

## **THE CHALLENGES OF KOSOVO MUNICIPALITIES CONCERNING PUBLIC OPEN SPACES AND THEIR MAINTENANCE**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Practice in Kosovo has shown us that the municipalities are planning and implementing capital investments at different costs, but they do not think or plan their maintenance. We wonder if those investments are sustainable and have a long duration.

Looking at the Kosovo trend, and after analysing the needs in the municipalities of Kosovo, it seems necessary to think about the next steps. Should we let investments as they are, or do we have to think how should we keep it? How should we plan the maintenance? What should we need to do in advance? How many technical and human resources we need and what will be the price for it, etc. etc.?

Regarding Public Open Spaces (POSSs), all these questions have been addressed in a document called “Public Open Spaces Maintenance Plan (POSMP)” and “Public Open Spaces Investment Plan (POSIP)”.

This paper attempts to explain the necessary steps undertaken and the process for drafting a maintenance plan, the challenges over which the working group of the municipalities of Kosova, in this case the department of public services of the municipalities has gone through.

In order to begin the necessary activities for the drafting of the maintenance plan, Mayor of municipality issued a decision for the establishment of the working group and the coordination group with their duties and responsibilities. Then they have organized on-the-job training to use geographic information system (GIS). Through GIS they identified all POSSs on their territory with all the elements within the POSSs creating a database.

Parts of the POSMP are also the annexes where are presented monthly plans of activities for maintaining of all POSSs which also foresees the planning of the necessary budget for the annual maintenance. If maintenance will be outsourcing, POSSs activities plans

are an integral part of the bidding material. Whereby, the municipality concludes the maintenance cycle of POSs on its territory, including regular monitoring on a daily basis.

**KEYWORDS:** Public Open Space, Maintenance plan, Investment plan, Activity plan, GIS, Capital investments.

## **INTRODUCTION**

After the war of 1999 Kosovo had many challenges, starting from emergency phase providing shelters for the population, reconstruction and construction of new administrative infrastructure, education, dwelling, road infrastructure, sewage system, water supply etc., up to the moment of establishing the state governance. Whereas regarding the environment, greenery, respectively the open public spaces and their maintenance the country had very little engagement on their agendas be it on central or local level.

The Council of Europe Identifies public open space as “an essential part of the urban heritage. A strong element in the architectural and aesthetic form of a town” Therefore, for Kosovo municipalities POS plays an important role in the lives of the inhabitants, besides the educational, ecological, economic development is also important for social interaction and promoting community development.

Working in the field of Public services, especially in public open spaces, with 17 partner municipalities of Swiss project “Decentralisation and municipal support - DEMOS I, it was big challenge for me also for responsible municipal staff involved in this field.

Support is dedicated to creating data base through GIS system, of all existing public open spaces (parks, squares, playgrounds, sport fields and other multi-use destinations) and to better maintain them. The assistance is primarily demanded, driven in supporting assessments, planning, monitoring service provision, enforcement, and public awareness.

Through this support to municipalities, have been developed Public Open Spaces Maintenance Plans (POSMP) and Public Open Spaces Investment Plans (POSIP) for 9 Kosovo municipalities: Shtime, Lipjan, Rahovec, Junik, Peja, Kamenica, Prishtina, Novoherda, and Vitia.

While researching and analysing different materials and studies, I noticed that different countries set different standards per m<sup>2</sup> per capita of public space, e.g. in Mumbai, based on the “The National Commission on Urbanisation (1988) suggests that the ideal ratio of open spaces is 4 acres per 1,000 persons, converted on square m per habitant is 16.19m<sup>2</sup>. The ratio of open space per thousand residents in Mumbai is 0.03 acres (0.121m<sup>2</sup>/habitant) as against more than three acres in New Delhi and Kolkata.

Standards foreseen in municipal plans of Kosovo municipalities are adapted in POSMP. Targeted standard of POS in a long-term plan is 10 m<sup>2</sup> /inhabitants.

