



# **Spatial aspects of de-radicalisation processes in Prishtina**

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## About the Project

D.Rad is a comparative study of radicalisation and polarisation in Europe and beyond. It aims at identifying the actors, networks, and wider social contexts that drive radicalisation, particularly among young people in urban and peri-urban areas. D.Rad conceptualises this through the I-GAP spectrum (injustice-grievance-alienation-polarisation), with the goal of moving towards the measurable evaluation of de-radicalisation programmes. Our intention is to identify the building blocks of radicalisation, which include the person's sense of being victimised, of being thwarted or lacking agency in established legal and political structures, and of coming under the influence of 'us vs them' identity formulations.

D.Rad benefits from an exceptional breadth of backgrounds. The project spans national contexts including the UK, France, Italy, Germany, Poland, Hungary, Finland, Slovenia, Bosnia, Serbia, Kosovo, Israel, Turkey, Georgia, Austria, and several minority nationalisms. It bridges academic disciplines ranging from political science and cultural studies to social psychology and artificial intelligence. Dissemination methods include D.Rad LABs, D.Rad hubs, policy papers, academic workshops, visual outputs, and digital galleries. As such, D.Rad establishes a rigorous foundation in order to test practical interventions geared towards prevention, inclusion, and de-radicalisation.

With the possibility of capturing the trajectories of 17 nations and several minority nations, the project provides unique evidence base for the comparative analysis of law and policy as nation states adapt to new security challenges. The process of mapping these varieties and their link to national contexts is crucial in uncovering the strengths and weaknesses of existing interventions. Furthermore, D.Rad accounts for the problem that processes of radicalisation often occur in circumstances that escape the control and scrutiny of traditional national frameworks of justice.

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## Executive Summary

The urban landscape of modern societies is intricately tied to the dynamics of public spaces. These areas serve as critical arenas where diverse groups and individuals intersect, negotiate identities, and influence collective bonds. The city of Prishtina presents a compelling case study in this context, marked by its complex historical evolution and challenges. From periods of occupation and marginalization to post-war development and unregulated growth, Prishtina struggles with defining its identity and ensuring livable spaces for its residents.

This study undertakes a comprehensive exploration of Prishtina's urban dynamics by focusing on specific public spaces. The chosen methodology combines descriptive analysis, expert interviews, field observations, and interactive workshops to examine the intricate socio-spatial patterns that shape the city's inclusivity and exclusivity. Three key areas emerge as focal points of analysis: Termokiss, the Bajram Kelmendi Street, and the University of Prishtina Campus. The latter stands out as a compelling case study in the context of this report, presenting a dynamic and multifaceted space where encounters and negotiated belonging take center stage. This public space was examined through two interactive workshops – D.Rad LAB I and LAB II – which brought together local-level stakeholders and youth, respectively, to gather insights on the evolution of this public space, its challenges, and its role in the city's fabric.

Key findings from the interactive workshops reflect safety concerns, insufficient infrastructure, and the desire for more inclusive amenities in these spaces. The significance of the Serbian Orthodox Church within the University campus prompts nuanced discussions on its symbolic and historical implications, ranging from the call for demolition to transforming it into a museum.

The study offers a range of strategic policy recommendations aimed at enhancing the public space under scrutiny. Notably, the Municipality of Prishtina is urged to place paramount importance on safety and security enhancements, encompassing measures such as the augmentation of lighting infrastructure and the installation of security cameras. The University of Prishtina is also strongly encouraged to take the lead in fostering multi-stakeholder collaboration through regularly scheduled meetings, which would serve as dynamic platforms for the exchange of ideas, enabling a collective brainstorming process to invigorate the area's overall augmentation. Moreover, the research underscores the significance of engaging in tactful and considerate public discourse concerning the Serbian Orthodox Church situated within the campus.

# 1. Introduction

In the urban fabric of modern societies, public spaces emerge as vital arenas where individuals and groups encounter one another, negotiate belonging, and shape collective identities. The spatial distribution within cities reflects diverse urban dynamics, presenting a complex interplay between social worlds. Public spaces, often thought of as neutral platforms for interaction, reveal themselves as sites where conflicts over distribution, participation, and access unfold. Such conflicts give rise to a multifaceted landscape of inclusion and exclusion, impacting the very social fabric of cohesive societies.

