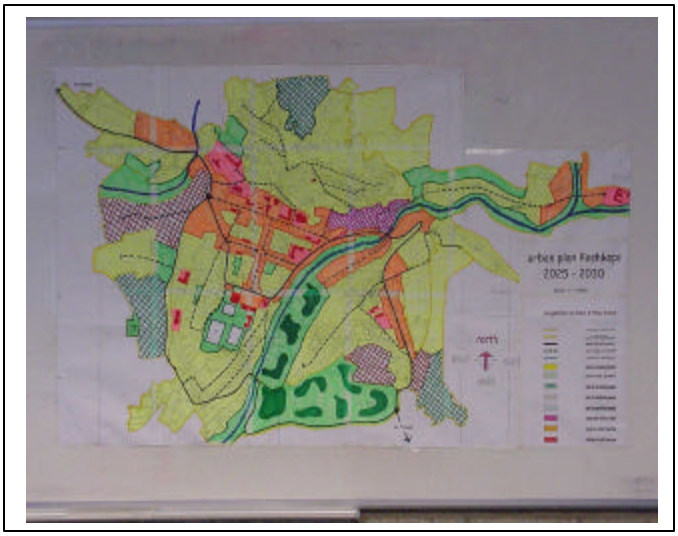
Manual
municipal urban planning
in Albania

Compass

Developing an urban plan in

Albanian municipalities



Date: 05 January 2003

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01 Introduction

The Albanian government started a process of democratisation. On behalf of this initiative a project called COMPASS has been conceived as a logical continuation of the Strengthening Local Government and Citizens Participation project (SLGCP).
The project of **COM**munity and **P**ublic **A**dministration **S**upport **S**trategy (COMPASS) describes the following three immediate objectives:

1. Provision of support to the Albanian Government in implementation of policies on decentralisation and enhancement of capacities to undertake and facilitate democratic and participatory local governance;
2. Capacity built up among a selected number of local governments on issues of sound, democratic and participatory local governance;
3. Develop and undertake a public awareness on democratic and participatory local governance.

On behalf of the program that must guide this process, the International Division of the Organisation for Dutch Municipalities (VNGI) has targeted some Albanian cities to take part in different projects.
One of these cities is Peshkopi, the capital of the Dibër district in the north eastern part of Albania. In Peshkopi an urban planning project has been executed between October 2001 and December 2002. The project was managed by mr. John Hermes, head of the urban planning department in Zeist (The Netherlands).
He was supported and assisted by mr. Flamur Kuci, the Albanian expert from Co-plan.

Developing an urban plan for a municipality is very complex due to the various and different interests of the citizens, advisors, civil servants, governors, politicians and the entire social and economic society.

Due to the objectives of the COMPASS project both experts visited Peshkopi several times in this period during which they coached the local staff of the municipality as well as the entire project organization.

They organized the citizens participation and worked out an urban plan for the city by participation of the population of Peshkopi. The entire planning process was facilitated by the COMPASS organization in Tirana.

In this manual is described how the project in Peshkopi was organized and managed.
The executed process may be seen as a blue print for other municipalities in Albania.

02 The organization

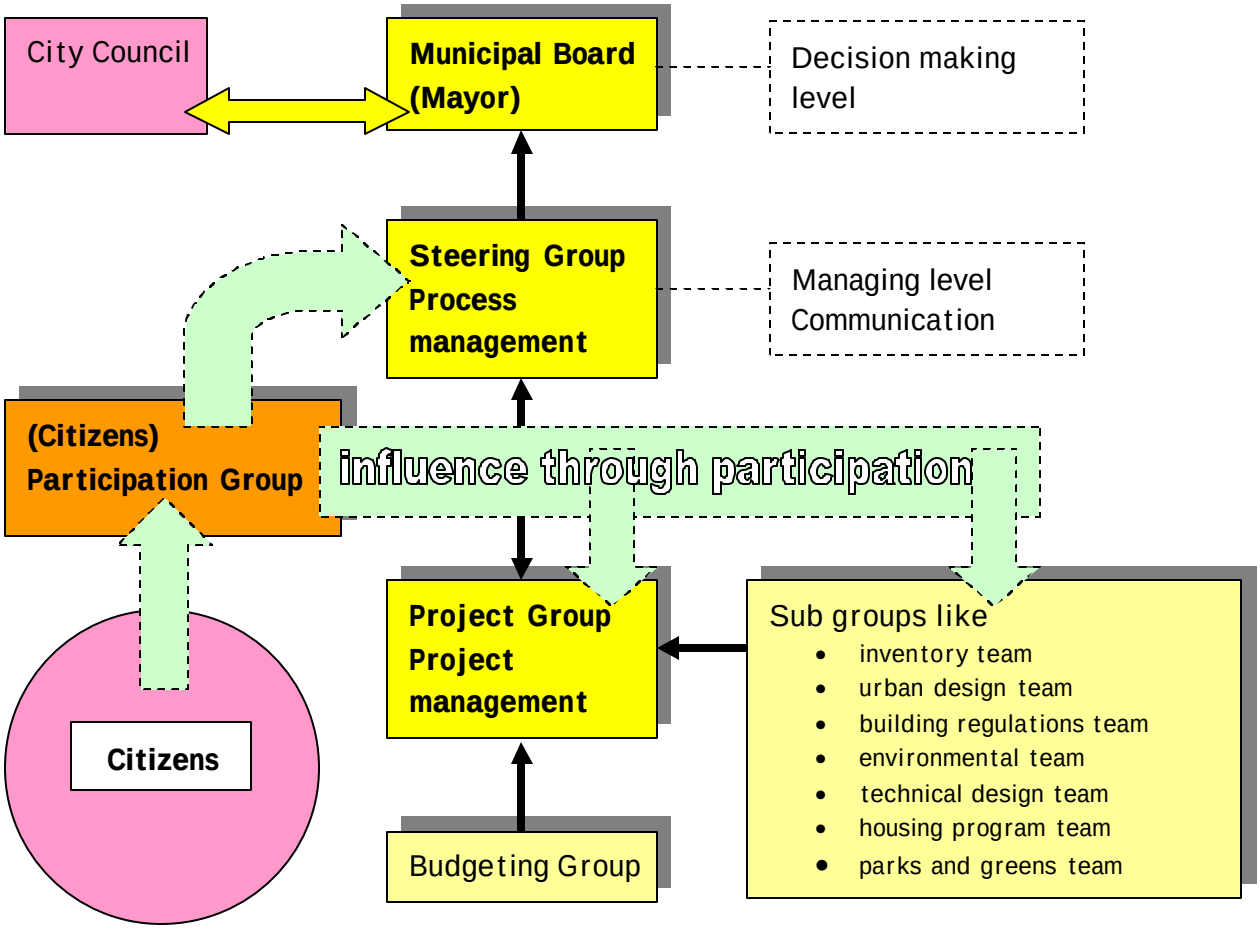
It is very preferable to manage the process of developing an urban planning project by means of a project organization. The members of the project organization only need to care about the project itself. Project responsibilities can be separated from the daily duties.
It is wise to divide the organization in three levels:

1. The decision making level
2. The managing level
3. The designing level

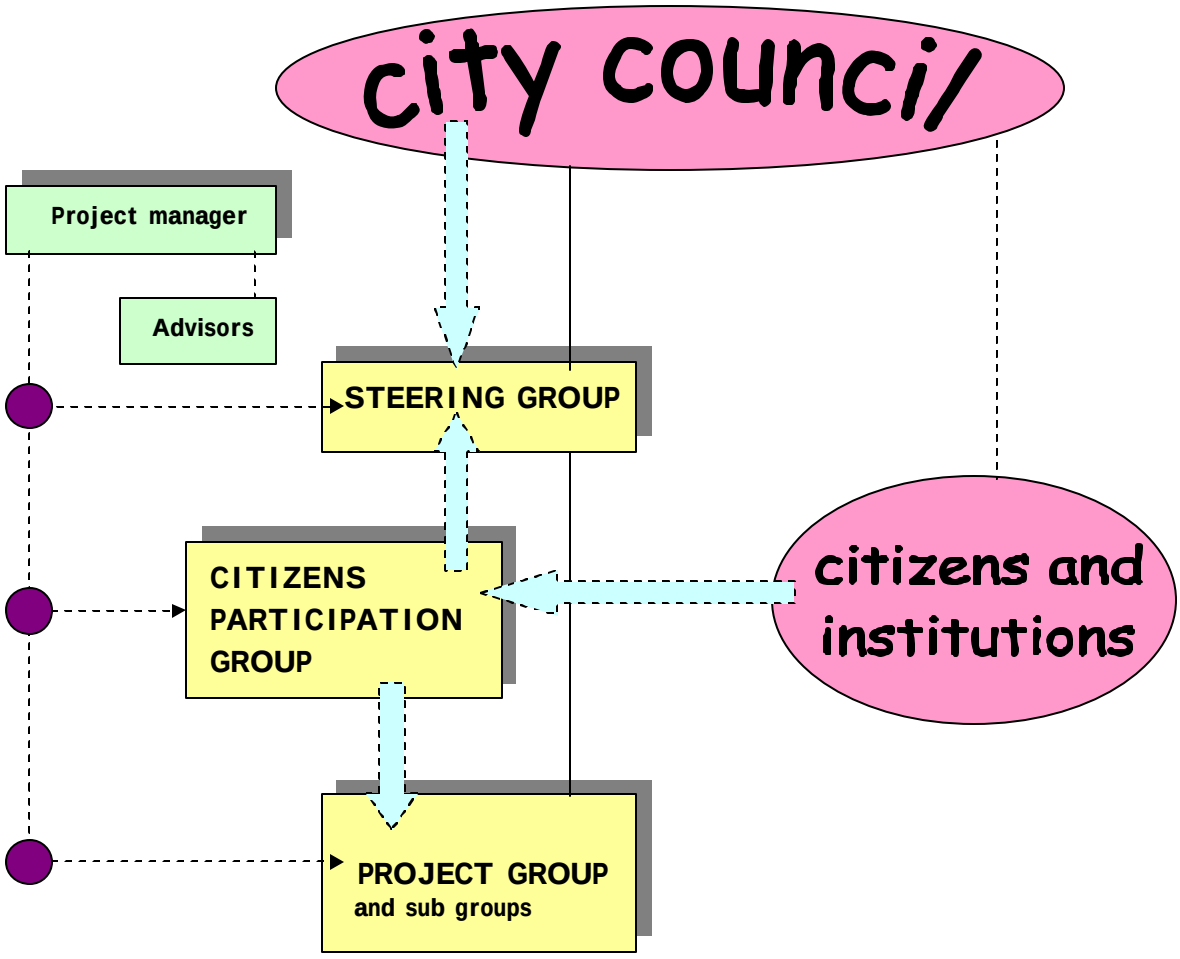
This division can be translated as follows:

1. The Board of Government / the Mayor on behalf of the City Council
2. The Steering Group
3. The Project Group supported by sub groups (as regards content)

The image below shows ageneral example of a project organisation in which the citizens participation is implemented (see also chapter 5). It is needed to make agreements between the project manager and the Mayor about the way of communicating and decision making on the several stages of the project.



The next scheme shows the position of the several groups of the project organization.
In this scheme the closed lines stand for a direct relation with other groups and the dotted lines show the communication structure to one another. The blue arrows mean that one group is directly represented in the other group by one or more members.



The project manager is preferably independent but also may be the head of the municipal urban planning department. If this functionary is not capable of doing this job properly because of lacking competencies or busy work elsewhere, it is advised to appoint an external project manager who is able to spend sufficient time for the project.

The Steering Group is composed of:

- the mayor who is the chairman
- the chairman of the city council as the linking pin between the city council and the project organization
- a member of the city council who is representing another political party than the chairman of the city council
- the project manager

The Project Group is composed of:

- the head of the municipal urban planning office (chairman)
- municipal expert on urban planning
- municipal expert on social society
- municipal expert on public relations and information
- three members of the participation group
- the project manager

The sub groups are composed of all kinds of experts who are recruited from the municipal staff and municipal departments and supported by external specialists if needed.

