

Nov 2nd, 11:45 AM - 12:00 PM

Urbanization and Socio-Urban Developments in Prishtina in Post-Conflict period

Besim Gollopeni

University for Business and Technology, besim.gollopeni@gmail.com

Follow this and additional works at: <https://knowledgecenter.ubt-uni.net/conference>



Part of the [Architecture Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Gollopeni, Besim, "Urbanization and Socio-Urban Developments in Prishtina in Post-Conflict period" (2013). *UBT International Conference*. 12.

<https://knowledgecenter.ubt-uni.net/conference/2013/all-events/12>

This Event is brought to you for free and open access by the Publication and Journals at UBT Knowledge Center. It has been accepted for inclusion in UBT International Conference by an authorized administrator of UBT Knowledge Center. For more information, please contact knowledge.center@ubt-uni.net.

Urbanization and Socio-Urban Developments in Prishtina in Post-Conflict period

Besim Gollopeni

University for Business and Technology, Prishtina, Kosova

E-mail: besim.gollopeni@gmail.com

Abstract. At the beginning of the XXI century, the life started to be very dynamic in Kosovo with emphasis on large urban centers. Ruined houses started to be reconstructed, new houses were built, and small and medium enterprises were established, as well as new institutions. Thus, the migration of population simultaneously occurred from small urban centers and rural areas to large urban centers, and developments were particularly focused in Prishtina. The growth of urban population in Prishtina happened for many reasons, but I will mention the most important ones such as: Establishment of the entire central administration, public/private universities and health institutions, as well as international headquarters, the concentration of economic business, etc., which enabled better chances for education and employment. Given such a whole urban population in Prishtina, many institutions were unprepared - without urban conditions to cope with the influx of population.

Keywords: population, migration, unplanned development.

1 Introduction

Many researchers and experts have been focused on urbanism studies including: sociologists, urban ecologists, urban planners, civil engineers, geographers and professionals from other fields. Such interest to study urbanization is due to the fact that the process of urbanization is affected by a number of social, economic, political, and other factors, which has implications in everyday urban life and beyond. Urbanization is a very complex process which is not measured only by an indicator for example: population size, but there are other indicators including culture of urban life, socio-economic structures of the general population, the city functions, technical - technological advancements, etc. One of the theorists of urbanization, Harvey points out that urbanization is an aspect of the environment created and caused by the spread of industrial capitalism. In traditional societies, city had significant differences from the village. In the modern world, industry reduces the division between city and countryside. The agriculture is mechanized and run simply on the basis of the price and profit principle. As work in the industry so this process reduces the differences of lifestyle among the people living in town and village (Giddens, 2002, pg. 537). The same as Harvey, Castells points out that the spatial form of a society is closely linked to the overall mechanism of its development. The growth of urban population in developed countries rapidly increased after the industrial classic revolution in Western Europe in the second half of the XVIII and XIX century, as a result of the process of industrialization and deagrarianization, while in the XX century and especially after World War II, concentration of population in cities and the expansion of urban settlements included all countries of the world, particularly developing countries ("Third World") (Islami, 2008, pg. 385). Urbanization and development of urban life in Kosovo with all his pace and dimensions is new, even though some cities have relatively long history and tradition. Until XX century, respectively after World War II, about 10 % of the total population of Kosovo was urbanized. Thereafter, the life had an intense dynamic in all its dimensions and urban population had continuously increased. The number of cities increased from 5 cities (1948) to 30 cities by the end of the 80-s, and among them had even mixed cities – towns, neither town nor village (Klina, Skenderaj, Malisheva, etc.). On the other hand, a particular phenomenon that has accompanied the development of most cities is the lack of design and implementation of general urban planning of that time in most cases and more than 1,400 rural settlements were left out of spatial planning process, with the exception of Prishtina which had urban general plan. However, the expansion of settlements generally had the character of concentration throughout the last century, which enables

