URBAN LIFE AND SOCIAL PROBLEMS IN KOSOVO

Besim GOLLOPENI[1]

SUMMARY

After 1999, population movements from rural to urban settlements and from small towns to large cities increased, and thus urban life began to dynamise. This increase in urban population was expressed as a result of urban industrialisation and the destruction of many houses in rural areas as a result of the recent war (1999) in Kosovo, poor conditions of rural infrastructure, and the search for a better life in cities. At this time, the demands of Kosovar society for housing and business were great, while Kosovo had not yet consolidated the relevant institutions (just emerged from the war) that would design and implement urban development policies and strategies in relation to the demands of society; therefore, the urban population increased, and, at the same time, social–urban problems increased too. Through the method of analysis — comparison and interview (N = 13) with professionals in the urban field — the study reflects the (demographic) urban growth, the advantages of urban life, and the social–urban problems manifested at the beginning of the 21st century.

Key words: urbanization, rural, urban, social–urban problems, uncontrolled.

INTRODUCTION

Looking at history, city planning in Kosovo dates back to the period after the Second World War, but in practice it does not have significant results. During the 1970s, both in developed countries and in Kosovo, strong socio-economic and political changes took place, which influenced the development of cities. The industrialisation and urbanisation of urban centres made the migration of the population from rural to urban areas bring rapid changes in urban development in many countries of the world, while in Kosovo, these changes with special emphasis have occurred in the last two decades, after 1999. The change in population structure has led to two types of internal migration: migration from rural to urban areas and from peripheral areas (small towns) to large cities, especially in the capital of Kosovo, Prishtina (Gollopeni, 2016a;

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[1] **Prof. Ass. Dr. Besim GOLLOPENI**, besim.gollopeni@gmail.com,
University of Mitrovica 'Isa Boletini', Republic of Kosovo.

2016b). Many people left the village to get a quality education, find a job, and have a better life in the city. The towns were constantly growing as the villages were depopulated (Gollopeni, 2015).

Urbanisation is a complex process of change of rural lifestyles into urban ones. It showed an almost exponential growth since the end of the 19th century (Bryant et al., 1982; Antrop, 2000; Champion, 2001; Pacione, 2001; Antrop, 2004). Urbanisation and development of urban life in Kosovo with all their pace and dimensions are new, despite the fact that some cities have a relatively long history and tradition. Until the 20th century, particularly after the Second World War, Kosovo accounted for about 15% of the total urbanised population. After this period, life began to be dynamic in all its dimensions, and the urban population was constantly growing. The number of cities increased from 5 (1948) to 30 by the end of the 1980s, and among them there were mixed cities, which were neither village nor city. After 2000, with the decentralisation process, 8 cities were added in Kosovo, and today there are a total of 38 cities/municipalities and 1,466 rural settlements (villages). As a result of population movements, political changes, and lifestyle, the need arose for modifications in the field of spatial/urban planning. In Europe, due to the urgent need to manage changes in planning concepts and strategies, modifications are constantly made. The most important turning point is the awareness that spatial planning is not simply related to the physical division of land for different uses, but that it is a spatial manifestation of the model of economic, social, cultural, and environmental development of society (MESP, 2002).

Kosovo's institutions have been unprepared since 1999 for the socio-economic developments accompanied by uncontrolled migration of the population from rural areas to urban areas. Trends in urban development in Kosovo are not favourable even today. Cities are characterised by major problems, with numerous illegal constructions that have caused problems in infrastructure, loss of agricultural land, unbalanced development, and social problems, which have made life difficult for citizens. In the first decade of the 21st century, every Kosovar citizen who had the opportunity to build did so, without following the law or obtaining permission from the responsible institutions. Due to the high demand for housing and business facilities, especially in large urban centres, construction has taken place in various urban areas, without urban plans (permits) and often accompanied by corrupt acts. Citizens and institutional officials who were obliged to enforce the law were afraid of illegal builders. On the one hand, citizens did not have the courage to denounce illegal builders, and on the other, they did not feel it their responsibility to do so while the institutions responsible for stopping illegal constructions were afraid to confront illegal builders or were their collaborators. Moreover, this situation had gone so far as to kill public

officials, such as the case of the murder of architect Rexhep Lucit, Director of Planning, Urbanism and Construction of the Municipality of Prishtina (2000), who with professional and intellectual potential made efforts to implement laws and urban plans to stop the urban degradation of Prishtina. This situation and others have made people (citizens and state officials) silent out of fear and distrusting of justice institutions, thus causing cities to degrade and socio-urban problems to increase.

