

2021

Symposium Report:

THE FUTURE OF TERRITORIAL PLANNING IN KOSOVO



Ministry of Environment, Spatial Planning and Infrastructure
in partnership with UN-Habitat Kosovo



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INTRODUCTION

Living under the enforced restrictions as a result of the measures taken against the COVID-19 pandemic, has pushed Kosovo to address its current spatial planning problems in a planetary scale, prioritizing more sustainable approaches and rethinking territories beyond the traditional administrative borders. The emerging socio-economic impacts have caused a change of demand on housing, mobility infrastructure, open spaces, healthcare and educational services, which calls for rethinking the overall spatial development framework through an inclusionary process, including policymakers (of both central and local levels), theorists (academia) and practitioners.

While the newly formed Government of Kosovo develops its action roadmap, this is a momentum for addressing the territorial consequences (integrated with the economic, social and environmental ones) of this global phenomenon, and discussing several fundamental issues related to the future of territorial and spatial planning in Kosovo.

In this regard, the [Ministry of Environment, Spatial Planning and Infrastructure \(MESPI\)](#) in partnership with [UN-Habitat Kosovo](#), organized the one-day symposium “[The Future of Territorial Planning in Kosovo](#)” on [June 25th, 2021](#), where a wide-range of existing issues and potential future prospects (vision, approaches, best practices) were actively discussed among the central level institutions, local and international academia and experts, local civil society representatives, as well as international organizations operating in Kosovo.

Besides the symposium organizers, MESPI and UN-Habitat Kosovo, who directly oversee (the Ministry) or support (UN-Habitat Kosovo) spatial planning processes in Kosovo (or specific regions and municipalities), the symposium was also endorsed by the Prime Minister Office, the United Nation Development Coordinator Office, and UN-Habitat Headquarters.

Key issues discussed were grouped under the following three sessions, each consisting of a presentation on the main issue addressed and best practices on the global context, followed by a panel and open discussion towards identifying key challenges and recommendations for solving them.

This report presents the main issues presented and discussed during the symposium, including the existing challenges and potential solutions towards sustainable territorial/spatial development in Kosovo.





Session 1: Institutional restructuring for a more effective and sustainable spatial planning system

How to strengthen national institutional organizations and capacities at different levels to achieve a "purpose-oriented" spatial planning system in Kosovo?

Ms. Shipra Narang Suri Chief, Urban Practices Branch UN-Habitat Headquarters	Liburn Aliu Minister of Environment, Spatial Planning and Infrastructure	Shkelqim Daci Swiss Development Cooperation	Elvira Pallaska UBT - Higher Education Institution	Ilir Gjinolli University of Prishtina	Samir Stagova UN-Habitat Kosovo	



Session 2: Territorial planning approach for a more balanced rural-urban development

What are the innovative solutions that can strengthen rural-urban interlinkages for a more balanced national territorial planning in Kosovo?

Dr. Nazlı Tümerdem ETH Zurich	Sali Shoshi Cultural Heritage without Borders Kosovo	Afrim Lajci Office of Prime Minister/ Swiss Cooperation Office	Hajrulla Ceku Minister of Culture, Youth and Sport	Zena Bunjaku Initiative for Agricultural Development of Kosovo	Zana Sokoli UN-Habitat Kosovo	



Session 3: Integrated spatial planning, land management and housing for sustainable development

How can we make integrated spatial planning, effective land management and large-scale housing provision part of our overall mentality and routine?

Dr. Jennifer Duyn Barenstein ETH Zurich Wohnforum	Rozafa Basha University of Prishtina	Besvika Kocani UN-Habitat Kosovo	Driton Tafallari Ministry of Environment, Spatial Planning and Infrastructure	Urqan Alija UBT - Higher Education Institution	Nita Liri University of Prishtina	

COMMITMENTS

The Prime Minister, Mr. Albin Kurti, opened the Symposium by acknowledging the importance of cities and calling for supporting their inclusive, accessible and equitable development, by putting people at their center and providing sustainable linkages with the built and natural environments. Considering the global threats such as climate change and the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as the need for joint action towards green development and protecting the planet, it is now the time to open a deeper and academic discourse on the territory, its planning and materialization, as well as the engagement of professionals of various fields, civil society and citizens in a more comprehensive planning process.