Prishtina emerges as a compelling case in the context of this study. The city is in a state of constant evolution. From the modernist interpretations of the socialist era to the post-modern trends of the 1970s and spanning the years of occupation that marginalized anything non-Serbian in public spaces, to the urban disorder of unauthorized constructions during the post-1999 period, Prishtina has been immersed in a protracted struggle to define its identity (Kryeziu 2020). Over the course of the last three to four decades, Prishtina has undergone immense infrastructural developments. The influx of population towards the city, driven by various factors including urbanization, has led to a significant expansion of the urban area. However, this expansion has often outpaced the provision of necessary infrastructure, services, and resources (Gollopeni 2013). The rapid growth, coupled with inadequate planning and infrastructure development, has given rise to challenges related to housing, transportation, and public services.

This study aims to delve into the historical transformations, urban development, and socio-spatial dynamics that have shaped the city by directing its attention towards specific public spaces within Prishtina. The selection of these spaces is an integral part of a comprehensive methodology that draws upon various research methods, including expert interviews and field observations. The study aims to investigate how inclusion and exclusion have manifested in these chosen public spaces. It particularly examines the University of Prishtina campus area as a pivotal public space in the city that serves as a multifaceted arena of contestation and significance. This examination is underpinned by the collection of insights derived from two interactive workshops – D.Rad LAB I and II – gathering insights from a variety of local-level stakeholders and youth to better understand the dynamics of inclusion and exclusion within the public space being studied.

The remainder of the paper is structured as follows. The first section provides a general overview of the methodology and researched methods employed, followed by a contextual introduction to the city of Prishtina. The subsequent two sections delve into the description of the best practice areas identified, including the in-depth case study of the University of Prishtina Campus area. Main findings stemming from D.Rad LABs I and II are subsequently discussed and relevant recommendations are provided.

# 2. Description of methods

This study employs a methodology that combines both descriptive analysis and interactive engagement to shed light on local characteristics and spatial dynamics in Prishtina by focusing on best practice examples of inclusionary spaces and contested areas that influence processes of (de)radicalisation in the city. Specifically, the research approach relies on a

combination of methods including literature review, expert interviews, field observations and interactive workshops, which altogether aim to provide a multi-dimensional understanding of urban dynamics that foster inclusion/exclusion.

As part of this study, a series of interviews were conducted with three experts, namely a high-ranking municipal official from Prishtina, a Professor associated with the Department of Architecture and Spatial Planning at UBT University, with former experience as the Head of Spatial Planning Division at the Ministry of Environment and Spatial Planning, and a researcher and journalist who has covered issues relating to radicalization and violent extremism in Kosovo. The subsequent identification of the three best practice/contested areas, which are discussed in the following section, emerged from these interviews in conjunction with field visits carried out by the D.Rad Kosovo team.

Among these three best practice/contested areas, one was selected as the primary focal point for the in-depth study which follows, and it also served as the venue for the interactive workshops – D.Rad LAB I and II. Beyond the insights gathered from expert interviews and the literature review, the process of designating this space involved informal discussions with colleagues and individuals associated with the area.

The D.Rad LAB I constituted an interactive workshop with local-level stakeholders, including representatives from the Local Public Safety Committee, the Municipal Community Safety Council, the Directorate of Public Services at the Municipality of Prishtina, as well as a representative from the Institute for Spatial Planning within the Ministry of Environment, Spatial Planning and Infrastructure. Additionally, students, professors from the University of Prishtina and the University for Business and Technology in Prishtina, nearby residents, and local business owners participated in the interactive workshop. The event took place at the National Library of Kosovo, situated adjacent to the university campus area. It was conducted in two sessions, the first held on May 18, 2023, followed by the second session on May 25, 2023. Altogether, a total of 13 participants attended the LAB I interactive workshop. LAB II was held on the office premises of the Kosovar Centre for Security Studies (KCCS) on June 26, 2023, gathering youth, including students and residents from the surrounding campus area, to share their experience and vision about the public space at hand. The second LAB was attended by five participants.

Both LABs were recorded via phone, capturing the dialogue and insights shared by participants. Importantly, prior to commencing with the workshops, all participants involved were required to sign consent forms, acknowledging their voluntary participation in the study and granting permission for the workshop to be recorded and transcribed for research purposes. Following the transcription of the recordings, the D.Rad Kosovo team employed a thematic analysis approach to analyze the data gathered during both sessions. Through this method, the researchers were particularly focused on identifying recurring patterns, themes, and key points made by participants. Of particular interest was the exploration of inclusion and exclusion dynamics within and around the University of Prishtina Campus.

