

# THE IMPACT OF SOCIAL LIFE ON THE URBAN FORMATION OF THE CITY OF TETOVA

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## Abstract

This paper examines the historical and urban development of the city of Tetovo, focusing on the formation of streets, public spaces and how are they use by citizens. The analysis of the city's streets and connections, as well as the role of public spaces and architecture, is the key to understanding how urban identity is constructed and how these structures help create a sense of belonging for citizens. Based on historical sources, it analyzes the way the city has evolved, being describe as a developed settlement that had bazaars, markets and organically shaped streets. The western part of the city, which retains its old characteristics, mentioned as an area of historical importance. However, the city faces major challenges, such as the lack of green spaces on the main streets. The text also addresses the need for urban reorganization, suggesting that the city has the potential to develop further through the creation of better spaces for social activities and the integration of the theories of urban planners, such as Jan Gehl. This study emphasizes the importance of public spaces and the need for sustainable and user-oriented planning to improve the quality of life in the city. It also aims to contribute to improving the urban development of the city and the opportunities to orient and integrate in the city of Tetova.

*Keywords:* Public spaces, activities, pedestrian streets, infrastructure reorganization.

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## 1. Introduction

The city of Tetovo, with a history dating back to prehistoric times, has been an important commercial and cultural center, notable for its geographical position and the structure of the city, which had a significant impact on the daily lives of its inhabitants. Analysis of the formation of streets and public spaces shows that the city has evolved in form, built around commercial centers and human gatherings. While Tetovo has preserved much of its historical heritage, urban challenges such as the lack of green spaces and heavy traffic have caused the city to face sustainable development problems. This text aims to examine the history and urban development of Tetovo, focusing on public spaces, streets and their use by citizens, to provide an in-depth look at the need for balanced urban planning and for a more sustainable and people-oriented city.

## 2. Social spaces of the city during history

The city of Tetovo is located in the northwestern part of the Republic of Macedonia, extending into the Polog Basin near the Sharr Mountain, also crossed by the Shkumbin River. According to recent research, Tetovo was inhabited since the 7- th millennium BC. Regarding the prehistoric period in Polog, there are almost no written historical sources. In the 15th century, Tetovo mentioned by the name Kalkandelen (Pierced Shield). Tetovo mentioned by Mehmet Bey as a settlement, as a city with a favorable geographical position, characterized by cleanliness and greenery. Mehmet Kebir Çelebi describes Tetovo as a rapidly developing settlement characterized by houses with large courtyards through which irrigation canals passed.

The French guide Ami Bouw, who visited the city of Tetovo in the first half of the 19th century, recounts that the city had two bazaars, beyler's mansions, inns, hamams, tekkes, mosques, imarets and many clean streets. (Abazi, *et al*, 2018)

The movement of people and the need for trade created the main streets of the city. Their shape is organically and the expansion of the city has started from the bazaars, in fact from the points where people gathered.



**Figure 1.** Gathering point, Bunar Bazaar in the city center (Bunar Çarshia), retrieved <https://www.tetova.gov.mk/>

The gathering points shown in the figure, presents the points where economic life developed. This space today uses as a city square and the trade have been moved to the surrounding buildings that enclose the space. The figure 2 shows the oldmap of the city where it clearly explains the gathering points were then.



**Figure 2.** Old plan of the city of Tetovo, gathering point, development of markets (bazaars), retrieved <https://www.tetova.gov.mk/>

According to map shown in figure 3 the city had few places where people gathered. The gathering of people at these points led to them socializing with each other, where the economy developed also activities carried out there.

