

[illegible]

Dorina ISUFI (Albania)

Born on December 2nd 1981, in Durrës, Albania.

I hold a University Degree in Structural Civil Engineering (equivalent to B.A. – 3 years and M.Sc. – 2 years) from Polytechnic University of Tirana, Faculty of Civil Engineering (2000-2005). The thesis of my Diploma “Anti – Seismic Construction Projecting based on the Euro Codes” (2005)

Also I hold a Master Degree in the field of Administrative Sciences. (2009 - 2011).

The first two years, after graduation, I’ve been working as a Structural designer in a private company. During this time I worked voluntary at the “Builders Association” (Durrës branch). Actually I work as a specialist in the project, study and technical control sector in the Urban Planning Department, in the Municipality of Durres, Albania. My organization is a first level local government in Albania. It represents the most important governmental structure for administration and the complex urban study of the city. I’m responsible of the execution of local governance related with urban planning.

I followed the course on **“Integrated Urban Planning”** (*IUP-06*). I must say that this course and its modules helped me a lot to better address complex urban planning issues during my every day work.

A city in motion:

Improvement of the essential functions in the city center of Durrës

1. Country and Sector

Durrës is the most ancient city in Albania. It is located near Adriatic Sea with about 30 miles of sea-line. Being always a point of connection of our country and the Balcanian Space by the sea and terrestrial roads, the city of Durrës had always a very important geopolitical role.



Pic. 1 Position of Durrës

Durrës is the second largest city of Albania.

It is the most ancient and the second city (after the capital Tirana) of Albania due to its importance in terms of economic and social development. It is located at the central Albanian coast, about 33 km west of the capital Tirana.



Pic. 2 View from the Amphitheatre

The largest amphitheatre in the Balkans is located in the city close to the harbor.

The county of Durrës has 5 municipalities and 10 communes. The area of the city with all its surroundings is 432 km². To the North and East it is bordering with Tirana and to the South the city of Kavaja. The county of Durrës has 414892 inhabitants, and the Municipality population is 203547 inhabitants. (2009 statistics).

Pic. 3 View of the Port and the City.



1.1 What are the country's basic development problems?

Municipality of Durrës is a local government authority and represents the most important governmental structure for administration and the complex urban management of the city, by implementing responsibilities, rights and duties that are given to them by law No.8652, of 31.07.2000 "For the Organization and Functioning of the Local Government".

In the field of Urban Planning it has the following duties:

- a. realize the implementation of the urban planning legislation;
- b. draft local vital development plans for the sustainability of safe, healthy, and secure urban environments;
- c. designate transportation corridors considering major new infrastructure, and control land and encourage the best use of the land, considering building codes and zoning laws;
- d. increase the awareness of the community, informing them about the local plans and activities in the urban processes (by media and municipality web site)

- e. promote and support the activities of local non-profit organizations in city urbanization, by including their opinions in the urban decision-making process;
- f. control the transport, green areas, land management, new constructions etc. in city urban environment;
- g. organize waste management and hazardous substances as well as the protection of green areas in urban centers and around them;
- h. Urban waste administration and waste water treatment.

1.2 What are the problems in the urban development sector?

1.2.1 Lack of a sustainable Urban Plan for the city of Durrës

The actual urban planning of the region and especially of the Durrës area is not very clear (coherent), it does not take into account the last 10 years of many territorial transformations and changes in the urban environment.

It's obvious that city needs a planning system, which focuses on the big problems of this actual development.

In the research that has been carried out it seems that there are only three important planning interventions that have contributed for the historical and structural development of the past and the present structure of the city:

- The first , the oldest one, is the Regulatory Plan of The City done by architect Leone Carmignani in 1942;
- The second , is the Regulatory Plan (still in power) of the 1987; planned for an area of 2800 ha, the planning area was in 1999 extended to become 7800 ha;
- The third was the Master Plan prepared with an orientating aim from the Urban Department of the University of Pescara in 1995 but it did not have the legal recognition of the Authorities of Durrës.
- By the end of March 2010 the Municipality in collaboration with the Ministry of Public Works, prepared the Regulatory Plan for the whole area of the city; a plan which is not approved by the government as yet.