spatial planning and at the same time investments can be of less cost. Since 1999 the situation changed, something new happened in this respect, because both urban and rural settlements began to take the shape of dispersed settlements, especially along the roads and agricultural land. This deteriorated situation still continues, because despite of the rapid growth of urban population, (most) Kosovo municipalities were without municipal and urban development plans. Even those which have such plans do not implement them. In this case, Prishtina has urban development plan but it has not a municipal development plan (July 2013). The current challenge is the lack of implementation of the urban development plan as well as other ones associated with it. Problems like this and others mentioned above led to urban and sub urban chaos of Prishtina territory. After the last War in Kosovo ('99), migration from villages around Prishtina and beyond, but also from other less urbanized (developed) urban centers moved to Prishtina, thus creating a real urban chaos. As a consequence of this is the traffic jam, illegal construction, usurpation of public and private property, environmental pollution, lack of parking, etc.

The paper aims to reflect urban demographic trends, physical expansion and urban challenges in order to have a clearer picture of trends of urbanization in Prishtina and challenges facing the city today.

2 A brief history of urbanization

Urbanization and urban life in Kosovo is relatively new, even though some Kosovo towns have inherited old urban tradition and culture. As it is known, Kosovo was much undeveloped until the second half of the last century (XX). Later penetration of capitalist economic elements, lack of economic development in its territory, the country's colonial position, concentration in the agrarian sector, etc., have led to a specific urbanization. Such a situation began to change in the second half of the last century (XX), including late industrialization, economic development, advancement in education and health system, as well as other social - economic and political advancements. During that time, with the expansion of the municipal system began demographic trends in large cities (Prizren, Peja, Gjilan, Ferizaj, Mitrovica, Gjakova), especially in the capital of Kosovo, Prishtina. After the establishment of the first public university in Prishtina (1970) and other important institutions, it began to become more attractive to people from rural areas and small urban centers throughout Kosovo, but also from East Kosovo and other regions inhabited by Albanians.

The development of urbanization in Kosovo dates from '70s onwards, where besides the large urban centers began to extend to smaller urban centers which were previously rural areas with a central position, but later became municipal centers. Significant developments in the demographic growth of cities occurred until the end of '80s - up to 1990 and 1991 where a stagnation of development was caused due to a bad political situation in the country. All public institutions with few exceptions were closed, and the Albanian workers had been violently fired from their jobs. Educational and health institutions had also been closed. During these years the public life had stagnated. Another phenomenon that happened in most cities in Kosovo and especially in Prishtina was the process of colonization of the territory by the ethnic Serbian, Montenegrin, Bosnian, etc., with the aim and political background (increasing numbers of non-Albanian community). But even this process of colonization by Serbian chauvinist policies did not work. Despite the great migration of the Albanian population throughout the 90s and before, and unfavorable situation (survival) were strong indicators such as the ties with the family and homeland, as well as high fertility and solidarity between Albanians have made stronger as a community until the liberation ('99) and the country's independence (2008).

The urban population constituted 15.5 % in 1953, 32.4 % in 1981 and about 36 % in 1991 (estimate) in the overall population. The number of urban population was about 71.000 in 1948, it increased to approximately 730.000 inhabitants in 1991. In the period 1953-1981 the urban population increased to 388.300 inhabitants or 306.9%, while in the period 1953-1991 around 600.000 inhabitants, or about 480%. It is estimated that currently between 45-50 % of Kosovo's population lives in the city (Islami, 2008, pg. 386).

The rate of urbanization in seven regional centers according to the census of 1981 and 1991 (estimate) has no significant differences, except of Prishtina, which leaves behind the other urban centers. Hence, it is worth mention that during the period of 10 years, all regional centers of Kosovo have marked an urban demographic increase about 10% - 20%. See the chart;

