

# Challenges and Opportunities in Territorial Planning: A Case Study of Tirana, Albania

Otjela Lubonja<sup>1\*</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Department of Engineering and Architecture, European University of Tirana, Albania

\*[otjela.lubonja@uet.edu.al](mailto:otjela.lubonja@uet.edu.al)

## Abstract

Albania has undergone significant economic, political, and social transformations over the past three decades, leading to profound changes in land use and territorial planning. This paper examines the challenges and opportunities in implementing sustainable territorial planning in Albania, with a focus on Tirana. It highlights the impact of land privatization, agricultural fragmentation, and regulatory weaknesses on sustainable development. Drawing on international best practices, the study explores how Albania can adapt advanced technologies, strengthen regulatory frameworks, and foster inter-institutional cooperation to address these challenges. The findings emphasize the importance of community involvement and tailored strategies to achieve sustainable territorial planning and improve the quality of life for citizens.

**Keywords:** Zoning, territorial planning, urban development, and revitalization

## INTRODUCTION

Territorial planning in Albania serves as a fundamental component of the nation's efforts to transition from a centralized governance model to a more decentralized and democratic framework [1]. This shift, which began following the fall of the communist regime in 1992, is integral to modernizing state structures and enhancing the autonomy of local governments [2]. As Albania continues to experience significant economic, political, and social transformations, territorial planning has become essential for managing urbanization and promoting sustainable development [3]. The effective implementation of territorial planning strategies is crucial for addressing the challenges associated with rapid urban growth, ensuring the equitable distribution of resources, and ultimately improving the quality of life for Albania's citizens [4].

The primary objective of this research is to analyze the current state of territorial planning in Albania, with a specific focus on the capital city, Tirana. Tirana, as the largest and fastest-growing urban center in the country, presents a unique case study for exploring the complexities of urban development in a rapidly changing environment [5]. This study seeks to evaluate the impact of recent legal and administrative reforms on territorial planning processes and to assess how these changes are influencing the development trajectory of Tirana [6]. By examining the interplay between policy reforms

and urban growth, the research aims to identify effective strategies for enhancing urban management and planning in Albania [7].

The paper explores several critical challenges that Albania faces in its territorial planning efforts. Key issues include fiscal decentralization, which remains a significant hurdle due to the uneven distribution of financial resources among municipalities [8]. This disparity creates development gaps, particularly between well-resourced urban centers and less affluent areas [9]. Additionally, rapid urbanization and migration from rural to urban areas exert pressure on existing infrastructure and resources, complicating efforts to maintain sustainable growth [10].

Despite these challenges, the study also highlights opportunities arising from recent legal reforms. These reforms have strengthened local government autonomy, improved financial management systems, and fostered greater citizen participation in governance [11][12]. By leveraging these advancements, Albania can enhance its capacity to manage urban growth and implement sustainable development practices.

The shift from [13] anti-urban model to modern urban planning practices highlights the evolving priorities in urban design and the need to address contemporary challenges such as sustainability and livability. In exploring these dynamics, the paper aims to contribute to the broader discourse on sustainable urban development in Albania. It underscores the critical role of territorial planning in shaping the future of Albanian cities and offers insights into potential pathways for achieving more sustainable and equitable urban environments [14]. As described in [15] industrial city model offers a foundational perspective on structured urban development. Through a detailed examination of Tirana's development, the study provides valuable lessons that can inform policy and planning initiatives across the country.

## **HISTORICAL OVERVIEW**

The historical context of territorial planning in Albania is deeply intertwined with the nation's transition from a centralized to a market-oriented economy following the fall of its communist regime in 1991. This period marked the beginning of comprehensive reforms in land use and urban planning, driven by significant legislative changes and broader socio-economic transformations.

The enactment of Law No. 7501 in 1991 was a watershed moment in Albania's territorial planning history. This law facilitated the redistribution of agricultural land, transitioning property ownership from collective to private hands. It fundamentally altered land use dynamics, paving the way for the development of a market economy [16]. However, the rapid shift to private ownership was not accompanied by a robust regulatory framework, leading to challenges such as the proliferation of informal constructions, particularly in urban peripheries [17]. The lack of effective urban policies and controls during this period underscored the urgent need for a more structured approach to territorial planning.

In response to these challenges, the Albanian government introduced Law No. 10119 in 2009, which established a comprehensive framework for urban development and land use management. This legislation emphasized sustainable development principles and sought to rectify the fragmented urban growth patterns that had emerged in the preceding decades [18]. By involving multiple stakeholders and various levels of government, the law aimed to foster integrated and sustainable urban planning, ensuring that urban growth aligned with broader national objectives [19].

The broader economic liberalization and market reforms in Albania spurred rapid urban expansion and real estate development. The privatization of state-owned assets and the liberalization of markets created new opportunities for investment and growth, but also posed challenges in maintaining orderly urban development [20]. The pace of economic change often outstripped the capacity of planning institutions, leading to difficulties in managing urban growth effectively [21]. The rapid urbanization necessitated substantial investments in infrastructure and urban services to accommodate the growing population and economic activity [21].

