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Chaotic cities of Kosovo and their Urban and Spatial Planning

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Abstract

With rapidly increased urbanization rates, cities becoming overpopulated and urban inequalities being more and more visible, Kosovo has been facing an ongoing debate about Urban and Spatial Planning of its territory. Professionals of the field and many others are questioning the current state of cities in Kosovo, such as Prishtina, Prizren, Mitrovica, Peja, and more. There are common concerns in all municipalities regarding the urban chaos, traffic jams, continuous constructions of which most illegally build in agricultural land, endless appetites for constructing high buildings, unexpected appearance of newly invented neighborhoods, ongoing ignorance towards nature, cultural and natural heritage. All this makes us question whether there is a lack of legislation, a lack of Urban and Spatial Plans of different levels, or a lack of Urban Planners, Architects, and other professionals of similar fields.

Kosovo has an abundant legislative framework for Construction and Spatial Planning, a relatively consistent course of Spatial Plans for the central and local level, and a very representative educated and graduated group of Architects, Planners, and Urban Planners. Moreover, Kosovo has a well-established University of Architecture, Colleges of Architecture, and Urban Planning. However, besides all the facts, today, we still live in chaotic cities! Thus, there are three suggestive actions to be initiated to build an initial ground for re-inventing our cities towards a better quality of life.

First, there is an urgent need to update and interconnect the present legislation on Spatial Planning. Second, the process of licensing Architects and Planners must be sent forth in the shortest possible time. And third, there is a pressing need to have a specialized University on Urban and Spatial Planning, with an explicit curriculum to prepare the upcoming Kosovar planners for our cities' emerging and future needs. Therefore, this paper analyzes current issues on Urban and Spatial Planning in Kosova, problems that are already visible but somehow not addressed in planning documents, future developments, and implemented projects, with or without reasons in the background.

Keywords: urban and spatial planning, chaotic cities, planning legislation, planning universities, urban and spatial planners

Introduction

As climate change adds to the many shocks the world is experiencing simultaneously, including the pandemic and growing inequality, developing countries are still faced with unattended prior problems caused by poor strategic and spatial plans. With the rapid growth of urbanization rates, cities becoming overpopulated and urban inequalities being more and more visible, Kosovo has been facing an ongoing debate about Urban and Spatial Planning of its territory.

Facing such challenges, planning has to become less and less about only defining land use and zoning. Instead, it has to act as a tool to invent cities that include and serve all citizens, offer equal opportunities, putting the communities at the center of decision making. Planners have to come up with novel and innovative tools and methods to ensure a better quality of life for people.

Recent circumstances, especially the pandemic, have highlighted the importance of good planning documents to tackle public emergencies like never before. At the same time, even more challenging and overwhelming for developing countries like Kosovo, this time period has called for action and reflection about what cities of today are providing for us, and what can we learn from it in order to build healthier and better cities.

Having gone through different systems and different stages of development, Kosovo's planning has resulted in varying planning frameworks and inconsistent planning documents.

On the other hand, the earlier 2000s brought a new unprecedented development of the cities. Emerging issues hit all the municipalities, including traffic jams, continuous constructions of which most illegally build in agricultural land, endless appetites for constructing high buildings, unexpected appearance of newly invented neighborhoods, ongoing ignorance towards nature, cultural and natural heritage.

Professionals of the field and many others now are questioning the current state of cities in Kosovo, questioning whether there is a lack of legislation, a lack of Urban and Spatial Plans of different levels, or a lack of Urban Planners, Architects, and other professionals of similar fields.

In this regard, this paper addresses current issues of Urban and Spatial Planning in Kosova, problems that are already visible but somehow not addressed in planning documents, future developments, and implemented projects, with or without reasons in the background.

Legislative framework

Kosovo has a relatively new and updated legislative framework for planning. The different political and social circumstances it has gone through have also been reflected in different eras of legislative planning frameworks.

The earlier legislation before '99 consisted of General Urban Plans and Regulatory Plans. Additionally, particular areas were covered with Urban Projects. A large majority of these

plans ended up not being implemented and opened the door for uncontrollable developments after the war.

This called for an urgent initiative for new legislation to enable the start of the new planning documents. Furthermore, a traditional approach used until that time would become considered inadequate and unable to meet the expectations of the presented urban challenges.

That led to switching the practice towards more strategic planning and adopting a new legal framework, which produced the next planning documents for both central and local levels. On the central level, the Kosovo Spatial Plan 2005-2015+ was the initial planning document drafted incompatibility with the new planning law. This instigated the local planning documents, consisting of Municipal and Urban Development Plans and Urban Regulatory Plans, and also Spatial Plans for Special Areas.

