

Public Space, public interest and Challenges of Urban Transformation

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Abstract—It's more than evident that urban growth and spatial, social transformations through it, were followed with non-adequate dynamics of urban planning as process and as result of that some parts of urban areas have been more degraded than sustainably developed, especially some of public spaces in urban areas. Those transformations were as a result of different urban challenges, especially:

- Lack of evaluation and research based on determinative factors for good management of urban growth,
- Lack of institutional efficiency (different institutional levels), for implementation of development policies,
- Lack of policy instruments and mechanisms towards integrated urban planning,
- Lack of institutional coordination, vertical and horizontal relationships, during planning process

Focus of this paper is based on question: How urban transformation using innovative and interdisciplinary methods, can affect public urban spaces in relation with public policy? (Study cases from Prishtina and Skopje).

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Keywords: growth, space, urban, public, planning, policy, institutional, interest, challenges, competitive, transformation

1. INTRODUCTION

As can be seen from literature review the mining and the role of public urban spaces in the city is complex, “These dynamic spaces are an essential counterfort to the more settled places and routines of work and home life, providing channels for movement, the nodes of communication, and the common ground for play and recreation” (Stephen Carr, 1993, “*Public space*” pp 3). Considering, cities as urban areas, especially their public spaces are places of: funning, loving, working, reading trading, debating, argumenting, policy doing; in general city and its public spaces are places where are supposed to be fulfilled: emotional, social and physical needs for both residents and visitors there. At what level are fulfilled those needs, it depends what are public institutional policies and which the development vision for urban planning especially related to management of rapid growth of the cities and their consequences to the city functionalization.

The urban society in general, especially institutions dealing with planning and development; have their concerns regarding urban rapid growth which is happening in continuity (in time and space) especially in developing countries considering also “ A multiplicity of divergent meanings attached to *public*, *public space* and the *public sphere*” (SETHA L, NEIL S, “*The politics of public space*” pp3). , as good treated thematics for countries in transition treated from developed countries, while in most cases countries under development are experienced without adequate urban planning and without adequate institutional mechanisms for this process too. As it can be seen from selected study cases city of Prishtina (Kosova) and city of

Skopje (Macedonia), respectively some of their public urban spaces in relation with their territoriality, visible and non-visible borders and interconnectivity. For evaluation are considered:

- Road's and paths through them
- Boulevard's and squares
- Greenery and recreation

Because those categories are considered as dominant public spaces in the city, they are interrelated with each other based on different functional and organizational levels of the city life and are target of public policy under transformation process too.

2. STATE OF THE ART

The meaning of urban area is structured by functionality of buildings and sites “Buildings are constructed and sites are developed in ways that are sensitively to both the historical and contemporary context” (James A. LaGro Jr, “*Site Analysis: Informing Context-Sensitive and Sustainable Site Planning and Design*”, pp 216). This paper, is based on systemic literature review for general overview related to public spaces and happy cities “We all translate our own ideas of happiness into form. It happens when you landscape your garden or chose where to live” (Charles M. “*Transforming our lives through urban design*”, pp 18), study cases and research of public opinion related to the urban developments in Prishtina and Skopje and spatial transformations of some public spaces their functionality and their integration with other parts.

Their rationale modelling, planning and design and their massive use by citizens, depends mostly from the quality of public policy and approach towards public urban spaces

“Institutional, group and network, exogenous, rational actor, ideas based” (Peter John, *Analyzing public policy*, pp12) indicators related to their quality. Evaluating the development and transformative process for public spaces of both cities Prishtina and Skopje, are identified some strengths as below:

- Lack of using multiply political instruments for developing those urban spaces with the aim that those will complete each other in transformation process
- Lack of continual improvements, based on development dynamics
- Lack of institutional coordination “up-down”
- Lack of specific development urban programs for specific urban spatial issues
- Lack of adequate inclusiveness of involved partners in the process

In the same time answers to those strengths for societies in transition (like Kosova and Macedonia) are also challenges urban development too. Coming back to the question: How urban transformation using innovative and interdisciplinary methods, can affect public urban spaces in relation with public policy? The proper approach to this can be considered: use of international development experiences from this field, improving institutional structures and expertise and treatment of specific spatial and social circumstances in the field.