### 3. Description of spatial characteristics and city context

In this section, we present first a general overview of the city of Prishtina, followed by examples of three best practice and contested areas, based on the desk research and expert interviews conducted as a part of this study.



### 3.1. General overview of the city - Prishtina

If one was to describe the capital city of Prishtina in one sentence, then the title of a 2013 article published in the “Public Space” edition of the renowned local magazine – Kosovo 2.0 – would surely do it justice: “Prishtina – The product of a ruined past, a chaotic present and an unplanned future” (Mydyti 2013).

The Kosovo war in 1999 marked a defining moment in the history of Kosovo and its population, and as such the country’s historical timeline, including its urban development, has to a large degree been divided into three segments: the pre-war period, the war period, and the post-war period. The earliest structures of the city of Prishtina date back to the Ottoman period, albeit very little of these structures have survived to this day, apart from several mosques and residential units. Its Ottoman remnants can still be felt, however, whilst walking across what’s left of the old, narrow, cobblestone streets in some residential areas of the city. The urban heritage of the city’s modern era is marked by the construction of collective housing blocks during socialist Yugoslavia. As Jerliu and Navakazi (2019) point out in their article on the Socialist Modernisation of Prishtina “modernist architecture and urbanism were critical in the construction of socialism and as a means for differentiating new developments from the capitalist form of urbanization” (pp. 55-74).

During this period, specifically between 1940 and 1980, four new neighbourhoods of collective housing were created, and several individual residential quarters were built. While some consider this to be the “golden era” of Prishtina’s urban development, others argue that with the construction of these massive urban units, the city has lost its identity and the subtle coexistence between divergent styles.

Post-war Prishtina is signified by a period of massive expansion and chaos in its urban social structure. There was a major demographic shift towards the capital city, accompanied by massive informal constructions within its urban area and an uncontrolled expansion of the city in all directions. These developments had a significant impact on the urban landscape as well as the habitability conditions of the city. Furthermore, this urban growth was not met with the technical, public, and social infrastructure necessary for the livability of its residents.

Present day Prishtina is home to approximately 160,000 people, with more than 60% of the population being under the age of 35. It is the largest local economy and the main gravitation pole in Kosovo, given the concentration of key public and international institutions in the city. The urban landscape of the city reflects different cultural and political influences. Services are primarily based in the city center, whereas the surrounding areas are mostly residential. A recurring environmental challenge for the city is poor air and water quality, which are largely generated by the power plant located near the city and traffic, and poor waste and water management, respectively (UN Habitat 2013).

In terms of the municipal administration's role in public space development and maintenance, the annual programme serves as the key document that guides urban and capital investment projects carried out by the local administration. These projects are designed, implemented, and maintained in collaboration with relevant local level institutions. The annual programme plays a crucial role in providing direction and priorities for the municipality's efforts in enhancing and preserving public spaces within the city. It serves as a strategic framework for allocating resources and coordinating various initiatives aimed at creating vibrant, inclusive, and well-maintained public spaces for the benefit of the community.

The urban planning and management cycles in Prishtina are governed by key legislation, including the Law on Spatial Planning, Law on Public Financial Management and Accountability, Law on Construction and Law on Public Procurement. (Kosovo Assembly, 2013; Kosovo Assembly ,2008; Kosovo Assembly, 2012; Kosovo Assembly, 2011)

The central level administration in Prishtina also plays a crucial role in the management and development of public spaces throughout the country. One of the main ways it does so is through budgeting, namely the allocation of funds to support infrastructure projects, landscaping, the installation of amenities, and other initiatives aimed at enhancing the quality and accessibility of public spaces. Additionally, various ministries, such as the Ministry of Environment and Spatial Planning and the Ministry of Infrastructure, work closely with local governments and other stakeholders to coordinate efforts and ensure the effective utilization of resources.

During the interview with a high-ranking municipal official from Prishtina (March 2023) he highlighted the important role of the private sector in positively impacting the communities in which they operate. Through numerous municipal-driven initiatives, local level administration collaborates with businesses to implement projects that enhance the quality and accessibility of public spaces. One example is the installation of urban furniture such as benches and seating areas in parks and other communal spaces within the residential areas that are more frequented by citizens.

In addition to the municipal administration and key legislation, other relevant stakeholders contributing to public space development in the city of Prishtina include local NGOs and media, international organizations, security institutions, and community groups and residents.

