Prishtina Cultural Patches
Re-evaluation of Ulpiana's "late modernist" heritage through interrelated cultural interventions

keywords / *cultural issues, heritage, interrelated interventions, community.*

Ermal Hoxha
PhD researcher / POLIS University

Abstract
The topic of this paper deals with aspects, both cultural and spatial, of the new image that the new capital of Kosova , Prishtina, wants to establish in the European context. After 10 years of independence from the state of Serbia and the gradual consolidation of Kosova 's government structures, time has come for of the capital to consolidate (or perhaps still to create) its image. The new state of Kosova already has a National Spatial Plan (yet to be approved), but Prishtina, as the capital, still remains without any real vision for the future and still without any strategy at the territorial level.

The paper is based on outcomes from the workshop "Prishtina, a new European capital. Images of a city to be discovered", attended by PhD students (DA Ferrara and Polis University) and 3rd year of architecture and urban planning students (Polis University, Tirana). The purpose of the workshop was to give a basic structure in order to develop future guidelines for a contemporary vision for Prishtina, orienting its development for the next 20 years.

This vision was based on four main issues: infrastructure, environment, unused space, and culture. This paper will focus exclusively on the cultural issues and attempt to clarify first the existing situation, and later propose hypothetical interventions.

According to the work done in the workshop, to structure such vision for the capital of Prishtina, the process was the following: preliminary study of the proposed national spatial plan for Kosova and further consultation with available information sources; field visit to compare the cartographic information with actual field condition; on field survey and interviews with residents and other actors operating in the city; outcomes from the analysis, brainstorming and the first proposals related to the strategies; final workshop to detail the urban scale strategy for each specific context and to overlay all the strategies together into a general vision at a territorial level.

What was found from the initial analysis, field visits and interviews, was that many different cultural realities exist in Prishtina, but not all of them are reflected in space. So, the chosen strategy to build the new cultural image of the capital of Prishtina, was to define at the urban scale all the spaces and buildings which can play an important role in Prishtina's cultural life, and then to re-evaluate that heritage through some interrelated interventions (some physical/ tangible, some not) which emphasize the need to promote social inclusion and a sense of belonging in each socio-cultural community.

Hence, the aim of the paper is to reflect upon the workshop process and to apply its outcomes – even through small urban interventions - to a series of patches (in the Ulpiana district context) contributing to the creation of Prishtina's new image, even though small urban interventions.

Introduction

Prishtina represents the city with the largest population in Kosova and the largest economic and social center of the province. Therefore, before addressing this topic in its specifics, it is necessary to present a territorial and cultural background of the region.

Kosova, the youngest country in Europe - who declared its independence from Serbia in February 2008 but is still unrecognized by some states for geopolitical reasons - is also the newest state in terms of population age according to the Spatial Plan of Kosova (Kosova Ministry of Environment and Spatial Planning, 2010, p.21-22).

Kosova has the highest natural growth in Europe (around 16%) and is one of the countries with the largest ethnic mix.

These communities are: Albanians (the largest community), Serbs, Turks, Bosnians, Roma, Ashkali, Egyptians and Gorani. Also, referring to the Kosova Agency of Statistics, religious beliefs are mainly three: Muslim (with the largest number of believers), Catholics and Orthodox (ASK, Kosova Agency of Statistics, 2018).

Although, in the past there have been ethnically-based conflicts between Kosova Albanians and Serbs (especially in the border areas of Mitrovica), there have never been any religious-based conflicts within the territory of Kosova . To this respect, a specific issue should be considered: Kosova residents have always called themselves "Albanians of Kosova " (always referring to their ethnic and territorial roots) and not "Kosovars" (related to a new concept that detached them from their ethnic Albanian roots). This concept, which has been changing over time, is currently under transformation as Kosova is building, little at a time, its complex identity under the emblem of its new flag (6 stars, representing the 6 mayor ethnic groups, and Kosova 's territorial map).

Over the past 10 years, Kosova has become known outside the Balkan territory due to some of its achievements in the fields of art and sports. International singers from Kosova or cinematic festivals like the DokuFest in Prizren or the Prishtina International Film Festival are already internationally recognized. Also, several medals in the Olympic and European Games speak for a sporting manifestation of this new identity under the symbol of the new Kosova flag.

In terms of education, the main indicators that show comparatively the relative level of development in the field of education are two: the average educational level of the population and the attendance rate in primary education. Based on UNFPA and IOM household research, elaborated for the Spatial Plan of Kosova , the level of illiteracy in Kosova in the year 2000 was 6.5% (Kosova Ministry of Environment and Spatial Planning, 2010, p.107). There is a large difference between the education of the population in the villages and in the urban centers. Also, the percentage of young people who continue the studies is not high. As in both the Spatial Plan and the Development Plan, special emphasis is given to the challenges related to the level of education in Kosova .

Kosova 's urban centers rank first in Europe by population density. In fact, lack of infrastructure and long distance from health and education centers have been the main reasons why Kosova 's rural population moved from rural to urban areas.

