

TRANSFORMATION OF PUBLIC SPACES AS TENDENCY OF OVERCOMING FRAGMENTATION IN DIVIDED CITIES: CASE STUDY OF KOSOVSKA MITROVICA

UDC 711.435(497.115)

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Abstract. *The aim of this paper is to investigate the role of public spaces, their transformation in the Kosovska Mitrovica city divided to the southern and northern part and their importance in order to overcome this fragmentation. It is important that the development and transformation of public spaces in this divided city contribute to the materialization of accessible spaces which promote the social integration and tolerance through an inclusive processes. The applied spatial-functional analysis of the mapped public spaces in the city as well as the observation of the social interaction in common public spaces constitute the framework of this paper. Concluding remarks provide an answer to the question of whether and to what extent the transformation of public spaces in the years after the war in Northern and Southern Kosovska Mitrovica affect the interaction of different ethnic groups, as well as the tendency to overcome fragmentation in this divided city.*

Key words: *Kosovska Mitrovica, divided city, public spaces, transformation, fragmentation, integration.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Divided cities are a common phenomenon in the modern world. Each individual case is influenced by a specific, inherent series of influencing factors and consists of as many different forms of manifestation of divisions. In a group of politically and ethnically divided cities such as Sarajevo and Mostar in the region of former Yugoslavia, Jerusalem in Israel, Nicosia in Cyprus and Beirut in Lebanon, the extreme of division is expressed through sovereignty, ethnic and national affiliation, religion and culture. Searching for the term "divided city" reveals the work of many scientists who use the same term but have very

Received December 16, 2022 / Revised January 21, 2023 / Accepted January 27, 2023

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different research perspectives, thus different approaches in identifying and categorizing this phenomenon appear, but it is evident that this topic is not sufficiently researched.

A divided city is defined as a city consisting of two or more different entities that must be spatially separated, mutually exclusive and relatively homogeneous enclaves (Nagle, 2009). Van Kempen (2007) and Marcus (1998) consider highly fragmented cities as divided cities, while O'Leary (2007) calls this phenomenon political division, where an entity becomes divided by a barricade in the form of a wall, fence or other type of physical barrier. The physical boundaries that separate cities have a practical and symbolic function. They represent "conflict infrastructure" (Till et al., 2013), such as walls, barricades and buffer zones, which are not only physical but also social and symbolic divisions (Pullan et al., 2012). The symbolic division is perhaps the deepest. This causes a feeling of insecurity and distancing from the population on the other side (Pullan et al., 2012). Symbols of division can also become "infrastructures of peace" by turning an artifact of conflict into a promise of peace (Till et al., 2013). Such symbols send a message of unity and cooperation, (Till et al., 2013). Even in cases where members of divided communities are free to move across divides, they often choose not to do so, either out of personal conviction or principle.

As physical space is the result of social processes and changes, so human behavior is determined by the physical, as well as the social and cultural context. It starts from the fact that the possible transformation of space in divided cities is approached from the point of view of reshaping the socio-spatial relations on which the patterns of public space use are based. Public spaces by their characteristics and function serve a public purpose and enable social communication, are accessible and open to all social groups and individuals and are key elements for successful cities as well as their ability to revitalize and create opportunities for economic and social development.

The research is conducted on the example of Kosovska Mitrovica as a research platform, because this city belongs to a group of politically and ethnically divided cities in the period after the NATO aggression and the war in Kosovo and Metohija from 1999 until today. The spatial divisions of the post-war urban development of Kosovska Mitrovica are discussed in their symbolic, ethno-demographic and institutional dimensions.

The starting hypothesis of the research is that public spaces in divided cities, with their physical and functional structure, encourage the concentration of users from divided ethnic communities and their socio-social interaction and integrate them spontaneously and naturally.

The aim of this research is to determine and analyze whether and to what extent public spaces in divided cities contribute to social integration and tolerance of a divided population through inclusive processes. Based on the initial hypothesis and the goal of this research, the following questions are asked:

1. How residents of divided cities communicate in public spaces and why everyday activities and mixing in public spaces are important?
2. How the use of public spaces affects interethnic relations?
3. Can public spaces be considered as tools that contribute to conflict transformation efforts in such contexts?

