

# Construction of central urban parts in major cities and historical context

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## Abstract

Urban growth is currently the largest force of impact on land use in Europe, where peri-urban areas have reached a four-fold "development" of cities and towns. In these tendencies, integrated urban management can increase the environmental elasticity of European cities, particularly in the east and south.

Although a country with a "modest" population compared to the mega-tendencies analysis undertaken by the European Environment Agency, Albania and Kosovo are part of the trends affecting developing countries. In the last 20 years, the trend has been so clear and in line with European trends as projection looks the same. According to INSTAT data, the population from 2001 to 2015 has shifted from rural dominance to urban dominance with a linear progressive trend. Thus, Albania and Kosovo from a rural country with a 42% urban and 58% rural population have arrived in 15 years in a country with 57% urban population and 43% rural with a stabilization in 2015.

As in the EEA analysis, this movement has been towards big cities (mainly Tirana, Durrës and Vlora) and precisely in peri-urban areas, with an unregulated urban extension and less environmental in the sense of public services.

According to ASIG and CORINE land cover land consolidation in the regions of Tirana, Durrës and Vlora is very high. Particularly in Kamza, a formerly agricultural area with clear priority agricultural production, the concretization has reached the level of 60% versus about 30% of agricultural and about 10% natural.

## Introduction

There is room for a fundamental change, minor in interference, but essential in approach. It is about using the word "development" of property or land. The use of this word is contrary to the integrated development of the territory. With its development, it is regularly used for its concretization, the erection / erection of permanent structures, thus the permanent change of land destination.

Development is progress in definition, but in the Albanian context in any case this word has not brought about development, but the alienation of land in concrete and permanent surface damage. This word itself must be chosen in integrated development or be substantially changed in the entire "land use" system. In the context of society, which pertains to the same subject two different things and has two different behaviors such as "trash" and "remnant", and the use of the word "property development" and "land use" will create two different meanings. Just as the word "breeding" of forests and the "management" of forests have at times understood the maintenance of forests and forests as a resource for supporting the ecosystem for diverse products and the use of different terms in urban planning creates different approaches to the integrated development of the territory.

In terms of climate change, the development of the territory constitutes the most essential aspect of economic protection and preservation of the current natural wealth, which provides the economy of production and income. Climate development means building a lagoon near the sea, or

planting trees on the edge of rivers, which in economic terms can be more profitable than a bunch of buildings near these territories. It is not new to say that it is the moment for internal improvement and the prohibition of further expansion into "virgin".

## 1. Urbanization: A light on the cities

In the 1980s and 1990s, the bosses of the cards as the infamous Pablo Escobar ruled the streets of Medellin and searched the policy. Escobar's power source was not simply the most lucrative international cocaine trade (created by drug demand in the United States) but also the extreme inequality in Medellin and Colombia<sup>1</sup>.



On the slopes of Andes lies the valley that serves as a cradle for the city. But across the valley slopes there were huge barracks, virtually abandoned by the government, which provided continuous supply with cartel recruits. The lack of public services enabled Escobar to win the hearts and minds of the poorest of Medellin with his generosity - even though he kept the city under terror.

Today these neighborhoods have changed completely. In the poor neighborhood of Santo Domingo, the new metropolitan city system, consisting of three airline slopes, serves residents tens of meters up the mountain, ending their isolation from the city center.

Getting to the mall now only takes a few minutes, and social and economic barriers between informal settlements and the rest of the city are breaking.

Problems in the city's poor neighborhoods have not been eliminated, but the benefits of infrastructure improvements are remarkably noticeable in well-maintained homes, murals and soccer fields located near gondola stations.

The cable car wagons are just the most visible part of the projects for which Medel won the Harvard University Prize Veronica Rudge's Green Prize in Urban Design, the most famous prize in the field.

Starting with the direction of Sergio Fajardo (now Medellin's governor, Antikuoia), who took office in 2004,

<sup>1</sup> Van den Berg, Leo. Braun, Erik. (1999): Urban Competitiveness, Marketing and the Need for Organizing Capacity. Urban Studies, Vol. 36, pg. 141

the city has made great efforts to transform barricades, improve education and promote development. (The current mayor, Anibal Gaviria, has confirmed his commitment to follow the path of his predecessor.)

Medellin raised public avant-garde buildings in areas that were the most forgotten, painted homes for the citizens living in the slums, and cleaned or upgraded the streets - all with the confidence that if they treat people with dignity, they will appreciate the surrounding area and will take pride in their communities. And this belief is born and more, (is becoming reality).