The (citizens) Participation Group must – through its members - have direct connections with the local citizens and local institutions. Therefore it is crucial that the composition of the CPG is a good cross section of the population and consists of members with different expertises and experiences.
In any case it is preferable or needed to have the following expertises in the group:

- economics
- legislation
- social development
- civil society and youth affairs
- techniques
- environmental and sustainable development

03 Developing a social, economic and urban vision

Why a vision?

Developing a vision is like making an exiting and fascinating journey.
Why should members of a local government undertake such a journey?
The answer is because a mid-term and long-term vision is:

- leading the way for municipal policy
- caring for integrated and related policy
- providing clarity, internal as well as external
- creating a basis for the municipal organization
- strengthening the image of the municipality
- underlining the identity of the municipality towards its surroundings
- creating a basis for citizens, enterprises and social organizations

How to develop a vision?

Three essential aspects must be distinguished when developing a vision.

- firstly the process
- the developing of the vision itself
- thirdly the communication which is very important

a. About the process

It is very important to manage the entire process under what the citizens participation, the order of activities, the legal procedures, the way of decision making and the implementation.
All these elements must be secured. Especially the decision making must be executed step by step and the implementation must be fitted completely to the approval of the vision.
It is of great importance to secure enough support and basis for the local government in organizing the process, initiating the debates, co-ordinating the activities and managing the project on its way to the final decision by the City Council.

b. About the vision

A vision has something to say about anything.
By developing avision normally one has to work out scenarios and / or alternatives, because only then clear choices are appearing into the picture and the discussions in the debates will be more lively.

One needs a multi discipline team to work out and translate all the out comings and results from the debates into concrete proposals for the future developments to build the vision upon.
This team delivers all the support needed during the development of the vision, the design of an execution program and the method of implementation in the organization.

c. About the communication

Developing a vision must be done through an interactive process. This means discussions and debates with all those people who have interests and those who are interested in the subject(s).
The debates must be taken place in an inspiring and creative atmosphere. But also the formal aspects of communication and participation may not be forgotten and must therefore brought into the attention of every participant in the process.

Start of the process of building up a vision is to think about a good slogan for the city (or village) that is covering the required direction of the urban development. The mission statement has to stand for the direction of the development and must be as short as possible, beginning with the name of the city. For Peshkopi the following slogan was agreed after discussion in the citizens participation group:

"Peshkopi, friendly and clean city, healthy and wealthy".

This mission statement expresses the direction of becoming a city with friendly citizens and a clean city that is not polluted by anything but healthy to live in. In economic perspective it expresses to become a wealthy place with adequate provisions for all.

In the next "urban development scheme" is shown in what way an urban vision can be developed.
There are always three important starting points:

- the number of the population the city must provide housing for
- the number of working people to create jobs for
- the relationship between city and nature (occupied and undeveloped area)

Out of these starting points one has to develop an urban vision and a social vision that have to be managed through a governmental and managerial policy and through good communication between the municipality and the citizens vice versa.

As far as the urban vision is concerned there are four main items to work out that have to be linked through the central issue of ecology and sustainability. This means that every new development must count with this issue.
The same way of thinking is valid for the vision on the social structure of the city. Also here are four main items to be worked out that have to be linked through the central issue of social cohesion and solidarity.

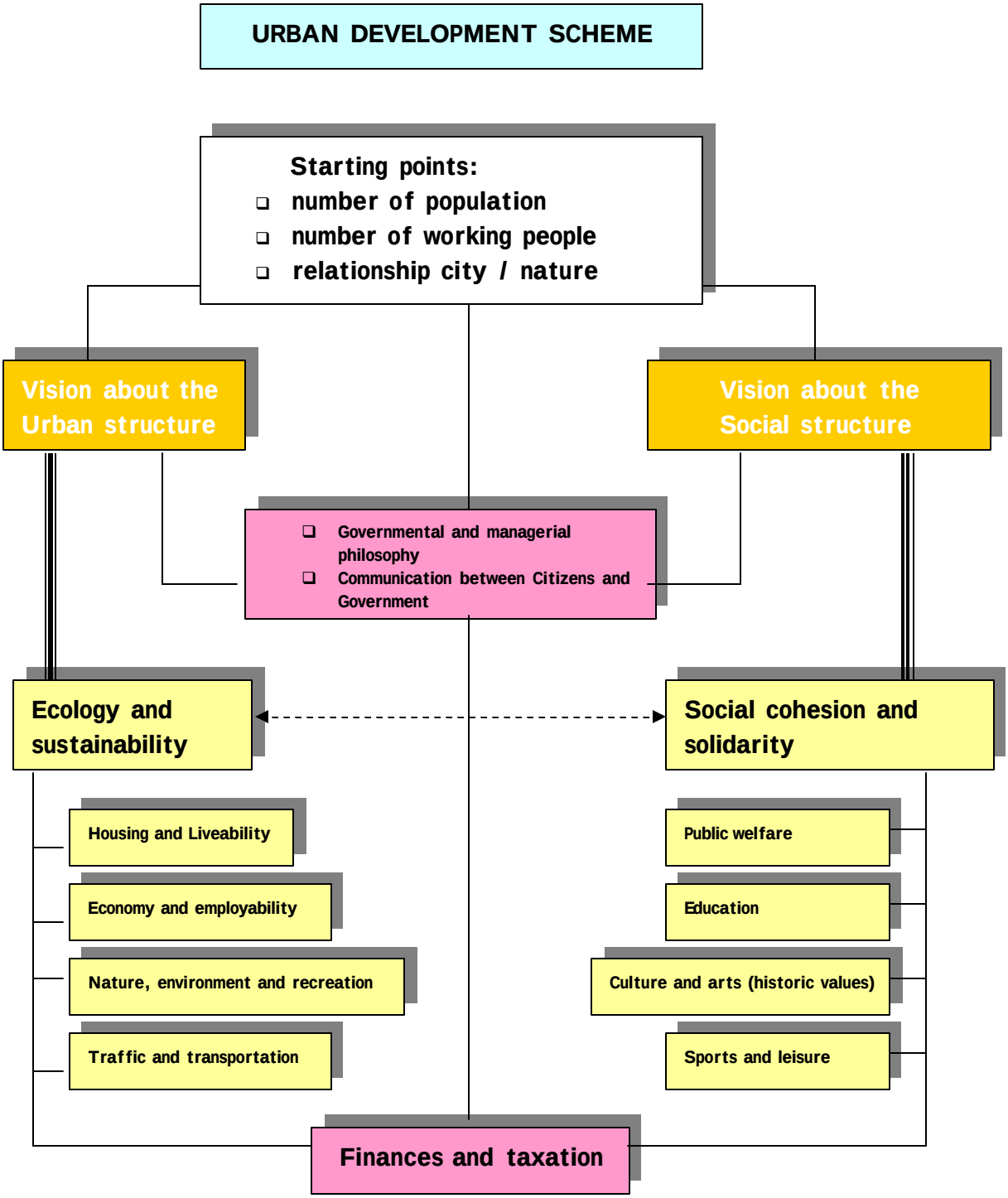
It is important to link the several items to a central issue because of the needed cohesion of the municipal policy fields.
The four main policy fields that have impact on the urban structure are:

- housing and liveability
- local economy and employability
- nature, environment and recreation
- traffic and transport

The four main policy fields that effect the social structure are:

- education
- public welfare
- culture and arts (historic values)
- sports and leisure

In the end the municipality has to build a vision about the financing of developments and how to spend yearly municipal budgets.
An important issue for Albanian cities is how to cope with the problem of collecting local taxes. One of the main shortcomings is the lacking of a citizens registration system which is needed for every field of policy.


URBAN DEVELOPMENT SCHEME
Starting points:
number of population
number of working people
relationship city / nature
Vision about the Urban structure
Vision about the Social structure
Governmental and managerial philosophy
Communication between Citizens and Government
Ecology and sustainability
Social cohesion and solidarity
Housing and Liveability
Economy and employability
Nature, environment and recreation
Traffic and transportation
Public welfare
Education
Culture and arts (historic values)
Sports and leisure
Finances and taxation

04 The inventory phase

A lot of data must be inventoried in order to be able to building a proper vision about the urban, economic and social future of the city. Hereunder follows a list of needed inventories.

- **demographic data**
  - number of inhabitants
  - division of male and female
  - division of age categories
  - prognosis of citizens development
- **social data**
  - historic and culture aspects
  - family life
  - health situation
  - level of education
  - level of income
  - housing situation
- **economic data**
  - percentage of unemployment
  - number of employment in several economic sectors
  - statistics of the local economy
- **geographic situation**
  - urban connections
  - landscaping
- **geologic data**
  - soil structure
  - soil species
- **seismographic data**
  - seismographic information
  - image of the break lines
- **technical data**
  - current urban structure
  - infrastructure / sewerage system
  - situation of traffic and transport situation
  - urban quality
  - water and energy supply
- **urban juridical aspects and urban law**
  - property situation
  - illegal buildings
  - urban regulations

- **financial data**
  - taxation system
  - costs of energy use
  - economic statistics

05 Citizens participation and communication

In chapter 02 an example of a project organization is shown that is qualified for building a municipal urban plan. The advantage of this kind of organization is the easy obtaining of commitment of the local citizens to the process. In recent decades in western European countries has been experienced that citizens participation in urban planning is crucial for a successful implementation.

Constant communication between the local government and the citizens about the development process is very important. The decisions to make by the municipality must be explained. Previous experiences had shown that the process will run out of the time schedule when the communication process is not well organised. The interests of people in urban planning is increasing because people know that urban planning is very much linked to economic results and perspectives.

For that reason it will be unavoidable to involve the citizens in the urban planning process. In Peshkopi it was made possible to form a citizens participation group (CPG) that could function independently from the other groups. This citizens participation group formulated their own program of demands for the future developments and was a good sparring partner for the municipality in the preparation period of the urban plan.

The citizens participation group consisted of people from Peshkopi who were a representative cross section of the population of Peshkopi. Four men and three women were selected in the group and were of different ages. Beyond that they possessed different expertises and experiences. The citizens participation group was supported and advised by the civil society officer of SNV.

The citizens participation group in Peshkopi consisted of:

- An economist (chairman) – 62 years / male
- A head of a secondary school – 58 years / male
- A head of an infant school – 52 years / female
- An engineer – 50 years / male
- A lawyer (businessman) – 45 years / male
- An expert on social development – 32 years / female
- A student – 18 years / female

The communication between the project organization and the citizens was managed through several channels. Firstly banners were suspended on mainstreet, the participation group made use of window posters to inform the population, a questionnaire was distributed to ask all citizens of 12 years and older about their ideas and opinions and last but not least TV-commercials were transmitted regularly and two or three times a documentary about the project was transmitted on the regional television station. At the end of the process a public hearing was organised in the cultural palace of the city where the draft of the urban plan was presented to the population. During this happening the citizens could react on the results of the questionnaires and the municipal proposals for the urban plan and regulations.

This intensive communication is needed to inform the local citizens constantly about the progress in the project, the choices that are being made and for measuring the basis among the population for the plans and choices.

06 Pro active participation

Pro active participation means that the citizens think about their own future and let the local government know what they expect them to do to achieve that. In municipal urban planning the organized participation must care for a situation in which the citizens can speak out freely about their wishes.

As was done in Peshkopi it is advised to develop a questionnaire based on the system of the "game of coins". This game delivers the needed information about the vision(s) of the citizens. With those information it will be possible to develop an overall urban, economic and social vision for the future of the city. That vision is the basis for municipal policy and can for instance be translated into an urban plan or an economic development scheme or a social-economic program and later on into working programs.

Before distributing the questionnaires the citizens must be well informed about this initiative of the municipality and the citizens participation group. The best way to inform people is by transmitting TV-commercials regularly during a month. This TV-commercial must show what the project is all about and what it means for the city and its inhabitants to work on future qualities and perspectives.