The population density was also influenced by the last conflict[1] that Kosova suffered. After the destruction

[1] / Kosova conflict (1998–99), conflict in which ethnic Albanians opposed ethnic Serbs and the government of Yugoslavia (the rump of the former federal state, comprising the republics of Serbia and Montenegro) in Kosova . The conflict gained widespread international attention and was resolved with the intervention of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO).
Wallenfeldt, J. (2008). Kosova conflict. [online] Available at: https://www.britannica.com/event/Kosova -conflict [Accessed: May 2018].

of many houses in the villages, residents were forced to abandon their lands and to concentrate in the big cities where the services were in better conditions.

The most important infrastructural axes of Kosova which can be interpreted as a Cardo-Decumano are: Shkodra - Gjakova - Prizren - Prishtina - Nish; and Belgrade - Mitrovica - Prishtina - Ferizaj - Skopje.

The intersection of these axes in Prishtina strongly emphasizes why this city was also designated as the capital of Kosova .

All key points discussed above are intended to provide a brief overview of the current socio-cultural condition in Kosova , in support of the project choices that will be reflected in the conclusions of this paper.

Background

The theme of a city's image is certainly not a new one. Already 40 years since Kevin Lynch's landmark book Image of the City (1960), professionals are still at odds with the challenges of this topic, the form of a "good city" (Lynch, 1960, p.6-13).

But, especially nowadays, challenges don't deal just with the formal aspects of the city. The issues about "city imagining" that Lynch raised with force are becoming more and more important, as are those dealing with visually-based narratives about the potential of a country.

So a place should not only aim at formal quality but also (and primarily) reflect economic potential or a strong environmental awareness. This topic becomes even more important if we consider that certain places or areas are now abandoned due to major changes in the economic sphere. We can mention here the famous Bilbao case, also analyzed by Charles Landry in terms of creativity and innovation (Landry, 2011, p.13-18), as a city which chose to invest in art and culture (Guggenheim Museum Bilbao) during a post-industrial crisis, reclaiming the economy and regenerating a rather large former industrial area.

It is also the case of the Zecche Zollverein industrial complex in Essen, Germany, which is now protected by UNESCO as industrial archeology and functions as a museum area that houses exhibitions and concerts. It suffices to understand that the traditional approach to planning leaves some gaps in this process. Gaps that should be exploited by local actors.

This "policy niche" actually offers plenty of opportunities for urban designers who are looking for new tools aimed at changing public perception about urban spaces.

Focusing now on Prishtina, we can say that despite the chaotic state, it offers to each visitor great energy in his/her first impact with the urban life. What emerges from each report on the spatial and development plans is the great potential that Prishtina's youth carries.

As mentioned above, in 1999, after the end of the war as administrative and service center Prishtina had a large population influx, which, over time, also turned into the greatest potential for this city. A mixité of ethnicities, beliefs and cultures. This is its real richness, which must be wisely highlighted and properly assessed in the analyzed contexts (fig. 1).

Prishtina recognizes three major transformation moments in the city. Originally it was born as an ottoman-oriental Kasbah. Later on came: the post-war reconstruction (the 1945-'60s), the socialist period ('60s-'89s), and the post-war urban transformations ('99 to today).

In the scheme and the ortho-photo image below, this distinction between the old city, the city of the socialist
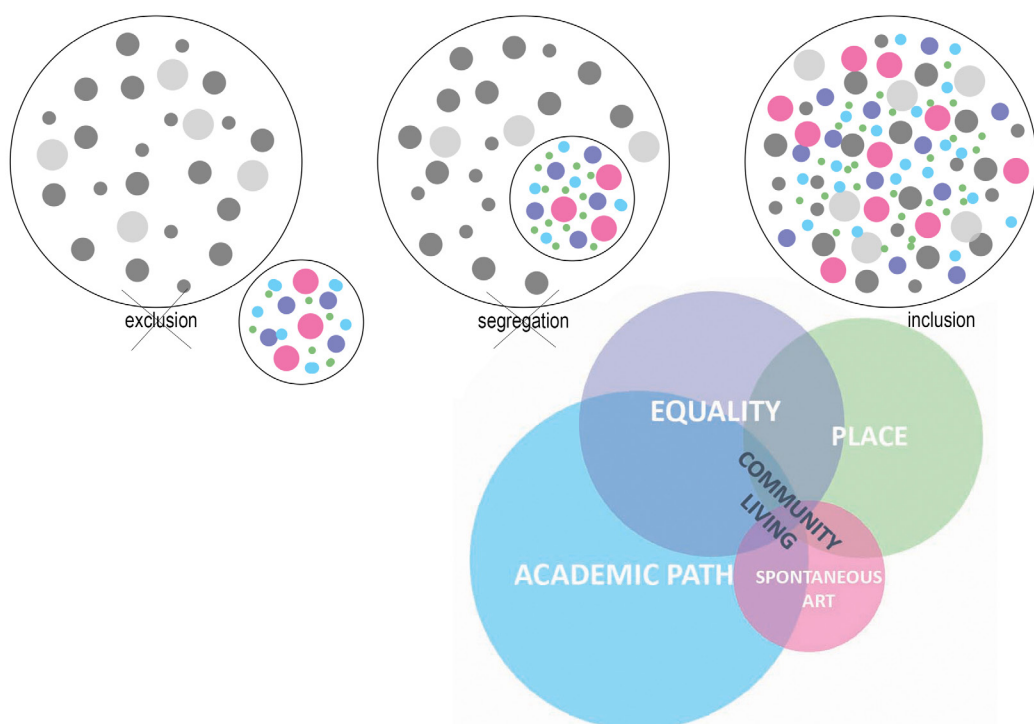
Fig1 / Schematic diagram of Prishtina mixité and its potential to create examples of equal community living spaces. Source / author

period, and the new peripheral areas (which mostly follow the axes of the main roads), is clearly distinguishable (fig.2-4). As described in Prishtina is everywere, by Vöckler and Archis (Vöckler, 2008, p.34-54), analysis of urban development shows that the economic changes and the boom of the post '99 constructions transformed rashly the existing urban fabric.

