

Planning for proximity in a fragile urban context. The case of Tirana

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Abstract (up to 125 words)

Tirana is the only city in Albania to have experienced a steady population increase over the past thirty years, due to strong internal migration and its attractiveness due to its great economic, social and cultural development. Its urban development is recent and relates to its political history. The demographic context nevertheless shows a high percentage of families at risk of poverty. The contribution attempts, by analysing one of the strategic projects of the new Tirana2030 Urban Plan, the one concerning schools and education, to reflect on the role of planning in the challenge towards the transition to an urban proximity model.

Keywords

Proximity, urban planning, governance

Introduction

In Western cultures, as Bernardo Secchi states in his book *The City of the Rich and the City of the Poor* (Secchi, 2013), the city has always represented the ideal place for social and cultural integration but, in its evolution, it has also become the scene of phenomena of separation and marginalisation, both physical and social. The geographer Edward Soja, in his book *Seeking spatial justice* (Soja, 2010) defines the concept of Spatial Capital as that wealth, or poverty, dependent on a person's ability to access social, cultural and professional life in the urban context in which he or she lives. The strong relationship between the city and the communities that inhabit it is thus evident. Sennett refines the reflection on the relationship between context and community in the book *Building and Dwelling, Ethics for the City* (Sennett, 2018) by introducing the concept of *ville* and *cit *. The term *ville* can be used to indicate the city as a whole, the built territory, understood in its physicality and spatiality, while the term *cit * indicates all the ways in which the territory is experienced, and therefore all the relationships that are established within it. The crises that the city has faced in the course of history are numerous, they are more or less of an economic, financial, institutional, political, social and cultural nature...

During the 20th century, cities developed following an idea, based on efficiency maximisation, of polarisation and hyper-specialisation of urban functions, a phenomenon that caused the monofunctionalisation of certain areas of the city such as, for example, areas entirely devoted to work, commerce, university, health, residence, and so on. In 2000, Nobel laureate Crutzen and biologist Stoermer¹ proposed the term 'Anthropocene' to indicate that human impact had become predominant on the earth's ecosphere. The result is that the way in which the city is used has been changed to include the use of the private car. The city structured in this way is defined by Ezio Manzini as the *city of distances* (Manzini, 2021). Further disrupting the dynamics of city development and organisation is the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020. The limitation of travel and the lack of a capillary network of services and commercial activities have made all the limitations of contemporary urban systems, based on the aforementioned concept of polarisation and hyperspecialisation, evident. In fact, urban

¹ Paul J. Crutzen and Eugene F. Stoermer, The Anthropocene, 'Global Change. NewsLetter', No. 41, 2000

areas were the most affected with over 90% of confirmed Covid cases concentrated in cities. The economic consequences of the pandemic will also mainly affect urban areas with over 120 million people at risk of new poverty. According to the report *Cities and Pandemics: Towards a more just, green and healthy future* (UN-Habitat, 2021) the issue is not so much human (and thus urban) density but the disparity between urban density and adequate services, and thus local governments play a key role. In particular, the report focuses on four main points with related policy proposals:

- Rethinking urban form and functions, in this sense the idea is one of compact design, widespread and accessible mobility and diversification of functions.
- The issue of poverty and inequality, through a widespread dissemination of services, both physical and digital
- Supporting the urban economy at the neighbourhood scale
- The need to improve multi-level and multi-actor planning and governance systems.

In recent years, partly and certainly as a result of the pandemic crisis, but also as a result of a heightened awareness of environmental issues and questions of how to work (Manzini, 2021) the so-called urban model of *distance* has been strongly challenged.

The urban model that has emerged as an opportunity for change and regeneration of urban systems is that of proximity. The term proximity refers to the condition of being physically close in space. Proximity understood in its plural sense, in all the forms in which it can present itself at the urban scale (Manzini, 2021). In the urban model of proximity, the key points are: the enhancement of public space that becomes a space for relationships, the progressive disincentivisation of the use of private vehicles in favour of slow and public mobility, the creation of neighbourhood networks, the spread of public services and commercial activities.

The transition to an urban proximity model has entered the public agendas of many cities around the world, with different implementation methods and instruments. Consider that according to data collected by c40, a global network of large cities working to develop and implement policies and programmes aimed at reducing greenhouse gas emissions and environmental damage and risks caused by climate change, which have been collected, analysed and classified, the implementation modalities of initiatives towards more sustainable cities can refer to: urban projects, urban plans, architectural projects, infrastructure projects, landscape projects and strategic programmes.

