1. Background

- Problem areas
- Challenges
- Objectives

2. Relevance of international experience

3. Environment of planning

- Political background
- Economic background
- Local government elections
- Structural plan background
- Existing planning model

4. Process of planning

5. Stakeholders

6. Form of planning

- Timing
- Structure and zone action plans
- Analysis matrix
- Land development matrix
- Summary matrix
- Development strategies
- Growth scenarios

7. Institutional implications

- Legal issues
- Institutional issues
- Financial issues
- Planning issues
- Other issues

8. References and acknowledgements

1. Background
Last year, I was involved in the Preliminary Structure Plan developed by the Tirana Land Management Task Force, an international team, based on the work between November 1994 and February 1995. The Ministry of Construction and Tourism, the National Planning Institute, the District Council of Tirana and the Municipality of Tirana have been working together to formulate strategies to guide land development in Greater Tirana. The university was indirectly involved through the contribution of professors and researchers. During the phase of the legal approval, university has been charged to carry out the project opponence.

I also was interviewed for different issues, and especially for the historical urban development of the city, my research subject at University. I was also member of the opponent group during the legal approval phase of the project. It was a new experience for Albania, and many things at first were found difficult to be judge. In the flow of my studies at Urban Management Centre, my way of understanding to such planning concept has really developed. That is why I would like to speak on that subject with crucial importance for the urban development of Tirana Metropolitan Region. It represents an interesting case for the international experience, too.

I. PROBLEM AREAS

The population of the Greater Tirana area (the city and district of Tirana) has been growing at the alarming rate of 7% per annum since 1990. In four years from 1990 to 1994, Tirana's population has increased from 374,500 to an estimated 475,000 residents. Consequently, the built environment of Tirana is also rapidly expanding by some 200 hectares each year and now occupies almost 2,400 hectares, compared to 1,600 hectares in 1990. In the short four-year period, the city has grown four times more than the total physical development that occurred in the 40-year period between 1945 and 1985. On an annual basis, the city is now expanding three times faster than the master plan anticipated.

The vast majority of Tirana's new development is occurring at the edge of the city. Analysis of aerial photography (July 1994) indicates that some 4,500 dwellings have been built, most of which have been constructed without permissions. In some new residential areas on the northern edge of the city, families living in the informal settlements account for 50% of the population. These new growth areas lack basic infrastructure, such as water, sewerage, roads and social facilities. Within the existing urban zone, the public authorities are working with inadequate infrastructure networks and social facilities that have forgone any capital investments in recent decades and severely strained by the new growth pressures.

II. CHALLENGES

The challenges facing both national and local authorities are:
(i). to regain control of the urban development process and guide its development within the context of a market economy
(ii). to respond to the unprecedented growth funded by private investments that is creating both vast areas without services and urban environmental degradation
(iii). to rehabilitate existing urban areas and restore acceptable levels of service
This response is severely constrained by the lack of public funds for infrastructure investments

III. OBJECTIVES
The Structure Plan provides an overall framework to link growth strategies with systematic rehabilitation and development of infrastructure. It also identifies development zones within the existing urban areas and the suburban zone that can be differentiated based on existing conditions, location, geographical characteristics, demographics, and when possible, economic trends. The overall objectives of the structure plan are:

**A. Physical Development Objectives**
(i). to identify strategies and areas for rehabilitation, reuse, and expansion of urban areas
(ii). to identify strategies and areas for residential development
(iii). to identify strategies and areas for economic development activities (retail, commercial and light industry activities)
(iv). to determine environmental concern areas and formulate strategies for protection
(v). to identify the need for social and public facilities

**B. Institutional, Legal and Financial Objectives**
(i). to define complementary roles for public-private partnership in urban development
(ii). to introduce new planning approaches that introduce greater flexibility and structure cooperation between central and local government, and local authorities
(iii). to propose infrastructure investment priorities for the construction, rehabilitation and maintenance of infrastructure
(iv). to identify institutional, legal and financial structures supporting desired development strategies