But this had negative consequences on certain rationalistic objects, such as the Grand Hotel or the actual Hotel Diamond, which lost their integrity.

The architectural heritage that came from the socialist period - actually designed not only by former Yugoslavian but also Kosovar architects - was not considered as Kosova 's fortune, so it was not protected from these kind of interventions.

But this situation seems to have changed during the last decade. The spatial and development plans for Prishtina envisage the preservation of this architectural and urban heritage.

Residential blocks like Ulpiana and Dardania are the representative cases and are becoming "living proof" of this wealth (not only as architectural heritage of a "late modernism", but also as a "model" of a more "livable" urban space). Hence, the final proposals for hypothetical interventions will focus precisely on the Ulpiana district (images of Ulpiana)[2].

Report of the process

Our method of work (workshop with PhD students and 3rd year students of architecture and urban planning) started from the confrontation of data found in the Kosova Spatial Plan of 2010 (yet to be approved) about issues related with the cultural aspects of Kosova 's society.

The Spatial Plan also poses important questions related to the preservation of cultural heritage, but also its potential to generate a contemporary image of urban reality.

"Apart from known cultural heritage, what views, landscapes, neighborhoods, constructions, and buildings we consider to be of special Kosova value and quality? What is the image, the identity and the values that

[2] / GYLER, M., The urban development of Prishtina and its public spaces, Milan, November 2013, Pg. 17-18; (May 2018). https://commongroundlaboratory.files.wordpress.com/2013/11/lecture-prishtina-28-nov.pdf
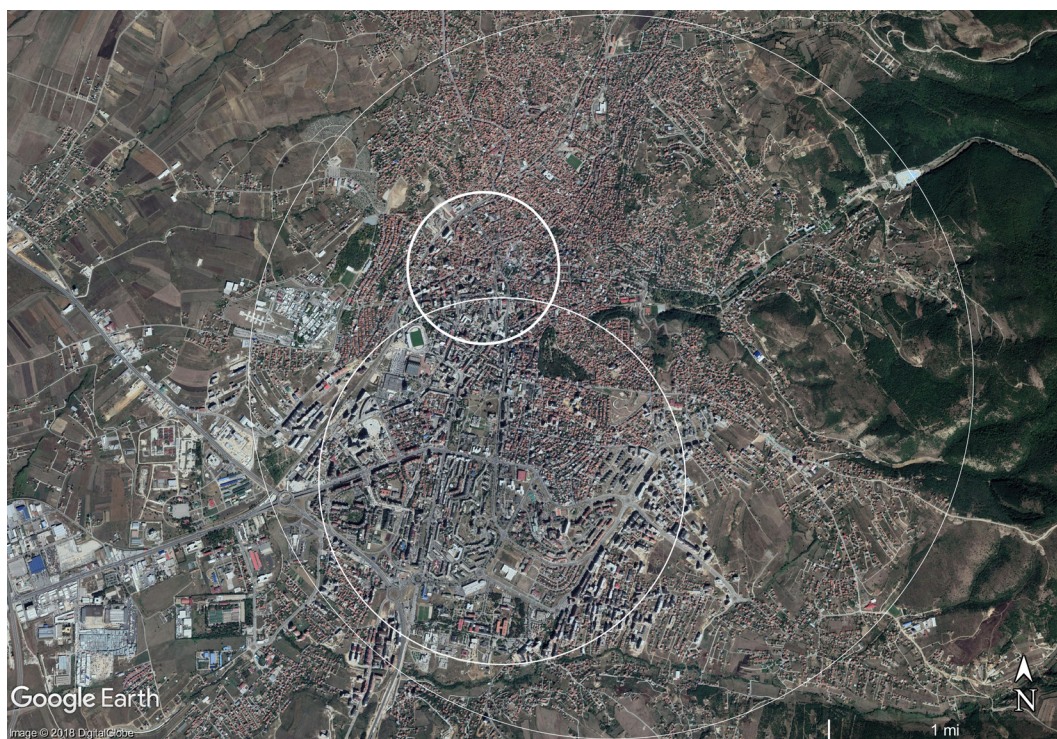
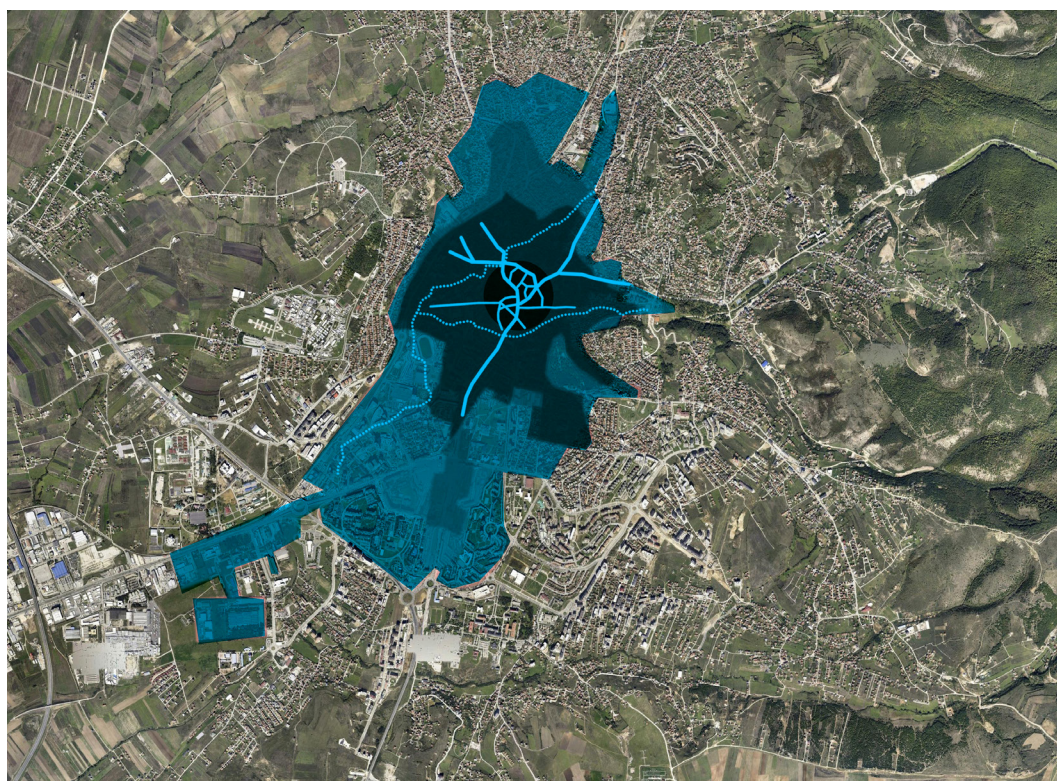*Fig2 / Ortho-photo image of the city of Prishtina and its constituent parts. Source / Google Earth 2018*

