

## Re-Creating Kosovo Cities

### Understanding Kosovo

Kosovo is the official name for the disputed province in the southern part of Serbia, neighbouring with FYROM (Macedonia), Montenegro and Albania. Since 1999, Kosovo is under temporary international (UN) administration, according to United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244. The population of Kosovo is 90 percent Albanian, who are using the name *Kosova* instead of Kosovo.

According to Wikipedia<sup>1</sup>, visiting Kosovo is worthy for:



- *“Seeing the UN and the international community in action (or lack thereof).*
- *Speaking to people in a post conflict environment as an eye opener that tends to cause a person to stop thinking of people in countries of civil conflict as simply nuts.*
- *Getting a first hand view of about 6 different cultures (Albanian, Serb, Roma, Ashkalia, Bosniak and Gorani-Macedonians Muslim).*
- *Gaining understanding of what happens when governments allow industry to function with no environmental regulation.*
- *Appreciating having electricity and water 24 hours a day. “*

At the heart of the Balkans, Kosovo was part of the Roman Empire, then Byzantium, and part of the Ottoman Empire in the early 15th Century. Kosovo became part of Serbia before the First World War, and of Yugoslavia just after. Under German and Albanian influence during the Second World War, its place in Yugoslavia was reaffirmed after the conflict. Kosovo became a province in the Socialist Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY), and enjoyed a certain degree of autonomy from 1974-90 within SFRY and Serbia. The Yugoslav Republic began to break up during the early 1990's with Slovenia, Croatia and Bosnia breaking away from the state. An upsurge in violence in Kosovo in 1998 drew the attention of the international community, leading to an eleven-week conflict in the spring of 1999. During the conflict, several thousand were killed; the numbers and the ethnic distribution of the casualties are uncertain and highly disputed. Thousands are still missing, mainly Kosova Albanians. On 10th June 1999 the region was placed under United Nations administration, with the European Union and Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe providing key parts of the interim government. KFOR, the NATO-led peace implementation force, provides military security. With the arrival of NATO, a large number of Serbs fled the region. Many Serbs fear to return to their homes since they perceive not to be safe for them, even with UN protection. Notably since the unrest in March 2004, when many Serbian houses were burned and other property destroyed while the Serbian populace was closed into enclaves and had to concentrate to the north of Kosovo until today.

The talks on the future status of Kosovo between the government of Serbia, which wants the territory to remain part of Serbia albeit with a high degree of autonomy, and the provisional government of Kosovo, which wants independence for the province, have started in Vienna, on February 20, 2006. According to the UN Envoy, the status will be resolved by the end of this year.

Kosovo has an area of 10,887 square kilometers (one third the size of Belgium). It is a geographical basin, situated at an altitude of about 500 meters, surrounded by mountains, and divided by a central north/south ridge into two sub-regions of roughly equal size and population. Detailed demographic data are not available - but the total 1998 population is believed to have been slightly above 2.2 million people, including about 90 percent ethnic Albanians. A large diaspora, mainly in Western Europe, plays an important role, particularly through remittances and the financing of the parallel structures developed throughout the 1990s. Minorities include Serbs, Gorans or Bosnians (Muslim Slavs), Roms, and Turks. Demographic growth is estimated at about twenty per thousand and average household size is believed to be about 6 to 7 persons. Kosovo's population is by far the youngest in Europe, with about half the people below the age of 20. About 60 percent of the pre-conflict employment was created by agricultural activities (including forestry and agro-business). Unemployment was already high, due to long-term impacts of a regional crisis. This unemployment rate was disproportionately high among ethnic Albanians.