Public space in present-day Prishtina faces various challenges and constraints that hinder its full potential as a vibrant and inclusive city for its citizens. First and foremost, the city lacks basic social infrastructure such as proper lighting in public spaces, which significantly affects the security and usability of these public areas. During the expert interview with a Professor at the Department of Architecture and Spatial Planning at UBT University and former Head of Spatial Planning Division at the Ministry of Environment and Spatial Planning (January 2023), the absence of adequate public lighting in Prishtina not only compromises the safety of citizens, but also contributes to an environment that is conducive to criminal activity. Lack of public lighting creates dark and secluded area in the city that attract individuals and groups with malicious intent.

During the interview with the high-ranking official from Prishtina, the issue of suffocated public space in the city was highlighted as a significant challenge. Zogaj specifically identified three factors that contribute to this issue: the excessive presence of cars, the impact of the Horeca industry, and the proliferation of residential buildings. The excessive presence of cars in the city has resulted in congested streets and limited space for pedestrians, while the construction of new buildings throughout the city often prioritizes the maximization of private living spaces, at the expense of open areas for communal use. Restaurants, bars, and cafes play a vital role in the social fabric of the city. However, many have expanded their operations onto sidewalks and outdoor areas, reducing the available space for pedestrians and contributing to the suffocation of public space in Prishtina.

(Non)-accessibility of public spaces in the city is a major barrier for certain categories of citizens, such as people with disabilities. Minor achievements have been made in terms of providing adequate infrastructure and equal movement for disabled people. According to a

2016 report published by disability rights NGO Handikos, only 8 public areas out of the 195 analyzed have suitable areas for parking designated for disabled people, while only 15 locations had appropriate toilets to fit the needs of the latter. Lack of access ramps and elevators in buildings are an additional hindrance, especially for wheelchair users and parents with strollers.

## 3.2. Description of three best practice/contested areas

The following section provides an overview of three areas where contestation and best practices overlap in the city and that have undergone remarkable social and urban transformations and have subsequently been subject to various dynamics in terms of accessibility and use by citizens. These areas were identified through a comprehensive research process that involved both formal and informal interviews with experts and local-level stakeholders, as well as field visits by the D.Rad project team in Kosovo to observe and assess various aspects of the chosen public spaces.

### 3.2.1. Termokiss

What was originally intended to be the building serving as the base for the central heating factory of Prishtina has now been transformed into Termokiss, a vibrant social center that gathers Prishtina's youth, artists, and citizens from surrounding neighbourhoods. Termokiss is situated on a small plot of land owned by the Prishtina Municipality, occupying an unfinished concrete structure that was originally constructed in 1997 by Termokos, the heating company of Prishtina. (Gjinovci 2016). Termokiss was established in 2016 as part of a joint effort from a group of young people, Prishtina Architecture week and a foreign Swiss partner institute, with the aim to stimulate urban and civil exchange, reflection, and creating change. Today the venue serves as an alternative meeting, educational and recreational spot that is open to the public on a not-for-profit basis. (Mehmetaj 2016).

Termokiss emerges as a compelling case within the framework of this report, especially in the context of inclusion and exclusion dynamics in public spaces, due to its radical transformation over the years. Before it was turned into a social hub, the yard where Termokiss is situated was largely abandoned, serving as a space where heroin addicts took their daily doses. The area evoked fear among people from the surrounding neighbourhoods, who avoided passing through it due to its association with drug use and addiction. This space is now frequently used by the very people that once perceived it to be a dangerous area. Some of them have even offered to support the center, either by financial means or by giving away unused furniture and appliances. The reclaiming and revitalization of this area by local citizens presents a compelling case of community-driven initiatives in challenging exclusionary dynamics and creating inclusive public spaces that are embraced and utilized by people, regardless of their background or social status.

While Termokiss promotes itself as an open and inclusive space, there are perceptions of contradiction raised by some regarding its actual openness. Critics argue that despite its marketing as a diverse and inclusive venue, it still tends to attract and cater primarily to a specific category of people, often associated with left-wing or progressive ideologies. This was brought up during the expert interview a researcher, journalist, and former Political Adviser to the President of Kosovo (December 2022), who emphasized that while Termokiss aims to foster a sense of community and belonging, the challenge lies in ensuring that it remains truly open and accessible to individuals from a wide range of ideological and political backgrounds.