Fig3 / Scheme of different phases of Prishtina's growth and its constituent parts. Source / author

you would like to promote?

Tourism depends much on qualitative open and built environments; it generates jobs and offers leisure opportunities with short range of each of the regions. So how can we validate those values and how should we manage them?

Where can the communities take care of?" (Spatial Plan of Kosova , 2010,

p.101).

It should be said that in all sources of information (Local Administration, Urban Development Plan, Municipal Development Plan or Spatial Plan), also reviewed by the students of architecture and planning of the third year of the POLIS University during the months of October-November 2017, important issues related to socio-

Fig4 / Prishtina and its historical layers. Source / author

cultural aspects (including architectural heritage) and education were raised, but this was only done superficially and the issues were never addressed in the details of the strategy.

The second step in our method of study was the confrontation with the maps and with information collected from previous work. The field visit reconfirmed the chaotic situation that emerged in cartographic material and even highlighted the real difficulties we had to face in terms of orientation inside the city.

It also highlighted the lack of clear points of reference (with perhaps as singular exception the mosques in the historic center, which thanks to the minarets defines a very clear itinerary in the city) or lack of hierarchical infrastructural networks in the urban tissue.

According to architect Arbër Sadiki, the only parts of the city which still retained a relatively clear urban structure were the Ulpiana neighborhood, the

Fig5 / Ulpiana district with late modernist buildings, '70-'80-s. Source / photo by Xhelil Neziri[3]

Dardania neighborhood, and the University Campus (all of them built during the '60s and '80s).

The field visit helped us to understand the real dangers that threatened those urban areas and what difficulties had been passed to maintain in time their architectural integrity (fig. 5).

The visit to the municipality of Prishtina revealed once again the

---

[3] / Early pictures of Ulpiana area. http://xk.geoview.info/prishtina_e_vjeter_dikure_nje_pamje_nga_lagjja_ulpianakomuna_e_prishtines_republika_e_kosoves,60044255p (May 2018).

embryonic state of the work of the urban department, which did not yet follow (and did not anticipate) a development vision based on clear and coherent strategies. Their work at this stage was based on the introduction of a single system of maps with different themes, thus revealing the inconsistencies between them.

So far, none of the strategies nor the vision of the Spatial Plan or the Urban Development Plan are reflected or seem to have any impact on the work of the department.

Discussions and interviews with different professionals directly related to the urban-social life of Prishtina reveal some very interesting aspects, which are difficult to capture except by acknowledging the near reality. One of the issues that was discussed at length was the new Kosovar identity. Kosova is one of the newest states, but the province of Kosova has an ancient history.

From a long political and equally violent military conflict with Serbia, how does Kosova 's youth feel today? Captured in the past, or ready for a new European story? In Prishtina's social life everyone feels the energy of youth everywhere. Bars, pubs, music, art, and sports. This is the new reality of Prishtina, regardless of political or economic problems. Youth probably carries the right potential to break the problems between ethnicities and religions, thus creating a new European identity.