Politically, the transition to democratic governance introduced new dynamics in urban planning. The decentralization of authority to local governments was intended to enhance responsiveness and tailor planning efforts to local needs [22]. This shift required significant capacity-building efforts to ensure that local administrations could effectively manage their expanded roles and responsibilities [23]. Balancing local and national interests became a critical aspect of urban planning, necessitating coordination and collaboration across different governance levels [23].

The democratization process also highlighted the importance of transparency and citizen participation in planning processes. Laws such as Law No. 146/2014 on Public Notification and Consultation were introduced to ensure that citizens and interest groups could actively contribute to shaping policies and draft laws, fostering a more open and accountable governance system [24].

Socially, Albania experienced significant population movements as people sought employment opportunities and improved living conditions. "The socio-political landscape influencing urban planning, as outlined by [25] highlights.

These movements contributed to increased urbanization, particularly in major cities like Tirana, which became focal points for economic activity and population growth [26]. By 2001, approximately 52% of the Albanian population resided in urban areas, marking a significant transformation in the country's demographic structure [27]. This trend has continued, reflecting the broader global patterns of urbanization and the specific economic and social transformations occurring within Albania. The resulting demographic shifts underscored the need for new approaches to infrastructure development and service provision, placing additional demands on urban planning systems [27]. Urban planners faced the challenge of ensuring that infrastructure and

services could keep pace with rapid population growth, particularly in terms of housing, transportation, and public utilities (Figure 1).

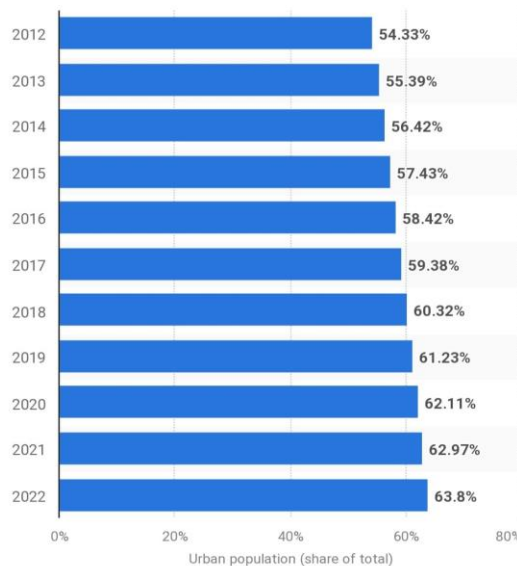


Figure 1. Urbanization from 2012-2022 (Statista, 2024)

## METHODOLOGY

This paper adopts a comprehensive and theoretically grounded methodological approach to explore the state of territorial planning in Albania, with a particular focus on the capital city, Tirana. The methodology is designed to integrate theoretical concepts from urban planning with empirical research techniques to provide a well-rounded analysis of the challenges and opportunities faced in urban development.

**Urban Planning Theories:** The study is anchored in key urban planning theories that emphasize sustainable development, participatory planning, and the integration of smart city concepts. The theoretical framework draws from works by scholars such as Allmendinger and Raemakers on planning practice and urban development [28], as well as Talen's critical introduction to planning theory [29]. These theories provide a lens through which to examine the effectiveness of planning practices in Tirana and identify areas for innovation and improvement.

**Governance and Decentralization Theories:** The analysis also incorporates governance and decentralization theories, which explore the relationship between local autonomy and effective territorial management. The work of Cullingworth and Nadin on town and country planning in the UK [30] and OECD's urban policy frameworks [31] are particularly relevant in understanding the dynamics of local government responsibility and capacity in Albania's transitional context.

**Comparative Urbanism:** Comparative urbanism provides a framework for evaluating Tirana's planning practices against international best practices. This involves examining successful strategies from cities with similar socio-economic and political contexts, guided by the works of Lombardi et al. on smart cities and sustainable urban futures [32].

**Case Study Analysis:** The empirical component of this research is centered on a detailed case study of Tirana. This method allows for an in-depth exploration of specific urban planning initiatives, policy implementations, and their socio-economic impacts. The case study approach is informed by qualitative data collected through interviews with urban planners, government officials, and community stakeholders.

**Comparative Analysis:** The study employs a comparative analysis of international best practices to identify adaptable strategies for Albania. This involves assessing urban planning models from other countries, particularly those with transitional economies, to glean insights that could enhance Albania's planning efforts. The analysis is guided by theoretical insights from works such as Giffinger et al. on smart city rankings [33].

**Data Collection:** Data is collected from a variety of sources, including primary data from interviews and secondary data from academic and policy literature. The collection process is designed to capture a wide range of perspectives and insights relevant to territorial planning in Tirana.