1.2.2 Rapid and uncontrolled growth of the city.

The rapid growth of the city has led to a situation with diverse housing situation in the old city. The area is characterized by high buildings, which are constructed during recent years and above all historical buildings in physic and sanitary hygiene degradation, inhabited by

families with low incomes. Buildings, roads, services and basic infrastructure like power, water and sewerage are often severely compromised and need to be evaluated to determine, if anything can be salvaged for redevelopment.

Historical areas and religious or social centers also need to be preserved and re-integrated into the new city plan. Every reconstruction plan that is proposed needs to be sensitive to the needs of the community and its existing culture, businesses and needs.



Pic.4

- Poor conditions buildings in the area
- High rise buildings, over the byzantine walls.

2. Problem Analysis

2.1 What components does the problem in question consist of?

The main problems in the city center concerns:

- The lack of a new plan has led to uncontrolled territorial transformations. In this part of the city there is various housing conditions, (from 2 storey houses to high rise buildings), new buildings and older ones with architectural values;
- These historical buildings very often are owned by people with very low income, and the municipality does not have the capability to maintain them. Furthermore there is no legislation giving government the responsibility to provide facilities of maintenance of these buildings.
- The main city square, which has come to play a central role in the architectural configuration of the main community buildings (*which will be explained further on*) surrounding the square , also as the main public place of collective life, needs to be renovated in the way to expose the best the values of this variety of buildings.
- Buildings, roads, services and basic infrastructure like power, water and sewerage are often severely compromised and need to be evaluated and improved. (*the city square included*)

There is a need for elaborated detailed “pilot projects”, related to areas with complex problems and degradation, from which different interested persons (private individuals and public authorities) can obtain good guidance and opportunities for administrative and technical implementation, respecting the society and the environment. Environmental policies and programs should therefore be extended to include the cultural environment and heritage.

3. Objectives

The project has to deal with the following themes of analysis and aspects:

a. Archaeology and cultural heritage

It is important to consider, identify and describe the archaeological, cultural and architectural heritage, according to the different historical period (Classic, Roman, Byzantine, Venetian, Ottoman, and Twentieth century periods) and in relation to existing preservation rules.

b. Green areas and ecological landscape importance

The proposed project must preserve the green areas of the study area for environmental reasons. It must respect the landscape quality. It should change and improve the street furniture without damaging the green area.

c. Public events and outdoor displays

The project must preserve and strengthen the use of the public space in relation to (in connection with?) public and collective events and political, theatrical or musical displays. The city square as a public and multi-functional space should be preserved.

d. Integration and re-examination of the built elements (the Mosque, the Palace of Culture, the Town Hall, the Library etc.)

The project must consider the current functions of the area and its surroundings and assess the urban development rules regarding the spaces and its functions (car parks, urban users, means of transport, pedestrian and cycle paths).

e. Public and private mobility, street furniture and car parks

Each proposal must attentively consider the functioning of the area and its urban surroundings according to the public and private mobility needs and particularly take into account pedestrian and cycle mobility.

f. Ecological environmental and social sustainability of the project

The proposals should take care to include the ecological aspects, considering the effects caused by the possible demolitions, diggings, routine or extraordinary maintenances.

3.1. Overall Objectives

- Reorganizing assessment of the existing town. This especially refers to the essential resources of territory, landscape, archeological, environmental and cultural heritage.
- To stimulate strategic initiatives for economical growth. This especially refers to the infrastructure systems, also public services and tourism.
- Integration of the Old City, the coastal area with the port, and the industrial area. This provides a strategic value for the urban development, from which the city of Durrës must benefit. The first point is to prevent the urban degradation. This includes compact, efficient land use, good housing and living environments, preservation of the local culture and knowledge, the natural system rehabilitation, community participation and involvement.
- The project must consider the current functions of the **square** (*a rectangle surrounded by a lot of institutional, cultural and residential buildings*). In the square there are also some important archaeological remnants. and its surroundings and the urban rules and

regulations regarding the spaces and its functions (urban users, means of transport, pedestrian and cycle paths). It has to be a cultural and touristic center.

