

From Ottoman to Modern - Transformation of Prishtina 1945-1990

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Abstract

This paper deals with the transformation of the city of Prishtina from an ottoman to a modern city, the capital of Kosova . A short overview of the ottoman city and its parts is presented and the context in which transformation began in the beginning of the 20th century when Ottoman Empire was defeated in the Balkan wars 1911-1913 and in particular after the World War 1, when the Kingdom of Yugoslavia was established after 1920

The research tries to give an insight to different phenomena of the development of architecture and the city of Prishtina - such as decadent transformation of the historic core of the city and construction of the new city areas planned in the spirit of modernism, through mass production and typical housing architecture, often through architectural offices throughout the former Yugoslavia. In these developments regional variations of modernism are possible to trace, expressed also through the influence on the Prishtina school of Architecture by the teachers coming from the respective schools - Belgrade, Sarajevo, Skopje, to the social position of architectural profession today and its presence in the media.

A combined research methodology/strategy involving interpretative historical research was used in this paper. Since it covers different political, economic and social contexts, it was necessary to use the combined strategy at different levels. In the research the basic arguments are found in the literature and archived documents with a common context.

Introduction

After the World War II, the Ottoman city of the western Balkans faced larger transformations and changes. Most of the cities were under the pressure of reconstruction by the new social forces coming out from the liberation from the Nazi-occupation.

These changes came also as a result of a long decline of cities in the second part of the 19th century and the aftermath of the independence from Ottoman Empire.

Architecture and urbanism of this period presents direct outcomes of the transformations and development based on which, our cities have

acquired a 'socialist/modernist identity'. Modernist actions in the socialist period occurred in the context of a wider urbanization in the region, often with conflicting ambitions expressed mainly through the plans and projects that demonstrate the utopian idea of building a spatial framework for a new society of which were affected by entirely pragmatic requirements.

Ottoman City

The main morphological feature of the Ottoman city is the division into two parts. A centre where economic, religious, cultural and other public activities took place, and the residential areas – a number of mahalles or

residential neighbourhoods¹. The morphological structure was bounded by a street network with mainly two types of streets - wider in the centre and narrow streets and alleys – dead end streets or coul-de-sacs for local use. As in all 'eastern cities', it is difficult to trace a hierarchy of the streets².

The chief device of Ottoman city-making was külliye. The word derives from the Arabic word meaning "the whole". A külliye was the functional centre of a well-defined neighbourhood, identified by family bonds, profession, or place of origin. It consisted of an interrelated group of buildings round a mosque installed and endowed by the sultan as the public nexus of obedient subjects. It is to be distinguished from the administrative center of the town, usually citadel, and the commercial centre of bazaars and haats, which were placed next to the Friday mosque³.

The core area of the centre was the

bazaar or çarşı in Turkish, a commercial area consisting of bezistan, caravanserais and shops where crafts, trade and other transactions were carried out. These buildings belonged to waqfs and provided the larger part of the urban commercial facilities. Because such buildings were rented by waqfs to merchants and artisans, the waqf system was directly related to urban economic activity such as artisanal production, trade and services⁵.

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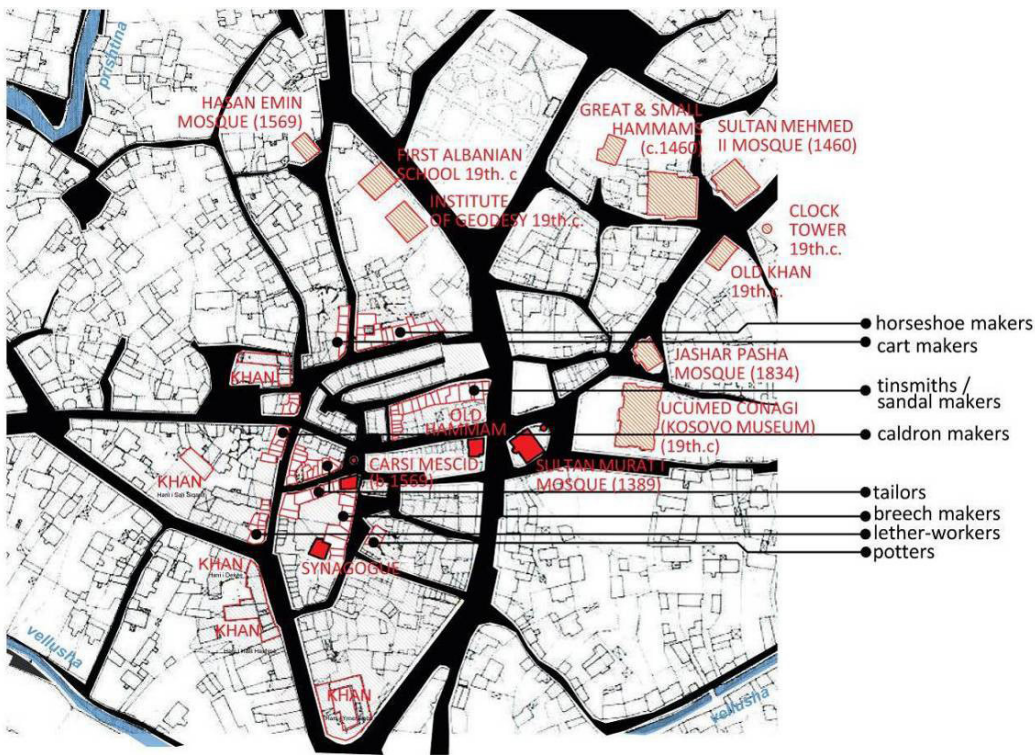