### **3. Social activities related to urban formation**

The purpose of this study is to analyze the impact of social life on the urban shaping of the city. Social life refers to various activities of people in an urban area. According to (Jan Gehl, 1987) there are three types of activities:

- Necessary activities – those that individuals are obliged to do, whether for work, daily tasks or commitments. These activities are more or less obligatory, such as going to school or work, shopping, waiting for a bus or someone, and performing tasks

- Optional activities – those activities that carried only if there is a desire for them and if time and place allow – are another matter. These activities are not obligatory and are dependent on the availability of time, environmental possibilities and the individual's desire to engage.
- Social activities are all activities that depend on the presence of others in public spaces. Social activities include children playing, greetings and conversations, various communal activities, and finally – as the most widespread social activity – passive contacts, that is, simply seeing and listening to other people. Different types of social activities occur in many places: at home, in private outdoor spaces, gardens and balconies, in public buildings, in workplaces, etc.

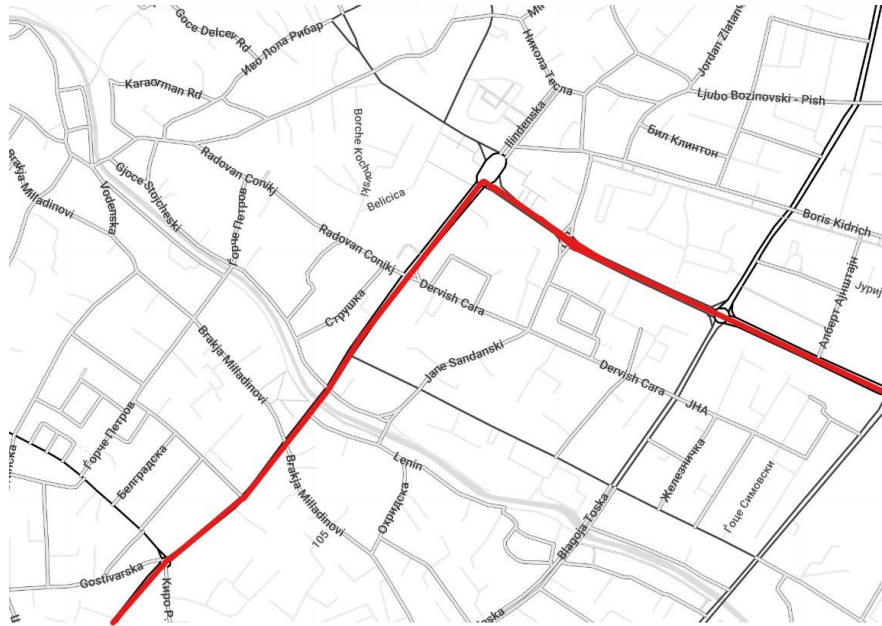
Considering the organized complexity of the city problems, the study tends to understand the process of urban transformation concerning the relation between social and spatial practices in the public places (Kamalipur, *et al*, 2013) The aim of this study is to analyze the activities mentioned above on streets and public spaces.

**3.1 Streets:** According to (Gehl, 2010) streets should design to create opportunities for people to stand and engage with each other. He emphasizes the importance of transforming streets from spaces driven by cars into spaces that are healthy and enjoyable for pedestrians and public transport users.



**Figure 3.** The roads that connect the city with the region, edited by the author, retrieved <https://snazzymaps.com/>

Figure 3 shows the main roads of the city of Tetovo, with the highest frequency. These roads create high connectivity between the city and the region and used by vehicles.



**Figure 4.** The city's main axes, edited by the author, retrieved <https://snazzymaps.com/>  
From the central part of the city, two main roads that connect the surrounding areas emerge, Ilinden Boulevard and Marshal Tito Boulevard, shown in figure 4. In addition to frequent by vehicles, they also frequent by people who pass through these roads to arrive somewhere, or have just gone out for a walk.

In the city of Tetova social life does not happen only in open gathering spaces but also along road axes. The streets branching off the city center frequents by people (figure 5), namely boulevard "Ilinden" and boulevard "Marshall Tito", are wide and have wide sidewalks where the flow of people is high and this allows people to meet and gather.


