“Crises such as pandemics, natural disasters, economic crises, historic events, and other processes have historically been moments that have developed and shaped cities and our living environments. [...] Now, as we are living in the Anthropocene period, in times of challenges such as climate change and depletion of resources, the way we react back should be by aiming towards sustainable development, by joining activist movements to save the natural resources.”

Albin Kurti



"Being in a crossroad, it is important to use the momentum that has been created and have wide discussions on where we are in comparison with our targets and how we are organizing the future of spatial planning in Kosovo. Professional and academic discussions (like this symposium) should always follow planning processes in Kosovo; they should precede and ensure that the right political decisions are being made."

Liburn Aliu

The Minister of Environment, Spatial Planning and Infrastructure, Mr. Liburn Aliu, presented the current spatial planning institutional framework in Kosovo, the role of central institutions (such as the Spatial Planning Division within the Ministry and the Institute for Spatial Planning) in driving spatial development, and ongoing challenges in implementing the spatial plans on the ground (including lack of accurate data, insufficient institutional capacities, as well as complex procedures hindering implementation processes, such as legalization and housing). Taking decisions to tackle these issues is inevitable, and such decisions should be innovative, proactive, and a result of wide discussions. By acknowledging the central role of spatial planning towards the overall national development, the Minister committed to immediate institutional engagement on building a more effective and spatial planning system in Kosovo, thus, opening the discussion for envisioning the future territorial planning.

The United Nations Development Coordinator, Ms. Ulrika Richardson, defined spatial planning as a mediation tool for allocating space, building shared values and supporting transformative change; hence the most strategic tool to achieve sustainability. Space is a question of power (who gets to use it and how), therefore, spatial planning processes should be inclusive, aiming to achieve sustainable, cohesive and healthy communities, making sure that no one is left behind (especially women and youth). UN Kosovo Team supports Kosovo's ambitions and aspirations through inter-agency coordination and joint efforts towards sustainable development, with UN-Habitat Kosovo being the focal point for spatial and territorial planning, urban development and human settlements supporting a more holistic, sustainable and balanced development for Kosovo's people and environment.



“As family of 15 UN-agencies, we have a common cooperation framework developed with our different partners: international, national and local institutions, and will do our best to accompany Kosovo toward this journey towards a more holistic approach on spatial planning and use that as a vehicle towards reaching social justice and achieving a better balance between humans (individual) and environment.”

Ulrika Richardson



"Cities and regions in Western Balkans share common histories and similar spatial patterns, struggling with imbalanced spatial developments, shrinking economies and stagnation of small and medium settlements. They have to come with innovative solutions for well-planned and well-managed settlements, built on participatory processes."

Omar Siddique

The Head of Office and Chief Technical Advisor of UN-Habitat, Mr. Omar Siddique, delivered several messages highlighting the importance of territorial/spatial perspective for the overall sustainable development, considering it as a means for rational organization of space and resource consumption, for prioritizing the right type of national investments (in infrastructure and public services), and for generating economic wealth. UN-Habitat Office in Kosovo has long history of cooperating with institutions in Kosovo in supporting spatial planning processes, most recently through the Inclusive Development Programme focused on the Mitrovica region. Through the Programme, seven local municipalities are supported in developing their spatial planning documents (MDPs, MZMs), sectoral plans (SUMP), neighborhood-based plans, and capital investment projects through participatory processes, aiming to make human settlements more inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable (according to SDG11 and NUA). UN-Habitat's availability to support Kosovo's institutions with knowledge, awareness-raising, coordination (among different stakeholders and global agendas) and reporting (conform global sustainability indicators) towards integrated approaches and spatial policy coherence was also emphasized by Dr. Shipra Narang Suri, the Chief of Urban Practices Branch, UN-Habitat Headquarters.