### 3.2.2. The Bajram Kelmendi Street

The Bajram Kelmendi street is situated in the Vellusha neighbourhood of Prishtina. The neighbourhood got its name from the Vellusha river that once flowed through the city but was covered in the 1980s.

The street underwent significant transformations in the past two decades. After the 1999 war in Kosovo, the area was swarmed with new residential buildings, which were largely built without permits or proper planning. Today, the Bajram Kelmendi Street has turned into a hub for the devout Muslim population of the city. The presence of the "4 Llullat" mosque, the premises of the Islamic Community of Kosovo, and the Faculty of Islamic Studies within close proximity has solidified the street's reputation as a hub for religious activities. The street is also notable for its unique dining and shopping options. It is characterized by a vibrant array of shops and businesses catering to the community's needs, including stores selling Islamic clothing, Halal food establishments, religious bookstores, and herbal shops. The bars and cafes in the vicinity have chosen not to serve alcohol, aligning with the values and preferences of the community. Furthermore, even the branch of one of the country's largest supermarket chains located in the area follows suit by not stocking alcohol on its shelves. (Zogiani 2014).

For many residents of Prishtina, the street has become the unofficial centre for religious Muslims. However, the street's transformation into what it stands for today has created a distinct divide in public perception. One notable aspect that reflects this divide is the gaze and judgments directed towards uncovered women. Their presence can stand out in contrast to the prevailing norms and practices observed by the majority of residents in the area.

In the Bajram Kelmendi Street area of Prishtina's Vellusha neighborhood, there are underlying lines of conflict that arise due to the contrasting beliefs, values, and practices of different groups that reside in or frequent the area. These conflicts primarily revolve around religious identity, cultural norms, and the coexistence of diverse socio-political ideologies. One of the main sources of conflict stems from the religious divide between the devout Muslim community and those who do not adhere to the same religious beliefs. Another line of conflict emerges from contrasting cultural norms and practices. The visibility of Islamic symbols, the observance of religious rituals, and the availability of specialized services catering to the religious Muslim population can create a distinct cultural atmosphere in the area. These lines of conflict do not imply direct hostility or animosity, but rather showcase the complexities of establishing inclusive public spaces that embrace diverse identities and perspectives.

### 3.2.3. The University of Prishtina campus

The University of Prishtina Campus is situated in the heart of the city, serving as a vibrant hub of education and culture for its citizens. It encompasses various faculties of the University of Prishtina, whilst sitting strategically amidst prominent architectural and cultural landmarks in the city, including the National Library of Kosovo and the National Gallery of Art. Other notable buildings that shape the landscape of the campus include the University of Prishtina Rectorate building, which serves as the administrative hub, and the Serbian Orthodox Church, which remains a source of contention to this day (Beqiri & Pallaska, 2018).

The university campus area is property of the Municipality of Prishtina. The urban planning and development of the campus adhere to the regulatory plan of the Center 2 Zone. In terms

of spatial coverage, the area of the campus spans over 15 hectares, with approximately 70% of the total area dedicated to open green spaces. Notably, it also functions as a vital corridor that connects the center of Prishtina with different neighborhoods, including the Ulpiana and Muhaxher neighbourhoods. The campus exhibits diversity in terms of its usage types, and it is not considered homogenous in this regard. (Municipal Assembly of Prishtina Directorate of Planning, Urbanism and Construcion). While students are the primary group that use this space, the campus is also utilized by other categories of citizens, whose activities are not necessarily related to the university. This includes residents of the surrounding residential buildings, business owners and passersby, to name a few.

A significant and contentious structure within the University of Pristina's campus area is the Serbian Orthodox Church of Christ the Saviour, the construction of which began during the 1990s amidst the backdrop of the Serbian occupation under Milosevic's regime. However, to this day, the Church remains unfinished and non-functional, casting a shadow over the city by serving as a symbol of the unresolved conflict between Kosovo and Serbia. (BIRN, 2014). The construction of the Church in the heart of the city and above all, on the premises of the University Campus, constituted one of the many forms of ethno-political oppression directed towards the Albanian majority population by the Serbian regime at the time, in this case manifested through the appropriation of public space.

For over two decades, the Church of Christ the Saviour has been a frequent subject of heated debates, particularly in relation to the ownership of the land under which the Church was built and its fate. In September 2012, the University of Pristina filed a lawsuit against the Serbian Orthodox Church, alleging the illegal occupation of over four hectares of land where the church sits. (Leposhtica, 2017). A final verdict on the case is yet to be issued, leaving the fate of the building, and what will be done with it, still uncertain. While the majority of the city's residents, especially those who experienced its construction, wish to see the Church demolished, others argue for transforming the unfinished and non-functional structure into a historical memorial.