Under annex A an explanation of the "game of coins" is attached as well as an example of a questionnaire. (Take care! This questionnaire is only an example, other questions – depending on the local situation – may be in favourite).

After having worked out all the results of the filled up questionnaires according to the attached instruction the project organization will be able to develop a draft for the urban plan, economic plan or social-economic program.
In the case of Peshkopi an urban plan was developed, based on the results of the questionnaires and the game of coins. The urban plan is the translation of a development vision of about 25 years and based on economic expectations for the next decades.

07 Preliminary designing / draft design

Before starting with the draft designing phase all the inventoried data must be available as well as the results of the interactive participation by the citizens and the demands that are given by higher authorities, like the central and regional governmental layers. For instance it is very important to make sure that the municipality has drawn the so-called yellow line correctly.
Furthermore it is very important to have access to the property ownership information, so that becomes clear in a very early stage of the process where problems may occur.

For designing one needs appropriate geographic information. The best basis is to have a geographic information system (GIS) to one's disposal (Autocad). When not, the draft for the urban plan may be done on a paper map. The best scale for designing is 1 : 2.500.
This scale of designing makes it possible for anyone to recognise the current and local situations.

The designing has to be done by the municipal staff that is representing the municipality in the project group or in the supporting sub groups. Mostly the urban planning department will do this job when there are sufficient capacities. If not, this work may be contracted out under the responsibility of the municipality to an advisory agency.

More or less at the same time as the draft of the urban plan is being developed, the first editing of the urban and building regulations can take place. These regulations must be attached to the plan and belong to the urban plan.

When the draft designing phase has been completed, the draft for the urban plan becomes subject of discussion and comment by the citizens that are participating in the process. The municipality must organize the next phase of participation by announcing the procedure of participation.

08 Interactive participation

The next phase of the citizens participation must take place in an interactive way. The draft for the urban plan must be announced by the municipality in which they explain the meaning of the plan and the previous procedure. The announcements can be done through all kinds of channels like banners in the street, public announcements on window posters, newspapers, TV-commercials et cetera.

A good suggestion may be to open a special PO-box for the municipality during some time to which citizens can send or deliver their comments on the draft of the urban plan. Furthermore it is advised to close the period of interactive participation by organizing a public hearing.
In this public hearing every citizen may attend and take part to ask questions, comments, have discussions, put in objections and let the municipal representatives know what one thinks about the proposals in the draft of the urban plan.

After having ordered all the questions, comments and objections, the project group and sub groups have to put up a list of recommendations for the Municipal Council in order to have a governmental decision about the modifications of the draft of the urban plan, including the described regulations.

09 Final design and description of regulations

After the approval of the City Council about the recommendations meant in the previous chapter, the project organization is entitled to set up the final design of the urban plan and the final descriptions of the (building) regulations.

It is advised to do this last phase in the designing by the municipal staff in co-operation with some members of the citizens participation group to avoid misunderstandings in this last step of preparing the urban plan and regulations.

The final result must be approved by the Steering Group like this group also had to do with the previous stages of the project and send it after that to the City Council for the governmental approval before the plan will be presented to the citizens.