In the first part of the paper, the goal of the research is presented within the broader theoretical and methodological context and the premises for the study of public spaces in divided cities are set. In the second part of the paper, the research of public spaces is shown on the example of Kosovska Mitrovica. The results of the research provide an answer to the question of whether public spaces in divided cities contribute to the interaction of populations from different ethnic groups, and serve as tools for their integration in order to overcome fragmentation in divided cities.

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1. Applied methods

The research work was carried out by combining several basic and specific scientific methods and techniques that are applied in the field of architecture and urbanism, as well as related areas of social sciences, sociology and urban psychology, based on spatial and sociological theories about the relationship between urban space and social processes, applicable for public spaces that generate different patterns of meeting presence and gathering of people. The general scientific method that was applied in the research work is the descriptive and analytical-synthetic method. The paper contains the case study of Kosovska Mitrovica and discusses the importance of public spaces as accessible spaces that promote the social integration of the population in a divided city.

2.2. Criteria for selection of open spaces

The contact zone plays an important role in the spatial configuration of divided cities. It is one of the main components in the configuration of the spatial structure, which can have physical barriers of divided parties, but also various intangible socio-political restrictions in continuous political uncertainty.

Experiences testify that the Master Plan of Nicosia, is a revolutionary template for the revitalization of the city within two communities, which defined four areas for the future integrated development of a sustainable city. The implementation phase is still ongoing, with many special projects. The main emphasis in these investment projects is on improving the flow of traffic and transportation, visual improvements in landscape and urban forms, restoration of historical buildings with a special focus on revitalization of public spaces (Oktay, 2007). Solidere's thirty year Master Plan of Beirut included the shaping of public spaces by private enterprises marginalizing state interests due to economic inequalities and market policies, neglecting public services that have no economic value, such as public transport or social housing (Höckel, 2007). The public spaces that are included in these plans are not only open spaces but also shopping centers that are promoted in this way.

Scholars' opinions about shopping centers as public spaces are contradictory. Since they are private, as such they limit access to people and ideas that do not enhance the image of consumption. Due to these limitations of people and ideas, shopping centers can influence social behavior by slowing it down (Bonham, 2015). However, shopping centers that are characterized by a higher level of comfort, safety, concentration of activities and content, become better, more acceptable and more attractive places for socialization Đukić & Cvetković, 2017).

The criteria used in this research for the selection of public spaces are:

1. Contact zone or demarcation zone in the urban area of the city and all public spaces belonging to this location,
2. Public spaces as places where anyone can freely gather and communicate ideas or information, where the space can be used for different purposes or functions,
3. Shopping centres as a substitute for public spaces in response to various social and economic trends,
4. Previous research and experiences on examples of divided cities in the region and the world.

2.3. Study area

In divided cities, people from different communities have motivations for sharing space that are often not related to the desire to nurture community or diversity. Instead, ease of access is a key matter of expectation regarding the sharing of public space that can be understood as spreading across a spectrum of different attitudes (e.g., tolerance, indifference, interaction), which is important in overcoming fragmentation in every respect.

Kosovska Mitrovica as a research platform enables field research of selected public spaces by the method of observation of the researched phenomenon of behavior and social interaction of a divided population through the appropriate spatial context.

2.3.1. Brief history and the aftermath of the war

Kosovska Mitrovica is a town settlement and the seat of the municipality of the same name in Serbia, which is located in Kosovo and Metohija and is one of the oldest settlements in this region. It is mentioned for the first time in medieval written documents. The name Mitrovica originates from the 14th century, after the church of Saint Demetrius of Thessaloniki, which was nearby the Zvečan fortification, and which in 1315 the Serbian king Milutin donated to his endowment - the Banjska monastery. As a result of the 1999 conflict, Kosovska Mitrovica became an important border town between areas dominated by Serbs and Albanians. Over the centuries, until the 1990s, Mitrovica was a multicultural city, an important industrial center, an important communication hub and a center of cultural development. The process of polarization of the urban community was less noticeable, observed from the late 1980s until the radical division in 1999 and is connected with the process of political transformation, the breakup of Yugoslavia and the Albanian-Serbian conflict over Kosovo and Metohija. After the bombing in 1999, this city became the focus of ethnic conflicts between the two communities. The international forces of KFOR and the UN police occupied the main bridge on the Ibar River to prevent the escalation of the conflict.

