

Prishtina – A New European Capital

Prof. Dr. Besnik Aliaj
Rector / POLIS University

300 “Prishtina – A new European capital” has been an inspiring experience but a complex project in itself. Although it had a good basis because of the interaction experiences of Co-Plan Institute and Polis University staff with Kosova institutions and professionals over last 2 decades, it has been never enough to take a position towards the future of a city or a country in itself. However, using well-structured ‘external’ research sometimes works better in an emotional post-war context like Prishtina where memories related to war of the past are still fresh and often blocking the decision-making processes related to future city development. Adding here also the exploding urbanization and a vivid - almost informal- market economy, makes it here even more difficult to correctly read the city in a short time. However, cooperation with local professionals and a strict methodological approach based on the experiences coming from POLIS/ UNIFE and Co-PLAN, made possible for our students, staff and PhD researchers to further elaborate their ideas and concepts over three main lines: i) the intensive visits and field-work in Kosova and Prishtina; ii) specialized studios and workshops in

Tirana and Ferrara; iii) and independent individual research. Such volume of work coordinated over more than one year by our academic team concludes successfully with a tangible product such as this publication that helpfully might be useful to Kosovar authorities, people, academics, researchers and professionals there.

Initially Loris Rossi and Laura Pedata (Italy) try to introduce the logic of ‘multi-scale reading’ in favor of the resilience of certain city, meaning its own capacity to absorb and digest positively different kind of shocks that can come from many diverse perspectives or a combination of factors, such as: economic, social, political, religious, natural, demographic, environmental, financial, etc. They emphasize the need to “rediscover the image of the city”. But this does not mean repeating old researches developed between 60s-90s, rather than reconsider it as additional pieces of mosaic investigating in a city of new generation, and by reinterpreting it to the present day conditions. So instead of a classical approach plan for Prishtina, we (POLIS/UNIFE) introduce by this publication an acupunctural program for Prishtina. with e set of alternative actions and conceptual

projects to be developed further on by authorities. Therefore the book has five chapters: i) exposing the reasons for such research; ii) undertaking interdisciplinary exchanges; iii) exploring the process of city reading via infrastructure, unused spaces, cultural parches and environment thanks also to the specialized individual research and articles; iv) elaborating ideas form Prishtina City Lab (@ Polis); v) conclusions and new trajectories for future research activities.

After that Arber Sadiki makes certain reflections on the socio-political aspects of Prishtina' architecture during 1945-1990. Author aims to highlight the political impact over the architectural developments of Prishtina during the centralized economy. Such a timeframe is based on important social events that were directly manifested in the capital city development. Lower borderline relates to the end of World War II, out of which Prishtina emerged underdeveloped and maily inheriting oriental features. Upper borderline coincides with revocation of autonomy of Kosova (28 March 1989) and commencement of a dark period for Kosova . Within such timespan, local society has been subject to significant political and social changes and constitutional amendments. First, amendments of 1963 and 1974 changed positively the position of the then 'Socialist Autonomous Province of Kosova', within the former 'Yugoslav Federation'. Immediate influence of both amendments are easily readable, especially the architecture of main public buildings which still dominate the architectural identity of Prishtina.

Ilir Gjinolli (Kosova) elaborates the origin of the city, especially during Ottoman period, and sees it in relation with the modern and contemporary phases of development. A short overview of the ottoman city is presented, including the context in which transformation began at the beginning of the 20th century. The research gives insights to different architectural

development phenomena of Prishtina - such as decadent transformation and damaging of the historic city core, because of the development of the new city areas, planned with the spirit of modernism, via mass production principles and standardized housing architecture of the former Yugoslavia. Analyzing throughout such federal developments, regional variations of modernism are traced in Kosova as well, thanks to the influence on Prishtina' school of architecture. A combined research methodology/strategy - involving interpretative historical research - has been applied. Basic argument and conclusions of the paper are drawn thanks to the literature and archived documents as well as fieldwork and projects of common context. The main conclusion is that development in Prishtina architecture and city planning has been comparable to what one could see also in other modernist/progressive capitals of time like Skopje, Sarajevo, Podgorica, etc, although Prishtina in the political/administrative aspects was classified lower.