Since 2003, with the support of the international community, Kosovo has made symbolic progress in the field of spatial/urban planning, central and local institutions have been established, and laws, plans, and spatial strategies have been drafted, but despite these achievements, in the absence of implementation of law and urban plans, social–urban problems continue to be evident. It is true that life in the city has advantages over life in the countryside; however, during the transitional period that Kosovo was going through, this time did not pass without antagonisms between people from the city and those who migrated from the countryside.

To give a clear picture of the situation, this study aims to present the (demographic) urban growth, the advantages of urban life, and the social–urban problems manifested at the beginning of the 21st century.

TRENDS (DYNAMICS) OF URBANISATION

Urbanisation is a process whereby populations move from rural to urban areas, enabling cities and towns to grow. It can also be termed as the progressive increase of the number of people living in towns and cities. It is highly influenced by the notion that cities and towns have made better economic, political, and social advancements compared to rural areas (Conserve Energy Future, 2020).

Urbanisation is a social, economic, political, and cultural process, which takes place in a certain time segment. The process of urbanisation varies from country to country, influenced by the different social, political, economic, and cultural conditions of that society. Based on the history of the most developed cities in the world, in Western countries, industrialisation, economic developments (division of labour, professionalism, change of social actions, change of social structure), and population growth are the main elements that have developed Western urbanisation. In Eastern countries, the developments and effects of the economy, education, and civilization have influenced the development of these cities (Likaj, 2013).

Harvey emphasises that urbanisation is an aspect of the created environment caused by the spread of industrial capitalism. In traditional societies, the city had obvious differences from the village. In the modern world, industry blurs

the divide between town and country. Agriculture is mechanised and run simply on the principles of price and profit. Like work in industry, this process also weakens differences in the ways of social life between people in urban and rural areas (Giddens, 2002). Like Harvey, Castells emphasises that the spatial form of a society is closely related to the overall mechanism of its development. Sociologists and anthropologists link urbanisation to human behaviour and the relationships between them. Wirth (1938) says that not only the population makes it an urban place; the influence that urban areas exert on the social life of the people is more important. According to Wirth, it is difficult for the population to define a place as urban. Especially where population density is used, as suggested by Wilcix (1926), it would be meaningless in an urban definition. Mayer (1964) argues that it is the individual that constitutes urban life. Fischer's (1975) idea, on the other hand, differs from that of Wirth's; according to him, urban areas have density, as residents are heterogeneous.

Until the second half of the last century, Kosovo was underdeveloped. The late incorporation of the elements of the capitalist economy, the lack of economic development of the territory, the colonial position of the country, the concentration in the agrarian sector, etc., made for specific urbanisation. This situation began to change in the second half of the last century, with late industrialization, economic development, and advancement in the education and health systems, along with other socio-economic and political advancements in the country. During this period, with the expansion of the municipal system, demographic inflows into cities began. After the establishment of the first public university of Kosovo in Prishtina (1970) and other important institutions, Prishtina began to become more attractive to the population from rural settlements and small urban centres throughout Kosovo, as well as for people from Preshevo, Medvegja, Bujanovc, Northern Macedonia, and other areas inhabited by Albanians.

Urbanisation in Kosovo started in the 1960s, when large urban centres began to extend to small urban centres that were previously rural settlements with a central position, which later received the status of municipal centres. Significant developments in the demographic growth of cities took place until the late 1980s, when there was stagnation due to political developments in the country.

In 1953 the urban population of Kosovo accounted for 15.5% of the total population, in 1981 32.4%, and in 1991 (estimate) about 36%. In the period of 1953–1981, the urban population increased by 388,300 inhabitants or 306.9%, and in the period of 1953–1991, around 600,000 inhabitants or around 480%. In 2011, the urban population in Kosovo accounted for about 40% of the total population (Islami, 2008).

Table 1: Level of urbanisation in Kosovo in the period 1948–2011

Year	1948	1953	1961	1971	1981	1991	2011
% of urban population	9.7	15.5	19.5	26.9	32.5	37	38.3

Source: For the years 1948–1981, population censuses; for 1991 estimation (Pushka, "Porast stanovništva kosovskih gradova", Stanovnišvo, no. 3-4 / 1990 - 1-2 / 1991, Belgrade, CDI, IDN, p. 181; for 2011, KAS population censuses.