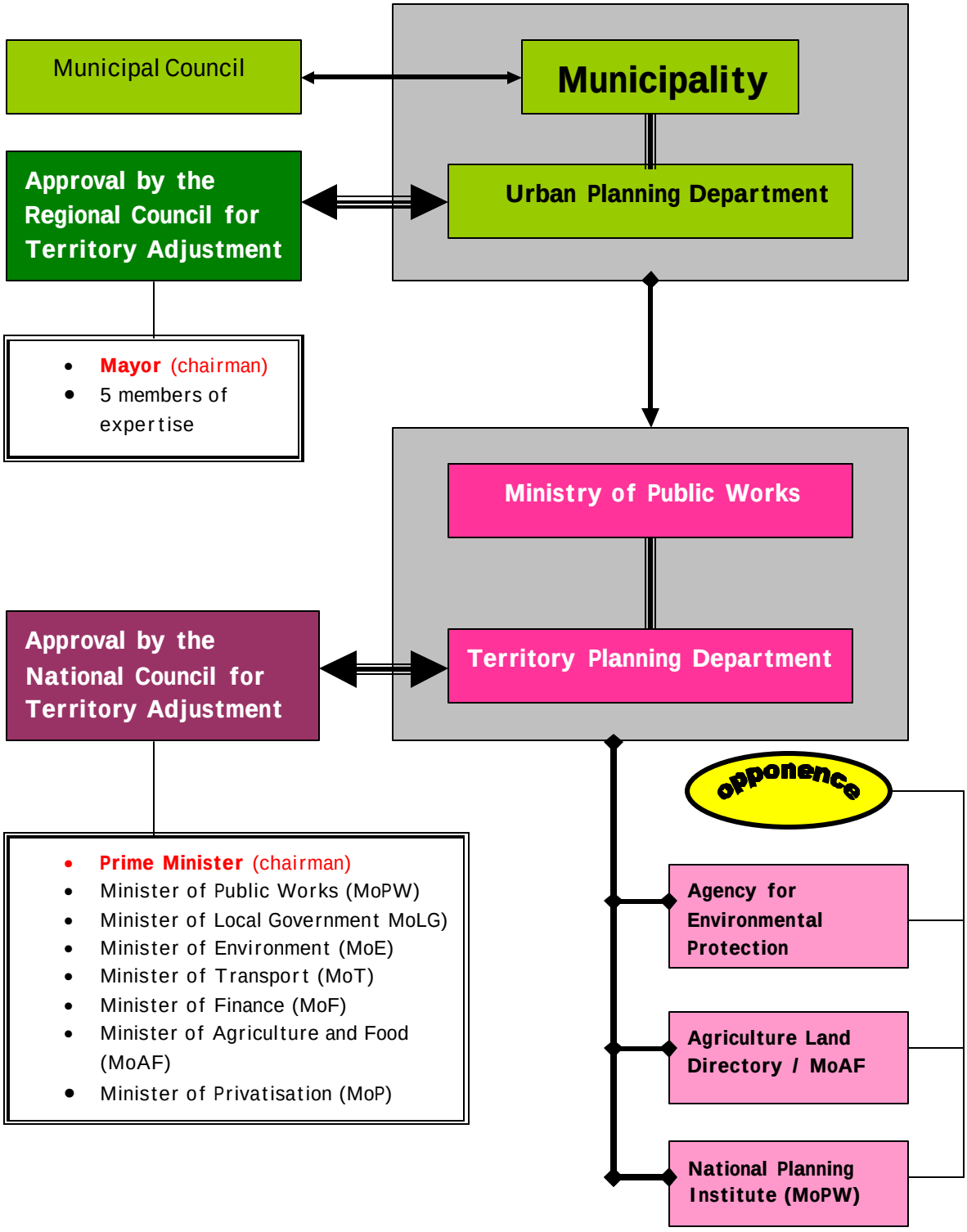
10 Formal (legal) participation

After the governmental approval by the City Council the final urban plan including the urban and building regulations, there should be an examination period of two weeks that is formally announced by the municipality.
During this period all citizens are allowed to bring in formal objections against the laid down urban plan and the (building) regulations.

All objections that have been brought in during this period and before the formal closing time will be assessed by the project organization. These assessments are judged by the Steering Group.

The City Council has to decide about these judgements. The urban plan must be adjusted according to these respective decisions. After these adjustments the urban plan and regulations are finalised and ready for further approval by the Regional Council for Territory Adjustment and the National Council for Territory Adjustment.

11 Procedure of approval



In the previous scheme is shown the route that Urban and Regulatory Plans as well as extensions of > 5.000 m2 and building permits in Albania have to go in the approval process.

After the final approval about an urban (master)plan by the Municipal Council of a city in Albania the urban plan needs the approval of the Regional Council for Territory Adjustment (Qarku) after which the plan is presented to the National Council for Territory Adjustment to be approved. After this last approval the urban plan and attached regulations is a legal document of which every citizen is obliged to keep the rules. If anyone is violating these rules he/she risks a penalty.

The final approved urban plan and attached (building) regulations are laid down in public (for instance in the city hall), so that anyone is able to get knowledge about what is allowed and what is prohibited.

12 Summary

In this summary the entire planning process is shown in **10 steps**.

Step 01
The organization

- Building a project organization
- Making agreements between the project manager and the Mayor about the way of communicating and decision making about the several stages of the project

Step 02
Developing a social, economic and urban vision

- developing a mission statement / slogan
- appointing the central issues for social and urban development
- working out four main items for social and urban development

Step 03
The inventory phase

- demographic data
- social data
- economic data
- geographic situation
- geologic data
- seismographic data
- technical data
- urban juridical aspects and urban law
- financial data

Step 04
Citizens participation and communication

- Composition of a participation group
- Planning the communication with the population

Step 05
Pro active participation

- Drawing up a questionnaire based on the “game of coins” to investigate ideas, opinions and interests among the population
- Analysing the results of the questionnaires

Step 06

Preliminary design / draft design

- By joining the inventoried data, the results of the questionnaires and the professional ideas and visions a first draft of the urban plan can be designed.
- Editing the rough version for the (building) regulations.

Step 07

Interactive participation

- Opening a special PO-box for the municipality during some time to which citizens can send or deliver their comments on the draft of the urban plan.
- Organizing a public hearing.

Step 08

Final design and description of regulations

- Based on the first draft the comments and suggestions must be added and makes it possible to develop the final design completely.
- Depending on the comments and suggestions also the regulations must be adjusted.

Step 09

Formal (legal) participation

- Laying down the final sample of the urban plan, including the regulations for a last examination by the citizens during a two weeks period.
- This period is formally announced by the municipality.
- Assessing all comments and objections that have been brought in during this period and before the formal closing time.
- Judging the assessments and presenting these judgements to the City Council. The City Council has to decide about these judgements.
- Adjusting the urban plan to the respective governmental decisions. After these adjustments the urban plan and regulations are finalised and ready for further approval by the Regional Council for Territory Adjustment and the National Council for Territory Adjustment.

Step 10

Procedure of approval

- Presenting the urban plan to the Regional Council for Territory Adjustment.
- After that approval the urban plan has to be presented to the National Council for Territory Adjustment.
- After this final approval the urban plan has a legal status.

Annex A

Explanation of the game of coins

The game of coins is played to collect important information to solve social, economic and urban problems. By means of this game information can be prioritised to make decision making easier. The game is often played in projects in which citizens participation is crucial. Furthermore it can be played by small groups and large groups. Every participant receives a list with a certain number of important issues and items that are subject to a problem that has to be solved. In this case we want to know how citizens think about the desired development of their city. Because it will not be possible to realize all needs and priorities of the people within a short period of time, choices have to be made.

Rules of the game of coins

The game of coins is played by anyone from 12 years and older and is anonymous. However the participants have to fill in a few questions about their background to allow the project management to make scientific accepted interpretations and conclusions out of the results of the game. The results of this research are only for the purpose of an urban and economic planning project. After completing the project all the results will be destroyed.

Every participant gets a budget with a certain value that is represented by 5 coins. All five coins have an equal value. In this case 19 important issues and items are put on a list. This list is distributed among all citizens of the city. Every participant may add maximum one item under number 20 that is not mentioned on the list.
Every participant must place his or her budget of 5 coins on the list of issues and items.
It is allowed to place all 5 coins behind one issue or item if you want to spend your entire budget on one item. But in that case you must realize that you can not spend a coin on another item anymore. It is not allowed to divide a coin in two halves or any other division.
By adding all the citizens' marks it becomes possible to draw scientific conclusions about the needs and priorities of groups of participants. These conclusions can be used as a basis for the urban and economic development of the city.

What to do in the end?

A) Concerning the list about the economic development:

01. Check whether you marked the questionnaire about the personal information.
02. Check whether you marked five ● 's on the "Game of Coins" list, because it is not allowed to have marked more than 5 of them on the entire list.

B) Concerning the urban plan list

03. Check whether you marked one O per question.
04. Put the form in an envelope and return it before – date - to
05. Put the two forms in an envelope and return them before – **date** – to: .....

