

# URBAN TACTICS FOR THE THIRD LANDSCAPE. THE CASE OF TIRANA

F. Naselli<sup>1\*</sup>, S. Dine<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1\*</sup>Department of Architecture, Faculty of Architecture and Engineering, Epoka University, AL

\*Corresponding author e-mail: fnaselli@epoka.edu.al

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## Abstract

The process of continuous and unlimited growth in cities has produced negative effects, which materialize in the production of negative urban areas, abandoned spaces, and waste landscapes, together with areas that appear without a proper character, because of informal non-designed human processes. Having such situations in Tirana, we can think of this third landscape as room for the continuous evolution future, important to biodiversity, climate, and pollution mitigation. Indeed, these third landscapes -involved and closely linked to urban metabolism- being transformed, can improve the quality of the urban environment, on the one hand, the other also raises the current lack in quantity of urban open areas by recovering neglected spaces. But how can urban leftover spaces contribute to the total amount of open spaces within the city? The aim is to try -through a tactical approach that works on a new quality and livability of urban open areas, but especially on their relationship with third landscapes- to re-think each recovering area into a spatial and functional element of a network of urban open spaces that meets environmental, health and social needs. Also, breaking the ongoing expansion of the city's volumes with three green-blue-grey corridors east-west can keep an ecologic continuity and recover new pedestrian-bike mobility paths in favor of citizens.

*Keywords:* third landscape, urban metabolism, tactical approach, urban open space.

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## 1 Introduction

“The Third Landscape can be considered as the genetic reservoir of the planet, the space of the future...” This is a definition taken from the book of Gilles Clément, *The Third Landscape Manifesto* (2003). Included in this category are leftover urban sites, transitional spaces, negative areas, abandoned buildings, etc.

The concept of the ‘Third landscape’ is closely linked with the concept of urban metabolism and urban open spaces. It raises the quality of the urban environment by recovering the urban leftovers and the quantity or the total number of urban open spaces. But how can urban leftover spaces contribute to the total amount of open spaces within the city? Can a third landscape play a useful role in terms of open space within the dense urban network of Tirana? By recovering all the abandoned and negative urban spaces we have, we can understand how many urban spaces we have. In such a way we might as well overcome the minimal amount of green open spaces in the city.

The constant change that is happening in cities every day is not respecting the social needs and daily life activities of the citizens. Cities should be considered as places of social events to have a vibrant community so there is a need to undertake actions on providing better places for the inhabitants.

## 2 Third landscape

Defined as a place that appears without a decided character and result of informal non-design human processes, the third landscape has a great impact on the environment as important to biodiversity, climate, and mitigation.

Third landscapes can be modest in size like a road or more extensive for example land abandoned. Often these neglected spaces occur more frequently on the periphery of cities or also on the boundaries between two types of land use: urban-rural, rural-industrial, etc.

Clément refers to the third landscape as the common space of the future. So, it is a goal to show everybody in Tirana what “public space” means and why it is so important for our life and our Albanian spirit. A proposal for a third landscape connecting these fragmentary spaces of the city that are abandoned can be a possible solution, proposing activities that create a sense of community and that favor the sustainable production of resources.

It is not just that abandoned areas are seen as wild and ugly; there is more.

### 3 Tactical approach

The aim is to try -through a tactical approach that works on a new quality and livability of urban open areas, but especially on their relationship with third landscapes- to re-think each recovering area into a spatial and functional element of a network of urban open spaces that meets environmental, health and social needs. Breaking the ongoing expansion of the city's volumes with three green-blue-grey corridors able to keep an ecologic continuity and to recover new pedestrian mobility paths in favor of citizens. Bringing back the lost connection of people with nature to improve their well-being and positively affect their lives in different aspects, developing social and environmental connectivity between different areas of the city. The study research aims to provide and promote ‘connectivity and continuity’ within different areas of the city with a possible solution of a proposal of a ‘third landscape’ connecting different urban areas that have been leftover.

“The need for a city identity is important as it provides harmony between “constant” and “changing” elements; people and events, which are integrated by a reciprocal link that makes a specific city unique and distinctive” [Kevin Lynch 1960].

Thus, the research study goal is to shape a new open spaces system in Tirana, taking into consideration and recovering what has been left over.