This very important step was followed by the brainstorming phase in the classroom, where the first ideas about the focus of the research were also made. Discussions always revolved around a topic: on the one hand, the cultural wealth found in the context, and on the other hand the ambiguity to give every piece an image and a certain physical location. Despite the very poor state of local finances, the idea of intervention was elaborated mainly at micro scale, where the everyday life of the Prishtina is directly affected, but still structuring through it a macro

scale at the city level, where patches are connected to a clear and distinct system.

The final workshop, in collaboration with the first year PhD candidates of the University of Ferrara, served as the final step for physically drawing maps (scale 1:5000) on the proposals from the previous brainstorming phase.

Outcomes and final proposals of urban intervention

The work described in the report section showed that the vision should be based on these three strategic points:
1. Preservation of some urban structures / architectural objects which still clearly provide authenticity in this aspect;
2. Identification of representative spaces (in the form of squares) for all;
3. Necessity to increase the infrastructure and educational programs related to culture and innovation.

Based on the three above-mentioned points (three strategies within a single vision) the most appropriate urban context representative of the synthesis of these points was selected.

The most suitable area (based on the field visit and on consultations with architect Arbër Sadiki) providing appropriate parameters to enable such intervention, was the Ulpiana context.

Initially, a list of monuments, objects of architectural value (or spiritual values / memory), cultural institutions, abandoned objects, spaces with potential for re-cultivation, etc., was made (fig. 6-7).

As it was noticed that most of them were gravitating around the current pedestrian area, the idea of bringing them into an interconnected relationship to create a distinctive cultural system was immediately born. What was noteworthy was that the spaces carrying the greatest potential to engage in this vision / system were those that defined Ulpiana's neighborhood, designed in the '60s by

Fig6 / Examples of cultural "objects/pieces" of relevant importance that should be connected to the city-system. Source / 3rd year student elaborations on Prishtina workshop; numbers refer to the list of "cultural-pieces" on figure 7)
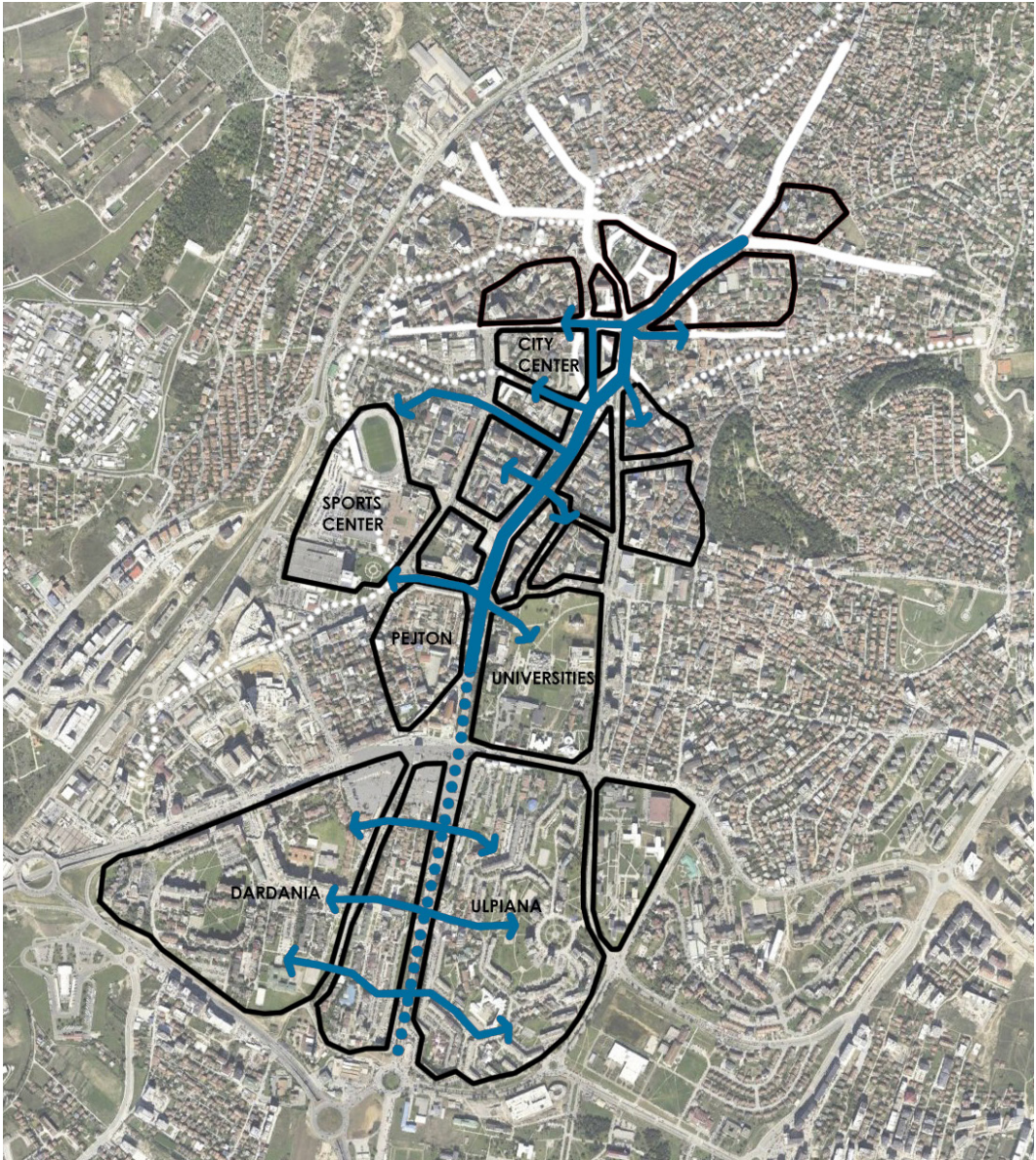
Fig7 / The existing pedestrian axis (on the central area), its extension (north-south) up to Ulpiana and Dardania districts and the "horizontal" connections of other cultural areas/districts with this central axis. Source / author

the architect Bashkim Fehmiu.