Fig1 / Prishtina Old Bazar in 1937
 Source / Prishtina Reinterpreted- Interrogating heritage-memory-identity triad in the contemporary context - PhD Thesis, Faculty of Architecture, University of Sarajevo, Jerliu, F. (2013)

¹ / A portrait of the Ottoman Cities, Muslim Worlds 92, no 3/4 Fall 2002, The H.W Wilson Company. Acun F. (2002)
² / The Ottoman city of the Balkans, The City in the Islamic World (2 vols), Edited by Salma K. Jayyusi Renata Holod, Attilio Petruccioli and André Raymon, Pinon, P. (2008).
³ / The history of Architecture-Settings and Rituals, Oxford University Press, Oxford, Kostof, S. (1992).

production, trade and services⁴.

The New Socialist City 1945-1970

After the World War II, the Ottoman city of the western Balkans faced larger transformations and changes. Most of the cities were under the pressure of reconstruction by the new social forces coming out from the liberation from the Nazi-occupation. These changes came also as a result of a long decline of cities in the second part of the 19th century and the aftermath of the independence from Ottoman Empire.

After the war the city was a polygon where political power intended to show the progress of the new society by destroying the old – capitalist/ bourgeoisie system represented by the old ottoman buildings and public spaces. So-called liberation of Kosova came in November 1944. For most of Albanians it was considered reestablishment of the Serbian rule over a territory where they were majority.

In the first post-war decade (1945-55) Kosova cities didn't experienced significant changes in terms of administrative functions. The exception is Prishtina, which turned to the capital of the Kosova Province in 1947. Changes became obvious due to the fact that main cities became administrative district centres.

The transfer of property was ideologically motivated and was more often conceived as a long-term ideological postulate of the socialist revolution than as a short-term economic proposition addressed to the problem of how the war-shattered economy of Yugoslavia could best be organized. The forms by which transfer of private property to the state sector took place were: sequestration, land reform, nationalization, confiscation, expropriation and gifts⁵.

The property ownership transformation caused a massive migration to Turkey

as a result of the constant pressure on Albanian population by the Serbian authorities. In the towns, beside the expropriation and confiscation of the properties from the wealthy city families, the pressure came through advantages that Serbian population got in employment, education and social housing.

The modest industrial production plants were developed immediately after the war. Some of the stronger guilds were transformed into state cooperatives to establish the first production facilities such as leather production, silver and gold accessories manufacturing, food production and clothing. The artisan production in this period experienced a decline. Due to state control, trade was mainly conducted in a controlled way by the socially owned enterprises. While in 1950's the process of industrialization was very slow, it took a very intensive form during 1960's and 1970's. New industrial areas were developed in the city fringes, sometimes arbitrary decided by the politicians. New economies of modern society such as tourism, education, health and culture soon became big employers. In this period an extensive infrastructure was developed, both technical and social. New modern paved roads connected cities. New schools and hospitals were built all around Kosova. The university education began the 1960 and soon in 1970 Prishtina University was established.

Planning System and Instruments

With the new social ruling system came the propaganda on the new modern city for the labour class of New Yugoslavia. A new planned city was introduced, but instead of preserving the existing structure, the authorities decided to build the 'new city' over the old city patterns.

According to many authors, scholars, in former Yugoslavia could be classified

⁴ / Acun F. (2002) *A portrait of the Ottoman Cities*, Muslim Worlds 92, no 3/4 Fall 2002, The H.W Wilson Company

⁵ / Bicanic, R. (1973), *Economic Policy in Socialist Yugoslavia*, Cambridge University Press, New York.

into three main periods⁶:

- Centralized-directive planning 1947-1952;
- The decentralized and socialist self-management planning from 1953 to 1967
- Democratized polycentric planning model from the 1967 to 1990

More specifically, the planning system

in Kosova could be summarized in the following table⁷:

In the first post war period the established way of doing things was to demolish the old houses and built the new housing estates. Massive demolitions might also be attributed to the old damaged structures that in some cases were difficult to preserve

