbul based real estate appraisal firm where he is still involved as a real estate appraisal assistant.