Urban Planning Project for (name of the municipality) (F/goc-pi)

Information about the participant

(Answer by marking the concerning O blue or black, like this ●)

- I am a
  - O female
  - O male
- My age is between
  - O 12 – 16 years
  - O 17 – 24 years
  - O 25 – 34 years
  - O 35 – 49 years
  - O 50 – 64 years
  - O 65 or older
- My highest level of education is
  - O no education
  - O primary school
  - O secondary school
  - O professional school
  - O university
- My household is a
  - O single household
  - O two people household
  - O family with child(ren)
- I have ..... children at home younger than 12 years of age
  - O no children
  - O 1 child
  - O 2 children
  - O 3 children
  - O 4 children
  - O more than 4 children
- I live in the neighbourhood of
  - O name of neighbourhood
  - O name of neighbourhood
  - O name of neighbourhood
  - O name of neighbourhood
  - O elsewhere
- I am
  - O at school
  - O not employed
  - O employed

    my present job is

- My/our yearly family income is (**only to fill up by people of 17 years and older**)
  - O less than 170.000 Leke
  - O 170.000 and 420.000 Leke
  - O more than 420.000 Leke

Rotation number: •••••
To fill up by the organization

Economic development of (name of the city) (F/goc-list)
Game of Coins (20/5)

Prioritise your needs and wishes by marking issues and items below up to a maximum of 5 coins. The more coins you mark at one issue or item the more importance the issue or item gets from you.

Example: You mark item 01 with 2 coins and item 06 with 3 coins. This means you want to develop the issues 01 and 06 and you find issue 06 more important than item 01. You did not say that the other items were not important, but you chose to develop the two marked items. In other words: You prioritised your wishes!

You are now ready to start your participation.

You possess 5 coins which all 5 represent the same value. Imagine that you are entitled to make the decisions about the development of your city and may decide about the spending of budgets. On which issues and items would you spend the available budgets? Mark the O behind your choice by colouring it blue or black. One filled O represents one coin.

(Answer by marking the concerning O blue or black, like this ●)

My priorities are:	***coins***
01. developing new housing areas	*O O O O O*
02. securing the water and energy supply	*O O O O O*
03. creating jobs and employment	*O O O O O*
04. repairing the sewerage system	*O O O O O*
05. improving the telecom system	*O O O O O*
06. developing a waste dump site	*O O O O O*
07. organizing a waste collecting system and city cleaning	*O O O O O*
08. improving the health service	*O O O O O*
09. improving the theatre	*O O O O O*
10. improving education facilities	*O O O O O*
11. repairing roads	*O O O O O*
12. preserving monumental sites	*O O O O O*
13. investing in cultural facilities	*O O O O O*
14. building parking lots for mini vans	*O O O O O*
15. re-allocating the open market	*O O O O O*
16. realizing greens and parks	*O O O O O*
17. building play grounds for children	*O O O O O*
18. improving sports and leisure facilities	*O O O O O*
19. removing all illegal buildings	*O O O O O*
20.	*O O O O O*

Rotation number: •••••
To fill up by the organization

Urban plan for (name of city)

(F/up-list)

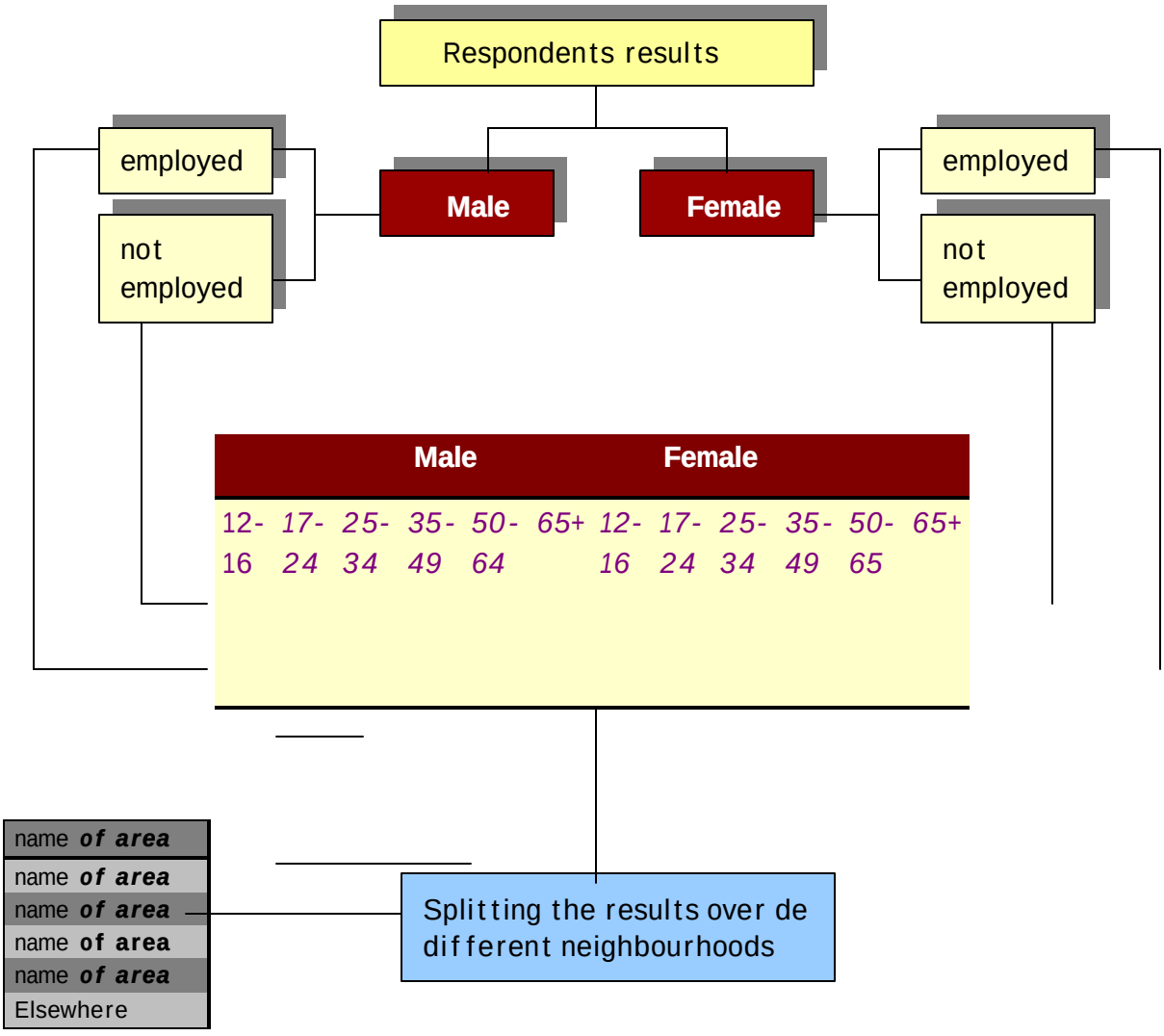
01. Do you agree with the idea to build a ring road around the city?	O	yes
	O	no
02. Do you agree with the idea to close the inner city from motorised traffic from 10.00 – 20.00 h daily?	O	yes
	O	no
03. Where do you prefer to build new houses or housing areas?	O	name of area
	O	name of area
	O	name of area
	O	name of area
04. Do you agree with the idea to reconstruct the (name of area) into a large park area with recreation facilities for children in green settings?	O	yes
	O	no
05. Do you agree to appoint the (name of area) as a historic quarter in which it will not anymore be allowed to build without tightened building regulations?	O	yes
	O	no
06. Do you agree with the idea to remove / to demolish all illegal settlements in the city?	O	yes
	O	no
07. Do you agree with the idea to establish the open market (Bazaar) in (name of area)?	O	yes
	O	no
08. a) Do you agree with the idea to reconstruct the road to the theatre which means it will not anymore be allowed to build along this road without tightened building regulations?	O	yes
	O	no
If you have said **yes** to question 8a, then fill up 8b.		
b) If this realization needs a big investment from the municipality, it means that local tax payments must cover this investment. Do you agree with the idea that you as a local citizen must pay these local taxes for the purpose of the reconstruction of the road to the theatre?	O	yes
	O	no
09. Do you agree with the idea to allocate the industrial area near	O	name of area
	O	name of area
	O	name of area
10. Do you agree with the idea to allocate the waste dump site near the south-eastern border of the city?	O	yes
	O	no

