TIRANA. ARCHITECTURE AS POLITICAL ACTOR

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INTRODUCTION

ULRIKE KUCH

Tirana is a city of contradictions. I think this definition largely mirrors our society and the inherent antagonism of our time. This is an important moment in our history: We are trying to get rid of the past and are working hard to catch up with the future, but we are still remaining in the middle of both. [...] Tirana is a city that started to be what it is when a surrealistic boulevard was built in the middle of this Ottoman village. It may have been the only boulevard in history without a city. The city grew as an extension of the ambition that gave birth to this boule- vard and was of course influenced by the politics of the different eras. Looking at Tirana's centre is like looking at a collection or a historical diary of political affairs and political love stories. [Edi Rama, 2010 [1]]

What is the use of a theory of architecture? It is to think of architecture from another point of view, to learn to see, to understand, to think of space, situations and relationships. It is to develop a curiosity for the built environment that doesn't stop with merely thinking about design, but also reflecting on philosophy, sociology, media, or whatever ar- chitecture might interact with.

The aim of the seminar "TIRANA. Architecture as Political Actor" which laid the foundation for this book was to explore and discover a relatively little-known city in a relatively little-known country. We, both students and instructors, were asked to look at Tirana with the curiosity of the unknowing.

Of course, we were not alone. We were joined by the humanities. Such a seminar on the theory of architecture never stands alone; it is always accompanied by the knowledge that is available. It is the second – or perhaps even the first – explicit aim of a MA seminar to become acquainted with the methods and methodologies, the theories and tools, with which to think about architecture. Tools that can be transferred to other contexts. Familiarising ourselves with these tools, learning about terms and definitions, is the core of scholarly work and sometimes a hard job – especially for students of architecture who are largely possess artistic, technical and practical training. Thus, the seminar focused on working with texts, formulating research questions, conducting research and composing a scholarly text. And in all of these tasks, the students were instructed to work independently.

This book is the result of an intensive process of reading, thinking, discussing, researching and writing. We started in April reading three texts on the Actor Network Theory (ANT), the theoretical lens which would serve as the basis of our research in Tirana. Those texts by Bruno Latour (Latour 1991), Alfred Gell (Gell 1998) and Albena Yaneva (Yaneva 2017) were the keys to the ANT thinking. The purpose was not to become experts of ANT, but to become acquainted with the key concepts and understand this specific way of thinking. It is also worth noting that we consulted texts by other authors which were available on Moodle and influenced our work – e.g. Thomas Gieryn (Gieryn 2002), Ignacio Farias & Thomas Bender (Farias/Bender 2010) and Kjetil Fallan (Fallan 2008). ANT was our tool for establishing contact with Tirana's architecture, for learning about its history, function, people and materiality and for thinking about the communicative relationships of these "things".

We scheduled our research expedition for two days – 15 and 16 June 2019. Prepared in advance with presentations held in Weimar on the history, nature, culture and politics of Albania and individual research on built structures, the students observed the architecture, talked to pedestrians and – most importantly – received support from Albanian students who voluntarily spent two days working with us.

To familiarise ourselves with the built structures, another medium was introduced: photography. While still in Wei-

mar, students attended both an input and a workshop by Tobias Adam on the idea of working with photography and architecture. Photography in this case should not regarded merely as a documentary record but should also be used as an artistic medium of awareness. Students took pictures to show the character of the buildings, its "programmes" and relationships. Sometimes the images supported the findings of the observation, sometimes they added another layer to the research. In any case, they enriched the methods of research, led to alternative ways of looking at the "things" and showed the student's artistic approach to the buildings.

Instead of enjoying their semester break, students spent the last weeks of their holidays working with texts and images, transferring theory and practice, thinking and discussing, watching and writing in a coherent whole. Each group mastered the task to find a specific way of bringing ANT and architecture together. This publication is the result of their hard work.

This book is a guidebook to the political networks of selected architectural structures in Tirana. It reflects the student's personal encounter with Tirana on 15 and 16 June 2019. Just like other guidebooks, it might serve to get an overview of what might be worth visiting. In contrast to those it delves deeply into the subject of research, thus the book is still an academic work. Using texts and images it creates itself a virtual network of relations.

I am very proud of what the students accomplished. It was quite a difficult semester; not only did they apply an interdisciplinary approach – sociologist architecture theory and photography – but we used English as our working language, students formed a heterogenous group of architecture, mediaarchitecture, urbanism students and worked under time pressure. From the beginning, this seminar was an experiment. Some things can certainly be improved, other things worked out quite well. I suppose all of us have learned a lot in different ways.

Six groups of two to three students worked on one building each. Following this structure, the book opens with a short introduction to the urban planning of Tirana by *Clara Blasius, Isabella Pullmann* and *Katharina Thurow*. The article highlights the wide variety of influences that shaped the city in the 20th century – the Ottomans, Austrians, Italians, even the Germans, and in the second half of the century, the communist regime.

The next piece by the same authors focuses on Hotel Dajti. As a hot spot of international tourism and secret service

surveillance facility in its early years, Hotel Dajti is now an encapsulated construction site. *Clara Blasius, Isabella Pullmann* and *Katharina Thurow* describe the present character of this building and its importance for today's discussions about the political heritage in Tirana.

The article by *Jakob Hainich, Marco Reusch* and *Lennart Weski* focuses on the most important structure in Tirana: Skanderbeg Square. The history of the square and the political and functional interpretations of its design lead them to the conclusion that "erasing and leaving traces" is the programme of this "thing".

One of the buildings on Skanderbeg Square is the puppet theatre. As an important witness to the country's systemic changes (it even served as the seat of parliament in the 1940s), this inconspicuous building is home to a puppet theatre today. Whereas in every mentioned building the importance of history needs to be taken into consideration, *Paul Beenen, Fabian Ellguth* and *Simon Kolbe* note that in the case of the Puppet Theatre, history plays a strange role – in public perception almost none at all.

One of the most iconic buildings in Tirana is certainly the pyramid. Built as a museum for the dictator Enver Hoxha, the pyramid lost its primary function after his death. In their article, *Selma Bulic, Leon Claus* and *Diellza Elshani* examine the importance of the communist past with regard to how the building is the currently perceived. The current plans propose reusing the space and ignoring the building's past – a thesis that may require further consideration after reading this text.

The boulevard mentioned in Edi Rama's quote above ends at today's Mother Teresa Square. This square is dominated by a "Casa del Fascio"-inspired building which houses the Polytechnic University. *Andoni Regueiro Candina, Louis Oehler* and *Rosalie Ratz* carefully describe and illustrate their observations of Casa del Fascio/Polytechnic University and follow the traces of their actors over the course of a whole day and night. The result is a dense map of communicative relationships, underlining the intensive and changing activities between human and non-human actors.

In their piece on the apartment of Ismail Kadare, *Marvin Brandt and Katharina Wittke* discuss the most recent and private "thing" in our project. The museum opened in May 2019, only a few weeks before we arrived. The author Ismail Kadare is a controversial character, oscillating between literature – a Nobel Prize candidate – and politics. On one hand protected by Enver Hoxha, on the other a

writer of banned literature, Kadare's apartment and its furnishings offer a deeper understanding of his janiform existence.

In the last text, *Marvin Brandt* attempts to unravel the confusion of ANT, Studio Kadare, the person Kadare and his literature. The article follows Marvin's thinking, his work with the theory, and Kadare's apartment as such. These thoughts vividly demonstrate the research process and its corresponding questions, terms and irregularities.

short term, *Markus Postrach* and *Christian Rothe* gave the book a unique appearance – many thanks to those two. I also wish to thank my colleague *Ronny Schüler* who took over in Tirana when my flight became a 20 hour-disaster and always offered a good piece of advice whenever I need it. And a big thank-you to *Kurt W. Forster* who established the contact to Arba and the Kadare-staff, whose emails in splendid language on Albanian literature inspired me, and whose confidence and open-mindedness encouraged me to dare this experiment.

Finally, I want to thank the students who accompanied us every step of the way on this very long road:

Paul Beenen, Clara Blasius, Marvin Brandt, Selma Bulic, Mu Chen, Leon Claus, Fabian Ellguth, Diellza Elshani, Elena Fiedler, Abel Geressu, Jakob Hainich, Simon Kolbe, Yasaman Mobasser, Louis Oehler, Isabella Pullmann, Rosalie Ratz, Andoni Regueiro Candina, Marco Reusch, Emre Sari, Katharina Thurow, Lennart Weski, Katharina Wittke

Considering the current disruptions taking place in Tirana, the idea of doing research on Tiranese architecture and its role as a political actor seemed highly relevant. In our research, we felt that "politics" was something that happens between "things", between human and non-human actors. When the working groups discussed the fences around the former Hotel Dajti, allegedly a symbol of corruption, when the life and work of Ismail Kadare clashed with the harshness of the architect Maks Velo whose insistent philippic evoked both the memories of the communist era and anger about today's crisis, or when the heat on Skanderbeg Square made our research almost impossible, the idea of "getting in touch" with Tirana and its architecture became reality. In the end, we discovered that the theory of architecture might possess an even broader significance then learning about one's own perception. It was about the power of architecture.

1   Über die Zukunft hinaus/Beyond the future. Moritz Haller im Gespräch mit/Interview with Edi Rama, Bürgermeister von/Mayor of Tirana. In: Stiller 2010, p. 75

A SHORT INTRODUCTION TO TIRANA'S URBAN PLANNING IN THE 20TH CENTURY

CLARA BLASIUS, ISABELLA PULLMANN, KATHARINA THUROW

After the revolution of June 1924, a two-part agreement was reached with Italy for the economic development and reconstruction of Albania in 1925 (von Erich 2016, 2). Tirana became the permanent capital of the country, and the challenge was to plan the city from scratch, as Tirana had only been a small, typical Ottoman city (Vokshi 2012, 24). The Italian Armando Brasini was commissioned to design a new administrative centre. None of his architectural projects were realised, but his urban plan "Sistemazione della Capitale d'Albania" had a huge impact on Tirana's urban development (Shkreli 2010, 24.) Brasini's idea was to have two separate squares for administration, namely *Ministries Square* (Skanderbeg Square) and *Presidency Square* (Mother Teresa Square), which were to be connected by a great boulevard for the citizens. The axis was based on the Roman principle of "cardo maximus", and the idea of having a splendid public space derives from the concept of the Roman "forum" (Vokshi 2012, 28/29). "From the perspectives drawn by Brasini we note the Bernini sculpture of the squares, from the urban doors that shield the closed space, deputed to the monumental key celebration of political and administrative power" (Riza 2012, 51).

"The results were soon quite remarkable because something heretofore unheard of happened in sleepy Tirana: in only 15 years (1926-1941) Tirana was transformed, like Cinderella, from an unknown modest girl into a beautiful princess. The city

suddenly became a showcase of the richest array of architectural styles." (Shkreli 2010, 26)

While Albania became a constitutional monarchy, the city was growing much faster than expected which made it necessary to redesign the urban development plan. In 1929 the General Regulation Plan, based on a proposal by the Austrian architect Köhler, was released. With this plan, Köhler proposed a continuation of Brasini's axis in the north and already foresaw a ring road around the city (Shkreli 2010, 30).

Ten years later on 7 April 1939, Albania was occupied by Fascist Italy. Immediately thereafter, Albania and Italy formed the union of the Italian-Albanian kingdom. Italy came to play a crucial role in the making of Albania, also in the field of urban planning (Vokshi 2012, 102). It was the same year that the "Central Office of Urban Planning and Building" was established and the Florentine architect Gherardo Bosio was put in charge. Just before his arrival in Albania, Bosio met with Mussolini who explicitly instructed him to upscale Tirana's urban structure "worthy of the kingdom in which soon also Italian settler families were to be settled" (Shkreli 2010, 32).

The planning and construction of the public square and *Viale dell'Impero* started in September 1939, while the new General Regulation Plan, slated to commence in April 1942, was initiated in October of the same year. The development of the city, as Bosio was proposing, would be completely independent of the existing one with a linear grid pattern at the foot of the hills and semicircle with a radial and concentric road system around the historical centre (Vokshi 2012, 106/107). The city roads intersect, like cardo and decumanus, in the *Skanderbeg Square*. The main axis of north-south orientation was created from the existing *Avenue Vittorio Emanuele III* and the *Viale dell'Impero*, with the *Littorio*-complex on one side and the barracks of the grenadiers on the other. The separation between the *Piazza del Littorio* with its fascist elements and the civic square, *Piazza Skanderbeg*,

connected with the monumental *Avenue of the Empire*, distinguishes the existing city centre from the new political and cultural representative centre (Vokshi 2012, 111/112).

Besides the General Regulation Plan, which Gherardvesigned together with Ivo Lambertini and Ferdinando Poggio, Bosio was also involved in the construction of several administrative buildings in Tirana: the *Imperial Palace*, the official residence of the Prime Minister, the *Hotel Dajti*, the stadium, the *Institute of Archaeology*, the *Polytechnic University* and the *Academy of Arts* (Shkreli 2010, 34-36).