3. RESEARCH

Treating this problematic issues of Public Space and Challenges of Urban Transformation, the evaluation and research was based on considering the mixture of typologies on urban planning “Synoptic, progressive, transactive, advocative, radical” (Binak Beqaj *“Zhvillimi urban, planifikimi dhe dizajni”*, pp104) and on spatial analyses of city central area for Prishtina and Skopje, considering their functional use from different community categories as contribution on spatial and social transformation of selected urban areas. The research was developed interviewing different groups of citizens about their daily use of urban public spaces and about distribution of their main activities using those public spaces and then evaluating statistical data through comparative research methodology, related to:

- Peoples concentration in public spaces on daily bases
- The structure of people using public spaces
- The variety and intensity of contacts between people there
- Multiple activities and quality of public spaces-their practical usefulness

3.1. The research concept

The research concept and research findings are based on considering cities as “Most complex artefacts” (Robert C, *“The Dictionary of Urbanism”*, pp 15), they are interesting to be used by citizens. Through, survey done involving different categories of citizens(interviewing 300 citizens of different categories in each city, using specific questionnaire forms, developed by three students groups involved from

faculty of Architecture), related to the question about where do they spent they daily time (more than five hours during the day) using public spaces of the city, results are presented in Fig.1 and they show that: “Roads & paths” mostly are frequented by young and medium age of citizens, “Squares and boulevards” partially are used by elders, while “Greenery and recreation” are used dominantly by young people, children’s and elders. Resuming the survey about this question, can be concluded that “Squares and boulevards” are the most frequented urban public spaces in use by all categories of citizens except children’s. From those analyses is understandable permanent focus on the urban planning issue that because of fact that different public spaces are places where different daily activities by different age categories of citizens are going on, those should be integrated with each other too

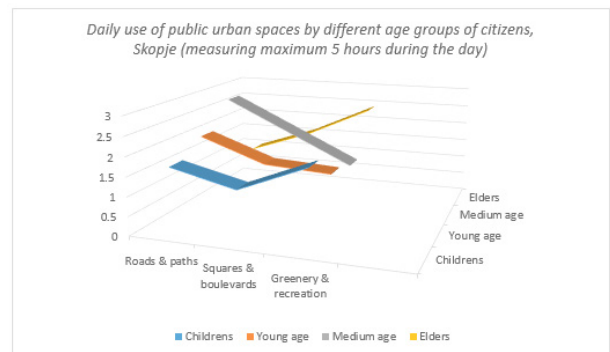
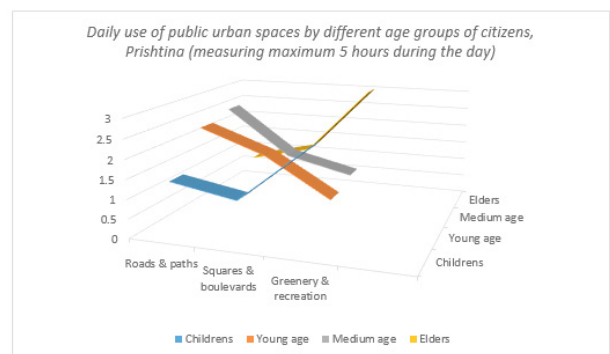


Fig.1. Time using different public spaces by different age groups of citizens in Prishtina and Skopje (source: survey done in April 2015)

3.2. Intensity and types of contacts

Intensity and types of contacts between citizens using public urban spaces in selected two cities are presented in Fig.2. First of all are identified three main types of contacts between citizens:

- Passive (ad- hock)
- Of work (business)
- Familiar

As it can be seen from Fig.2 most intensive type of contact is “familiar contacts” and this associated with close friendship too. It might be that this is as reflection of traditional local culture of citizens for using public spaces as places for mass

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