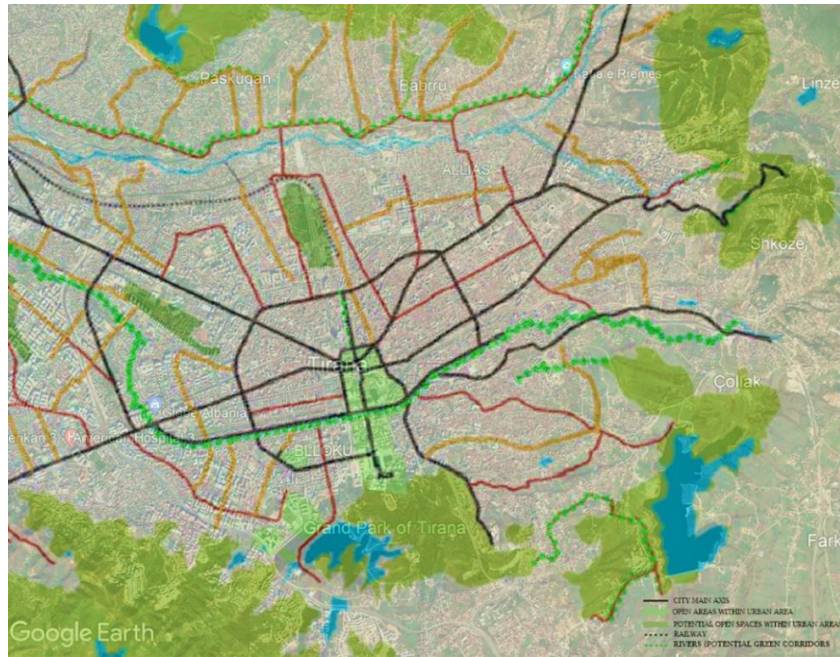
### 4 Our proposal for today’s Tirana

Tirana is a city lacking so many urban open spaces but not lacking open spaces. Having a lot of open spaces but not giving a function causes these spaces to become just some abandoned areas that just exist by being there, but no one sees them. I truly believe that Tirana has still a lot of work and changes to go through, despite all the change

that has happened in recent years. I believe that as architects, it is our duty to give meaning to every public space, however small or big it is, however unimportant or neglected it might be, it can make a major change in people’s lifestyles. Creating a proposal for many small urban spaces to turn them into landmarks and transforming the negative and leftover spaces of the city into positive ones. The case of application is the city of Tirana as a city lacking urban open spaces but at the same time having many areas which are not used so-called ‘urban voids. The urban areas should have successful planning producing a highly visible result in the form of a city with distinctive and well-connected neighborhoods, well-functioning transport systems, and easy access to workplaces, shopping, public services, and recreational areas. Having fast and reliable access to transport to the inner city and green recreational areas situated right next to the residential areas. People should have the possibility to enjoy every urban open space, park, agricultural landscape, and river and still benefit from the proximity to the city center.

Choosing the first phase and focusing the attention on three of the ‘Third landscapes or urban leftovers in Tirana, which are linear ones which cross the city:

- [1]. *Lana river*
- [2]. *Tirana river (Lumi i Tiranës)*
- [3]. *Formal Railway*



**Figure 1.** City main axis, potential open spaces and potential green corridors



**Figure 2.** Three linear third landscapes in Tirana

These third landscapes are linear and cross the city, but they are different in terms of the environment. Tirana river is the one which is the more natural shaped until now compared to the two others, whereas Lana River can be considered as intermediate, in some parts it is more natural, and in others, it is less. The railway is artificial. By proposing a project above a third landscape we want to create a remarkable connection between the general functions of the city and the transport infrastructure and create a cohesive recreational landscape that stretches well into the densely populated urban areas.

In the second phase, the focus is on the railway and the area around it, strengthening the connection of the railway, urban spaces around and the people. This is by turning it into an atmosphere for the enjoyment. Creating a landmark making it easier for its citizens to live, work and enjoy the city.

To achieve the wanted results, there is the need to undergo different methods since it comprises various sources of information and data. Starting with ‘Quantitative Research’ deals with theoretical background and studies done by other scholars and researchers based on similar concerns.

Continuing with ‘Qualitative Research’ where the focus is on the results carried out from site surveys and questionnaires and explanatory approach on the study areas.

## Conclusion

This paper presented a case of a third landscape, using a tactical approach to transform the negative into a positive.

The project was inspired by tactical-approach solutions and by implementing a green and blue rather than a grey infrastructure to reduce the risks of climate change. The third landscape should be seen as room for continuous evolution in the future, important to biodiversity, climate, pollution mitigation, etc. Indeed, these third landscapes being transformed can have a positive impact on the urban environment,

The aim is to create a sense of place by recovering abandoned railways and reconnecting citizens with the place and its history.

Some small changes have started to grow around the city, which might seem unimportant or even unnecessary at first sight, but when they are done, they have the power to change peoples’ lives.

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