**2. Relevance of International Experience**
To establish more direct linkages between land development objectives and infrastructure investment priorities among central and local authorities, the Minister of Construction formed a Land Management Task Force (LMTF) in October 1994. The LMTF was supported by a joint team of Albanian and international consultants. The international consultancy was funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) through its contract with PADCO Inc.. The international team included a multi-disciplinary team with specialists previously experienced in such field from:

(i). Territorial Adjustment Department at Ministry of Construction and Tourism (Albania)
(ii). National Planning Institute in Tirana (Albania)
(iii). Town Planning Department at Municipality of Tirana (Albania)
(iv). Planning Section at District Council of Tirana (Albania)
(v). PADCO - Planning Aid Development Cooperation Organisation (USA),
(vi). Unit for Housing & Urbanisation,
Graduate School of Design, Harvard University (USA)
(vii). GHK International Ltd. of London (Great Britain).

This broad participation had the value of bringing together the international experience of planning in the market economy, and the experience of Albanian planners that had a very deep understanding of the country's political behaviour, the social and moral values of Albanian society, as well as the historical and existing development trends. Two parts of the team complemented each other better. The experiences were critically accepted during the
round table analysis. It was also crucial for the joint team to understand that international achievement does not automatically produce success in Albania. The moral was; there is no standard road map about planning, since every country has its own specific conditions!

3. Environment of planning

I. POLITICAL BACKGROUND
Albania suffered one of the most centralised and repressive regimes in the world and was virtually isolated from the rest of Europe during 1945-1990, when it was open to market economy. The previous regime had an anti-urban development policy, oriented through rural areas. Population movement was strongly controlled and more than half of the country's population still lives in rural areas. The collapse of communism occurred later and more disorderly than other Eastern European countries. The agricultural production and much of industry collapsed, and the country was on the brink of hyperinflation. The victory of the democratic opposition in the 1992 elections opened up new prospects for democracy in Albania. In the aftermath of the elections, optimism was running high. However, this was based almost entirely on grandiose hopes and unrealistic promises. Euphoria was soon replaced by disappointment. The people soon came to a more realistic understanding that no foreign capital investment was going to be made in Albania unless there was a legal framework to protect the investment, and unless the country was politically stable.

II. ECONOMIC BACKGROUND
From this low base much has been achieved in the last years, as Albania has set out on the long, testing transition to a pluralist democracy and market economy. With massive financial and technical aid from abroad, the government has succeeded in stabilising economy. Albania has achieved one of the highest growth rates of transition economies in Eastern Europe. Indeed the unemployment growth rate increased. Water supply is only available in many towns and cities for five to six hours a day. The electricity distribution system is completely overloaded, leading to widespread power cut and blackouts in the cold winters. The country has only around 50,000 telephones or 1.4 per 100 habitants. The establishment of adequate services, from roads, airports, water and power supply to banking and telecommunication, is one of the biggest challenges facing the country. Even that shock treatment has been applied, Albania has been hindered every step of the way by its luck of knowledge relevant to the market economy.

III. LOCAL GOVERNMENT ELECTIONS
Local government was for the first time democratically elected in 1992. Elections were held on a quarrel climate, where did not miss even clashes. The electorate at large changed their voting behaviour significantly during the poll. In only four months the government lost considerable support, while the opposition made impressive gains. As a consequence, a new and difficult situation emerged in which the government remained in power by dominating the parliament, while the opposition increased their power and autonomy at the local level. The central government insisted that they would not work with opposition local authorities and they will no support the population of those districts(!?). This partisan division of central and local power has led to a constitutional impasse, since the country has not yet approved a constitute!

IV. STRUCTURAL PLAN BACKGROUND
Political and economical dynamics reflected also on social and physical structure of urban living centres. Tirana, is the typical example of Albanian urban transition. The lion's share of the increase is because of migration, associated by a serious form of urban decay and a clear aggression of environment. Migration of population from rural areas, especially from north-eastern part of country is the biggest challenge. Government has found difficult to control and shape the heavy dynamics within existing planning means. The response and collaboration between responsible institutions had been merely poor, and soon situation was turned a hot political issue.