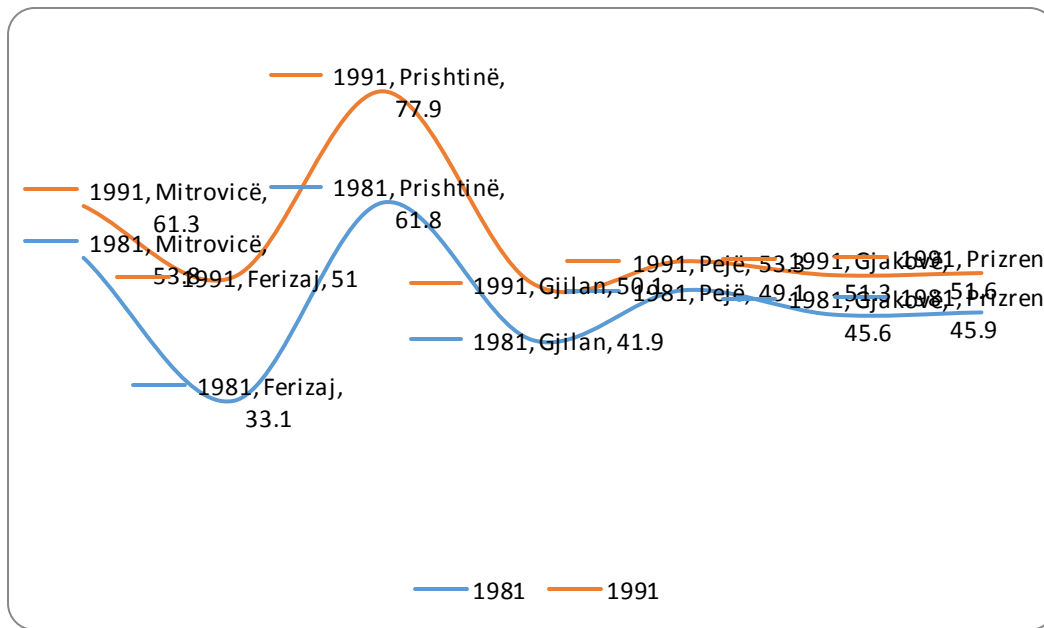


Fig. 1. Urban demographic growth in 7 regional centers from 1981 to 1991.

The life started to be very dynamic in the post war Kosovo. Ruined houses started to be reconstructed, new houses were built, and administrative, educational, cultural institutions, as well as new businesses were established. During this period, life began to take its right meaning but also accompanied by many challenges. Transitional period, in which the country is going through in general, especially the capital of Kosovo, Prishtina, is accompanied by many challenges in the field of urbanization. Migration from rural areas - remote rural, small urban centers, but also from large urban centers - regional centers and other areas inhabited by Albanians especially from East Kosovo have led to an increase in population and expansion of the city and urban suburbs, associated by major irregularities in the field of urbanization. Usurpation of public - private property, unplanned construction, traffic jam, lack of parkings, lack of public spaces, clash of rural - urban cultures, became part of life in the capital - Prishtina. Currently, according to the results of the census, households and dwellings in Kosovo (April 2011), Prishtina has about 200.000 residents and this number could be many times larger if we add the number of non-resident persons and daily migrations. We do not want to discuss here about the quality of the results of the population census (2011), because we consider that it has been discussed quite a lot so far without success. All population estimates indicate that Prishtina could have over 300,000 resident inhabitants. If we add daily and weekly migration, the number of population can be higher. Considering a poor urban aspect of Prishtina with the lack of infrastructure, traffic jam, degraded urban environment, lack of housing and high cost of living, became the most discussed issues and problems faced during recent years by the citizens visiting Prishtina and especially Prishtina citizens.

3 Demographic and spatial growth

Demographic growth of cities throughout Kosovo had been during all second half of the last century. As we mentioned above, there was a demographic increase mainly in 7 largest regional centers including Prizren, Peja, Mitrovica, Gjilan, Gjakova, Ferizaj, and especially Prishtina. Demographic growth of urban centers was caused by both natural components and mechanical components such as migration of population. Prishtina Municipality has 48 villages, organized in 16 counties (local communities). According to data available to the municipality, about 7,000 families live in such villages. In some villages, especially those belonging to Malsia e Gollakut (Gallap), is noticed a great movement of the population (especially young people) towards urban areas (Prishtina). Thus, some villages that have been overpopulated now have a very small number of people, such as Nishec, Radashec, Kukaj,

Hajkobilja, Glogovica etc. (KK.Prishtinë, 2008, pg. 25). Migrations of population from rural areas caused the constant demographic growth of Prishtina. See table;

Table 1. Movement of Prishtina population in the period 1948-1999

Year	Number of population	Grow in % in period	
1948	19.631	1948-53	22.7
1953	24.081	1953-61	60.3
1961	38.893	1961-71	80.1
1971	69.514	1971-81	55.5
1981	108.083	1981-91	43.9
1991	155.499	1991-99	26.3
1999	195.000	1948-99	893.3
2011	198,897	1999-11	***

Source: For the years 1948-1981 official census of population 1991-1999 (until the end of March) estimate, (Islami, 2008, pg. 398). For year 2011, refer to census of population (2011).