**Data Analysis:** The data is analyzed using qualitative methods, with a focus on identifying key themes and patterns in urban planning practices. The theoretical framework informs the analysis, allowing for a nuanced interpretation of the data that considers both empirical findings and theoretical implications.

## RESULTS

The study's findings highlight several key challenges in territorial planning within Tirana, focusing on issues such as land privatization, agricultural fragmentation, and regulatory weaknesses. These challenges have significant implications for urban development and require strategic interventions to ensure sustainable growth and effective urban management.

### *Challenges in Territorial Planning*

#### **Land Privatization:**

The transition from collective to private land ownership, initiated by Law No. 7501 in 1991, has led to a complex landscape of fragmented land parcels in Tirana. This privatization process, while essential for establishing a market economy, has resulted in a patchwork of land ownership, complicating efforts to implement cohesive urban planning strategies. The division of land into smaller, privately owned plots has made it challenging to coordinate large-scale urban development projects and infrastructure improvements.

#### **Agricultural Fragmentation:**

The redistribution of agricultural land has also contributed to fragmentation, hindering efficient land use and development. Many agricultural plots have been subdivided and sold, often without consideration for optimal land use or future urban development needs. This fragmentation has led to inefficient land use patterns, limiting the potential for agricultural productivity and urban expansion.

#### **Regulatory Weaknesses:**

Despite legislative efforts to improve urban planning, regulatory weaknesses persist in enforcing planning laws and guidelines. The implementation of Law No. 10119 in 2009 aimed to address these issues by establishing a comprehensive framework for sustainable urban development. However, the lack of effective enforcement mechanisms and coordination among different levels of government continues to impede the realization of integrated planning goals. This regulatory gap allows for unauthorized constructions and unplanned urban sprawl, undermining the city's long-term development objectives.

#### ***The City of Tirana: Current Status and Future Prospects***

The city of Tirana has a unique character that intertwines aspects of divine influence and human creativity. The divine influence refers to the city's historical and cultural heritage, including its religious monuments, such as mosques, churches, and other sacred places. On the other hand, human spontaneity highlights the dynamic and vibrant nature of Tirana, shaped by the actions, aspirations, and innovations of its people. It refers to the lively urban life, cultural events, urban art, and entrepreneurial spirit. Human spontaneity implies that Tirana is not static but is constantly evolving, driven by the creativity and energy of its inhabitants.

During the first period, Albanian cities had an extensive and organic structure, with a grid-like road network. The initial intervention worth mentioning is the "main axis (the main boulevard)" of Brasini, the only one designed and constructed from the outset, which according to theory, would be considered the best form of urban city and urban theory. Tirana was populated in its center, away from the lake area, which was forested, while the outskirts were primarily fields. Within the city, buildings were low with many green spaces. The Dajti National Park was entirely green, and in the area now known as the Paris Commune, there were greenhouses. The footprint of Tirana began to expand from the center towards the periphery. In just 10 years, by 2004, maps show that the city had rapidly expanded, approaching the lake and the Dajti Park.

*-How can a city be destroyed in just two decades due to unplanned and unstudied expansion?* Today, anyone can feel the consequences of the lack of green spaces or the constant traffic congestion on the streets. [34]. The satellite images in Figures 2 and 3 show that from the area of the Artificial Lake, only the lake itself and a small green space remain, while the rest has been surrounded and built upon. The Dajti Park has also been encroached upon in the lower area. The same has happened in every peripheral corner, and the interior of the city is now much denser than just a few decades ago.





**Figure 2.** Images showing the evolution of the city center of Tirana over a 30-year period (<https://www.intv.al/nasa-tirana-dje-dhe-sot-si-u-transformua-kryeqyteti-shqiptar-foto-36120>).



**Figure 3.** Images showing the evolution of the city of Tirana over a 30-year period (<https://www.intv.al/nasa-tirana-dje-dhe-sot-si-u-transformua-kryeqyteti-shqiptar-foto-36120>).

But what will happen next? As seen in the satellite images, Tirana is overcrowded with buildings, yet this has not stopped entrepreneurs from moving towards the construction of skyscrapers in the capital, as part of the new regulatory plan for Tirana. The new regulatory plan for the capital does not specify how many and where the skyscrapers will be built in Tirana, but they are expected to be developed over the coming years. Builders claim that at least 15 skyscrapers are expected to be constructed in Tirana. Urban planners explain that the plan aims to build several skyscrapers, up to 40 stories high, from the city center along the New Boulevard area to the Lake Park [34].