- Conserve the historic identity of the city, multi ethnic, multi religious, opened and consolidated.
- Conserve and develop the parks, green areas, community services.
- Improvement of local infrastructure system to accommodate the increased traffic, articulation of road network infrastructure with pedestrians;
- Strengthening of public transport and other ways of circulation.
- Each proposal must attentively consider the functioning of the square and its urban surroundings according to the public and private mobility and particularly to promote pedestrian and cycle mobility.
- *Must be added to this objectives a **specific one**:*

Improvement of the existing buildings , construction maintenance of old buildings, to satisfy all present needs, anticipated use and to meet the necessities of the future, to provide better urban functions of the city.

Developing and saving public areas (archeological areas, green areas, public services).

3.2. Risks

Projects aiming at preservation and maintenance of such areas in old towns may push the poor away from the area. Typically neither the previous habitants nor the small scale business can afford the high cost levels in newly restored buildings. There is therefore a need for well-directed cooperation programs to help maintain the existing diversity, the mixing of the people and activities and find affordable solutions.

3.3. Expected Outcome.

In the context of sustainability, it is also important that the historic city centers are economically viable and ecologically sound, i.e. that they provide economic opportunities and can regenerate themselves in a way that is not harmful to the environment over time.

Buildings – Public Spaces – Environment

Rehabilitation of the historic area with these main elements:

- Connection of the spaces
- Defining this area as a preserved one
- Green spaces.

Entrance – Road network – Circulation

One of the results will be the improvement of the structure of the historic centre and creation of new linkages between urban places. The entire area is part of a clearly delineated traffic and pedestrian islands. It will be structurally defined with new trees, green paths and stairs to enter the archaeological sites.

This study believes in its efficiency and is related to the economic and social growth, for the physical rehabilitation and the urban renewal of the city:

- The improvement of the damaged and deteriorated parts of the area
- The adaption of the existing inhabited areas and their existing infrastructure conditions with a better sustainable structure.
- The therapeutical importance of open spaces and the recuperation of public spaces (green areas, public services, archaeological areas). This is like an evaluation of the identity of a multilayer city: the archaeological city, the Byzantine city, Venetian & Ottoman, The city of 900, and finally the contemporary one.
- The improvement of sustainable mobility, reorganization of the mobility systems, giving the priority to public transport or other alternative ways of sustainable mobility.
- Planning and implementation of renovations and the management of construction sites are labour intensive. Moreover, developing and maintaining historic towns and buildings calls for traditional handicrafts and artisans. This encourages cottage industries, and provides extra earning opportunities for the poorer members of the community.
 - Heritage preservation also creates jobs for women in small and medium-sized enterprises.
 - Restored buildings and areas do not only attract businesses but also re-animate the city with new activities, such as festivals, concerts, theatres and exhibitions. Cultural tourism has become one of the most important factors in economic development. It is mainly based in cities and towns and can provide an additional income source for residents.

The plan aims at achieving **a sustainable development of the territory**. It also aims at the wellbeing of the citizens, reduction of inequality and disorders of the under-privileged part of the population, reduction of risks (seismic, hydro-geologic, environment pollution) from an urban view. The real results will be:

- An area that will attend the city and its citizens.
- An area that will serve to increase the tourism, related to the public features that it possess.

- Identification and restoration of the architectural and historic memories.
- Improvement of the historic and archaeological sites due to establish harmonic entrances (pedestrian roads and green paths).
- There will be improved housing and improved existing infrastructure.

4. Process

After précising the objectives, the next step was to develop the plan itself, by identifying in detail the specifically actions that are needed to be undertaken in relation to the development objectives.