Following up, the Kosovo Spatial Plan 2010-2020+ was the last central plan covering the whole country's territory, which was drafted during the same legislative framework. Today, even with a new legislative framework, and very outdated data and planning strategies, we are yet to see the following draft for the Spatial Plan of Kosovo.

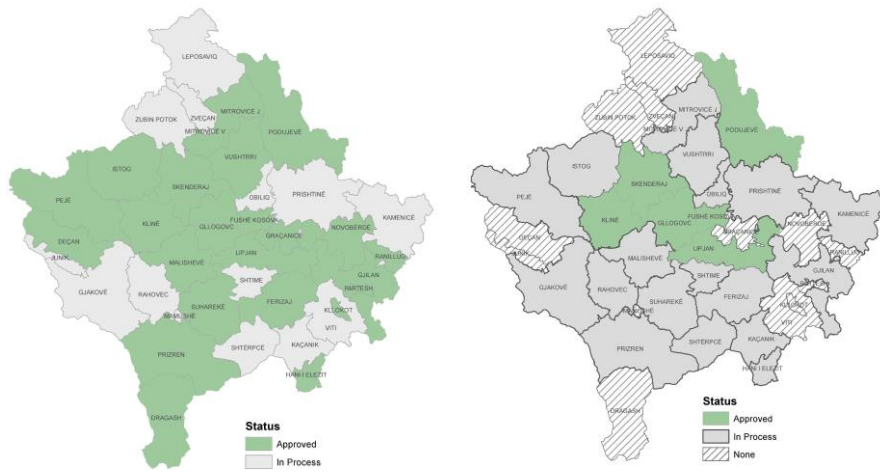
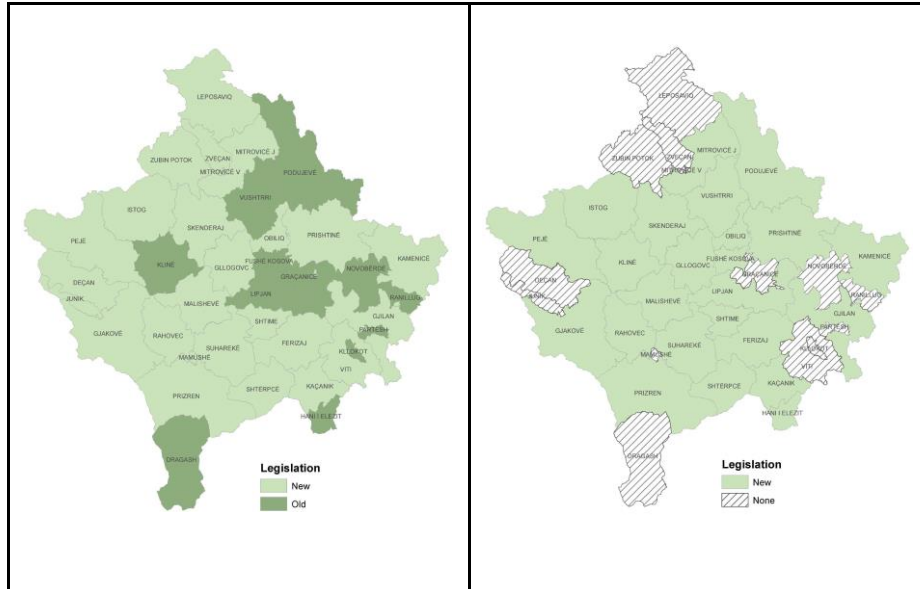
Meanwhile, at this period, a majority of the municipalities in Kosovo had started or completed the process of drafting municipal planning documents.

Out of necessity and supported by different international programs, 2013 started the last era or legislative planning framework for Kosovo, consisting of the Law for spatial planning and a list of vast bylaws, including the Administrative Instructions for Spatial Planning Technical Norms.

The new planning law and other spatial planning legislative documents changed the legal basis, in this case, the responsibilities and requirements of the authority responsible for spatial planning and management at the central and local levels. Moreover, it presented new planning documents for both levels like Municipal Development Plan, while it skipped some like Urban Development Plans.

The changes that the new legislation brought in the planning process, the stakeholders, and participant inclusion, presented great strides towards successful planning. At the same time, this short period of implementation has already presented challenges in the legislative documents, mismatches, and gaps. Meanwhile, municipalities have all been advised to and all have either finished or are in the process of drafting their planning documents in accordance with the latest legislative framework.

Figure 1-Planning documents in level of Kosovo



Planning of Kosovo's municipalities

Spatial planning can be described as a function with the purpose of managing the future distribution of activities in a spatial manner. It aims to create a rational territorial organization of land use and the relationship between them, by balancing demands for development, considering the environment, social and economic circumstances. (Wegener, 1998). Spatial planning should be a measure for coordinating the developments of a city and reducing differences within a territory, all while offering spatial cohesion for a country or a region.