B

B

Studio House Kadare

Skanderbeg square

Puppet Theatre

Hotel Dajti

The Pyramid

Polytechnic University
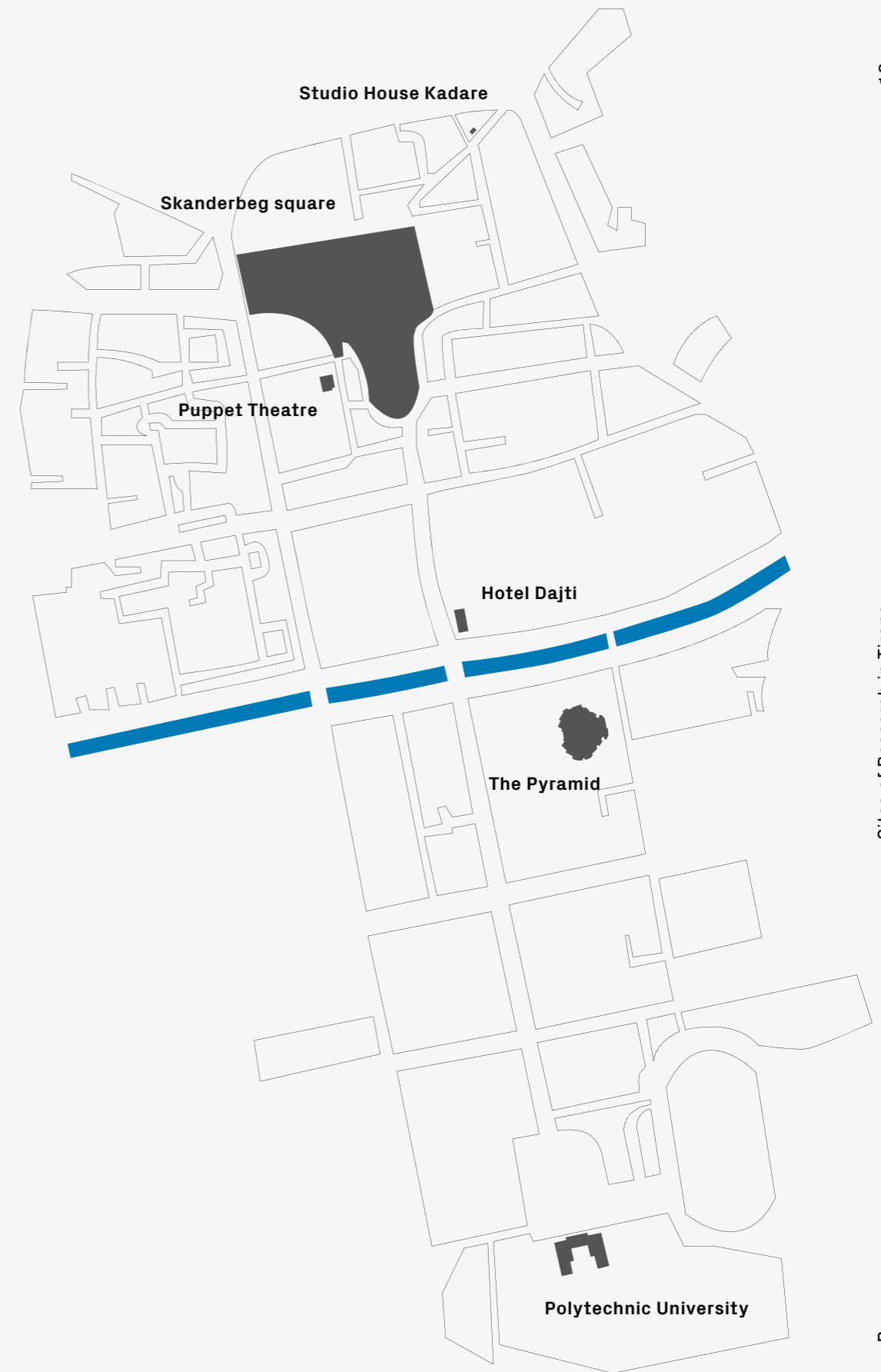
HOTEL DAJTI

CLARA BLASIUS, ISABELLA PULLMANN, KATHARINA THUROW

As he was stepping inside the Hotel Dajti, a question began to form unobtrusively and gradually in his mind. Why had he, Petit Gjadri, been chosen to perform this prestigious autopsy? But henceforth he should not try to answer that or any other question. He was under a stay of execution, and he had to try to use the time remaining to good effect. The coffee he was going to enjoy in a hotel set aside for the exclusive use of foreigners and members of the nomenklatura – a place he would have dared to enter previously only in quite exceptional circumstances – would be just a foretaste of the higher serenity that was slowly spreading through his being. The kind of freedom that humans call "the peace of the grave," without really appreciating it insofar as they usually experience it only as they die, had, in this particular case, become available to him a little ahead of time. [Ismail Kadare, The Successor, p. 3]

The splendid design of the new avenue that Gherardo Bosio proposed for Tirana in the 1940s included five roadways and wide sidewalks, allowing for lateral parking and a comfortable pedestrian stroll, as well as privacy and isolation of the buildings from the main traffic. Tall trees were planted along the boulevard to embellish the facades and provide shade in the summertime. To ensure harmony for the avenue as a whole, it was necessary to set guidelines for the various buildings in terms of volume, height and covering material, independent of the relative value of each building (Vokshi 2012, 112/114).

In the case of Tirana "…planning and building seem to alternately have the upper hand in an endless discourse: at times building seems to win, while at other times planning seems to dominate, although they still remain closely intertwined" (Accossato 2010, 43). The General Regulation Plan of 1929 proposed the construction of a representative hotel in Tirana's city centre which Gherardo Bosio,

after the Italian invasion, was placed in charge of designing. In April 1942 Hotel Dajti was opened (Tirana International Contemporary Art Biannual n.d.)

STRUCTURE AND ARCHITECTURE

While other foreign architects at the time tried to integrate some elements of Albanian identity in their works – often some visual elements in their facades as one recognises in the ministerial buildings – Bosio rejected those efforts and influences entirely. He "purifies everything for a clear and rational fascist style" (Kodra 2017, 204). The Hotel Dajti with its reduced cubic design became Bosio's first real rationalist project (Vokshi 2012, 140).

Developed as part of the General Regulation Plan, the building generally conforms to the design scheme of what was then called Viale dell'Impero (Avenue of the Empire), today the Bulevardi Deshmoret e Kombit (Martyrs of the Nation Boulevard). Although, it does retreat from the road (Menghini, Pashako & Stigliano 2012, 145). Spanning an area of 8,760 sqm and situated on a 10,240-sqm plot, the hotel accommodates 91 rooms with 125 beds in total (Vokshi 2012, 140). Considering that hotels of that era were predominantly simple, small inns from the Ottoman period, this large, representative hotel is quite an exception (Tirana International Contemporary Art Biannual n.d.). At the time of construction, it was very functional and modern, seen as a "jewel of the avant-garde" (Menghini, Pashako & Stigliano 2012, 145). Apart from the hotel rooms, it contains restaurants, bars and diverse luxury services. It has hosted "for decades political, cultural personalities and important events that have marked the chapters of the Albanian history" (Nepravishta 2017, 51).

The building consists of two interior spaces. The one where the public spaces are accommodated is eight metres high and covered with travertine. High windows highlight its importance and accentuate the full height of the interior. The main entrance is off-centred

and emphasised by a canopy (Vokshi 2012, 140). In the basement there are service rooms, and offices are located in the mezzanine floor. The other one, the vertical space with three floors, is where the guest rooms are located. The module of four metres, prescribed by the boulevard regulations, is repeated on the facade through a visible frame structure in reinforced concrete. The upper part thus dissolves into a grid of vertical and horizontal slabs (Menghini, Pashako & Stigliano 2012, 145). Above, the rather traditional ground floor finds its counterpart in the conventional solution of the overhanging roof.

The contrast between those areas is accentuated by the otherwise reduced language. Even in the interior spaces, which were designed by Gio Ponti, "one can notice a discrepancy between the majestic ground floor with its marble walls and the upper part, where the rooms are poorer and much simpler. Fascist Italy had just entered the Second World War and because of financial restrictions the initial project had to be changed and reduced." (Tirana International Contemporary Art Biannual n.d.)

TEMPORARY USES AND RE-USE

Until the opening of Hotel Tirana, now Tirana International, in the 1970s, most foreign visitors stayed in the Hotel Dajti. In the 1980s it was reserved for foreign VIPs (Yamey 2016, 18). In 1991 when the regime of former dictator Enver Hoxha collapsed, Hotel Dajti fell into despair until it was closed down and abandoned (Birn 2010). At the beginning of the 21st century, the building was protected by the Council of Ministers with decree no. 180, designating it as a cultural monument of the second category (Nepravishta 2017, 51). This meant that the exterior appearance of the building could not be altered. However, although protected as a historical landmark, it had already been vandalized and become dilapidated.

In 2009 the building served as the main exhibition venue of the 4th Tirana International Contemporary Art Bian-

nual (T.I.C.A.B). Previously there were plans to turn the hotel into offices for the foreign ministry, a move contested by the municipal authorities (Birn 2010). In 2010 ownership of the building changed hands. The building was acquired by the country's central bank, the Bank of Albania, for 30 million euros. Even during the renovation of their headquarters, they were using it as office space. "However, because the hotel will also need extensive renovations, some local observers say that its acquisition amounts to nothing less than a loan from the bank to the government. Reacting to the acquisition of the hotel by the central bank, the Socialist opposition accused Governor Ardian Fullani of complicity in hiding the government's mismanagement of public funds" (Birn 2010). There were also speculations that the sale was "a way to avoid a short-term liquidity crisis due to the high-interest commercial loans that it took in 2009 to finance massive road building projects" (Birn 2010).

Soon the bank began restoration work of the building. The redesign was headed by the Roman architect Marco Petreschi. According to the bank, the "restoration project is based on the original design of architect Gherardo Bosio, but adjusted to the standards of the new century, together with the green surroundings" (Bank of Albania n.d.). These *adjustments* comprised the construction of three additional areas: a treasury bills facility, a garage with a hanging garden and a block for technical areas (Nepravishta 2017, 51).

This conversion is just one of many examples of how architectural heritage in Albania is treated. The country has gone through quite a few periods, and each transition "was accompanied by the phenomena of abandonment or reconstruction of existing building stock." Even economic changes have had an impact: "Switching systems to the market economy found Albania with a large number of retail, industrial, social and public buildings not suitable for the needs of the community and for the functions for which they were built." The need for a change of use

was "a result of significant political and socio-cultural changes" (Nepravishta 2017, 50). Adaptive re-use and rehabilitation of those works inherited from Italian architects and engineers, completed between 1925 and 1943, was part of a broader discourse and nowadays is also a paradigmatic subject of this discussion. The Hotel Dajti is therefore not an isolated, but an interesting subject. While there are other cases that show different approaches, the hotel is an example where an intervention was deemed necessary to adapt the building to new functions – in order to protect the building as such.

Whether or not selling the hotel was the right step and whether or not this was the right kind of repurposing for a building like this are questions that will likely remain unanswered. "Civil society and professional associations have opposed the idea of transforming Hotel Dajti into bank offices. The change of the function of the building violates the values protected by landmark protection laws and historical memory" (Nepravishta 2017, 53). The bank imagines itself contributing to the commonweal, espousing the "very rich library," and promising "this building will be a window ensuring direct contact with the public, particularly researchers, academics, students and the media" (Bank of Albania n.d.).

Nevertheless, given the character of its future use, the building might continue to be as isolated and exclusive as it, in one way or another, always has been and – being in the middle of construction – definitely is now.

THE HOTEL AS AN ACTOR

Examining how the hotel came into being and its history is one aspect of approaching a building with an Actor Network Theory (ANT) mindset. Regarding it as an actor instead of merely a passive object means there is another mission: to witness its actions and reactions, observing closely, focusing not only on the building itself but on its *interactions* with other artefacts – like human beings.

APPROACHING THE BUILDING

The Actor Network Theory serves not as a toolkit for understanding the relations various actors are forming, but rather opens the observer's field of vision for such a perspective. This leads us to the vital role the spectator plays, especially when, as in this case, the building's condition is one of alteration and reinterpretation.

Studying an artefact with restricted accessibility, only possible to observe in a short and defined period, in which factors like time of day, day of the week or simply the weather contribute, means even more dialogue and keeping in mind the observer's role. We affect the choice of agents, the environment, the people we talk to, in fact every parameter. To illustrate the observer's impact (and the one of coincidence), for example accessibility to a building can vary depending on the day of the week and whether the responsible security guard sympathises with us.

The building's condition is another factor, making the situation a special one. The studied artefact is in a continuous state of transformation. This has an impact on its examination, since observing is not only possible in a short time period, but is also performed in the unstable balance between the past in tangible form (as the building did not experience many transformations in keeping up with the times) and the present alterations as it looks to an uncertain future.

Thus this approach results in describing the situation the observer finds himself in this short period of time, with the subject transforming every time we check.

The 'here-and-now' situation: The building is inaccessible, security guards, several surveillance cameras and fences covered with renderings of the interior prevent outsiders from illegitimately entering. The building itself is covered with scaffolding, a second shell shielding the inside and hiding it from external eyes peering curiously from the other side of the fencing.

Trees surround the Hotel Dajti; along the front, the main road Bulevardi Deshmoret e Kombit allows either a very close but disconnected juxtaposition of hotel and observer (due to the height of the screens and fences) or generates a confronting vis-à-vis across the large gap of the six-lane street where fences, scaffolding and trees obscure the structure. The main entrance's original canopy peeks above the obstructions towards the park.

The former hotel is enclosed on three sides by the Galeria Kombetare e Arteve with parking spots and a sloping dead-end walkway, the canal Lana and the Catholic cathedral Shen Pali.