Despite substantial development subsidies from all Yugoslav republics, Kosovo was the poorest province of Yugoslavia. Additionally, over the course of the 1990s, poor economic policies, international sanctions, weak access to external trade and finance, and ethnic conflict severely damaged the economy. Kosovo is now probably the poorest economy in Europe, with a per capita income estimated at 1,565 Euro (2004). According to the Family Budget Survey<sup>2</sup> in 2002/03, 37% of the population live under the poverty line (1,42 Euro per adult per day), while 15,2% live under the extreme poverty line (0,93 Euro a day). Most economic development since 1999 has taken place in the trade, retail and the construction sectors. The private sector that has emerged since 1999 is mainly small-scale. The industrial sector remains weak and the electric power supply remains unreliable, acting as a key constraint. Unemployment remains pervasive, at around 40-50% of the labor force. The Euro is the official currency of Kosovo and used by UNMIK (United Nations Mission in Kosovo) and the government bodies. The Serbian Dinar is used in the Serbian populated parts.

### **Disintegrating Kosovo Cities**

The more than 2 million inhabitants living today in Kosovo are distributed in more than 1450 settlements in 30 municipalities. Settlements are distributed all over the Kosovo area, the majority (53%) or 63% of the population is living above sea level up to 700 m, while the other part is living in settlements above 700 m, lacking social infrastructure and services. Lacking these services, a part of the population from these settlements has moved to more developed settlements, in search of better housing conditions. The unequal development rate in Kosovo has resulted in population migration from rural to urban areas and from urban to more developed urban areas. The uninterrupted movement of population has burdened urban areas, which in turn are developing without any control of construction and spatial development. The most fertile rural areas, located in low plain lands, valleys, river and lake terraces, are increasingly being occupied by houses and yards, factories, roads, mines, schools, hospitals and other objects, all unplanned and often illegal constructions.

The largest city is Prishtina/Pristina, the capital, with a population somewhere between 700.000 (according to the Prishtina Strategic Plan) and 250.000 (according to ESI/IKS<sup>3</sup>). Six other towns have populations in excess of 50,000 to 120.000 Prizren in the south, Gjakova/Dakovica in the south-west, Peja/Pec in the west, Mitrovica in the north and Gjilan/Gniljane and Ferizaj/Urosevac in the south-east.

Post-conflict Kosovo is facing a very complex and unsustainable urbanization pattern:

- during war a lot of Kosovars fled their country to western Europe, leaving their villages, towns and cities behind, causing a substantive depopulation;
- due to war damage and extreme poverty many people moved from the rural to the urban areas, especially from the mountainous areas in the border regions;
- cities in their former boundaries are unable to provide space for new investments, which leads to unplanned and uncontrolled urban development;
- informal settlements become a common sight on the city outskirts, illegal constructions mushroom in city centers, the access to services becomes more difficult and the quality of life deteriorates;
- due to lack of employment many (mainly young) Kosovars moved and are moving from villages to towns and from towns to the capital, Prishtina/Pristina, the only city with a growing tertiary economy, mainly due to the (temporal) international presence;
- due to this fast and partly forced urbanization, cities and especially the capital were/are not 'ready' for this new influx of (mainly young) people;
- combined with this process of fast urbanization, there is a process of a wild and uncontrolled suburbanization around and in between the towns, in the most fertile and arable rural areas of the Kosovo plains;
- more than 15,000 buildings are illegally constructed since the end of the war;
- various urban functions are consuming the open and agricultural land along major roads: small shops and shopping malls, hotels, innumerable petrol stations and car metal sites, insolate unfinished houses..., often in river flooding areas;
- this uncontrolled process of urbanization and suburbanization is causing an increasing mobility and environmental problem, with semi-permanent car traffic jams and heavy pollution due to the import of old cars without catalyst;
- due to an extremely weak and almost absent public transport system, car traffic is increasing day by day, as well the traffic insecurity and the traffic pollution.



The 'visual result' - at least for 'first time visitors' - is quite shocking: damaged villages and towns, new but often unfinished houses and shops everywhere in and around the cities, noisy and polluting traffic occupying not only the streets but also the sidewalks or footpaths, if available, ... and streets full of young and mainly unemployed people.

The cities in Kosovo are clearly in 'a state of flux', but the disintegrating forces seems to be still stronger than the 're-integrating' forces, seven years after the war has ended.

During a workshop with staff members of the Department of Spatial Planning end 2005 (see next paragraph for more explanation), a matrix was made in an attempt to balance these problems with some opportunities, as a bridge towards a more sustainable urban policy in Kosovo.