Antonello Stella (Italy) elaborates theoretically the meaning of contemporary city starting from the case of Prishtina and its sub-units. He does it by confronting features of global city to the local subunits of the local capital. Stella refers to Aldo Rossi (Italy 1966) and Rem Koolhaas theories (Holland, 1978). The theory of urban transformations (in the first case), or the theory of the lack of city planning which can draw not only weak points but also strengths for the city image building (in the second case), seems to be logical also in the case of Prishtina. He concludes by underlining that the city of Prishtina - as a new/national capital - faces the need for a total rethinking of the urban structure in relation to the pressing demographic growth and its historical moment of independence and international recognition. This means Prishtina as

capital might necessarily start its own reformatting from the assumption that any reflection on the rethinking of individual urban fragments will have to rely on a more general post-modern critical reflection on the strengths and weaknesses of the current state, rather than from the perspective of a classical planning exercise of modernity era.

Dorina Papa (Albania) discusses the envisioning of Prishtina by considering the methodology of an image shaped by the spatial experience. The idea of visual unity in an urban scenery made of heterogeneous objects has been developed since the 70s by Gordon Cullen (1971), in terms of sequential narration of space perceived by a pedestrian. Following the landscape traditional artistic approach in city design, Cullen pointed out a series of physical and visual elements characterizing the aesthetics quality of the urban scene addressing human-oriented sensitive aspects related to their aesthetics satisfaction. This means for Prishtina that a new urban landscape vision must exceed the existing concept of visually pleasing static frame through which the city has been perceived so far, by considering human perception as a dynamic experience, in movement, which leads to a serial vision or space sequences. In this sense, Prishtina might highlight a picturesque approach in urban design based on an articulated and interconnected system of spaces and elements that contribute in the definition of the urban environment such as buildings, trees, roads, water, urban furniture, etc.

Both Domenico Pastore and Francesca Sisci (Italy) elaborate the fact that city is built over time based on the stratification of events and transformations, which define its distinctive aspect. Prishtina as well in each of such events has its own monumental buildings that become a symbol of the city able to give them

a meaningful image that remains in time. Urban theories between the 60s and 90-s (Lynch, Superstudio, Rossi, Koolhaas) identified in the large-scale architectural complexes the potential of the main elements for the (re-)construction of the city image. Therefore authors suggests for Prishtina as a new capital, the use of some of these theories. They illustrate it with the case study of the city of Florence, where such methodologies helps to bring forward different interpretations of the urban image. For all these authors, the value taken by significant buildings in (re-) creating the image of the city can be thus summarized as: i) Landmark for Lynch: apparent image of the city; ii) Monument for Rossi: essential image of the city; iii) Megastructure for Superstudio: transcendent image of the city; iv) Bigness for Koolhaas: Immanent image of the city. Prishtina might also benefit out of such logical evolution.

Llazar Kumaraku (Albania) focuses on the case of Ulpjana as a historic potential for the new capital Prishtina. The article is based on the academic studios of urban planning conducted at Polis University Tirana, aiming the historical analysis of the ancient Prishtina settlement known as "Ulpiana". It underlines the influence can have such historic settlements for the city of Prishtina. In the same time, it opens a possible window on the future development of Prishtina, which might be based exactly on such heritage as stimulus for resilient developments in the periphery. In other words, the article emphasizes the potential of Prishtina becoming a new European capital, not so much in the content of the existing city in itself, rather than based on its "periphery" made up by elements of historical/archaeological values in the surroundings of the city. These "satellite cities" can be the devices that can increase the touristic economy and can, also, make the inhabitants

aware for an operational schedule of architectural and urban elements. Starting from this case, further studies can be deepened on all other historical and territorial elements that surround Prishtina in order to highlight the historical and cultural potential of the entire region.