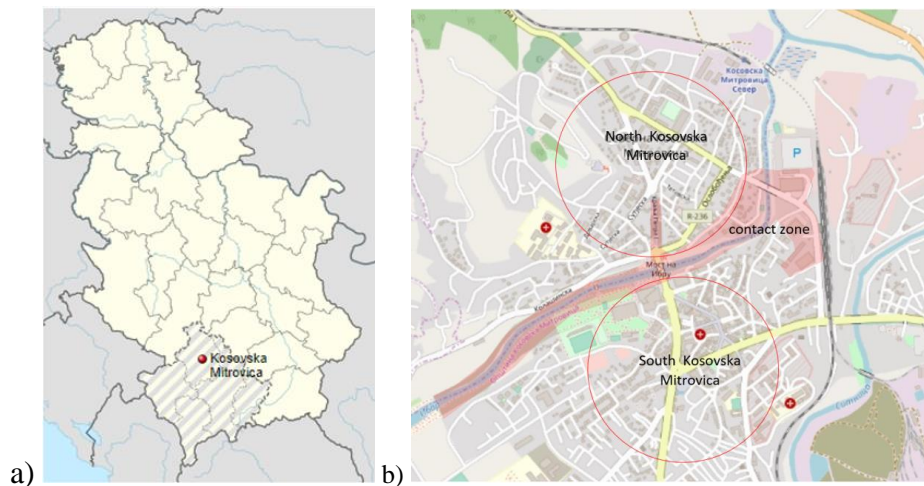


Fig. 1 a) Location of Kosovska Mitrovica, b) Divided city of Kosovska Mitrovica north and south of the Ibar River.

(Source: https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/thumb/2/29/Serbia_location_map_28with_Kosovo%29.svg/800px-Serbia_location_map_%28with_Kosovo%29.svg.png)

The division of the municipality of Kosovska Mitrovica into two de facto municipalities, North Kosovska Mitrovica with a Serbian majority, and South Kosovska Mitrovica with an Albanian ethnic majority, institutionally, geopolitically and ethnically, contributed to its functioning as two separate cities even today (Božović, 2022).

2.3.2 Selected types of public space

Public spaces in Kosovska Mitrovica on the banks of the Ibar River have changed from embedded in the social fabric of the city to part of a more impersonal and fragmented urban environment. Much of the current interest in urban design of public spaces in this city is focused on different creation and management. Public spaces and their transformation over time, in both parts of the city that are used today by ethnic communities, are important spaces for the interaction of a divided population.

Observations were made in the contact zone of the divided parties in Kosovska Mitrovica, in public spaces where the possibility of interaction between the divided populations is evident (Fig. 2), and that:

1. Public open spaces:
 - bridges on the Ibar that separate - connect North and South (1,2),
 - Pedestrian zone with attractive shops located in the northern part of the city (5),
 - Public parks on the banks of the Ibar river (6,7).
2. Shopping malls near the banks of the river Ibar, which are located in the southern part of the city near the eastern bridge on the Ibar, which are not public in the sense of ownership, but in the sense of perception (3,4),



Fig. 2 Public spaces in North and South Kosovska Mitrovica. 1-Main bridge on the Ibar, 2-East bridge on the Ibar, 3-Shopping malls (ETC) in the southern part, 4-Shopping malls (Jumbo, Waikiki, AM Megastore) in the southern part, 5- Pedestrian zone with shops in the northern part, 6-Park with attractive contents on the bank of the Ibar in the northern part, 7- Park with attractive contents on the bank of the Ibar in the southern part.

(Source: personal archive)

3. THEORETICAL APPROACHES ABOUT DIVIDED CITIES

In the last three decades, many scholars have made contributions highlighting the growing fragmentation of the urban environment, and the term "divided city" covers many approaches, methodologies and fields of research.

Almost every major city is heterogeneous in terms of culture and ethnicity. This implies that each city is divided to a certain extent by race, class, religion, culture etc. However, there are some cities that are "more" divided than others. Gizem Caner and Fulin Bölen (2015) analyzes the development patterns of such extremely divided cities, using examples from Beirut, Berlin, Jerusalem, Nicosia, and Belfast.

In cities, inequalities are spatially reflected through the division into rich and depressed districts. Urban studies tend to offer a double explanation for these divisions. On the one hand, cities are moderately divided: multicultural, more or less peaceful cities. Here, divisions occur mainly due to production processes, class, racial and gender relations, increasing inequality between rich and poor, and urban segregation. Well-known examples of multicultural cities are New York and London. (Mollenkopf, & Castells, 1991; Marcuse, & Van Kempen, 2002).

