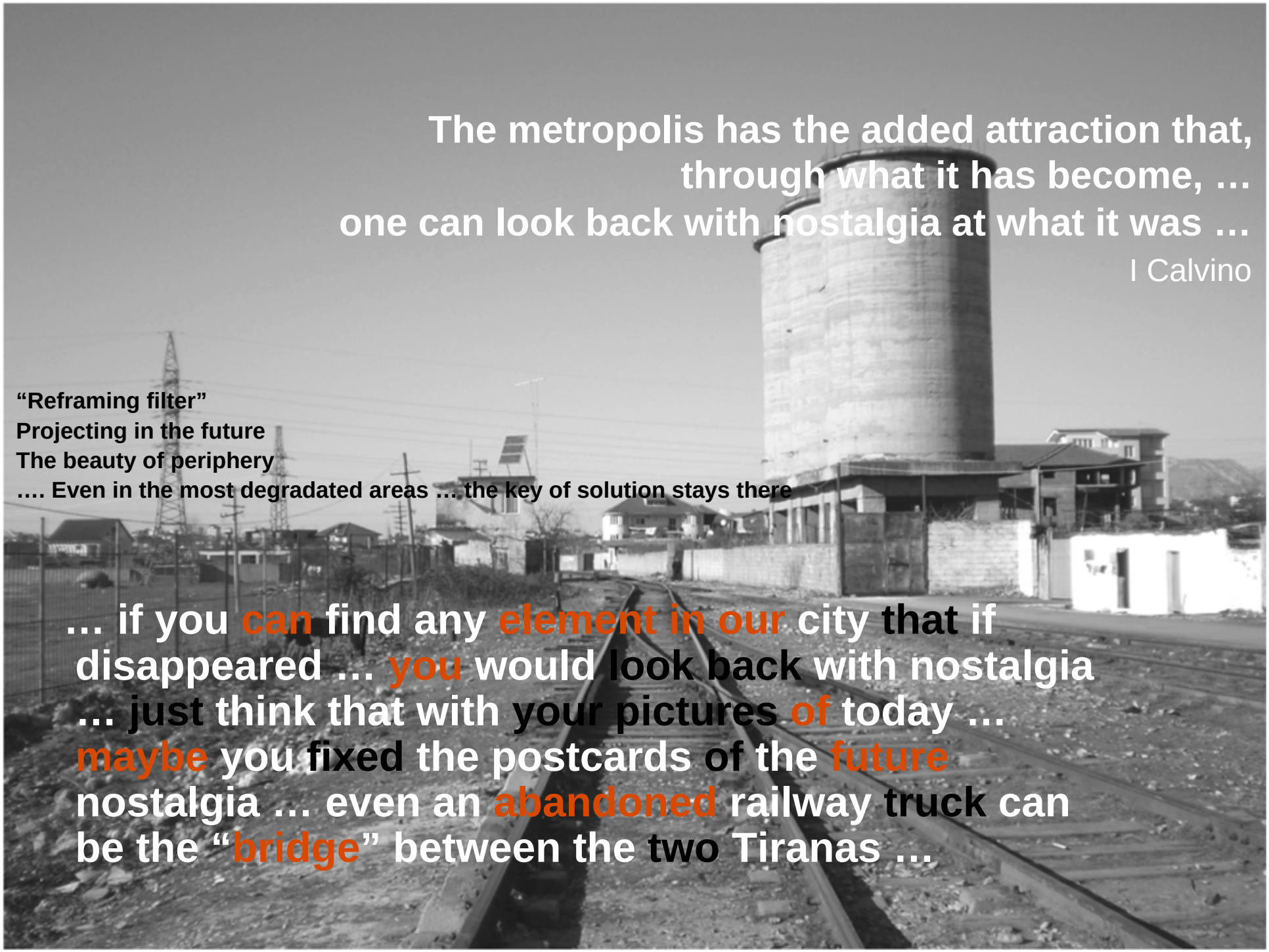
… theoretical and practical Issues of urban design in Albania …

What are the main characteristics of **transformation of urban space and image** in Tirana in the socialist and post socialist period

… the future …

The challenge

Can we still “**recapture**” the urban form?



The metropolis has the added attraction that,
through what it has become, …
one can look back with nostalgia at what it was …

I Calvino

"Reframing filter"
Projecting in the future
The beauty of periphery
…. Even in the most degradated areas … the key of solution stays there

… if you can find any element in our city that if disappeared … you would look back with nostalgia … just think that with your pictures of today … maybe you fixed the postcards of the future nostalgia … even an abandoned railway truck can be the "bridge" between the two Tiranas …

How the cities took the shape they did?

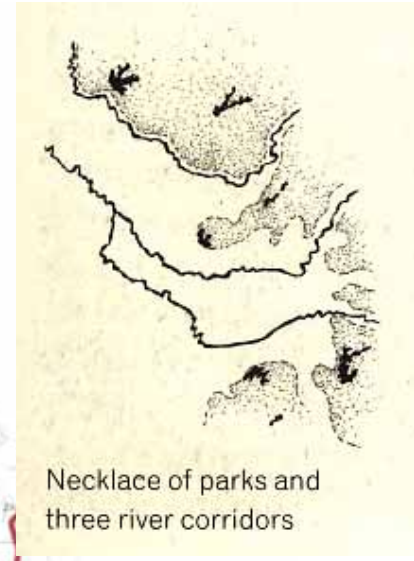
… Here we start the challenge of exploring the relations between the urban form and urban processes

- two main aspects (Kostov):
  - (i) People, forces and institutions that bring the urban form
  - (ii) physical change through time (historical periods)

… we can observe social implications and human behavior in relation to urban form

… Does Albanian type of public space / place engender social interaction or discourage it?

- **Necklace of (parks), river corridors**
- **The city three river system from east to west … <u>crossing the city</u> and the territory**
- **Vital role in <u>structuring the city</u> – regeneration and the future development**
-

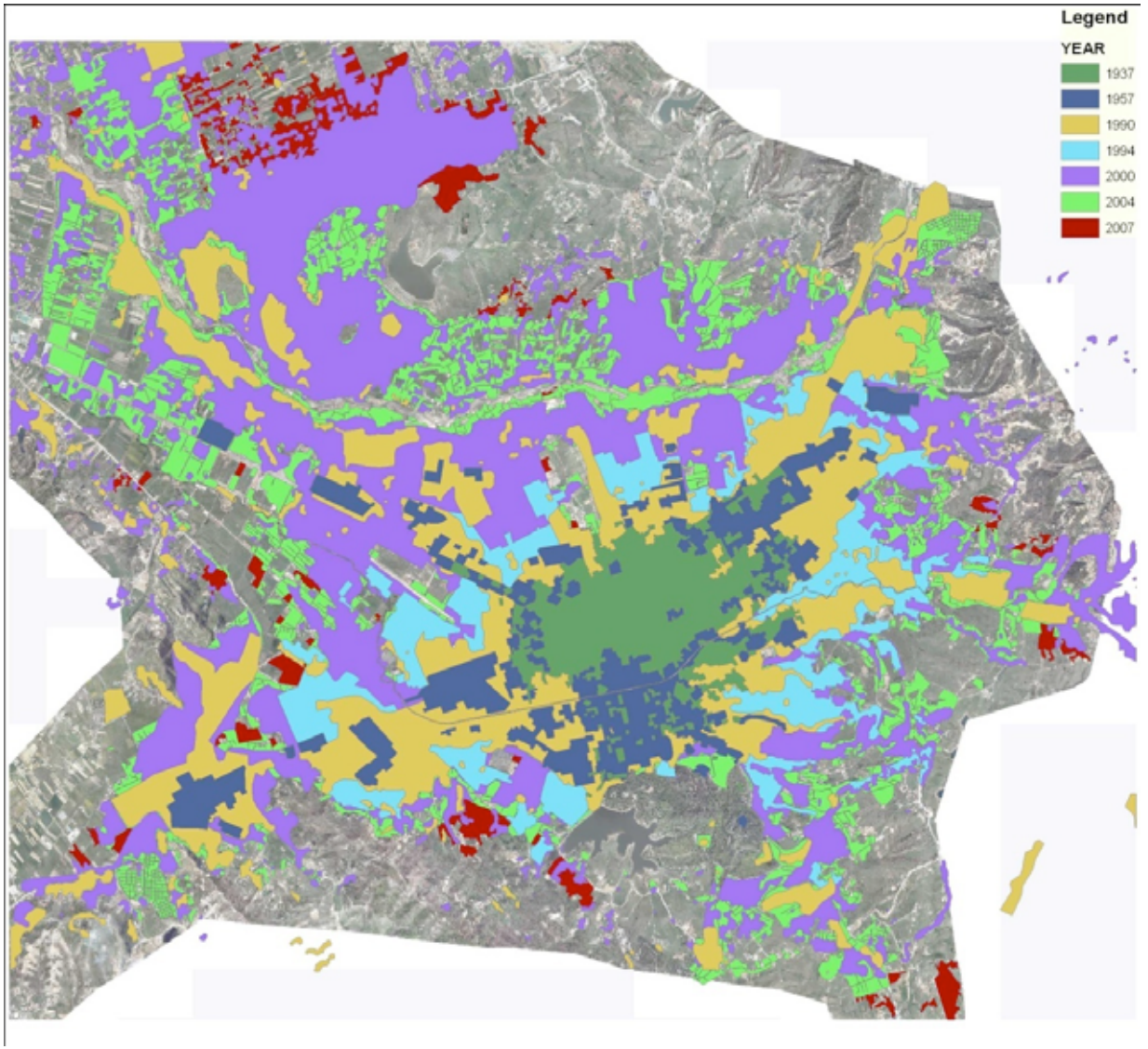


Necklace of parks and three river corridors

Repositioning of Tirana in the new metropolitan settings

Repositioning of Tirana in the new metropolitan settings

- Five fold increased from 1991 to 2001 GT:
  - 12km2 --- 56 km2
- Massive population expansion in GT:
  - 7-5% increase during the same period

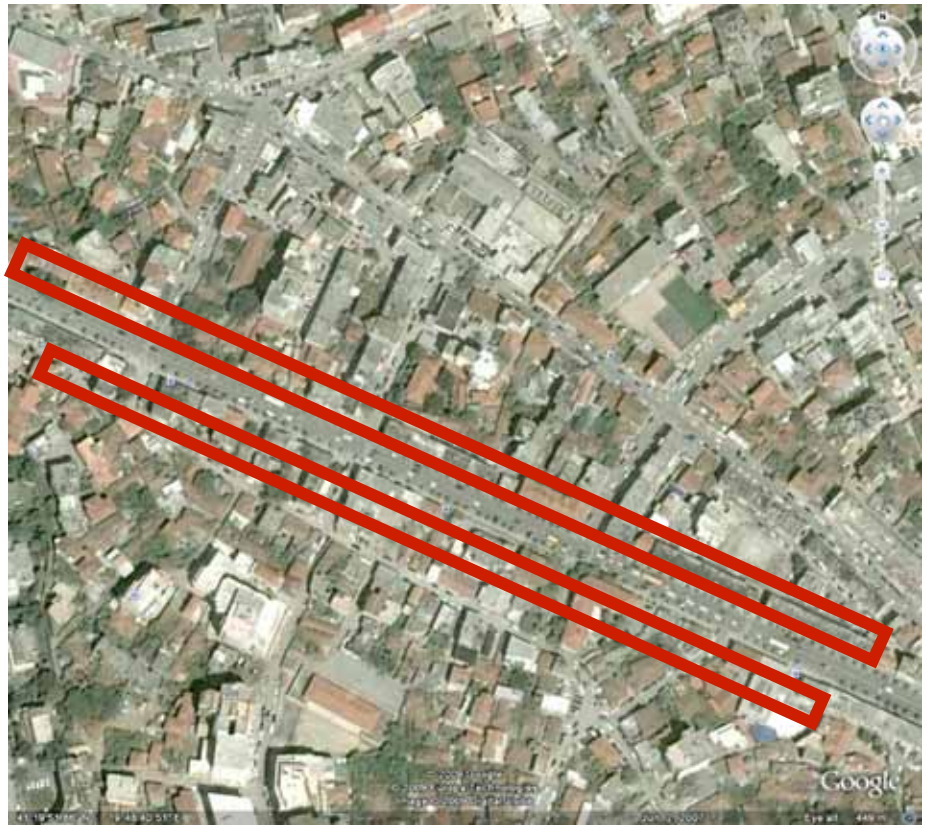


… some typical urban “cells”