Peter Nientied (Holland) and Besnik Aliaj (Albania) elaborate together the nowadays struggle of the broad public in the capitals of Balkans (Prishtina, Tirana, Skopje, Podgorica) in search for a new identity and new symbolism in urban spaces. They study the central squares of 4 Balkan capitals (including Prishtina) from a design and anthropological perspective with useful conclusion for Kosova capital as well. There is a desperate local need for integration to EU and global economy that must go in line with a new image where design and planning has a special role.

All these theoretical contribution are than elaborated in a specially designed international workshop with PhD researchers and staff of POLIS University, Tirana Albania; and UNIFE, University of Ferrara, Italy; under the name: Prishtina New European Capital - Images of a city to be discovered!

Than the "Prishtina New European Capital" Project is organized in 4 working groups/themes:

Besjana Qaja, Ilda Rusi, Laura Abbruzzese – worked on "Infrastructure" theme.

Aguljeln Marku, Keti Hoxha, Sara Pouryousefzadeh – worked on "Unused Spaces" theme.

Amanda Terpo, Ermal Hoxha, Silvia Imbesi – worked on "Cultural Parches" theme.

Fiona Imami, Malvina Istrefaj, Sim Kai Li, Vittoria Mencarini – worked on

"Environment and Pollution" theme. Students of Polis University, 3rd year Architecture and City Planning programs – worked on concrete "action plans" and "details projects", as well.

Each of them elaborates individually a specific strategies and recommendations for Prishtina as a new European capital:

Aguljeln Marku (Albania) elaborates the importance of improving energy efficiency, by intervening in public service areas to save energy and reduce gas emissions.

Amanda Terpo and Besjana Qaja (Albania) elaborates a path to change and transform the city via infrastructure, both at local and national/Balkan level.

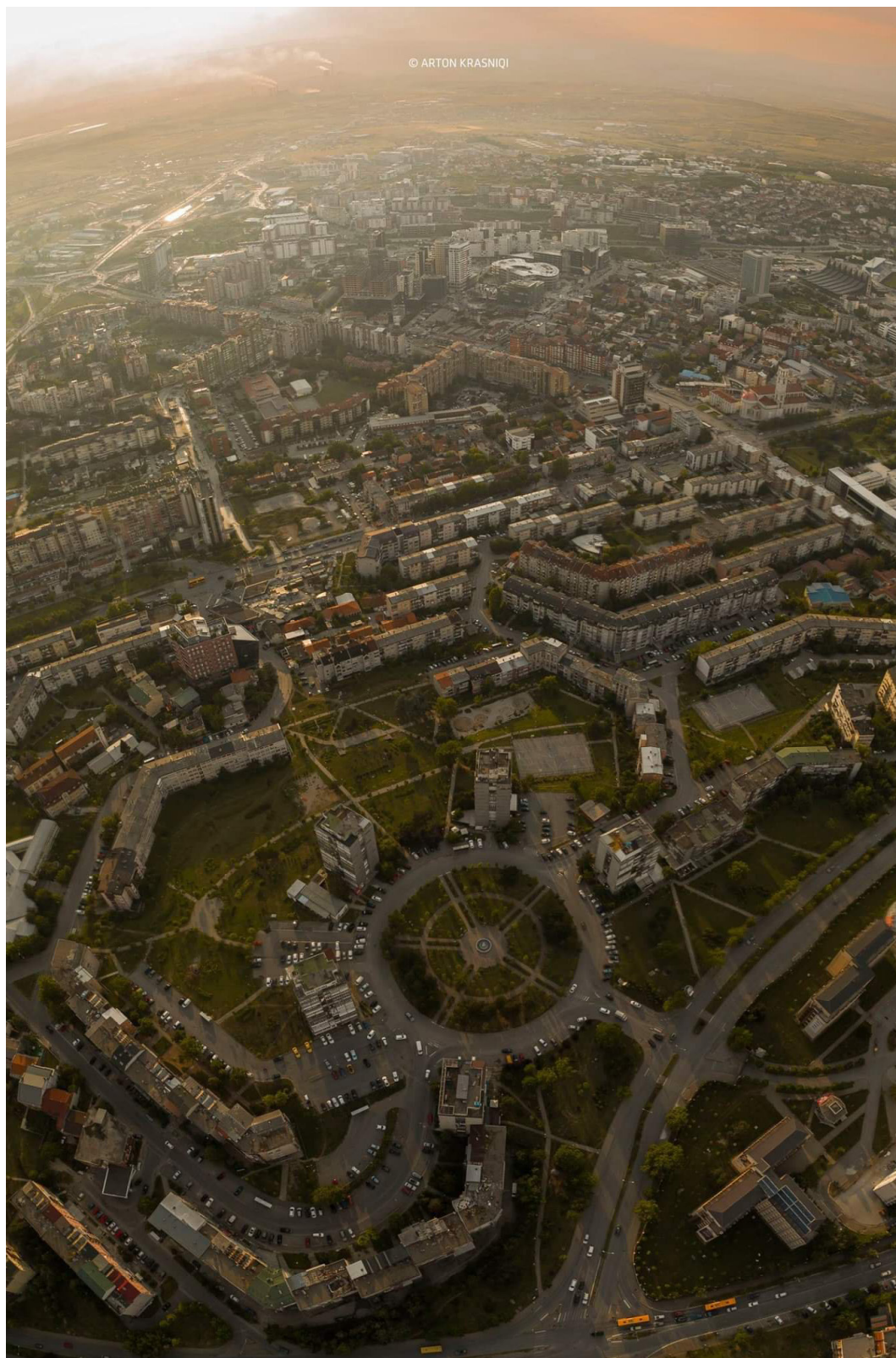
Ermal Hoxha (Albania) elaborates Prishtina cultural patches by using the example of Ulpjana urban/architectural complex through interrelated cultural interventions.