On the other hand, there are cities that are "extremely divided" - disputed cities, where division occurs because of aspects that are less negotiable, such as nationality, sovereignty, ethnicity or religion. There are fewer of them, but they provide a significant insight into how division can degrade the city. In the last three decades, more and more theorists are dealing with "divided cities" and a more specific form of urban fragmentation in them, classified according to their extremity (Safier, 1997). Nevertheless, the literature on "divided cities" tends to elevate a small number of cities to paradigmatic examples and to focus on abstract categories based on explanations of single-factor urban fragmentation. Theorists claim that a significant angle of observation of urban polarization refers to the configuration of urban governance and political power.

These divided cities are less numerous and indicate physical or political competition in certain special cases. Well-known examples of such cities are Belfast, Jerusalem, Nicosia, Mostar, Beirut and Berlin. Prominent scholars working in this field have over time developed theories known as "divided city debates" (Bollens, 2009; Calame & Charlesworth, 2009). Field research in Beirut, Belfast, Jerusalem, Mostar and Nicosia are linked to scientific research to shed light on the history of urban division, the social impact of physical division and various professional reactions to self-imposed apartheid. Through interviews with people on both sides of the divisions - residents, politicians, taxi drivers, environmental professionals, cultural critics and journalists - they compare the evolution of each urban divide along with its social influences. The patterns that emerge support the claim that division is a gradual, predictable and inevitable phenomenon that ultimately hinders inter-community cooperation. With voices from divided cities, updated partition maps and previously unpublished photographs, divided cities shed light on the enormous costs of physical segregation.

Paragraphs summarizing the patterns of division of the mentioned cities, to a certain extent, point to Kosovska Mitrovica. "Political ethnical identity" begins when political and ethnic identity merge and, accordingly, the ethnic dimension is the dominant determinant of political affiliation. This is related to the idea that "a divided city shows how identity, challenge and space are intimately intertwined" (Björkdahl & Gusić, 2013). The merging of political and ethnic identity is a process that has affected most of Yugoslavia and is not unique to Kosovska Mitrovica.

Theorists are of the opinion that in divided cities, urban planners and relevant organizations must ensure that fragile social arrangements that encourage interference are not disrupted by the imposition of barriers. Public places are necessary as a common space, for locating commercial centers and services and other recreational spaces where interaction between communities occurs. The globalized and neutral nature of urban spaces such as shopping malls sometimes improves in diluting conflicts and encouraging interaction. However, related interests from privatization may also hide and perpetuate less visible social inequalities and consequences in the long run. Common identities, such as those based on occupation or class, can help to see divided communities living side by side differently.

3.1. Definitions, characteristics and importance of public spaces

Public spaces are all spaces between houses in the city and other built-up areas (Krier, 1991). According to their characteristics and function, public spaces serve the public purpose, enable social communication, are accessible and open to everyone. Henri Lefebvre (1992) considered that space cannot be considered only a physical field, a backdrop for appropriate activities, but a unit produced by society, a place of the greatest intensity of exchange within urban physical structures, a kind of „spontaneous theater, a place where words are exchanged and signs.“

Theorists (Lynch, 1990 & Džejkobs, 2011 & Cullen, 1971 & Rapoport, 1977) agree to this opinion, stating that the urban environment shapes the behavior, knowledge, and disposition of actors, which has fueled interdisciplinary interest in critical research into the role of power, origin, gender, identity, and representation in public space.

The definition of public space, by Jenny Jones, AM, Planning and Housing Committee, 23 November 2010, reads: “Public Realm relates to all those parts of the built environment where the public has free access. It encompasses: all streets, squares, and other rights of way, whether predominantly in residential, commercial or community/civic uses; the public spaces and parks; and the ‘public/private’ spaces where public access is unrestricted (at least during daylight hours). It includes the interfaces with key internal and private spaces to which the public normally has free access”.

Architects (Gehl & Svarre, 2013) considers that the prime function and attraction of a city is in meeting other people, and that public space has the crucial role of a meeting place. They emphasize the feeling of personal security as a quality of public space and a very important component of the city's attractiveness in today's democratic society with all the differences being represented.

As Gordon Cullen (1971) observes the specifics of open public space through the movement and experience of observers, Christian Norberg-Schulz (1980) through the synergy of space and character-context and use, Naomi Carmon (1997) as a territory between private spaces, accepting not only the physical and social dimension of space. We can say that the public space of the city is not only a physical framework but also activities that take place within a defined space of public or private property available to the public, which supports or facilitates public life and social interaction.