PERIOD	TYPE OF PLANNING ACTIVITIES	TYPE OF PLANNING DOCUMENT
1947 - 1965	Central command planning (Controlled development, urban growth and city limits/ public interest over the private / focused on technical solutions)	Regulation and detailed plans
1965 - 1987	New system of voluntary planning, "social self-management planning"/ Communication and coordination of different bodies at all levels through agreements and commitments, with no hierarchical approval system.	1. Top down master plans as goal formulations from - (land use) 2. Regulatory and detailed plans as solution bottom-up driven (5 years plans).
1974 - 1990	Decentralized - Provincial level and local planning. Spatial planning at the Provincial government level. Municipal and urban planning, regulatory and detailed urban planning.	1. Spatial Plan of Kosova 2. Regional spatial plans 3. General urban plans 4. Regulatory Plans 5. Detailed Urban Plans

Tab1 / Planning system in Kosova

in both technical and financial terms. of the national holidays.

The most drastic case in Kosova was the destruction of Prishtina Çarshia – The bazaar with more than 600 shops – including the covered market – the bezistan. In this way the century old bazaar disappeared to leave space for the new ‘Brotherhood and Unity Square’. The new public spaces came as a need to create places for the monuments of glory to the new socialist system. The authorities used these spaces also for political meetings where party officials would give speeches in the celebration

Brotherhood and Unity Square was built over the ruins of the bazaar. A rectangular square with a fountain, a sculpture and a monument with triple columns should become the symbol of the long-term battle for human rights and equality between Kosova nationalities – Albanians, Serbs and Turks. In term of visual dimension, the square is totally out of scale and the triple column got in some kind of competition with three minarets of the oldest

⁶ / Hoxha, E. (2006) PRISHTINA ESCAPE-Challenges for Urban Development-MSc Thesis, Katholeke University of Leuven
⁷ / Loc. cit



Fig2 / Prishtina General Urban Plan 1953. Source / Prishtina Municipal Archive



Fig3 / Two pictures: Demolition of Prishtina bazaar and actual situation - Brotherhood and Unity square (1960). Source / Prishtina Municipal Archive)

mosques of the city, which stands in a perfect harmony in regard to their heights and distances between them. In terms of functional dimension, it is passing square because it was placed in the crossroads of Divanyollu in the

East- and Nazim Gafurri in the west West Street and North-South street. With no public facilities around it, socially, it produced a public space with no interest for being there. And since the fountain was not maintained, after

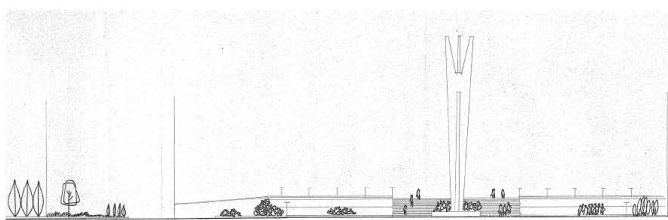
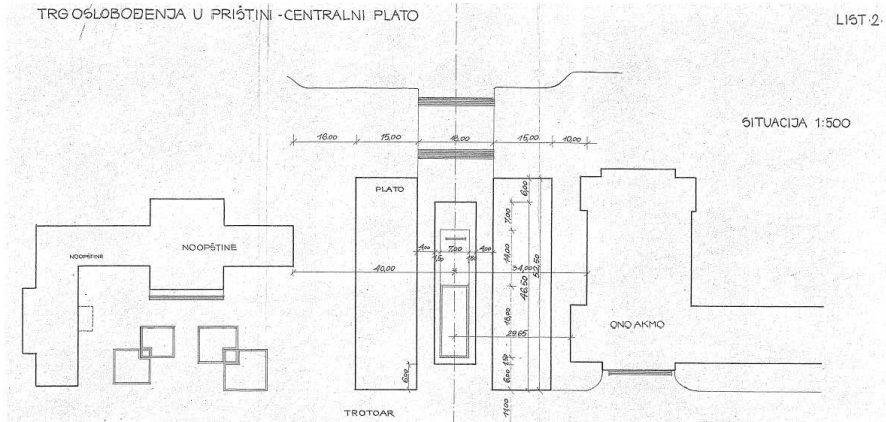
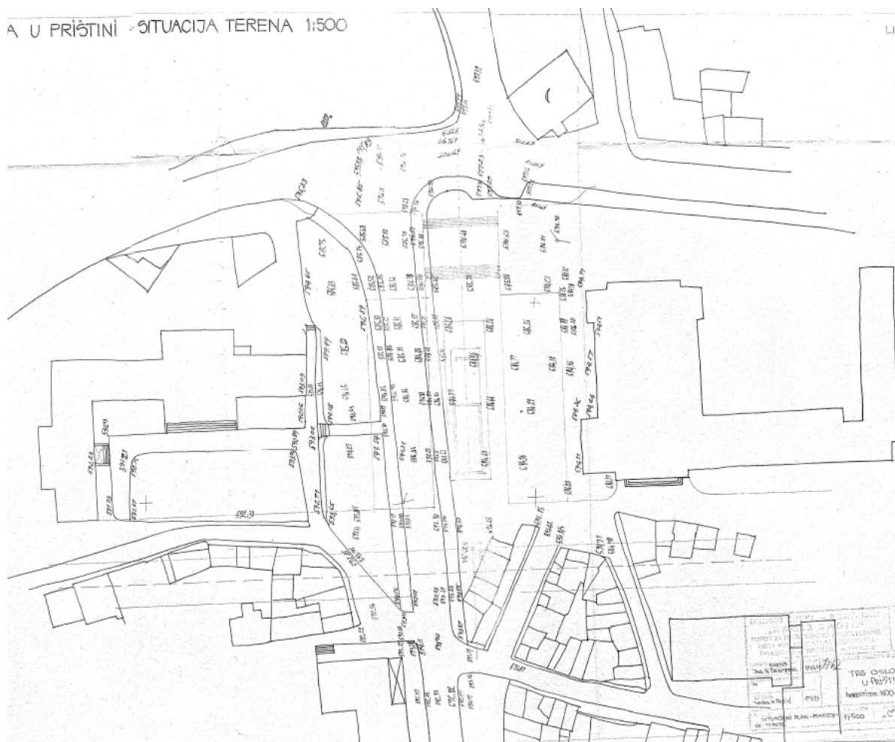