Such situation called emergence on the preparation of new development plan for Tirana Metropolitan Region. Both local governments, Municipality and District of Tirana, belong to the same political party as the central government. Tirana represents actually the country's urban primacy. Problems there are more complicated and grave, and it can easily be a influential model for other urban centres, too. The importance as capital city, as international gate, etc. drawn the priority attention of central government. LMTF and Joint Project Team represented a new partnership in central-local relationships for the development of an urban planning strategy. They had assistance provided by central and local agencies and officials who provided valuable assistance and access to information. Political consensus overcome political stress and commitment was given, too.

V. EXISTING PLANNING MODEL
Urban plans have been also previously prepared for the suburban areas of Tirana and for the Municipality of Tirana. These plans include:
(i). A master plan for the municipality of Tirana - prepared in 1989, before the introduction of the economic reforms, based on a number of assumptions and strategies that did not anticipate the tremendous demand for housing, land, commercial development and infrastructure that have occurred within the past four years.
(ii). The Regulation plan for the Suburban Zones of Tirana - prepared in September 1994 by NPI, indicating proposed land uses in the periphery of the city, which has not been officially approved, while is being used to evaluate the planning impact of new development

4. Process of Planning
To understand better the process of planning see schemes in the next pages:
(i). Process of planning in the structure plan
(ii) Levels of planning process
(iii). Project development chart

5. Stakeholders
There is developed a scheme of stakeholders, in the next page, too. In order to see stakeholders from their interests point of view there are distinguished five main groups:
(i). Central level stakeholders - as Council of Ministers, Ministry of Construction and Tourism, and other centralised institutions concerned on urban development. They are concerned that urban dynamic is out of control both politically and technically, and they want a legal development document to manage it. Today this is a considerable political issue, while general elections will be held this summer. The perspective of the plan will
determine the general situation of Tirana Metropolitan Region, that has a direct impact on economical and political stability of the country, and the future of open market in Albania.

(ii). Local level stakeholders - as Municipality and District Council of Tirana, and their locally controlled institutions concerning planning. Since local government of Tirana belongs to the same political party as the central one, they have the same political interest. Furthermore, local government elections are to be held this summer, too. Local governments have more direct responsibilities on the community needs. They feel more the pressure of the people's complaints on the situation. Decentralisation as a new policy in Albania, makes local government even more concerned on the financial power and the efficient use of the economical resources.

(iii). International level stakeholders - as USAID and PADCO, etc. focused on the technical support in favour of the establishment of democracy and market economy in Albania. They are also interested on helping to overcome faster and with fewer sufferings possible the transition in Albania. To facilitate it, training and collaboration with Albanian professionals is crucial especially for the implementation phase and further continuity of planning policy

(iv). Non-governmental stakeholders - as University; religious organisation like CAFFOD, Cebemo-Venactie; NGOs like SOROS, CNV, PAPPA, Ex-political Prisoners Organisation; other private business and commercial enterprises, etc. Their interests are related to certain group of population or individuals, establishment of private profitable activities and businesses, or simply for professional experience, scientific and educational purposes, etc.

(v). Intermediary level stakeholders - as LMTF and other planning institutions. This group is a mix of interests of all other groups. It is created by collaboration of several institutions in different levels, taking in account the interests of all parts involved in the process, as well as the interests of all Albanian society. Their collaboration is basically scientific and technical but with the important value of political and economical commitment and consensus of the stakeholders.

6. Form of Planning
The question can be: Why structural plan? Loking from the point of view of Albania's specific condition, it is clear that planning there has not to deal only with physical development. Because of dramatic political and economical changes a totally new institutional, legal and financial planning policy should be reconstructed. This implies that changes in planning strategy are not within the same economical and political environment. Instead of centralism - decentralisation is presented, and instead of controlled economy - free market is introduced, and so on.