PRESENTATIONS and DISCUSSIONS

SESSION 1

INSTITUTIONAL RESTRUCTURING FOR A MORE EFFECTIVE AND SUSTAINABLE SPATIAL PLANNING SYSTEM

The role of national governments towards sustainable spatial planning

Dr. Shipra Narang Suri, UN-Habitat

Territorial planning is a political process, a process of reconciliation, prioritization, and decision-making towards reaching the economic, social and environmental goals and achieving systemic changes. A spatial planning system may be defined as the institutional framework of a specific country, allowing for/regulating the multiple and complex processes of vertical (between policy levels) and horizontal (between policy sectors and between public and private subjects) interactions addressing the spatial organization of social life. As such, it should be an integrative and participatory decision-making process, which easily adapts to ongoing/dynamic relationship changes.

Spatial sustainability relates to the long-term ability of cities and settlements to successfully plan for their increased urbanization, while sustaining economic growth, maintaining sustainable environments and enhancing social development. Governments can achieve spatial sustainability by guiding the physical form and functions of cities and regions in order to create equitable access to jobs, housing and social interactions, to enable agglomeration economies, and to encourage sustainable relationships to ecosystems and natural habitats.

The territorial aspect towards sustainable development is also acknowledged in the 2030 Agenda, the Paris Agreement on climate action, the Sendai Framework for disaster risk reduction and resilience building, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda for financing sustainable development, and the New Urban Agenda (NUA) on achieving sustainable, well-planned and well-managed urbanization. Sustainable, inclusive, safe and resilient cities and human settlements (SDG11) can be achieved by promoting positive links between urban-rural areas, integrated policies and planning for resource efficiency, climate change and disaster resilience, developed through participatory processes aiming for social inclusion and poverty reduction (NUA). Deriving outcomes contribute to ending poverty (SDG1), improving health and well-being (SDG3), gender equality (SDG5), access to drinking water (SDG6), resilient and resilient infrastructure (SDG9), reduced inequalities (SDG10), responsible consumption and production (SDG12), and inclusive society and institutions at all levels (SDG16).



CASE STUDIES

- Croatia's spatial planning is organized in the national, regional and local levels, which are responsible for developing the respective levels spatial plans (such as National Spatial Development Plan, Country Spatial Plans, City and Municipal Spatial Plans etc.), aiming to address demographic challenges related to migration, socio-economic challenges and spatial imbalances.
- Poland uses four levels of planning (national, regional, county and local levels) which base future developments on national spatial development concepts, supported by regional, metropolitan and municipal zoning plans, which should be guided by the principles of spatial order and sustainable development, harmonizing all functional, social, economic, environmental, cultural, compositional and aesthetic considerations.
- The Netherlands has traditionally implemented comprehensive national spatial policies, however in 2006 the country decided to end traditional regional policies (which brought regional disparities) and place emphasis on supporting regions that contribute to national economic development, enhancing its competitiveness and promoting innovation. National, provincial, and basic municipal government plans were all replaced by structural visions, containing strategic policies and their mode of implementation through zoning scheme within the respective government level.
- Mexico regulates its spatial development on the national, state and local levels, through urban development and territorial order programs in parallel with ecological planning.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Formulate a national policy framework promoting sustainable urbanization patterns (including adequate standard of living and economic growth),
- Develop an enabling, enforceable, transparent legal and institutional framework (enhancing territorial and economic planning, spatial coherence, balanced regional development, regulation of land and property markets, protection of the built and natural environment etc.):