## PLANNING PROCESS

In order to know which are next activities, terms and responsibilities of each individual during the drafting process of PMPOS and PIPOS it was necessary to undertake some activities before starting the drafting plan. First of all, mayor of municipality of Lipjan, issues the decision for establishment of Working Group (WG) and Coordination Group (CG) with description of duties and responsibilities (Figure 1). Member of CG it can be Mayor or Vice mayor, Director of Public Service or Director of Budget and Finance, whereas member of the WG are Director of Public service as a leader, officer for environment, gender officer, urbanist, planer and finance office. In total member of the WG are planned to be five, seven or nine officers, depending how big the municipalities are.

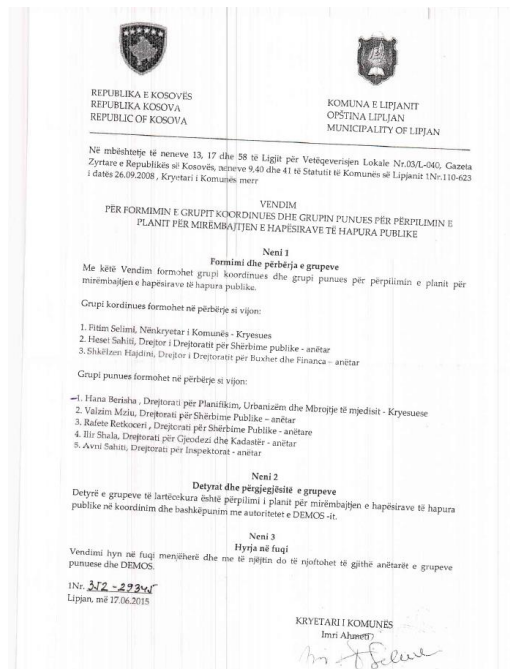


Figure 3: Municipal decision for establishment of Working Group (WG) and Coordination group (CG)

Since we had no experience to draft such plans in Kosovo, the donator with participation of municipality has seen it reasonable to fund the study visit in Swiss at the city of Biel Bienne. Coming back to Kosovo the working group started with the first steps on drafting the plan. The

working group of Lipjan Municipality with the support of the field experts initially drafted the working plan including all necessary activities, time period and deliverables.

Activity plan and deliverables - MPPOS/IPPOS Lipjan municipality 2016-2021									
Phase	Which Plan? Maintenance Plan (MP) or Investment Plan (IP)	Steps	Activities expected from the consultant	Deliverables	Expected from Municipality (consultant will not move to next stage before municipality delivers the expected deliverables)	Remarks	Maximum number of expert days		
							Senior expert (SE)	Junior expert (JE)	Total
Startup process	MP / IP	Establish Working Group (WG) and Coordination Group (CG) and identify stakeholders	n/a	Establish WG and CG and identify stakeholders	Decision on establishment of WG and CG and a supplying with a list of relevant stakeholders	Meeting with Lip on 19 June (th)			
	MP	Introduction/Preparatory meeting with the WG and CG and other stakeholders	Participate in the meeting and present the content and process of development of a maintenance plan	Organizing the meeting with complete participation of the members of WG, CG and relevant stakeholders . . . Supplying the contact list of the members and other stakeholders	Members of WG and CG to be informed on process and procedures of development of MP	to be done together with discussion of table of contents			
	MP / IP	Finalize Table of Content	Share and agree with municipality the table of content with clear instructions for WG and elements to be included	Final MP Table of Content approved by DEMOS and agreed with municipality	Municipality agrees on table of content		1		1
	MP / IP	Work plan template	Finalize the work plan template based on the approved table of content	Final work plan template adaptable to all municipalities. approved by DEMOS	Municipality approves and commits to comply with responsibilities and timeline				0
<b>Timeline: June 19, 2015</b>									
Data Collection	MP / IP	Data Collection Template	Data collection questionnaire	Develop a data collection questionnaire for assessing the current situation, according to the agreed table of contents.	Final data collection questionnaire with the elements according to the agreed table of contents, approved by DEMOS				
		Data collection	Data Collection and analysis	Access to the information and database	A brief report from consultants on available data and additional data collection required	Partly done already and to be finalized within AGS on quality-check			
			n/a	All data collected and sent to DEMOS	Completed questionnaire and relevant documentation sent to DEMOS				
		Data analysis	Assist the municipality to process all data collected	Work with DEMOS experts in data processing	All data processed and verified, a document with data processed sent to DEMOS				
<b>Timeline: June 19, 2015</b>									
Chapter 1 introduction	MP / IP	Draft the first chapter of the plan to include Scope of the Plan, Municipal profile, MOP & Zoning Maps & DRP and reference documents	Chapter review and finalisation	Prepare a draft of Chapter 1	Chapter 1 of maintenance plan approved by WG and CG (decision taken by the CG)		2	1	3
<b>Timeline: June 26, 2015</b>									
Chapter 2 Current Situation and	MP / IP	analyse data	Assist the municipality to analyse the POS inventory and possible additional data / reports	draft chapter 2, current situation	Baseline report approved by the CG and published (through local media, municipal website and circulated to all relevant stakeholders)	the data will be available, they just need to be put into a report format	1		1
		deliver a presentation on the current situation	Prepare and facilitate a 1 day workshop on evaluation of current situation and on improvements by better maintenance and by investments	Workshop with all stakeholders present	active participation at the workshop of the respective departments (public services, finance, urbanism?)		1	1	2