This unprecedented growth influenced the **urban morphology** (big and small scale)

- the most important growing area
  - Inner city growing / dense areas
  - (new) Periphery
- Informally developed areas (after ’90; periphery and center)
- Traditional areas
- Areas newly created during the communist regime
- Other areas …. (commercial and production activities)

TRADITIONAL AREA (erosion)
Externalities, property value, access, ...
© 2009 Google
Image © 2009 DigitalGlobe
Google
41°19'54.55" N 19°49'36.17" E
Jun 2, 2007
Eye alt 451 m



… the sindroms started … much time before .. .
“Artificial” insertion … urban “curtains”

TYPICAL COMMUNIST RESIDENTIAL BLOCKS
Replaced traditional areas, ore developed as new extensions of the city

Post ’90s

New infill development .. In the center and in periphery
Replacing small scale developments … with high rise

New developed areas … high rise buildings in the periphery

New developments in periphery …
High rise private developments … and social housing

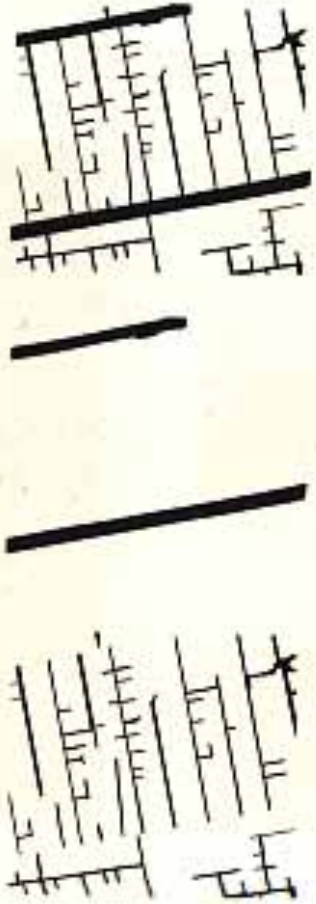
High income residential area

Informal peripheries …

Reticular Pattern

Radial Pattern

Straight Linear Pattern



Curved Linear Pattern

Cul-de Sac Pattern

Rur-urban

Trendencies
For the creation of the linear city
With economic activities

Everything in the hands of Private Developers And land owners

… socialist period
standardized typology of transformation …

Industrialization program of the country …

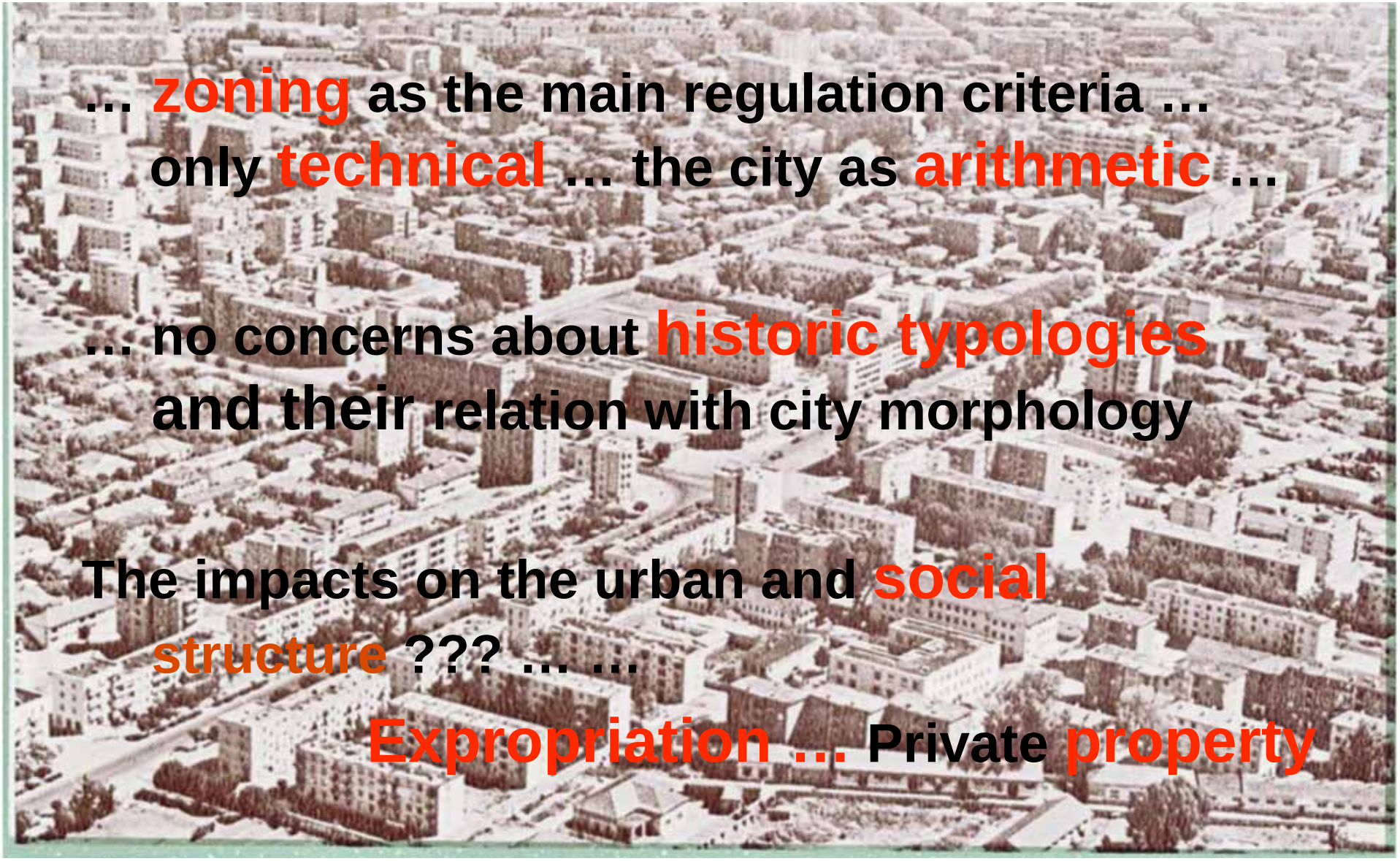
…regulatory plans

Transforming the city based on the
Replacement strategy of the
old / traditional neighborhoods

Expansion of the city in new areas …

Instruments

“paradise” for urban planners



… zoning as the main regulation criteria …

only technical … the city as arithmetic …

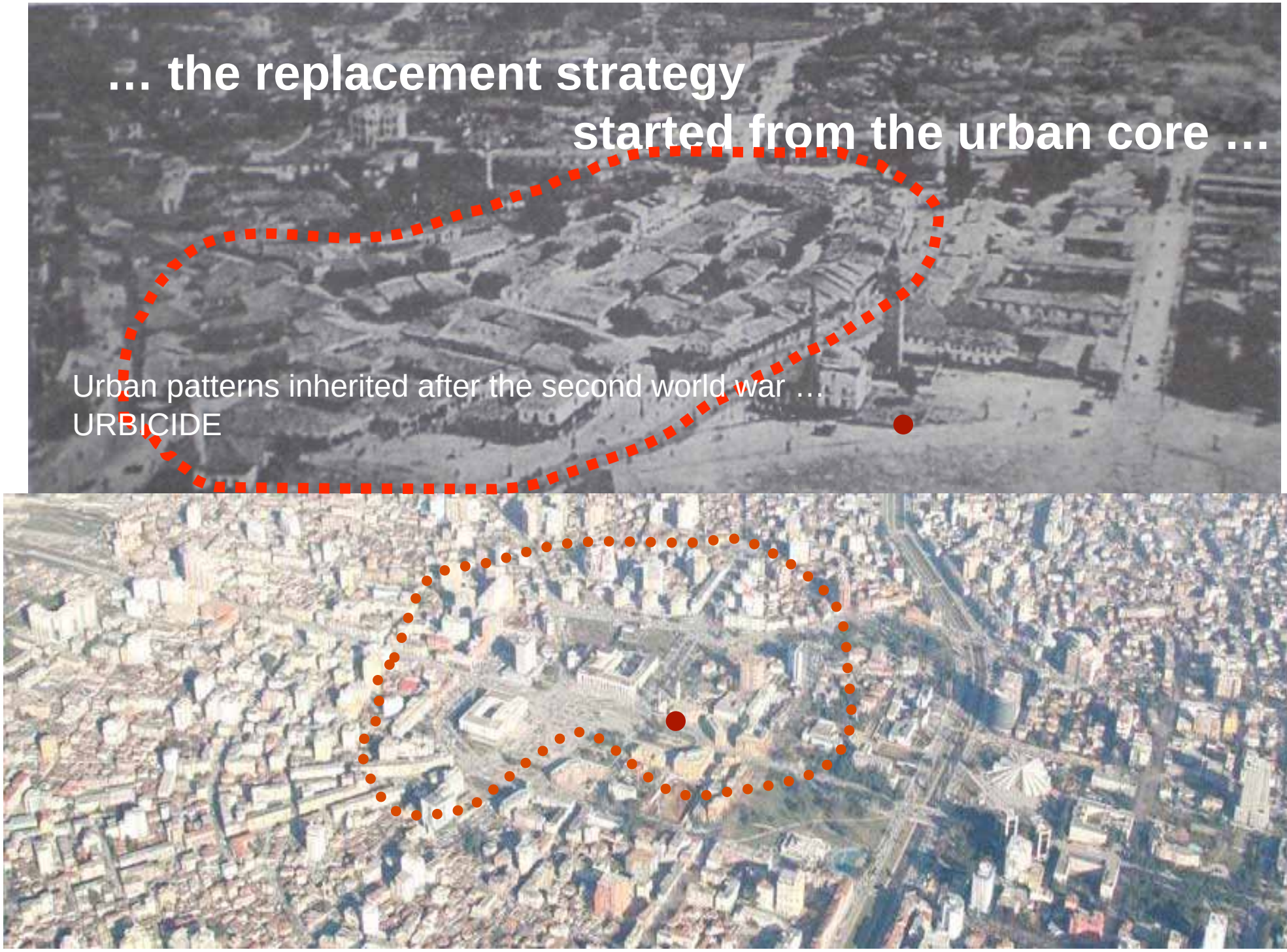
… no concerns about historic typologies

and their relation with city morphology

The impacts on the urban and social

structure ??? … …

Expropriation … Private property


… the replacement strategy
started from the urban core …
Urban patterns inherited after the second world war …
URBICIDE

Violence against architecture …

- Urbicide is a **struggle** into the sphere of organized space (Bill Millard)
- **Erosion** of neglected (Dajti hotel)
- A city can be destroyed also through acts of **construction**
    - Socialist
    - Post-socialist
- Impacts on urban fabric: typology
- The destruction of buildings is a **strategic maneuver**

... not **human touch** ...