**Figure 5.** Sidewalks and pedestrian streets views

In addition to the boulevards, secondary streets especially "Boutique" Street, which has been transformed into a promenade for people, have a large flow of people where in addition to the social dimension, the economic dimension also develops. Figure 6 shows another promenade in the city is around the Shkumbin River.



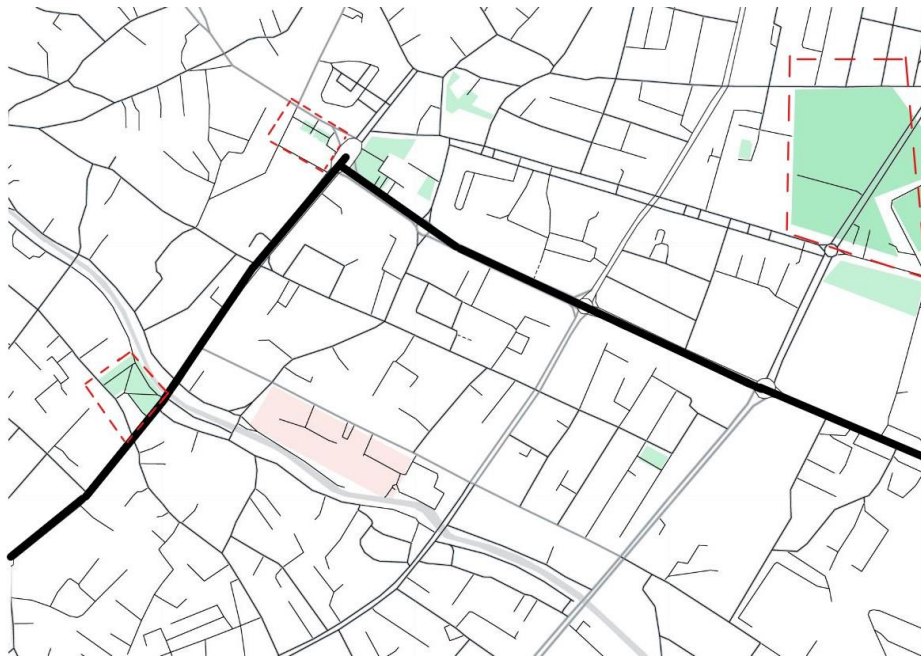


Str. "Radovan Coniq" Butique Street			
Path along Shkumbin River			
Str."29 Nëntori"			
Str."Dervish Cara"			
Poor 	Good 		Very good 

*3.2 Public spaces:* In addition to the analysis of streets, this paper will also analyze public spaces such as parks and squares. According to (Gehl, 2011) public spaces (such as squares, parks, pedestrian streets and boulevards) are places where people can interact and create social connections. The opportunity to see, hear and meet others is one of the most important attractions in city centers and pedestrian streets.



**Figure 8.** The green spaces in the city of Tetovo, parks with different destinations, edited by the author, retrieved <https://snazzymaps.com/>



**Figure 9.** The city's two main boulevards and the green spaces along them, edited by the author, retrieved

<https://snazzymaps.com/>

Along the main axes of city, there are only a few smaller green areas, so Tetovo lacks green spaces on the main streets of the city. Streets with a high frequency of pedestrian and vehicle movements do not have enough green spaces.

According to the analysis how activities are happening in these spaces, the **Pasha Mosque Park** has a convenient location on the main axis of "Ilinden" Boulevard. Nearby facilities, such as religious facilities, educational facilities, allow people to gather and this makes it a gathering point for all people and all age groups, which leads to socialization of people. All of activities given by Jan Gehl, are present in this park, some pedestrians pass by to go to school or work, which means they pass by for necessary activities. Others stop for rest and some come out to have a good time there.

**The City Square** has a seating and green area, while most of the space is free. All activities carried out in the square, such as gatherings of people for events, various meetings, concerts, free movement for people passing by for various jobs, etc. It is a separated space from the road with a good closure of buildings and it's very well connected to the Butique Street. The size of the square is not significant because during the gathering of people for various activities, due to lack of space, they are compelled to go out on the street.