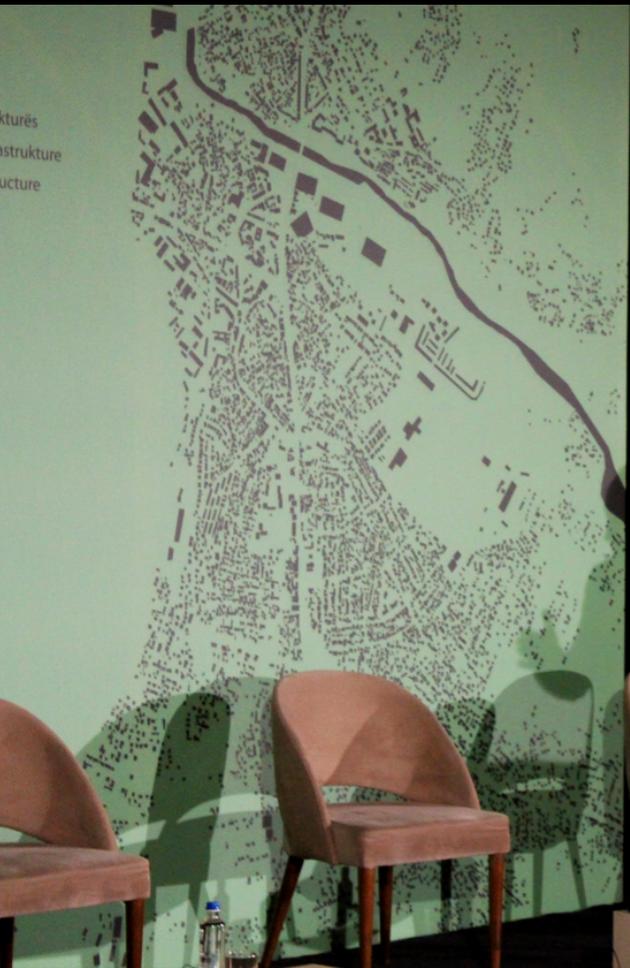


- Laws should be needs-based, context appropriate, based on adequate financial and human resource assessment for their implementation,
- Legal frameworks should have clear institutional and governmental set-ups (including horizontal and vertical coordination) to eliminate gaps, overlaps, confusion, lack of transparency, poor accountability and non-compliance,
- Compliance processes should be simple, expeditious and affordable (not complex and discouraging).
- Define, implement and continuously monitor decentralization and subsidiarity policies (ensuring coherence between the sectoral and spatial levels),
- Strengthen the role, responsibilities, planning and implementation capacities and resources of local authorities,
- Promote inter-municipal cooperation and multilevel governance systems and support,
- Collaborate with associations, networks of professional planners, research institutes, civil society, private sector (partnerships, coordination, consensus-building).

KEY DOCUMENTS

- UN-Habitat. 2015. International Guidelines on Urban and Territorial Planning.
- UN-Habitat. 2020. The New Urban Agenda Illustrated





With growing institutional capacity gaps combined with inconsistencies in various legal frameworks, current planning of municipal territories, especially urban areas, is occurring in the absence of an updated National Spatial Plan and a still unfinished Zoning Map of Kosovo. The Institute of Spatial Planning has developed 47 spatial planning indicators to be used when drafting MDPs; however, accessible and empirical data that would pave the way for realistic spatial plans is still insufficient (further being hampered by the slowness of the legalization process). These are just some of the gaps that need special policy attention at the national level to take immediate institutional measures that are necessary to build a more effective and sustainable spatial planning system in Kosovo.

The first panel included Liburn Aliu (MESPI), Shkëlqim Daci (SDC), Elvida Pallaska (UBT), Ilir Gjinolli (UP) and Sami Stagova (UN-Habitat), whose opinions were further challenged, enriched or supported by the discussants, including Luan Nushi (ISP), Eliza Hoxha (MP), Shqiprim Ahmeti (UBT), Lulzim Aliu (DUE, Municipality of Ferizaj), Tomor Qela (UBT), Flutra Zymi (Qytetarët Aktiv).

The panel discussion started with the overview of the development of spatial planning process and legislation in Kosovo, role of spatial planning central institutions, continuing with the identification of legal challenges and inconsistencies, measures that should be taken to support sustainable spatial planning and development, as well as the inclusion of academia and other partners towards fact-based and inclusive spatial planning.



