



Analysis of the urban structure and revitalization of Vasil Andoni Street

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ABSTRACT

The historic zone of Prishtina is part of the city that represents the historic and environmental values of the city, with a rich built heritage as residential, commercial, handicraft, religious. Unfortunately, this rich heritage is heading towards total loss from the neglect and various degradations that are taking place. This research aims to analyze the urban structure of the historic zone of Prishtina, in particular Vasil Andoni Street. Based on the results from research methodology used, comprised from analysis, comparisons, interviews, and questionnaire, this paper aims to give a design proposal for urban revitalization of the Vasil Andoni Street, that would provide the sustainable development of the area, in physical, social, economic and spatial aspect, while protecting and respecting the cultural heritage of the zone.

KEYWORDS

historic zone, urban structure, revitalization, sustainable development, cultural heritage

1. INTRODUCTION

Urban revitalization provides an opportunity to find ways to achieve sustainability and resilience in historic areas. Recently, the need for renovation of old buildings in historic centers is being considered more than ever. This renovation process can be considered as an opportunity to implement the factors of sustainable and resilient development that lead to the preservation of the original architecture of an area [1]. To provide sustainable development of the historic areas the three main pillars of sustainability, social, economic, and environmental dimensions should be included [2]. Historic preservation is closely related to the planning and development of a city, as a major driver of urban revitalization [3]. In order for historic centers to preserve their liveliness, they must be able to develop, change and adapt to today's needs. It is a big challenge to balance the socio-economic demands of the city on the one hand and the protection of cultural heritage on the other, during the city planning processes [4]. Among the most important elements of the historic centers are the streets and their commercial areas that need appropriate policies to deal with their issues so that they can inherit to future generations. They represent not only a means of communication and connection between parts of the city but also the expression of economic and social areas [5]. Preservation and adaptation of heritage buildings for tourism purposes can play an essential role in the socio-economic regeneration of the area where they are located [6]. The danger faced by cities is the loss of their historic centers due to neglect, abandonment, gradual taking of public space from private use, or as a result of territorial urbanization in any part of the region, decentralizing residential, commercial, and office areas. The urban revitalization includes the adaptive reuse of buildings, the recreation of public spaces, and the reorientation of events. Without a good strategy, its deep understanding by local and central authorities, and its coherent implementation, the historic areas of cities can collapse despite the funds, creative efforts, dedication, and expertise invested in their rehabilitation [7]. Urban conservation

is a process of continuous but controlled environmental interventions, which includes the preservation, restoration, and adaptation of heritage buildings by introducing new functions; a process that respects the continuity of history and tradition, and the needs of the community [8].

2. BACKGROUND

The Republic of Kosovo is located in the southeastern part of Europe, with an area of 10,908 km². Prishtina is the capital and also the largest administrative, economic, educational, and cultural center in Kosovo. It is located at the coordinates 42° 40' 0" North and 21° 10' 0" East. The area of Prishtina Municipality is about 523 km² [9].

The story of Prishtina begins with its historic center. This area is among the only parts of the urban structure of the city, which represents the historic and environmental values of the city, with a rich heritage of residential, commercial, handicraft and religious buildings. The importance of the historic zone lay in the bazaar of the city, which is located right in its central part, as well as the two urban stripes that passed through this area. The significant values and importance of this place start from the historical, architectural values to the importance as a place that dates back many centuries, with many monuments that unfortunately are largely damaged, some beyond repair.

The historic zone of Prishtina is facing constant degradation. Especially the old traditional houses are in danger. Some houses are being demolished; others burned allegedly intentionally to make place for newer modern buildings, while day by day the old structures are being replaced with new ones. The different interventions of the front facades of the buildings, the application of inadequate materials, and the inadequate treatment of the stores on the ground floor of the buildings are constantly degrading this area. These are also followed by other major degradations, like the construction of new buildings, which endangers the values of the original architecture of the zone.

The purpose of this study is to analyze the urban structure of the historic zone of Prishtina, in particular Vasil Andoni Street (Fig. 1), and based on the results of the research it aims to give a design proposal for urban

revitalization of this street, balancing the new and the old. The research was initiated by research questions: What is the state of the historic zone of Prishtina? What direction its development has taken? How to act to remedy this situation?

The methodology used in this research consists of both qualitative and quantitative methodology. To answer the research questions following methods are used, starting from:

- Analysis – comprised of data collected from direct observation, books, magazines, urban and conservation plans, and other documents;
- Interviews – direct interviews were organized with different stakeholders, representatives of local and central government institutions, as well as professionals, non-governmental institutions;
- Questionnaires – are addressed to the community in Prishtina to collect information about their knowledge on cultural heritage, community participation in city development, and how they perceive the development of their city;
- Comparative method – consists of the comparative analysis of urban and conservation plans with the current state; comparison of urban plans in different historical periods;
- Evaluation method – determined whether urban and conservation plans have met the set criteria and achieved the required results.