Across the world, cities are the reference center for major societal debates and this for a good reason. When individuals live in small quarters, they can not escape the problems of society: growing inequality, environmental degradation, and inadequate public investment<sup>2</sup> The forum reminded participants that vibrant cities require planning - a message that contradicts the major trends of most of the world. But without planning and government investment in infrastructure, public transport and parks, and care for potable water and sanitation, cities will not be viable. And the poor are the ones who will suffer the most from the lack of these public goods.

Medellin has some lessons for America as well. Indeed, recent research suggests that inadequate planning has fueled economic segregation in the United States and how poverty traps have been created in cities without public transport, creating shortages of accessible jobs.

The conference went further, pointing out that "vibrant cities" are not enough. We need to create urban areas in which individuals can flourish and create innovations. It is no accident that Enlightenment - which brought the fastest and wider growth to living standards in human history - was born around the cities. New thinking is a natural consequence of high population density, and if certain conditions are created - conditions that include public spaces in which people can interact and cultures flourish and democratic characters develop to host and promote public participation.

A key topic of the forum is the emergence of consensus on the need for sustainable environmental, social and economic development. All of these aspects of sustainability are interlinked and complementary, and cities provide the context where this is clearer.

One of the biggest obstacles to achieving sustainability is inequality. Our economies, democracies and societies pay a

<sup>2</sup> Martin Neil Baily and Douglas J. Elliott, (2009): The US Financial and Economic Crisis: Where Does It Stand and Where Do We Go From Here? Business and Public Policy, pg. 210

high price to increase the gap between the rich and the poor. And perhaps the oddest aspect of widening the income gap and wealth in so many countries is that it is deepening the inequality in opportunities<sup>3</sup>.

Some cities have shown that these traits widely present are not the result of unbreakable economic laws. Even in the advanced countries with the highest inequality - the United States - some cities, such as San Francisco and San Jose, are comparable

Some cities have shown that these traits widely present are not the result of unbreakable economic laws. Even in the advanced countries with the highest inequality - the United States - some cities, such as San Francisco and San Jose, are comparable to the fastest growing economies in terms of equality and opportunities.

While political paralysis has affected so many national governments around the world, forethought cities are becoming a basis for hope. A split US seems unable to resolve the alarming increase in inequality. But in New York, Mayor Bill De Blasio was elected with the promise to do something about it.

While there are restrictions on what can be done at the local level - national taxation, for example, is far more important than municipal taxes - cities can help ensure the availability of affordable housing for everyone. And they have special responsibility to provide high quality public education and public services to everyone, regardless of their income<sup>4</sup>.

Medel and the World Urban Forum have shown that this is not just a dream. Another world is possible; we need a political will to follow that dream.

## 2. Historical Structure of Balkan Cities: Space, Power, Culture and Society

For visitors from the rest of Europe, the historic structure of urban settlements in the Balkan Peninsula often evokes similar reactions: their modern architecture and urban structure appear not only somewhat unnoticed, but in terms of style and technology, it also looks surprisingly homogeneous in a wider region between Banja Luka and

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<sup>3</sup> Davidson, F. (1996). "Planning for Performance, Requirements for Sustainable Development." *Habitat International* 20: 445-462.

<sup>4</sup> United Nations (2008): *Spatial Planning, Key instrument for Development and Effective Governance with special reference to countries in transition*, pg. 84

Edirne. The reason for these two is that for a very long time between the fourteenth and nineteenth centuries, most of the peninsula was united under the rule of a single ruler, the Ottoman sultan.

With his installation on the throne in Istanbul in 1453, a centralized state was developed, many of whose subjects, as well as their goods and ideas, traveled freely between the joints of an urban network with dynamic expansion in the Balkans and beyond. It was very common, for example, that a builder or carpenter from rugged Western Macedonia could be found working 400km north of Belgrade. Models for the monumental urban architecture of the region often came from Istanbul, which also provided the top tier of provincial society with an elite style to imitate in line with their economic potential. In choices related to dress or decoration of houses, religious differences were often less important than class differences. However, the outward appearance of cities reflected a religious hierarchy, which was fundamental to Ottoman society until the advent of modernity<sup>5</sup>

A large number of extraordinary monuments were built in fast-growing urban settlements in the Balkans between the fifteenth and seventeenth centuries, but churches were not part of them. After the Ottoman conquest of a certain country, the most monumental building in the city was usually converted into a mosque and, generally, the building of "ex novo" churches was forbidden by the Hanafi law. The necessary repairs to older structures were considered legitimate, provided they had imperial authority. The churches built in the Ottoman Balkans before the nineteenth century were often rebuilt within the dimensions of the oldest buildings on the site - a rule that certainly limited the design potentials until gradually being lifted in the nineteenth century. It was in the middle decades of this century, just a few decades before the collapse of the empire, the time when the monumental church returned to the sights of Ottoman cities; but even then the high camps would not dare to cross the heights of mosques minarets.

