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Sabina Bollano
PhD in Social Sciences and Behaviour, Lecturer
European University of Tirana
1000, Xhanfize Keko Str., Tirana, Albania
https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0201-8442

The study of "Cities of the Future" urban planning and development decision-making experience

Abstract. Given the rapid technological and global development, "Cities of the Future" are becoming important centres of innovation, where cultural, economic, and technological influences intertwine. The research relevance of such studies is determined by the impact of innovations on the development of the urban environment, which contribute to sustainable development and improve the quality of life of residents. The study aims to analyse planning practices and urban development solutions in "Cities of the Future" in Albania, focusing on the interaction of social, economic, and environmental aspects. The following methods were used: generalisation, induction and deduction, analysis, and synthesis. The study examined data on urbanisation in Albania, the gross domestic product of the country and in the cities of Tirana, Diber, Durres, Vlora and Korca per capita, as well as the main aspects of planning and economic sustainability in general. The study of the architectural and infrastructural development of Albanian cities revealed key trends and innovations, including the implementation of modern residential complexes, interactive applications, the use of energy-efficient technologies, the restoration of historical sites and the creation of eco-parks. This demonstrates the importance of balanced development that incorporates both modern technologies and the preservation of cultural heritage. Stable economic conditions point to opportunities for sustainable development and investment in cities. The positive trend in gross domestic product creates favourable conditions for attracting new businesses, technological innovations, and the development of sustainable lifestyles. In addition, the analysis of innovations in transport, aesthetic approaches and economic sustainability of Albanian cities determines the prospects for their global competitiveness. The results of the study can be useful for the development and planning of future urban development in Albania, as well as used as a basis for decision-making in the fields of economics, technology, and urbanisation

Keywords: infrastructure; energy-efficient technologies; restoration; eco-parks; innovations; smart systems

INTRODUCTION

In the context of rapid technological and global development, cities in today's world act as laboratories of innovation, combining the influence of culture, economics, and technology. Growing pressure on urban resources and rapid population growth makes it necessary to consider new strategies for planning and developing urban spaces to ensure the sustainability and efficiency of future megacities. Insufficient exploration of new urban design strategies threatens inefficient resource management, environmental problems, and socio-economic imbalances, which can threaten sustainable development and quality of life in cities.

The rapid pace of urbanisation requires rethinking approaches to urban planning. "Cities of the Future" focuses on the harmonisation of technological advances, environ-

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*Corresponding author

mental sustainability, and human well-being. In this context, much attention is paid to cities that integrate the latest technologies, sustainable development, and improved quality of life (Săraru, 2023). M. Kaššaj & T. Peráček (2024) note that smart cities use advanced technologies to improve infrastructure efficiency. Intelligent transport systems and energy-efficient buildings, as well as data from waste management collection and analysis systems and the introduction of smart technologies, simplify urban operations and improve the overall quality of life. In the context of rapid technological and social development, cities should be prepared for changes and challenges, such as climate change, population growth, technological innovation and global economic shifts (Myalkovsky *et al.*, 2023). It is especially important to study the interaction between urban development and urban tourism, as tourism can be an important factor for economic development.

A. Afezolli (2022) emphasises that from 2000s, Albania has been marked by the most dynamic economic, urban, and industrial transformation in its history. The growing economic opportunities of cities are driving large-scale migration from rural areas to large centres. In the past, Albania's transport system consisted of bicycles, mass transit and walking, but the current trend towards more private cars and sparse development is rapidly turning Albanian society into a car-dependent one. In a growing economy, the improving quality of life, increasing housing space and car dependency are creating serious environmental, public health and safety issues.

E. Aliaj & E. Tiri (2023) note that Albania, being at the crossroads of cultural and historical influences, is becoming an interesting object for architectural research on the planning and development of urban areas. The country's history of transformation and change, as well as its geographical location, make it a unique context for studying and applying innovative approaches to urban development. In addition, the studies of Albanian scholars, in particular A. Hysa *et al*. (2021), highlight the importance of Albania's unique cultural and historical heritage, which poses several challenges and opportunities for the country in the field of urban development. The emphasis is placed on the fact that the integration of innovative technologies and global approaches can help ensure the sustainability and competitiveness of Albanian cities in the modern world. The results also highlight the need for a balanced development that considers the quality of life of citizens, environmental issues, and the need for economic growth.

Albania, with its unique natural and cultural diversity, is facing challenges from intensive urbanisation and infrastructure projects. For instance, according to A. Hysa *et al*. (2021), the turbulent development of Tirana, the capital of Albania, after the post-socialist era, is generating discussions about preserving the city's identity, as disproportionate development causes a hybrid identity. Despite the municipality's attempts to clean up the mess, the new master plan is questionable due to insufficient consideration of the historical heritage and the living city. It is important to improve the development strategies, considering the adaptability of the city and preserving its unique identity, as well as considering the participation of citizens in the decision-making process. Despite the existing potential, there are gaps in research on urban planning and development in Albania. This aspect requires attention to the identification of key challenges facing the country's cities, such as environmental issues, infrastructure development and social inclusion. Therefore, it is important to focus on filling these gaps and to propose concrete strategies that can contribute to the development of future urban spaces in Albania, combining innovation and cultural heritage preservation.