Fig4 / Brotherhood and Unity Square - initially Liberation Square - Above: the plan form 1960
Source / Prishtina Municipal Archive



Fig4.1 / Brotherhood and Unity Square - initially Liberation Square / view from the West
Source / author

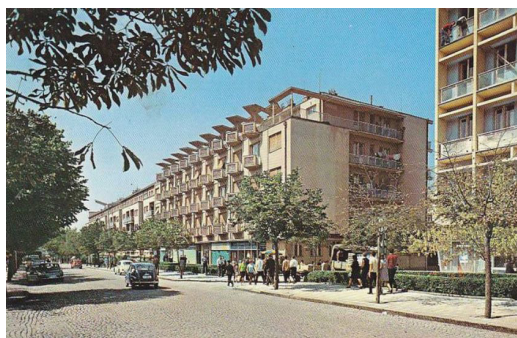


Fig5 / Left - Mother Theresa Boulevard in 1970. Source / Prishtina Municipal Archive; on the right pedestrianized Boulevard, September 2015. Source / author

some years it was filled up with the earth and planted with greenery.

Mother Theresa Boulevard or Marshal Tito Street was first planned intervention in terms of urban design. Planned over the existing core street of Lokac Neighbourhood. The widening of the street required demolishing many houses of the Lokac neighbourhood, including Lokac Mosque and the Catholic Church.

A new modernist street emerged with the national theatre, hotel Bozhur, modernist housing blocks, green alley and small squares between blocks. The shops in the ground floor, although with limited supply of goods, presented a kind of substitution of the bazaar, but the offer of the shops were very poor in the first decades.

One of the planners, Professor Novakovic, a late professor of planning at Belgrade University, while he was teaching as a visiting professor at Prishtina University, had admitted that they made a big mistake when they decided to transform the whole neighbourhood for creating the boulevard.

Fortunately, the Boulevard became really the most vital public space in the city.

During 1980's it was turned to pedestrian area, but Serbian authorities in 1991, reclaimed the cars in the street until after the war when it firstly became pedestrian street from 18.00 to 24.00 and finally in 2007 it became a pedestrian boulevard named after Mother Theresa.

The Modern City 1970-1990

The Kosova's new autonomous status within Yugoslavia, in 1974, created the opportunities for developing the new institutional urban planning and public architecture. The autonomy became a backbone for city centre transformation in Prishtina as a capital including institutional buildings and public spaces.

The most notable developments were the Youth and Sport Center, Palace of Media 'Rilindja', Prishtina Radio and Television building, National Bank of Kosova, University Clinical Centre, National library, Institute for Albanology, Kosovafilm, Grand Hotel. All these buildings were characterised by the public spaces around them and in terms of public life these buildings present symbols of prosperity and emancipation of Kosova citizens.

In this period Architecture studies began in 1978. Department of Architecture was established within Faculty of Technology, University of Prishtina. The study programme started as a combination of courses from other faculty programmes in the former Yugoslavia.

In the beginning of 1980, decline of economy followed by the decline in social relations especially amongst the Yugoslav nations culminated with the dissolution of SFRY and the wars in period 1991-1995 and than in Kosova 1998-1999.

New Modernist Neighbourhoods

Modern urbanism came to Kosova in the 50's, when first architects graduated



*Fig6 / Ulpiana Neighbourhood - aerial photo 1972.
Source / Prishtina Municipal Archive)*

at the schools of Architecture in Belgrade, Sarajevo and Skopje. Change of political status 1966-1974, high rate of population growth and migration to Prishtina characterized growth of the city as it became industrial and a university city.