Another more recent event that added to the lingering historical unease surrounding the University campus was the launching of excavation work in campus premises on suspicions of a war-time mass grave being buried there. Following an order from the Kosovo Special Prosecution, in July 2016, a search for buried bodies commenced on the campus grounds, prompted by a tip from a nearby resident, who claimed that victims of Serbian forces were buried under the lawn between the Serbian Orthodox church and the National Library. After two weeks of excavations, no human remains were found at the suspected mass grave site. (Ristic, 2016).

Alongside these events, the campus remained a vital and integral part of the urban fabric of Prishtina. Serving as a dynamic hub for social and cultural activities, the campus continues to host a myriad of events, from student-led initiatives to nationwide protests. With the vast majority of the area consisting of open green spaces and nestled in the heart of some of the busiest and most congested streets in the city, the campus area provides an ideal setting for rest and relaxation. However, as with other public spaces in the city, issues such as poor maintenance, lack of proper infrastructure, including urban furniture, public lighting, and other essential amenities, as well as accessibility issues for the disabled, elderly and parents with infants, hinder the full utilization and inclusivity of the area.

## 4. Key findings from D.Rad LAB I and LAB II

The University of Pristina campus stands out as a compelling case study in the context of this report, presenting a dynamic and multifaceted space where encounters and negotiated belonging take center stage. Within this space, various groups, including students, residents, businesses, and citizens of all backgrounds, coexist and interact. Within its limited perimeter, the campus houses some of Kosovo's most important cultural landmarks, ranging from the various faculties of the University of Prishtina to the National Library of Kosovo and the National Gallery of Art. This establishes the campus area as a crucial space for knowledge exchange and artistic interactions in the city. However, it also creates tensions concerning ownership and influence over who holds greater authority in shaping the space and its purpose. The University campus also serves as a space where contrasting versions of history and ethno-political tensions are vividly manifested, most notably through the presence of the unfinished Serbian Orthodox Church, which is a site of collective memory for those who lived through the turbulent 1990s. The campus area raises important questions relating to how public space affects the shaping of particular identities and how the secular and the religious can coexist in shared spaces.

### 4.1. Summary of D.Rad LAB I

D.Rad LAB I was a comprehensive and insightful gathering of various experts and stakeholder's familiar with the university campus area in Prishtina (see above), some of whom had personally witnessed its transformation over the course of the past four decades. Participants held the area in high regard, lauding it as a site of popular resistance, resilience, and emancipation. Older participants, who had experienced the occupation in the 1990s and had witnessed the subsequent growth and reconstruction of the city in the post-war period, particularly emphasized these historical aspects.

Lack of overall safety in the campus area was highlighted as a pressing issue, particularly among participants who frequent the zone on a day-to-day basis, such as students, professors, and residents. Among the main security concerns raised were the presence of stray dogs and the lack of adequate lighting across the campus. Certain parts of the campus were previously used by drug addicts, and although some residents mentioned that such incidents have decreased, it still adds to the avoidance of the area during nighttime, especially among women. A professor present in the workshop pointed out that the lack of public lighting exacerbates such activities, as darkness can create an environment conducive to criminal behavior. Participants emphasized the need for securitization of the area, particularly through the installation of security cameras, which they believed would not only improve the overall sense of safety but also make the campus more accessible and welcoming to everyone.

Participants found the campus area to be unwelcoming, mainly due to the absence of urban furniture, insufficient shade during the summer months, and poor maintenance, particularly when it comes to green spaces and waste management. Discussions regarding enhancing the utilization of the campus area often revolved around the commercialization of the surrounding environment. The majority of participants expressed a desire for additional amenities, particularly Horeca spaces such as coffee shops and other similar establishments. It is important to note that in the context of Kosovo, coffee culture is an integral part of the social fabric of society. It is not merely about consuming a drink but rather an essential social

activity that brings people together. As such, many participants viewed Horeca spaces as potential catalysts for revitalizing the area, creating gathering points for students, residents of various socio-demographic backgrounds, and visitors alike.

A few participants, however, advocated for maintaining the university campus as a strictly public space. Referring to other public spaces in the city that have been overtaken by commercial interests, one of the participants – a professor at the adjacent faculty of Arts – noted that such transformations often result in limited access and exclusion for certain groups, such as low-income individuals and marginalized communities, which can create a sense of alienation and detachment from what was once an open space for public use.