The core principles that c40 presents² are:

- Residents in every neighbourhood have easy access to services.
- Each neighbourhood has a variety in the type of housing and different levels of accessibility to it.
- Residents in every neighbourhood have access to green spaces within walking distance of their homes.
- The possibility of working close to one's home or having spaces for those working remotely.

Among the best-known initiatives is certainly that of the city of Paris, which, starting in 2020 under the leadership of mayor Anne Hidalgo, is experimenting with the transition to the *15-minute city* theorised by Carlos Moreno. The project envisages that all urban residents can perform the six essential functions (living, work, commerce, health care, education, and entertainment) in about fifteen minutes on foot or by bicycle from their homes. The model theorised by Moreno is based on four main components: proximity, density, diversification of functions and digitisation (Moreno et al., 2021). As an example, and useful for the analysis of

² https://www.c40knowledgehub.org/s/article/How-to-build-back-better-with-a-15-minute-city?language=en_US

the case study, one of the main actions of the Parisian project is the one centred on schools. There are mainly two strategies: the pedestrianisation and landscaping of the urban area near the school buildings in order to generate public and relational space, and the opening up of schoolyards to increase the amount of public space³.

The contribution, through the case study analysis of the plans and projects underway in the city of Tirana, aims to deepen the ongoing projects and strategies that aim at the transition towards an urban model of proximity and in particular the relationship of the urban plan in the management of these processes. Specifically, the contribution will delve into policies, projects and strategies that have the school as a protagonist and that respond to objective 07 of the Urban Plan TR2030 "A new and wide network of open schools".

Tirana, a brief analysis of the context

Tirana is the capital of Albania, a state on the Balkan peninsula bordering the Adriatic and Ionian Seas. The urban area of Tirana is home to more than a third of the Albanian population and is also the only city to have a positive demographic variation, due to the strong internal migration that began in the early 1990s. Albania's political history has greatly influenced the country's demographic and spatial dynamics. Albania was under communist rule for almost fifty years, from 1946 to 1990, and during these years the country remained completely isolated from the rest of the world, including the other countries of the Soviet area. Before the communist period, Albania was mainly a rural state, while during the regime the first significant urbanisation undergone by the nation began, in this case homogenous throughout the territory and not concentrated only in the main cities; furthermore, there was a strong policy of controlling the territory and, above all, the location of families, which is why, following the fall of the regime, a strong movement of internal migration began (Dino, 2020). In this sense, it is interesting to focus research and analysis on the city of Tirana, which since the fall of the regime and particularly in the last twenty years has practically doubled its population and experienced a major transformation from a car-free *garden city* (Battiata, 1992) communist style to a city full of commerce, new buildings, and a vibrant social life (Pojani, 2010). The fall of communism in Albania marked the beginning of a complex transition from a centralised socialist state to a free market economy (Pojani, 2010). On an urban planning scale, a new phenomenon developed, that of illegal construction, due to the reintroduction of private property and a total absence of development plans, it is estimated that over 70% of the buildings constructed after 1990 were built without building permits (Aliaj et al., 2003). The result of this phenomenon is massive urban and suburban *sprawl*. The process of demographic increase due to internal migration, which also causes urban sprawl, renders the capacity of the city's infrastructure networks insufficient. The result is a disastrous situation from a sanitary and environmental point of view. Moreover, these areas, being unplanned, lack schools and public services. The Albanian socio-demographic situation is not the most rosy, Albania being one of the poorest states in the Balkan Peninsula. Moreover, although slowly improving, the data on indicators of risk of poverty and social exclusion remain worrying, in 2021, in fact, more than 40% of the population was at risk of poverty or social exclusion, and the percentage increases greatly when talking about families with dependent children⁴.

Turning to urban planning, a key element in these transformations and the new vision for the city is the entry into force of the new Urban Plan, Tirana 2030, in April 2017.