The study aimed to examine the experience of planning and urban development solutions in the "Cities of the Future" in the context of Albania, considering social, economic, and environmental development. The current state of urban spaces is analysed, and the problems and opportunities facing Albanian cities are identified. The objectives of the study encompass analysing the current state of cities to evaluate their social and economic development and their role in the national economy, examining innovative urban planning solutions to promote sustainable development and enhance residents' quality of life, and assessing the environmental sustainability of urban areas by analysing natural resource utilization and conducting impact assessments.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The theoretical segment of the study includes works by researchers in the field of "Cities of the Future" and Smart Cities planning. In addition, the sustainable development goals, and statistics of Ministry of Tourism and Environment of Republic of Albania (2019), the World Bank in Albania (2023), and the United Nations (2024), as well as monographic and periodical literature was used as an information component of the study.

A set of general scientific groups of methods was used in the study. In particular, the systematisation and generalisation methods were used to structure information on urban transformation projects in different cities of Albania. The induction method was used to move from specific examples of urban development to the formulation of general principles, and the deduction method was used to derive recommendations for individual cities. Grouping was used to combine related data into logical categories to facilitate understanding and analysis. This included grouping projects into thematic areas such as innovative technologies and environmental sustainability. A thorough analysis of the collected information was used to formulate conclusions and recommendations for further urban development and the impact of urban planning decisions on environmental sustainability. Statistical methods were used to quantify and analyse the data, in particular, to assess the effectiveness of the implemented projects using development indicators. The synthesis method was used to combine individual components and knowledge into a single whole, to create a holistic picture of urban development in

the context of "Cities of the Future". Comparative analysis was used to identify differences and similarities between different cities in Albania.

To analyse the development of cities in Albania, study the impact of urban strategies on the quality of life, and social integration, assess the impact of urban development on the country's economic potential, and evaluate environmental pollution in cities, the economic, environmental and social situation was studied using data from the Institute of Statistics of Albania (n.d.) and the Ministry of Urban Development (n.d.). In addition, the following indicators were analysed: Albania's urbanisation data, population, and gross domestic product (GDP) per capita in the following cities: Tirana, Diber, Durres and Korca, as well as the gross domestic product in Albania for the period 2000-2023. The rationale for selecting the cities is based on their role in the economy, location, and ability to represent different aspects of urbanisation and development in different regions of Albania.

The research involves a detailed description, analysis, and interpretation of urban phenomena in the cities of Tirana, Diber, Durres, Vlora and Korca. The main emphasis is on studying how these cities implement plans and projects, incorporating relevant practices and strategies for sustainable and technological development. This descriptive approach was used to study and compare the cities' development, identifying their strengths and weaknesses, as well as opportunities for further sustainable development.

The obtained research results were processed for reliability by applying the multivariate method of MANOVA analysis of variance using Microsoft Excel software and the Statistica 10 software package. Differences in the results obtained are possible at a significance level of $P \leq 0.05$ according to the Student's criterion.

RESULTS

Urbanisation and urban development in Albania are deeply interconnected and influence each other in various ways. Increased urbanisation can stimulate economic development in cities by increasing production and services, developing infrastructure, and attracting investment. The growing level of urbanisation increases the demand for various municipal services, such as water, sewerage, electricity, transport infrastructure. Urban development is a response to this demand. Urbanisation can cause changes in the social and cultural spheres of life. Urban development helps expand educational opportunities, cultural life, access to healthcare and other social benefits. Cities are often centres of economic activity where new jobs are created. This can attract migrants from rural areas and increase urbanisation. Growing urbanisation can put the natural environment and ecosystems at risk. Therefore, urban development requires careful planning to preserve natural resources and reduce emissions. The analysis of urbanisation shows a gradual increase in Albania from 43% in 2000 to 64.2% in 2023. The level of urbanisation increased with particular intensity in the period from 2012 to 2018 when it rose from 54.33 to 60.32%. The data obtained indicate a trend towards increasing urbanisation in the country, which may be the result of economic development and changes in social structures (Fig. 1).

