Prishtina: shifting experiences of places and plans in a ‘post-conflict’ urban space

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"Prishtina is not a city you fall in love with at first sight. It’s a messy city with centuries-old Ottoman heritage competing with communist designs and recently built monstrosities”. Thus the first tourist guide book on Kosovo opens the section on Prishtina (2007), and ends by cryptically stating, that "A new era has begun for Prishtina”. The question is, what this ‘new era’ is assumed to entail. What kind of city is Prishtina becoming? Prishtina has, by architects and planners, been designated as a more or less ‘typical’ ‘post-conflict’ city. What does this signify? What are the different implications of political conflict and war?

In the last ten years after the war, house construction has been rampant and the city, although comparatively small, is sprawling in all directions with apartment and office buildings cropping up everywhere in every size and shape seemingly oblivious to any urban planning. The partly worn-down apartment buildings, as the new high-rise constructions, the monuments, mosques and churches, the shops, cafés, car-washes, and garbage containers condense many of the significant activities, relations and meanings that make up this city.

How can we understand ’sustainability’ in this context?

Taking one or two neighborhoods as points of departure I shall briefly reflect over the development of this city, specifically by considering questions concerning house construction and translocal/transnational relations, and how notions of place, home, belonging permeate local movements and experiences.