The premise of the planners is that the TR2030 plan should, while following in the footsteps of previous *zoning* plans, govern complexity while avoiding the rigidity typical of a *zoning*

³ <https://www.paris.fr/dossiers/paris-ville-du-quart-d-heure-ou-le-pari-de-la-proximite-37>

⁴ https://www.instat.gov.al/media/11137/silc-2021_final_anglisht.pdf

plan. Within it will be the territorial strategies and vision of Tirana to 2030 and will serve as the basis for the development of sectoral and detailed plans. In this sense, therefore, drafting a plan that provides a master plan for the city becomes unsuitable when considering the dynamism of urban development and economic, demographic, social and environmental changes. Therefore, the plan will be useful in re-establishing a norm for future urban development but will also be flexible in being able to be supplemented and implemented by new actions.

The plan identifies and defines ten strategic objectives to guide Tirana's urban, economic, and social development:

- An intensive, polycentric city
- An accessible city
- A city with biodiversity
- A sustainable city
- A Mediterranean centre
- A creative city
- A smart city
- An inclusive city
- A Balkan garden
- A 24-hour city

The plan document then contains a framing and cognitive analysis section from a geographical, demographic, social, urban planning, environmental, economic perspective...

- Strategic Project 1 - Metrobosco
- Strategic Project 2 - Nature Oases
- Strategic Project 3 - Second and Fourth Green Ring
- Strategic Project 4 - New World Park
- Strategic Project 5 - Three Green and Blue Rings
- Strategic Project 6 - New Dynamic Epicentres
- Strategic Project 7 - A New and Wide Network of Open Schools
This strategic project, which is also the one that will be explored in this contribution, has schools as its main focus. The current situation is that of a highly densified city with few services. The idea of this strategic plan is to start from the school building in order to build the public city, in particular to diversify the functions within the schools with openings beyond school hours and to redevelop the urban space next to the schools so as to take it away from car traffic and transform it into public space. For the construction of new schools, the plan envisages the use of the PDV instrument with transfer of public space, instead of expropriation. In addition, the possibility for the administration to collaborate with local associations and NGOs to develop these projects is expressly provided for.
- Strategic Project 8 - Preserving the Architectural Richness of the 20th Century
- Strategic Project 9 - A new agricultural system and a new network of farmers' markets
- Strategic Project 10 - High-Quality Transport
- Strategic Project 11 - Mobility Networks
- Strategic Project 12 - Tirana City for All
- Strategic Project 13 - A New Energy Corridor

A new and extensive network of open schools. Current situation, regulations for new construction and current policies

The current situation presents a serious shortage of school facilities in terms of capacity in relation to the population concerned. In order to cope with this shortage and to avoid excessive, albeit present, class overcrowding, with all the consequences of the case, it has been necessary for the secondary school to provide teaching in two shifts, one in the morning and one in the afternoon, again with not a few difficulties, including the poor concentration of the children. The policies and strategies implemented by the administration about education and school buildings are presented below.

Construction of new schools

One of the objectives of the Urban Plan is to implement the school network so that the capacity is adequate for population growth and the distribution allows everyone to access school services, with the goal that they become community centres within neighbourhoods. The location of new schools is defined by the PPV tables and the locations defined by the *Visibility Plan*, the rules for the construction of new schools are regulated by Article 83 of the Cabinet Act (VKM) No. 671/2015.

Act of the Council of Ministers (VKM) No. 671/2015- Article 83

Article 83 of the aforementioned regulation defines rules for the location and design, on an urban scale, of school buildings. The parameters are: definition of the number of inhabitants (non-students) for each school, definition of the size of the radius of influence of each school, declined on urban and rural areas, and the square metres per student to be guaranteed in the building.

	Kindergartens	Secondary schools	High schools
Building per tot. inhabitants	1500 inhabitants	6000 inhabitants	9000 inhabitants
Urban area of influence	250/350 metres	500/600 metres	1000/1500 metres
Rural area of influence	500/600 metres	1000/1500 metres	2000/4500 metres
Square metres per student	18/25 square metres per student	20/25 square metres per student	20/30 square metres per student

PPV/PDV

The new TR030 Plan divides the territory into minimum intervention units and defines their intended use. Regarding the realisation of public services, the urban planning instrument is similar to the Italian system that provides for the free transfer of areas to the municipality, in the event of the start-up of a subdivision plan. The system is that of the PDV (*Plane të Detajuar Vendore*), i.e. local detailed plans of public or private initiative that allow the development and implementation of the plan. The administrative units that define the boundaries of the PDVs are detailed in the plan documents and on the Tirana Municipality's webGIS⁵. Each area is identified by a unique code (e.g. TR/01-TR/02...) and by a use destination, to which the functions defined in the plan are to be incorporated in case of PDV implementation.