KEY CHALLENGES IDENTIFIED:

- Overall lack of political will to properly deal with spatial planning, except the former Minister Mr. Hetem Çeku and the current Minister Mr. Liburn Aliu, who as an architect himself bring hope to spatial planning in Kosovo (Mr. Gjinolli),
- Unclear new legal framework, which has installed the logic “of doing business” (Mr. Aliu, Ms. Hoxha), has introduced a new land regulation tool “zoning”, transposed from the American planning system without proper contextualization (Mr. Daci, Mr. Gjinolli), and has removed planning at the city level (within defined urban borders) (Ms. Pallaska),
- Lack of implementation of spatial plans on the ground, either developed based on the previous or the new Law on Spatial Planning (Mr. Stagova),
- Unclear division of roles and responsibilities within spatial planning institutions (at the central level, such as DSP and ISP) (Mr. Aliu), with ISP being initially established for engaging the academia
- Insufficient institutional capacities, reflected in staff-overload and poor quality check and implementation monitoring of plans (Mr. Daci, Mr. Gjinolli),
- Rapid pace of planning at the local level which follows a national strategy (Spatial Plan of Kosovo) that is outdated and may not represent the current reality (Mr. Aliu),
- Poor quality of spatial plans (lacking adequate data, population needs, proper estimates and analysis) (Mr. Aliu), hence driving overbuilding and uncontrolled urbanization (Mr. Daci), agricultural land loss and closed neighborhoods (Ms. Pallaska).



KEY RECOMMENDATIONS PROVIDED:

- Depoliticize spatial planning processes (aiming for longer-term development) (Mr. Aliu, Ms. Hoxha),
- Conduct a feasibility study on the need for changing the Law on Spatial Planning and make evolutive (step by step) changes as needed, starting with Administrative Instructions and Technical Norms (Mr. Stagova),
- Decentralize decision-making in spatial planning processes (Mr. Gjinolli),
- Empower municipalities in developing their spatial plans in-house (Mr. Nushi), as multi-sectoral, strategic and inclusive plans that are easy to understand and implement (Mr. Aliu/M. Ferizaj)
- Increase central-local cooperation during spatial planning processes (information exchange, spatial data) (Mr. Gjinolli, Mr. Nushi, Mr. Qela),
- Develop institutional capacities by increasing their (e.g. ISP's) research capacities (Mr. Qela) and supporting development of national academic programs in strategic planning (Mr. Gjinolli),
- Functionalize spatial planning database at the central and local level (Mr. Stagova, Mr. Nushi),
- Build a monitoring system for implementation of plans on the ground (Mr. Gjinolli, Mr. Daci) and synchronizing planning activities at all levels (Mr. Ahmeti),
- Plan according to population growth trends and estimates, housing/development needs, human and environmental health, following the New Urban Agenda and the European Union Urban Agenda (Ms. Pallaska),
- Plan through inclusive and participatory processes, cooperating with experienced professionals, academia and promising students in the field, businesses, civil society and international organizations (Mr. Aliu, Mr. Gjinolli, Mr. Stagova, Ms. Hoxha, Mr. Ahmeti, Ms. Zymi).

“Law enforcement is necessary because it is about the health and well-being of citizens.”

Afrim Lajçi

SESSION 2

TERRITORIAL PLANNING APPROACH FOR A MORE BALANCED RURAL-URBAN DEVELOPMENT

Expeditions to the near (Northern Istanbul)

Dr. Nazli Tümerdem, ETH Zurich

Compared to the highly populated and industrialized southern part of Istanbul, the northern part is sparsely populated and is dominated by forests, water reserves, agricultural lands, farms, military zones and quarries. However, mega-scaled and state-led neoliberal operations have put the area under a transformative process, causing economic and ecological adverse impacts. These megaprojects have been developed through ad-hoc processes for the purpose of state's discourse materialization, sometimes not following the city's masterplan, and disregarding public benefits and expert opinions. Istanbul Walkabouts is a performative, projective and participatory research project, which uses walking as a critical methodology for exploring, recording, representing and resisting transformative landscapes of northern Istanbul. Through 235km walks, this project aims to explore and understand these territories and to increase awareness and transparency on the consequences of unplanned top-down approaches; thus, building a platform for discussion and discourse, which critiques current unsustainable operations and informs future urbanization policies through bottom-up approaches.



MAIN TAKEAWAYS

- Thinking beyond the binary (anthropo- and city-centric) concepts like city-country, urban-rural, center-hinterland, inside-outside,
- Absence of coherent urban theory, dubiousness and unreliability of law, and neoliberal operations can lead to ecological catastrophes (such as Istanbul Canal).