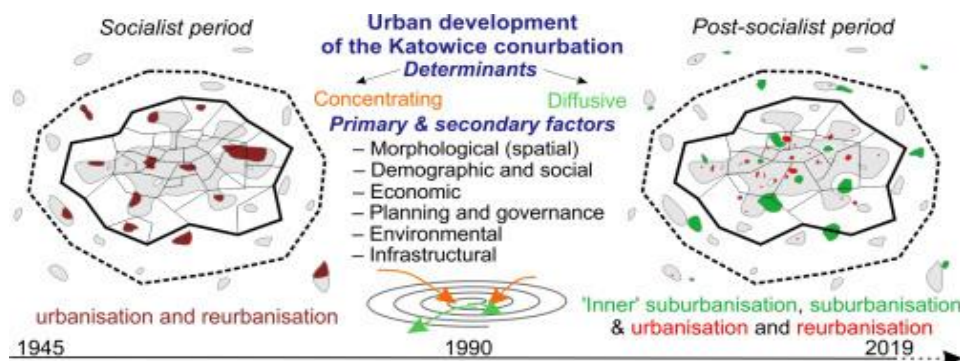
Tirana is a city that grows by about 30,000 residents per year. The question is, how can we plan for this growth in a sustainable way? The model we should follow to achieve sustainable development should be a Polycentric one. Polycentric cities are the future of sustainable development. As we approach a new normal for urban density — with cities housing 10 million, 15 million, or more people — cities that are better positioned for the future are evolving along a polycentric, multi-centered model.

Some of the polycentric cities in the world include New York, London, Tokyo, Paris, and Beijing. Each city plays a crucial role as an economic, cultural, and political hub for the country and the surrounding region.

New York City is one of the cities with the most polycentric centers in the world, including Times Square and Wall Street. London has the Metropolitan Police Service area, which includes Westminster and the City of London. Tokyo offers numerous police stations, covering key areas like Shibuya and Shinjuku. Paris has stations in all directions of the city, while Beijing includes stations in the historic city of Zhongguancun and other major areas. These cities are key global hubs for economic, cultural, and political activities.

Polycentric urban planning is based on the idea that a city can consist of several sub-centers, each with its own functions, identities, and networks, which are well-connected to each other and to the surrounding regions. These sub-centers can be existing cities, suburbs, or new developments, and they may vary in size, density, and specialization.

This type of planning aims to distribute the population, workplaces, services, and amenities more evenly across the entire urban area, reducing overcrowding, travel time, and carbon emissions, while increasing accessibility, diversity, and resilience. The figure 4 clearly shows the transition from the socialist system to the post-socialist one in Katowice, Poland. Under the socialist system, all development was centralized and controlled, whereas in the post-socialist period, development became decentralized and distributed.



**Figure 4.** Schemes of the development of the city of Katowice, Poland.  
(<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0264275119313344>)



"Polycentric cities can achieve sustainable development, which aims for access to housing and services for all population categories; a public transportation system that must be safe and affordable for everyone; participation in decision-making for sustainable and inclusive urbanization and planning; protection of natural and cultural heritage; access to green and public spaces, especially for the most vulnerable population groups; sustainable and flexible buildings. Achieving one or more objectives allows for the resolution of many issues in cities, as the objectives are interconnected with each other."

## DISCUSSION

The findings of this study on territorial planning in Tirana, Albania, reveal significant challenges and opportunities that can be analyzed in the context of international best practices, particularly from European countries. These insights provide a roadmap for enhancing urban planning strategies and achieving sustainable development.

### *Analysis of Findings in the Context of International Best Practices*

**Land Privatization and Agricultural Fragmentation:** The challenges posed by land privatization and agricultural fragmentation in Tirana can be contextualized through the experiences of European countries, where integrated land management and urban planning strategies have been effectively employed. For example, the use of land consolidation and re-zoning techniques in countries like the Netherlands and Germany has proven successful in addressing fragmentation and promoting sustainable urban growth [35]. These practices could be adapted to Tirana's context to facilitate cohesive urban development and efficient land use.

**Regulatory Weaknesses:** The regulatory weaknesses identified in Tirana's urban planning framework highlight the need for robust enforcement mechanisms and comprehensive planning laws. European cities such as Copenhagen and Stockholm have implemented strong regulatory frameworks that ensure adherence to urban planning guidelines and facilitate sustainable development [36]. These frameworks emphasize transparency, accountability, and stakeholder engagement, providing valuable lessons for strengthening Tirana's regulatory environment.

**Urbanization Trends and Infrastructure Development:** Rapid urbanization in Tirana necessitates strategic infrastructure development to accommodate growth sustainably. European cities have excelled in integrating public transportation systems and green infrastructure to support urban expansion while minimizing environmental impact [37]. Adopting similar approaches, such as transit-oriented development (TOD) and green belt preservation, could enhance Tirana's urban resilience and livability.

### *Potential for Adopting Advanced Technologies and Strengthening Regulatory Mechanisms*

**Advanced Technologies:** The implementation of advanced technologies, such as Geographic Information Systems (GIS) and smart city solutions, offers significant potential for improving urban planning and management in Tirana. These technologies

can enhance data collection, analysis, and decision-making processes, enabling more efficient resource allocation and infrastructure development [38]. Furthermore, smart city components like intelligent traffic management and energy-efficient systems can contribute to more sustainable urban environments.