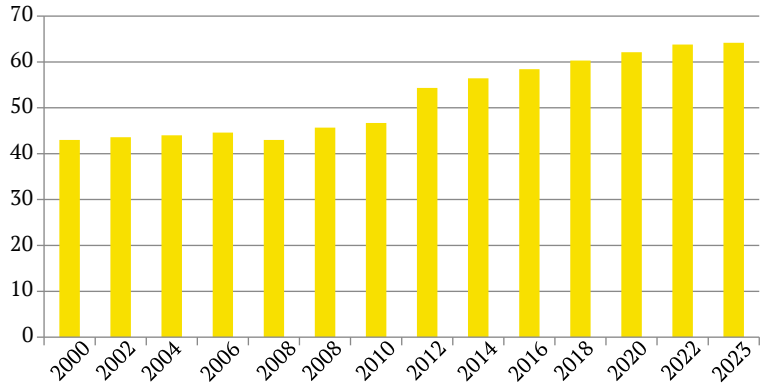

Figure 1. Urbanisation in Albania from 2000 to 2023, %
Source: Institute of Statistics of Albania (n.d.)

Considering urbanisation in the context of the selected cities, it is worth noting that Tirana's population grew by more than 50% between 2000 and 2023, indicating a steady level of growth. Potential growth drivers may include economic development, infrastructure projects, job opportunities, political stability, and the attractiveness of the city to new residents. In contrast, the population of Diber, from 2000 to 2023, decreased by 47.37%, from 190,000 to 100,000 people. Population decline can be caused by a variety of factors, such as the outflow of people in search of work, the lack of jobs, demographic trends, or a lack of economic activity in the city. On a positive note, the city of Durres has a steady positive population growth, even if this growth is rather moderate and has been within 25% for 23 years. Analysing the population data of the city of Korca, it is possible to note that the growth rate is decreasing from 2000 to 2023.

The population of the city of Vlora is also expected to increase, reaching about 187 thousand people in 2024. The population decline occurred consistently during this period.

The most significant decrease in population occurred from 2010 to 2023, when the growth rate was negative 11.36% (Fig. 2). According to the data obtained, Albanian cities show different urbanisation dynamics during the period under consideration. Such differences may be the result of various factors, such as economic development, job availability, infrastructure projects, and socio-cultural factors. Analysis of these data can identify the reasons for the different rates of urbanisation in different cities, contributing to an understanding of the dynamics and identifying possible vectors for further development. Additional research on the economic, socio-cultural, and infrastructural situation of each city could provide a deeper understanding of these differences in urbanisation levels.