3. ANALYSIS OF THE URBAN STRUCTURE OF VASIL ANDONI STREET

Vasil Andoni Street is a 7 m wide street stretching along 100 m, turning into an arch shape. It consists of 13 buildings, one of which is a monument listed for temporary protection in the Cultural Heritage List. Vasil Andoni Street is one of the central axes of the historic core of the city, where it connects the old part of the bazaar with the main point or nucleus, where are located the most important monuments of the city, like the Great Hammam, Clock Tower, Mosques, City Archive, and many other monuments.

In Fig. 2 the situation with photos of the current state of Vasil Andoni Street is shown. The analysis shows that in some parts of the road, the road is paved with cobblestones, as it was in past, but unfortunately, currently, only 1/3 of it remains, while the vast majority is paved with asphalt.

In Fig. 3 the destination of the current areas of the Vasil Andoni Street and buildings story are analyzed. The area consists of private residential and commercial buildings, and public buildings as well. Regarding the height of the buildings in this area, they vary from one to four stories. Predominant are buildings with ground-level only, altogether five buildings; followed by four buildings with the ground and two stories; three buildings with the ground and one story, and there is only one building with ground and three more stories.



Fig. 1. Vasil Andoni Street in the historic zone of Prishtina (modified map) [10]

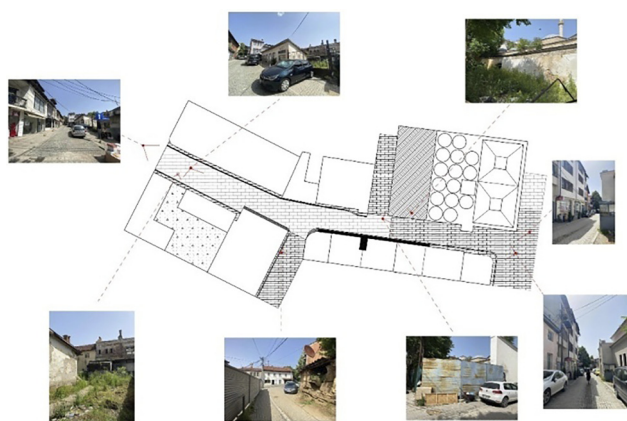


Fig. 2. The situation with the photos of the current state of Vasil Andoni Street

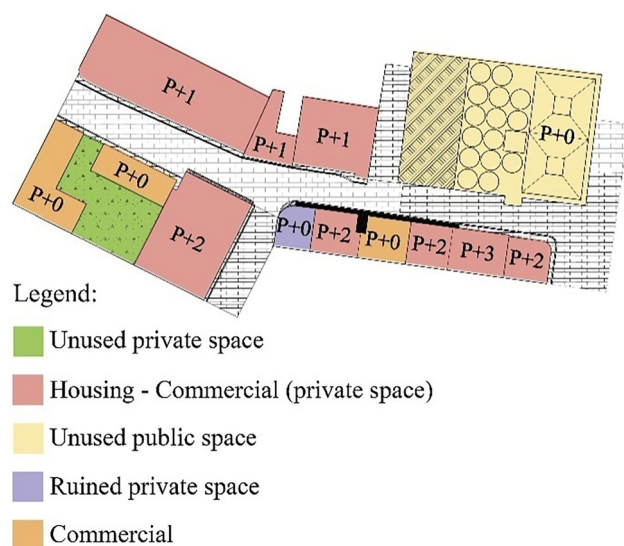


Fig. 3. Analysis of the existing functions of Vasil Andoni Street

4. FINDINGS

The historic zone of Prishtina is facing continuous degradation. Degradation is quite large and diverse, including social, spatial, and environmental aspects. New buildings, in some cases even the middle and high buildings, are being built close to protected monuments, disrespecting requirements for height, distance, and the concept of the traditional architecture of the zone. Another type of damage is non-compliance with the criteria of restoration and conservation during the restoration works on monuments.

There is a lack of lighting in the streets, which makes it difficult to get around, and also the monuments are not illuminated to highlight the features and values of these buildings. Traffic congestions, especially on narrow secondary roads, which connect the main road is another issue. There is a lack of public places within the zone for various social and cultural activities.

According to the survey conducted for the historic zone of Prishtina, there is a huge dissatisfaction among the respondents with the current state of the zone. The questionnaire is addressed to the neighborhood community to find out their daily problems and to gather information about community knowledge on cultural heritage preservation and urban development, community participation in city development, and their perception of the city's development.