Table 1: spatial and other problems and opportunities in Kosovar Cities

	PROBLEMS	OPPORTUNITIES
Spatial	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>traffic congestion</i></li> <li>- <i>lack of public transport</i></li> <li>- <i>illegal constructions</i></li> <li>- <i>informal settlements</i></li> <li>- <i>ribbon development</i></li> <li>- <i>environmental degradation</i></li> <li>- <i>lack of green spaces</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>diversity of landscapes</i></li> <li>- <i>cultural/natural heritage</i></li> <li>- <i>industrial heritage</i></li> <li>- <i>old railway networks and stations</i></li> <li>- <i>walk able / bike able short distances</i></li> <li>- <i>potential for private investments</i></li> </ul>
Non-spatial	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>high non-employment</i></li> <li>- <i>increasing poverty</i></li> <li>- <i>increasing criminality</i></li> <li>- <i>rate of migration</i></li> <li>- <i>Serbian enclaves</i></li> <li>- <i>cohabitation</i></li> <li>- <i>non effective institutions</i></li> <li>- <i>lack of education and other social services</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>many youngsters (cafe bars)</i></li> <li>- <i>potential labour force</i></li> <li>- <i>strong family ties</i></li> <li>- <i>cross road of cultures in Balkan</i></li> <li>- <i>multi religious/multi cultural society</i></li> <li>- <i>mercantile tradition</i></li> </ul>

Source: "Connecting Cities, Connecting Citizens; towards an Urban Policy Agenda for Kosovo", MESP/UN-HABITAT, January 2006

Except for the professionals in Kosovo dealing with environmental and spatial issues, there seem to be a very low awareness of this negative urban environmental spiral among most Kosovars, and even among most internationals once they've overcome their first 'impressions'. Only when Albanian Kosovars and internationals come back from a weekend trip in neighboring regions in the western Balkan, they realize that the contrast is growing day by day, even with Albania, where there seem to be a growing awareness about environment and sustainable urban life...

A possible explanation is that cities in Kosovo were faced with a more or less forced urbanization of rural people with a very traditional and nearly tribal character, not knowing how to live together and to develop a new public realm in cities. In Mitrovica, a once very multi-ethnic city in the north of Kosovo, the river Iber now ethnically divides the Kosova Albanians in the southern part of the city and the Kosovo Serbs in the northern part, partly with displaced persons from other Serbian enclaves in Kosovo. It can be questioned how people of conflicting ethnical groups can work together to improve their urban environments, if people of the same 'group' can hardly organize themselves, mainly due to family based organization patterns. One of the explanations is without any doubt the historical fact that Kosova Albanians for the first time in modern history has to rely on their selves, for the moment with the help of the international community. Some people say that exactly the omni-presence of the international community in Kosovo is taking away the motivation for self-organization. For UN-HABITAT, this is one of the main reasons to promote and implement a capacity building and development approach.

### Setting-up a new planning system in Kosovo

Since 1999, UN-HABITAT is assisting the transition from the former centralised, top-down planning system towards an inclusive, participatory and multi-disciplinary approach to planning. A planning approach that takes into account specific needs of various social groups and is focussed on participation, transparency and accountability. Involvement, at the same time, with the central and local level, the University, and civil society organisations and developing

adequate legislation was a unique experience which led to the development of a comprehensive approach to planning and allowed to anchor the process among Kosovo institutions. UN-HABITAT's initial interventions were focussed on the establishment of institutions to deal with property issues as the Housing and Property Directorate, the Kosovo Cadastre Agency and on building capacities for efficient management of local governments through LoGo (Local Government Programme) and Municipal Support Programme.