The degree of urbanisation in the seven regional centres of Kosovo, according to the censuses of 1981, 1991 (estimation), and 2011, did not make significant differences, with the exception of Prishtina, which leaves behind other urban centres. But in the first decade of the 21st century, all regional centres of Kosovo recorded urban demographic growth of about 10%–20%. According to our estimates, about half of Kosovo's population lives in urban areas, which is approximately the average of the global population and neighbouring countries in the region.

Table 2: Urban population in Kosovo and some countries in the region, 2011

Country	Urban population	% of total
Kosovo	661,586	38.3
Albania	1,747,593	53.25
North Macedonia	1,212,740	57.09
Serbia	3,907,243	55.22

Source: For Kosovo, Kosovo Agency of Statistics (2011); for Albania, North Macedonia, and Serbia, href = 'https: //www.macrotrends.net/countries/MKD/north-macedonia/urban-population'> North Macedonia Urban Population 1960-2020 . www.macrotrends.net. [Accessed 19 Aug. 2020].

Globally, more people live in urban areas (55%) than in rural areas. In 1800, 3.2% of the population lived in cities, in 1850 about 6%, in 1900 about 12%, and in 1950 29.8% (increase of 10 times), while in 1995 45% of the world population lived in cities (Pushka, et al. 2000). Developed countries have reached a high level of urbanisation (over 70%) and now have small urban population growth. By 2050, 68% of the world's population is projected to be urban (UNDESA - PD, 2019). According to our estimates and forecasts, by 2050, about 60%–70% of the total population of Kosovo is projected to be urban.

RESEARCH METHODS

In this research, 13 semi-structured interviews were conducted, with an interview duration of about an hour and a half, with professionals in the field who were researchers or have engaged in drafting projects/urban plans and development policies in the last two decades in Kosovo. The age of the respondents varied from 29 to 60 years old. Of the total number of respondents, nine were male and four female. The interviews were conducted in Albanian. In order to understand as many of the interviewees as possible, we conducted free conversations so that the interviews would be cheaper and more tiring, and at all times notes were kept that were then selected and systematised as needed. Each interview has an identification code (P1–P13).

Table 3: Descriptive data on the sample of respondents

Number of respondents	Total 13
Gender	Male 69% Female 31%
Average age of respondents	47.3 years
Average years of experience	14 years
Education level	University studies 45% Master studies 41% PhD studies 9% Other 5%

We do not claim that this small sample is statistically representative, but based on the experiences of the interviewees, the involvement of key experts at the national level, and personal experience and research in this field, we can come to conclusions.

RESULTS AND DISCUSION: URBAN LIFE AND ANTAGONISMS

The process of urbanisation in Kosovar society is in a dynamic form, because it is still very anomic for all groups and social stratifications, for both migrant groups and the early inhabitants of the city. Rural–urban migrations have led to a breakdown of socio-demographic homogeneity and the creation of new socio-professional structures and special regional-demographic types. In the process of this transformation, it was possible to observe an increasingly small

percentage of the agricultural population with the transition to non-agricultural activities through professional mobility and schooling of new generations, but also directly, without professional and educational training (Islami, 2008). "Urban migrations, in addition to the transformations they have brought, have led to the clash of rural and urban cultures" (49-year-old female, P13). Many families migrating from the countryside to the city brought with them their traditional rural culture through the elements of living; large family communities; the way of organisation and functioning of their homes; the fencing of high-walled yards; the construction of accompanying structures that in most cases served as warehouses, garages, fire houses, or stables; drying clothes by placing them through the wires of balconies, etc. In such situations, the city or city life resembles a 'ruralism'. Some cities in terms of level of urbanisation and functioning resembled a village. The average number of members per household in Kosovo is 5.8, in urban areas 5.1, and in rural areas 6.4 (KAS, 2013). Although the culture of life in the city differs from that in the countryside, it nevertheless has its own similarities, when it is known that we are dealing with cities - mixed towns neither village nor city. According to Durkheim and Merton, these social complexities form anomic urbanisation. Anomic urbanisation is formed as a consequence of norm loss (Durkheim defines norm loss as normless) and irregularity (according to Merton). The social structure undergoes a significant transformation in itself. The anomic situation is formed by changes in the social and cultural structure of city life, and the incompatibility of these two structures forms what Merton calls irregularities in the city structure, which is also reflected in the process of urbanisation (Likaj, 2013).