... transformed it in **the "essence" of basic needs"**

... was not the place to offer **more opportunities** ...

No space for **architectonic representation** ...

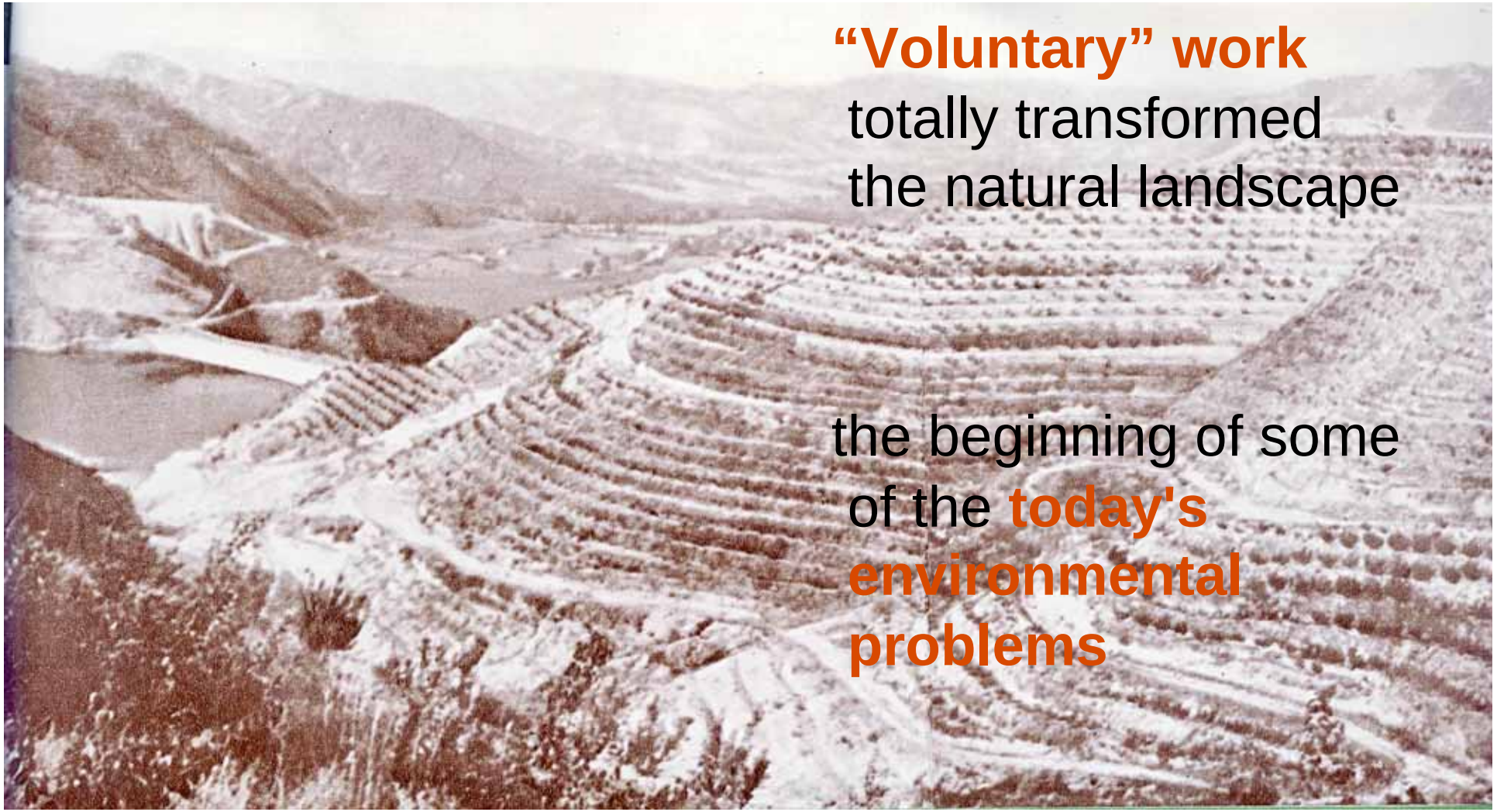
this was what we inherited at the begging of ’90s

Lack of vital energy

… clean cities = “sterility”

deprived from life energy …

… no-ones space


“Voluntary” work
totally transformed
the natural landscape
the beginning of some
of the **today's**
environmental
problems

Kukës
© 2009 Europa Technologies
© 2009 Tele Atlas
© 2009 Cnes/Spot Image
© 2009 Google
Google
42°04'38.46" N 20°25'27.11" E
Jul 20, 2003
Eye alt 4.84 km

… after ’90s approaches …

Interventions … “instruments”

… from **replacement** interventions
big scale (neighborhood)…

… to
“**fill-in**” = gradual “space occupatin” …
… **plot based** …
interventions

… **inability to create /maintain coherence in urban development** at big scale…

N
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Image © 2009 DigitalGlobe
Google
41°19'28.92" N 19°48'53.74" E
Jun 2, 2007
Eye alt 451 m

© 2009 Google
© 2009 Europa Technologies
Image © 2009 DigitalGlobe
19°50.39" N 19°49'24.28" E

Euro Jeans

Traditional areas

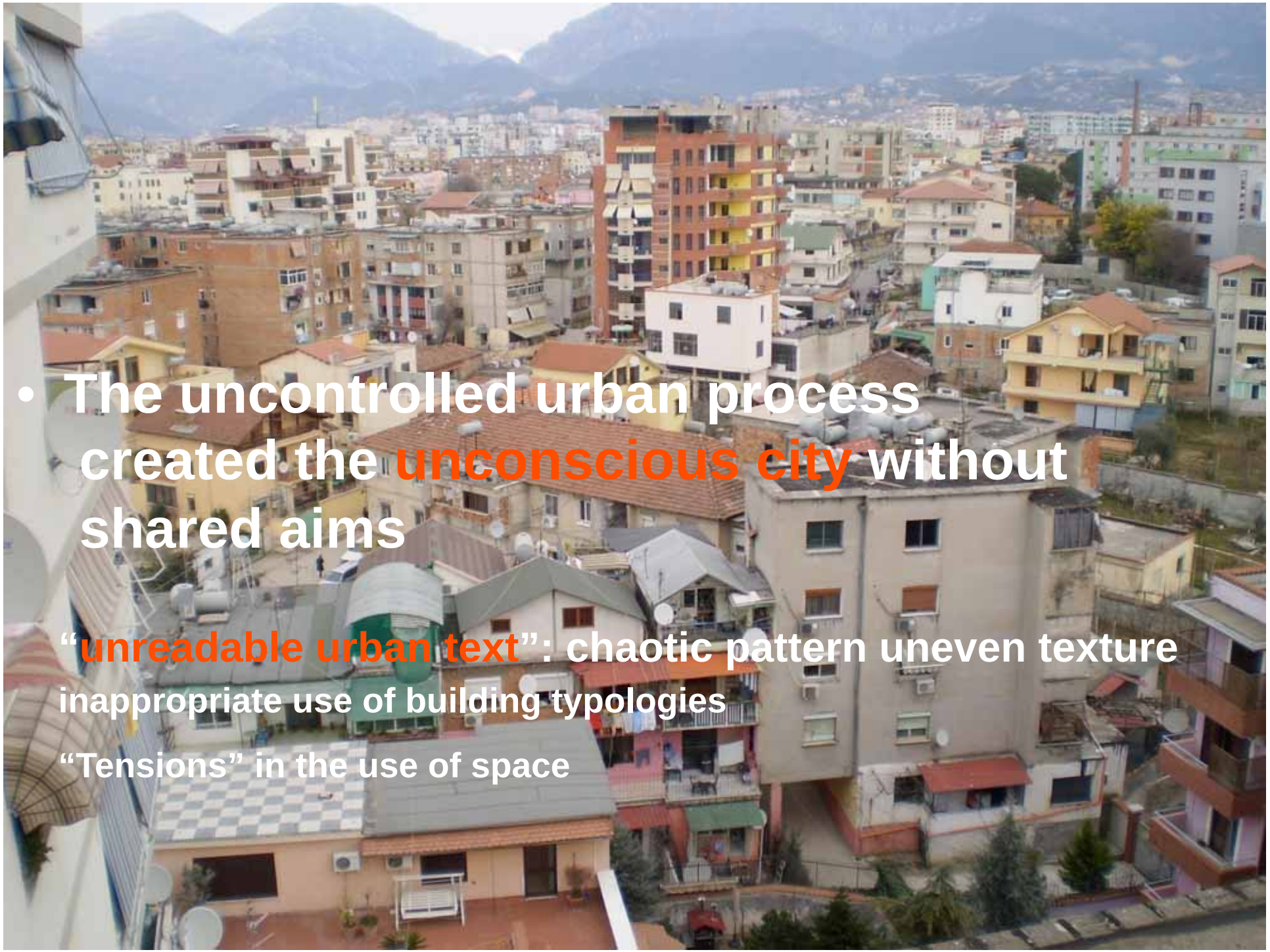
Eroded and neglected

"URBICIDE"
Eroded and neglected

Eroded and neglected

The future informal “garden city” …

2004/11/22



- **The uncontrolled urban process created the unconscious city without shared aims**

"unreadable urban text": chaotic pattern uneven texture

inappropriate use of building typologies

"Tensions" in the use of space

- Low **enforcement – no** enforcement
- Life style
- **Profit maximization** (builders, land owners …)
- Changes attributed to the specific **education of architects** and urban planners (lack of consideration of the contexts)
- **Technical documents** that directed / blocking Vs enabling

Professional situation

Narrow scope of architecture … routed in the “traditional **education” from civil engineering** …

Focused **only on technical and engineering concepts** – pure rationalist model – mixed with socio-communist limitations

… educated **how to “divide” the space** but not how to **“create” the space** … this impacted the development during the communist regime … and this of today

Lack of critical judgment **and professional critique** about the damages in the past and this of today

One example:
“The geometry of distances” … the alibi

The rule that destroyed our cities

The space understood only in terms of 3d geometry
No character ... no care about the lived space

... “hapesira merr kuptim jo vetem nga boshlleku ne vetvete, por nga elementet konkret te vendit” – kjo ben diferencen ..... Heidegger

Lack of inspiring visions for future development

Positivist approach – reframing

- Urban fabric in Tirana is **heavily damaged** … paradoxically **here stays its specificity of today** … the challenge is to transform it in a more **conscious** urban condition …

- … after that … it is clear that a **change** is needed … starting from a thorough **understanding of the "urban text"** … sequential layers …. and TRANSLATE it IN AN urban design strategy

Reframing: the architect as “facilitator”

… all **behavior takes place in some context …** The meaning that any event has, **depends upon the “frame”** in which we perceive it.

When we **change the frame we change the meaning** (Bandler and Grinder, 1982).

Framing is another word for contextualization, and reframing is re-contextualization.

Similar to the facilitator … the architect **helps others to “see” a new / different point of view** … and take other factors into consideration

- Reframing is also crucial in the **creative process** through the ability to put a **commonplace event in a new frame** that is enjoyable …
- this has to do with the ability to **simultaneously associate an event in two separate and different contexts** (“bisociacion” in Bandler and Grinder, 1882).

Positivist approach

Reframing the existing in a new identity …

Assuming: CONSCIOUS conditions / shared experience) AS a remedy TO the lost IDENTIY

Reframing should guarantee the passage from :

- Unconscious → Conscious (shared experience)
- "unreadable" → "urban text" … reading the hidden potentials

LOST IDENTITY

READING / DISCOVERING THE HIDDEN POTENTIALS AS REMEDY TO PREDICAMENT OF UNREADABLE- RE-CONTEXTUALIZATION

REFRAME results

CAOTIC AND UNREADABLE as --- Complexity and multilayered phenomena --- richness of the urban patterns / specificity

Instead of **"killing" the richness** of the context we can **recreate** the "unreadable"

Running city – rich energy for processes to be managed in the city

Anti-urbicide strategies

New identity … how?