**Box 1**

**UN-HABITAT Mandate**

The United Nations Human Settlements Programme, UN-HABITAT, is the United Nations agency for Human Settlements. It is mandated by the UN General Assembly to promote socially and environmentally sustainable towns and cities with the goal of providing adequate shelter for all. In the light of rapid global urbanization, the strategic vision of UN-HABITAT offers a way forward for achieving this full-spectrum agenda, by targeting means for implementing programmes and projects in a proper and practical relationship to global priorities and Millennium Development Goals. Achieving sustainable development and alleviating poverty require the integration of economic, social and political objectives into a coherent overall framework. As part of UN-HABITAT's Global Campaign on Urban Governance, engagement of civil society in the decision-making process and consensus building for issues of local development is one of the key principles of good urban governance.

In the Urban planners<sup>4</sup> from all 30 municipalities of Kosovo participated in an advanced training programme on strategic and spatial planning which offered an opportunity to learn from experiences of other countries in the region. The workshops were developed and conducted by international and local trainers and experts prepared the municipal planners to deal with these issues in their own municipality. Training materials developed for these purposes and closely linked to the planning process reflected in the Law on Spatial Planning are in the final stage of printing and will be soon available on the UN-HABITAT's website<sup>5</sup>.



A visioning workshop in Mitrovica.

In the period 2004-2005, as a UN-HABITAT consultant, I conducted training on visioning and the use of spatial concepts in spatial planning, with several practical visioning workshops with city-planners and some stakeholders. Being more practical by nature, these visioning exercises were very much appreciated by the Kosovar planners. UN-HABITAT also assisted intensively the Ministry of Environment and Spatial Planning to establish the Institute of Spatial Planning and prepare its staff to develop a new Strategic Plan for the territory of Kosovo.

The staffs were trained by UN-HABITAT from scratch with the capacity building programme tailored to a "roadmap" for strategic and inclusive planning at central level. Workshops, training sessions and on-the-job assistance were targeted at achieving concrete results, such as preparing documents for public debates or holding public consultations at various stages of work on the Kosovo Spatial Plan. The final draft Plan has been recently presented in a series of public debates held across Kosovo attended by many stakeholders, including municipal officials, as it sets the broader context for municipal spatial plans. The Kosovo Spatial Plan is also an important tool to gradually integrate the Kosovan cities in the European Urban Network.

## Capacity Building for an Urban Policy

At the end of 2005, I conducted capacity training for the Department of Spatial Planning “How to develop an Urban Policy Agenda”. Urban policy is the term that gathers together urban municipal policy and the central policy on cities. Urban policy is the sum of all the efforts of governments and stakeholders, at the central and local level, focusing on urban issues and reinforcing the urban spirit. In more popular terms: an urban policy is about developing and implementing a coordinated policy to make better cities in Kosovo.

The preparation of a specific urban policy for Kosovo started with the capacity building of the staff of the Department Spatial Planning (DSP) in policy development with regard to the urbanization process in Kosovo<sup>1</sup>. The working method was basically an interactive exploration of the possible content of an Urban Policy Agenda for Kosovo. A delegation of 5 Staff members of DSP formed a team together with the UN-HABITAT consultant, who acted as a facilitator and animator of debate and discussion. It was quite obvious that a ‘normal’ procedure to draft an Urban Policy Paper is problematic in the case of Kosovo. In many (European) countries the drafting of an Urban White Paper took many years of preparation and could already rely on existing (strategic) spatial policy and all kind of instruments to support sustainable urban development.

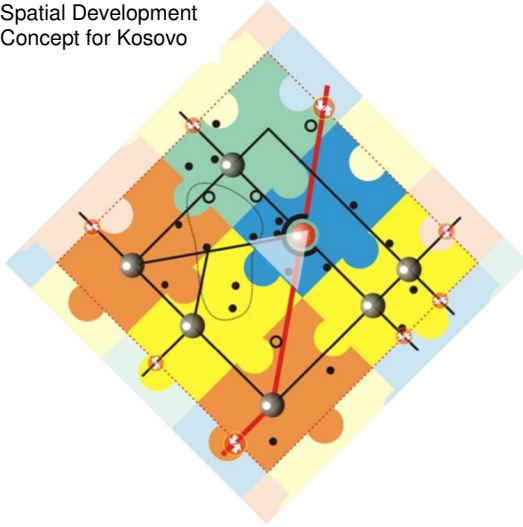
The fast urbanization process in Kosovo does not allow taking years of study and reflection. There is a high sense of urgency. Therefore it was recommended to start with an Urban Agenda as a list of first priorities, with some actions and programmes on longer term. The first Urban Agenda should be regarded as a “working hypothesis” that will be falsified or supported and fine tuned by more data and research. In order to balance the urban with the rural policy, it was recommended to develop a rural policy paper, within the framework of a national spatial planning strategy. If possible, the development of a rural policy is done simultaneously with the urban policy, but not necessarily. But a workshop with the Department made clear that the fast and wild urbanization of Kosovo leads to a situation that an urban policy for Kosovo can not longer be limited to the traditional city centers of Kosovo.