KEY DOCUMENTS

- Tümerdem. 2018. Istanbul Walkabouts: A critical walking research of Northern Istanbul
- 1/100.000 Istanbul Metropolitan Plan (revised in 2009)





Given the current movement of active citizens to protect Kosovo's cultural heritage, ecosystems and natural resources, it is essential today – in addition to institutional restructuring – to discuss planning approaches that pay particular attention to urban-rural interconnections. Urban-rural relationships are nonlinear – diverse urban-rural interactions and connections throughout space within an urban-rural continuum – including the flow of people, goods, capital and information, but also between sectors and activities such as agriculture, services and production. The discourse on urbanization in Kosovo must leave behind the traditional and outdated dichotomy between urban and rural; in order to be sustainable, they must be developed together, inequalities must be reduced and the development gap bridged. Urban and rural spaces are closely related to each other in terms of spatial, economic, social and environmental and cannot be adequately treated if they are isolated from each other.

The second panel included Sali Shoshi (CHWB), Afrim Lajçi, Klodeta Krasniqi (MCYS), Zenel Bunjaku (IADK) and Zana Sokoli (UN-Habitat), supported by Gylar Mydyti (ETH), Enisa Serhati (UNDP), Gramen Taraku (Freelancer) as discussants.

Main issues discussed spanned across the role of rural areas, cultural heritage, tourism and mobility in balanced territorial and economic development, protection of natural resources, improvement of agricultural practices, food sufficiency and environmental education towards sustainable development.



KEY CHALLENGES IDENTIFIED:

- Rural areas, previously seen as sites for interaction with nature for spiritual, traditional, food and artisanal reasons, today have lost their significance due to the loss of livelihoods and population migration to urban areas (Mr. Shoshi, Ms. Sokoli),
- Around 60% of Kosovo's architectural and archaeological heritage (out of the total of 990 architectural monuments and around 400 archaeological sites) is located in rural areas, without much information about their existence (Mr. Shoshi),
- There is lack of a clear overview of the system of heritage values in Kosovo (Ms. Krasniqi),
- Limited water resources (around 2000 m³/capita, 4 billion reserves/year), lowest in the region, which are expected to further decrease due to climate change; yet unmanaged properly, resulting with damaged riverbeds and water pollution (Mr. Lajçi),
- Agriculture contributes to around 10% of the GDP (Mr. Bunjaku), however it is also a highly polluting sector,
- Sustainable Urban Mobility Plans are a relatively new concept in Kosovo, not required by law but developed by municipalities on their own initiatives (Ms. Sokoli),
- Outdated and unreliable statistics, e.g. the share of urban vs. rural population (Ms. Mydyti).

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS PROVIDED:

- Enhance inter-institutional collaboration (across MESPI, MCYS and MAFRD) as well as with civil society to support cultural heritage protection (inclusion in spatial plans), respective infrastructural developments (environmental performance, and development of rural areas (Mr. Shoshi, Ms. Krasniqi),
- Link cultural heritage to collective memory, culture, youth and tourism (Ms. Krasniqi),
- Explore the potential for further touristic development of the rural clusters (villages or regions with similar characteristics) identified across Kosovo by CHwB, such as the mining and metal processing (Artana, Janjeva, Mitrovica), wine production (spanning from Suhareka to Gjakova), cultivation of fruits (Istog), and dough products (bread) and ethno-culture (Has) clusters (Mr. Shoshi),
- Treat urban and industrial wastewater by providing water treatment facilities across the seven biggest urban areas (and beyond) by 2025 (Mr. Lajçi),
- Protect water resources (from pollution and degradation), define designated areas for accumulating lakes and flood-protection measures in spatial plans (Mr. Lajçi),
- Include rural communities in spatial planning processes (Mr. Bunjaku),
- Expand zoning rules, allowing for mixed rural and touristic development where there is potential (Mr. Bunjaku),
- Provide adequate infrastructure and services to rural settlements to reduce rural-urban migration and support overall development (Mr. Bunjaku),
- Ensure sustainable mobility systems, providing public urban transport (as in Prishtina), biking and walking lanes, adequate parking and public spaces through the development of SUMP (as the cases of Mitrovica South and Mitrovica North) (Ms. Sokoli),
- Support inter-generational planning processes envisioning the future we want (Ms. Sokoli),
- Strengthen the role of universities in leading the scientific and philosophical discourse on territory and space, urban and rural concepts (Ms. Mydyti),
- Empower communities (either urban or rural) in self-organization, knowledge-sharing, and decision-making, without waiting just from the institutions (Ms. Mydyti),
- Support local climate action through GHG inventory and green development strategies (such as the Urban NAMAs pilot-project implemented by UNDP in Prizren) (Ms. Serhati),
- Finalize the spatial plan for the National Park 'Bjeshkët e Nemuna' (Mr. Tarku).