NETWORK: AGENTS AND ROLES

To witness the building's actions and the network in which it operates, we need to consider its communicative relations with other actors, going from the 'inside', the original structure, over the scaffolding, the barriers and the renderings shown on the fences, to the surrounding environment generated with other 'neighbouring' artefacts like the park, the gallery and the streets.

The remaining original structure is transforming, changing its appearance and thereby making tremendous noise together with the workers. However, nearly no communication or interaction emerges outside the encapsulated area. One gains the impression of a passive, rigid and yet strong artefact. The scaffolding, a second skin, plays an important role as it does the biggest part of hiding the structure, and – by doing so – takes over and manages its communication. Just like the fence and renderings depicted on it are other actants which communicate for the hotel by showing its future prospects, formulating the investor's very precise vision. In order to describe the interactions with the environment and surroundings, it is crucial to see these actants, the original structure, the scaffolding, the fence and renderings, not as separated artefacts but intertwined. On the one hand, barriers and coverings are visually concealing

the hotel, but they exist in their certain forms because of the structure behind them, that is, the hotel *affects* **their appearance. And this is the substance that comprises the interactions with the surrounding actors.**

Tirana, 15 June 2019

The boulevard is flooded by a rhythmic swell of cars, conducted by the flicking of the traffic lights. The stream in and out of the city centre is that of a common Saturday. From here, from the side, it seems almost like a regular highway, just taking up space with its many lanes, cutting through the cityscape. Its magnitude isn't obvious without the axial views and their grand finale. The road surface is heating up under the strong – midday, midsummer – rays of sunlight. Here, my position and the park form an opening along the stringent line of the boulevard. My facade is set back, withdrawn from the road's edge, allowing for a little green pocket and a big entrance gesture. Parallel to my front, trees are aligned. Had not time passed this quickly, had they not grown this tall, they would still be decorating me, instead of hiding. They would still have an organised, rather than organic expression. What does it matter now? Maybe, with the trees only, it would have been exciting to discover what's behind them. Today, there's so many more layers and only few slits, that I can see through or be seen through. First they treated me like a majesty, later they forgot me and now they've tried to undress me for a while, to rip off my clothes, to tease out my secrets. I got wrapped in scaffolding and I feel like a knight in armour. Ready to fight, at the same time ponderous to move. People are passing by, dazzled by renderings of a future-me, they hardly notice me and don't understand who I really am. Some do have an opinion and seem to dislike the shown visions. They use it as a blank canvas to say what they think. I wish those pictures would show the reality instead, or even the past, the golden times, me at my peak. Some of the older ones remember my past, for those I'm still a point of reference, they have a different perception of the play I'm casted for. Back then, everyone wanted *to know what happened inside, wanted to hear what was said and done, although not everyone dared to enter. Now, I'm shouting out loud and trying to stop this, make someone understand, but nobody is listening, nobody seems to care. I am being watched over by cameras and guards, to keep away anyone who is asking inconvenient questions about the history I went through or the path I'm going to walk down soon. Of course, it is not easy to peek behind the scenes, but still – also guards are human, they are able to sympathise and decide which rules to follow and when. The only people I'm in physical, actual contact with are the workers. But they treat me like a patient with a serious disease. Sometimes I wonder why they have to remove this much to make me whole again. How much of me will be left? When the streets are quiet, I can hear the whispering, I hear rumours being spread. I can hear them talking about politics, power, corruption... There's many different opinions being expressed and expectations being formed. But more time will pass, a future will come and will always turn out differently than thought. I'm growing old and still growing, but my old grandeur is fading away.*

Hotel Dajti

SKANDERBEG SQUARE

JAKOB HAINICH, MARCO REUSCH, LENNART WESKI

INTRODUCTION

Skanderbeg Square is located in the exact centre of the Albanian capital of Tirana and thus serves as its main plaza. It is named after the Albanian national hero Gjergj Kastrioti Skenderbeu whose monument, an equestrian statue, is part of the plaza as well. Many of the main roads in Tirana lead towards the square.

The square was built by the Austrians in 1917 and gained popularity after Tirana became the capital of Albania in 1920. From this time forward, it was subjected to several changes throughout Albanian history. In the time of the Italian occupation, the architect Florestano Di Fausto designed a new city plan for Tirana in a neo-renaissance style with the city centre and the monumental administrative buildings around Skanderbeg Square. During the Albanian monarchy from 1923 to 1939, a couple of buildings were built around Skanderbeg Square. All of them were torn down during the communist period.

The following buildings now surround the square, clockwise from the north: the *Tirana International Hotel*; the *Palace of Culture*; the *Et'hem Bey Mosque* with its clocktower; the city council of Tirana (*Bashkia*); the *Ministry of Public Works, Transport and Communication*; the *Ministry of Agriculture*; the *Ministry of Economy, Trade and Energy*; the current *Puppet Theatre* which housed the parliament between 1924 and 1939; the head office of the Democratic Party of Albania; the *Banka e Shqiperise* and the *National Museum of History*.

DEVELOPMENT AFTER WORLD WAR II

After World War II Skanderbeg Square underwent several redesigns. During the 1960s the old bazaar quarter with its orthodox cathedral and town hall

had to give way to the new, monumental buildings and large parade grounds for political events. The new buildings that surrounded the square were designed in the style of modern socialist architecture. The Palace of Culture, built between 1960 and 1966, was the first new building along the eastern side of Skanderbeg Square and features a high portico made of eighteen columns. The statue of Gjergj Kastrioti Skenderbeu was erected in his honour on the 500th anniversary of his death in 1968. In 1979 Hotel Tirana opened at the north side of the square. With its fifteen floors it was the tallest building in Tirana until the late 1990s. Two years later in 1981, the National Museum of History was opened. For that reason, the square was extended westwards. Above the entrance of the museum is a large mural mosaic entitled "The Albanians" depicting various figures from ancient to modern Albanian history and still shapes the square to this day. After the death of Enver Hoxha, the dictator of the socialist Albanian republic, the green in front of the National Museum of History had to give way to a statue in his honour but was torn down during student protests in 1991.

After the end of communism in 1990 Skanderbeg Square was characterised by heavy traffic and served as the main junction connecting all parts of the city. Later on, a large roundabout was established which created a massive, remote and relatively inaccessible space in the middle of the square surrounded by hectic traffic. The space was populated by funfair rides and small kiosks which were common at that time.

DEVELOPMENT IN THE 21ST CENTURY

Edi Rama, the former mayor of Tirana, started redesigning the city in 2003 with a focus on urban design. He established several programmes to clean up the city, remove illegal buildings and revitalise existing parks. Edi Rama's city makeover programme gained worldwide attention when he invited internationally renowned artists to paint the facades of selected buildings in Tirana. In 2008 he pursued plans to modernise and Europeanise Skanderbeg Square. An international competition was staged, which the Belgian architects' office 51n4e won. Reconstruction and restructuring started in 2010 but was held back due to political reasons. The square should have been turned into a pedestrian and a public transport zone, but the plans were never realised.

After Edi Rama was voted out of office in 2011 the current major Lulzim Basha pushed for a new plan to redesign the square. It called for more green space and banned cars from the square altogether. In 2010 the state of Kuwait provided around 10 million euros to finance the project.

In 2016 under the aegis of Tirana's most recent mayor Erion Veliaj, the square was redesigned once more and altered to its current form. The square was turned into a pedestrian zone, and an underground parking garage was built under the west side of the square. Erion Veliaj largely continued the plans of his predecessor Edi Rama. The main intention of his redesign was to establish a large public space, like in the olden days, for the public and young people.

STATUS QUO

Skanderbeg Square in its current form opened in June 2017. The total cost of construction amounted to approximately 13.5 million euros, the lion's share of which was covered by the state of Kuwait. The roughly 38,000 sqm plaza is surrounded by a "green belt" which offers shade, movable and immovable seating and a variety of native plants and trees. The square itself is shaped like a flattened pyramid and covered in stones quarried from all over Albania, symbolising the unity of the country. When you stand on top of the pyramid at the centre of the square, the surrounding buildings start to lose their monumental feeling. As you walk towards the plaza, the pyramid covers the buildings, and it looks like they are "drowning".

There are around one hundred wells embedded in Skanderbeg Square which cover different parts of the square with water and lower the ambient temperature in the summertime by about two degrees.

FIRST IMPRESSIONS

When we arrived in Tirana and set foot on the square for the first time, we discovered a very large plaza with monumental communist-era buildings populating the edge of the square and a nicely designed park surrounding it. You walk across the square, dip your toes into one of the wells, you recognise the metal chairs and the large plastic seating objects and you start to appreciate the very European design of the whole square. Despite the fact you have never been here before, you somehow get the feeling of "knowing" the place.

The metal chairs can be moved freely, and you see groups of people, sitting in the shade between the columns of the Palace of Culture or in front of the National Museum under the blazing midday sun. The "green belt" offers shade and provides a little bit of privacy in the middle of the city. The green behind the Skanderbeg monument serves as a gathering place where people can watch open-air movies or football on the big screen. The whole square emits a very informal feeling. This makes it easy to gain a low threshold entry to it.

During the day the square is mostly used for crossing and only tourists can be seen in the middle of the square. Locals avoid the heat and seek shade in the "green belt" or in front of the various buildings. At night when it gets a little bit cooler, the whole atmosphere changes. People gather on and around the square, street musicians and performers demonstrate their talent, teenagers ride their bikes and scooters, and the whole square turns into a 'catwalk'.

When you ask the locals about Skanderbeg Square, everybody seems to have a different opinion. However, on one thing they all agree – during the day the square is just not usable or even bearable. The colourful stone surface turns into a white, dusty wasteland during midday, because it heats up so much. It makes you feel like you're walking on a frying pan with no shade at all. The vitality and liveliness in the evening hours does not translate to daytime use.

The various plants and trees effectively cover large parts of the surrounding buildings, giving the main square an even more isolated feeling. The identity-giving qualities of the square are lost in the eyes of many. Although the history of the square might be a problematic one, it still represents a large part of Albanian history and identity and trying to erase and forget its past is never right.

But the mixed feelings are not just the result of a planning decision (or mistake). They arise because the place has a symbolic meaning and a story that one does not grasp at first sight. Historically, every leader of Albania made changes to Skanderbeg Square and every change of the square also symbolised a change in politics or power. In the eyes of the locals, Edi Rama joins ranks with his predecessors. The European feeling we perceived when we set foot on the square for the first time was not unintentional: Albania wants to join the EU and its first efforts are to Europeanise their capital and rid itself of its communist past. Rama studied art in Paris and wants Tirana to project the image of a European renaissance city. Even in the participative processes held with the locals, images and paintings of European renaissance cities and ideas were shown. Also the towers which are planned to surround the square are reminiscent of Tuscan cities. The shallow pyramid on the square mirrors the pyramid of Enver Hoxha, just down the *Boulevard of Martyrs*. The main idea of

the plaza is to balance the asymmetry of the square with the symmetry of the historical centre of Tirana and to "tie together" the various architectural heritages surrounding it. However, in the eyes of the locals it greatly fails to do so.

ERASING AND LEAVING TRACES

Looking at the Skanderbeg Square, it seems obvious that mostly political actors were involved in building, developing, destroying and changing the square over decades. The network splits itself up in several networks, but everything is connected: citizens of Tirana, the historically and culturally important buildings surrounding the square, the political circumstances and the loaded history of the square and the whole country. The citizen-based network always has to deal with a higher power which tries to tell them what is right and how they have to interact and abide. The network of buildings symbolised the power of fascism/communism and should now be hidden. The history and the political circumstances inject the whole story with underlying conflict and confusion.

But how and at what point did the place itself become an actor?

To define the exact point is impossible. Presumably it was the creation of the square itself or more exactly the thought of doing so a long time ago. The situation nowadays seems complicated, and there are so many layers that it is difficult to unravel the Gordian Knot. Assuming the place itself has taken on the role of an actor in the vast network of history, residents, political wishes, individuals (e.g. mayors, dictators) and so on, we tried to define a programme for it. With respect to the various changes over time and their importance for the whole country, we called the programme "erasing and leaving traces".

The whole square serves as a collective memory, for joy or sorrow to the current rulers who always try to erase the former memory by leaving their own traces on this hard-fought square. Some acted more brutally than others. In our eyes, the current solution is the first to change the square completely without erasing it totally. It is the first that takes every actor and his/her point of view into account and at least gives him/her the chance to adapt slowly. Buildings drowning through a pyramid that reminds us at the same time of the brutal dictator Envher Hoxha – it's a paradox that a square is able to subtlely drown ancient history by pointing it out at the same time. What makes it so complex are the broad angles of view from which one can try to understand the place. But this variety is no coincidence, it is the intended change to prepare a broad network for the future and start to imagine new points of view – without erasing traces.