- Examples of improvement through the design process applied in some cases

- better understanding of the "latent" structural features, centralities
- … ability to **conjecture** "a form" with catalytic role … in favor of **public consciousness** (Berlage institute study)
  - Structural Urban Fascias
  - "catalytic" lines of influx and / or nodes
  - "sanitation" of chaos through collage technique

Collage model

Rowe, Koetter

- A theory of **competing powers** to establish a more likely **comprehensive city**
- Re-establishing **bricolage alongside sciences** --- as concomitant propensities
- Why this dialectical predicament be not accepted in theory as in the practice?
- Solid-void dialectic that allow for **joint existence of over planned** and **genuinely planned** … of the “accident” and, public and private … individual and state equilibrium
- Qualify the virtues of order with the values of chaos
- **Rome illustrate** bricollage: a dramatic settlement with **abrupt collisions, acute disjunctions** …

The proposition leads to the condition of
the 17 century Rome …
collision, inextricable fusion,

Tirana as a paradigmatic example

Berlage Institute (Tirana Metropolis)

- … between its **reality** and a **conjecture** of it as an alternative reality

- The city as an **archipelago**: … distinct parts that “aims” towards a place - a **concentration of complementary** centralities outside the city center … by reinforcing of what already exists

- **Strategic interventions**: Fine and tuning; Reinforcing patterns and structures; Structuring Tirana’s formation; Concentration; Parallel Tirana; Durana

Character of pattern as a spatial device

"Fine and tuning": distilling patterns (district level)

platform for the installation of a more conscious urban condition

– character extrapolated from each pattern and reinterpreted to turn latent potentials into quality of space

essential character

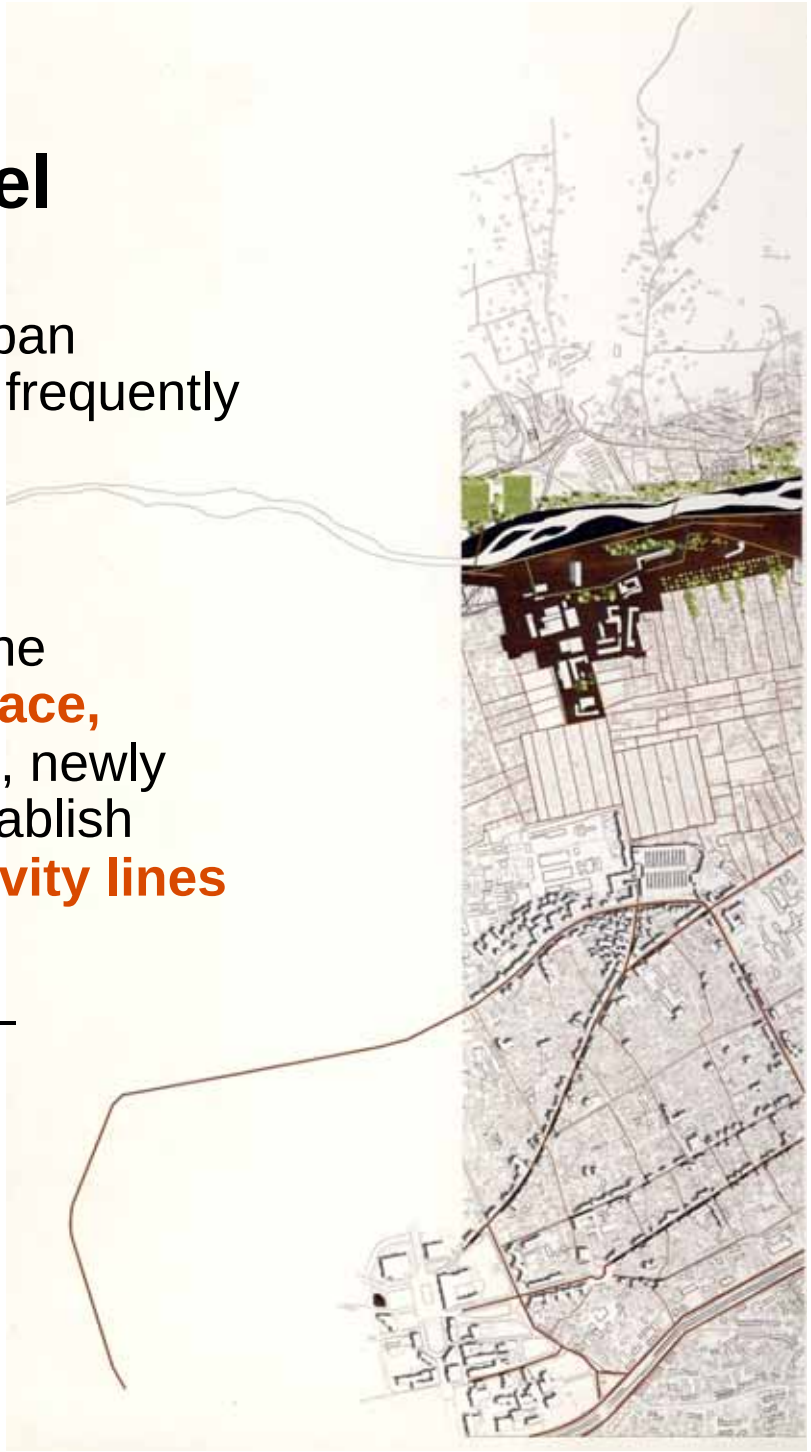
- The labyrinth – from impermeable to permeable
- The fortress – from excluded to included
- The garden city – from latent to explicit

geometric form

- Reticular, radial, straight line, curved linear, cul -de-sac

Scars and seams: urban level

Morphological interruptions as urban **gathering** places – linear spaces – frequently not consciously perceived



- Represent **exceptions** (depending on the position between patterns) – **public space, establish connectivity**, forgotten sites, newly created poles; urban collectors that establish greater sense of awareness = **new gravity lines**

- **enact a dialog across the whole city** – decongests the central core

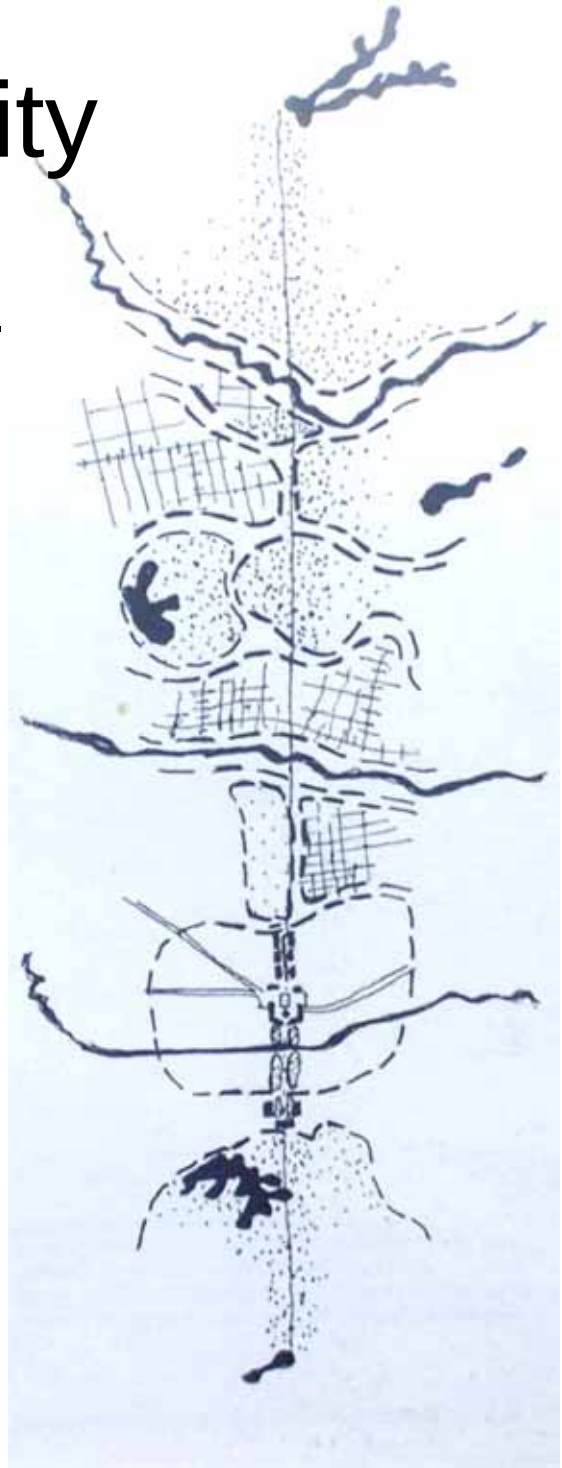
- Scars and seams in your area???

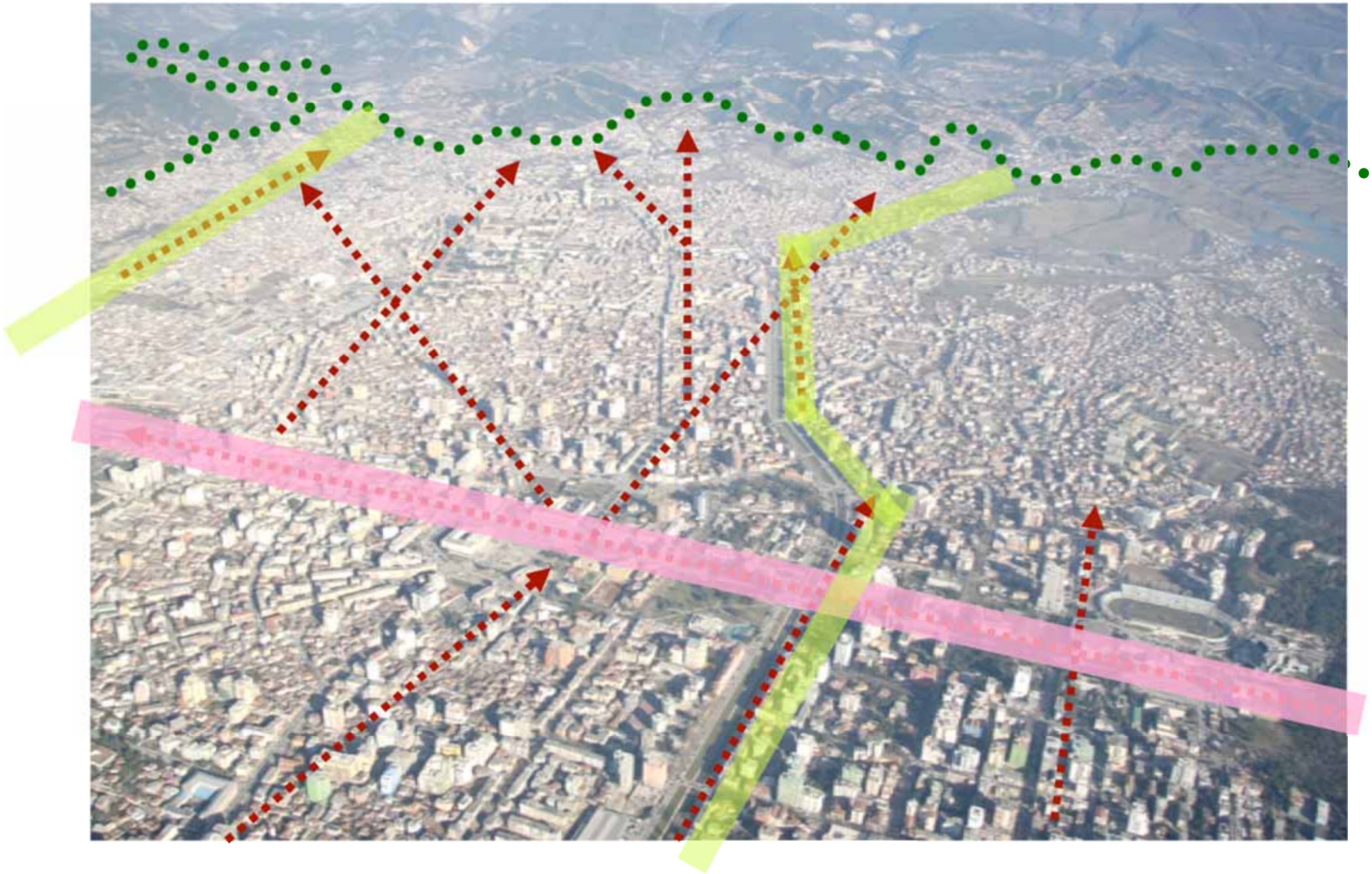
Axes as a new line of gravity

… the relation between the **continuity** and the **sequence** of fragments along it;