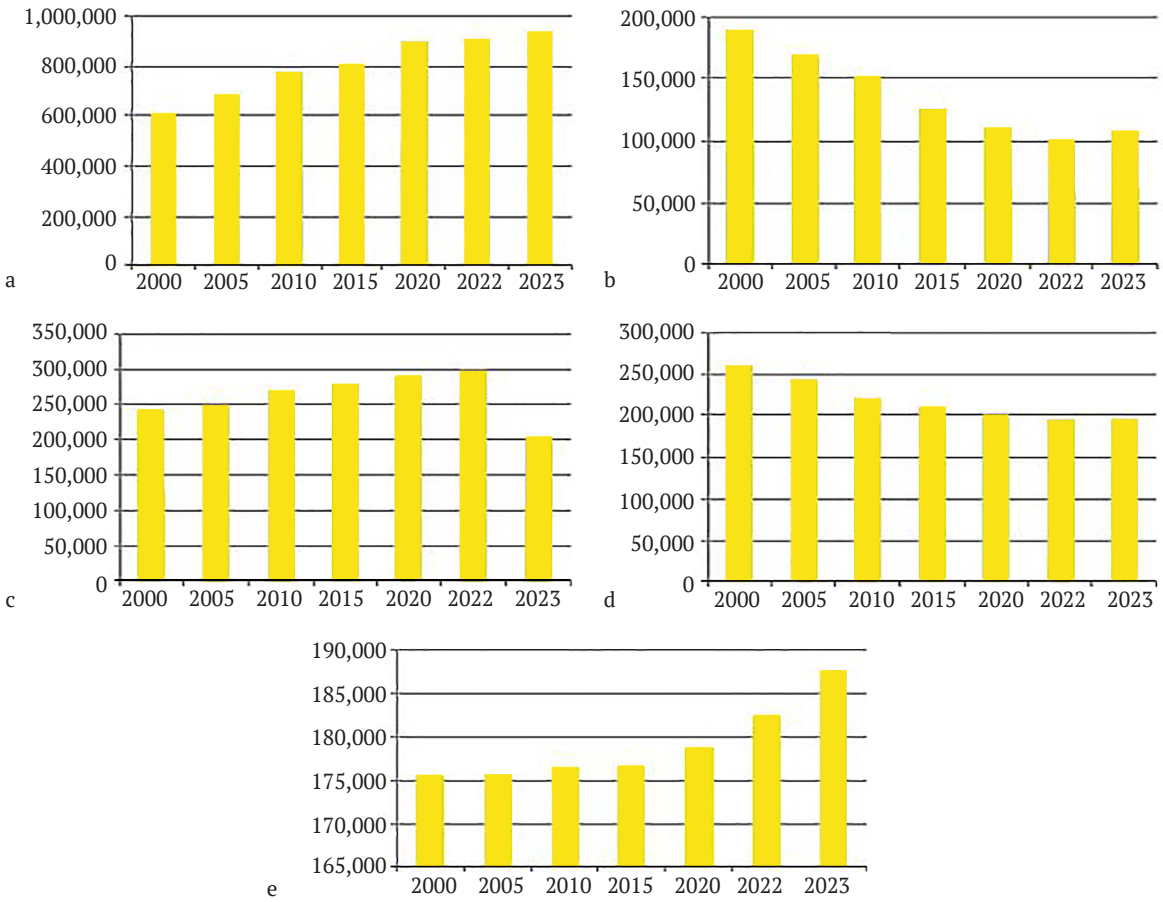

Figure 2. Population of Tirana (a), Diber (b), Durres (c), Korca (d), Vlora (e)
Source: Institute of Statistics of Albania (n.d.)

Tirana, as the capital and economic heart of Albania, is experiencing significant development and challenges related to overpopulation, air pollution and environmental issues. In particular, the growth of the car fleet and the use of fuels with high sulphur and lead content contributed to the air quality deterioration. In response to these challenges, Tirana is implementing initiatives to improve environmental quality and develop a city of the future. In 2015, the city joined numerous cities around the world in organising its first vehicle-free day. This initiative aimed to combat air pollution problems in the city and helped unite worldwide efforts to reduce the negative impact of transport on the environment. As of 1 January 2019, the government introduced a ban on imports of used cars manufactured before 2005 to limit environmental pollution, encourage the purchase of new cars from certified Albanian dealers and improve overall road safety. It is important to note that airborne particulate matter PM10 and PM2.5, as well as NO_2 and CO_2 gases, are additional sources of air pollution. They are caused by the rapid growth of new building construction and the expansion of road infrastructure (Mele & Muka, 2022). Furthermore, the government is actively developing green spaces and parks, such as Grand Park, which are becoming not only recreational areas but also important components of the city's environmental plan. Initiatives to restrict construction in green areas help preserve natural reserves and create environmentally friendly areas. With the expansion of its road infrastructure and the construction of new facilities, Tirana is adapting to the challenges of a modern city of the future, trying to balance development with the preservation of natural resources. This demonstrates the city's commitment to creating an environmentally friendly and sustainable environment for its residents. The authorities' efforts to develop

infrastructure, limit construction in green areas and create new recreational areas demonstrate their desire to realise the concept of a city that effectively uses its potential to improve the quality of life of its citizens while preserving the environment.

Tirana actively engages citizens and uses open data to develop projects in five priority areas: mobility, society, lifestyle, economy, and agriculture. It's worth noting that the administrative-territorial reform has significantly increased the size of Tirana municipality. In the context of financing various projects, the city is considering innovative schemes such as crowdfunding. The city also considers reward-based crowdfunding models that allow citizens to contribute to specific projects involving private service providers. For example, by paying electricity bills, citizens may have the opportunity to contribute to a social project that meets Tirana's smart city goals. Importantly, the #Crowdfunding4Children initiative, using social media, crowdfunding platforms, and human rights initiatives, aims to raise USD 20,000 to build the country's first comprehensive playground for children with special needs. It is also worth noting that Tirana is introducing electric buses and creating charging zones for electric vehicles, helping to reduce gas emissions, and developing online platforms for public participation in city management, with the possibility of submitting applications for repairs, cleaning. As for architectural innovations, modern residential complexes are being built, focused on sustainable and comfortable living, using energy-efficient technologies, and considering aesthetic aspects. In addition, restoration works are being carried out using restoration technologies to preserve and highlight the architectural heritage.

Even at the early development stage, various projects already demonstrate great potential for interaction with citizens. The city also plans to engage in civic participation through a new mobile application, Tirana Ime. The app not only provides real-time information about bus stations, taxis and traffic but also allows citizens to report any problems in their neighbourhood, receiving quick responses from the municipality. The implementation of such projects and inventive financial schemes allows Tirana to move towards becoming an independent "smart city", which other localities in the country can easily follow in the future.