The latest changes embolden every actor in this network to leave their traces – and if it is only the steps in the water that will dry out after a few hours. The place itself teaches how to deal with loaded history by neither heroising individual parts nor trying to obliterate them. It is the multifaceted square itself that started a wide discussion about heritage, history and Albania's future in a way that no human actor could have done. There is no guarantee that the current situation will outlast the next change of power or the will of some individuals. In our opinion, it doesn't have to because at least the current design was an urgently needed chapter in the square's history and fulfils the programme of "erasing and leaving traces".
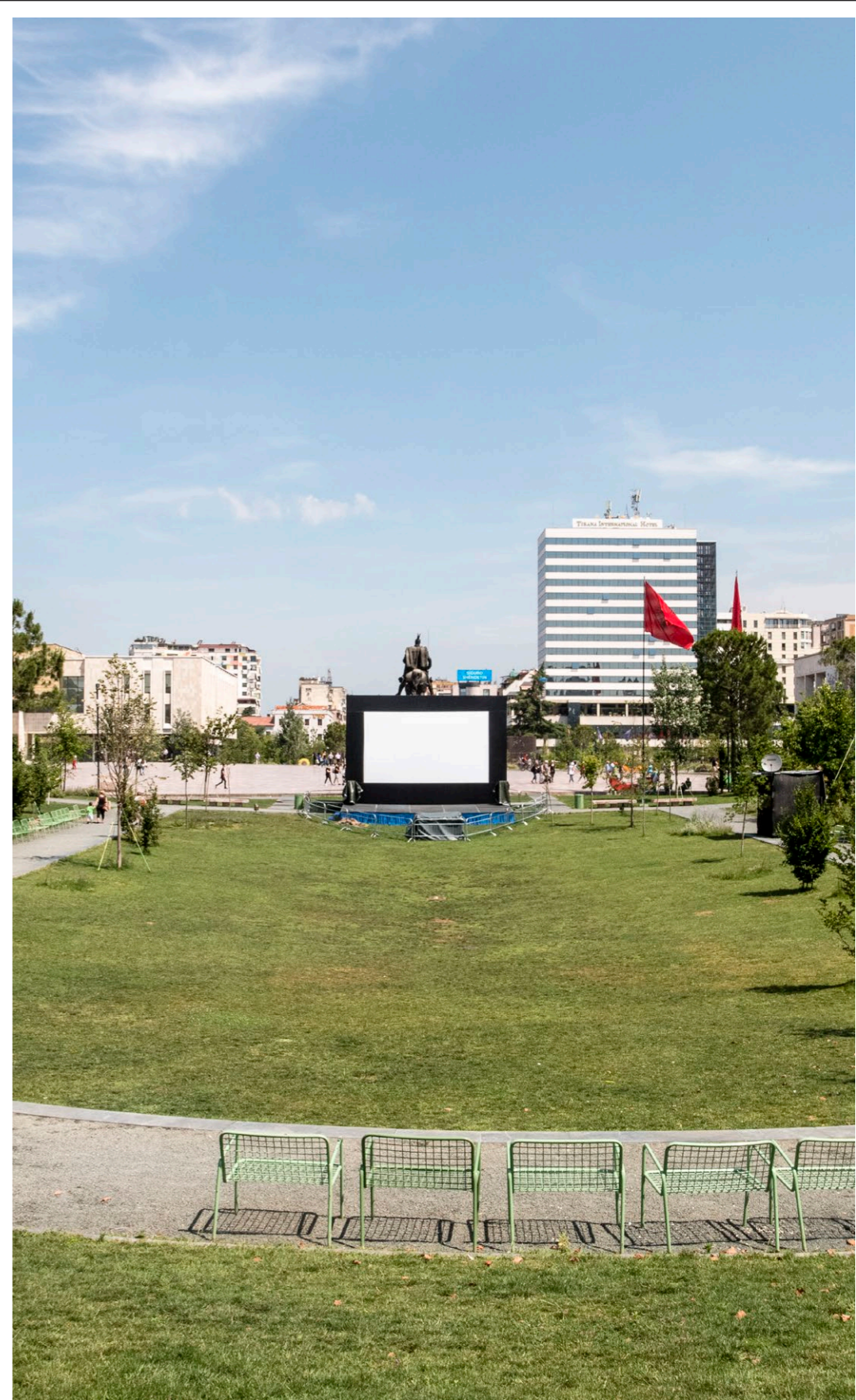
PAUL BEENEN, FABIAN ELLGUTH, SIMON KOLBE

ACTOR AND SETTING

A small building in the middle of a flourishing city, easily overlooked by most people – and yet it its historical and social importance for Albania is indisputable.

The building, now used as a puppet theatre on the edge of *Skanderbeg Square*, is surrounded by other buildings that surpass its size and charisma at first glance. But at second glance, the viewer becomes aware of its significance in a wide-ranging network which not only takes on urban visual and historical dimensions, but also has immense significance for Albanian society of the past and present. In order to understand its role as an actor in this network, one must examine the history of Tirana and that of today's puppet theatre.

The building was planned in 1913 by the Austrian occupation as an officers' mess hall on the outskirts of the city. When Albania regained its independence in 1920, the officers' mess, which was still under construction, was designated the new parliament out of necessity. The building fulfilled this function from its completion in 1924 until the occupation of Tirana by the Italian Fascist regime in 1939. Under the puppet government of the landowner Shefqet Verlaci, Tirana was transformed into a large city as expressed through its fascist, rational architecture. At that time, new government buildings were erected, as well as a boulevard, banks and monuments. The urban planning and architectural construction emphasised the dominance and power of the foreign government by Italian fascism. The *Camera dei Fasci* was installed in the officers' mess, which can be compared to today's lower house of parliament, and thus continued to fulfil its function as a centre of political power.

In the following phase of communism, led by its dictator Enver Hoxha, the former seat of government was used as a cultural palace starting in 1950. At the same time, the puppet theatre, which is still housed in the building today, was founded.

The period of communism in Tirana was generally characterised by the construction of many representative buildings. The architectural ideology of the communist
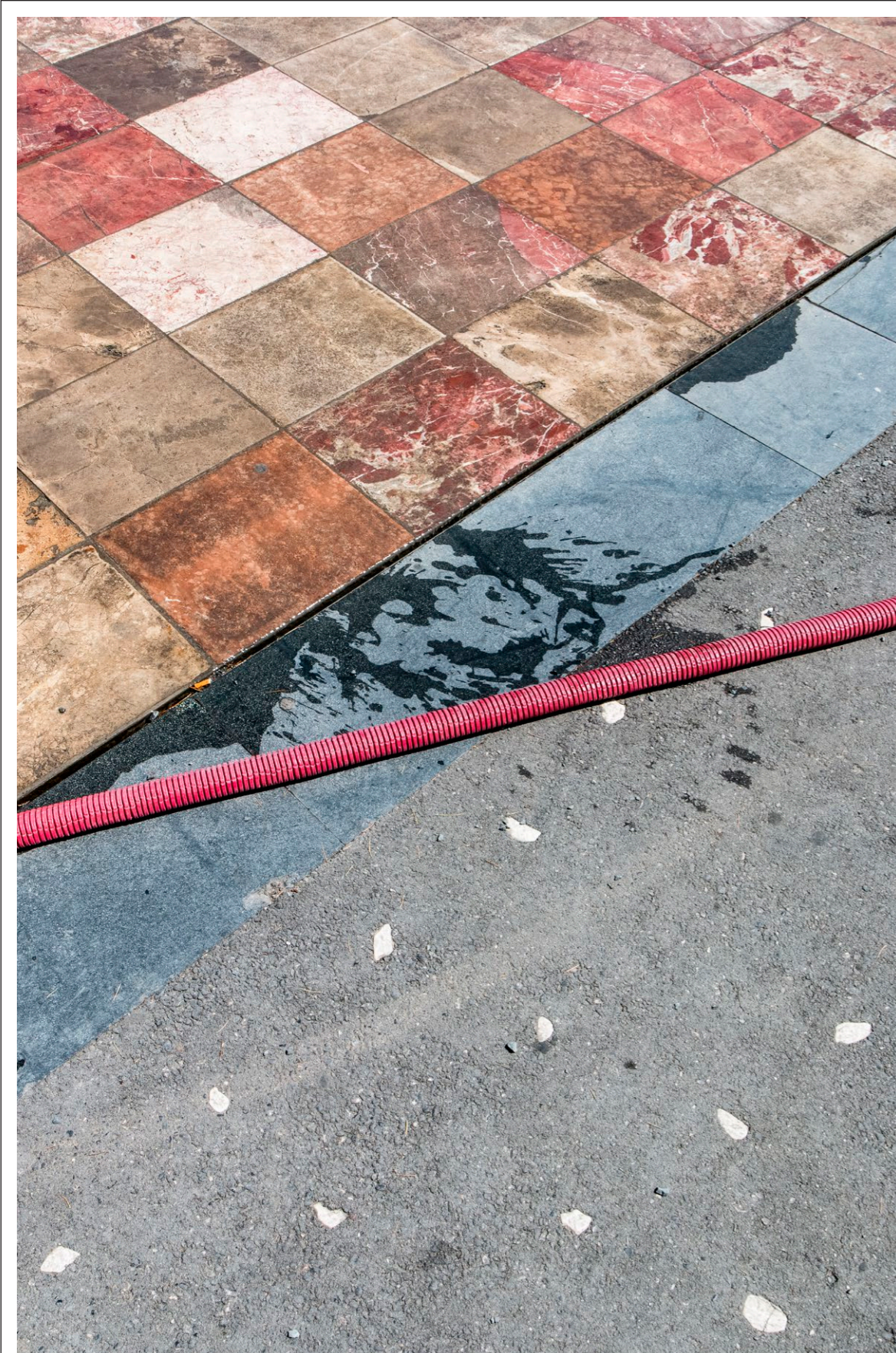
regime manifested itself particularly at Skanderbeg Square, especially in the design of the *National Museum* and the new *Palace of Culture*. With the completion of the Palace of Culture in the immediate vicinity, the puppet theatre remained the only function in the former officers' mess.

Today Skanderbeg Square is both the spatial, social and cultural centre of the city. All major axes through the city end at the square. Around it, new high-rises mark the current developments and growth of the city. The puppet theatre building stands in contrast to this architectural development. Compared to its neighbours, it is rather small and inconspicuous and leaves the big stage to the surrounding buildings. Looking back on the development of the building and its functions, it elicits the impression of increasing political degradation – from parliament and the seat of government to a puppet theatre.

During the same period of time, the square located at the far end of a small town saw several stages of development and rose to become the political, cultural and social centre of the city. Everything around it grew bigger and more important. Over the course of time, the building became increasingly restrained in its political significance and public perception due to its surroundings – so much so that it fell into oblivion. If one asks the locals today, they only know the puppet theatre in its current function. Nobody talks about the officers' mess or the parliament anymore.

STRUCTURE

The building is located on the south-western edge of Skanderbeg Square in the immediate vicinity of the *Ministry of Energy and Industry*, the *Albanian National Bank* and the *Orthodox Resurrection Cathedral*. Its main facade clearly faces Skanderbeg Square, to which also the main entrance opens. It leads into the building, lying centrally on the main nave, and is enclosed by a small foyer, which acts as a central distribution hall, from which all the important premises depart. The

building is divided into a main wing and two laterally adjoining side wings, which in their design formulation, height and dimension are clearly subordinate to the central main wing. This is also reflected by their functions. While the main hall houses the auditorium and the foyer, the wings have toilets, changing rooms and technical rooms.

With the arrival of the puppet theatre in 1950, the building was extended with an annex that contained the stage and all its necessary technical equipment. This is barely noticeable from within but is clearly identifiable from outside. The design of the facade is significantly reduced; pilasters and similar design features are completely eliminated, and the wall paint is simply kept in white, while the main building, derived from its window and column grid, is alternately held in green and white. All the building cubatures have their own roofs, but these are covered with roofing shingles, resulting in a consistent overall impression.

PROGRAMME

In its role as an actor, the building pursues its own programme which becomes apparent through its observation in the (historical) network. First of all, it is expressed as a place of culture and relaxation with respect to the functions of the puppet theatre, ice-cream shop and café. At the same time, it is located in the immediate vicinity of the city centre, Skanderbeg Square and its institutional facilities, whose representative character is measurable at every angle. Despite its outward inconspicuousness, the puppet theatre is of certain importance for the urban population of Tirana. Through its functions, it offers a place of relaxation that contrasts the hectic pace of downtown Tirana. The programme can be determined from these included functions, which result from the different facilities in the building.

As a children's puppet theatre, it provides security, peace and culture – for small people in a small room. It creates its own small world in a large, colourful and diverse environment. Its inner

use emits a sense of tranquillity that can also be interpreted externally in its architectural language. It should never be given a representative character, because its inner purpose would thus be invalidated and would lead to its expulsion from its network. And on the other hand, it needs its neighbours which allow it to withdraw in the first place.

For its part, the puppet theatre finds its purpose by allowing the other buildings to seek the attention of the general public. Thus, the building's programme can be understood as a place of rest and a refuge from the urban space, especially in contrast to its neighbours and Skanderbeg Square. The programme can be supplemented from a historical perspective. Due to its former public significance, it serves as a contemporary witness in the palimpsest of Tirana's political developments and thus as a representative of Albania. In this way, the former officers' mess and seat of government once housed inside this building now play an identity-forming role. It can tell the population about past political regimes and social plans.

One quickly notices that the building is the "odd one out" compared to the others in its immediate vicinity in terms of both its use and dimensions. It takes a back seat, giving way to the other actors in the network which also have much more representative external tasks to fulfil in their use as museums, opera houses, parliaments or national banks. But that is exactly what is needed for this system to function. The way their uses and spatial dimensions come together couldn't be more convenient.

NETWORK

The communicative relationship between the building, its surroundings and the urban population can be seen in its network. The building's programme is aimed at different people. On the one hand, the described function of rest and relaxation, conveyed by the café and ice-cream shop, exerts a direct influence on pedestrians. Looking for a place to linger, they find a possibility to escape the hustle and bustle. On the other hand, it

consciously attracts people who want to visit the puppet theatre. This results in a mode of communication that is conditioned by spatial proximity as well as a radiance that attracts people from all over the city and represents a reason for visiting the centre.