Figure 2: A part of activity plan and deliverables of POSMP and POSIP

The planning period of WG upon drafting of POSMP and POSIP by Lipjan municipality was very ambitious at the beginning, planned to be completed within 4 months (June – September). Nevertheless, when the municipal officials started to work, they needed more time to work on the document then they have foreseen. First of all, they had to perform their primary duties as per they working contract and later on to work on drafting the plan as additional task provided by employer, not being paid for it, thus it has been foreseen to work on it within the daily duty and this kind of performance has delayed the entire process. We have also to consider other administrative bureaucracies within the municipality. So, the final approval of POSMP&POSIP at the assembly took 6 months instead of 4 planning months.

## IDENTIFICATION OF PUBLIC OPEN SPACES AND CREATION OF DATABASE

Creation of POS database is the main element to start working on the Maintenance and the Investment plan of POS. In order to create the sustainable database and update it time to time it has been decided to

do it with software GIS – Geographical Information System. The working group was in need to be trained in advance. We have chosen to use this software since it is an open source and it can be downloaded from internet.



Figure 3: POS in urban zone of the city of Lipjan

During the identification of public spaces, the WG encountered many difficulties to compare the cadastral data. In many occasions they did not match. At the end as real grounds for maintenance of POS were taken the areas being measured at the field.

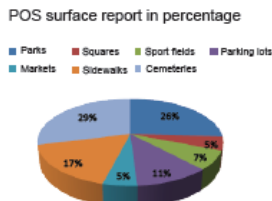


Figure 4: Summary – POSs by area

The process of drafting the plan included the regular meetings between WG and CG after each completed chapter. Only after the approval of work by CG we worked further to the next chapter. During the planning process it is also important to have the organisation and the participation of citizens, where through organized public discussions we have consulted and considered their requirements.



Figure 5: Photos from working group and public debates

## CHALLENGES

Having in mind that this is the first from 5 municipalities that started to draft the POSMP and POSIP, indeed the working group encountered many challenges.

Some of those challenges are as below:

- Mayor's Decision on establishment of Coordinating and Working Group and start of work;
- Training of WG with GIS software;
- Identification of POSs at the territory of Lipjan municipality;
- Discrepancies of cadastral notes with the records in the field
- Public debates with citizens;
- Small municipal budget to maintain the POSs;
- Decrease of priority list to 22 POSs only in urban area;
- Current area of POSs for active and passive recreation is 5.82 m2/inhabitants;
- Target quantitative standard of POSs in long-term in 10m2/inhabitants.

POSMP has its annexes where you can find the compiled table of activities for 22 POSs which based on existing and planned budget, will be maintained. These tables would be part of tendering material of Lipjan municipality in order to enter into a contract with maintaining company.