Many authors who deal with the problem of the city consider shopping malls as closed public spaces, even though they are privately owned, where, in addition to shopping, the needs for communication and entertainment can be met (Petrović, 2009). The shopping malls a representative of modern consumer spaces and is seen as a place of interaction between the environment and actors and between actors (Đukić & Cvetković, 2017). As a

result, shopping centers has become new centers of social life - a place of socialization, spectacle trade, information exchange, etc.

These public spaces are increasingly recognized as key elements for successful cities, as well as for their ability to revitalize and create opportunities for economic and social development. But in fact, finding ways to build and maintain a healthy public space remains elusive for many municipal authorities, especially in the developing world, and especially in cities that are divided by any principle. The huge network of streets, parks, squares, and courtyards that define public space is often missing, too poorly planned or without adequate citizen participation in the design process.

The ten principles below are based on hundreds of squares - good and bad - that have been analyzed and observed by many theorists. What they emphasize the most is that design is only a small part of what goes into creating public urban spaces. To truly succeed, public space must be taken into account through factors that extend beyond its physical dimensions in order to promote the economic, environmental and social prosperity of divided communities.

In the TheCityFix, an online resource for the news and analysis on urban sustainability and development, author Priscila Pacheco in text public Spaces: 10 Principles for Connecting People and the Streets published 2017 analyses ten basic principles public space, referring to Ben Rogers and his text "In defence of the realm: 10 principles for public space" published in the collection "Making good – shaping places for people" 2017, and states: 1) diversity of uses, 2) active facades, 3) social dimension and urban vitality, 4) human scale, 5) lighting, 6) stimulating local economy, 7) local identity, 8) complete streets, 9) green areas and 10) social participation.

Author states the significance of all stated principles for the vitality and quality of public space in order to achieve coexistence and urban welfare of all citizens.

4. CASE STUDY OF KOSOVSKA MITROVICA

This case study analyzed public spaces which have transformed and show social relations that we might not otherwise be aware of or that we do not think about much. The public spaces in North and South Kosovska Mitrovica covered by the research provide an opportunity for unexpected or surprising encounters and illustrate the potential and challenges of a less segregated city.

4.1. Spatial-functional analysis of common public spaces

When it comes to the division in the City of Kosovska Mitrovica, a distinction can be made between tangible and intangible elements. Even though material elements are the most visible, we cannot underestimate the importance of intangible elements. The most obvious tangible division is the main bridge, transformed and renovated, and locals call it the "New Bridge" or "French Bridge" because of a reconstruction funded by the French government in 2001. As will be explained below, the bridge has become a paradigmatic picture of the division of Kosovska Mitrovica itself.

In a strange paradox, the bridge that does not connect but splits the city, has become a symbol of division and after reconstruction of the bridge that induced new steel construction, colorful lighting, a staircase in the middle of the bridge that descent to the river it became attraction to all citizens and international visitors. For the locals, it is part of the everyday landscape, a quasi-invisible reminder that others live literally across the bridge.



Fig. 3 The main bridge on the Ibar connecting / separating North and South Kosovska Mitrovica, recorded in April 1999. and 2001.
(Source: personal archive)

However, the division is less clear than it seems at a first glance. The bridge is still closed to traffic, and until 2014 it functioned as a parking lot (for southern Mitrovica) and as a peace park (for northern). Today, the bridge is mainly used by citizens/pedestrians who are tied to work in the southern or northern part of the city from different communities and who use it by foot in the early morning and afternoon when they return from work.



Fig. 4 The main bridge on the Ibar that connects North and South Kosovska Mitrovica, a bridge blocked by barricades recorded in March and as a green peace park in October 2014.

(Source: https://www.google.com/url?sa=i&url=https%3A%2F%2Fww.politika.rs%2Fsr%2Fclanak%2F360699%2FProblem-razgranicenja-koci-otvaranje-mosta-na-Ibru&psig=AOvVaw28NDVJlk-Bdme97ftxBGu&ust=1644513721860000&source=images&cd=vfe&ved=0CAsQjRxqFwoTCPD17ZWR8_UCFQAAAAAdAAAAABAI)

In a continuous two-way process, they create and change twenty-one-year-old habits, while at the same time this open public space influences and changes those who were exclusive in its use for various reasons, and their presence on the bridge as curious citizens is evident today. It is noticeable that people from different communities who work or live in different zones and those who occasionally use the bridge for photography and out of pure curiosity still make a connection through everyday activities.