Nestled among the Deshat Korab and Lure Selishte mountain ranges, Albania's Diber, although naturally rich in 21 glacial lakes, two national parks and thermal baths, faces challenges in tourism development due to deficiencies in infrastructure and road network. Private sector involvement is needed for effective development, as the lack of infrastructure amenities is currently hampering the growth of tourism in this charming region. Diber, despite its challenges, remains somewhat more developed than the neighbouring districts of Elbasan and Kukes. It is important to work actively to attract investment and develop effective infrastructure so that the region can tap into its development potential and become attractive to tourists, as well as improve the quality of life for the local population. Despite some stagnation, the city is implementing programmes to preserve nature and green areas, including the creation of eco-parks and the development of ecological routes, the launch of virtual tourist expositions and the use of augmented reality technologies to attract tourists. Architectural solutions are based on the development of environmentally friendly residential projects using materials with the lowest environmental impact. Art spaces are also created, and modern art objects are installed to enrich the city's cultural environment. However, according to the local population, the city lacks sports and recreational facilities, both indoor and outdoor. There are not enough public parks and playgrounds, nor are there enough centres where children and young people can engage in drawing, singing or other activities. Schools lack laboratories. This not only hinders the learning process but often leads to demotivation. Institutions and organisations should create conditions and equal opportunities for young people (Caso & Giordano, 2022).

The city of Durres is strategically located on the shores of the Adriatic Sea, which makes it a key connection for the sea routes connecting Albania with the Balkan, Mediterranean and European spaces. Throughout history, this geopolitical and strategic position has attracted the attention of major powers, which has influenced the development of the city and its socio-economic life. The city of Durres has become a key urban centre in the Eastern Adriatic due to its important position, which determined its role in regional geopolitical developments. This resulted in a rich cultural environment and the development of trade and cultural ties. In light of this, the importance of Durres in the context of the city's future development is emphasised, as its strategic geopolitical position, rich cultural heritage and history contribute to the creation of a unique environment. Ensuring a high quality of life for residents, creating sustainable infrastructure, and attracting investment plays an important role in maintaining and strengthening the city's position in the region, as well as in its future development. However, rapid development and urbanisation affected the city's environment, and since 2000, various measures and policies have been introduced to improve environmental quality and protect it. These measures are aimed at reducing the significant pollution caused by urbanisation, increasing population density and concentration of industrial, commercial, telecommunications and other activities.

In this context, measures to develop road infrastructure, and improve utilities and sanitation systems were taken, especially in problematic areas of Durres such as Shkozet, Keneta and Porto Romano. There has also been a focus on increasing green space, not only in residential areas but especially along the coast, which has suffered significant losses due to the expansion of development after the 1990s (Aliaj & Tiri, 2023). It is worth noting that Durres is famous for its sports infrastructure, including stadiums, swimming pools, football pitches and other sports facilities. The city is implementing smart port management

systems that optimise cargo handling and improve maritime safety. Interactive online maps of the city for tourists and residents are being developed, which contain information about the city's infrastructure and events. Innovative marine facilities are being developed that combine modern design and functionality with environmental sustainability. A light-emitting diode (LED) technologies are also used to create atmospheric lighting for architectural objects along the coastline.

Korca is identified as a key player in the development of the "Cities of the Future" in eastern Albania. In particular, the city is experiencing significant cultural and economic growth, becoming an important cultural and industrial centre in the region. Its museums reflect the city's centuries-old cultural heritage, creating a foundation for tourism development and drawing attention to the city's uniqueness. Given the migration outflow, Korca has a Regional Development Agency (S.M.E.), which is tasked with implementing various projects aimed at supporting and developing the region, cooperating with donors, authorities, and central government bodies to ensure the sustainable development of the region. The provision of advisory services to support the private sector creates an environment conducive to improved business performance. Through surveys and feasibility studies, informed decision-making by public institutions and local entrepreneurs is facilitated to develop private businesses and improve public services. In addition, it actively engages in cross-border cooperation (Burda, 2019).

The city's efforts to introduce online learning in schools and universities, develop virtual classrooms and learning platforms, and create online services for paying taxes, submitting documents, and receiving other municipal services are important. Modern art installations and objects have been installed that interact with viewers and create unique experiences. In addition, historic neighbourhoods are being restored using innovative methods of reconstruction and adaptation to modern needs. It is worth noting that in 2020, Albania launched the Smart Cities/Smart Villages programme, which is an energy-efficient and green investment initiative to implement integrated strategies and effective use of information and communication technologies (ICT) to improve basic infrastructure in the areas of transport, energy, lighting, and environmental protection.

In Albania, cities such as Durres and Korca have been selected as pilot projects for this programme. The overall goal is to develop these cities to provide basic infrastructure services through the implementation of smart solutions, thereby improving the quality of life and preserving a clean and sustainable environment. According to gross domestic product per capita, the cities under study are showing positive dynamics. The years 2018 and 2022 look like periods of significant economic development (Table 1). An overall analysis of the dynamics of Albania's GDP may indicate promising prospects for the "Cities of the Future". The period from 2000 to 2008 shows successful economic development, which may indicate that cities will have stable economic conditions for development. The slight downturn after 2008, likely related to the global financial crisis, can serve as a lesson for cities to develop sustainable and balanced economic strategies. The impressive economic growth in 2020 and 2023 may point to new opportunities for cities to attract investment and develop modern infrastructure solutions (Fig. 3).