Its second role as a place of culture and relaxation is more than adequately achieved by its traditional use. This is further promoted by its network. Especially by small things, like advertising signs, but above all by the carousel located in the immediate vicinity on Skanderbeg Square. In its use and positioning, it forms a natural bridge from the city centre to the puppet theatre. Even if they cannot necessarily be described as connected, they influence each other and thus draw attention to one another, describing a kind of child-friendly prezone that differs in its use from the rest of the square.

In its programme as a place of identity, the communication appears to function less effectively in the current situation. There are no clues to its history. Only an active examination of the building reveals its significance for the history of Albania and its population.

It is noticeable that the awareness of the historical background of puppet theatre does not really exist in the broad mass of today's population. Very few people are aware that the building has not always contained the puppet theatre, let alone that it used to be the most important political institution in Tirana – if not in Albania. Thus the full potential of its role in the network is not being fully tapped which is likely due to both its lack of staging and its environment, which tells more about the identity-creating history of the Albanian population purely in terms of its use. The puppet theatre with its history could contribute to this if there were greater public awareness of its role, for instance, through something like exhibitions. In this way, the building could make the most of its potential and further establish its programme as a place of identity. Maybe this small contribution could help generate more public awareness of its role as a place of identity.

Puppet Theatre

THE PYRAMID

SELMA BULIĆ, LEON CLAUS, DIELLZA ELSHANI

This chapter will try to open a debate on the role of the *Pyramid* of Tirana, its position in different setups and different networks during Tirana's and Albania's history.

The pyramid with its own history has existed in Tirana for over twenty years. Even though it was built as a mausoleum for the former dictator of Albania Enver Hoxha, it became a strong social node for its outer usage as the regime changed. The following review of its history and investigation will enable the reader to better understand the importance of the pyramid as an actor in the city of Tirana.

The state of Albania and its political situation throughout history has played an essential role in forming Tirana from the pre-communist regime to its present-day condition. After the strong Italian influence before the war and right after, the aim to transform Tirana into a socialist city became the focus of attention in 1960s. At the time, urban planning was centralised which made it hard to differentiate between urban planning and politics (Frank 2009). The equity principles of socialism characterised Albanian-styled communism along with its attempts to control all aspects of urban public life (Rugg 1994). Tirana was turning into a monumental city, especially the centre of Tirana which hosted the main administrative buildings. The city centre represented force and rebirth at the same time (Frank 2009). One of the buildings that played an important role throughout the history of Tirana and became symbolic of the city was the pyramid of Tirana. The pyramid represents the city's troubled past and uncertain future. Even though it is perceived as magnificent, ugly and strange at the same time, it undoubtedly continues to be one of the most significant buildings in Albania. Its significance comes as a result of the related actors and the network of actors it belongs too.

TIRANA'S PYRAMID AS A MEMORIAL

In a country where regimes and leaders have often changed, a large number of memorials have been built to glorify them. Each succeeding regime attempted to portray itself as the best one and create memorials that would surpass the previous ones in size, cost, and magnificence. In Tirana, the majority of memorials comprise statues, buildings and the names of streets, parks and squares. Since communism was the last regime that preceded democracy, the presence of memorials from that period is still evident. While changing a name of a street, or removing a statue is easily done, buildings are of longer duration and their existence often gives rise to divided opinions.

In the Tirana memorial network, the pyramid is part of an assortment of memorials with communist origins, especially those associated with the work of Enver Hoxha, and another set of memorials in the form of buildings. While some buildings are still known today for being communist memorials because of their programme at the time (for example, the *House of Leaves* had the function of collecting information during communism, while today it is a museum), the pyramid in Tirana stands out because it was built to be a memorial. Although it doesn't have the same programme today, its form and position still attract the attention of passers-by and leave a deep mark on the collective memory of the city and its identity.

The pyramid stands out as one of Albania's most distinctive landmarks (Nientied/ Janku 2018, 15). It is a subject of controversy, occupies a significant and expansive location in the city and has a characteristic shape that cannot go unnoticed. Moreover, it still possesses an important feature, its original function – the glorification of the communist leader Enver Hoxha. This glorification even pervades its structure with the largest mono-volumetric interior space in Albania (Manahasa/Manahasa 2014, 4) and the distinction of being the most expensive building ever built in Albania.

Although it changed functions over time, its original function casts a shadow over all future ones, and even today after over 25 years, the pyramid still evokes the memory of Enver Hoxha and communism in the minds of Tirana's citizens.

THE PYRAMID IN THE NETWORK OF COMMUNISM

The socialist Tirana including the pyramid itself was constructed during the communist period in Albania. When Enver Hoxha's regime embraced Albania, the country faced authoritarianism and not much democracy (Frank 2009). The history started to reshape Albanian society by breaking with the past. There was a strong arrangement of actors in Albania during the years of communism, all of which were closely related to each other. The location and the characteristics of the building are very important. The space where this "thing" – the pyramid – is located was occupied by two-storey buildings which had to be evacuated after the Central Committee's decision to build Enver Hoxha's museum (Manahasa/Manahasa 2014).

After Enver Hoxha's death in 1958, directions were given to construct a museum in his honour in order to remember him but not enhance his memory (Manahasa/Manahasa 2014).

It's worth mentioning that the socialists were oriented towards operas, museums, theatres and other public cultural institutions (Frank 2009). Many of them were built during the 1960s and 1970s. Therefore, the decision to build a museum for Enver Hoxha was no surprise for Albania. Three years later, still in the era of communism, the pyramid was built in Tirana as a "thing" to complete the network of communism. Tirana itself had been a host of this network and the building by carrying its essential significance. The pyramid was designed in a style that was ahead of its time by a group of four Albanian architects, including Enver Hoxha's daughter Pranvera Hoxha, his son-in-law Klement Kolaneci, Pirro Vaso and Vladimir Bregu.

As soon as it was built, it became a symbol of the city and of the time in which it was built. In this way, it assumed the role of an actor of the wider network and inherited different programmes at different times. However, its relationship to communism is the strongest and most long-lasting one. Since its completion in 1988, it has become part of the communist network because of its original function to which it is affiliated – the museum of the communist leader of Albania Enver Hoxha.

The building's purpose was to glorify the character of Enver Hoxha and communism, and so it is no wonder that it is the most expensive facility ever built in Albania. The building features the most cutting-edge technology used in construction in Albania at that time. It was the first time builders created such a massive inclined surface with a mono-volumetric interior space of the largest span in Albania (Shkreli 2011).

THE PYRAMID IN THE NETWORK OF ITS PROGRAMMES

As we have seen, the pyramid is connected to several other points within the city of Tirana. Its special location within the urban fabric is crucial to its presence in Tirana and to the perception of the residents of Albania's capital. We also discovered that the pyramid was and still is connected to the communist period of Albanian history. Until now, our analysis has not focused on its different functions and users throughout history. In the following paragraphs we will take a closer look at the changing functions.

By referring back to Bruno Latour's text "Technology is Society Made Durable" (Latour 1991) on the Actor Network Theory (ANT), one can think of the pyramid's functions as programmes. The programme is best understood as a correlation between an actor and another actor; both of them act within a certain network which is never complete or fixed. The pyramid and the population of Tirana are both actors. Together they form a specific network which has changed over time due to political changes in so-

ciety. The pyramid can also be part of a wider network, for example, in its interactions within the city and with other buildings in Tirana. In an essay about the pyramid, the authors Odeta Durmishi Manahasa and Edmond Manahasa summarize this thought precisely: "[The pyramid] has some memories on urban fabric; it has some memories in respect to the past and some collective experience to the present and […] it will have some memories for the future" (Manahasa/ Manahasa 2014, 1).

One can apply this idea to the functions of the pyramid: there are different programmes which also change over time. After the period of communism, the monument was used as an international youth centre and a night club and then as a cultural centre. With the focus on youth as a central programme, one can see that the pyramid today is still an important actor. Not only do young people use the building as a reference for describing what Tirana has to offer, but also the space around and on top of the building as public space, e.g. for skating.

A rather different quality of the pyramid – but perhaps the most crucial one – is its political dimension. Especially after the communist period, the pyramid became an actor of political memory and an object of reflection on Albanian history because "[i]t is architecturally, socially and culturally part of Albanians' memory" (Manahasa/ Manahasa 2014, 1). Thus the network of the building as an actor and the programme broadened further. The programme is connected to a network which acts all over Albania and therefore the pyramid becomes an actor of national memory. It is not known for its function, but as an actor which is crucial for reflecting Albania's past: "Though a few remember the building's function, all of society connects it to Enver Hoxha. The only subject of discussion is whether to remember the past or not" (Manahasa/ Manahasa 2014, 7).

Later on during the Kosovo War in the 1990s, the pyramid was used as a NATO command centre and simultaneously for a charity camp. The government as an actor had the most influence on the function of the pyramid over time.

## THE PYRAMID IN THE NETWORK OF TIRANA'S CITIZENS

The pyramid is an actor in people's daily lives, even if it doesn't have public functions anymore. It is located at the point where people pass by daily. People use it as a playground, climb on it, take pictures of it, bypass it or unintentionally walk past it. To learn the opinions of passers-by, an interview method was used, and the results were presented graphically. Twenty-seven citizens were interviewed, and their responses were classified into two categories: persons younger (10) and older (13) than 30 years. Nine persons declined to answer our questions, while two persons under 30 were tourists; their answers were not included in the results. The following questions were asked, to which the respondents were asked to answer "yes" or "no". The graph shows "yes" answers in percentages.
A: Do you know the original purpose of the pyramid?
B: Have you ever visited the interior of the building?
C: Do you associate the building with communism?
D: Do you think the building should be demolished?
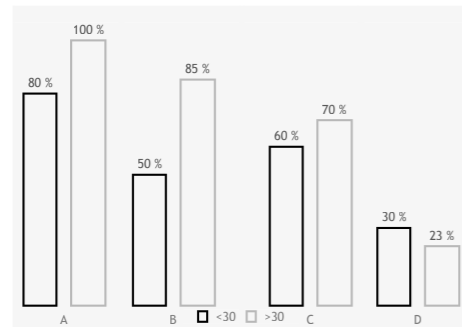
CONCLUSION

In conclusion one can summarise that the pyramid is connected to its function as a memorial to Enver Hoxha. Its uses and function were and have always been tied to Albanian history – especially to the communist period. On one hand, its past and current use reflects the ways Albania copes with its communist histo-ry. The pyramid and the name of Enver Hoxha are still tied together, although communism vanished in 1990. This becomes especially apparent when people were asked whether the building should be demolished or not. On the other hand, the pyramid takes on a very ambivalent role in the city of Tirana. Its central location at the *Bulevardi Bajram Curri* ensures that the building remains a point of orientation and thus bears the potential for a significant public function.

By referring to Bruno Latour (Latour 1991)*,* one must reflect on the programme of the building. As a three-dimensional space, the building is an interactive actor within the city. However, the pyramid is also a symbolic actor when referred to as a symbol of Albanian history. Although some say that the pyramid is like a shadow of Albania's "bad past", it remains nevertheless a part of Albanian history. Why then should the building be demolished?

According to our research, one could conclude that the programme of the building is to reveal Albanian history and therefore serve as an actant in the still-existent network of communism. At a closer look, it becomes obvious that its precise programme as an actor is to activate the Albanian population in order to think about the past. In this regard, the pyramid influences the population of Tirana and shapes their way of thinking. Another argument for this conclusion and against a purely pro-communist agency is the form of the building. Many people remember buildings by their function. They know what a certain building has to offer. In the case of the pyramid, the contrary is true. Especially young people recognise the building by its form, not by its (former) function. This might also be a hint for the future. By understanding and combining the form and function as crucial aspects, the pyramid of Tirana can become an actor which preserves Albanian history. At the same time, the pyramid gains its quality through its appearance and thus serves as a landmark and public space.
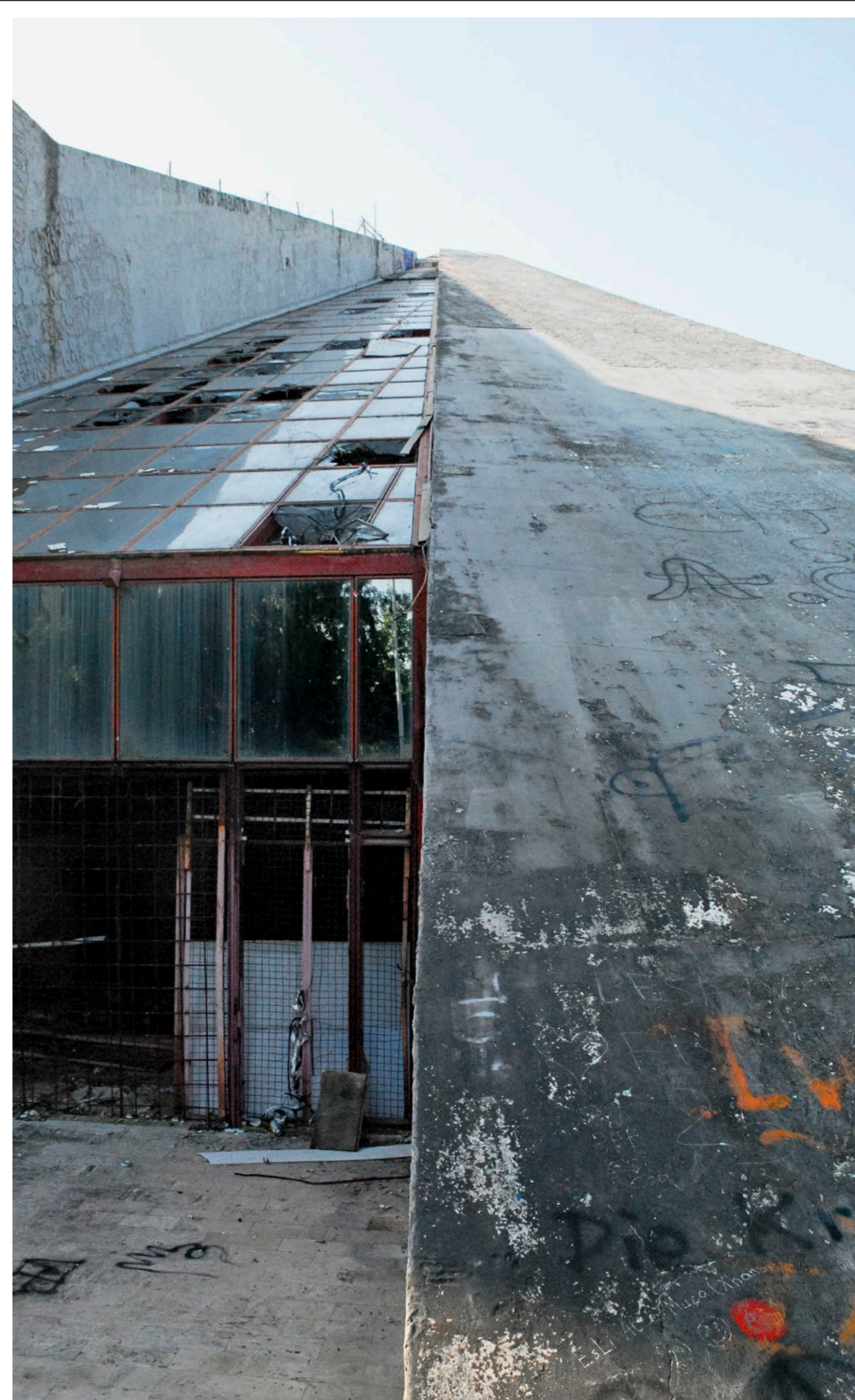
POLYTECHNIC UNIVERSITY