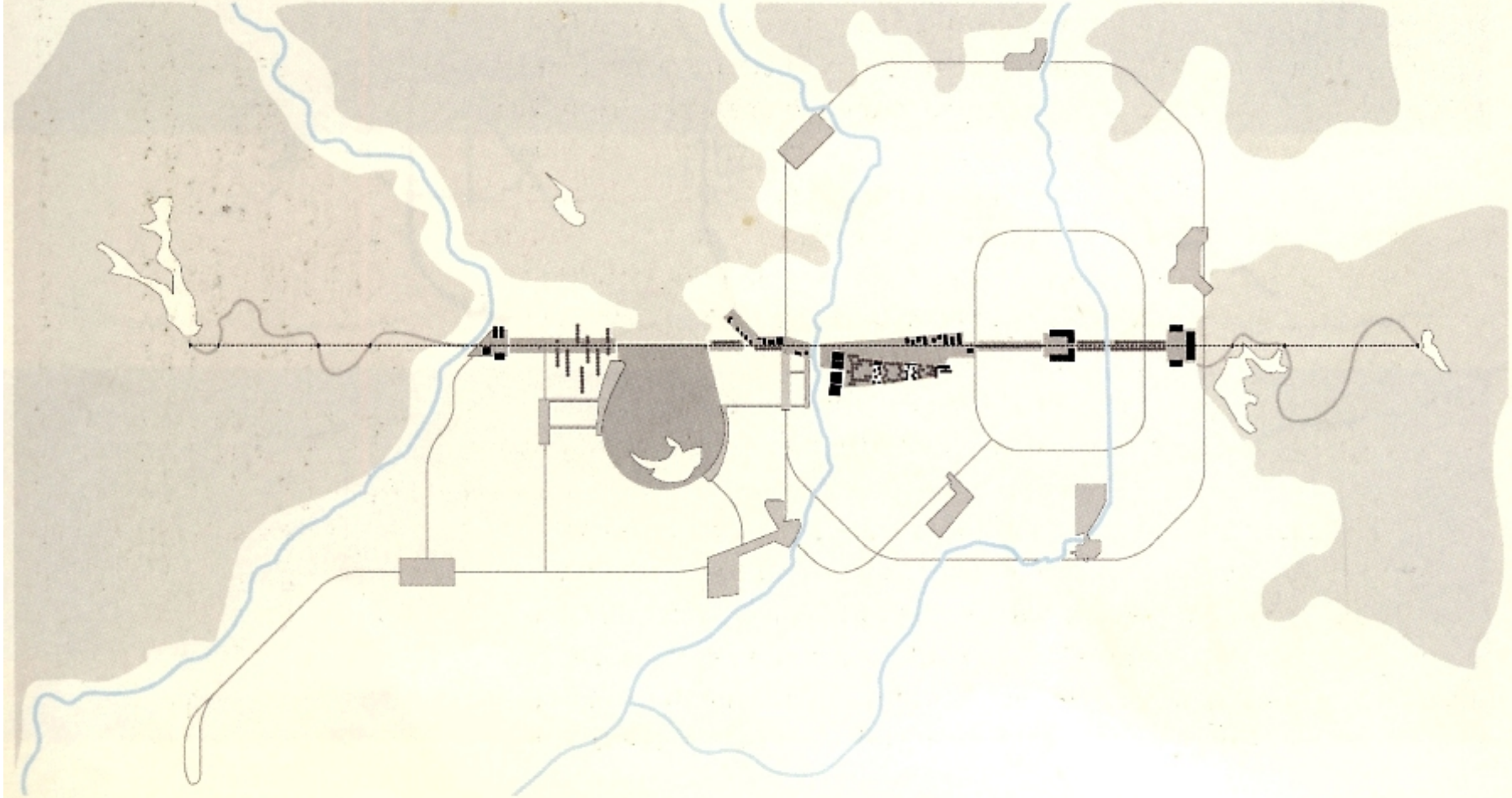
The axis counteract with the difused urbanisation offering a new **collective experience**, affecting the collective **consciousness**, collecting **independent urban and landscape fragments**,

… not an idealized axis type



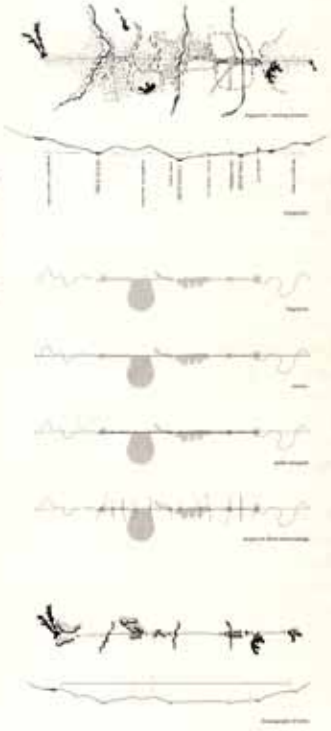


The Tirana Axis: A New Ideogram. A new balance between fragment and continuity is achieved. The axis' continuity is not dismissed, nor does it aggressively predominate over the internal logic of the urban parts that constitute the axis.

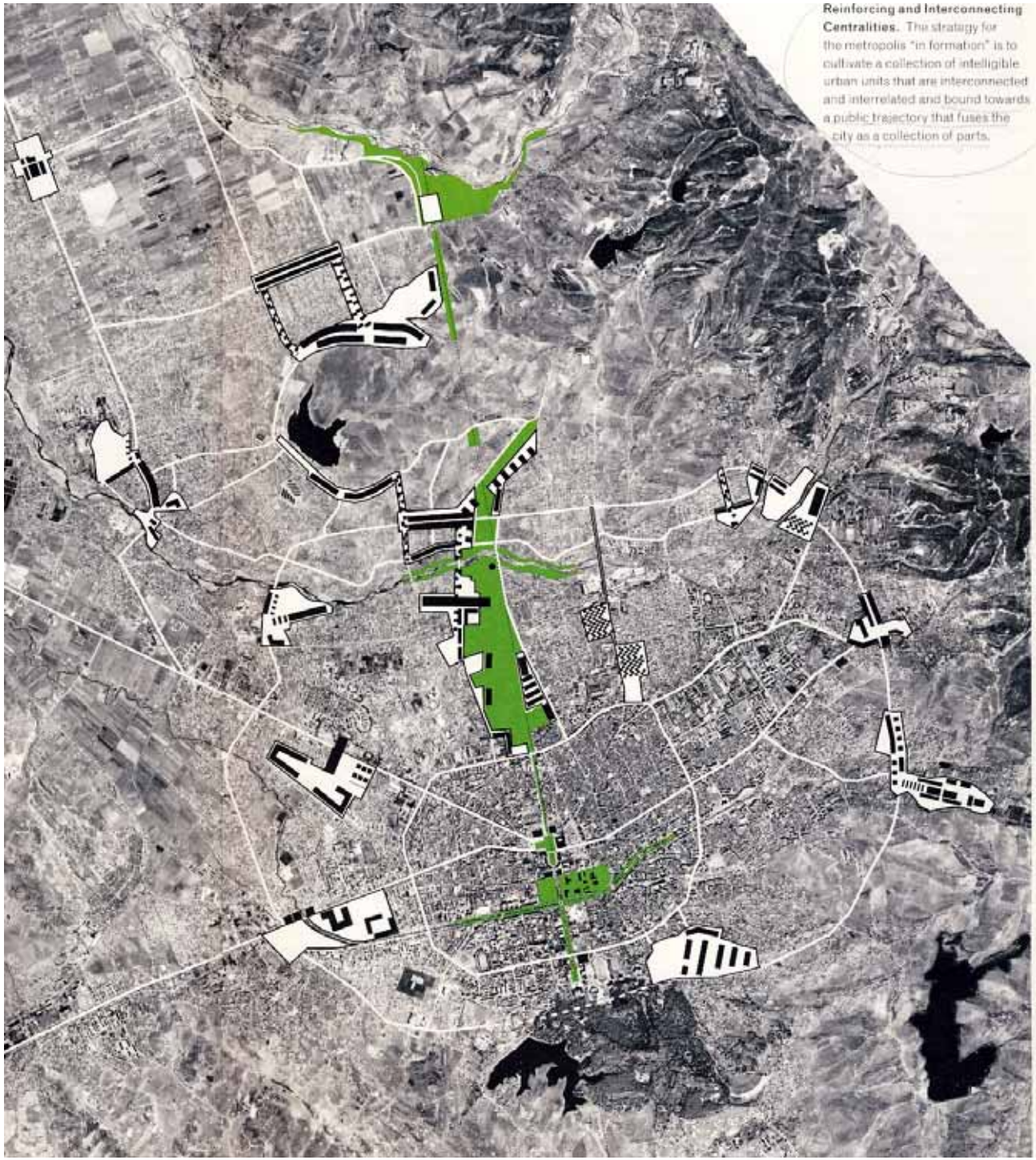


The Axis.
Symbolized by the first Albanian tram line running along its trajectory, coherence is introduced to the metropolis 'in formation' and the collective imagination of its citizens. The impact of the axis depends as much on its engagement with the different city- fragments in its path as it does with its desire for continuity.

From Axis to Section
The axis of the boulevard 'Martyrs of Nation' in the historic core continues as a northern trajectory into the periphery, collecting a series of urban and landscape fragments that are engaged to function as a catalogue, or literally a 'cross section' of the current state of Tirana 'in formation'. Rather than imposing an idealized axis-type upon the existing, we propose to bring precisely this aspect of 'cross-section' into action for the realization of a new civic structure.