The Urban Policy in Kosovo should therefore focus on the entire urban valleys of Kosovo. A new spatial vision has to be developed to cope with this reality. This observation was translated in a spectrum of two opposing scenarios:

- a monocentric scenario favouring Prishtina/Pristina with the secondary cities as satellites of the capital, called metaphorically “Prishtina City”;
- a polycentric scenario with a distribution of central level functions over all the 7 regional centers in Kosovo, called “Kosova City”. In this scenario the development of a grid network of infrastructure for all modes is crucial, and will lead to complete urbanization of the lowlands of Kosovo, with integration of well protected agricultural and green spaces.

The Kosovo Spatial Plan has more or less chosen for the ‘Kosova City’ scenario, but with the aim of compact city development, while the ‘Kosova City’ scenario does not longer believe in compact city development but tries to cluster the urban developments around multimodal nodes.

Spatial Development  
Concept for Kosovo



Developing an urban policy for the urban central valley of Kosovo will have a very strong spatial dimension. The Spatial Plan for Kosovo is the right framework to deal with the future of cities in Kosovo. But urban policy can only be successful when developed and implemented in a 'diagonal' way: as the resultant of an intersectoral (horizontal axe) and a multilevel approach (vertical axe). There is no fundamental problem with an integrated urban Policy that is submitted to the central government by the spatial planning minister, but it is recommended to do this in close cooperation with the other competent ministers, with the prime minister as bridging person. Crucial is to achieve a clear mandate to implement the concrete actions and measures of the urban policy programme. This

programme will consist of a longer term part that will be revised only once in 4 to 6 years and a short term part that needs to be revised every year. To guarantee the diagonal approach a dialogue with at least the urban municipalities have to be organised and integrated in the urban policy agenda or paper. Last but not least: a good urban policy agenda needs input (and output) from other stakeholders than governmental shareholders: private stakeholders, NGO's, civil society. Involvement of stakeholders could be regarded as the third dimension. The resultant of two dimensional (diagonal) approach combined with the third dimension is called the Inclusive Urban Governance. Finally the training session ended with the proposals of setting up an Urban Task Force group and organizing a series of Urban Fora to stimulate public debate and awareness.

### Critical observations

Planning instruments like the Kosovo Spatial Plan and an Urban Policy Agenda can only be successful if they are adopted and translated by the local planners, knowing the local level is (for the moment) the most crucial one in terms of influencing the use of space (e.g. by regulatory planning and issuing the building permits). The achieved and ongoing mentality change at central level has to be complemented by a change of the mind set on local level. In one of the debriefings after several UN-HABITAT missions to Kosovo, I reported following observations about planning and planners at the local municipal level:

- **Very dedicated and professional "planning architects"**. It is clear that the planning profession in Kosovo is still in a start up phase. Most planners are architects and are gradually being trained as spatial planner. In most other European countries, the spatial planning profession is more diverse and recruits from geography (physical and social), sociology, environmental sciences, engineers ...). This enables multi-disciplinary planning teams, which is required to tackle complex planning challenges at all planning scales and policy levels.
- **Strategic and comprehensive planning approaches**. The strategic approach is clearly a result of the planning and policy reforms in Kosovo, guided by the new Law on Planning. But in the implementation process of the Planning law, I notice a struggle with collecting data from all sectors involved, before entering a visioning process. The diagnostic and analytical process consumes a lot of time and energy, frustrating the more important planning phases.