Fiona Imami (Albania) elaborates on survival and sustainability, via local/municipal finances for Prishtina as a next generation European capital

Ilda Rusi (Albania) elaborates on the building typologies of Prishtina's neighborhoods, by focusing on the visual assessment of their structural/aesthetic configuration as tools for distinct urban image.

Keti Hoxha elaborates functional shifts in public buildings, by using the example of the central sport and recreational center "Adem Jashari" (formerly known as "Boro and Ramiz" center).

Laura Abbruzzese (Italy) elaborates on renewing circulation in Prishtina by promoting it as a multimodal transportation hub to return services and facilities to people.



Source / Arton Krasniqi
<https://www.skyscrapercity.com/showthread.php?p=161077226>

Malvina Kolic (Albania) elaborates the paradigm of green infrastructure for Prishtina, via other best practices, and by identifying key components to approach such strategy

Sara Pouryousefzadeh (Iran) elaborates on the theme of biophilic design in the context of local natural landscape

proposing restoration according IUCN categories for urban protected areas.

Silvia Imbesi (Italy) elaborates on 'user centered' design methodologies as an instrument for social improvement in Prishtina.

Sim Kai Li (Singapore) explores

strategies connecting a city by confronting Prishtina's context with the case study of Singapore.

Vittoria Mencarini (Italy) elaborates the ideas of landscape ecological urbanism, as an effective strategy for a resilient future of Prishtina.

Loris Rossi (Italy) and Dorina Papa (Albania) and their architecture/planning studio students at Polis University Tirana, discuss on urban exceptions looking into the possibility for regenerating public space in Prishtina by interrupting existing consolidated urban logics.

Asdren Sela (Kosova) talks on the ripple effect as an official design instrument of image building in favor of the local sovereignty, in the case of the (re-) development of new state properties and headquarters.

Liridonaj Blakaj (Kosova) elaborates the case of redeveloping a new market/bazar along the historic center of Prishtina.