Fig. 5 The main bridge on the Ibar that connects/separates North and South Kosovska Mitrovica, recorded day and night, 2021.

(Source: https://www.google.com/url?sa=i&url=https%3A%2F%2Fsr.wikipedia.org%2Fwiki%2F%25D0%25A1%25D0%25B5%25D0%25B2%25D0%25B5%25D1%2580%25D0%25BD%25D0%25B0_%25D0%259A%25D0%25BE%25D1%2581%25D0%25BE%25D0%25B2%25D1%2581%25D0%25BA%25D0%25B0_%25D0%259C%25D0%25B8%25D1%2582%25D1%2580%25D0%25BE%25D0%25B2%25D0%25B8%25D1%2586%25D0%25B0&psig=AOvVaw2JQxt1h8grUxN_KPq0u60s&cust=1644513989851000&source=images&ccd=vfe&ved=0CAsQjRxqFwoTCJD1sJyS8_UCFQAAAAAdAAAAABAD)

Locals from all communities experience the bridge not only through physical shape, urban design, attractiveness, or perception of sensory stimuli, but feel connected, through its understanding as a special place, a place that has always been there, everyday, lived experience, bad and good. The concept of "place" often emphasizes the importance of a sense of belonging and emotional attachment to that place, as well as a sense of identity-belonging to a particular territory or group (Cullen, 1971).

Just as physical space is the result of social processes and changes, likewise human behavior determines the physical, but also social and cultural context.

However, there is another eastern bridge on the Ibar, where the interaction between ethnic groups is much greater. The eastern bridge is located in Bosnjacka Mahala, a multiethnic settlement in the north of Kosovska Mitrovica inhabited by Serbs, Bosniaks and Albanians, where neighbors on both sides regularly pass. The bridge has no aesthetic



Fig. 6 The eastern bridge on the Ibar that connects / separates North and South Kosovska Mitrovica, recorded in 2021.

(Source: personal archive)

value and has not suffered reconstruction and revitalization in the post-war period, but it is a convenient route for Serbs from the north to the newly built shopping malls, which are also visited by Albanians from the south.

During the day, the Kosovo police are on the bridge, monitoring the circulation of all users - pedestrians, cyclists, and drivers, for safer traffic. People from the north tend to walk faster when passing through inactive areas that are left and right along the bridge. Public lighting creates the necessary conditions for safer movement at night, so the bridge is also used in the evening.

The construction of shopping malls in South Kosovska Mitrovica after the war 1999. in the regenerated area spaces are provided accessible to the all city population. Shopping malls in this part of the city, such as ETC, Jumbo, Waikiki, and AM Mega Store, Interex, are located a few hundred meters from the east bridge.



Fig. 7 Shopping malls, recorded in 2021
(Source: personal archive)

These urban city spaces tend to neutralize differences, as global brands and the universal commercial English language locally applied are not linked to one side or the other. Serbs come to buy goods that are not available in the north or are cheaper, as well as to buy world brands. People on divided sides feel more comfortable visiting these places where security checks are targeted at all customers rather than a specific group. The malls are visited during the day and are used more by women with children than men.

In the northern part of Kosovska Mitrovica, King Peter I Street leads from the main bridge to the center. It used to be a busy road with all the elements of a complete street, but in 2017, it was transformed and turned into a pedestrian zone.



Fig. 8 King Peter I Street, recorded in November 2014. and May 2017.
(Source: personal archive)

The connection between the ground floor levels of the buildings whose facades were revitalized in 2016, and the pedestrian streets contributes to the attractiveness of the urban design of the northern part of the city. The pedestrian street is visually more interesting, and people use it more often because of the content on the ground floor (shops, cafes, playrooms), and the urban furniture that is an integral part of it. Green areas and tree lines on both sides greatly affect the perception of the city, and streetlamps on security and a more relaxed atmosphere. During the day, at any time, Albanians from the south, mostly women, visit branded stores, so that spontaneous interaction between different groups is occurring.



Fig. 9 King Peter I Street, after reconstruction into a pedestrian zone observed in June and November 2019.