SESSION 3

INTEGRATED SPATIAL PLANNING, LAND MANAGEMENT AND HOUSING FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

The role of territorial planning for sustainable and inclusive housing and cities for all

Dr. Jennifer Duayne Barenstein, ETH Zurich Wohnforum

Adequate housing is defined by seven criteria: legal security of tenure, availability of service, affordability, habitability, accessibility, location and cultural adequacy. With no basic infrastructure of services, such as water, sanitation, energy, transport etc., no type of housing can be considered adequate. Lack of infrastructure has economic, environmental, health and livability implications. Worldwide, millions of people lack access to these services and are deprived of adequate housing due to disconnected territorial planning; thus, increasing social inequalities and exclusion.

Kosovo as well suffers with territorial issues such as urban sprawl, which has contributed to loss of agricultural land, ecosystem degradation, extension of infrastructure, and socio-economic impacts. Social housing complexes are segregated and built in the urban periphery.



CASE STUDY

- Housing issues in the city of Zurich are addressed through public-private partnerships, in which cases the city leases public land to housing cooperatives (for up to 60-70 years) to build high quality housing within the city center (accompanied with adequate services, public spaces, and other criteria supporting adequate and sustainable livability).
- Cooperative housing is not social housing as it does not segregate people. Such an approach supports city densification, efficient land management, reduced traffic congestion, and efficient infrastructural planning.
- The city of Zurich has committed to increase the share of city dwellers living in non-profit housing to 1/3 by 2050.



RECOMMENDATIONS

- Integrate territorial planning with housing developments (linking it with infrastructure and service provision),
- Invest in transport infrastructure and services (to reduce urban dwellers spending on mobility, increase their wellbeing and protect the environment),
- Integrate social housing dwellers within the same housing area built for other citizens (to avoid spatial marginalization of those with lower incomes).

KEY DOCUMENTS

- UN-Habitat. 2009. The right to adequate housing.





Balanced territorial development in Kosovo means having 'political' will and institutional capacity, using adequate planning tools and striving to have compactly developed spaces and mixed-use areas that have adequate infrastructure and mobility, are easily accessible to all social groups of the society, offer resilient and affordable housing/housing with sustainable services and adequate living opportunities. In this regard, integrated land planning and management are essential tools that can help public authorities identify and avoid vulnerable areas, secure property rights, register property, and facilitate an efficient land market. More specifically, these tools can be seen as a basis for undertaking development incentives in support of creating social and affordable housing in unregulated markets (such as Kosovo), but also to ensure sustainable, resilient, social and economic growth.

Panelists for this session were Mimoza Sylejmani (UBT), Besnike Koçani (UN-Habitat), Driton Tafallari (MESPI), Urgan Alija (UBT), Nita Luci (UP), whereas discussants Banush Shyqyriu (UBT), Merita Dalipi (MESPI), Visar Perani (IFC).

Topics discussed throughout the session addressed the lack of accurate data and proper housing profiles, lack of public land, possible planning and design tools that could be used for a better understanding of the society's needs on basic services and housing, possible innovative financial instruments, and potential for improving the citizens' wellbeing through integrated spatial planning.