This project (of the zone inside the byzantine walls, the city square and the palace of king Zog) should present the big archeological, historic, environmental and natural interest that this area has for the city. This area should be an attractive and important park serving the city inhabitants and also the tourists interested in Durrës. The intention is that this area should have a limited access for traffic. It will have green paths, pedestrian islands, places to rest, and also pathways leading to the archeological areas. The proposals should take into account the ecological aspects, considering the effects caused by the possible demolitions, digging, routine or extraordinary maintenances.

4.1 Site conditions and its current nature

The square of the Byzantine fortress plays the role of binoculars toward the Old City and The New City. It forms a rectangle and it is surrounded by a lot of institutional cultural and residential buildings. In the square there are also some important archaeological remnants. The following list is an inventory of these elements:

Institutional and cultural buildings:

- The Town Hall (built in 1930)
- The big Mosque (recovered in 1993)
- The Prefecture
- The Palace of Culture “Aleksander Moisiu” (built in 1963)

Archaeological sites:

- The Amphitheatre
- Byzantine Walls
- The big Mosque
- The Forum



Pic.5 The City Hall



Pic.6 The Mosque

The first activity that was carried out was the discussions with the urban office in the municipality to prepare the main tasks considering all the objectives and risks that this project may come across.

It was proposed as a First proposal for the Requalification of the historic area with these main elements:

- **To concentrate on the new centres** (heritage centres, exposed areas, cultural centres)
- **The urban recovery**
- **Connection of the spaces**
- Defining this area as a preservation zone
- **Green areas and public spaces.**

Taking into consideration these main elements, it was decided, (for the first phase of a more detailed project that will

follow next year's investments) to start with this new initiative:

The green areas and public spaces. This is an initiative that was initiated by the municipality, to furnish the city with new trees, with the detailed plan to start with the interventions that are easy to implement and within the provided budget.

When this intervention started and it became obvious it would happen be implemented, urban development enterprises came into reality, new businesses were open and tourist shops established.

4.1.1. The amphitheatre

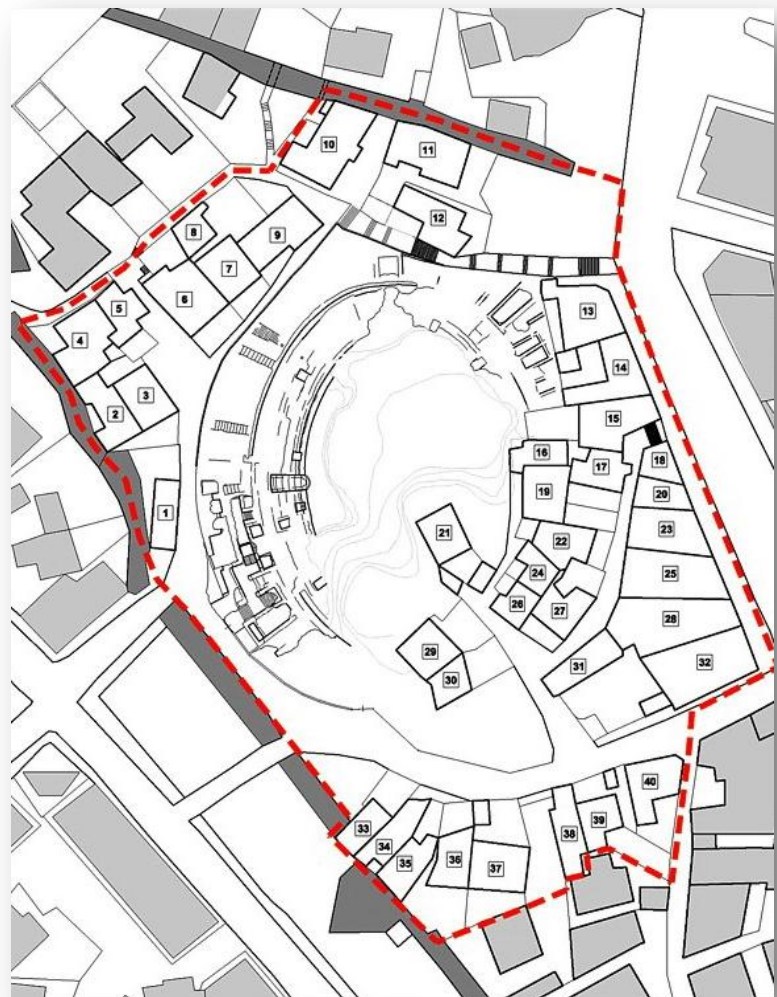
The Amphitheatre of Durrës built in the 2nd century BC, figures amongst the largest monuments of the Antiquity. It is the only monument of this type on Albanian territory. The amphitheatre is situated in the center of the city of Durres. In the 5th century AD, the amphitheatre ceased to be used in accordance with its main function. In the 6th century a mortuary chapel, dedicated to Saint Asti, the first Bishop and martyr of Durres, was built on top of the amphitheatre. The chapel, famous for its mosaics, is significant as a testimony to the origins of Christianity in the city of Durres.