- **'Afraid' of visioning the future.** A consequence of the concentration on diagnosis and analysis is that most municipal planners seem to be reluctant to vision the future and desired spatial structure by simple sketching. There seem to be a feeling that more should be known before sketching. This means that there is limited internal experience with envisioning and using spatial concepts.

These observations bring me to the interim conclusion that changing attitudes takes a very long time, especially at the local level with understaffed municipal administrations working for very low salaries, lacking know how and basic equipment . Confronting those local planners with very sound but quite theoretical planning approaches is not always very successful, and can even generate the opposite effect, for instance the very comprehensive approach on the Law of Spatial Planning. It is assumed that a truly strategic and more realistic approach requires a 'management of change' towards four basic principles of strategic planning:

- work cyclic in stead of linear;
- accept subjectivity;
- accept uncertainty;
- be selective in stead of comprehensive.

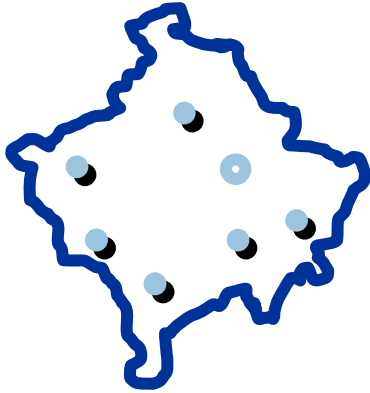
Although this approach is not new at all, we can observe a growing acceptance for it. The third World Urban Forum of UN-HABITAT in Vancouver/Canada brought 10.000 people together from all over the world, exchanging their ideas and experiences in the field of sustainable urban planning and governance. There is no formal declaration or conclusions - long live diversity of opinions - but I collected 10 personal echo's affecting UN-HABITAT's work in Kosovo:

1. Master plans are definitively out and inclusive planning is becoming the evidence all over the world.
2. Inclusive planning means involvement of ALL stakeholders, with accent on the poor and vulnerable people in the communities.
3. Community oriented planning should not be bureaucratic but field and action oriented. The actions should be framed in a long term vision.
4. Slow formal planning processes should be replaced by or combined with fast-track planning actions.
5. Formal planning should be combined with informal arrangements.
6. Lack of money, staff or data is no excuse for doing nothing or slowing down.
7. Create sustainable cities with incremental sustainable actions.
8. Create inter-cultural cities with involvement of all cultural groups.
9. Ensure effective linkages between planning and private and public budgetary processes.
10. Make planning smart by creating learning and exchanging networks.

These '10 commandments' are certainly not disgracing the international planning 'ideology'; it's rather a question of reframing and fine-tuning. The new UN-HABITAT programme in Kosovo, funded by the Swedish Government, is a good opportunity try to incorporate the raised comments and observations to the efforts so far.



## Making Better Cities Together



“*Making Better Cities Together*” is the motto of the Sida-funded Municipal Spatial Planning Support Programme, through which UN-HABITAT supports the municipal spatial planning in Kosovo until the end of 2007. Kosovo cities and towns are in the process of drafting the municipal and urban plans. These plans are to be strategic and action oriented, detailed in the urban regulatory plans and implemented through private and public investments. The six secondary cities of Kosovo - Peja/Pec, Gjakova/Djakovica, Prizren, Mitrovica, Ferizaj/Urosevac and Gjilan/Gnjilane - can contribute to a more balanced development of Kosovo and reduce the ongoing migration of population to the capital city, Prishtina/Pristina. The new programme continues to strengthen

capacities through a daily on-the-job assistance focused on the municipal spatial planning in the six secondary cities of Kosovo, meeting at least the spirit of the Law on Spatial Planning. The Programme is designed to address the specific needs of the six secondary cities of Kosovo for municipal spatial planning, while understanding that the development process in these municipalities will stimulate development in smaller, neighbouring municipalities.