Civic axis

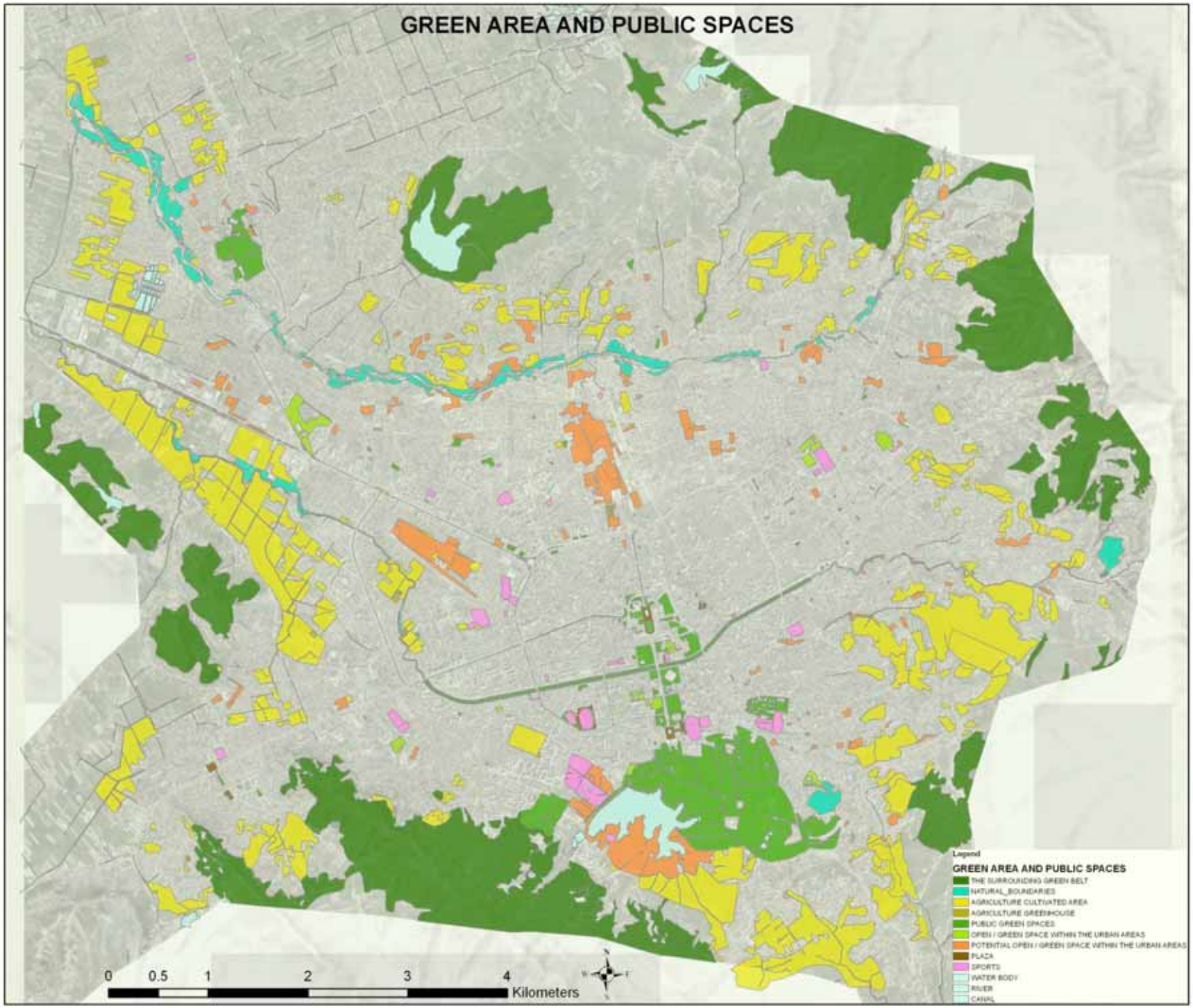


Reinforcing and Interconnecting Centralities. The strategy for the metropolis "in formation" is to cultivate a collection of intelligible urban units that are interconnected and interrelated and bound towards a public trajectory that fuses the city as a collection of parts.

The primary structural armature

- Latent Natural settings for **restructuring the urban continuum** on the territorial scale

- The civic axes act as a **line of gravity** (linear centrality) generating a **consolidating force** that provide coherence and intelligibility in the metropolitan area