Throughout the interactive LAB I, one of the recurring and central topics of discussion revolved around the unfinished building of the Serbian Orthodox Church and its uncertain future. Discussions around the Church often transcended considerations of the physical structure and surrounding environment. Rather, participants delved into its symbolic and historical significance, some of them expressing how walking past the church served as a powerful reminder of the oppression they had endured during the era of Serbian occupation under the Milosevic regime. Participants viewed the Church not as a religious edifice but as a political project designed to assert dominance over a population. According to one of the older participants, who had experienced the campus area during his student years, there is a significant difference between how the space was utilized before the Serbian Orthodox Church was built and after. He shared that in the 1980s, the green area of the campus was bustling with students, with barely any free spots to be found. However, in contrast, nowadays, the area is never crowded to that extent. Although the church is not the sole reason for this change, he emphasized that it did contribute to a shift in the sense of ownership that students had over the space.

Notably, during the discussions, two participants expressed the view that the role of the church in the area should be diminished. They suggested not making it a central topic in discussions of the public space and avoiding associating the entire area solely with this single religious object. On the other hand, some participants held a different perspective, believing that the only sustainable solution is to demolish the church altogether. They argued that the church was constructed illegally and does not belong in the campus area, which is primarily intended for educational and public purposes. According to them, introducing religious elements in a university campus contradicts the idea of a secular and inclusive space. Interestingly, one participant proposed a unique idea of converting the church into a museum dedicated to wartime history, which would exhibit pictures and artifacts from the 1990 war and contribute to the collective memory of the nation.

## 4.2. Summary of D.Rad LAB II

D.Rad LAB II participants, comprising young boys and girls who either study in one of the adjacent faculties of the University of Prishtina or are residents of the area, were more focused on the present-day challenges the space faces, expressing how these hinder their optimal utilization of the area. Some of the girls that participated in LAB II expressed their reluctance to frequent the campus area during the evening hours. They openly expressed their reluctance to visit or spend time in the campus vicinity after dark. This reluctance was driven by a sense of vulnerability and unease, which was exacerbated by specific safety-related concerns such as the presence of stray dogs and inadequate lighting in the area. Much like the attendees of



LAB I, participants in LAB II underscored the importance of enhancing security measures in the area, with a particular emphasis on the installation of security cameras.

While participants in LAB II acknowledged the church's presence in the University Campus area and its historical significance, it did not dominate the discourse. Instead, the discussion shifted towards the perspectives and desires of young people who frequent the campus area, with a focus on identifying what they perceive as lacking in the space and brainstorming ways to enhance it to better meet their needs. The participants' vision for the space was truly inspiring as they put forward a diverse array of amenities and activities aimed at enriching the vibrancy and inclusivity of the entire campus zone. Their proposals ranged from the establishment of a botanical garden in the campus area which would allow students to utilize the outdoor space during the warm summer days, to the creation of an open-air cinema and the establishment of an information center for locals and tourists alike, providing information about nearby cultural landmarks, public facilities, and local initiatives.

## 5. Analysis and policy recommendations

From a socio-spatial perspective, the campus area under consideration is not an inherently exclusionary space from a core definition of the term, as it allows for free access and use for people of all backgrounds at any time of day, without restrictions. However, a closer look reveals more intricate socio-spatial dynamics at play. The distinction between "us" and "them" in the campus area is not a simple matter of one group having exclusive access over the other. Instead, it assumes a more abstract nature, particularly evident through the presence of the Serbian Orthodox Church. The latter serves as a visible marker of the complex socio-political history and ongoing ethno-national tensions in the country. The unfinished state of the church and its inaccessibility – both literal and figurative - symbolizes the stalemate of unresolved tensions between Kosovo and Serbia, which deprives of any real prospect for reconciliation.

The findings from the D.Rad LABs reveal a strong eagerness among people, particularly the younger generation, to confront the current challenges by prioritizing enhancements to the rest of the campus area. Indeed, while acknowledging the existence and historical significance of the church is essential, it is crucial to avoid overly emphasizing its role in defining the entire campus area. During both LABs, there was a resolute focus among participants to improve and optimize the campus area as a whole, which reflects a sincere aspiration on the part of citizens to establish an inclusionary public space that coexists with its role as a site of ethno-political contention.