The structure plan for Greater Tirana combine in itself short and long-term development planning; urban and regional development planning; institutional and financial development planning. It formulate a legal strategic development policy through a number of action zone planning concept! It provides national and local authorities a planning framework to guide development in the Greater Tirana Metropolitan Region (Municipality and District of Tirana). The plan addresses to the regional urban development needs, identifies critical development issues relative to needs for urban expansion and rehabilitation of the formal
built-up areas, and finally offers a phased infrastructure strategy to support land development objectives. The structure plan incorporates aspects of these proceedings plans and proposes priorities for the phasing of development. More specifically, the plan examines development strategies that can be applied to:

(i). Vacant land development - identifying infill and expansion zones with an emphasis on residential development, and considering alternative land use such as commercial and light industrial development.
(ii). Renewal and rehabilitation of formally built areas of the city - identifying strategies for the development of these areas and makes recommendations.
(iii). Informal settlements - including development options such as upgrading of the existing settlements, relocating residents living in the environmentally sensitive zones, and controlling the growth of informal settlements.

I. TIMING
The structure plan projects development options over a 20-year period time from 1995-2015. Such longer-term planning, permits the identification of environmental issues and infrastructure corridors. The 20-year planning period must be balanced with planning decisions that support and guide a transitional market economy that is often functioning in a crisis mode. To achieve this balance, the structure plan identifies priorities in five years increments, as:

(i). 1995-2000 five year Immediate Action Planning Period
(ii). 2001-2005 five year Intermediate Planning Period
(iii). 2006-2015 ten year Long-term Planning Period

In the short-term, the plan takes in consideration immediate action programs on land and housing to alleviate deficiencies and meets short term demands during, say, next 1-2 years. Sufficient land has to be identified, assembled, serviced and sub-divided to accommodate immediate needs and to prevent further illegal settlements. Long-term interventions can be developed parallel with the immediate action programs and will comprise establishment of housing and site development programs. That is, I think, really convinient for Albania.

II. STRUCTURE AND ZONE ACTION PLANS
The structure plan is examined on the basis of changes in demographic, economic and social trends. The LMTF recommends Zone Action Plans (ZAP) are to be developed for specific zones within the Greater Tirana areas. The ZAP planning process offers a flexible planning mechanism, responding to the unique features and development objectives of particular areas. It allows local and national governments to focus planning attention on specific areas that are facing the most immediate growth pressures, and have the greatest development potential. The ZAP concept assists the identification of strategic investments and guides private land development in incremental approach. It identify key areas of opportunities and constraints for each zone, and means to involve private resources for investments in residential, commercial and industrial development. Each of these plans should be reviewed through a planning process that incorporates views of both, public and private sector.
ZAP will strategically identify areas of action for the development of the zone. Plans will identify the critical strategic objectives for the development of the zone, developing a list of priority investment opportunities, the environmental and historical significant areas, and protection from new urban development. Traditional planning approaches do not facilitate collaboration with private development. Indeed it creates a rigid set of development and zoning regulations that lack an ability for collaborative links between public and private investment opportunities. Quite differently, ZAPs would establish a development framework of the zone, by detailing further the off-site infrastructure and land development options for each zone. That is way I think that the method used is really helpful for the Albanian situation. The proposed zones represent also one component of both, analyse and development matrixes.

Zones are devised as:
(i). Western Tirana - primarily the area between the Kavaja and Durres roads and along the emerging development corridor
(ii). North of the Tirana River - the area north of the Tirana River including the rural areas of Paskuqani, Koder-Kamza and Babrruja
(iii). Northern Infill Area - the area near the Tirana train station and south of the Tirana
(iv). Eastern Tirana - the area east of the built-up area of Tirana
(v). Southern Tirana - the area south of the city, especially along the Elbasani Road and the area near Tirana's National Park
(vi). Existing Built-Up Area - of Tirana, especially the areas in poor condition due to the age or inadequate maintenance of the infrastructure and buildings

The proposed zones represent one component of analysis and land development matrixes, too.

III. ANALYSIS MATRIX
In order to analyse major characteristics for each area of the Greater Metropolitan Region of Tirana, analysis matrix was build, based on:
(i) the proposed six zones, as explained above
(ii). the zone characteristics, such as - approximate area in hectares and boundary / ownership status / existing land use / approximate number of informal dwellings / accessibility to infrastructure / water / sewerage / roads / electricity / mass transportation / distance to the city centre and other major employment centres / public facilities / environment / adjacent land uses / slope employment centres / hydrology / natural visual resources / soil conditions / etc.