The migration was mainly from the other cities of Kosova, but migration from the western Macedonia, South Serbia and Montenegro should not be underestimated.

From 1961 - 1971 Prishtina population almost doubled. As a capital, planning of

large scale neighbourhoods according to the Athens Charter founded an appropriate ground, in appropriate time in Prishtina.

In the late 1960's in Prishtina the new modernist neighbourhood started to develop. 'Ulpiana' plan came as a result of a national competition won by prof. Bashkim Fehmiu.

If the plan was considered a good example in the former Yugoslavia, the architecture built, was very poor, probably because of the low capacity

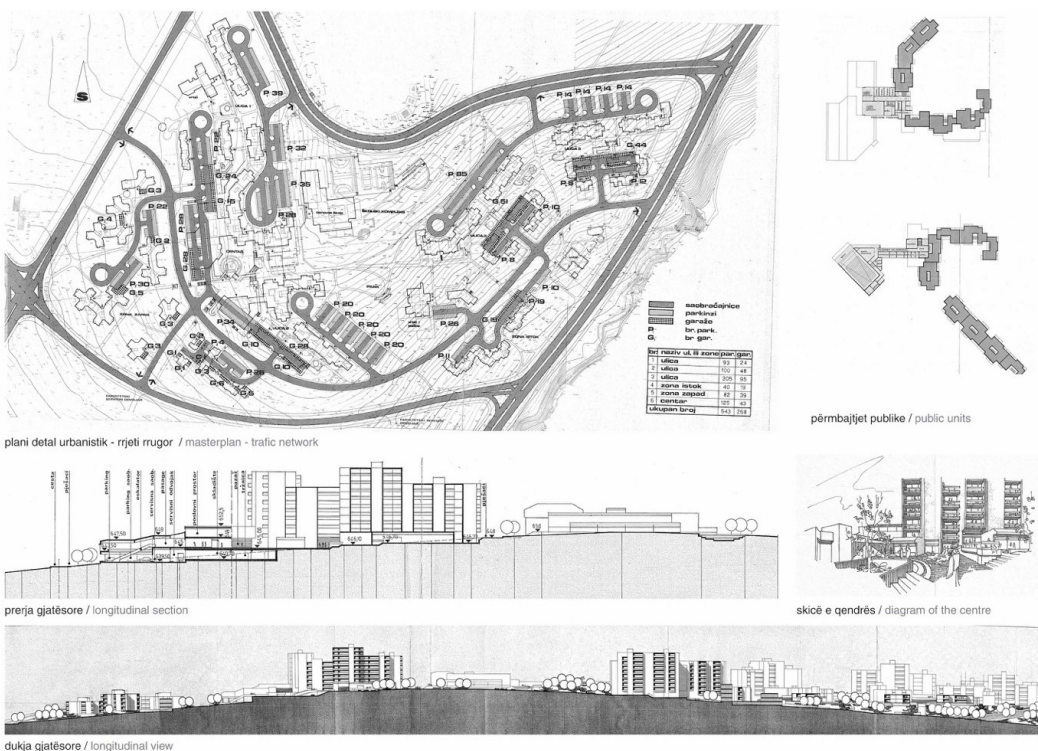


Fig7 / APZ Plan Zagreb- Sunny Hill Neighbourhood - 1976- 1988. Source / Prishtina Municipal Archive.

of the city management to deal with such a big project. In contrary the public space was very well developed and it can be still considered an example how a residential neighbourhood should be equipped with public space, green and recreational areas.

From the mid 1970's to the end of 1980's, two other neighbourhoods were developed, Sunny Hill and Dardania. These housing estates were also modernist planning exercises of the urban planners from Zagreb, Croatia.

Transformations - The Landmarks of the new Capital

The Kosova autonomy became a backbone for city centre transformation in Prishtina as a capital including institutional buildings and public spaces. It was the right time for development of the most remarkable modernist public buildings. The architecture of these buildings conveyed the transformation and progress of the new capital in the socialist Yugoslavia.

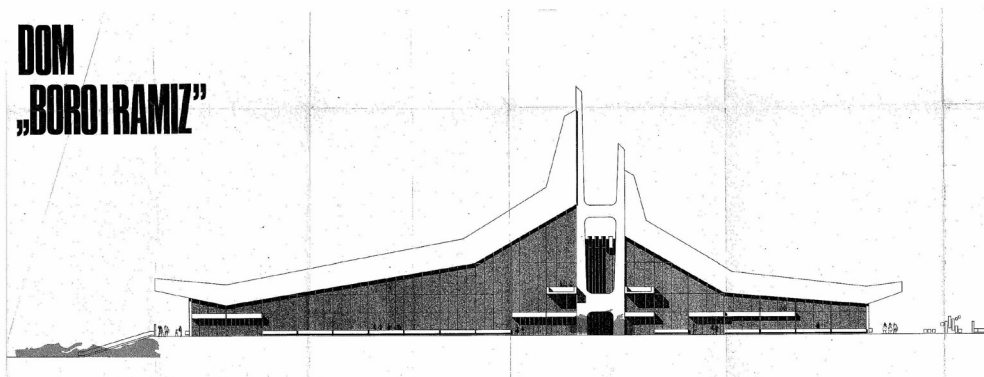
The most remarkable buildings were the Youth and Sport Center, Palace of Media 'Rilindja,' Palace of Radio