(Source: https://www.google.com/url?sa=i&url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.rtv.rs%2Fsr_lat%2Fkoronavirus%2Fu-srpskim-sredinama-na-kim-138-novih-slucajeva_1305263.html&psig=AOvVaw3G_kETf9_QFYXYWCfrqD0t&ust=1644513519907000&source=images&cd=vfe&ved=0CAsQjRxqFwoTCJCXtLmQ8_UCFQAAAAAdAAAAABAJ)

The banks of the river Ibar have been used to harmoniously connect the settlements on both sides with the river and its corridor, so that the river and its landscaped shores become one of the main urban axes of development of North and South Kosovo Mitrovica. On the left and right side of the river, the areas that were unorganized, unlit, and devastated, were turned into public park areas with accompanying facilities.



Fig. 10 Unarranged banks of the river Ibar, recorded in 2014

(Source: https://www.google.com/url?sa=i&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwikimapia.org%2F2360859%2Fsr%2FMost-preko-reke-Ibar&psig=AOvVaw1T5yv7tPYMxJDEI9TPTKrkj&ust=1644511834368000&source=images&cd=vfe&ved=0CAsQjRxqFwoTCMibhpeK8_UCFQAAAAAdAAAAABAU)

In addition to ecological and aesthetic significance, these spaces have a wide range of useful features for the city as a whole, through their multifunctional characteristics.

The park on the south side is realized through universal criteria for creating green areas such as safety, accessibility, comfort, and attractiveness. Within this park, there are facilities that provide different amusing activities to citizens and attract the interest of both communities, such as running tracks, outdoor gyms, and bike paths.

All these contents are accompanied by landscaped areas with urban gear, for walking and sitting with the existing and newly planted greenery. Not far from the main bridge, a prefabricated pedestrian bridge has been set up, in order to attract citizens from the north to use the park. A little further upstream along the river, an AQUA PARK and another pedestrian bridge were built.



Fig. 11 Transformed public parks on the left and right banks of the Ibar River, recorded in 2020
(Source: personal archive)

On the north side along the left bank of the Ibar was an inactive and devastated area, which was also turned into a public park, but not as attractive and substantial as on the south side.

Through many years of observation at different times of the year, it is obvious that in both parks, citizens meet during the day in recreational activities (cycling, rollerblading, recreational running, walking and occasional communication). Citizens from the north - Bosniaks are even users of AQUA PARK and promoters of this attractive private space, but there are no indications that Serbs from the north use them.

4.2. Results

Relevant data was collected through a field tour of selected public spaces, observing and recording the behavior and social interaction of users in different periods of the year, as well as through communication with citizens and from personal experience.

Table 1 shows the results of the analysis of the quality of selected public spaces in Kosovska Mitrovica using ten principles that determine successful public spaces in divided cities through a three-level evaluation (favorable, partially favorable and unfavorable).

Table 1 Results of the analysis of public spaces in Kosovska Mitrovica

serial num.	10 principles for public space	Main bridge on the Ibar	East bridge on the Ibar	Shopping centers in the southern part (ETC, Jumbo, Waikiki, AM Megastore)	Pedestrian zone with shops in the northern part	Park with attractive contents on the bank of the Ibar in the southern part
1	Diversity of uses	○	○	●	●	●
2	Active facades	—	—	●	●	—
3	Social dimension and urban vitality	●	○	●	●	●
4	Human scale	●	○	●	●	●
5	Lighting	●	○	●	●	●
6	Stimulating local economy	—	—	●	●	—
7	Local identity	●	—	●	●	●
8	Complete streets	●	●	●	●	●
9	Green areas	—	—	—	●	●
10	Social participation	●	●	●	●	●

Legend: ● favorably ● partially favorable ○ unfavorable

Source: author

4.3. Discussion

The results of research and analysis of the quality of transformed public spaces in Kosovska Mitrovica after the 1999 war show that these spaces, which belong to the contact zone of the divided parties, possess certain qualities, and that the most important component of success is the presence of people, and that shopping centers in the south and the pedestrian zone with branded shops on the north represent the most attractive public spaces for residents on both sides. These are public places that provide security, you stay in them for a long time while viewing the windows and shopping, where voluntary, informal regular gatherings of individuals take place. The park and the pedestrian zone on the banks of the Ibar River with attractive facilities for sports and recreation, enriched with linear greenery are also places of social interaction partially safe with the satisfaction of the visual impression of individuals. The bridges over the Ibar River are symbols of the division of the city, where the main bridge retains the qualities of the principle of local identity and a passive social dimension.