### 2.1. Urban Architecture

While in very few cases (such as Sofia and Thessaloniki) still can be found monuments dating from Late Antiquity, the "old town" quarters in the Balkan cities preserved, to a large extent, the structure and construction of the nineteenth century, though their main monuments are usually older. It was in this period when new urban models

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<sup>5</sup> Kendrick, John W. (1961) *Productivity trends in the United States*. Princeton University Press, pg. 112

entered the Balkan scene and, occasionally, in fierce competition with the traditional ones<sup>6</sup>.

Nowhere is this more evident than in Sarajevo where there is an immediate change from Bashcharia - a neighborhood whose structure can be found roughly in the decades around 1500, but in its current form reflects the changes that took place around the year 1900 (such as the open square with a pseudo-Ottoman water distributor of sebil type) and a roundabout built in the style of Central Europe's "main street", called Ferhadija, which was born around the 1900s as a counter-model to the old center. In Skopje, the Vardar River is the border between a "traditional" shopping mall, which appeared under the fortress, starting in the fifteenth century, and a "modern" section, which developed rapidly only in the last century. In Sofia the differences have been sharpened: its transformation into the capital of the Bulgarian nation around 1900 left behind a little trace of the Ottoman past. The road ring surrounding the center of Sofia brings to mind the configuration of Vienna, where many Bulgarians went to learn about architecture and similar fields during this period<sup>7</sup>.

Most of the older urban structures of Balkan cities date from the Ottoman period and not earlier. Monumental exceptions include some of the basilicas of the cathedrals built inside the Balkans, in a period of restoration of Byzantine rule around the eleventh and twelfth centuries, represented by some of the best preserved examples in Prizren, Serres, Verroia and Ohrid. That period saw a real revival of urban life in the region after the barbarian invasions of the seventh century - to a degree that would not be repeated until the late fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. It was then when many Balkan cities acquired their main monuments before the nineteenth century. As a rule, it was not architecture that originated from local processes and work (projects) by local artists, but pursued the types and styles formulated in what could be called the "metropolitan Ottoman region" around the Marmara Sea, where the old imperial cities: Istanbul, Bursa, and Edirne (hence the main achievements of Ottoman architectural design).

The standardization of Ottoman architectural types enabled remote provinces to create monuments of somewhat

distinct character. Standard deviations of the standard models were generally meaningful in the sense that they reflected the status or ambition of a particular master or date from a period in which the details were not yet standardized but left in the choice of builders and masons. For example, the unusual (in the provincial context) size and sophistication of the Gazi Hüsrev Bey Mosque in Sarajevo reflected, in all likelihood, echoing the origin of her mistress - he was a son born in Macedonia of an Ottoman princess - and the degree unusual power given to the ruler of a region of strategic importance for the expansion of Ottoman hegemony in Central and South Europe.

Regardless of the size, the urban architecture of the Ottoman cities developed on a predetermined frame of sorts. In accordance with the importance of the province where they were located, there may be Jama Masjid (in the early period usually only one), smaller prayer houses in use by separate neighborhoods, hani, covered markets for luxury goods, public baths ("cafes of beautiful sex"), primary and secondary schools, water supply, public fountains etc. The popularity of cubes not only as a structural but also iconographic element is very visible in many of Ottoman Ottoman settlements. We know a little about the initial decoration of the interiors of these buildings, but the decoration of the portals is sometimes meaningful<sup>8</sup>.