The urban tissue of this neighborhood was further highlighted by "aligned" typologies (collective housing), built in Prishtina in the '60s and '70s, during the socialist influence on housing typologies. According to a study of architect Sadiki for the "International Conference of Applied Sciences" in Tetovo, he says:

"Those two settlements [Ulpiana and Dardania] designed and realized based

DARDANIA

MAHALLA

NEW BORN

OLD TOWN

ULPIANA

LAKRISHTE

KOSOVA'S FIELD

Fig8 / Diagram of different parts of Prishtina connected by a main axis. Source / author.

on parameters that derive from this program, even today represents two settlements with best living comfort in the city" (Sadiki, 2015, p. 5-6).

The ability of these two parts of the city to be connected was also underlined by the Urban Development Plan of Prishtina 2012-2022 (Municipality of Prishtina, 2013, p.152), where the idea of extending the pedestrian zone to the end of the Ulpiana neighborhood was also conceived. As also noted in the publication Archis Interventions in Prishtina (AIP Archis Interventions Prishtina, 2013, p.12), since Prishtina does not actually have a representative center (not an urban center, but a pedestrian longitudinal axis), the potential to place in Ulpiana some of

the representative buildings of a new image of the capital is great.

Therefore, the pedestrian zone, along with its extension to the Ulpiana area, will serve as an axial fulcrum that starts from the old city (north) and ends in the Ulpiana neighborhood (south), and where all cultural and recreational itineraries will converge (fig. 8-9).

Once the cultural axis (north-south) is defined, the objects, areas, and potentials related to culture and innovation are defined, which will in turn define transversal (east-west) itineraries joined to the central axis (fig. 10).

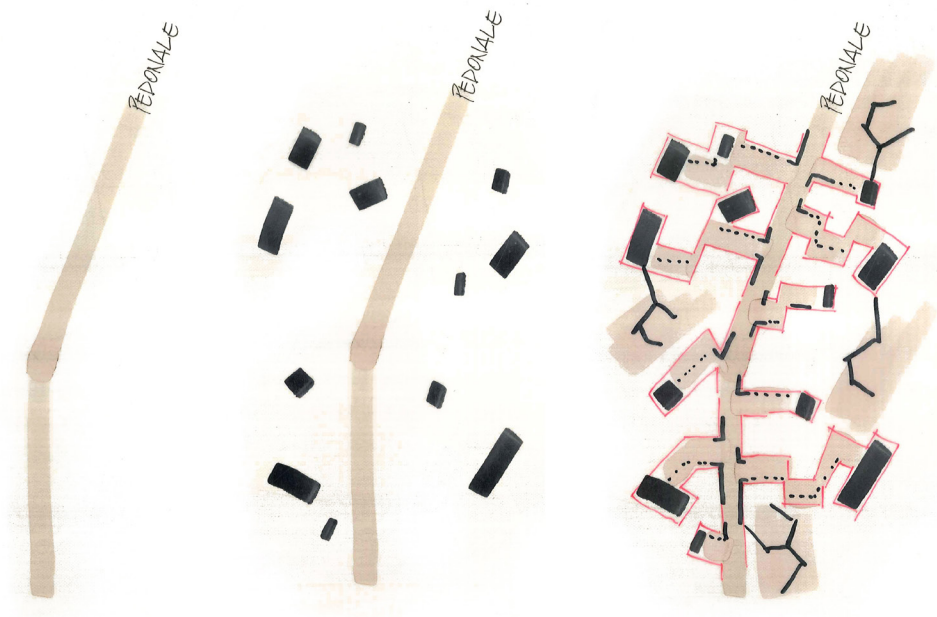In the list of these "points" there are also the Gërmia Park (a natural

Fig9 / Diagram of the pedestrian axis connecting strategic buildings/spaces. Source/ author

/ recreational area where you can observe the entire historical center), a number of abandoned buildings (which are refurbished and included in the program), cultural institutions, educational institutions, monuments, sports halls, etc.

In terms of design details the project proposes a number of urban furniture elements, which play a threefold role: a) vertical or horizontal visual elements which call attention to a cultural event, b) "interactive" technological elements that interact with the visitor and inform about cultural events at the same time, c) urban furniture elements that formally assist in defining a space while offering sitting areas and lighting fixtures. In the Ulpiana area where possible, these elements become more consistent, creating amphitheaters, performance platforms, expo panels or even passages in different levels.

In the Ulpiana area spaces and surfaces can also be highlighted by "urban-graphic-art" as a spontaneous artistic form giving everyone the opportunity to use a common urban element or space. This would be a good way to re-evaluate and connect architectural heritage and, at the same time, create a new dynamic image of the city.