What makes the urban way of life special and controversial to some extent is the discrimination and segregation manifested between people of urban and rural origin. When bad things happened in the city, the people from the city blamed those who had migrated from the villages, while the latter did the same for the people from the city. Thus, deep antagonisms were created between citizens from the city and migrants from the villages. Citizens who migrated to large cities were often not welcomed by the local society, because after a long time of social and cultural homogeneity it is extremely difficult to accept social and cultural diversity. Another factor is that these social actors had formed their own social identity and were not prepared to share it with other social actors. These divisions further evolved, leading to identifications and labelling as 'peasants', 'mountain men', and 'uneducated', and even the identification of cafes, restaurants, and public places such as of peasants or of citizens, leading to social–urban division and inequality.

Kosovar society faces many problems, challenges, and anomalies. In recent years, we encounter an urban discourse that has to do with the categorisation of people based on the drinks they consume, categorising them into two types:

a) citizens and b) villagers. This local discourse has made a large part of the bars in the capital but also in some other cities not serve drinks, such as Fanta, Sprite, or even juices, just not to be categorised or identified as villagers. It has been considered a shame to consume such drinks in Prishtina for years. This fact brings to mind the a-culture and counterculture of the 1960s in the US, where 'Coca-Cola was produced for white people, and Pepsi for black people' (40-year-old male, P1). These situations are expressed as a result of the superior feeling of the locals in relation to the citizens of rural areas. And, naturally, such situations contribute to divisions, inequalities, and social differentiation in the city.

ADVANTAGES OF URBAN LIFE (IN THE CITY) AND SOCIAL PROBLEMS

Urbanisation is a social process that affects social relations in urban life and creates advantages and disadvantages for the urban environment. Through the placement of modern industries in cities, more people have been attracted to migrate from rural to urban areas due to better employment opportunities. Industrialisation has increased employment opportunities by giving people the opportunity to work in modern sectors in job categories that allow for economic gain. In cities, there are better physical infrastructures, educational opportunities, health services, and social life. For this reason, more and more people are encouraged to migrate to cities to receive a wide variety of social benefits and services that are not available in rural areas. Such a situation has led many people in Kosovo to leave rural settlements and settle in cities. This is due to the fact that cities offer countless opportunities, such as:

- **Better education infrastructure and opportunities** - Cities offer a variety of schools   and educational programmes with higher quality, which makes the choice easier and greater for pupils and students. 'Villages were forgotten by institutions after 1999, and people from villages were forced to migrate to the city in search of a better life' (43-year-old female, P10).

- **Better health infrastructure and services** provide specialised and higher-quality health services, which are not available in the villages.

- **Greater employment opportunities** - The opportunity to find a job in modern sectors and with higher economic benefits is many times greater in the city. The city offers employment opportunities for all categories of society, which are not available in the villages. 'In the absence of jobs in the countryside, people saw the city as a place of opportunity, and so it happened' (55-year-old male, P6).

- **Culture and sports** - The city provides the most suitable infrastructure for cultural and sports activities, offering citizens a variety of opportunities for development and entertainment.

- **Social emancipation** - For conventional societies such as Kosovar society, the city is a good opportunity to emancipate. To have a dignified life, people are forced to attend higher education or schools/vocational courses, which lead to better and greater employment opportunities and thus, detached from community life, close social ties and progress towards social emancipation.

- **Public transport** is not developed in cities as in developed countries; however, it is more available than in the countryside and creates greater convenience.

- **Better opportunities to meet new people** - Due to the larger number of people in the city and cultural diversity, there are better opportunities to meet new people and benefit from social interaction in various forms. These are opportunities that one can hardly find in rural life in Kosovo when dealing with a homogeneous population.

- **Dynamic life** - The city is characterised by dynamic life. People are in school, in courses, employed in one or more jobs, and have little free time.

- **Shopping centres** - Mainly large shopping centres are located in urban areas, and these have enabled shopping in one place and at more favourable prices for people. So they have enabled easy access through public transport, a short car ride, or even walking.