Table 1. The impact of emotional intelligence on professionalism GDP per capita by city, EUR

City	2000	2004	2008	2010	2014	2018	2020	2022	2023
Tirana	4,610	4,752	4,911	4,741	4,600	6,140	3,203	6,675	6,452
Diber	1,302	1,450	1,658	1,798	2,370	3,374	3,564	3,657	3,754
Durres	2,840	2,960	3,196	3,508	3,330	4,412	4,560	4,670	4,691
Korca	1,830	1,950	2,065	2,097	2,587	3,284	3,350	3,462	3,574
Vlora	2,678	2,840	2,998	2,867	3,265	3,837	3,850	3,921	3,984

Source: Institute of Statistics of Albania (n.d.)

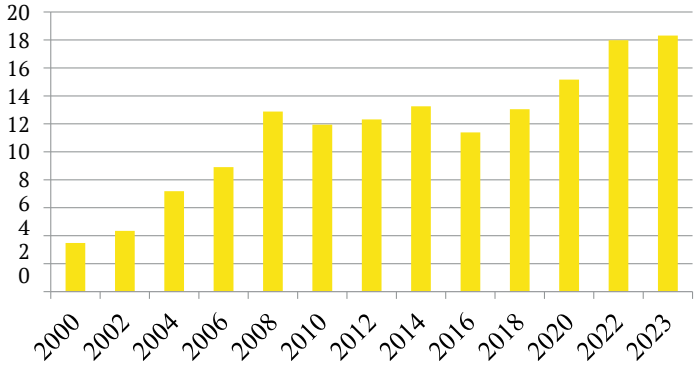

Figure 3. GDP in Albania, USD billion

Source: Institute of Statistics of Albania (n.d.)

This positive trend can create favourable conditions for attracting new businesses, technological innovation and sustainable living in the "Cities of the Future". Successful economic development may also reflect the high standard of living and social well-being in these cities. In summary, the positive dynamics of gross domestic product in the Albanian cities under study indicate successful economic development, promising prospects for future cities and the potential to attract investment, develop infrastructure and improve the quality of life of residents.

DISCUSSION

With the rapid development of modern cities and their importance as centres of economic, social, and cultural life, the analysis of architectural and infrastructural innovations is becoming a key element in understanding and planning the future development of urban spaces. The diversity of approaches to urban planning and construction in different countries and regions of the world creates variations in the achievements of cities in the context of sustainable development. An analysis of the experience of different countries not only identifies common trends but also unique solutions that reflect the characteristics of each city and its response to modern challenges. In modern smart cities and "Cities of the Future", there is an active development of social initiatives. This includes creating inclusive spaces, promoting equality, and tackling social challenges. This may include developing social programmes, improving housing conditions, and ensuring access to education and healthcare services for all segments of the population.

Environmental development is aimed at preserving natural resources and reducing negative environmental impact. Smart cities use technology to use energy and water efficiently and reduce air emissions (Bieliatynskyi *et al.*, 2023). Green technologies and clean energy sources are becoming an integral part of urban development. Architectural projects in such cities focus on the efficient use of space, creating aesthetically appealing and functional buildings (Dzyba & Saveliev, 2023). Architects use innovative materials and concepts to ensure sustainable construction and create comfortable conditions for residents. In addition, the "Cities of the Future" are implementing technologies to optimise transport, energy management, water supply and waste management. The use of sensors, artificial intelligence systems and the Internet of Things allows cities to effectively manage resources and ensure the safety of citizens (Baidrakhmanova *et al.*, 2023).

D. Nováčková & J. Wefersová (2021) note that "Cities of the Future" are becoming centres of innovation and technological development. The integration of smart technologies, sustainable construction, and social initiatives allows for the creation of environmentally friendly, comfortable, and safe environments for residents. Such cities are aimed at ensuring the quality of life and creating conditions for sustainable development, which is also demonstrated in the current study, which correlates with the findings of G. Maia *et al.* (2023), who emphasised that cities that intensively use their cultural heritage to develop tourism and cultural events have a positive impact on the economy. This approach contributes to both the preservation and restoration of historical sites, which is important in the context of sustainable urban development. The successful use of cultural heritage not only contributes to economic growth but also maintains and enriches the socio-cultural landscape, rendering it more attractive to residents and visitors (Barseghyan *et al.*, 2023). Such harmonious development can serve as a model for other cities seeking to balance economic growth with the preservation of their unique cultural heritage.