**Strengthening Regulatory Mechanisms:** Strengthening regulatory mechanisms is crucial for ensuring effective urban planning and development in Tirana. This involves enhancing the capacity of local governments to enforce planning laws and promoting inter-institutional cooperation. By fostering collaboration between national and local authorities, Tirana can develop more cohesive and comprehensive planning strategies that address both local and national priorities [39].

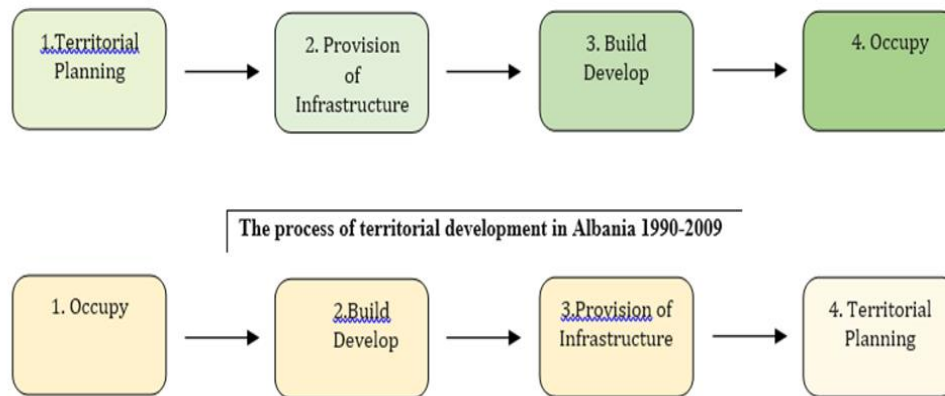
**Fostering Inter-Institutional Cooperation:** Effective urban planning requires collaboration among various stakeholders, including government agencies, private sector actors, and civil society organizations. Facilitating inter-institutional cooperation can lead to more coordinated and integrated planning efforts, ensuring that diverse perspectives and interests are considered in the decision-making process [40].

#### *Vision for Sustainable Urban and Territorial Development*

In a period of rapid urbanization, it is crucial for city development to be sustainable and resilient to climate change. Urban space planning must prioritize environmental protection, conservation of natural resources, and the creation of infrastructure that can withstand climate challenges. This vision aligns with global development goals and emphasizes the importance of inclusive and integrated cities that reduce social and economic inequalities. Urban development strategies in developing countries, such as those explored by [41] are critical for addressing growth challenges.

To achieve these objectives, urban planners in Tirana must design comprehensive strategies that define areas for construction and create basic infrastructure, including water supply, energy, and sewage systems. Fiscal incentives and tax reductions for private investors can encourage urban development while improving infrastructure [42].

The democratization of urban planning processes, through public notification and citizen participation, is essential for building trust and ensuring that planning reflects the needs and aspirations of local communities. By adopting a mix of methodologies, including sustainable development, smart cities, and participatory planning, Tirana can create a more sustainable and equitable urban future. Addressing the feasibility of implementing smart city components in Albania requires careful consideration of the local context and capacity. However, with the right investments in technology, infrastructure, and governance, Tirana can become a model for sustainable urban development in the region (Figure 5).



**Figure 5.** Scheme of the Territorial Development Process "Territorial Planning and Development in Albania, 2015"

According to the 2015 document "Planning and Development of Territory in Albania," the need for profound reform in the sector of territorial planning and development in Albania is an issue that has existed for more than two decades. This process is not a new problem but rather a consequence of the significant institutional and economic changes that occurred after 1990, when Albania transitioned from a totalitarian system to a democratic state with a market economy. These changes required a complete overhaul of the planning and development framework to address the challenges of urbanization, property rights, and sustainable land use in a rapidly evolving political and economic landscape.

**Regime Changes and Their Impact on Planning:** After 1990, Albania experienced a rapid period of political and economic transformations, with one of the main consequences being the shift in property ownership from state to private ownership. This drastic change in the ownership system significantly altered property relations and had deep impacts on urban development and territorial planning. Furthermore, informal constructions, efforts to privatize property, and the rapid growth of cities created chaos in land management, necessitating a mandatory reform of planning policies, have been a prominent issue, as documented by ALUIZNI [43]. The historical development of Tirana has been significantly influenced by cultural and religious institutions, as highlighted by [44]., who discusses the role of mosques in shaping urban centers.

The transition to a market economy and private ownership created new challenges, including a lack of proper regulations and the inability of local authorities to effectively manage urban expansion. The rapid urbanization and informal construction practices further complicated the enforcement of urban planning policies, highlighting the need for comprehensive reforms to address these issues and ensure sustainable territorial development. The transition to a market-oriented economy posed unique challenges for urban planning in transitional economies, as explored by [45].