Visibility plan

Given the demographic growth, the increase of informal settlements and the emptying of some peripheral areas, also as a result of the administrative reform of 2014, the Municipality

⁵<https://akpt.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=ff270e99f5be45f19c7b7a1e3e618b27>

of Tirana has prepared a study, the *Visibility Plan*, with the aim of identifying the medium and long term needs for the construction of educational facilities of the pre-university cycle. In particular, the plan foresees, according to the provisions of Law No.125 of 2013, the possibility of granting and activating a public-private partnership, in order to achieve the objective, considering the impossibility of bearing all the expenses. The plan starts from the analyses already made in 2016 for the drafting of the previous urban plan, which localised the new interventions in the most peripheral and informal areas of the urban fabric; in this update, however, the entire municipal territory is analysed. The plan, in its public-private partnership mode, became necessary considering the insufficiency of funds collected through the Temporary Tax for Educational Infrastructure, which, as of the beginning of 2016, collects funds useful precisely for improving the school system. An analysis of the data showed that in order to solve the problems of school sizing, 17 new schools need to be built in Tirana Municipality, 10 of which are secondary schools. The total cost of building these schools is estimated at over six billion lek⁶, a figure that is unsustainable for municipal budgets. In Albania, the Public Private Partnership (PPP) is regulated by Law 125/2013, which aims to create a favourable and sustainable framework for the promotion and facilitation of investments made as concessions or partnerships between public and private entities. The model used is the *Design-Build-Finance-Operate (DBFO)* model, in which contractors assume responsibility for the design, construction, financing and maintenance of the work for the duration of the contract. In this way, the schools can be built quickly and the burden on the municipal budget diluted over time, making the operation sustainable.

The *visibility plan* is based on the four main pillars defined in the TR2030 Urban Plan:

- Intensive and polycentric city
- Tirana Smart city
- Accessible city
- Inclusive city

The specific objectives that, based on these four pillars, the plan pursues are:

- The elimination of two-shift teaching due to the high number of students and the shortage of school buildings
- The normalisation of the student to class ratio, with the goal of an average of thirty students per class
- Improving accessibility and distribution of schools
- Improving learning conditions and thus the quality of school facilities (gyms, canteens, laboratories, etc.)
- Improving the quality of teaching following the normalisation of the number of students per class
- Regenerating urban areas around school buildings, following the idea that they can also *become* centres for the development of social activities, also with the help of the *School as a community* project

⁶ 1 EUR = 100.562 ALL (2024)

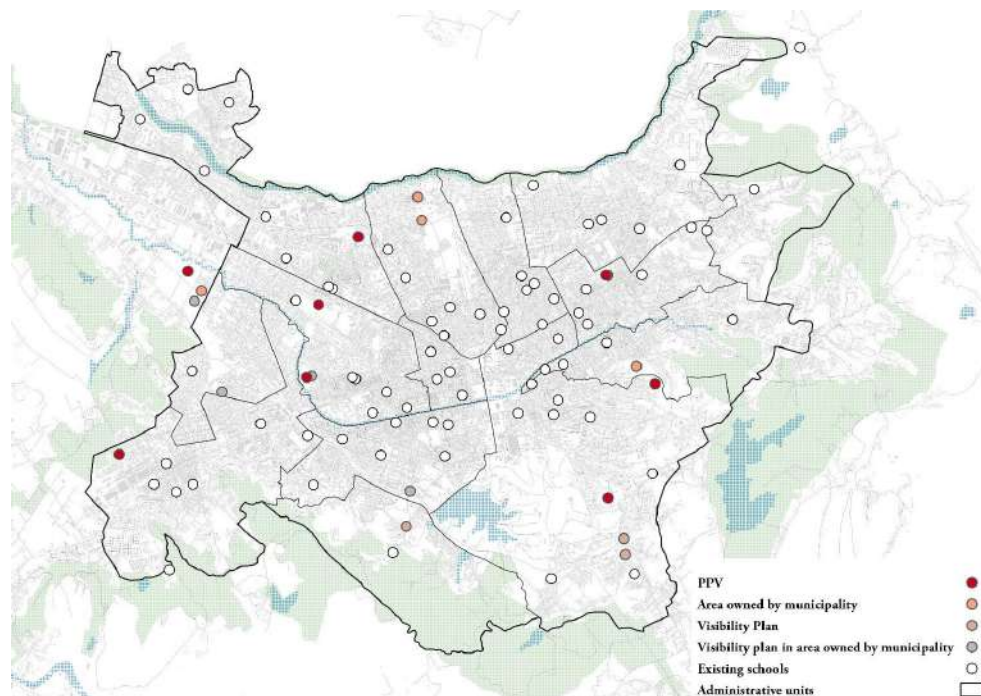


Figure 1 - Mapping of secondary schools planned to be implemented and the method of implementation. Source: author's elaboration