V. LAND DEVELOPMENT MATRIX
It proposes development strategies based on growth objectives and the characteristics of zones. It is based on:
(i). the proposed six zones, as explained above
(ii). the zone characteristics, such as - residential development / informal settlements / total new residential development / commercial development / industrial development / public facilities and open space / other mayor types of developments / supporting trunk infrastructure development / primary road priorities / other road priorities / enabling private sector development in a sustainable environment / etc.

VI. SUMMARY MATRIX
It underlines major existing deficiencies and proposes development objectives for upgrading zones and formal areas. It also summarises development objectives and methods to begin to improve services in these zones, based on:

(i). land category - low density informal / high density informal / formal / new expansion / infilling
(ii). existing deficiency - demand driven / upgrading / description / land tenure / people / infrastructure / institutional / financial
(iii). development objectives - demand driven / upgrading / description / land tenure / people / infrastructure / institutional / financial

VII. DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES
To facilitate the development objectives of the structure plan are suggested the following:
(i). Encourage urban development patterns that optimise development and the environmental opportunities, incorporating Albanian cultural values
(ii). Localise focus for incremental development; decentralise analysis, planning and implementation, and formulate achievable land development strategies.
(iii). Formulate land use plans and flexible, enforceable and guidable regulations; add infrastructure to the land, to increase its value; stimulate private investors and generate revenues
(iv). Encourage enterprise development through strategies that involve public-private partnership (v). Guide land development through rehabilitation and upgrading, increasing land value and generateing revenues to cover cost of infrastructure providing
(vi). Facilitate strategies of informal settlements for relocation, upgrading, control and direction of the growth of these settlements; incorporate NGOs in the formulation, implementation and improvement strategies.
(vii). Protect environment and minimise environmental degradation through the development of critical infrastructure and the conservation of land.
(viii). Deconcentrate urban growth in Albania through regional and secondary city development.

VIII. GROWTH SCENARIOS
The LMTF as part of the planning process examined, vacant land, illegal settlements and determined the new development areas. The historical trend and the masterplan for the Tirana city and suburbs call for a circular development scheme, with ring-radial road system. Due to the physical constraints (topography) to the east and south of the city some of the development proposed will be difficult and expensive. Most of the growth potential areas are in the north and west of the city. There are other pocket areas that can be linked to development process. The basic structural form of the city will be strongly influenced by the infrastructure, which is likely to combine two approaches, that sounds logical to me:
(i). Circular growth - as continuation of the expansion of circular road system
(ii). Nodal development - that involve the creation of several nodal points at the fringe
(iii). A combined approach - that is a mix of the circular and nodal growth patterns.

7. Institutional Implications
The experience of structure plan was really positive. Political and institutional barriers were overpassed. Commitments were given and financial aspect of planning process was
covered. A better vision for the future development is created. However, there are many institutional implications, keeping in mind the difficult economical and political situation of the country. There is not yet achieved stability. Both central and local governments have a very poor budget. Decentralisation policy is politically frozen and the country luck relevant market oriented knowledge on planning development. Private sector is not yet well-established. University was excluded from the direct planning process, even that later this was corrected somehow.

There were problems regarding collaboration and exchanging information. Very few people know exactly the job done, and few Albanian planners have any clear idea about it. Even they working directly in the plan, did not have the contemporary knowledge, to be able to understand the form of planning used. The final report and the experience gained is victim of bureaucracy and still is not available for the technical, research and training institutions interested on planning development. Informal development that was the initial concern, was postponed to the second intention. Especially, foreign consulatance was particularly interested on new development. To me upgrading and rehabilitatation will be the most adaptable and emergent way of solution, given specific conditions of country and very low standart of life. It is a fact that the first action plan started till now is about new housing development while the rabbit is slepping somewere else.

I. LEGAL ISSUES
The LMTF identifies critical legal bottlenecks trying to mobilise local private and public sector funds for the infrastructure and land development. Actual planning law prevents public agencies from selling land, and collecting sales prices prior to project completion. The minimum land prices for sale do not take in consideration relative advantages in terms of location, access, service, size, shape, and side development potential. A decree should be amended to allow government to rent or sell serviced and unserviced land based on the prices of a real estate committee that should be created between Tirana Municipality and District, Ministry of Construction, and Real Estate Association. New legislation is required on allocation of public uses land and compensations.