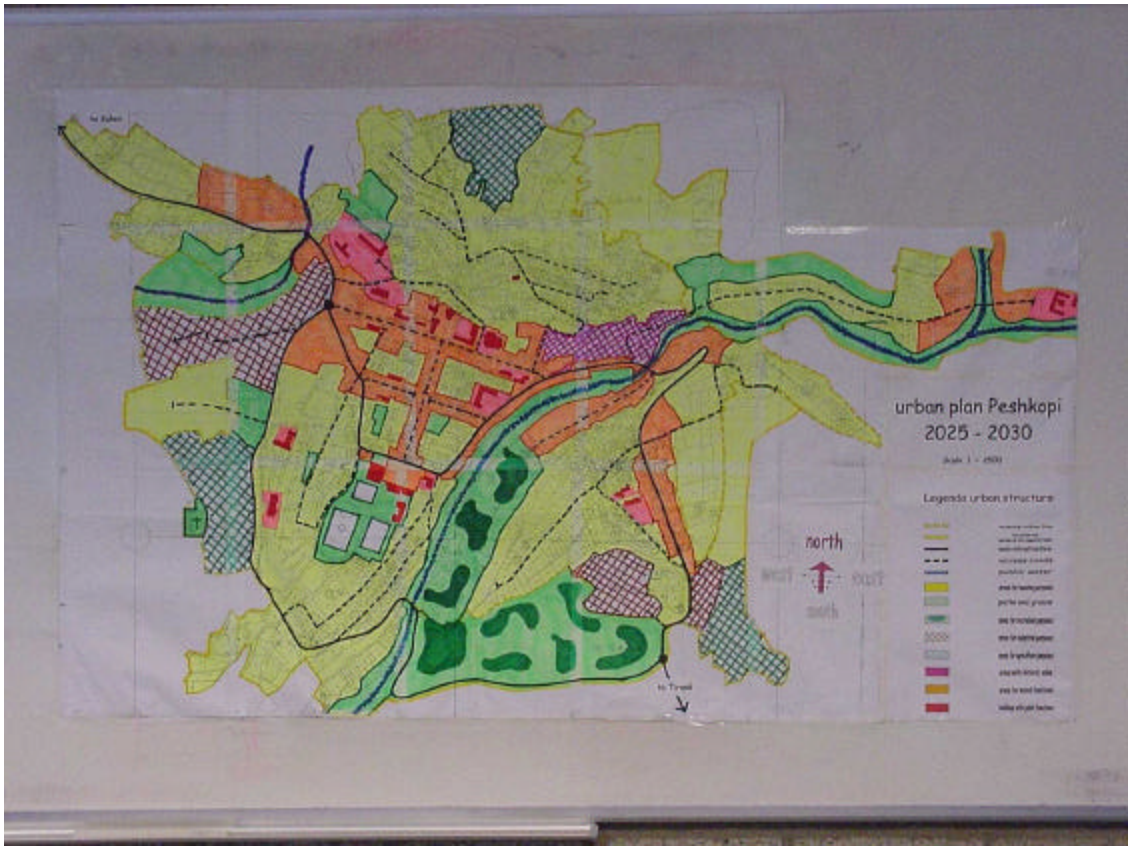
Rotation number: •••••
To fill up by the organization

Instruction for the work up of the returned forms from the respondents

01. Mark all lists with a rotation number
02. Mark all matching pi-forms with the same rotation number
03. Count all the coins per concerning issue and item
04. Divide the results per issue and item into those given by male and those given by female respondents
05. Sub-divide the results into the categories employed / not employed
06. Sub-divide the results into the age categories
07. Sub-divide the results into the geographical areas

The work up of the questionnaires follows the next scheme:



Annex B

Urban plan Peshkopi – 03 December 2002