A similar opinion is also expressed by I. Butoracová Šindleryová & A. Čajková (2023), who emphasise that cities that implement modern architectural concepts and create creative urban spaces attract innovative enterprises and promote technological development. This also corresponds to the results of the study, which confirms the positive impact of using modern concepts in urban planning on business and technology development. The provision of innovative and creative spaces can be a key factor in stimulating economic growth and creating a favourable environment for the development of modern technologies in the "Cities of the Future". In addition, according to Z. Zou *et al.* (2020), cities where the business community, community and government actively cooperate have great potential for sustainable development. The creation of such partnerships contributes to the formation of a favourable environment for economic growth, which ensures sustainability and moves cities forward in the context of their development.

According to R. Matheus *et al.* (2020), the study is consistent with the view of scientists that cities that actively implement green technologies and energy-efficient solutions in architecture contribute to reducing their carbon footprint and creating a favourable environment for residents. This indicates the importance of green technologies in shaping a sustainable and environmentally balanced urban environment. The study by W. Li *et al.* (2020) on active public participation in urban development emphasises that open and interactive relations between the community and the authorities determine the effectiveness and sustainability of urban development. This approach not only increases the level of support and acceptance of development strategies but also ensures that the real needs and opinions of residents are considered, which is a key aspect of creating a more sustainable and adaptable urban environment. Such interaction contributes to the efficient use of urban resources, support for innovative initiatives, and a sense of shared responsibility and partnership to achieve common goals in urban development.

This study and the views expressed by scholars such as S. Mirzabeigi & M. Razkenari (2022) further illustrate the importance of the interaction between economic prosperity, cultural diversity, and innovation in architecture as key factors for achieving sustainable urban development. This approach not only contributes to the creation of attractive and resilient communities but also identifies new avenues

for further research and strategies in urban planning and development. The results indicate that the integration of these components forms the basis for effective urban governance, promoting sustainable development, improving the quality of life and interaction between different socio-cultural groups. Thus, the importance of a balanced approach to urban planning and development is becoming known through the prism of the studies and recommendations in the relevant scientific works. However, S. Matúšová & P. Nováček (2022) express different views on the relationship between economic success, urban culture, and architecture. The authors argue that the economic success of a city is closely linked to the rational use of urban spaces and high-quality infrastructure. Their approach emphasises the need for effective management of urban resources and the creation of conditions for entrepreneurship. At the same time, when referring to architecture and cultural aspects, they point out the importance of preserving and restoring historical sites as part of the city's identity.

This study is similar to the point of view of H. Silvennoinen *et al*. (2023), who emphasised the importance of developing creative and cultural industries to stimulate economic growth in cities. The authors emphasised that investment in culture and the arts can play a key role in creating new jobs, attracting innovative businesses, and improving the overall economic situation. This agreement highlights the importance of further research into the development of creative and cultural industries for the sustainable economic success of cities. These diverse perspectives emphasise that the relationship between economic success, urban culture and architecture is complex and determined by a wide range of factors. To ensure sustainable urban development, it is important to consider the diversity of approaches and to find a balance between different aspects of development, while adhering to the principles of a sustainable economy, social justice, and environmental sustainability (Zotsenko & Vinnikov, 2016).

The findings of this study are also reflected in the statements of I. Mutambik *et al*. (2023), also emphasised the importance of an integrated approach to analysing urban development. According to the authors, understanding the interaction between the economic, socio-cultural, and architectural aspects of the city is critical to achieving efficiency and sustainability in the urban environment. The authors identified that dynamic urban development requires a deep understanding of contemporary challenges, including population growth, economic changes, and deepening environmental problems. The scientists confirm that the relationship between different areas of urban life, including economy, culture, and architecture, determines the overall success of a city's development. Albania, as a country that has undergone a significant transformation after decades of socialist rule, sees its cities as key factors in achieving sustainable development and improving the quality of life of its population. The country, located at the intersection of different cultural and historical influences, demonstrates its readiness to adapt to modern challenges by seeking effective ways to develop its cities (Saaty & De Paola, 2017; Razavi, 2021).

The high gross domestic product in Albanian cities indicates stable economic conditions, which can be used as a basis for developing urban planning strategies. Studying how successful economic trends affect the structure and planning of cities can help to develop optimal solutions for future projects. The positive trend in the economy in 2020 and 2023 creates favourable conditions for innovation and sustainable development in cities. A study of which cities are using this economic growth to implement innovative solutions in urban planning can serve as an important input for architectural research. Some innovative solutions that can be used by the cities of Tirana, Diber, Durres, Korca and Vlora in urban planning include:

- sustainability and sustainable development: the principle of sustainability takes into account not only the current needs of the city, but also the needs of future generations. This can mean integrating sustainable development into city planning, such as the use of renewable energy sources, preservation of green areas, and other environmentally friendly initiatives;
- smart technologies: implementation of innovative technologies to improve the quality of life of residents, such as smart lighting, air quality monitoring, waste management systems;
- smart transport: development of infrastructure to support sustainable movement, such as bicycle paths, public transport based on electric vehicles, and integration of smart transport technologies;
- urban green building: the creation of green and ecological zones in the city, including vertical gardens, roof gardens, parks, and other urban green spaces that contribute to the ecological balance and health of residents;
- community participation: involvement of local residents in the decision-making process regarding the development of the city, using innovative methods such as public consultations, mapping, and support for public initiatives.