II. INSTITUTIONAL ISSUES
The majority of informal settlements and new development open land is under the jurisdictions of central and two levels of local government, as well as numerous agencies. To avoid such contradictory situation, it is recommended formation of a Project Implementation Team focused on site development, which can report to a joint committee of central and local government. The need for planning and coordination on cross jurisdictional issues as; sewer, water, roads, waste management, etc. is also reviewed.

III. FINANCIAL ISSUES
The LMTF, reviewed municipal finance issues, especially on the effects of new projects upon provision, maintenance and expansion of basic urban infrastructure. Actually, the plan delegate power to local government but they have no financial or legal autonomy. The limited financial resources are competing for capital investment because of big expansion of the city. The property tax is not well-organised yet. Central government grants for local services are expected to be at the same level as before. To overcome the financial limits and to relate financial management with physical planning, additional revenue sources should be developed as local property tax system and revenue generating projects.
IV. PLANNING ISSUES
The structure plan must be reviewed, modified, and adopted by local and national authorities as a strategic development document. The process should incorporate the views of both sectors public and private. Further zone action plans should be detailed for each of the development zones. A new urban development regulation plan should be prepared for the greater metropolitan area. A periodical review and updating of the regulatory and structure plan should be conducted. To coordinate planning and implementation of the plan should be created a special institution.

V. OTHER ISSUES
There are other specific areas with more detailed institutional implications each, as:
Land and Housing / Infrastructure / Capital Investment Program / Private Developer - NGO Participation / Economic Development / Informal Sector / Rehabilitation and Reuse Strategies / State Land Disposal and Transfer / Public Facilities / Transportation / Environmental Protection / Tourism / Business Development / Regional and Secondary Cities Development

References and Acknowledgements

This paper was available due to the important information and the experience of the Tirana Land Management Task Force, obtained through the series of documents as below:
(i). The Preliminary Structure Plan of Tirana
(ii). An Infrastructure and Trunk Needs Assessment
(iii). A Pilot Project pre-feasibility study for Western Tirana
(iv). A Pre-eliminatory Zone Action Plan for Tirana
(v). Tirana Land Management Program - Legal, Institutional and Financial Issues
(vi). A Synopsis with an Action Plan

The information were also available thanks to the communication with specialists involved directly in the plan as below:
1. Juli Shllaku - Territorial Adjustment Department, Ministry of Construction and Tourism, Albania
2. Agim Shehu - National Planning Institute, Tirana - Albania
3. Mira Lufi - Town Planning Department, Tirana Municipality - Albania
4. Viron Hamzaj - Planning Section, Tirana District - Albania
5. Kevin Gates - PADCO, Inc., USAID - USA
7. John Driscoll - Unit for Housing and Urbanisation, Graduate School of Design, Harvard University, USA
8. Agron Lufi - Civil Engineering Faculty, Polytechnic University of Tirana - Albania
9. David Allen - Land & Property Valuation & Management Course, Polytechnic University of Tirana - Albania
10. Engjell Dhrami - Urban Planning Department, Faculty of Civil Engineering, Polytechnic University of Tirana - Albania

Other literature available:

(FIG. 1) Source: Jiri Musil, Academy of Science, Budapest -Hungary
TIRANA'S BUILT UP AREA IN 1989 AND RECENTLY INFORMAL DEVELOPED AREAS

(FIG 3) Source: Kevin Gates, planner PADCO, Inc.
The Preliminary Structure Plan of Greater Tirana 1995

TIRANA AND IMMEDIATE AREA GENERAL USE DIAGRAM
(FIG. 4) Source: John Driscoll, Tirana Land Management Program,
Preliminary Structur Plan, 1995

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STRUCTURE PLAN OF TIRANA
(FIG. 5) Source: John Driscoll, Tirana Land Management Program,
Preliminary Structur Plan, 1995

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HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT TREND

Illustration: Besnik Aliaj, "A historical overview of Tirana"
European City Conference, Copenhagen - Denmark.