Demographic data show that the largest urban growth in Prishtina has occurred between '60s – '70s, where urban growth reached up to 80%, then to continue with a gradual decrease to '90s. Whereas, from '50s to '90s, urban demographic growth had reached 900%. According to the census of 1961, Prishtina had only 49.3% Albanians, 58.6 % in 1971, whereas in 1981 (census), the number of Albanians in Prishtina was 75.803 (70.1 %), the Serbs 16.898 (15.6%), Montenegrins 4.169 (3.9 %), Roma 5.101 (4.7 %), Bosniaks 2.504 (2.3 %), Turks 1.922 (1.8 %), etc. In 1991 from the total of 155.499 inhabitants, Prishtina had about 120.000 Albanians (77%), around 21.000 Serbian - Montenegrins (about 13 %), about 7.000 Roma (4.5 %) etc. (Islami, 2008, pg. 399). About 90 % Albanians comprised the total population of Prishtina, based on the 2011 census.

The residential and other non - residential area (commercial buildings, roads, kindergartens, etc.) had a constant increase both in urban and rural areas. Today, 14 years later (since '99), Prishtina has marked a rapid increase of both inter urban and suburban areas, which led to a confusion on distinction of the cadastral boundary of its urban space. Prishtina city has already joined with Fushë Kosova town almost even with that of Lipjan and Obilic.

The expansion of business activities along the national road from Prishtina to Peja and cheaper price of living (lower prices of land and housing/flat) has led the developments to focus on this part of the urban area.

On the other hand, alongside the national road Prishtina – Skopje are also concentrated commercial buildings, creating thus closer ties between Prishtina and Lipjan. Given such a large urban growth and constructions expanded along the roads (Prishtina - Ferizaj), makes us believe that, for nearly one decade Prishtina will be connected to Ferizaj. Prishtina City and its suburbs, for just one decade (the last decade) was expanded (built) about 200%, including entire neighborhoods with individual and collective housing, commercial buildings, etc. Urban and suburban developments with such a rapid growth were almost totally unplanned where all rude developments caused a "rural area" of certain neighborhoods which have multidimensional and long term consequences. See the map;

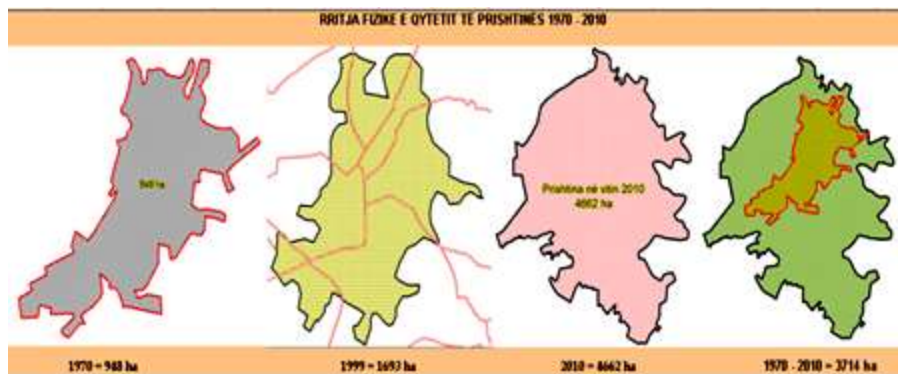


Fig. 2. Expansion of Prishtina city from 1970 to 2010.