These innovative approaches can help to improve urban development in a liveable and workable environment.

Thus, the confirmation of the study is reflected in the statements of recognised experts who emphasise the importance of a deep understanding of the interaction between different aspects of the urban environment to create sustainable and effective strategies for the development of "Cities of the Future". Research on innovative approaches to urban planning and analysis of their impact on the quality of life of residents indicate the need to implement sustainable development in urban planning. In particular, consideration of environmental aspects and rational use of resources are becoming key factors in achieving environmentally sustainable urban development. Thus, to summarise, the results of the study indicate the importance of an in-depth analysis of the economic, socio-cultural, and architectural dimensions of urban planning in the context of Albania. The analysis of the current state of cities and their interaction with economic and environmental

development provides valuable insights into the challenges and opportunities facing these cities.

CONCLUSIONS

Analysing the modern architectural and infrastructural landscape of the selected Albanian cities of Tirana, Diber, Durres, Vlora and Korca, various innovations can be identified that reflect their rapid development. In the context of architectural solutions, there is an active implementation of modern residential complexes, the use of energy-efficient technologies and the restoration of historical sites.

An important aspect of sustainable development is the environmental dimension, which is implemented through the creation of eco-parks, the use of environmentally friendly materials in construction, and support for ecotourism. Another important aspect of sustainable development is the use of innovative technologies in solving transport and logistics problems, including the introduction of electric transport and smart city management systems. Architectural innovations also include the creation of art spaces, the use of naval architecture and interactive architectural objects. These measures are designed not only to ensure the functionality and sustainability of cities but also to enhance the aesthetic level and create an attractive urban environment. An analysis of GDP dynamics shows promising prospects for the "Cities of the Future". Stable economic conditions from 2000 to 2008 can serve as a basis for the likelihood of sustainable development and promotion of cities. The resilience and growth of the economy in 2020 and 2023 also point to new opportunities for such cities in terms of investment attractiveness and the development of modern infrastructure solutions. A positive trend can create favourable conditions for attracting new businesses, technological innovations, and sustainable lifestyles in the "Cities of the Future", which reflect a willingness to implement innovative solutions and adapt to challenges.

Further study should explore aspects of global urban competitiveness, develop innovative solutions to transnational challenges, and build more sustainable and efficient urban systems in light of rapidly changing technologies and societal needs.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

None.

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Сабіна Боллано
Кандидат соціальних наук та поведінки, викладач
Європейський університет Тирани
1000, вул. Ханфизе Кеко, м. Тирана, Албанія
https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0201-8442

Вивчення досвіду містобудування та прийняття рішень щодо розвитку «Міст майбутнього»

Анотація. Враховуючи стрімкий технологічний та глобальний розвиток, «Міста майбутнього» стають важливими центрами інновацій, де переплітаються культурні, економічні та технологічні впливи. Наукова актуальність таких досліджень визначається впливом інновацій на розвиток міського середовища, які сприяють сталому розвитку та покращують якість життя мешканців. Дослідження спрямоване на аналіз практик планування та рішень міського розвитку в «Містах майбутнього» в Албанії, зосереджуючись на взаємодії соціальних, економічних та екологічних аспектів. Використовувалися такі методи: узагальнення, індукції та дедукції, аналізу та синтезу. Дослідження вивчало дані про урбанізацію в Албанії, валовий внутрішній продукт країни та в містах Тирана, Дібер, Дуррес, Влера та Корча на душу населення, а також основні аспекти планування та економічної стійкості в цілому. Дослідження архітектурного та інфраструктурного розвитку албанських міст дозволило виявити ключові тенденції та інновації, серед яких впровадження сучасних житлових комплексів, інтерактивних додатків, використання енергоефективних технологій, реставрація історичних місць та створення екопарків. Це свідчить про важливість збалансованого розвитку, який включає як сучасні технології, так і збереження культурної спадщини. Стабільні економічні умови вказують на можливості сталого розвитку та інвестицій у містах. Позитивна динаміка валового внутрішнього продукту створює сприятливі умови для залучення нових підприємств, технологічних інновацій та розвитку сталого способу життя. Крім того, аналіз інновацій у транспорті, естетичних підходах та економічній стійкості албанських міст визначає перспективи їх глобальної конкурентоспроможності. Результати дослідження можуть бути корисними для розробки та планування майбутнього міського розвитку в Албанії, а також використовуватися як основа для прийняття рішень у сферах економіки, технологій та урбанізації

Ключові слова: інфраструктура; енергоефективні технології; реставрація; екопарки; інновації; розумні системи