The Municipal Spatial Planning Support Programme focuses specifically on the following objectives:

1. On-the-job-assistance and guidance to municipal planning bodies, local government officials, civil society organizations and the private sector for the six secondary cities in drafting municipal and urban development plans.
2. Strengthening the dialogue among municipalities as well as between municipal and central level with regard to spatial planning policies.
3. Building capacities among civil organizations and private sector to actively participate in inclusive planning.
4. Supporting Action Planning and assisting in developing pilot action projects, including informal settlements, identified through the planning process.

This Programme supports municipalities in the municipal and urban planning processes, while assisting the Ministry of Environment and Spatial Planning and civil society organizations to actively participate in these processes. The on-the-job-assistance is combined with technical support training programmes and facilitation of public participation, as well as support for pilot projects. The Programme is implemented by a team of an international urban advisor and a Kosovar planner placed in each of the six selected municipalities and supported by a mobile team of international and Kosovan experts. Practitioners' experience sharing and networking with European planning institutions as well as rooting the Programme within a broader regional and European context will also be promoted as a means to strengthen capacity of municipal planners. Thus, 'learning by doing' is a primary capacity building tool when it comes both to training activities and the establishment of the participatory processes. The engagement of civil society as a key stakeholder in the process will be facilitated to create a more sustainable cooperation forum between NGOs, citizens, the business community and local governments. Special attention is paid to creating equal opportunities for the participation of men and women and vulnerable groups such as ethnic minorities and youth, in particular.

The Programme is trying to make the best use of the lessons learned during the 7 years of UN-HABITAT's work in Kosovo, including the critical remarks and recommendations to work closer to and with the local cultures.

The Programme started officially with an Inception meeting on April 6<sup>th</sup> 2006, with the signing of the cooperation agreements between the involved municipalities and UN-HABITAT. On July, 18<sup>th</sup> there was a first Programme Development Meeting to evaluate the progress so far.

Three months are quite short for a reliable evaluation, but just enough for some first impressions:

- Having 6 teams operating in the municipal offices of the secondary cities, closely cooperating with the municipal planners is certainly a different experience than operating from the capital city towards all municipalities.
- The combination of a Kosovar planner and an international advisor is certainly a 'challenge', but opens perspectives to adapt the UN-HABITAT principles much more to the local situation, especially through the close cooperation with the municipal planners.
- The cooperation agreements create in most cases a certain pressure to the mayors and CEO's of the municipalities, with a better 'recognition' of the spatial planning process within the municipal decision making.
- Even after a short period of three months it is quite clear that a clear commitment and mandate from the mayors and CEO's is a precondition for success.
- A second precondition is the appointment of municipal planners only dealing with planning matters (at least separated from issuing building permits), as a motor of a "municipal planning team", composed by civil servants of different departments, and acting as a spider in the planning process, with tentacles to the municipal assembly and a formal council of planning experts on one hand and to the stakeholders and civil society organizations on the other hand.
- Engaging civil society and other stakeholders in the planning process is quite difficult without any participatory budget line in the municipal budget.
- The focus of some municipalities to "finish the required plans as soon as possible" seems to be incompatible with truly inclusive and strategic planning.
- The entire outsourcing of the required plans to a private company, which is happening in most municipalities, seems to be incompatible with the principles of institutional capacity building and governance.
- It takes time to change the mentality of the local planners and decision makers to move from land use planning to strategic planning, as most of them are mainly focused on regulatory plans as a basis to grant or refuse building permits.
- It takes time for the municipal UN-HABITAT teams to get familiar with the local cultures and codes.
- The municipalities appreciate UN-HABITAT's efforts to establish more and better cooperation among municipalities and with the central level institutions.
- The assistance of local and international advisors on specific themes as public urban transport, legal issues and especially GIS is appreciated but expected to be more intensive.