Contacts between citizens from both parts of the city are made in the described public spaces (mostly during the day), which is why we call them common spaces. Jan Geil (2016) dealt with the intensity of contacts between people. In the case of this divided city, where conflicts between ethnic groups have lasted for two decades and are uncertain in the time to come when it comes to escalation, it can be said that the contacts are of low intensity or passive. Low-intensity passive contacts are of great value as a form of independent contact forms and a prerequisite for other more complex interactions. He lists the possibilities that low-intensity social activities include:

- Contact at the most modest level,
- Possible starting point for contacts at other levels,
- Possibility to maintain already established contacts,
- Source of information about the external social world,
- Source of inspiration, the possibility of stimulating the experiential.

Public life in this divided city takes place as formal and informal, taking place between the domains of formal institutions in the north and south, certain choices and voluntary decisions. These are different public places where voluntary, informal, regular gatherings of individuals from different ethnic communities take place, which are influenced by interests, security, convenience, or the satisfaction of the visual impression.

5. CONCLUSION

Public spaces in border contact zones with their spatial and functional characteristics in divided cities play an important role in achieving social interaction between different ethnic communities. In this paper, the starting hypothesis of the research that public spaces in divided cities, with their physical and functional structure, encourage the concentration of users from divided ethnic communities and their socio-social interaction which is proven on the example of Kosovska Mitrovica.

This particular perspective is shared by Scott Bolens (2009), who also understands public space (from what he describes as a minimalist definition in divided cities) as consisting of coexistence in the same physical space in the absence of intergroup tension.

The example (case study) of Kosovska Mitrovica presented in this paper illustrates how public spaces contribute to the socialization of a divided population and provides answers to research questions about the way communication is achieved through everyday activities and meetings and whether their use affects inter-ethnic relations and that public spaces can be considered tools that contribute to efforts to transform relationships in such contexts.

This research shows that the public spaces on the south and north coast of Kosovska Mitrovica, which were spontaneously transformed after the war in 1999, are embedded in the social fabric of the city in a part of the impersonal and fragmented urban environment, but as such are important and essential elements for urban life and overcoming urban segregation that is still present in the city. Public spaces must provide all elements related to quality through acceptable and attractive contents for use, especially in terms of safety, distance, traffic, etc. The research illustrates that the users of these spaces have a need to visit them, not only for shopping, but also to recreate and relax, take a walk and meet people with whom they used to hang out and exchange opinions, which results in mutual interaction at an initial low level. By using public spaces "bridges" it is possible for residents from different sides who are employed in the opposite zone to connect through daily encounters. However, cultural, political and economic issues related to management policies have an impact on the development and perception of public spaces and their use.

It is clear that the social attraction rests in a safe, comfortable and aesthetically appealing environment, which is expected of public spaces, and thus encourages socialization in contact zones in divided cities, and thus impulsively, spontaneously overcomes the division in every respect. The integration of activities and functions in public spaces are elements used in planning, with the aim of reviving contact zones in the urban spaces of divided cities.

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TRANSFORMACIJA JAVNIH PROSTORA KAO TENDENCIJA PREVAZILAŽENJA FRAGMENTACIJE U PODELJENIM GRADOVIMA: STUDIJA SLUČAJA KOSOVSKA MITROVICA

Cilj ovog rada je da se istraži uloga javnih prostora, njihova transformacija u podeljenom gradu Kosovska Mitrovica na južni i severni deo grada i njihov značaj u cilju prevazilaženja ove fragmentacije. Važno je da razvoj i transformacija javnih prostora u ovom podeljenom gradu doprinese materijalizaciji pristupačnih prostora koji promovišu društvenu integraciju i toleranciju kroz inkluzivne procese. Primenjena prostorno-funkcionalna analiza mapiranih javnih prostora u gradu i posmatranje društvene interakcije u njima su konstitutivni okvir ovog rada. Zaključne napomene daju odgovor na pitanje da li i u kojoj meri transformacija javnih prostora u godinama posle rata u severnoj i južnoj Kosovskoj Mitrovici utiče na interakciju različitih etničkih grupa, kao i na tendenciju prevazilaženja fragmentacije u njemu.

Ključne reči: Kosovska Mitrovica, podeljeni grad, javni prostori, transformacija, fragmentacija, integracija.