Proposed title		HPP-1_D																			
Maintenance total cost		5,239.47		1.94																	
Category		Park																			
						Number of activities undertaken at POS during the period of maintenance activities															
No.	HPP Name	Activity description	Unit	Quantity	Unit price	Total price (annual)	No. of activities (annual)	January	February	March	April	May	June	July	August	September	October	November	December		
1	CA	Collection and disposal of waste	m <sup>2</sup>	2698	€ 0.01	2,590.08	96	2	2	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	2	1	
2	CA	Removal of graffiti	m <sup>2</sup>	2,698	€ 15.00	40.47	1			1											1
3	CA	Cleaning and maintenance of the fountain/tap	copie	1	€ 5.00	20.00	4			1	1	1	1			1					1
4	CA	Removal of snow from pedestrian paths	m <sup>2</sup>	748	€ 0.01	59.84	8	2	2	1									1	2	1
5	H	Irrigation of green areas	m <sup>2</sup>	1950	€ 0.01	721.50	37			1	4	6	6	6	6	6	2				1
6	H	Mowing the grass as per technical specification	m <sup>2</sup>	1950	€ 0.01	721.50	37			1	4	6	6	6	6	6	2				1
7	H	Repainting of low greenery/grass	m <sup>2</sup>	97.5	€ 0.20	19.50	1			1											1
8	H	Fertilization of the green areas	m <sup>2</sup>	1950	€ 0.10	195.00	1			1											1
9	H	Planting of low greenery/flowers	m <sup>2</sup>	100	€ 0.05	5.00	1			1											1
10	H	Planting low greenery/flowers	m <sup>2</sup>	100	€ 0.20	20.00	1			1											1
11	H	Maintenance of high greenery - planting trees	piece	19	€ 5.00	95.00	1		1												1
12	H	Clipping, disinsection and deratization	m <sup>2</sup>	2698	€ 0.01	26.98	1			1											1
13	CE	Maintenance of urban furniture/ benches	piece	3	€ 20.00	120.00	2			1			1								1
14	CE	Maintenance of urban furniture/benches	piece	5	€ 50.00	250.00	1			1											1
15	CE	Maintenance/repairment of cobblestones paths in case of damage as per technical specification	m <sup>2</sup>	37.4	€ 9.00	336.60	1			1											1
16	CE	Maintenance of lighting	piece	18	€ 0.80	18.00	2			1							1				1

Figure 6: Tabular forms of activities for maintenance of specific POS within area, unit, quantity, price and timing



The maintenance of POSs previously and recently has been made through service contracts given to outdoor contracted operators, respectively the framework contract with 3 years' duration. The same are managed by engaged official who is in charge to supervise the infrastructure projects. We can mention some of the deficiencies identified on it:

- Deficiencies on division of maintaining areas/fields;
- Deficiencies on anticipated maintaining activities;
- Incorrect description of maintaining activities;
- Lack of technical specifications;
- Deficiencies on planning and maintaining dynamic, etc.

The afore mentioned deficiencies have set in doubts the relevance of offered prices in previous contracts, whereas as consequence the monitoring of maintenance could become difficult. Nowadays, the municipality can monitor in advance the contractor as per the plan of planned activities and seek for responsibility from the contractor also to plan the necessary budget for next year's pursuant to POSMP and POSIP.



Figure 7: Approved POSMP and POSIP for Lipjan Municipality

In December 2015 after 6 months of work made by WG and CG we have managed to complete the drafting of PMPOS and POSIP for Lipjan municipality and approved it at municipal assembly.



Figure 8: Lipjan Municipal assembly decision for approving of POSMP and POSIP

## CONCLUSION

On the whole we can say that because of the difficulties we had, initially the project itself which supported the municipalities, but especially the municipalities involved in the drafting of maintenance plans, this initiative and engagement of both parties has resulted in success of the municipality and the citizens who are users of the POSSs.

Municipalities have come to the conclusion that without the right maintenance plan and investment plan in the POSS, cannot have a fair budget planning and cannot have maintained public open spaces. Not having maintained investment made in POSSs, is a failed investment, because over the time it begins to be demolished. In this case, the citizens are dissatisfied, and the environment is unclean, degraded and unmanaged.

Finally, we can conclude that the experience in the 10 supported municipalities is guidance for other municipalities in Kosovo that have no maintenance and investment plan of POSSs. They should take initiatives and act as soon as possible with the development of the

POSMP and POSIP, independently or with the support of external expertise.

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