Today, a part of the arena is occupied by contemporary houses, as shown in the map.



Pic.7 View from the air

- The Roman Amphitheatre (II – IV A.C), has been the object of studies since 1966, the date of its discovery, waiting to regain the excavations. The biggest axis is 136m and a height of 20m (preserved). In the medieval age it could accommodate 15000 to 20000 people.
- Restoration and rehabilitation projects have been prepared in order to integrate this significant landmark in the overall city development. Being surrounded by other important archaeological sites of the city, situated near the Archaeological Museum which displays a large number of valuable



archaeological findings, the amphitheatre will play a major role in the future of cultural tourism in Albania.

Condition:

Very poor: structural failure

Risk:

There is risk of deterioration of the mosaics and paintings. Risk is also linked to the illegal constructions.

Condition risk:

Slow decay, solutions agreed upon but not implemented.

Technical assessments and costing:

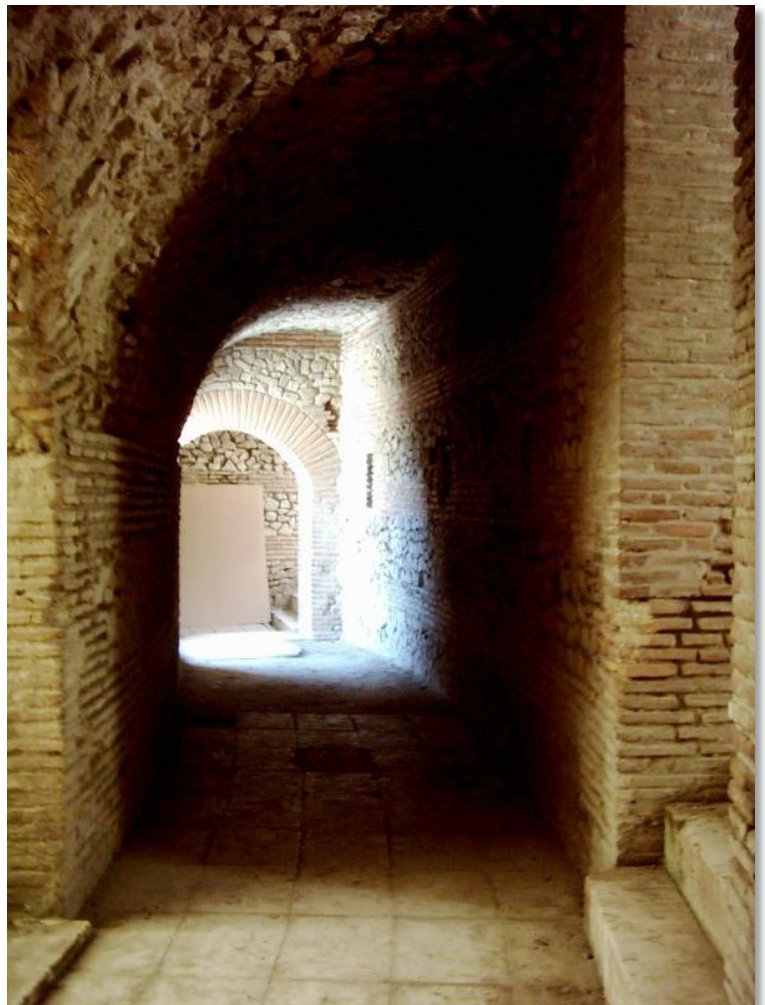
An agreement between the University of Parma, Italy, and the Institute of Monuments of Culture, facilitated the process of evaluating the costs for the consolidation works and the cadastral survey in the amphitheatre.