GREEN AREA AND PUBLIC SPACES
Legend
GREEN AREA AND PUBLIC SPACES
THE SURROUNDING GREEN BELT
NATURAL_BOUNDARIES
AGRICULTURE CULTIVATED AREA
AGRICULTURE GREENHOUSE
PUBLIC GREEN SPACES
OPEN / GREEN SPACE WITHIN THE URBAN AREAS
POTENTIAL OPEN / GREEN SPACE WITHIN THE URBAN AREAS
PLAZA
SPORTS
WATER BODY
RIVER
CANAL
0 0.5 1 2 3 4
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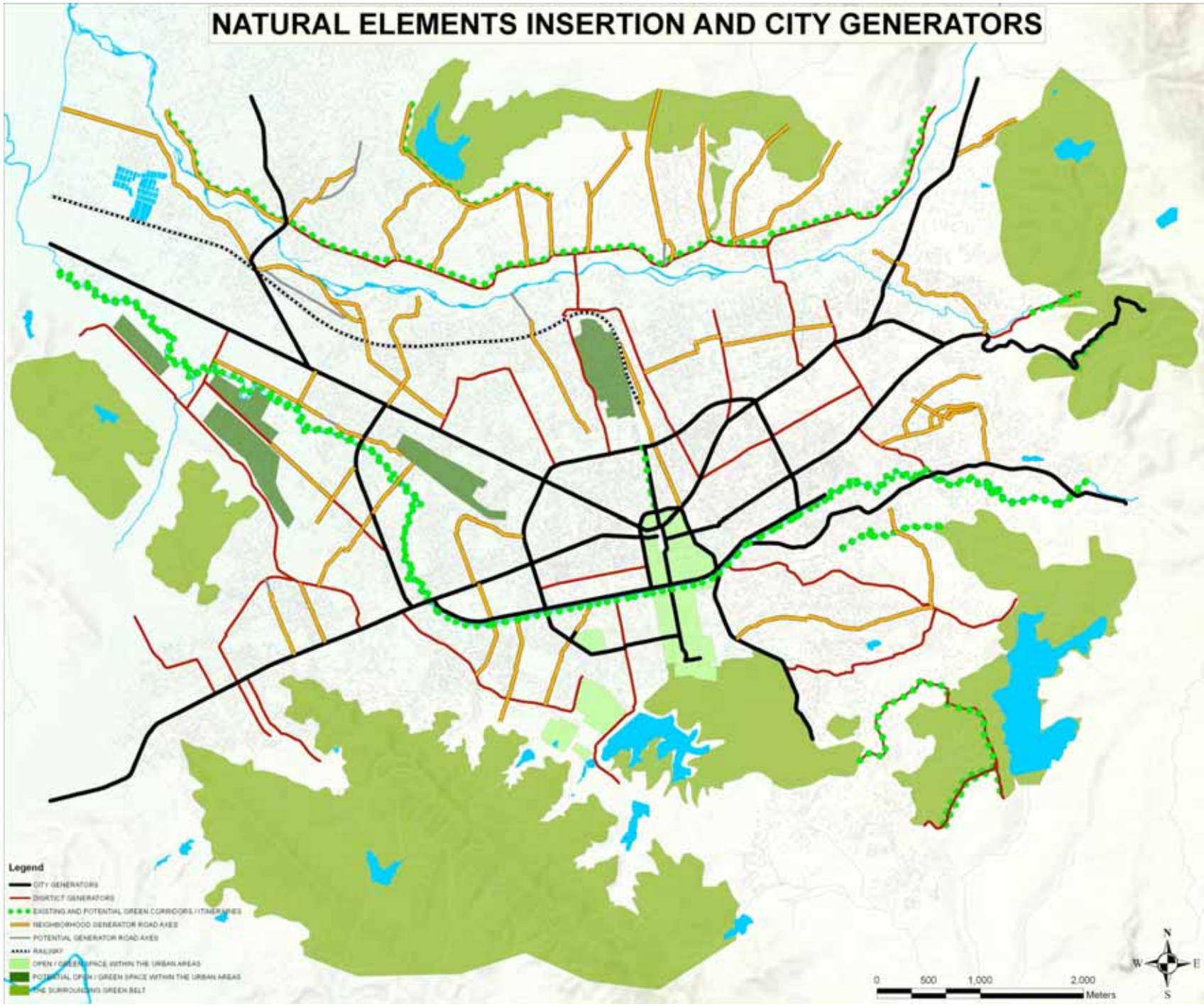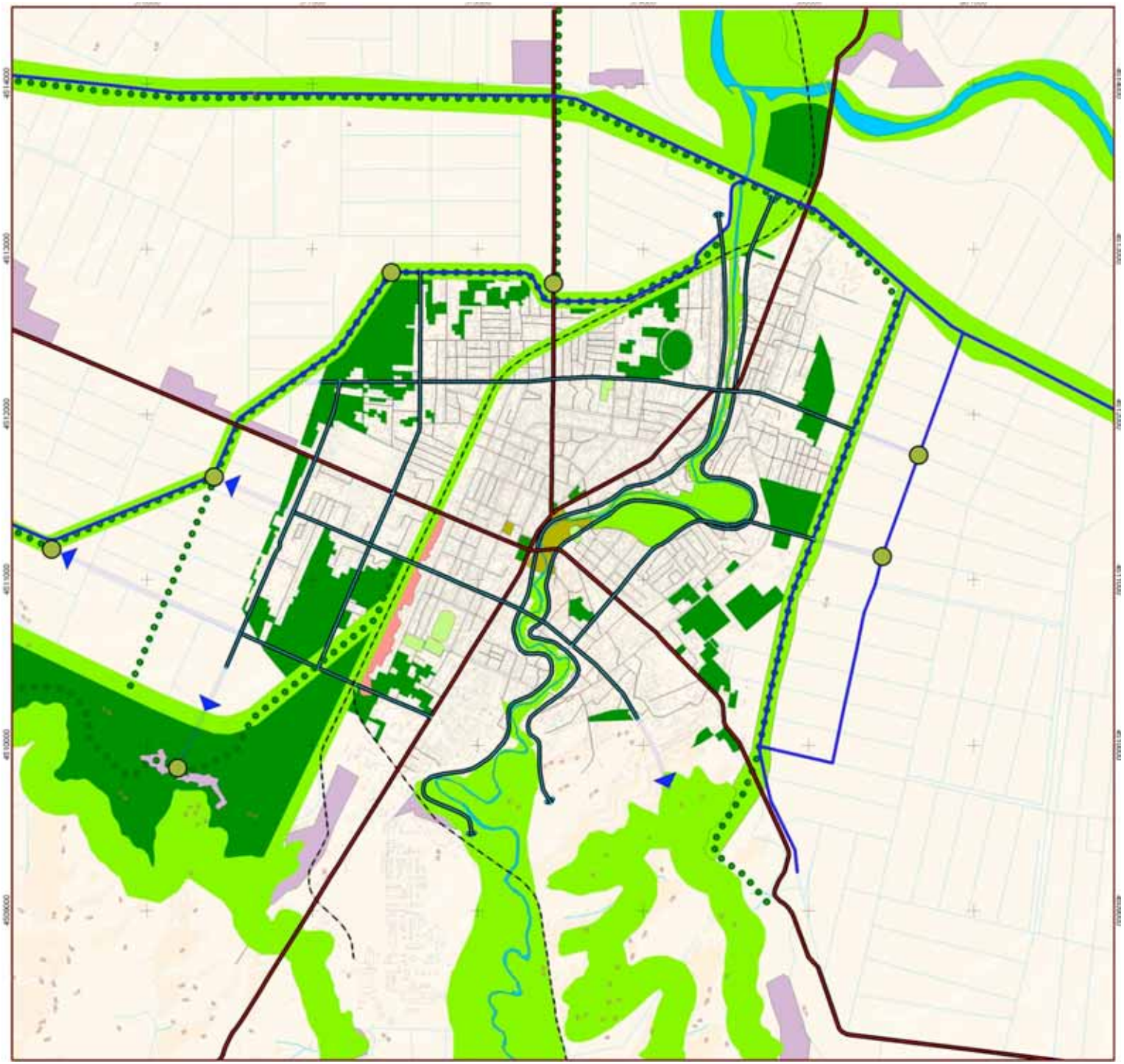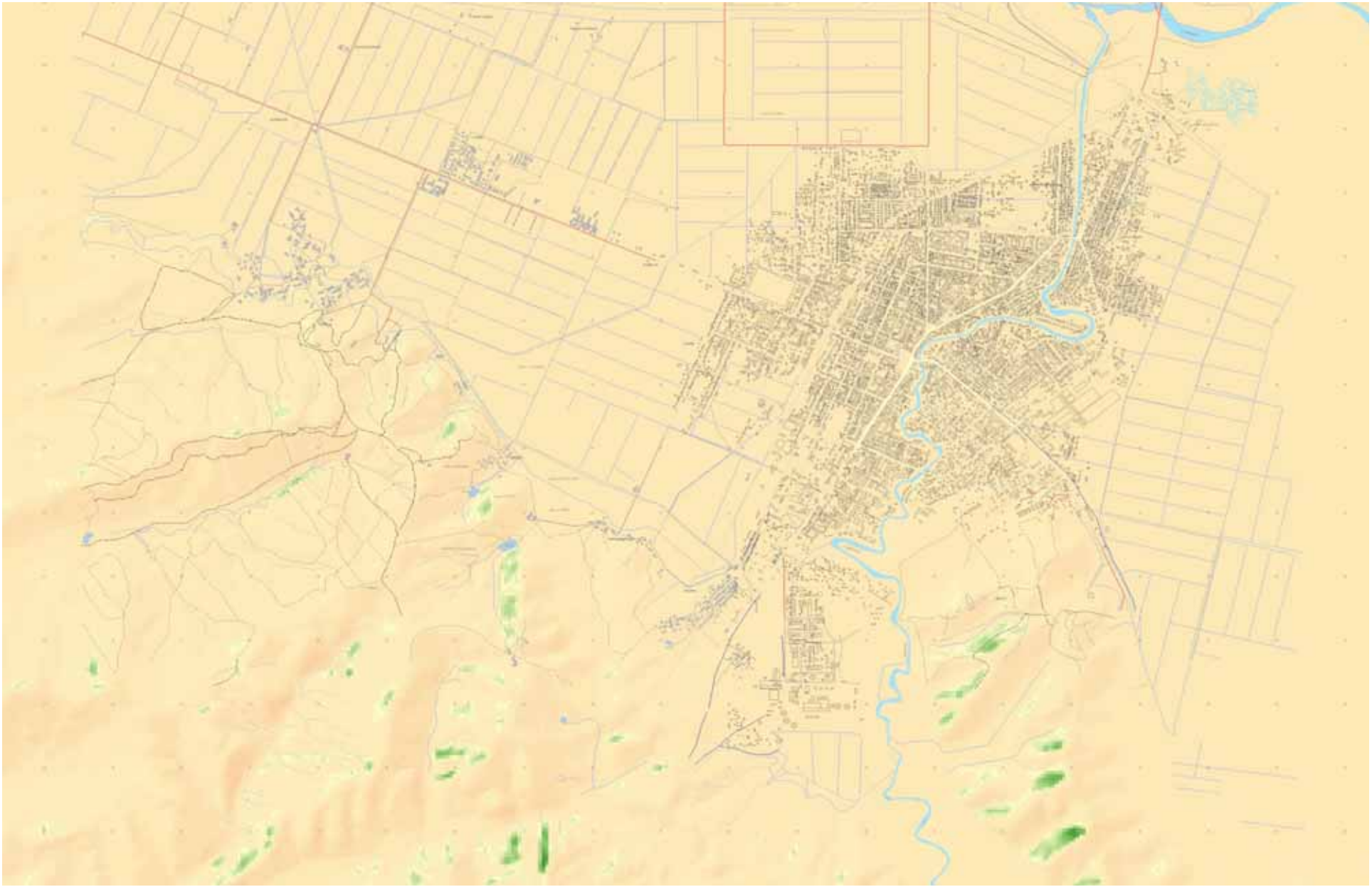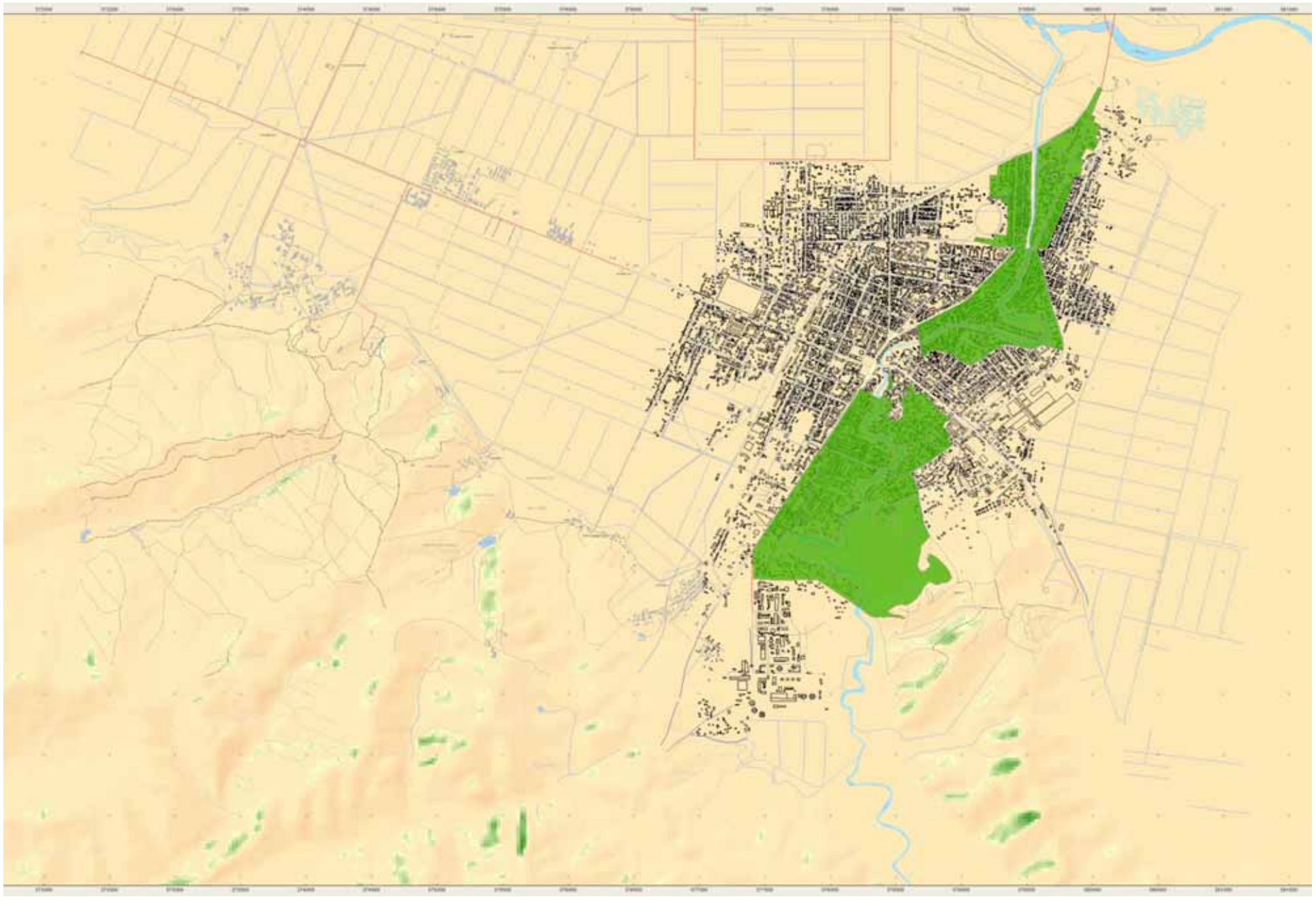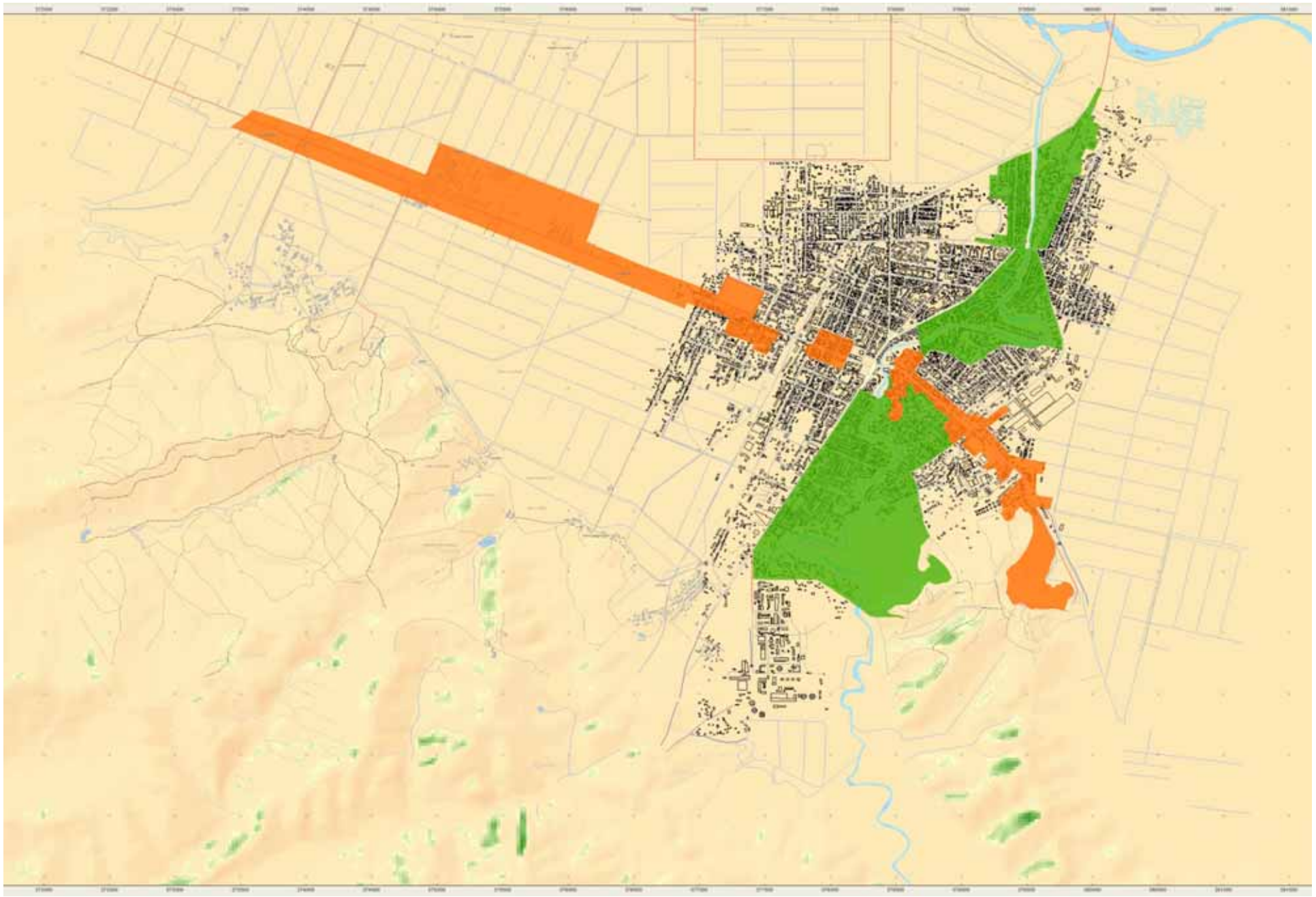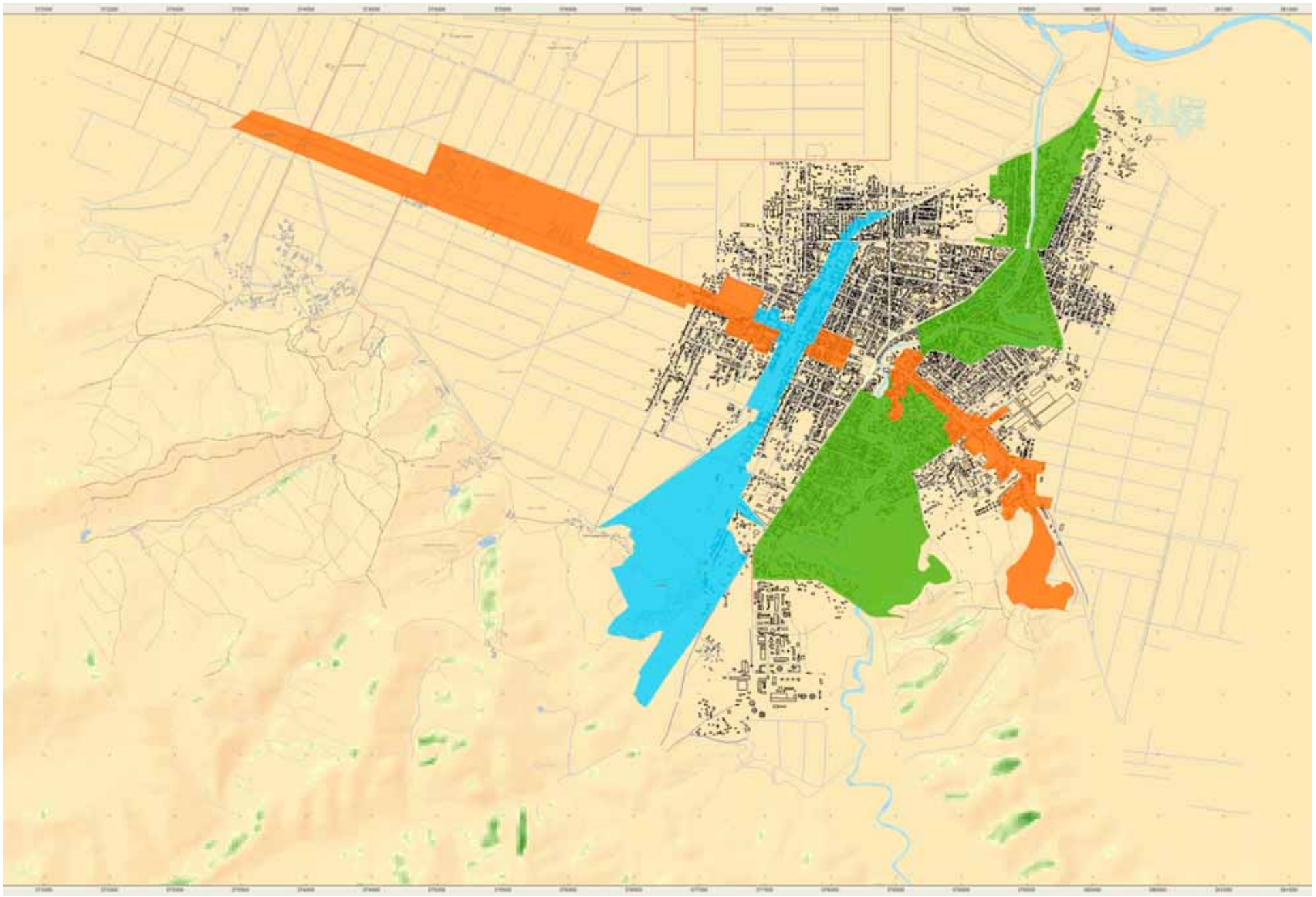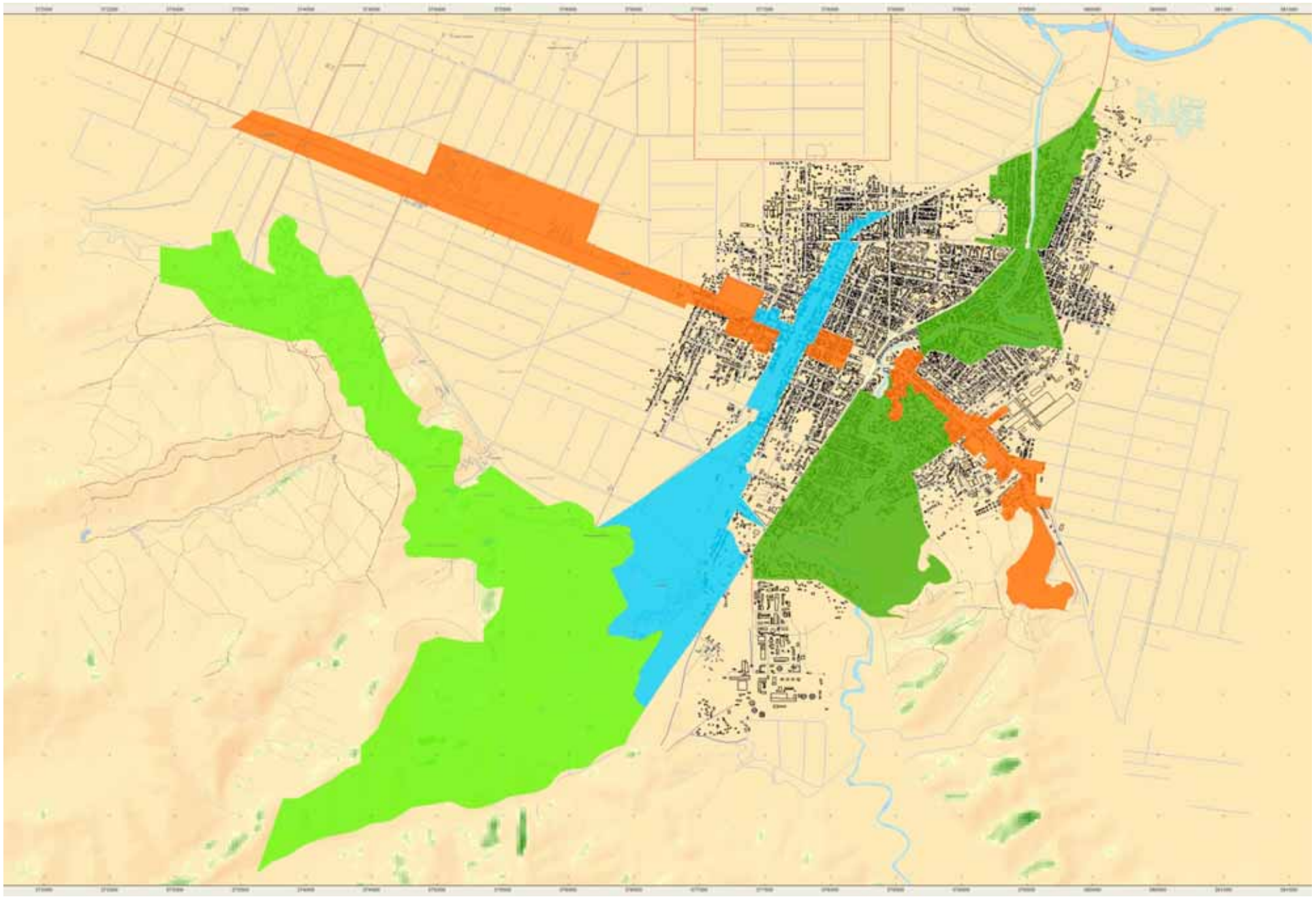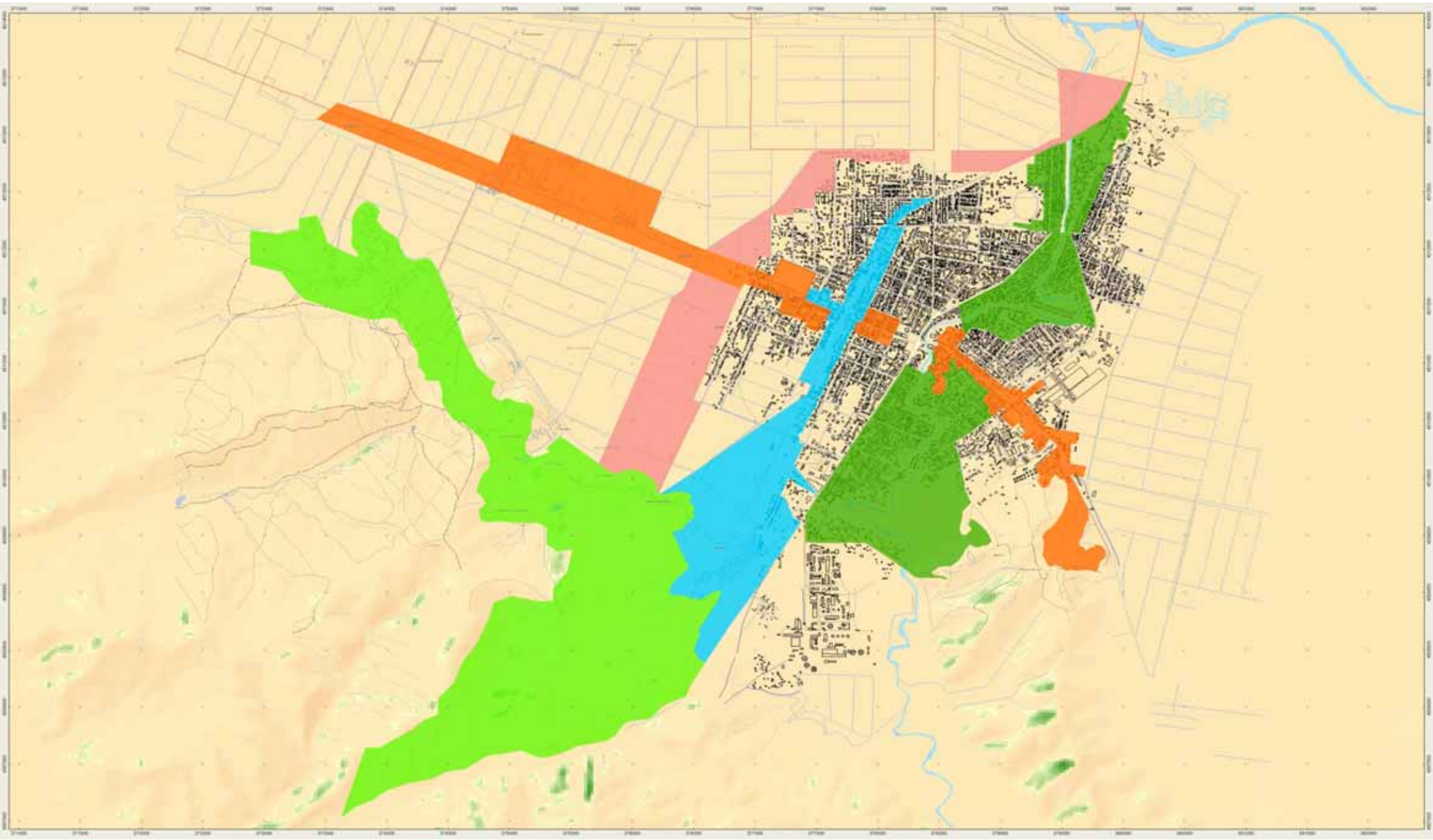
NATURAL ELEMENTS INSERTION AND CITY GENERATORS