ANDONI REGUEIRO CANDINA, LOUIS OEHLER, ROSALIE RATZ

HISTORY AND CONTEXT

In April 1939 Albania had already been formally occupied by Italian military forces in hopes of returning Italy to its long-gone Roman "glory". Soon thereafter, a thirty-six year old Florentine was appointed to design Italy's architectural centrepiece in Tirana. Gherardo Bosio (1903-1941) was his name and although he had designed an array of public buildings for Albania's capital, Bosio was mainly tasked with the development of a masterplan for Tirana's administrative centre. His proposal consolidated the contemporary centre with the historic downtown, creating a monumental core.

Bosio envisioned Tirana's historic downtown (*Skanderbeg Square*) as a vital hub. Based on ancient Roman city planning, he laid two main roads – one running from north to south, the other from east to west – which intersected at the square. He proposed expanding the administrative infrastructure along the south axis and placed a cluster of representative buildings at the end of it, creating a dialogue between Skanderbeg Square and the reformative *piazza*.

Piazza del Littorio (now Mother Teresa Square) presented three main public buildings of Italian-occupied Tirana: *la casa dell'Opera Dopolavoro Albanese* (right), the seat of *Gioventù Littorio Albanese* (left), and behind it an *Olympic stadium* while *Casa del Fascio*[1] prevailed as the ensemble's centrepiece (middle).

STRUCTURE AND ARCHITECTURE

Tirana's *Casa del Fascio* was a three-storey building, divided into two wings by a five-storey chimney-like structure. Everything was built in travertine, giving the building a reflective white tone on sunny summer days. According to the author,

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he drew inspiration from a classical north Albanian house type called *kulla* (fig. 1). Furthermore, the structure was set on a pedestal, towering above its neighbouring buildings and the square, ensuring its visibility from the historic downtown.

Nowadays fascism and communism have left Albania, and the shell that once used to house and impose both ideologies has been expanded and currently serves as an academic building: the main seat of the Polytechnic University of Tirana.[2]

fig. 1: Sketch of Kulla

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND OF THE RESEARCH

The following map shows the results of our two-day observation at the Polytechnic University of Tirana. We worked by taking pictures and observing the place. In keeping with our overall topic, the Actor Network Theory (ANT) proposed by Michel Callon, Bruno Latour and John Law, every "thing" can become an actor, also called "actant" – regardless of whether it is alive or not. It means that every "thing" matters equally and contributes to a certain environment or situation. We collected every impression we came across – people, animals, objects, materials, buildings, light and shade, and we took pictures to document those things and put them in a map to show the relationships between the different actants. It is a way of describing not why but rather how things come together. The aim is to define the so-called "programme" – the use or wish of an actant – that is formed by connected actants and consequently influences the connected actants within the network. Each actant possesses its own programme.[3]

We went there on Saturday and Sunday, 15 and 16 June 2019, visiting the location at various times of day – in the afternoon, at night, in the early morning and around noon. This is relevant as we defined the university's programme at a weekend, which presumably differs from its weekday programme. We think it's important to keep this aspect in mind.

THE POLYTECHNIC UNIVERSITY AND ITS COMMUNICATIVE NETWORK

We came as observers, and it turned out to be an outside observation trying not to interrupt the goings-on. By this we mean that we did not enter the university (as we were not allowed inside), and we tried to have as little influence as possible on the whole setting. Considering our research output, we decided to embed ourselves as outside actants, as we are not as closely connected to the research object as the major actants are.

Thus, our observation turned out to present more or less a spatial situation of the building's surroundings which obviously concerned its position in and its relationship to the city of Tirana. The following map shows the communicative relationships of the Casa del Fascio/Polytechnic University building that we observed.

MAP (fig. 2)

The connections between the actants are shown by lines. The more connections an actor has to others, the more important it becomes in the whole fabric. The size of the letters refers to its extent and thus to its importance within the network. The aim of mapping these things is to determine the programme of the building in its current situation, considering all factors neutrally and equally, as explained before.
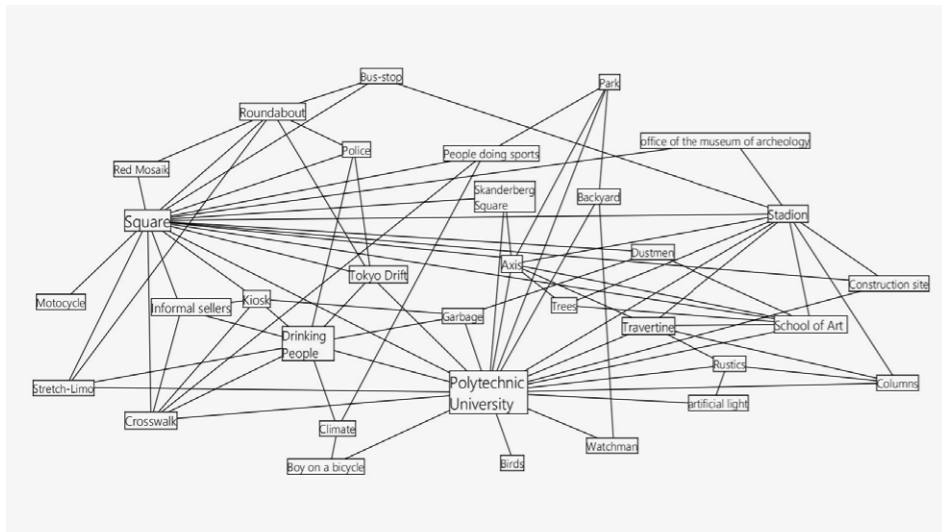
fig. 2: Map of the Polytechnic University

Time does not play any role in the whole assemblage – but as we said, we considered climate, sun and shade as actants because they have influence on other actants' behaviours as we observed during the field trip. But we will return to this later.

Looking at the map as a whole, we see that there are two main actors within the network: the university itself and Mother Teresa Square. All other actants are related to at least one of them. So that clearly shows us one programme of the university – its position as the largest building on the square at the end of the axis that goes from Mother Teresa Square to Skanderbeg Square.

But delving deeper into the network, we obtain a closer look at the smaller branches that reveal more complex programmes.

Our discussion so far has dealt with understanding the strange and complex atmosphere of the Mother Teresa Square in Tirana. Our primary focus is on the former Casa del Fascio, and by describing its network, we aim to get a closer look of the actors and their relationships. Our research setting was limited to a certain time and space. Therefore, we shall concentrate on the happenings at the weekend from the early morning hours until midnight, which thereby comprises the frame of our network. We photographed and watched the scene throughout the day and recorded every actor we spotted.

MATERIAL, HUMAN BODY AND TIME

While drawing links between these actors, we increasingly found two points difficult to handle. For one, the mapped network became much too dense to capture every single actant, all the relationships and the overall idea. Concerning the important actors – "building material" or "human body", for example – it was not possible to comprehend all the communicative relationships to every actor, especially as relationships shifted.

To solve this first problem and better organise our map, we decided to add a material dimension to each actor: The human body is the material of human actors, *Casa del Fascio* is dominated by travertine and embossed natural stone and the square is made of asphalt. These materials maintain links that are based on physical and chemical reactions – they formulate their own network, a second skin to complex actors like Casa del Fascio. Consequently, this dimension is about how materials connect and what kind of effects these connections have on their actors' programmes. Often material connections formulate an anti-programme to this programme. For example, we observed lots of people in their daily routine seeking the shade when they crossed Mother Teresa Square. The overheated asphalt and the glaring light reflections on the travertine force the human body to take another path than the most direct. This material dimension must always be kept in mind when dealing with architecture.

Secondly, time has a deep impact on which kind of actors are eventually linked together. The birds in the early morning hours are part of the network as well as the car maniacs in the evening – they just never meet each other at the same time. In our investigation, daytime had a strong influence on the constellation of actors. Not every actor in our map was present at the same time (and yet, they can be linked, e.g. no garbage during the night-time events, no birds in the morning hours.) If we are looking at one specific moment, we only observe a group of actors actively linked together. This constellation of actors is the formulation of time in the network; they only occur together during a specific period of time.

FOLLOWING THE CHAIN

Finally, we scrutinised the overall programme of Casa del Fascio and its surroundings. What is the agency behind these walls? To exemplify our method and research idea, we described one chain of actors in a specific period of time (evening).

First, there was the *material dimension* of the scenery. During the day, Mother Teresa Square, its buildings and the climate work against the human actors. As mentioned earlier, the constellation intensifies the effects of the sun. This relationship underlies all programmes or anti-programmes in the network. With the onset of twilight, the relationship reverses. The sunset is accompanied by a slow cooling of the air and stone that allows human actors to reconquer the square. Natural darkness is pushed away by artificial lighting in blue, white and yellow, and the programme of public life beats the anti-programme of nature.

To describe the programme of public life, we looked at *human and non-human actors*. The whole square is enveloped by stone tribunes and stone stairways that offer seating in mass gatherings or in daily life, as is evident in our case. These are frequently used by young and middle-aged people who assume numerous roles. Drunkards are in every group, actors that are strongly connected to the two kiosks and informal merchants. In general, the kiosks and their offered goods attract human actors, so one can observe more clusters of people around them. The invisible, virtual public sphere as represented by smartphones must be mentioned too, as it strongly controls the behaviour of human actors. The centred stairway of Casa del Fascio is topographically the highest point from which one can look straight down the axis to Skanderbeg Square. The stone tribunes around the square also offer a great view of the happenings in the middle. There one can find the car "maniacs". The four-lane road of the axis become even broader as it flows into the square; the asphalt offers ample space for showing off one's driving skills in accelerating, moving around and parking cars (Tokyo Drift). Compared to the daytime, the traffic significantly increases in the evening. The car maniacs remind one of the Albanian tradition of "giro" when the whole family dresses up to have a representative walk in the evening – the costume merely changes to a metal case.

This alternative "giro" leads straight into parallel chains of actors: police officers who enforce the speed limits and care for the safety of the public, dustmen who collect discarded trash and bottles, more spectators swap their virtual representation of the happening with reality etc.

CONCLUSION

The scenery and the constellation of actors creates the impression that Mother Teresa Square sets the stage and audience automatically. This might be the overall programme

of the place. Due to the material dimension, it speaks strongly to the human body and highlights its extraordinary position in countering natural conditions. During the day this is architecturally interpreted as untouchable dignity that lies heavily on the three buildings; during the night more human actors get involved and turn the square into a vibrant place. Strong, historical backgrounds, as one can see in our case, always distracted us from a clear vision of the present. Small, but nonetheless important observations at the location might have been swept under the table by dealing too much with the past. ANT turned out to be a helpful lens to focus on what was really there and provided a balance between fresh observations and already existing information.

1   The title Casa del Fascio was given to a building
     that housed the local branch of the National
     Fascist Party in Italy and its colonies during Benito
     Mussolini's fascist regime.
2   All the information presented in this text is taken
     from the book by Ezio Godoli and Ulisse Tramonti (ed.)
     (2012): Architetti e Ingegneri Italiani in Albania.
     Firenze [Edir Edizioni].
3   Cp. Law, John (2007): 'Actor Network Theory and
     Material Semiotics' (25 April 2007), available at:
     http://www. heterogeneities. net/publications/Law
     2007ANTandMaterialSemiotics.pdf (27 July 2019).