Conclusions

In Prishtina there are 6 different ethnic communities (the biggest one being Albanian), several religions (the most diffused one being the Muslim religion), and very different social layers (for example, there is a significant difference between the educated layer and uneducated). All of these realities are mixed in an urban conglomerate, which rarely clearly shows its cultural belonging. This, in essence, is a positive aspect, but is difficult for each of these communities to be equally represented in this urban space.

These issues guided the main topic of this paper: creating a new image for Prishtina (from the cultural point of view) by connecting cultural pieces from the old town with new re-evaluated pieces of the "late modernist" period.

The conclusions drawn from the outcomes of the workshop and various consultations with residents and professionals, are that the fastest and most efficient way to create this new image is the inclusion of the new generation of Prishtina (open minded and ready for a cultural evolution) and the use of some urban spaces for the development of cultural activities, recovering parts of the architectural and urban heritage of Prishtina, such as the Ulpiana's case and its "late
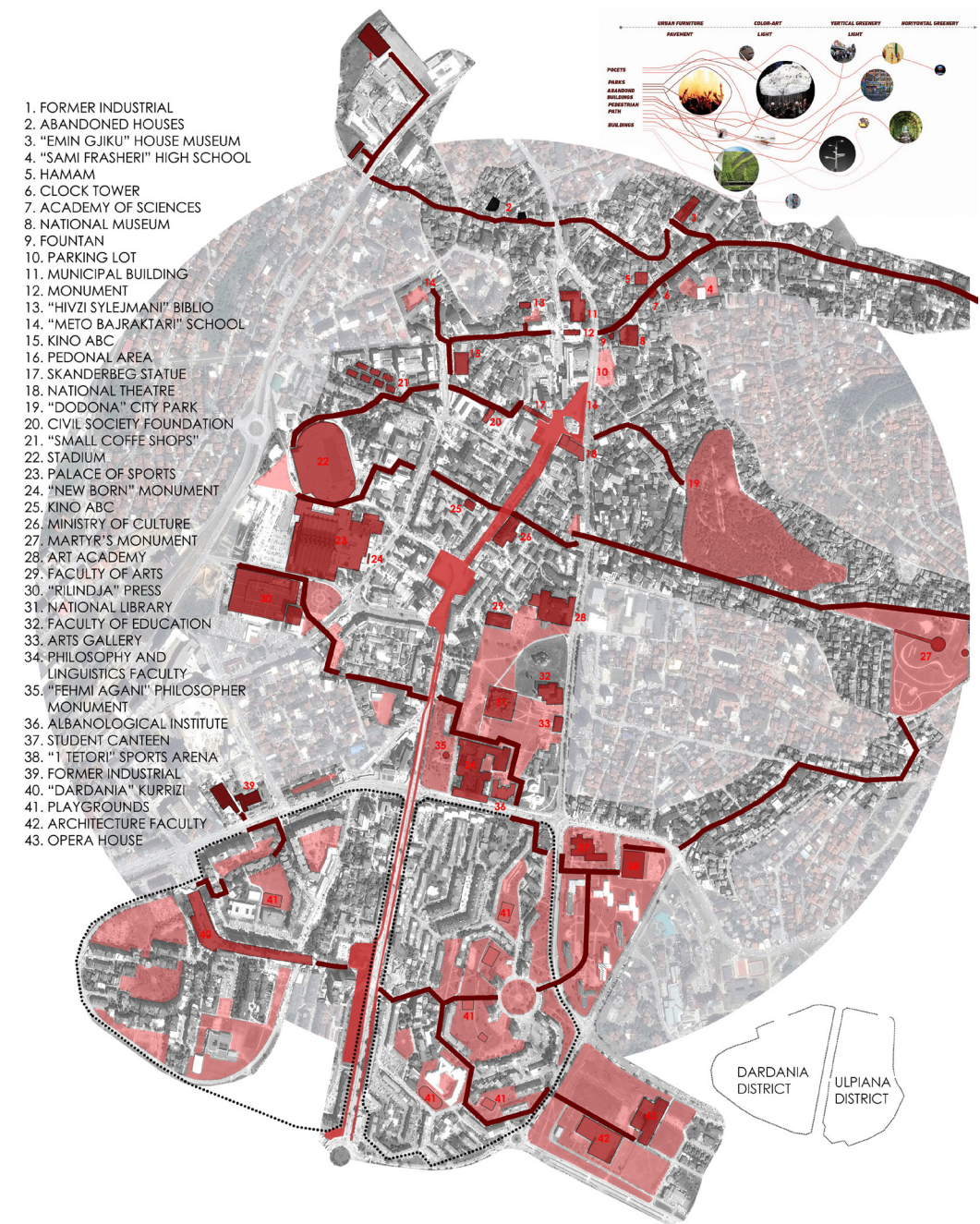
1. FORMER INDUSTRIAL
2. ABANDONED HOUSES
3. "EMIN GJIKU" HOUSE MUSEUM
4. "SAMI FRASHERI" HIGH SCHOOL
5. HAMAM
6. CLOCK TOWER
7. ACADEMY OF SCIENCES
8. NATIONAL MUSEUM
9. FOUNTAN
10. PARKING LOT
11. MUNICIPAL BUILDING
12. MONUMENT
13. "HIVZI SYLEJMANI" BIBLIO
14. "METO BAJRAKTARI" SCHOOL
15. KINO ABC
16. PEDONAL AREA
17. SKANDERBEG STATUE
18. NATIONAL THEATRE
19. "DODONA" CITY PARK
20. CIVIL SOCIETY FOUNDATION
21. "SMALL COFFE SHOPS"
22. STADIUM
23. PALACE OF SPORTS
24. "NEW BORN" MONUMENT
25. KINO ABC
26. MINISTRY OF CULTURE
27. MARTYR'S MONUMENT
28. ART ACADEMY
29. FACULTY OF ARTS
30. "RILINDJA" PRESS
31. NATIONAL LIBRARY
32. FACULTY OF EDUCATION
33. ARTS GALLERY
34. PHILOSOPHY AND
    LINGUISTICS FACULTY
35. "FEHMI AGANI" PHILOSOPHER
    MONUMENT
36. ALBANOLOGICAL INSTITUTE
37. STUDENT CANTEEN
38. "1 TETORI" SPORTS ARENA
39. FORMER INDUSTRIAL
40. "DARDANIA" KURRIZI
41. PLAYGROUNDS
42. ARCHITECTURE FACULTY
43. OPERA HOUSE