The findings also provide valuable insights into the perceptions and attitudes towards commercialization of public spaces, particularly in the context of the campus area under consideration. Participants showed a general openness to the idea of privatization as long as it serves the public good and contributes to the dynamism and usability of the space. This perspective reflects a willingness to embrace private investment and commercial entities to bring positive changes and improvements to the area. It is important to note, however, that this relatively lax perspective on privatization and commercialization also arises from a sense of disillusionment with the institutional-led initiatives for revitalizing the space. This sentiment suggests that citizens are willing to compromise on the idea of a strictly public space open to all, if it means that by privatizing it, it becomes more functional, vibrant, and inclusive.



Lastly, the findings also shed light on the fact that community engagement is not prioritized by institutions when it comes to issues related to public space management of the university campus area. Notably, during LAB I, there were remarkable instances where representatives from municipal-level institutions attending the workshop were inspired by ideas put forward by residents and students. They expressed a genuine willingness to establish contact and collaborate on joint projects aimed at improving the area. Unfortunately, public platforms that bring together diverse stakeholders to discuss and address important matters concerning public space are lacking.

Based on the analysis above, the following policy recommendations are proposed:

1. The Municipality of Prishtina and its relevant departments should prioritize enhancing safety and security in the campus area by implementing simple yet effective measures, such as increasing public lighting and installing security cameras. Other cost-effective measure proposed by one of the LAB I participants is the installment of free internet connection in the area, which can significantly contribute to creating a safer environment and foster connectivity.
2. The University of Prishtina should host regular meetings, held either monthly or bi-yearly, inviting a diverse range of stakeholders such as representatives from the municipality, safety councils, local residents, and students, which would serve as valuable platforms for exchanging ideas and inspiration on how to enhance the area and improve its accessibility.
3. The Municipality of Prishtina and the relevant institutions in the university campus area should should proactively engage in open public debates and discussions regarding the Serbian Orthodox Church in a sensitive manner. They should consider integrating it into a broader narrative that encompasses the diverse historical and cultural layers of the campus area. Exploring its transformation into a museum or cultural center could contribute to collective memory and reconciliation.

## 6. Conclusion

In conclusion, The University of Pristina campus is a multifaceted space with significant historical and cultural importance, serving as a site of popular resistance and memory, particularly linked to the turbulent events of the 1990s and the presence of the Serbian Orthodox Church. Within this space, various groups, including students, residents, businesses, and citizens of diverse backgrounds, coexist and interact, making it a dynamic hub.

Safety concerns, including issues such as inadequate lighting and the presence of stray dogs, weigh heavily on the minds of campus users, particularly students, professors, and residents. This insecurity has led some, notably women, to avoid the campus area during the evening hours. Yet, amidst these challenges, there is a desire among participants, notably the younger generation, to prioritize improvements for the entire campus space. They envision a vibrant future, emphasizing the need for security enhancements and advocating for the introduction of various amenities, from botanical gardens to open-air cinemas.

Furthermore, the findings underscore a willingness to consider privatization and commercialization if it results in positive transformations, indicating a pragmatic approach to revitalizing the campus area. However, it also reveals a sense of disillusionment with institutional-led initiatives, necessitating more inclusive platforms for community engagement. The complex role of the Serbian Orthodox Church within this space sparks multifaceted discussions, with diverse perspectives on its future. Participants highlight the importance of acknowledging its presence without allowing it to dominate discussions, while others propose repurposing it as a museum dedicated to wartime history.

Ultimately, the University of Pristina campus exemplifies the challenges and opportunities inherent in managing public spaces within a diverse and historically charged urban environment. The policy recommendations put forth aim to enhance safety, promote community engagement, and navigate the complex heritage of the church, with the overarching goal of creating a more inclusive and vibrant public space in Prishtina.

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## Appendices

### Appendix I: Expert interviewees

No.	Area of expertise	Area of employment	Interview conducted
DE_Prishtina_1	Radicalisation	Journalism, research	07/12/2022
DE_Prishtina_2	Urban planning	University – Department of Architecture and Spatial Planning	24/01/2023
DE_Prishtina_3	Economics	Municipality of Prishtina	16/03/2023

## Appendix 2: Pictures



Picture 1: Part of the University of Prishtina campus (Photo: Donika Elshani)





Picture 2: The Serbian Orthodox Church (Photo: Donika Elshani)



Picture 3: The National Library of Kosovo (Photo: Donika Elshani)