**The children's park** uses only by children and there are spaces for rest of parents of all age groups. The space is use only in the seasons when the weather warms up and it is a very good gathering point, but it is located on the suburb of the city.

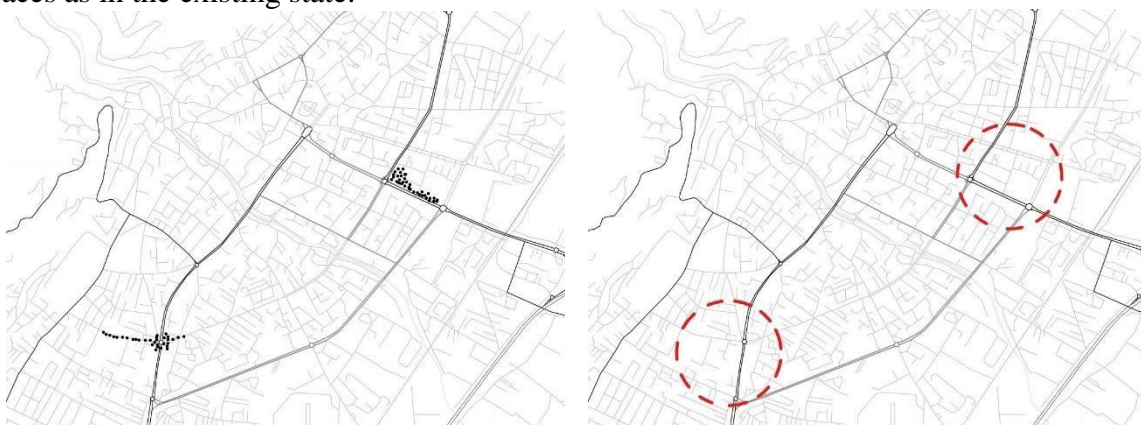
**Women's Park** is a space that is located near the children's park. It is a very well- designed and green space, but because the children's park is located nearby and it is located on the suburb and is located in an area with fewer inhabitants, the park is not use at all by people.

Table 2 shows the spaces mentioned above and the activities that carried out there. Information given in this table based on field observations.

**Table 2.** The necessary, optional and social activities at squares and parks

	Necessary activities	Optional activities	Social activities
Pasha Mosque Park	●	●	●
The City Square	●	●	●
The children's park	●	●	●
Women's Park	●	●	●
Poor ●	Good ●	Very good ●	

In addition to these public spaces in the city, there are other places where people gather. These spaces have the potential to transform into public spaces. Below on the figure 10 are show those spaces as in the existing state.

**Figure 10.** Potential gathering area, edited by the author, retrieved

<https://snazzymaps.com/>

These two places are located on two boulevards of the city; one is the Green Market where students and other people wait at local bus stop, while the other gathering point is nearby third roundabout in the city where there are collective housing facilities, business and educational facilities. This space has a good chance of being a larger social one.

In addition to some distances, the city still needs green spaces and a better urban organization of the roads because from the existing situation it seems that the city choke by concreting and unresolved traffic.

#### 4. Conclusions

The city of Tetova has gone through a long process of development and transformation, preserving some important aspects of its historical heritage, but also facing major urban challenges. The streets and public spaces, once used as commercial and social centers, are now part of a growing and developing city. However, despite having a carefully built structure, Tetovo needs better urban organization and more green spaces to ensure a healthier environment



and space for its citizens. As Jan Gehl emphasizes, cities need to create spaces that encourage social activities and provide opportunities for people to engage and interact with each other. Tetovo has the opportunity to become a more pedestrian-friendly city and public transport users, focusing on the development of public spaces and the reorganization of streets. The city of Tetovo has great potential for sustainable development, but this development requires commitment and careful planning to preserve its historical heritage, creating a modern and functional environment for all those who inhabit it.

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