and Television, Grand Hotel. National Bank of Kosova , National library, Institute for Albanology, Kosovafilm. In terms of public life these buildings present symbols of prosperity and emancipation of Kosova citizens, a new emerging republic in the former Yugoslavia.

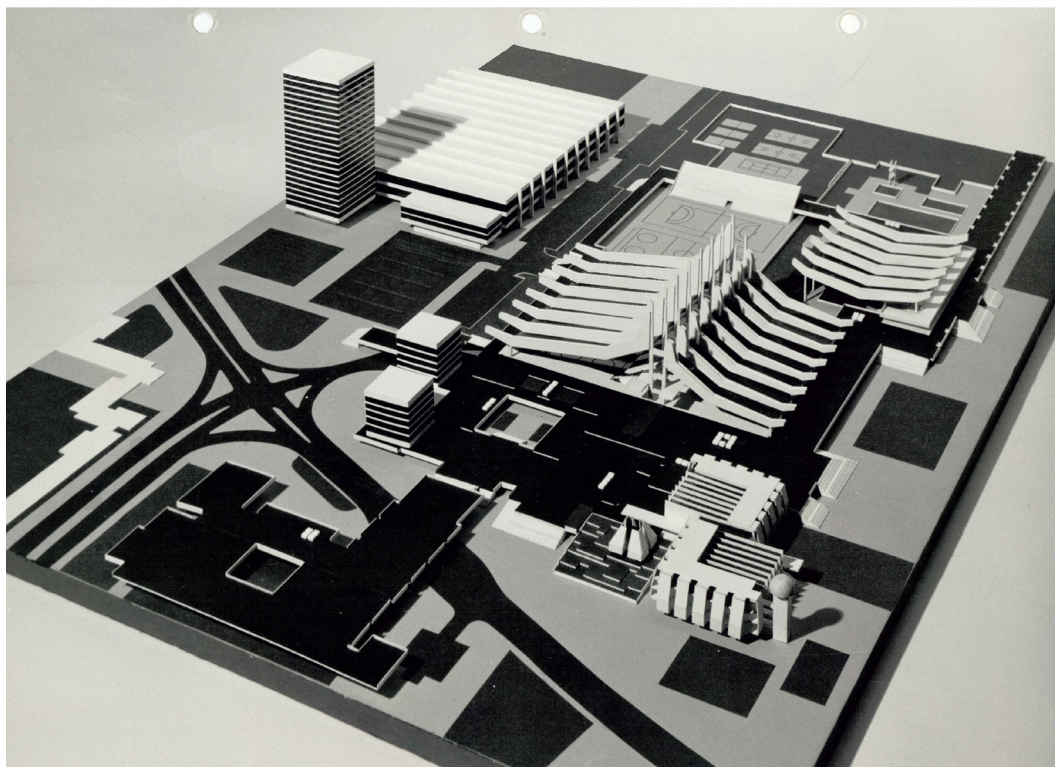
These buildings, although some of them completely transformed due to transformation of the property ownership still present the landmarks of Kosova capital. As building were completed and used ever since, the public space around were never completely designed and cultivated for a proper use by the public. It seems that this was due to poor city management of the public spaces, which continued until recent years. As Florina Jerliu notes, "...modernist landmarks in Prishtina are quite dispersed in spatial terms. A system of public space that would allow for spatial integrity, and unhindered mobility between landmarks located in close vicinity, was never considered.

Adding to this the lack of public square, which the modernist urbanism had genuinely developed in 20th century cities, the perception about landmarks

DOM „BOROI RAMIZ”