Kosovo is currently witnessing the most intensive process of new developments in construction and buildings. At the same time, it finds itself in the time with most planning documents, covering the major areas of its territory. In general, there are 37 Municipalities, with 38 Municipal Development Plans done and 24 Municipal Zoning Maps (see fig 1 and fig.2), with the details presented as in figure 1

Municipal Development Plan -MDP - 25 documents are by new law in force,

Municipal Urban Plan-MUP - 13 documents are by old law, which makes total of 38 documents, from which, 23 are approved and 15 still in process.

Also, there are 24 Municipal Zoning maps from which, 18 are in process and 6 are already approved.

Figure 2 - Statistics for Urban planning documents by new and old Legislation

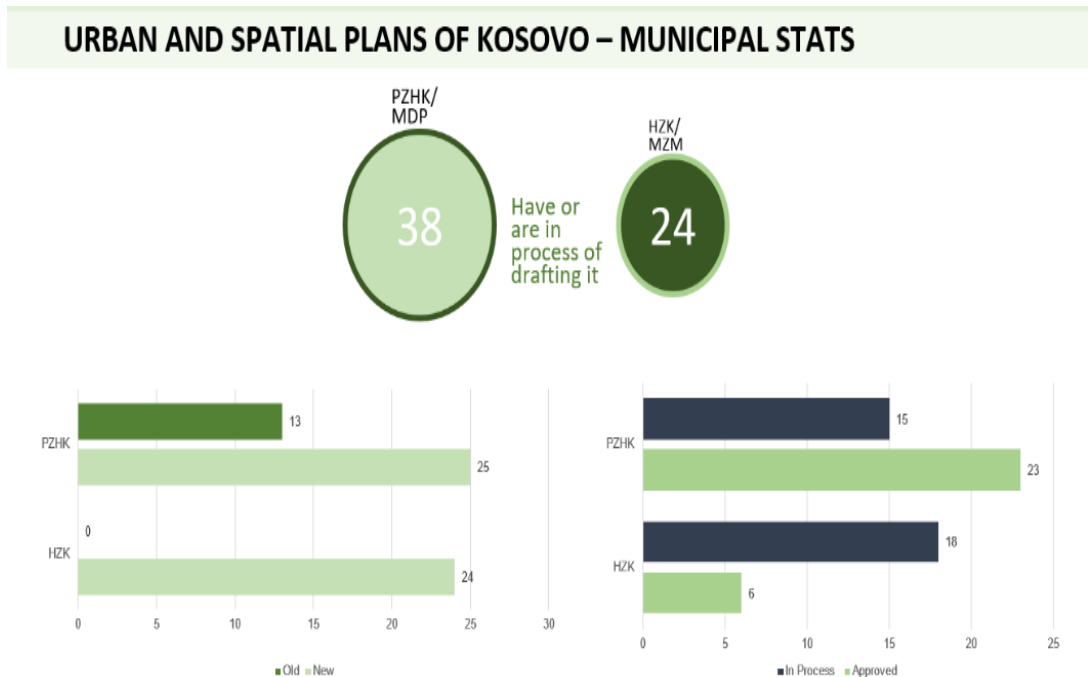


Figure 3- Current urban Plans by Municipalities

URBAN AND SPATIAL PLANS OF KOSOVO										
No	Municipality	Document	Legislation	Year	Status					
1	GIAKOVË	PZHK HZK	New New	2021-2029* 2021-2029*	In Process In Process	20	VUSHTRRI	PZHK HZK	Old New	2016-2024 2021-2029*
2	FERIZAJ	PZHK HZK	New New	2017-2025 2021-2029*	Approved In Process	21	VITI	PZHK HZK	New /	2021-2029* /
3	KAÇANIK	PZHK HZK	New New	2021-2029* 2021-2029*	In Process In Process	22	SHTIME	PZHK HZK	New New	2021-2029* 2021-2029*
4	KLINË	PZHK HZK	Old New	2012-2020 2020-2028	Approved Approved	23	LIPJAN	PZHK HZK	Old New	2019-2023 2021-2029*
5	MAJSHEVË	PZHK HZK	New New	2019-2027 2021-2029*	Approved In Process	24	PEJË	PZHK HZK	New New	2019-2027 2021-2029*
6	MITROVIÇE J	PZHK HZK	New New	2020-2028 2021-2029*	Approved In Process	25	PODUEVË	PZHK HZK	Old New	2016-2025 2019-2027
7	MITROVIÇE V	PZHK HZK	New /	2021-2029* /	In Process /	26	PRISHTINË	PZHK HZK	New New	2021-2029* 2021-2029*
8	OBILIQ	PZHK HZK	New New	2021-2029* 2017-2025	In Process Approved	27	RAHOVEC	PZHK HZK	New New	2021-2029* 2021-2029*
9	SKËNDERIAJ	PZHK HZK	New New	2017-2025 2020-2028	In Process Approved	28	PRIZREN	PZHK HZK	Old New	2013-2025 2021-2029
10	HANI ELEZIT	PZHK HZK	Old New	2010-2025 2021-2029*	Approved In Process	29	THERANDE/SUHAREKË	PZHK HZK	New New	2021-2029 2021-2029*
11	MAMUSHË	PZHK HZK	New /	2021-2029* /	In Process /	30	NOVOBËRDË	PZHK HZK	Old /	2012-2022 /
12	GJILAN	PZHK HZK	New New	2021-2029 2021-2029*	Approved In Process	31	GRAÇANICË	PZHK HZK	Old /	2014-2029+ /
13	DRENAS/Gjillogoc	PZHK HZK	New New	2020-2028 2021-2029	Approved Approved	32	RANILLUG	PZHK HZK	Old /	2011-2025+ /
14	DEÇAN	PZHK HZK	New /	2019-2027 /	Approved /	33	PARTESH	PZHK HZK	Old /	2006-2015+ ** /
15	DRAGASH	PZHK HZK	Old /	2013-2023 /	Approved /	34	SHËRPECË	PZHK HZK	New New	2021-2029* 2021-2029*
16	F.KOSOVË	PZHK HZK	Old New	2013-2023 2020-2028	Approved Approved	35	KLLOKOT	PZHK HZK	Old /	2012-2017+*** /
17	ISTOG	PZHK HZK	New New	2019-2026 2021-2029*	Approved In Process	36	LEPOSAVIC	PZHK HZK	New /	2021-2029* /