Urban space built in 1970 was about 948 hectares, in 1999 was about 1693 hectares, in 2010 marked a record increase (expansion of the city) around 4662 hectares. Expressed in percentage from 1970 to 1999 marked an increase of 78.59%, while, from 1999 to 2010 the city was expanded of 175.37%. On the basis of this analysis for 30 years (1970-1999) Prishtina has not been expanded in physical-urban aspect as it is increased only in the last decade (1999-2010). Currently, in Prishtina the quality of housing construction is (mostly) of high standards, but one thing which makes life hard in such modern apartments is unplanned construction. Today, in the center and suburbs of Prishtina as well, the life has become very hard, due to the rude construction with the lack of natural lighting, lack of physical infrastructure (roads, car - parking, sidewalks, etc.) and social one (kindergartens, schools, health centers), etc. Another increasing phenomenon in Prishtina and beyond is, known as "Urban Deintegration" from the majority world – urban area, is the creation of separate inter-urban districts independently urbanized, constructed and administered by individual private companies. This form of new districts creates social groupings - deep social urban differences as well as territorial deintegration, though such concepts are unacceptable to developed countries. In such neighborhoods can live only people with very high income! But the concern is that the establishment of such suburbs is like "prisons" surrounded by high walls and separated from the majority urban – world. The clash of different cultures within the community that lives in such neighborhood, and other urban culture surrounding neighborhood, causes individual dissatisfaction, stress, etc. It is another concern the fact that such districts are constructed in the most qualitative agricultural land. See fig.



Fig. 3. Constructions of neighborhoods in Prishtina.

4 Causes of spatial and demographic growth

During '60s - 70s of the last century (XX) and especially in the first decade of the XXI century, major changes of demographic concentrations and spatial expansion took place in urban and suburban areas. In the second half of the last century, migrations were at a slower pace, but after 1999 onward,

considering the latest stage of migrations, and the most important one, which caused the rapid growth of cities and especially of Prishtina. At this time, migrations from village - city, from small towns to bigger towns and from other Albanian territories were a routine of time, and everyone had the chance to use it. But the target of young people (students) was particularly Prishtina. Prishtina became a generator of population concentration and social-economic development as well as hopeful for the population, because the opportunity to have a better life (education, job, etc.), was greater than elsewhere (Gollopini, 2012, pg. 6). The urban growth reasons are divided into two groups: demographic and spatial (urban) growth reasons.

4.1 Causes of demographic growth of the city

- Prishtina as a University center - until last war in Kosovo ('99), Prishtina was the only university center in Kosovo. Large number of young people came to study not only from Kosovo but, also from Macedonia, Montenegro and East Kosovo (Albanian nationality). After graduation, a number of youth lived in Prishtina, where they began a new life, thus gradually turning from an immigrant into a citizen of Prishtina;
- Establishment of central administration and other institutions (economic, business, cultural, international residencies, etc.), created new jobs very much needed by the society;
- Destruction of houses and businesses - during the war ('99) especially in rural settlements caused the migration of population from rural to urban areas. After the war, a large part of the rural society began investment in larger urban centers in the country, especially in Prishtina, hoping to have a greater, faster and more safe market;
- Concentration of economic investment in greater numbers than in all other centers, led especially youth population towards Prishtina;
- Better quality infrastructure of Prishtina than elsewhere;
- Public and private property usurpation - a part of the population in the absence of their houses (which were destroyed during the war by Serbian police and army) led them to come in the city and usurp flats, business premises and public / private property (temporarily) thus using the lack of legal institutions. Hence, benefiting materially from such actions, and thus slowly becoming permanent residents of Prishtina;
- Better living conditions (education, employment, health, infrastructure, etc.).

4.2 Causes of spatial growth of the city

- Prishtina lacked a municipal / urban development plan - until 2004. It did not have municipal development plan till 2013, even though, after this period it developed an urban development plan (2004), it still did not work, due to the domination of clan groupings, nepotism, political influence, etc., that led to an unplanned area;
 - Lack of strategy and residential policies in the country - not knowing housing requirements to the appropriate extent and defining urban construction standards, urban growth expanded in an unplanned manner, taking the whole area of agricultural land and causing inadequate access to infrastructure, and
 - Increasing number of unplanned businesses along the roads, etc.
- These are the assumed to be the main and the most important reasons that have led to such demographic growth and expansion of Prishtina city, but never end up with that, there are other especially individual reasons which require certain analysis and studies.