In the question of whether the condition of cultural heritage buildings within the historic zone of Prishtina is good, about 86% of respondents answered no, while only about 10% answered yes (Fig. 4a). When asked who is responsible for the current state of the cultural heritage, about 70% of respondents think that central and local government institutions are responsible for this state of the zone, while about 19% of respondents think that the professionals are responsible, and about 10% residents (Fig. 4b). In question what do you think should be more within the historic zone of Prishtina, the largest percentage think that should be more public spaces and greenery areas within the historic zone (Fig. 4c). When asked what would be most affected by the revitalization of this zone, the largest percentage of respondents think in terms of tourism, followed by the economic aspect (Fig. 4d).

5. REVITALIZATION OF THE VASIL ANDONI STREET

According to the findings from the research, there is an urgent need for revitalization of the Vasil Andoni Street where among the main issues that need to be addressed are as follows:

5.1. Utilization of two unused spaces

It is of great importance to create high-quality designs for public spaces on Vasil Andoni Street to create a unique sense of place and attractive area for residents, business owners, and visitors. The two unused spaces at the east and west entrances of the street will be transformed into public spaces for various cultural and recreational activities (Fig. 5). Through attractive elements, street furniture, lights, and greenery, these spaces will be transformed into places of relaxation, recreation, culture, and communication for citizens and visitors (Fig. 6).

5.2. Pavement

Like all the historical nuclei of cities in Kosovo, this area was once paved with cobblestones. Unfortunately, the old cobblestone pavement has survived in very few road segments, while the rest of the road has paved with asphalt. The revitalization design envisages the removal of the subsequent layers of the pavement in the street Vasil Andoni and the restoration of the cobblestones (Fig. 6). The sample of

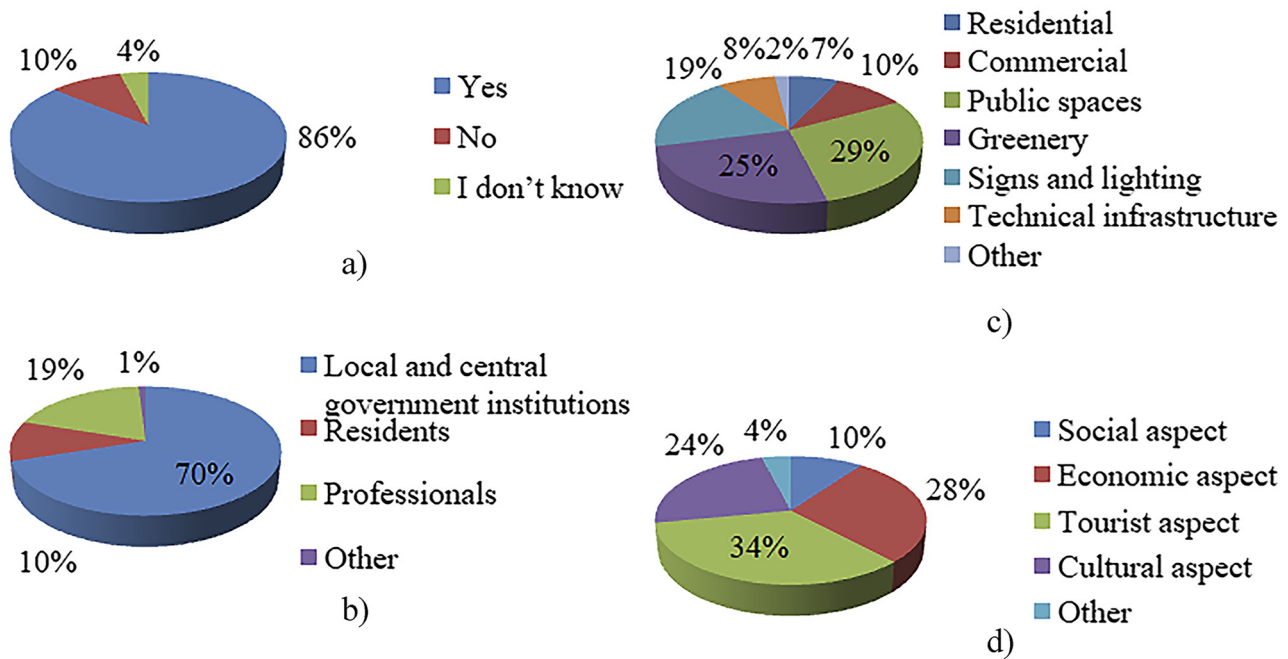


Fig. 4. a) Do you think that cultural heritage buildings in the Historic Zone of Prishtina are in good condition? b) Who do you think is responsible for the state of the Historic Zone of Prishtina? c) What do you think should be more within the Historic Zone of Prishtina? d) What would be most affected by the revitalization of the Historic Zone of Prishtina?

cobblestone that will be applied is the one that is still preserved in some road segments of Prishtina [11].