*Fig 10 / Map of interventions (and type of intervention) extended to the entire axial center.
Source / author*

modernist" design.

The urban intervention is based on three strategic points: preservation of some urban structures / architectural objects; identification of representative spaces; increase of the infrastructure and educational programs related to culture and innovation. The elements that can be used are: vertical or horizontal visual elements to spot cultural events; "interactive" technological elements to inform about cultural events; urban furniture elements to define space and also serve as a seating platform.

The proposed approach seeks to attract the attention of local professionals in this field with regard to this category of interventions. In this paper is given a modest contribution to the retrieval and re-evaluation of some objects / spaces that carry architectural or spiritual values – their installation on a hierarchy - how the art, visual arts, music, performances, exhibits and so on, can build a new image for a contemporary city, where different cultural communities can easily find themselves, and where everyone can be equally represented.

Despite the broader context, some small spaces can be gained naturally by the inhabitants, especially artists, and contributing to the definition

of a dynamic image for the city and transforming it in a contemporary European capital.

Bibliography

Alexander, Ch., Ishikawa, S., Silverstain, M., Jacobson, M., Fiksdahl-King, I. and Angel, Sh. (1977), A Pattern Language – Towns, Buildings, Construction, New York: Oxford University Press.

Arbër, S. (May 2015) The Contribution of the Architect Bashkim Fehmiu in the Architecture of Prishtina after the Second World War, Tetovo: International Conference of Applied Sciences I.

ARCHIS. (October 2009), Interventions in Prishtina - PRISHTINA Dynamic CITY, Knowledge and education: key factors for the future development of Prishtina, Prishtina: workshop.

Gehl, J. (2010) Cities for People, Washington: Island Press.

H. Whyte, W., (1980), The Social Life of Small Urban Spaces, New York: Project for Public Spaces.

Jacobs, J. (1961), The Death and Life of Great American Cities, New York: Random House.

Lynch, K. (1960) The Image of the City, Massachusetts: The M.I.T Press.

Vöckler, K. (2008), Prishtina Is Everywhere, Turbo Urbanism, the Aftermath of a Crisis, ERSTE Stiftung.

Webliography

Archis Interventions in Prishtina, Prishtina Dynamic City, November 2013.
http://www.seenetwork.org/files/2014/03/06/10/AI_Dynamic%20City%20Prishtina_2013_screen_fin.pdf

ASK, Kosova Agency of Statistics.
http://ask.rks-gov.net/en/

Department of Urban Studies and Planning, Imagining the City, Lynch, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Fall 1998.
http://web.mit.edu/imagingthecity/www/overview.html

Early pictures of Ulpiana area.
http://xk.geoview.info/prishtina_e_vjeter_dikure_nje_pamje_nga_lagjja_ulpianakomuna_e_prishtines_republika_e_kosoves,60044255p

GYLER, M., The urban development of Prishtina and its public spaces, Milan, November 2013.
https://commongroundlaboratory.files.wordpress.com/2013/11/lecture-prishtina-28-nov.pdf

LANDRY, C., Creativity, Culture & the City: A question of interconnection, Forum d'Avignon Ruhr, 2010.
https://www.forum-avignon.org/sites/default/files/editeur/ECCE_report.pdf

Spatial Plan of Kosova , Spatial Development Strategy 2010-2020+, Prishtina, June 2010
http://www.ammk-rks.net/repository/docs/Spatial_Plan_of_Kosova_2010-2020.pdf

Urban Development Plan of Prishtina 2012-2022, September 2013.
https://kk.rks-gov.net/prishtine/wp-content/uploads/sites/45/2018/02/PZHU-_Prishtina.pdf

Zeche Zollverein Mine Industrial Complex - Photographs and images.
https://www.gettyimages.it/immagine/complesso-industriale-della-miniera-zeche-zollverein?page=2&sort=mostpopular&mediatype=photography&phrase=complesso%20industriale%20della%20miniera%20zeche%20zollverein