Industrialisation, the establishment of administrations in cities, economic zones, tourism, etc., provided jobs, which has led many people, especially qualified young people, to migrate to the city. Cities are equipped with modern communication technologies, with social facilities, school infrastructure, health, ways of dressing, emancipation, and freedom of women in particular, and people believe they can lead a happy life in cities. Historically, urbanisation has been accompanied by significant economic and social transformations. For example, urban living is associated with higher levels of literacy and education, better health, lower fertility and longer life expectancy, greater access to social services, and greater opportunities for cultural and political participation (UNDESA, 2014). However, rapid and widespread urbanisation mainly results in negative effects and social problems. The rapid growth of Kosovar cities from rural to urban migration has led to:

- **Lack of housing** - The demand for housing was high in the first decade of the 21st century as a result of the destruction of houses by the recent war in Kosovo and migration from the countryside to the city. Large demands for housing, on the one hand, and the lack of consolidation of institutions to design and implement urban plans and strategies, on the other hand, have led to illegal construction and superstructure in cities, thus causing urban chaos. 'Cities became places where many people intended to make a living or do

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business, and thus, by not enforcing existing laws and urban plans, built out of place, causing urban chaos' (57-year-old female, P7).

- **Increase in the cost of rental price of apartments, especially in Prishtina**
- Very high demand for housing has resulted in an increase in the price of rent. The rent of apartments was very high in relation to the average salary in Kosovo and unaffordable for households with one employee.

- **Air/environmental pollution** was present especially during the winter season and was mostly detected in cities such as Prishtina, Fushe Kosovo, and Obliq. Causes of air pollution were power plants for electricity production, heating of households with coal, and cars (urban traffic). 'One of the problems worth mentioning is environmental pollution, where pollution figures are alarming, especially in Pristina' (60-year-old male, P2). Poor air quality has significant health consequences, as it produces higher rates of respiratory and heart disease and higher mortality rates in cities (Stylianou & Nicolich, 2009).

- **Lack of water (in some cities)** - A significant part of cities have a lack of water, especially during the summer season.

- **Lack of schools and large number of students in the classrooms** - School infrastructure is missing in a significant part of cities, especially in Prishtina, as a result of urban growth. Schools are missing in some neighbourhoods of the city, and classrooms were overcrowded with students (over 40 students per class), causing dissatisfaction with the quality of education. Such a situation is still present today in many cities of Kosovo, as a result of urban growth.

- **Noise** - In the absence of law enforcement by relevant institutions and civic silence, noise has taken place in Kosovar cities day and night, causing turmoil and civic insecurity. Noise caused by cafes, restaurants, and citizens with a minimum of civic education was present at all times. 'To be honest, in recent years there has been a civic awareness. After 22:00, there is no more noise as there was years ago; however, institutions still need to do more to take action against premises and citizens who do not respect the law of noise' (53-year-old male, P8).

- **Occupancy of public and private property** - After 1999, as a result of the war in Kosovo, many families were left without housing and, in an attempt to settle housing, migrated to the city. Many citizens usurped private and public property for material gain. This situation has led to social conflicts, causing fear and civic insecurity. For years, many citizens were denied property rights as a result of the usurpation of their property. This situation progressed after the intervention of local institutions and support from international organisations.

- **Lack of parking** is present in most cities in Kosovo. In the absence of parking lots, people park their cars in the wrong place (in green spaces,

sidewalks, etc.), often leading to interpersonal conflicts, thus causing fear and insecurity for citizens.

- **Illegal constructions** became an integral part of Kosovar society. In the absence of implementation of laws and urban plans, many citizens built without following laws and urban plans, causing urban chaos. Illegal construction became an obstacle for citizens to have a dignified life. 'Today, we encounter houses, buildings, and entire neighbourhoods built in Kosovar cities that require urban revitalisation as a result of field construction. Illegal constructions have prevented the expansion of roads, sidewalks, and green spaces, and this situation brings stress and nervousness to citizens' (29-year-old female, P3).

- **Public transport** - In most cities, except Prishtina and some other cities, there is a lack of public transport (interurban). This is because most cities are small in area and in terms of demographics; however, this has also happened in the absence of urban policies. Although public transport in Prishtina is organised, it is still far from the standards of developed countries and thus does not meet the requirements of citizens. 'Inadequate itinerary, lack of public transport coverage of all neighbourhoods of the city, and inadequate conditions have made people not use public transport, causing chaos in urban traffic' (43-year-old female, P12).

- **Organised crime and corruption** - In Kosovo, there are over 300,000 illegal constructions. Illegal constructions have taken place in urban centres, suburbs, and urban parks throughout the territory. Illegal builders are natural persons, legal entities, and organised groups who, for material benefits, have destroyed cities and made life difficult for citizens, without facing the law to the proper extent.