KADARE HOUSE STUDIO

MARVIN BRANDT, KATHARINA WITTKE

On 26 May 2019 the current mayor of Tirana Erion Veliaj posted an picture of himself on Twitter with author Ismail Kadare, his wife Helena Kadare and the Italian architect Elisabetta Terragni in front of a white bookshelf.

This scene served as an occasion to publicly reveal the author's former flat, his living and working space in Tirana, and present the results of its converted function and purpose as a museum. In order to set up the "*Studio House Kadare*", the city of Tirana had purchased the flat along with its interior furnishings and transformed it into an exhibition space under the supervision of the architect Elisabetta Terragni. The tweet highlighting Veliaj and the municipality of Tirana in their endeavours to develop this new exhibition site emphasises the cultural-political publicity efforts connected to this place and reveals the complex agency inscribed there. During our research on location, we would soon discover an extensive system of multi-layered (and coded) figures and things. However, our two-person team that carried out the investigation under self-restricted conditions over three days in discussion with experts (Arba Baxhaku, Maks Velo and Erilda Selaj) on site was only able to superficially explain such a complex system. Accordingly, the text below is a first approximation of this place with examples detailing how architectural artefacts themselves act as actors, constructing, reproducing or rewriting reality. For this purpose, three time-cuts were made. On the basis of these three defined phases – construction phase, living phase and the phase of the site made accessible in a new public realm – we shall discuss the enhancement and transformation of the network constituting to this place.

BETWEEN POLITICAL AND SPATIAL ESTABLISHMENT

The edifice in the *Rruga e Dibrës* was designed by the young architect Maks Velo beginning in 1971. By the time it was completed, it came to embed a foreign body in the otherwise one- to two-storey environment, a formerly Ottoman-precinct east of *Skanderbeg Square*. In the immediate vicinity of Albania's political centre of power, Velo created an *enfant terrible* for the Ministry of Construction which sought to standardise and functionalise the housing industry from a purely technocratic point of view, allowing an idea of architectural expression only in the predefined frame of social building. Velo's compact six-storey building with protrusions and recesses, spacious balconies and a dynamic facade (so-called "*Dice Residential Building*") prominently stands out in the cityscape and contradicts the dogmas of a social realism (Ndreçka & Nepravishta 2014, 30).

Yet the really controversial aspect of this building is harboured in the inner structure of the house. Only when looking at the blueprints does it become apparent that the literary figures Kadare and Agolli were accommodated here in particularly spacious premises, transforming two residential units into one four-by-one apartment in total. This allowed these two writers to set up work and reception areas in their own four walls with maximum comfort. Hence from 1973 onward, Kadare and his family lived on the second floor in a flat extending in full width between the two circulation cores of the housing block. The poet Dritëro Agolli lived on the floor above him. Kadare was already a successful author at the time, and his works had been published abroad on a larger scale. He constantly had to walk a tightrope between demonstrating loyalty to the regime and expressing criticism. Since 1970 he was a member of parliament under Enver Hoxha, yet simultaneously parts of his work were massively censored and sporadically banned. Maintaining close relations with people in power at the time was in

itself part of his ambivalent relationship to the totalitarian system. We can say that he literally "settled in and fitted" under and alongside the dictatorship. The local residential conditions clearly demonstrate what special freedoms the writer enjoyed as a figurehead of the Albanian cultural enterprise in those years. Kadare spent his days writing within a totalitarian system. By focusing on historical subjects, he could write about existential questions and threats. Thus in 1971, the novel *Chronicle in Stone* was published which deals with his childhood in Gjirokastër in the south of the country. The motif of the fireplace as an element of the regional-traditional construction or building culture was echoed in Maks Velo's design in an anachronistic manner by Kadare's decision to install a fireplace in his workspace. Helene Kadare described it as a special place within the apartment, and its installation was Kadare's "project". Marble and fireclay bricks were not available on the market, but acquaintances and friends helped to procure them from other parts of the country. From today's perspective, we can venture diverse speculations about this idiosyncratic architectural artefact and its impact on the author's conduct and output, as well as his private and professional surroundings. On the one hand, the fireplace was a modest luxury object, but on the other hand, it served as a placeholder for history, origin, identity, ritual and spirituality within one's own four walls. The fireplace was an antidote/anti-programme to the rationalisation of everyday life and became part of the Kadare's character and his work processes:

"Is[mail, ed.] attached great importance to the fireplace in his studio. Whenever he noticed that I was annoyed by the whole mess created around the pieces of marble and wood and mortar littering the ground, he kept arguing that the fireplace, more than any other part of the apartment, would be vitally linked to his creative work. As time has shown, this turned out to be completely true." (Kadare, H. 2011, 329)

The interior fittings, including the completion of the chimney, was en-

trusted to the architect Koço Çomi, who also designed the furnishings for government buildings and villas. Between the shared family living area, the living room and the studio, there was a wide, four-winged, large glass panelled folding door that allowed for a flexible room configuration while providing an expressively inviting entrance or amplified threshold to Kadare's studio space. The result was a kind of salon with bourgeois attributes that absorbed and hosted the social life of the writer, the reception of visitors and the business of writing. Part of the salon was also a built-in wardrobe wall with elaborately veneered fronts which served as a library and later became the background of numerous photographs. In the ductwork of the interior doors and built-in customised furniture, the soffits of the windows and balcony doors were also lined with solid wooden frames. The fireplace in the studio also received an appropriately curbed, framing mantelshelf. These individual components were produced by the "Misto Mame" combine. From the 1970s on, the combine was the only remaining production facility for furniture for domestic use. The combine's standardised furniture portfolio containing only a handful of designs for beds, tables, chairs, sofas and shelves, had a major impact on the uniformity of Albanian everyday life under the communist dictatorship. Custom designs made by Misto Mame were reserved for the country's political elite and influential figures.

TRAPPED BEHIND BOOKS

In 1981 Kadare's parable "The Palace of Dreams" got published and was immediately banned. For almost a decade, he lived with his family in the Dice Residential Building under constant observation of the Politburo. For the architect Maks Velo, who had designed a whole series of expressive, geometric buildings with a contemporary international attitude, the universal need for state control had meanwhile become a nightmare. In 1978 he was sentenced to ten years in prison

and forced labour for the modernist tendencies in his work. According to Kadare, his literature saved him from this kind of penalty: "In 1970, after the translation into French, I suddenly became famous in the Western world. The paranoid state was completely unprepared for this success. Around my person, there was only silence. At a much later time I understood that I was expected to say to the Western bourgeoisie: I may please you, but I am your enemy... which never happened" (Kadare, I. 2017). Beyond all ambivalence regarding his behaviour, his insights into an oppressive system and his translated editions of his books were one of the few proofs of a nation's existence, one that had presumably been erased from the map. On the surface, Kadare maintained his relationship to Enver Hoxha, while withdrawing intellectually into the field of literature: "I was a normal writer in an abnormal country. Under dictatorship, a poet's homeland is nothing but language. As a result, we read a lot. Too much. The reality disappeared behind books" (Kadare, I. 2011). After studying in Moscow from 1958 to 1960, Russian translations became Kadare's key to the international literature scene. From the desk in his apartment, Kadare always had an eye on his books right in front of him. The white shelf that served as a library in his studio was an exotic design object among the wooden surfaces of Koço Çomi's interior details. Kadare, who was allowed to travel abroad for business trips, brought it from Italy. The modular system with a few coloured drawers was more flexible and sober than its surrounding area. One of the archive photos by his photographer-friend Petrit Kumi depicts Ismail and Helena Kadare in front of the packed shelf with dozens of books in double rows and personal items like a collection of pipes. Next to the fireplace, the white bookshelf was another curious and rather contrasting detail of Kadare's workspace. "Palace of Dreams" caused tempers to flair, and the goodwill of the regime towards the author crumbled away. In 1990 after 17 years in the Dice Residence Building and only few months before the implosion of the communist regime, Ismail and Helena Kadare de-

cided to ask for asylum in France. Without faith in the political transformation process, the writer left his apartment to his sister. As she only inhabited the smaller bedrooms and kitchen, the large living room and studio space became an indoor time capsule. Even after returning to Albania in 1999, Kadare never lived there again.

KADARE AS A PUBLIC TOPIC

Today the city of Tirana is seeing tremendous growth in population and economy, and the municipality and government are constantly creating venues of cultural consolidation, not only in response to calls to make life in Albania more attractive to its well-educated youth which is massively moving abroad, but also to cater to the burgeoning tourism market. The omnipresence of communist heritage has become part of this cultural landscape. With a distance of three decades, new perspectives and methods of appraisal are emerging. The Dice Residence Building is one of many examples that highlight the architectural heritage of communism era in a differentiated manner. And the architect Maks Velo has returned to the public stage, fighting for an adequate conversion by emphasising the aesthetic and urban values of his buildings. The Dice Residence Building has survived the radical breakdown of buildings around Skanderbeg Square in favour of a large roundabout and now stands as a solitary edifice once again – surrounded by main streets and post-communist commercial real estate. The back of the house has involuntarily become a front facade. In street-art style, a huge "K" had been applied to the staircase, calling attention to the newly installed "Studio House Kadare" that was opened in May 2019. The 83-year-old Kadare has become a key figure of local popular culture, replete with contemporary attributes: pro-European, cosmopolitan and patriotic (Röhm n.d.). The reconstruction of the author's birth house in Gjirokastër opened to the public in 2016 when the city celebrated his 80th birthday. Following the death of Kadare's sister, the Tirana's municipal government decided to buy the flat in 2018 and convert this once private residence into a place "to preserve and further promote the work of Ismail Kadare" (Studio House Kadare 2019). The Italian architect Elisabetta Terragni, who had previously designed the Museum of Secret Surveillance "House of Leaves" in Tirana, turned the place into a showroom for the author and his work. As visitors, we arrived in a space that operates somewhere between authenticity and nostalgia. Items were added to the walls, windows and furnishings, including private pictures of the writer's family life, stills of movie adaptations, archive materials about Tirana, quotes and infographics. Both bookshelves were refurbished and filled not only with Kadare's book collection but also personal objects. One can use this private library now for study purposes and the organisers plan to hold readings here. The furniture and chimney, which is out of order, are now part of a scenography that tries to embed something intangible like novels and biography in a very dense spatial situation where preserved traces overlap and blur with Kadare's works. Especially the tangible and occasionally ambiguous objects offer a rich source for further exploration of the author's complex life under totalitarianism. Thanks to its multiple layers and projection surfaces, the "Studio House Kadare" becomes a place of civic inclusion, addressing different social and political classes and biographies. That makes it an appreciative symbol of the socio-cultural agenda of Tirana and its mayor Erion Veliaj who is fostering a proactive heritage policy in a global setting that communicates via medial representation and the "eventisation" of culture. Veliaj's tweet on the opening day included both the announcement of the further conversion of the Dice Residence Building with a similar space dedicated to the poet Dritëro Agolli who lived on the floor above Kadare and the restoration of the housing complex according to the instructions of Maks Velo (Veliaj 2019). The network expands spatially and agency-wise, multiplying the omnipresent links between the global and local, reality and fiction, history and story, construction and reconstruction.
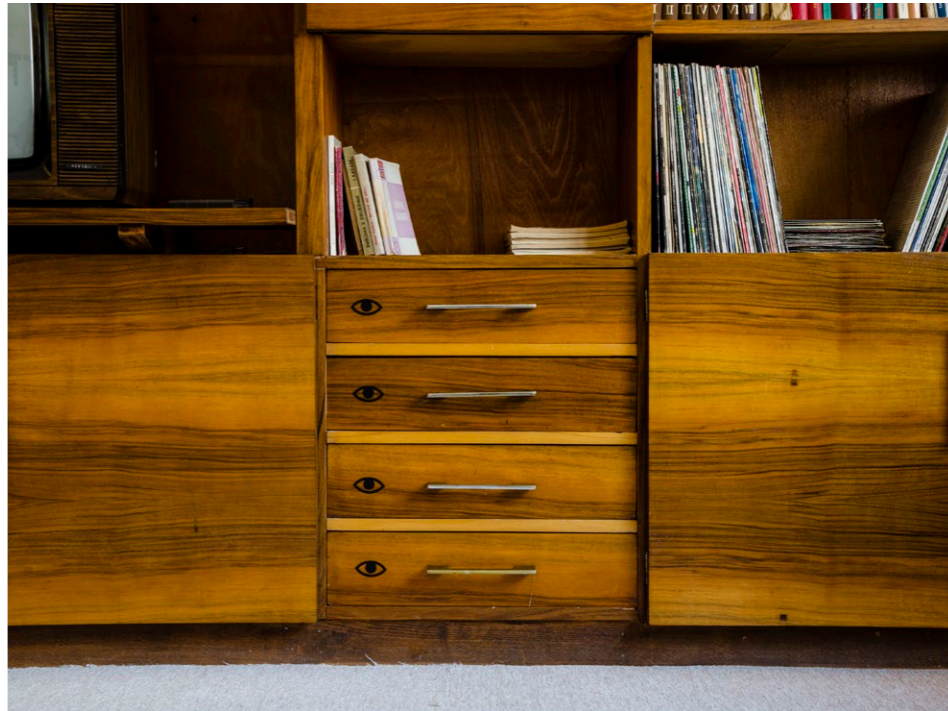
Kadare House Studio

THOUGHTS ON ARCHITECTURE AND ANT. THE KADARE EXAMPLE

MARVIN BRANDT

Concept Letter on how to trace invisible relatabilities between matters (ANT) and bringing them to expression (structure|figure|diagram)

"What are the invisible relationships that define our lives and what sort of threads run through them?" – W.G. Sebald (quoted in the studio's exhibition)
"The city coins us; as we coin the city" (Jan Gehl)
"We shape our buildings and afterward our buildings shape us." (Winston Churchill)

OVERVIEW

Aim is to go into a form of interface-research, trying to unfold speculations on those somehow present (*affectively* apprehendable) but intangible – also because probably indissoluble and therefore perhaps maybe reasonably unnoticed – coining and co-adaptive relations that can be attributed to (*human* and *non-human*) beings/bodies/things (+ maybe those spaces in-between) and the way they seem to interrelate and interact as actors and agents – forming endless networks (of information a.k.a semiotic verification around another) and creating constellating sets of realities (bound culturally &/or virtually).