fasada lindore / eastern façade

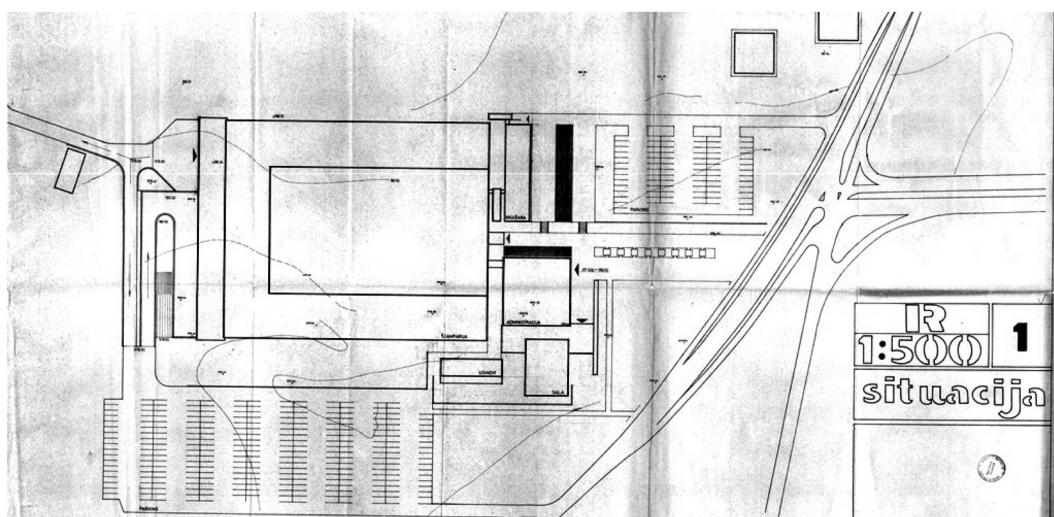


modeli / model

Fig8 / Jankovic Z. - Youth and Sport Centre 1974-1982.
Source / Prishtina Municipal Archive



Fig9 / Youth and Sport Centre
Source / author



situacioni / site plan

Fig10 / Konstantinovski G. Media Building RILINDJA 1978. Source / Plan: Prishtina Municipal Archive



Fig11 / Konstantinovski G. Media Building RILINDJA 1978. Source / Photo Afrim Spahiu.

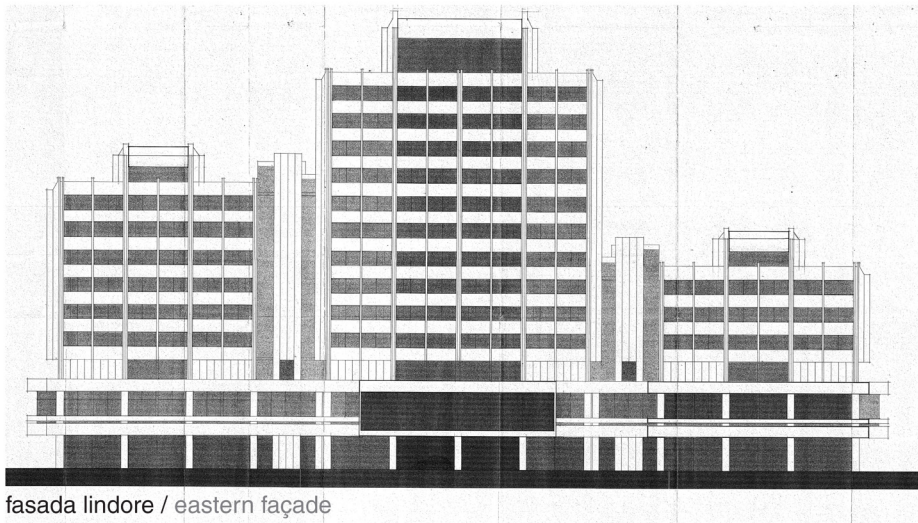
in Prishtina is that of isolated islands"⁸. From 1985 - 1988, the planning department at Prishtina municipality drafted the General Plan 1988-2000, with the local planning experts. It was for the first time that the local planning experts, architects and engineers worked together in a planning document. Due to circumstances in Kosovo in the years to come, this plan remained a blue print to mark the

history of urban planning in Kosova .

Conclusion

For Kosova , the period of the so-called 'socialist modernism' in former Yugoslavia, has not only been a transformation in terms of the development of architecture and the city, but it marks the beginnings of the architectural and urban profession in an organized way led by professionals,

⁸ / Jerliu, F. (2013) Prishtina Reinterpreted- Interrogating heritage-memory-identity triad in the contemporary context - PhD Thesis, Faculty of Architecture, University of Sarajevo



modeli / model

Fig12 / B. Fehmiu, M. Jevremovic, D. Kovačević - Grand Hotel Prishtina 1978.
Source / Facade: Prishtina Municipal Archive)



Fig13 / B. Fehmiu, M. Jevremovic, D. Kovačević - Grand Hotel Prishtina 1978.
Source / Photo Afrim Spahiu, Facade: Prishtina Municipal Archive)