Referring to the "re-invented planning principles" observed at the WUF 3 in Vancouver, I can add following observations regarding the implementation of the Municipal Spatial Planning Support Programme in Kosovo so far:

- Master plans are still in the 'planners mind' but inclusive strategic planning is becoming step by step the new practice.
- Involvement of ALL stakeholders, with accent on the poor and vulnerable people in the communities is not yet a common practice. Most planners and decision makers are still focused on infrastructure, urban center renovation and industrial zoning.

- Planning is still mainly considered as a bureaucratic process and not enough field and action oriented. But by creating a vision and frame on the longer term it is expected that the municipalities will select concrete actions in the sphere of community planning.
- The idea to combine formal planning with informal arrangements is not yet very ripe, but promising for the future, by setting up experiments with the formula of “Urban Pacts”<sup>6</sup>.
- Although it is still often the case in Kosovo that lack of money, staff or data is used as an excuse for doing nothing or slowing down, UN-HABITAT’s assistance can overcome this ‘inertia’.
- Creating sustainable cities with incremental sustainable actions is unfortunately not often the case here, but there are some promising changes, mainly focused on improvement of intra-urban public transport (Peja/Pec, Ferizaj/Urosevac).
- Creating inter-cultural cities with involvement of all cultural groups is a very delicate and complex matter in post-conflict Kosovo, and will be crucial for reconciliation of all groups in society.
- Ensuring effective linkages between planning and private and public budgetary processes is certainly not yet the case in Kosovo, but that will probably change when municipalities have selected their strategic pilot actions.
- Making planning smarter by creating learning and exchanging networks is getting more and more accepted as a working method.

## Conclusion

With the aim of ‘re-integrating’ the Kosovo cities, internally and within the European network of cities, the new UN-HABITAT municipal support programme has a challenging potentiality to put (international) theory in to (local) practices. ‘Success’ or ‘results’ at the end of the programme should be measured not only in terms of having drafted and approved municipal and urban development plans. Maybe more important is to measure ‘mentality changes’ in terms of:

- Awareness of the unsustainable and disintegrating trends in a post-conflict society with a transition economy; and the sense of urgency to change quite radically the course of (urban) development.
- Commitment of the (local) governmental decision makers and planners for a inclusive and community based planning process, with concrete ‘small-step-projects’ as stepping stones between visionary dreams and today’s situation and practices.
- Commitment of the central government to provide the necessary instruments for the municipalities to carry out their (planning) responsibilities properly; supported by a consistent multi-stakeholder Urban Policy Agenda.
- Empowerment of Civil Society organizations on central and local level, as counterpart of the governments and partner in new forms of (urban) governance.
- Last but not least: the commitment and ability to set up and implement strategic spatial planning and design projects with a measurable contribution to a more sustainable and integrating urban development, reflecting authentic local solutions to global problems in this era of fast urbanization.

As usual, these ambitions will be much higher than what is reasonably achievable in two years time. But flexible as planners have to be, the most important is to see if the small steps are at least going in the right direction; the direction of re-creating the Kosovo cities and integrating them in the European network of cities.

Frank D'hondt<sup>7</sup>

<sup>1</sup> <http://en.wikipedia.org>; search on Kosovo

<sup>2</sup> Quoted in the "Spatial Plan of Kosova 2005-2015+", MESP, December 2005

<sup>3</sup> "A Future for Prishtina's past", European Stability Initiative (ESI) and Kosovar Stability Initiative (IKS), 2006.

<sup>4</sup> There are only a few graduated spatial and urban planners in Kosovo; most of them are architects or engineers. The University of Prishtina/Pristina is preparing a masters degree on spatial and urban planning, but could not start it yet, due to lack of financial resources and funding.

<sup>5</sup> [www.unhabitat.org](http://www.unhabitat.org)

<sup>6</sup> See "Urban Trialogues.", Edited by A. Loeckx, K. Shannon, R.Tuts and H.Verschure, UN-HABITAT/KULeuven, ISBN 92-1-131709-6

<sup>7</sup> This paper has been written in personal name. Frank D'hondt was UN-HABITAT consultant in the period 2004-2006, and is actually International Spatial Planning Coordinator of the Municipal Spatial Planning Support Programme of UN-HABITAT, Kosovo Office

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