- **Lack of green spaces and physical infrastructure for cycling** is present in most Kosovar cities. This situation makes it impossible for citizens to enjoy green spaces (for recreation, relaxation, and entertainment), and people who ride bicycles in the absence of physical infrastructure risk their lives, as fatalities on urban roads in Kosovo are not uncommon. 'Recently, some municipalities have begun to pay attention to the construction of physical infrastructure for cycling; this is to be welcomed — better late than never' (45-year-old female, P4).

- **Lack of family privacy in the city** - Many buildings are built close to each other, so that, in some cases, it can be easier to communicate from the living room to the neighbour in the other building than with family members in the same apartment in the next room. This situation has led to a loss of privacy/intimacy for the family, causing nervousness, stress, and social dissatisfaction.

Stress, in turn, impairs the mental health of urban residents. Much research finds that urban residents have more mental health concerns than rural

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residents. In particular, they have much higher levels of mood and anxiety disorders and of schizophrenia (Lederbogen et al., 2011). This situation, created over the years, has occurred as a result of non-implementation of law, urban plans, and lack of institutional action to stop illegal builders.

According to Islami (2008), looting, usurpation, threats, aggressive behaviour and various offenses, willingness to create chaotic situations, disregard for urban norms, throwing garbage through windows, spilling water, noise in the late hours of the night, lack of urban education, etc. are an integral part of the process of 'ruralisation' of our cities since mid-June 1999. Immigrants from rural areas established in urban areas, without any preparation for city life, continue to live a rural life and cultivate a rural mentality in all its dimensions (Islami, 2008).

'The uninterrupted movement of the population has aggravated the urban areas, which, in turn, are developing without any control of construction and spatial development. The most fertile rural areas, located in the lowlands, valleys, and terraces of rivers and lakes, are increasingly being occupied by houses and yards, factories, roads, mines, schools, hospitals, and other facilities, all unplanned constructions and often illegal' (D'hondt).

Urbanisation also has the effect of dissolving the traditional family (leading to a family with a smaller number of members). A joint family cannot be kept in the cities due to the high cost and way of life. People prefer to live in the nuclear family. According to Wirth, the city's way of life has some social peculiarities, such as the replacement of close social ties with secondary ties, the fading of strong tribal ties, the fading of family importance in the social context, the loss of a sense of bond formation close to neighbours, and the fading of traditional social solidarity (Alver, et al 2007; Likaj, 2013). A possible explanation is that cities in Kosovo were faced with a more or less forced urbanisation 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 (D'hondt).

CONCLUSIONS

Rapid urbanisation and migration from rural areas and small towns to larger urban areas has changed the social structure. First of all, rapid urbanisation has brought economic, social, and cultural changes. The industrialisation of cities allowed the transition from the old agricultural economy to a modernised economy and enabled the creation of new jobs. It is difficult to exactly determine the process of urbanisation in Kosovo, but we can conclude that it began in the 1960s and continued until the 1990s. It then stagnated due to the political situation in the country until 1999. After 1999, accelerated

urbanisation began, with many changes in the political, economic, social, and cultural structure, which have influenced the Kosovar society in general. At this time, there was a rapid increase in the urban population. Currently, about half (50%) of Kosovo's population lives in urban areas. People migrate to cities to gain a better standard of living. They are influenced by urban pull factors (education, employment, better life) and rural push factors (dissatisfied with rural life: poor physical infrastructure, poor-quality education and health, unemployment). Urban life provided better employment conditions, education, and health services than in rural areas, as well as greater access to social services and opportunities for social, cultural, personal, and family development activities. This situation has contributed to the antagonisms of citizens from the city and the countryside, creating unpleasant situations and deepening social differentiations and divisions in cities.

Despite some institutional progress made in the urban area, these changes were not enough to better manage the urban situation. After 2005, Kosovo drafted urban development plans and strategies; however, the lack of quality and implementation of these plans, which would provide solutions to many social–urban problems that plague Kosovar society, remains a matter of concern.

The urban situation is not at the level of urban standards. There are cities and neighbourhoods that do not meet even the minimum urban criteria and require revitalisation in order to create conditions for a quality urban life. In the absence of commitment of competent institutions, in cities we have uncontrolled and illegal developments, imbalance, urban pollution, heavy traffic, noise, urban chaos, crop matches, lack of water, and lack of adequate school and health infrastructure, causing social problems. This situation lasting for two decades now requires the special attention of the policymaking and leadership class, higher commitment and activation of experts in the field, and public awareness. Government and policymakers must plan for and manage the impacts of urbanization. Only by addressing these interconnected issues, and both the technical and political barriers to change, can they ensure a good quality of life for urban dwellers.

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