Policies in place

School as a community

With City Council Resolution No. 144 of 23/12/2022 'For the approval of the use of pre-school gyms for extracurricular sports activities and on days off', the *School as a Community* project was launched.

The Project envisages the possibility for Sports Federations, Associations, Sports Clubs to use the sports facilities of the public schools of the Municipality of Tirana to practise their activities but also to educate and raise awareness on sports issues. Specifically, gyms and complementary facilities (changing rooms, toilets, material storage areas) can be used during extracurricular hours and on holidays up to a maximum of five hours per week for each Federation free of charge. The aim of this project is to promote sport as an opportunity for physical education but also for social inclusion and integration for all those children and young people who find themselves in situations of hardship. Hence, a project that aims on the one hand to develop the idea of the school as a community centre, as a multifunctional place open even beyond school hours, and on the other hand to generate a culture of sports education to combat sedentariness and promote sociality and social integration.

The application process is relatively simple: at the beginning of each month, the Municipality of Tirana publishes a call for applications on its notice board, and interested parties have three weeks to submit their application by filling in an annex. The only requirement to be able to participate is to be a duly registered organisation in accordance with current legislation, and the documents to be attached to the application are: a deed of registration with the Court, a copy of the Statute, a programme of activities to be carried out, documentation proving at

least three years of activity in the provision of sports services, fiscal regularity and court certifications.

There are currently more than fifty gyms involved in the project.

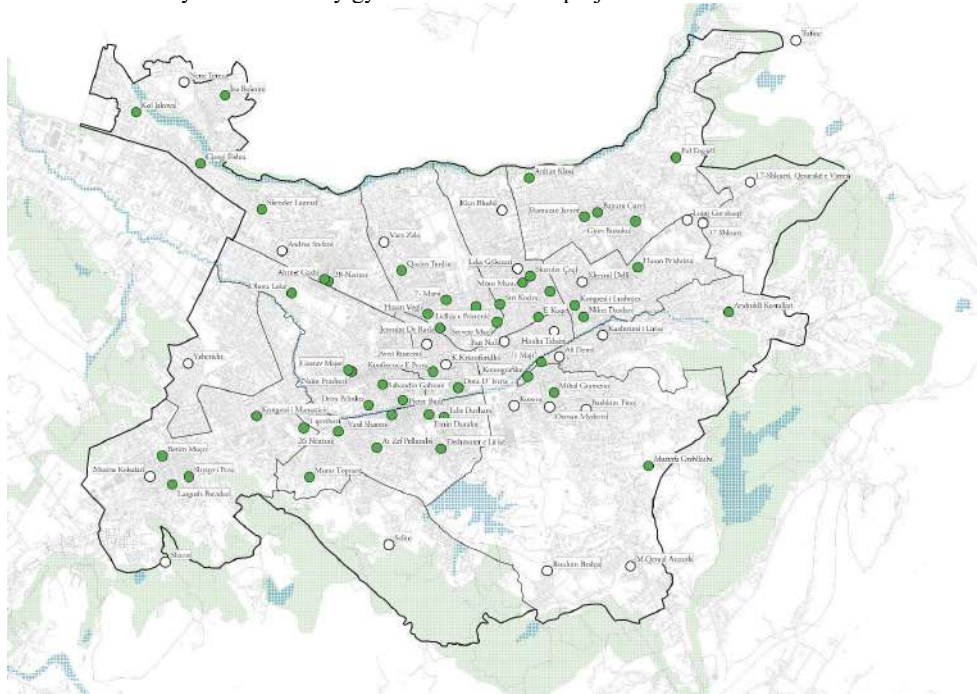


Figure 2 - Mapping of secondary schools involved in the "School as a Community" project. Source: Author's elaboration