**Complex Challenges:** Efforts to implement a comprehensive reform of the planning system have faced significant difficulties due to the complex nature of the issue. The

reform affected a wide range of interests, not only at the governmental and institutional levels but also within the private sector, civil society, and the community, all of which often held different and sometimes opposing views on planning matters. This clash of interests and the lack of consensus has made the reform process slow and, in many cases, insufficient. The diverse and conflicting perspectives made it challenging to create a unified approach, slowing progress and hindering the effectiveness of the reforms.

**Lack of Technical and Institutional Knowledge:** Another barrier to the progress of the reform has been the lack of technical knowledge and professional resources for urban and territorial planning. In 1990, Albania did not have a well-established tradition of planning as a modern discipline, and for many years following this period, there was a lack of proper training and human resources to support the planning process. However, over these 25 years, there has been a continuous effort to build the capacity and institutions that could support sustainable and efficient territorial planning. "Comparative analysis with OECD countries, as discussed in the [46] report, reveals that Albania's urbanization trends are consistent with broader global patterns, yet require targeted policy interventions to address local challenges. Despite these efforts, challenges remained in ensuring that the necessary expertise and resources were in place to fully implement effective planning reforms.

- *How can Albania adopt this model?*

**Distribution of Development in Major Cities and Satellite Regions:** Albania can encourage the development of cities such as Durrës, Elbasan, Shkodra, and Vlorë by supporting them with infrastructure and economic opportunities that attract investments and create job opportunities for the residents of these cities. This would help prevent the overpopulation of Tirana and reduce internal migration.

**Investment in Connectivity Infrastructure:** Investments should be made in public transportation and roads connecting the cities of Albania, including major ones such as Tirana, Durrës, Shkodra, Elbasan, and Vlorë. Rail networks and public transportation should be improved and developed to enable fast and efficient mobility between these cities, including the development of a tram system.

**Creation of Independent Centers and Services:** Albania can create and support the development of several urban and regional centers, which can function as independent economic, social, and cultural hubs separate from Tirana, but still connected to it through modern and well-coordinated infrastructure.

**Analysis of Population Growth and Urbanization:** The use of data from INSTAT and other institutions to create a detailed report on population growth and its distribution in cities and rural areas. This report can assist in decision-making for infrastructure development, such as the construction of schools, hospitals, and roads, in alignment with the population distribution. A concrete example is the improvement of the urban

planning plan for the city of Tirana, which uses data on population growth and migration to develop areas that require more services.

**Investment in Infrastructure and New Technologies:** Implementing an intelligent system for managing construction, urban planning, and traffic, such as "Smart Traffic Management" in Tirana. This system could include the use of sensors to monitor and adjust traffic in real-time, easing circulation and reducing pollution. Smart streetlights could be installed on main roads, reacting to traffic intensity and reducing energy consumption. Data for a specific area could be analyzed, including factors like green space ratio, density, etc.

**Support for Environmental Protection and the Development of Renewable Resources:** Investment in solar panels for public buildings and government services, such as using solar energy for street lighting and schools.

**a. Investments in Rural Areas and the Development of Regional Centers:** Supporting infrastructure development and services in rural areas to promote sustainable growth and reduce disparities between urban and rural regions.

**b. Request for International Support to Increase Capacities in Smart City Development:** Securing funding from both private and foreign sectors for the development of smart cities. This includes creating a national plan to guide the development of these cities.

**c. Use of GIS and Advanced Systems for Monitoring and Assessing Urban Development:** Implementing Geographic Information Systems (GIS) and other advanced technologies to track and evaluate urban growth and ensure sustainable planning practices.

- *Smart cities, components of a smart city – can they be adopted in Albania?*

Cities and capitals are examples of urban environments with high population densities where the need for cooperative, integrated subsystems with integrated intelligence that promotes development is constantly growing. The natural integration of different subsystems within a city, such as public safety, buildings, energy, education, healthcare, and transportation, is emphasized by proponents of this integrated perspective. Comparing Tirana's urban planning strategies with those outlined by [47] reveals significant gaps in implementation and regulatory frameworks.

Developing a cohesive system that embodies the idea of a smart city is the aim. Smart economy, smart people, smart governance, smart mobility, smart environment, and smart living are the six possible attributes of a smart city that have been proposed by [48, 49]. The study in [50] have emphasized the interconnectedness of these elements by connecting these traits to various facets of urban life. Also the research in [51] have offered a framework that emphasizes three elements as essential to the idea of a smart city: people, institutions, and technology. This framework states that a city is smart when



its investments in IT infrastructure and human social capital support sustainable growth and an enhanced standard of living through participatory governance. It includes a commitment to lifelong learning, social and ethnic diversity, flexibility, creativity, cosmopolitanism, an open mind, and active participation in public life [52,53]. Real-time, dynamic interactions with businesses, communities, and citizens are hallmarks of a smarter government because they promote development, innovation, and advancement.