18	KAMENICË	PZHK HZK	New New	2021-2029* 2021-2029*	In Process In Process	37	ZUBIN POTOK	PZHK HZK	New /	2021-2029* /
19	JUNIK	PZHK HZK	New /	2019-2029* /	In Process /	38	ZVEGAN	PZHK HZK	New /	2021-2029* /

*Prone of change depending on the year of approval; ** As part of Gjilan Municipality; *** As part of Viti Municipality

Nevertheless, Kosovo’s citizens today find themselves in chaotic cities, with almost no public spaces, with even less green areas, with no properly functioning public transportation, chaotic and monstrous buildings, constant traffic jams leading to fewer and fewer parking spaces. Photos below will reflect what is said above.

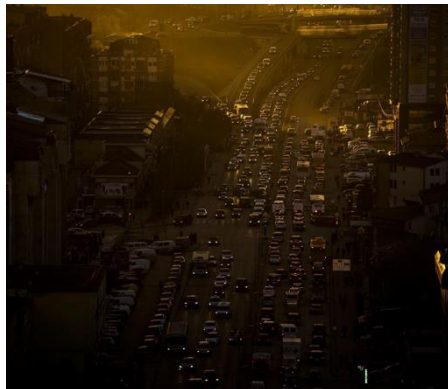


Foto1 - Prishtina



Foto 2- Prishtina



Foto 3 – Fushkosova



Foto 4 - Ferizaj

Conclusion

Kosovo has an abundant legislative framework for Construction and Spatial Planning, a relatively consistent course of Spatial Plans for the central and local level, and a very representative educated and graduated group of Architects, Planners, and Urban Planners. Moreover, Kosovo has a well-established University of Architecture, Colleges of Architecture, and Urban Planning. However, besides all the facts, today, we still live in chaotic cities!

Kosovo has been witnessing the most intensive process of new developments in construction and buildings. At the same time, it finds itself in the time with most planning documents, covering the major areas of its territory. This short period of implementation of the new legislation has already presented challenges in the legislative documents, mismatches, and gaps, like the Badovci lake situation. Meanwhile, municipalities have all been advised to and all have either finished or are in the process of drafting their planning documents in accordance with the latest legislative framework.

This all, while still having an outdated Development Plan of Kosovo from the old legislation, and lacking to have approved the Zoning Map of Kosovo. In this regard there are common concerns in all municipalities regarding the urban chaos, such are:

- traffic jams
- continuous constructions of which most illegally build in agricultural land
- endless appetites for constructing high buildings
- unexpected appearance of newly invented neighborhoods
- ongoing ignorance towards nature
- cultural and natural heritag

Recommendations

There are three suggestive actions to be initiated to build an initial ground for re-inventing our cities towards a better quality of life.

First, there is an urgent need to update and interconnect the present legislation on Spatial Planning.

Second, the process of licensing Architects and Planners must be sent forth in the shortest possible time.

And third, there is a pressing need to have a specialized University on Urban and Spatial Planning, with an explicit curriculum to prepare the upcoming Kosovar planners for our cities' emerging and future needs.

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