Streets for schools and streets for kids

Another important strategy that the administration is implementing relates to the redevelopment and pedestrianisation of some streets near the school buildings. The projects have different funding and actors. An important reality in the Albanian context is the presence of NGOs⁷ that, through access to funding from large foundations or European cohesion projects, implement projects and processes in different sectors. The pedestrianisation projects of the streets around schools in Tirana were mainly implemented by the NGO *Qendra Marrëdhënie*⁸ with the support, in addition to the municipal administration, of foreign

⁷ Non-governmental organisation is a non-profit organisation that is independent of states and international governmental organisations. They are very diverse organisations engaged in a wide range of activities, often of a humanitarian or social character, taking different legal forms in different parts of the world: some may have the status of charities, others may be registered for tax exemption based on recognition of social purposes. Still others may constitute fronts for political, religious or other interests. They are typically financed by donations or handouts from philanthropists, while the larger ones are also supported by public money.

⁸ <https://www.qendra-m.org/en>

foundations and associations such as: NACTO⁹, BVL¹⁰, FIA¹¹, UN UNHABITAT¹², GIZ Albania, Bloomberg, European Community through European Education and Culture Executive Agency and others.

Qendra Marrëdhënie (QM) is a non-profit urban design and research group based in Tirana. The organisation consists of architects, urban planners, geographers, community organisers, graphic designers, experts in nutrition and food systems, transport engineers and social workers. Their main objective is to improve the quality of the environments in which children live and to do this they provide technical assistance and design services to local authorities and neighbourhood institutions such as parents' councils, student governments, residents' committees, and other associations.

Foundations, as referred to above, are, in general, bodies constituted by assets preordained for the pursuit of a specific purpose. The way in which foundations, each according to its purpose, intervene as actors in this project is through the allocation of funds, which NGOs can access, to implement projects. Specifically, therefore, QM had access to funds that enabled the realisation of projects for the pedestrianisation and landscaping of the perimeter roads of some schools. The Administration, through the Infrastructure and Mobility, Urban Planning and Public Works sectors, verifies, approves and implements the projects.

The first funding is from the BVL Foundation for the implementation of the Urban95 Agenda. Urban95 is an initiative to help administrations and planners understand how their work can influence the development of children, 95 being the average height of a three-year-old child, Urban95 takes an integrated approach combining the improvement of urban spaces and the provision of services. Additional funding comes from NACTO's *Streets for Kids* programme within the *Global Designing Cities Initiative*. *Streets for Kids* is a multi-year programme to develop guidelines and promote street designs that create safe and fun streets for all children to learn, play and move around the city. A third grant also comes within the *Streets for Kids* project from GIZ Albania. Another interesting intervention, financed by Bloomberg Philanthropies as part of the *Asphalt Art* project, is the renovation of the space around the Gustav Mayer and Naim Frasherri schools. The project consisted of the landscaping and pedestrianisation of 1700 square metres of school yard and almost 2000 square metres of driveway within a block shared by four schools.

⁹ National Association of City Transportation Officials

¹⁰ Bernard van Leer Foundation

¹¹ Foundation for the Automobile and Society

¹² United Nations Human Settlements Programme



Figure 3 - Aerial photo of the situation before and after the Asphalt Art intervention Source: <https://asphaltart.bloomberg.org/projects/tirana-albania-creating-safe-spaces-to-walk-for-students-at-four-schools/>

By design, schools in Tirana all have, in most cases, large courtyards and open spaces. QM's goal is to be able to open up these courtyards to make them public space. According to Ray Koci, a QM member interviewed during the research, opening up school courtyards in Tirana would double the amount of public space available.

There are currently eight secondary schools on which road repair projects have been implemented through foundation support and administration funding: Gjon Buzuku, Osman Myderizi, Fan Noli, Shkolla and Kuqe, Edith Durham, Gustav Mayer, Naim Frasheri, and Mihal Grameno. The idea, however, is to assimilate this practice at the administrative level so that it no longer depends on external funding but can become a practice implemented directly by the municipality.