In other words we want to try to study how things, through (miniscule) interrelations in the way they *»become«* or adapt (in steps of: *transmission* + **reception** + **reflection**: and in counter *transcription / translation* + *transformation*) in a constant

and simultaneous exchanging process of and with another, define each-other or *"bring into existence"*, with that also (their) surroundings (as *relative* **environments / territories / milieus / settings / places / spaces of circumstances; semiotic-/ archetypical constellations:** *socio-spatial* **and** *political structures*).

In so doing, to put it into even more concrete expression, we will be dealing with the sensory detection (by empirical convergence or immanence) on (thereby specifically observed *"subjective"*) relations between things and us: this relation that *transmitted "affective"* inputs have (as *significant/signal*) to our *reception* and in turn to our *translation* (i.e. thereby *signified roles* and *programs*), and in turn to our actions (i.e. thereby developed behavioural structures + restructured *transformations* of those), and therefore its imbedding conjunction (i.e. of a psychological/ sociological/political mediated coding) connected to surroundings, and it's role in defining those environments to start with; Altogether we can call that process to be analysed, a systematic adaptive process of things and environments simultaneously *defining* and *designing* or *fashioning*, and furthermore – in manner of then periodically/repetitively co-adapting and expanding those layers of information – *re-defining* and *re-designing* or *re-fashioning* each other.

In that sense it is to be explored, how there is a constantly active adaptive and co-adaptive process of *coining* and *re-coining* between matters and layers, and in more specific detail then, we can perhaps be attempting to *graph* these inherent processes in their dynamic (by force/movement) and state change (in *»being«*), between *ingressing* and *egressing*, between an *inner* and an *outer* (in a *diagrammed* notion of structure, despite of things being in an ever loosely or fluidly ex-changing transitional nature as they are).

Herein we want to be getting closer on how such networks get established in the way that for instance facets from the *outside*, have an *inner* influence on us, like components or constituents that then also determine our recognition of this outer surrounding as well as our states/*status* in this surrounding, by inherent *reflections* acting *within* the closest personal surrounding of yourself (on well-being and further decision-making thoughts as much as casing personal considerations and aspirations which lead on possibilities/opportunities to increase well-being) – so how this sentiency is at the same time immanently influencing further actions and behaviours in *expression* or *negotiation* taken to the *outside* again, we could say in innovation of reproaching those former acknowledged and experienced settings and finding new adaptive (expressive or audaciously evasive) alterations and alternations to deal with those pre-experienced dispositions (in things just naturally indecipherably taking course, along with that added human *interference* in seek of more); opening a social-spatial/political discourse immanent in all things (human and non-human) *»being«* as they are, as within that *ramification (network)* of all the intertwined interrelations involved.

INTRODUCING THE NETWORK AND NETWORK-RELATED THEORY

The *Network* as metaphor.
The Network here used as topo- & morpho-logical model.
The metaphor/model bears a *creational* (creative) *imaginational* (strategic/poetic?) construction in itself. That can be applied to support (structure) an ordering of thought, on environments, built environments, things, actions and events.
For instance, a penetration between venue and contact zone and technological infrastructure, which allow a freedom of cross-referenced connectivity in a very open sense, from biological to technological, from physical to immaterial, from micro-to macro, from the very small to a very whole.

The metaphor allows you for a moment to *grasp* a structure, single strings and knots or patterns of webbing / weaving / braiding / meshing, holding or concen-

trating content and connections (information/data/ideologies), otherwise floating freely and invisibly in-between things. Hence it's in principle a systematic / conceptual or in philosophy an ontological tool with visionary/rhetoric (imaginary) and archival (memory) *power*. And thus we find the *"network"*-definition or -reference with an inflationary adaptation in our day-to-day contemporary use of language – it productively conjures or deals with the transcendence of heterogeneous, pluralistic not just dualistic phenomena, establishing connection or a point of cross-section and possibly an attempt of storing (controlling). I want to pose the link to control here on in direct link to our focus on politics. Our intelligence to control or make links to control in this sense, establishes an already political action.

Specifically in its description between immaterial and human interrelations the metaphor evokes conjuncture. Yet in development of its related semantic content it is fundamentally a product of and thus leads back to material, natural or cultural origin.

In post-structuralist (post-modernist, post-liberal/capitalist) philosophy *Deleuze* and *Guattari* refer to or establish a network-model-principle in their elaboration on matters in the endeavors of their book-projet *Mille Plateaux* (Deleuze/Guattari 1980) through a more pictorial example, by use of their *Rhizome*-analogy, supporting in theory one of the most significant mentally and physically / spatially comprehensible (holistic) manifestations of this metaphor of the theory by first of all bringing it back to something organic, a constantly adapting botanic root-organism.

Similar strategies can be analyzed in other fields of discipline, in actors using their disciplines or mixing fields of discipline to express discursive political content. As in the case of the artist *Allan Sekula* mixing fields of disciplines of his own expertise, expression and tracing other disciplines and personal fates to evoke an idea of a network both through his own productive (creative/poetic) creation in depiction of a network while at the same time it being formed in feedback of / through the tracing of an already established network – that of a capitalist, neo-liberal realism – all to be uncovered in him narrating and photo-documenting his experience following the economic steps in the chain of the fish-market and the personal encounters and stories experienced on the way tracing the produce geographically from the sea to the shop in his work *'Fish Story'*.

NETWORK-RELATED QUESTIONS

On to our real further questioning…
- What kind of promise (aim of uncovering) does this model incorporate for us?
- If we look at it with a focus on politics; a focus on power and authority perhaps. Where is the analysis of authority-responsibility and accountability and how they are dispersed in these interactions incorporated in theory of the introduced research-field and the conductions of the researchers before as well as now our own research grabbing on to this?
- If we are trying to discuss the definition (or the *role*) of architecture in this context.
- What is architecture in this context?
- Or in which context can we define it as an *actor*?
- Does it have a role? Does it define settings in form of a program?
- Looking at it in closer detail / perimeter as we are doing-Is it instead maybe to be defined as a mere *intermediary* or *intermediant* thing? (which is an overall definition constituting its entity in the whole chain but rather more passively, *undefined*) …part of a bigger chain instead
- aren't the processes behind the whole construction of it the defining acting, mediating and expressive elements in this chain → constituting matters in link to

forces, power – the control of things, before architecture, or with architecture?
- therefore making the definition "architecture" just the very surface layer of constructed content / content in a constantly constructive process?
- Architecture an intermediary conception behind much more going on? Rather than that active front/upper surface game-changer?

MATRICES OF CONSTITUENTS & CONTRIBUTORS / CONDUCTORS | COM-BUNDLING A NETWORK

ACTORS (Actants) & AGENTS (Inter-/Mediators)
- Bodies (as Actors & Agents)
- Things | Surfaces | Structures | Matter (as Actors & Agents)
- Affects | Layers | Spheres (too ephemeral/temporal to decipher) (as Actors & Agents)

Interrelations in-between: different forms of "acting" or "(inter-)mediating" *agency*. Forms of exchange / transition taking place…

Exchanges:
Just by example of looking at this in terms of definitions, which can be attributed to things – human and non human; as actors or agents – sharing an exchange of some sort,
- between each-other
- from one to the another
- from inner to outer – from outer to inner
- and intermingling we can say and jot-down:
- there is: movement/mobilization of things, between things, inherent to things (defining states…) in examples:
- there are: placements/displacements of things, between things, inherent to things
- so there are: inclusions/exclusions – embeddings/dis-embeddings of things, inherent…
- so there are: conjunctions/disjunctions of things, between things, inherent…
- so there are: ANDs and ORs and together they can construct chains, … (building or dissecting further definitions, i.e. of defining circumstances)
- so there can be a structuring assigned to (in form of constructing / de-constructing) these chains, defining interrelations between things, inherent to things, and defining circumstances of those things, this introduces an intellect- political power

SIDENOTE

So just as I am building / constructing these sentences, there is a convolution of information (knowledge / contents) structured around another, aiming to define such circumstances of the state of things and how they stand in relation to another.

But this is based on how I have read and acknowledged that entire circumstance to be, so this brings in my personal (possibly neutral, possibly additional or possibly adjacent) understanding (+mediation) to such readings of formerly expressed (explained or narrated -in that sense structured) definitions on how things stand in relation to another, in thoughts made (or knowledge expressed-structured) by others.

So all this current expression puts me in an acting position but mainly in agency (in mediation) of such thoughts conducted by other actors / mediators on constellations / relations between things (as actors and agents and thus establishing a chain-network). Specifically looking at this element of circumstance – such chains

open up an endless circle of possibility to constantly (re-)define, relative to what circumstance or constellation of circumstances is chosen or picked out, in form of analysis and thereby in form of expression (because that defines or reflects a –subjectively– structured definition composed somewhere/by someone of its own). *Who or what is active in making that composing choice of focus / definition / coding?* There are for instance those people defining all these constellating circumstances and attributions inherent to things (just as in the way they can be put in a state of being actors or agents) in terms of *programs* and/or *roles*.

Then there is us discussing all this matter, selecting and picking our own strings in these relations and of individual constellations.

Both from an inside of things and an outside of things, from an immanent internal point of view – i.e. a primary knowledge; (sensory) experience – and from a distanced external point of view – i.e. a secondary knowledge; experience recollected memory + narration – equally active and in exchange of each other at the same time…

We can say there is an equal observing / reflecting and thereby fundamentally active (as observant/reflectant) entity or a *role* – in being the observer/reflector, taken up in this constellation in order of coming to (defining) the expression of such constellations in the first place (and in course there is a mediation of this information further on).

ADDRESSING TIRANA

We are actors and agents in sharing our experiences from *Tirana*. Just as much as we are/were active, involved and distanced observers and listeners in that environment (open to all things; acknowledged to our *"affection"* and by the knowledge narrated to us through actors and agents, underlying possibly individual roles / programs / networks).

We will conduct in agency of actively sharing these inputs and grasped connections through all things (seen/observed, heard of and thus analyzed further) in one chosen environment.

We will further conduct in action or speculative attempt of piecing out networks accordingly

→ through those inputs collected and narrated around both primary and secondary *affects*, having gone through processes of both internalization and externalization of people (in personal and on counter openly shared experience, in memory and recollection taken from an inside to an outer expression) in negotiation with logical frames, orders, roles, values; in programs and structures, simultaneously reflecting and probably further interplaying / scripting / inscribing / setting (structuring; constructing or de-constructing) realities that individuals, furniture, rooms, books, windows, doors, floors, fireplaces, facades, city, culture and politics share with each other in focus of one particular building within Tirana's topography.

THE BUILDING

An Apartment Building, marking Tirana's Socialist-Era *(1945-1991)*

The building highlights both an impression (we could say an intersection) of new architectural approaches taking wind in the 1970s in terms of the typology of standardized / pre-fabricated residential complexes being built around the city at that time and a very specific case of finding new forms to this. Perhaps in connection to a new form of urban imbedding, in light of it's prominent setting / in anticipation of prominent residents, situated within short walking distance from *Skanderbeg Square*, erected along a newly implanted strip in a formerly *Ottoman*

precinct, which through this intervention then attained such definition as Tirana's *"Broadway"(Studio Terragni Architetti "Kadare Shtëpia Studio" – exhibition guide 2019).*

The Architect: Maks Velo
Time of construction: 1971-1972
The Appartment in focus: a flat or double-flat inhabited by *Ismail Kadare* and his family
Ismail Kadare: a leadinng literary figure in *Albania* since the *1960s*

The building is typical of communist architecture and was designed and built by architect Maks Velo in 1972. Known also as "the palace of cubes" due to its protruding rectangular design, it is situated on Rruga Dibra – what was once a bohemian and vibrant part of old Tirana. But this building was home to not just Kadare but other prominent writer Dritero Agolli who lived on the floor above. Both men enjoyed the privilege of having a large spacious apartment with many rooms, whilst the general population lived in small, 2 or 3 roomed properties. (The Balkanista 2019)

After the apartment has been abandoned by *Kadare's* family and left empty since after the year 1990, a very recent project has been called into existence in supporting it's heritage as a place of cultural exchange, administrating its public disclosure in curation of *former belongings* and *décor* (evidently having been stored and found there still) to be reconfigured / exhibited for anyone to openly come explore and see.

We went and had a look – and since it marks the very special circumstance throughout our case – study / objects of research, where we had the opportunity to get such a strong impression of it's insides and further connections in meeting the architect and the exhibition team, we would like to commence in connecting our imbued impressions from this very interior position of the architecture, particularly it's furnishings and their tracing both an inner and an outer ramification in spheres of mediation and activity.

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