KEY CHALLENGES IDENTIFIED:

- Insufficient spatial planning capacities within central and local institutions (for drafting strategic documents, collecting and analyzing data) (Mr. Agaj), with ISP having only 13 people (with two of them working in the northern part of Kosovo),
- There are difficulties with working with different partners across institutions (Ms. Koçani),
- Lack of data and information (including qualitative data from the ground, proper demographic measurements and forecasts) especially on housing (Mr. Tafallari, Ms. Koçani),
- Lack of clear definition (within the existing laws/regulations) on social, affordable and adequate housing,
- Around 60% of housing related data is collected manually (on paper or Excel), according to UN-Habitat's rapid housing needs assessment in Kosovo municipalities (Ms. Koçani),
- Lack of clear division of responsibilities regarding housing (lack of housing or social housing sectors within municipalities, hence the Ministry being the main handler of the issue) (Ms. Dalipi),
- Lack of monitoring of implementation of the spatial planning documents on the ground,
- Presence of empty houses/apartments in the market.



KEY RECOMMENDATIONS PROVIDED:

- Build partnerships with the private sector, with clearly defined roles and responsibilities (e.g. public institutions provide the land, while private sector develops it conform the public needs or set aside housing units for the lower-income groups) (Mr. Alija, Ms. Sylejmani, Mr. Perani),
- Position housing sector as a central component in strategic documents of both central and local levels (especially MDPs), with the aim of supporting families with lower socio-economic status that are unable to afford the market price (Mr. Tafallari),
- Address the need for creating new affordable housing, but also improving the quality of existing ones (Ms. Sylejmani),
- Increasing housing availability by developing vacant apartments that are in stock (Mr. Shyqyriu),
- Bring the notion of “integrated planning” into the context of ideological transformation processes (Ms. Luci),
- Redefine the concepts of urban/rural borders, thinking of “integrated planning” as an ideological transformation process (building on the debate on Anthropocene, bringing nature to the city, treating cities as unified areas) (Ms. Luci),
- Harmonize the housing terminology and definition in respective legal framework and other related documents (Ms. Koçani),
- Increase research capacities in Kosovo (by increasing the dedicated funds for research in the field of planning, housing, etc. from the MEST) (Ms. Koçani),
- Utilize younger generation’s skills in technology in creating new platforms and software for improving data collection processes (Ms. Koçani),
- Establish technical working groups (cross-sectorial) for integration and harmonization of different products, activities,/projects (planning, housing, cultural heritage assets, etc.) (Ms. Koçani),
- Further develop the cultural heritage database (spatially marking mountain pathways, cultural heritage and archaeological assets and respective protection zones, agricultural assets, etc.) (Ms. Koçani).

“The famous local urban planner Rexhep Luci once said “To all of those destroying the city, the city will avenge”. Building on that, I now say “To all of those destroying the planet, the planet will avenge”.

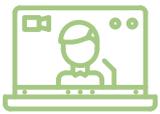
Nita Luci



OUTCOMES and NEXT STEPS



Expand the discussion with local governments, utility providers, practitioners, entrepreneurs, civil society organizations, and local community representatives.



Enhance relations with academia and research institutions, as well as data providers to support science- and fact-based planning:

- Invest in capacity building within spatial planning institutions,
- Invest in research programs,
- Further develop and enrich spatial planning databases.



Conduct a feasibility study on the advantages and disadvantages of the current spatial planning legislation framework:

- Assess current spatial planning documents' implementation on the ground,
- Identify bottlenecks, clearly defining why they cannot be addressed by the current legal framework and what is needed to change them (supported with factual data or proven cases).



Analyze other countries' transition of spatial planning practices, contextualizing advantages and disadvantages into the Kosovo's context.



If proven necessary:

- Initiate the adjustment process of the legal framework considering practical approaches, such as amendments of the respective Administrative Instructions and Technical Norms (as an evolutionary/transformational process, rather than an abrupt one),
- Undertake structural changes within the Ministry to better utilize its role and operations (e.g. redefining the role of Institute for Spatial Planning, potentially as a mediator between the government and academia).



2021

Symposium Report:

THE FUTURE OF TERRITORIAL PLANNING IN KOSOVO



Ministry of Environment, Spatial Planning and Infrastructure
in partnership with UN-Habitat Kosovo