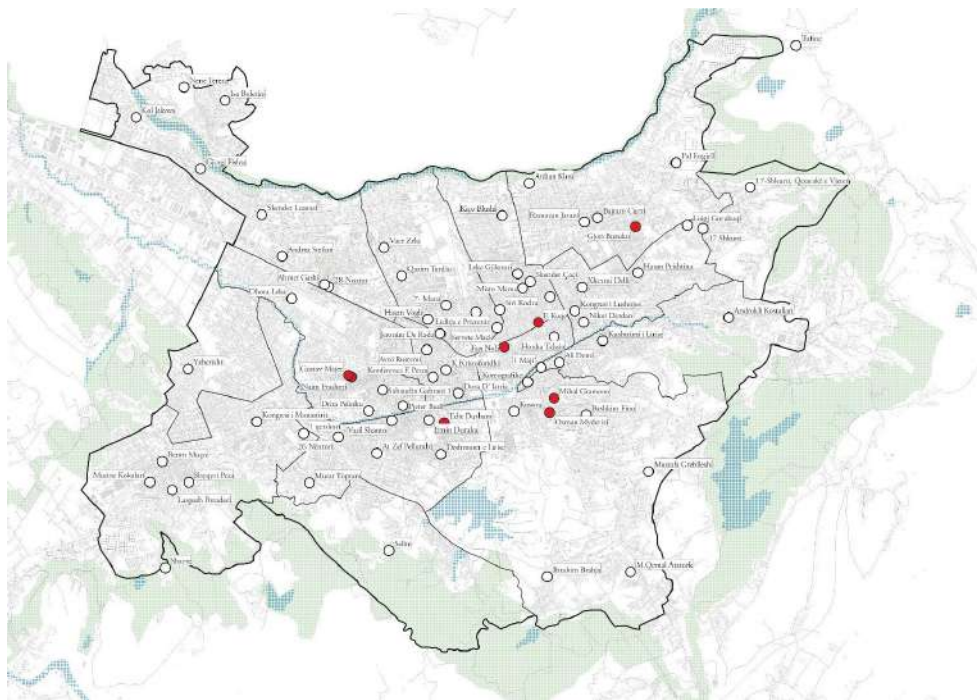


Figure 4 - Mapping of secondary schools involved in the "Streets for kids" project. Source: Author's elaboration

The relationship between the Urban Plan and current policies

The analysis of current policies and strategies about schools in Tirana, as shown by the analysis made, demonstrate that they fit perfectly with the strategies outlined in the Urban Plan to pursue its strategic objectives. Municipal regulations, European policies, public-private partnerships and other instruments work together to achieve the Plan's objectives. In this process, a great responsibility lies with the urban planning and public works sectors of the Municipality of Tirana, which are responsible for coordinating the various actions in the field. As can be seen from the conceptual image (Fig. 5) all the policies and strategies in place (PDV, *visibility plan*, *school as a community* and *streets for kids* project) respond to and follow the vision defined by the objectives of the urban plan. In this sense, the evaluation of the tool of strategic objectives is interesting insofar as it defines strategic actions and objectives giving the public administration the possibility of activating numerous solutions for their pursuit. The complexity of urban transformations, therefore, is not only relegated to the spatialisation and norms of the plan but to the possibility for the Administration to evaluate and define the instruments and actors with which to implement the actions. This type of planning is open to pathways and experimentation of new ways of doing urban planning, which makes consolidated urban planning tools adaptive and flexible (zoning, subdivision plans, etc.) but leaves room for the affirmation of innovative instances and practices that arise from the reading of urban and human needs.

If the PDV tool is related to the classical rules of a town-planning scheme, with the well-known mechanisms of disposals and service provisions, the projects, implemented by the NGO *Qendra Marrëdhënie* working on the school building and the urban space close to it, are in the vein of those practices of 'social innovation' from below that have emerged on the urban

scene in recent years (Orioli & Massari, 2023). The *visibility plan* strategy, on the other hand, uses public-private partnerships to speed up the construction of new schools, the main objective of the urban plan, while the *school as a community* project is one of those *top-down practices* promoted by the administration with the active involvement of sports associations and the community, fitting in as a practice that relates to both spatial and *welfare* policies.