5 Conclusions

In the second half of the XX century, the urban population had a large increase towards a positive trend until the early '90s. Thereafter, growth of urban population stagnated by mechanical components due to political reasons. During this period, public institutions including universities, schools, factories, etc. have been closed and the majority of Albanians have been fired of their jobs. The emigration of Albanians intensely occurred during '90s, when many families migrated in order to provide their own

living (Europe and wider). Urbanization and urban life in Kosovo is relatively new, even though some Kosovo towns have inherited old civilization. Until the second half of the last century (XX), only regional centres such as Prishtina, Prizren, Gjilan, Gjakova, Mitrovica, Ferizaj, and Peja were urbanized, but through later expansion of the municipal system, more central position settlements received city status. Thus, until the late '80s, the number of towns increased to around 30 ones including mixed towns (neither town nor village). The overall urban population of Kosovo was about 10% in the '50s, but it marked an increase until the end of the XX century of about 35% urban population.

Prishtina was the city that had mostly immigration of population marking an urban increase. The highest number of urban population has been in the period 1960 - 1970; to continue with slower increase until 1990. Thus, according to 1991 estimate, Prishtina had about 75% of urban population. Construction of modern housing and infrastructure had also started. Economic activities such as handicrafts, trade, agriculture, gradually advancing to other economic activities dominated up to '60s.

Large population immigration or "Demographic boom" known as demographic concept took place in Prishtina in 1999 and onwards, for reasons mentioned above. At this time, public institutions were not prepared to design adequate plans and urbanism strategies as well as good management of urban spaces. In terms of institutional gap and other reasons, people built houses, business premises and other facilities without respecting the construction standards, thus bringing Prishtina to an urban collapse. In just a decade urban territory expanded rapidly with about 200%. Even though most of the buildings were built of a hard (solid) material, the problem is that they have (mostly) been constructed without permission urban (plans), but they were imposed and unplanned.

Among the main reasons of the fast demographic - urban growth is certainly immigration, because the main country's institutions were located in Prishtina, such as public and private universities, public administration, major business centers, international headquarters, etc. all these elements created favorable conditions and new jobs, and certainly better life conditions, which enabled Prishtina to be very attractive place of working and living.

Challenges faced by citizens and urban areas of Prishtina are numerous including illegal constructions which day by day makes urban life harder, traffic jam, lack of green spaces, lack of parkings, noise, environmental pollution from vehicles, lack of adequate infrastructure, etc.

Finally, to stop the urban chaos, Prishtina needs to have a special status (law) and a special budget, start the implementation of urban and municipal development plan, design and implement regulatory plans for specific neighborhoods; announce international competition on the design and planning (neighborhoods, streets, squares, parking etc.), establish an Urban Planning Institute which among others will deal with monitoring of implementation of such plans etc., otherwise everything will be too late.

References

1. Giddens, A. (2002). *Sociology*, Tirana: SOROS.
2. Gollopeni, B. (2008). *Spatial Planing Proces*, Year I. no. 1, Magazine Environment, Prishtina: MESP, fq.17.
3. Gollopeni, B. (2012). *Urbanization and urban planning challenges in Kosovo*, European Magazine, no. 6., Prishtina: SOROS, fq. 6-8.
4. Gollopeni, B. (2013). *Shortcomings of spatial/urban planing in Suhareka*, Readings in Population, Environment and Spatial Planning, Edited by: K.D. Sharma, H.S. Mangat and K. Surijit Singh, ISPER, Panchkula / INDI, fq. 355-364.
5. Islami, H., (2008). *Demographic Studies, 100 years of demographic development of Kosovo*, Prishtina: ASAK.
6. Muicipal Asamble of Prishtina, (2008). *Medium-term development strategy of Prishtina, 2008 - 2011*, Prishtina: MAP.
7. Mulla, Gj. (2000). *Urban sociology*, Prishtina: University of Prishtina.