5.3. Restriction of road use for vehicles

To increase the road safety and efficient functionality of this area, its status should be changed into pedestrian-only street and designed accordingly, allowing the motor traffic in certain hours (Fig. 7). By banning vehicle traffic, pedestrians will be able to move freely on the road, and at the same time, this access would attract more visitors to the area. The motor traffic of street dwellers could be allowed in the morning (06:00–08:00) and the evening (20:00–22:00).

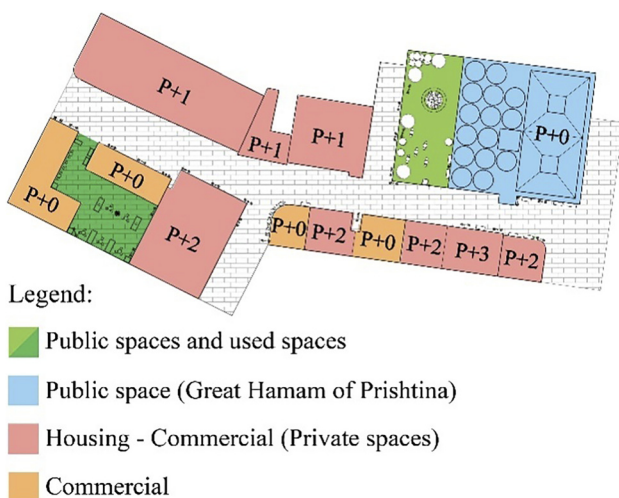


Fig. 5. Proposed functions of Vasil Andoni Street

5.4. Restoration of the building's façades

Shopfronts are an important part of the street character and constitute a visible part of the building. Well-designed and well-maintained front facades of the stores make it a more attractive street for the passerby and the buyer. Good storefront design can enhance the street visual experience, business promotion, and customer experience [12]. Doors give an important impression on the initial perception of the street. They should also have proper visual signs. At the same time the entrance – access to shops must be easy – suitable for the elderly, and those with special needs. The shopfront design should be adapted to existing buildings in the area and adapted to their openings. The material of window and door frames and shopfronts should be made of wood. Shopfronts in the street Vasil Andoni should be



Fig. 6. Design proposal for the situation of Vasil Andoni Street



Fig. 7. Design proposal for the revitalization of Vasil Andoni Street

related to the architectural character of the upper floor of the buildings, in the context of proportion, scale, and layout. It should also be in harmony with neighboring shops, given the size of the openings facing the street (Fig. 7).

5.5. Renovation of the roofs

The proposed material for roof coverings of the buildings in the street Vasil Andoni is the traditional brick tile. In the case of impossibility to secure this model, other tiles with the same material, color, shape, and dimensions can be used.

Gutter material should be copper or zinc, in a dark color, compatible with roof covering. Windows under roofs are allowed, but always respecting the lighting and design criteria of the windows proposed for use in this area.

5.6. The lighting of the street

Designing street lighting in historic centers is a challenging task that seeks to promote the appropriation of the areas, buildings, and nighttime ambiance. Street lighting in Vasil Andoni Street aims to illuminate streets and passageways in a warm white light enhancing the character of the area, promoting commercial activities, and supporting pedestrian safety and security. It is proposed to illuminate the street and the front facades of the buildings to highlight the architectural details, features, and values of these buildings. With lower uniformity levels of light, it will be possible to enhance the historic atmosphere and create a more attractive contrast and texture. Careful consideration should be given to illuminated buildings so that they make a positive contribution to the legibility and image of the historic center at nighttime and the light intensity is properly balanced throughout the area (Fig. 8).



Fig. 8. Design proposal for the revitalization of Vasil Andoni Street

6. CONCLUSIONS

The current condition of the historic zone of Prishtina is not good; therefore emergency intervention is needed, knowing the rich values of this area. The problem is the degradation that is taking place in this area, the neglect by various factors, which unfortunately is leading to the total loss of the zone with many rich cultural heritage assets.

To address these issues is proposed revitalization of Vasil Andoni Street, which can serve as a model also for other roads within this area. A special focus is given to the restoration of the front facades of the buildings and the renovation of the roofs. It is proposed to turn Vasil Andoni into a pedestrian street, by allowing the motor traffic only during limited hours. The entire surface of the road should be paved with cobblestones. Two unused spaces within this street are proposed to transform into public spaces for recreation and social events, providing easy access for people with special needs. The lighting of the street will contribute to street safety and enhancement of the character of the area. Proper explanatory signage, advertisements, lighting, in harmony with the urban character of the zone can make this street tourist-friendly and protected.

Creating more awareness and supplying people with information about the values of the historic zone of Prishtina is crucial for them to realize the importance of the preservation of the rich heritage in this zone.

Urban revitalization of the Vasil Andoni Street would enable the sustainable development of the area in physical, social, economic, and spatial aspects; while protecting and respecting the cultural heritage of the zone.

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