Pic.8 Inside the amphitheatre



4.1.1a Proposals

The aim is to re-establish sustainable urban conditions. This will also include the issues of the land properties, ownership and juridical legality of existing buildings in the areas with archaeological values and



its surroundings. The intention is to start the intervention for the demolition of the abusive buildings and to initiate the physical renewal, not only for the cases of expropriation, but also the intervention in the privately build areas.

The amphitheater is public property, under the jurisdiction of the Institute of Monuments of Culture. The houses built in the vicinity of the amphitheatre were and will be demolished and the owners compensated according to the existing laws.

The restoration project has been implemented and it includes excavation works in the arena, expropriation of the inhabitants and consolidation works in the sector of the staircase. The project foresees also the construction of a wooden staircase allowing use of the amphitheatre as a stage for shows and events.

The Municipality of Durrës has also improved the infrastructure around the amphitheatre (streets leading to the monument, lightening) and establish the signposting in English and Albanian.



The good thing is that now the amphitheatre with the well improved infrastructure in its surroundings can be used as an economic facility, for expositions or cultural shows.



4.1.2. The byzantine walls

The walls are 4400 m long. There are still a series of fortresses of polygonal shape visible in intervals of 60-65m from each other. The Venetian Fortress positioned in the lowest part of the Walls is now used for a commercial activity.

The project for improvement of the walls is extended along a line in south-north direction that is 550m and another one in southeasterly direction 750m. Inside the walls there is about 20ha. Some of the existing buildings are very high, and a few of the low houses are in bad conditions. Some parts of the walls are occupied by buildings with no architectonic value and in some cases they are abandoned.

Pic.9 The Byzantine walls.



4.1.2a Proposals

The main purpose was to reconstruct an urban attractive park, serving the inhabitants and the tourists and all “city users” that are attracted by the culture of Durrës.

This action was undertaken to increase the actual green areas and finally to start the demolition of abusive existing constructions.





Pic.10 The Byzantine walls and surrounding areas.



4.1.3. The City Square

This City Square has always been the heart of the city, and the symbolic space of representation for the community and the main public place of collective life. It is an

exceptional opportunity to consolidate a process initiated and intended to give force and quality to the whole urban and metropolitan structure.



Pic.11 The City Square.

The municipality of Durrës opened the International Competition for the renewal of the main square, which is a connecting link with the antique area of the city.

The main issues of this competition were:

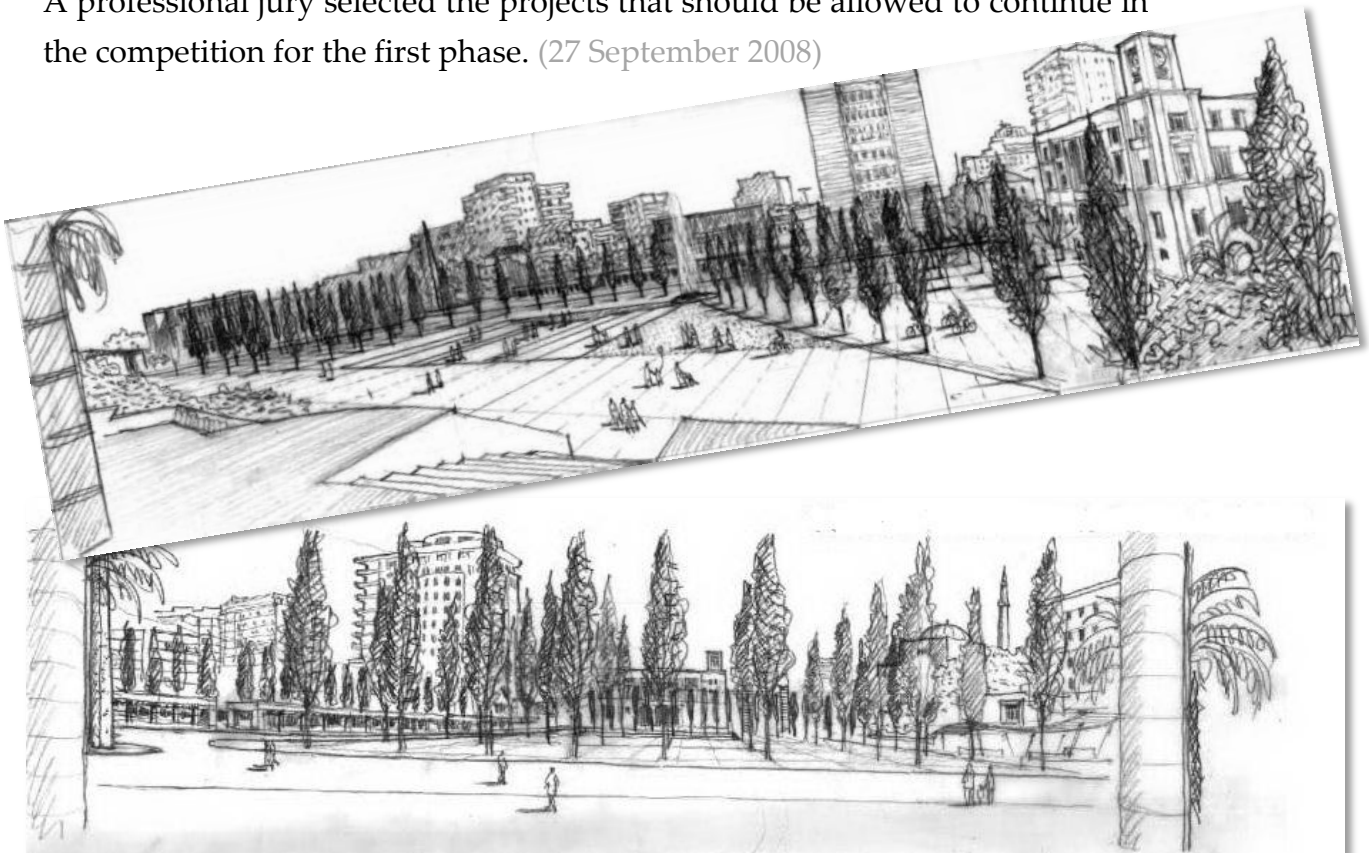
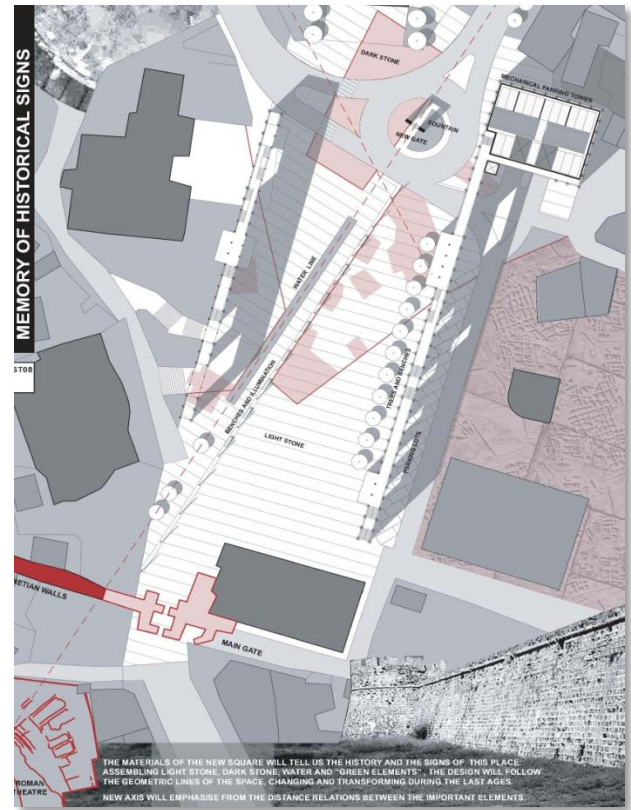
The project should not be limited only in the historical monuments, but should also include the preservation of the urban environment for common people, who live in these centers. The focus should be put on the social history and development of urban settlements.