## 2.2. Different development paths

There has been much temptation to imagine the cities of Southeast Europe as representative of certain types, in line with the dominant powers of the past in different parts of the region - so we read about the "Ottoman city", the Venetian / Dalmatian counterpart, "Balkan city", "Hungarian city" etc. - but there are actually very few normative examples of such a claim. It should not be forgotten that at the time of Ottoman conquest the cities

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<sup>6</sup> Blakely, Edward J. Bradshaw, Ted K. (2002): Planning Local Economic Development, Theory and Practice, Third Edition. Sage Publication, pg. 122

<sup>7</sup> Song, Yan (2013): Infrastructure and Urban Development: Evidence from Chinese Cities. Lincoln Institute of Land Policy, pg. 44

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<sup>8</sup> Leigh, Nancey Green (2013): Strengthening Urban Industry: The Importance of Infrastructure and Location. Lincoln Institute of Land Policy, pg. 83

already existed in the Balkans. The truth is that the Ottomans, at times, seem to hesitate to intervene drastically in the existing urban structure. Sometimes the protective walls were flattened and large churches converted, but sometimes none of these happened. In many cases, the Ottoman urban nucleus with the relevant Islamic institutions developed outside the walled medieval towns, almost as a new settlement, which over time replaced the oldest settlement center in terms of importance. Undoubtedly, the invasion brought about significant transformations, but these may well be described as ottomanisation of existing settlements rather than an implementation of the Ottoman "urban patterns" in a "tabula rasa". Of course, a significant number of Balkan cities have Ottoman foundations without the medieval urban precedents, such as Sarajevo, Novi Pazar, Korca or Razgrad. The three examples of prominent historical Balkan cities, which we are presenting below, give us an idea of the different ways of their development<sup>9</sup>.

The medieval town surrounded by the walls of Ohrid seems to have been taken by the Ottomans from an Albanian feudalism at the end of the fourteenth century. The "Ottomanization" occurred later, following in this form: the main walled church, Sophia of the XI century, returned to Jumma Mosque. The area around it became a small "government quarter", with the governor's residence, an Ottoman cutter and a small temple dedicated to a martyred Ottoman clergyman. Outside this small area, quarters in the middle of the medieval walls of the city, however, remained largely Christian. Ohrid, a Muslim, was born outside the walls along the lake shore. It was this place where large Islamic institutions (including a madrasa with a scriptorium) were established and was also the place where the Ohrizade family, which seems to have dominated Ohrid's politics in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, had its great residence and some public buildings associated with it. The ancestor of the family had converted a monastery that dominated the city in the mosque, probably under the sultan's ashes. Located far from the Muslim neighborhoods of Ohrid, the building was identified with the fact that free food was distributed to the needy, regardless of faith. Perhaps this act served as a tool to increase the role of the Ohrizade family in the city.

From what can be rebuilt to a somewhat significant extent, it turns out that the settlement was both divided and united. The old walled town was inhabited by non-Muslims, except for an area around the Pasha's residence

and Sophia, where the Ottoman center's power was felt. However, the most dynamic part of Ohrid was what we could call the Lower City, where most of the Islamic institutions of the city were located and the dominant family in the locality resided. Perhaps the Ohrid urban structure can be seen not only as a manifestation of Muslim / Christian separation, but also the division between the local Muslim elite (represented here by the Ohrids) and the distant center of Ottoman power (represented by the Pasha and the Sultan's mosque ", ie from Sophia converted). The modern Ohrid center was developed from the once suburbs of Muslim dominance to the flat place below the walled neighborhood, which has remained a largely residential / tourist area<sup>10</sup>

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## Conclusions

Challenges of spatial and urban development have to do with day-to-day challenges, ranging from political, developmental, environmental, energetic, challenges to neighborly and international cooperation, those in the sphere of development of education, housing, infrastructure development, and capital and budget investment issues. Urban development towards the requirements of the European Union are: Inclusion and urban development; Public Private Partnership and Urban Development; Real Estate Management and Urban

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<sup>9</sup> Clarke, George R. G. (2013): How and Why Does the Quality of Infrastructure Service Delivery Vary?. Lincoln Institute of Land Policy, pg. 72

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<sup>10</sup> Bahl, Roy W. Linn, Johannes F. Wetzel, Deborah L. (2013) Financing metropolitan governments in developing countries. Lincoln Institute of Land Policy, pg. 66

Development; Urban development for metropolitan urban areas; The role of architecture in urban development; Free public spaces; Cultural Heritage and Urban Development; Control of urban developments; Housing and social development in the wake of urban development; Sustainable urban growth; Illegal constructions and the process of legalization; Urban life and civil society; Urbanization and Tourism; The impact of daily politics on architecture and urbanism; Urbanization and Climate Change in Kosovo; Urban identity elsewhere in Kosovo, and many more. We all know that the European Union is on the move to become an inseparable continent, where territories are faced with similar economic, social and environmental challenges, but they do not know the boundaries. This happens while at the same time these territories are institutionally and administratively governed through traditional boundaries. While there are no limits on the territory of the European Union, there must be rules agreed upon by all who adhere to it for such a functioning, for a substantial economic, social and environmental cohesion.

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