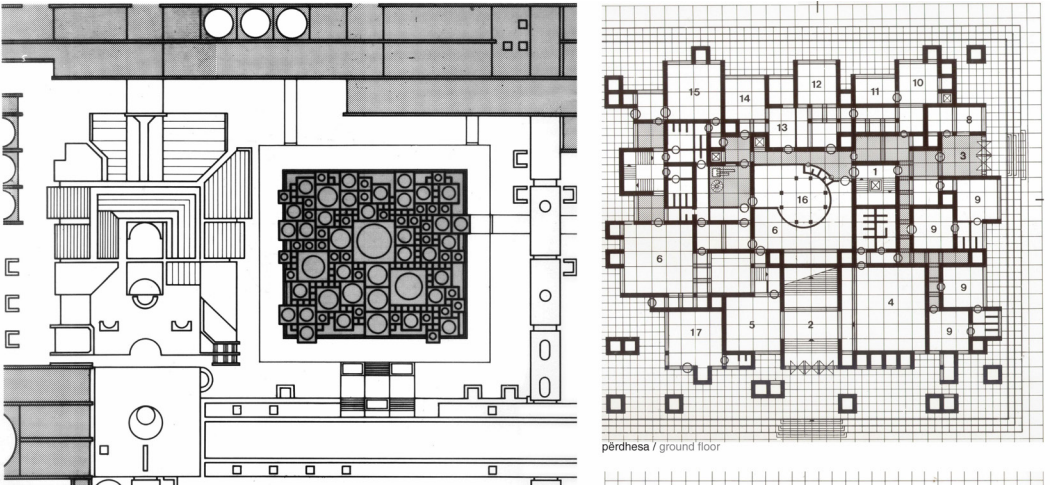


Fig14 / Mutnjakovic A. - National Library 1982.
Source / Plan: A. Mutnjakovic's personal archive



Fig14.1 / Mutnjakovic A. - National Library 1982. Source / author

including education of architects at the architectural schools in the former Yugoslavia as well as establishing of the school of architecture in Kosova in the late 70's of 20th century.

It is a fact that, under certain circumstances, modernisation of Kosova did happen after the World War 2.

Architecture cannot be valorized on the quantitative aspect alone. With all its uncertainties, the time of modernity was also expressed in its spatial relationships. Despite huge changes in Kosovar society in the last few decades, these relationships are still here because most of the public

spaces in Kosova were constructed in the period of 1945-1990⁹.

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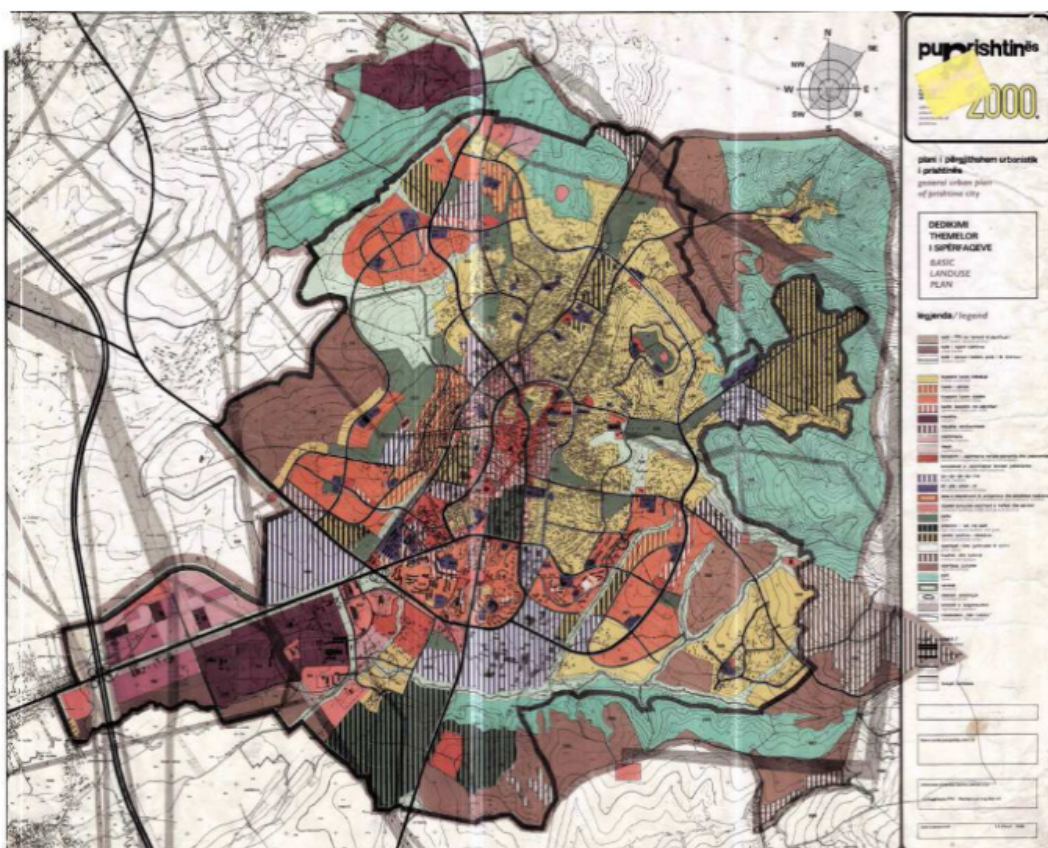


Fig15 / Prishtina General Plan 2000 - 1988. Source / Municipality of Prishtina Archive

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