The Activities:

There were some participants in the first phase of the competition.

All projects were well accepted and it was interesting to hear the points of view of every participant.

A professional jury selected the projects that should be allowed to continue in the competition for the first phase. (27 September 2008)





Pic.12 *Involving the community*

After that, there were two meetings with the community, the citizens of Durrës. They are all affected by the proposals because of the importance that this center has for everybody's life.

It is considered that the

study and the completion provide a basis for the efficiency and the improved relationship with economic and social growth directed to and reflected in the physical requalification and



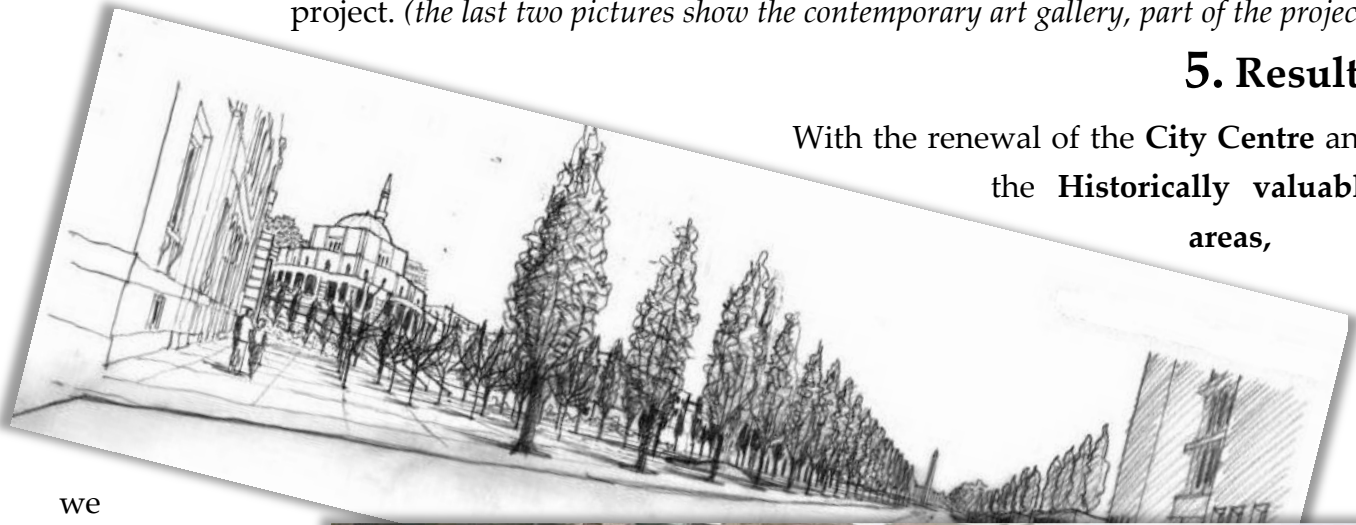
the urban renewal of the whole city. The winner of the competition was an Italian architect, and the municipality is implementing the winning



project. (the last two pictures show the contemporary art gallery, part of the project)

5. Results

With the renewal of the City Centre and the Historically valuable areas,



we (the municipality) aimed at making the city attractive. The improvements led also to possibilities for economic growth, which will increase



over time, because this plan will continue and include further improvements, and also connecting the area (city square, archeological area) with other centers of the city.

*Precisely through this plan and its activities, the City of Durrës presented a **new image of the city in motion**, active and innovative, and at the same time attentive to the values of the past, of its history and of its memories, geared towards the sustainability and towards the overall quality of its development.*

For all these reasons, the city is getting into motion, and intends to remain active and vital. A recent motto we chose to characterize our energy is precisely:

“Durrës never stops!!!”