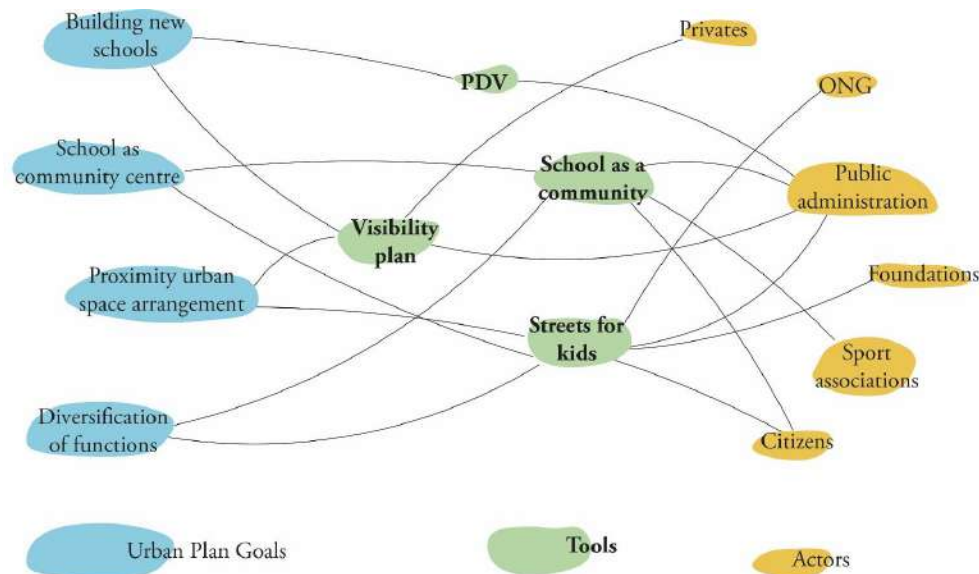


Figure 5 - Overview of the Tirana Urban Plan's objectives, instruments and strategies and the actors involved. Source: Author's elaboration

Conclusions

Urban issues are complex, if we understand the discipline of town planning "not so much as a set of works, projects, theories or norms" but as "the traces of a vast set of practices: those of the continuous and conscious modification of the state of the territory and the city" (Secchi, 2000) and as 'the science that studies urban phenomena in all their aspects, having planning as its aim' (Astengo, 1966) then a contemporary reflection on the role of the Urban Plan in the governance of the territory, and of the transitions with which cities (and Administrations) are called to deal, becomes fundamental. As Orioli and Massari state, "If, therefore, we want to resume reflection on the plan, questioning its credibility and its possible forms today, we must start from this node: from the relationship with policies and the project(s)." (Orioli & Massari, 2023). The context in which cities live today is a complex one, made up of transversality, interrelationships, and interdependencies (Moreno, 2024). A Plan must be able to hold together the complex dimension of policies and projects. The dimension in which the Plan, of course, is placed is the municipal one, the Plan is a political act and as such entrusts much responsibility to Administrations and Mayors, as Moreno states in his last book: "Mayors are not a transmission belt between national political life and local life: they are the backbone and the full protagonists of political life in our countries. Urban life requires strategic vision, dynamism, commitment and constant participation of the community. (Moreno, 2024)". Today, as Edgar Morin stated, we live the tendency of reductive thinking, the one that reduces the city to questions of architecture and circulation, the challenge of the Plan today, instead, is

to get rid of the restrictive "zoning questions" and leave more space and listening to social innovation, to new practices, to the so-called *cité* defined by Sennett (Sennett, 2018). If, therefore, the challenges of innovation call for more reflection on issues such as environmental sustainability, mobility, education, work, and care (Moreno, 2024), then the proximity model appears as a valid response to this urban challenge and the Plan as the tool through which to govern this complexity.

The case of Tirana shows how an Urban Plan capable of defining strategic thematic objectives for urban development and leaving room for a variety of implementation practices and tools such as: public-private partnerships, cooperation with associations, bottom-up projects involving local communities, and more 'classic' projects, can be the answer and the key in the hands of Administrations to govern the new urban challenges. The issue of education and schooling is of particular interest when one finds oneself in contexts, such as Tirana, of strong social inequalities and a high rate of poverty. Working as a public administration on the school that becomes not only a public service available to all but also the community centre in which the public life of the local community develops is a fundamental issue. The work carried out by the Municipality of Tirana on schools has therefore achieved several objectives among those that hinge on the proximity model expanding the network of services through the construction of new school buildings and the upgrading of existing ones, improving the quantity and quality of public space through the opening up of large schoolyards and the landscaping and pedestrianisation of the threshold space around schools, differentiated the functions of the school building and offered *welfare* services with the project of entrusting the gyms to sports associations, woven a network of communities into the relationship through the work of the NGO *Qendra Marrëdhënie*, which took care of both the physical design of the space and the involvement of the communities in the co-design.

The Plan, therefore, puts itself at the service of a transition process that builds on the existing and tries to indicate a direction in which to direct transformations. (Bianchetti, 2021) (Orioli & Massari, 2023).

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