Given this information, the [54] model is suggested since it successfully divides indicators into three parts. This method offers a thorough framework for comprehending and assessing smart city initiatives by incorporating various components and their key indicators, which sets it apart from the more intricate measurements and evaluations suggested by [55]. The integration of technology in urban planning, as discussed by [56] is crucial for developing smart city initiatives. Comparative analysis reveals that Tirana can benefit from adopting practices discussed by [57], where technology is used to build informed and engaged urban communities.

To gain a more comprehensive understanding of the concept of a smart city, it is essential to define and explain each of the fundamental pillars that together form a smart city [58]. Describing these pillars is an important effort to provide an overview of the many aspects that define and differentiate the complex structure of a smart city. This analytical division not only helps us understand the different elements involved but also contributes to the academic discussion about changing approaches to urban development. As example the research in [59] examines traditional city models, providing insights into historical planning practices. (Figure 6)



Figure 6. A Smart City (<https://riberasolutions.com/smart-city-iot-and-ai>)

Smart city concept contributes to traffic and transportation management to reduce traffic congestion and pollution, efficient energy use, and natural resource management, along with digitally managed infrastructure. The transition from traditional to modern city planning models, as outlined by [60], reflects the evolving priorities in Tirana's urban

development. By aligning with international standards, as seen in the amendments of [61] Albania enhances its territorial planning framework to better support sustainable development goals. Smart cities also use open platforms to enable active citizen participation and ensure that decision-making processes are transparent and based on accurate, real-time data.

## CONCLUSION

1. Development of a polycentric model for cities helps in the distribution of functions and reduces the burden on urban centers, promoting equal economic development.
2. Territorial and spatial planning should be reviewed by professionals in the field and experts from the academic world.
3. Community participation is essential for creating a sense of responsibility and consensus in urban development.
4. Transparent decision-making is key to ensuring citizen trust and helps in respecting human rights.
5. Improvement and implementation of legislation and policies by creating a clearer legal framework and integrating policies for sustainable development.
6. Territorial zoning according to functions for efficient management of spaces and natural resources.
7. Reforms of cities and regions to generate economic growth and employment opportunities.
8. Identification of construction zones for the protection of natural resources and the development of sustainable territories.
9. Improvement of living conditions, by creating recreational spaces and social infrastructure to enhance urban infrastructure.
10. Use of advanced technologies for smart planning, as well as the use of GIS systems for managing urban development (including all directions).

## REFERENCES

1. Law No. 8653, dated 31.07.2000 – On the Administrative Territorial Division of Local Government Units: A law on the territorial division and decentralization of local government authority.
2. Law No. 7501, dated 19.03.1991 – On the Distribution of Agricultural Land (also known as the Land Law).
3. United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat). (2016). International Guidelines on Urban and Territorial Planning. Nairobi: UN-Habitat.
4. Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung. (2022). The future of social democracy in the digital age (FES Report No. 123). Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung

5. Aliaj, B. (2003). Rritja e Tiranës dhe roli i Xhamive në zhvillimin e bërthamave urbane. Tiranë: Shtëpia Botuese.
6. Republic of Albania. (2014). Law No. 107/2014, on Territorial Planning and Development. Government Publications of the Republic of Albania.
7. Law No. 115/2014 – On the Organization and Functioning of Local Government: A law on the reorganization of territories and the creation of 61 municipalities and 12 counties in Albania.
8. Law No. 68/2017 – On Local Government Finances: A law that aims to strengthen the financial autonomy of local government units and improve public finance management at the local level.
9. Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung. (2022). The future of social democracy in the digital age (FES Report No. 123). Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung
10. Lombardi, P., et al. (2012). Smart Cities and the Transition Towards a Sustainable Urban Future.
11. Law No. 146/2014 – On Public Notification and Consultation: A law ensuring transparency and citizen participation in decision-making and legislative processes.
12. Law No. 10119, dated 23.04.2009 – On Territorial Planning: A law that regulates the planning and development of territory in Albania.
13. Frank Lloyd Wright (1932). Qyteti Antiurban. Chicago: Shtëpia Botuese.
14. OECD (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development). (2012). Urban Policy in OECD Countries. OECD Publishing.
15. Tony Garnier (1904). Qyteti Industrial. Paris: Shtëpia Botuese.
16. Law No. 7501, dated 19.03.1991 – On the Distribution of Agricultural Land (also known as the Land Law).
17. Pugh, C. (2000). Urban Development and Planning in Developing Countries. Oxford University Press.
18. Law No. 10119, dated 23.04.2009 – On Territorial Planning: A law that regulates the planning and development of territory in Albania.
19. Republic of Albania. (2014). Law No. 107/2014, on Territorial Planning and Development. Government Publications of the Republic of Albania.
20. Law No. 7501, dated 19.03.1991 – On the Distribution of Agricultural Land (also known as the Land Law).
21. Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung. (2022). The future of social democracy in the digital age (FES Report No. 123). Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung
22. Law No. 115/2014 – On the Organization and Functioning of Local Government: A law on the reorganization of territories and the creation of 61 municipalities and 12 counties in Albania.
23. Law No. 139/2015 – On Local Self-Government: A law aimed at transferring competencies and functions to local authorities for the management of activities and economic development.
24. Law No. 146/2014 – On Public Notification and Consultation: A law ensuring transparency and citizen participation in decision-making and legislative processes.

25. Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung. (2022). The future of social democracy in the digital age (FES Report No. 123). Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung
26. Aliaj, B. (2003). Rritja e Tiranës dhe roli i Xhamive në zhvillimin e bërthamave urbane. Tiranë: Shtëpia Botuese.
27. Pugh, C. (2000). *Urban Development and Planning in Developing Countries*. Oxford University Press.
28. Allmendinger, P., Prior, T., & Raemakers, L. (2000). *Introduction to Planning Practice*. Chichester, England: Wiley & Sons.
29. Talen, E. (2013). *Urban Design Reconsidered: A Critical Introduction to Planning Theory*. Routledge.
30. Cullingworth, B., & Nadin, V. (2002). *Town and Country Planning in the UK* (13th ed.). London: Routledge.
31. Gurdgiev, D., & Keeling, M. (2010). *Towards the Smart City: Integrating Technology and Urbanization*.
32. Lombardi, P., et al. (2012). *Smart Cities and the Transition Towards a Sustainable Urban Future*.
33. Giffinger, R., et al. (2007). *Smart Cities Ranking – An effective Instrument for the Positioning of Cities*.
34. Aliaj, B. (2003). Rritja e Tiranës dhe roli i Xhamive në zhvillimin e bërthamave urbane. Tiranë: Shtëpia Botuese.
35. Cullingworth, B., & Nadin, V. (2002). *Town and Country Planning in the UK* (13th ed.). London: Routledge.
36. Gurdgiev, D., & Keeling, M. (2010). *Towards the Smart City: Integrating Technology and Urbanization*.
37. OECD (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development). (2012). *Urban Policy in OECD Countries*. OECD Publishing
38. Giffinger, R., et al. (2007). *Smart Cities Ranking – An effective Instrument for the Positioning of Cities*.
39. Law No. 115/2014 – On the Organization and Functioning of Local Government: A law on the reorganization of territories and the creation of 61 municipalities and 12 counties in Albania.
40. Law No. 139/2015 – On Local Self-Government: A law aimed at transferring competencies and functions to local authorities for the management of activities and economic development.
41. Kanter, R. M., & Litow, S. S. (2009). *Informed Communities: Using Technology to Build a Smart City*.
42. United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat). (2016). *International Guidelines on Urban and Territorial Planning*. Nairobi: UN-Habitat.
43. Albania, ALUIZNI (2007-2013). *Informal Construction Report. Registration of Informal Construction from 1990-2013*

44. Aliaj, B. (2003). Rritja e Tiranës dhe roli i Xhamive në zhvillimin e bërthamave urbane. Tiranë: Shtëpia Botuese.
45. Baar, K. & Pojani, D. (2004). *Urban Planning and Development in Transitional Economies*. Routledge.
46. OECD (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development). (2012). *Urban Policy in OECD Countries*. OECD Publishing.
47. Allmendinger, P., Prior, T., & Raemakers, L. (2000). *Planning Practice and Urban Development*. Wiley & Sons, Chichester.
48. Gurdgiev, D., & Keeling, M. (2010). *Towards the Smart City: Integrating Technology and Urbanization*.
49. Giffinger, R., et al. (2007). *Smart Cities Ranking – An effective Instrument for the Positioning of Cities*.
50. Lombardi, P., et al. (2012). *Smart Cities and the Transition Towards a Sustainable Urban Future*.
51. Nam, T., & Pardo, T. A. (2011). *Smart Cities: Development, Implementation, and Application*.
52. Lombardi, P., et al. (2012). *Smart Cities and the Transition Towards a Sustainable Urban Future*.
53. Nam, T., & Pardo, T. A. (2011). *Smart Cities: Development, Implementation, and Application*.
54. Giffinger, R., et al. (2007). *Smart Cities Ranking – An effective Instrument for the Positioning of Cities*.
55. Nam, T., & Pardo, T. A. (2011). *Smart Cities: Development, Implementation, and Application*.
56. Gurdgiev, D., & Keeling, M. (2010). *Towards the Smart City: Integrating Technology and Urbanization*.
57. Gurdgiev, D., & Keeling, M. (2010). *Towards the Smart City: Integrating Technology and Urbanization*.
58. Pugh, C. (2000). *Urban Development and Planning in Developing Countries*. Oxford University Press.
59. Kanter, R. M., & Litow, S. S. (2009). *Informed Communities: Using Technology to Build a Smart City*.
60. Kostov, S. (2003). *Dy tradita lidhur me modelin e qytetit*. Tiranë: Shtëpia Botuese.
61. Law No. 41/2024, "On Amendments and Additions to Law No. 107/2014, "On Territorial Planning and Development," as amended."