

ANALYSING THE SYSTEM OF SETTLEMENTS IN THE REPUBLIC OF KOSOVO

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Avni Kastrati

Idriz Shala

Kosovo agency of statistics, **Kosovo**

ABSTRACT

Statistical data consist of a temporal and spatial dimension. This means that they are valid for a certain point in time or period of time as well as for a certain location. Republic of Kosovo is characterized by a large number of Settlements. The structure of the system of settlements in Kosovo is presented through traditional approach of quantitative analysis of basic characteristics of the settlement network in Kosovo. The system of settlements in Kosovo is characterized by dispersion of its 1469 settlements and low level of urbanization. There are many rural settlements with emphasized dwelling function, small towns and only seven larger towns. Spatial development trends indicate that the dispersion will stay an important spatial element, but causing environmental pressures. The dispersion will have many positive effects on regional development in Kosovo.

Keywords: Location, Settlements, regional planning, GIS data

INTRODUCTION

The Republic of Kosovo is characterized by a large number of settlements. Although the national territory extends on the 10,908 km², there are 1469 settlements registered [1]. Settlements are important landscape element of Kosovo that needs to be taken into consideration in geographical analysis of Kosovo and in shaping its regional and spatial development strategies.

Settlements in Kosovo were of particular interest to geographers and other social scientists from the beginning of the modern geographical science in Kosovo.

To achieve the aim of the article different traditional approaches are used the settlement network analysis, urban settlements.

Methods used in the survey are based on calculation of relative numbers and elaboration of the basic statistical analysis. The source of data is the database of the based census data from 2011, analysis of geographical literature.

The first part of the article presents traditional approaches in analyzing the system of settlements: basic characteristics of the settlement network in Kosovo using the population statistics, and urban settlements. The second part of the article brings results of the categorization of settlements in Kosovo.

The article concludes with a short summary of basic characteristics of the system of settlements in Kosovo, specific issues regarding the current and future development of the system of settlements in Kosovo and the possibilities for future research on the system of settlements in Kosovo.

DATA, MATERIALS, AND COVERAGE

This study make use of aggregated census data disseminated by the Kosovo Agency of Statistics as a result of the 2011 population and housing censuses conducted in April 2011.

ANALYSING THE SYSTEM OF SETTLEMENTS IN KOSOVO BASIC CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SETTLEMENT NETWORK

Statistical data for Settlements are of some considerable importance for the central government and for local authorities while planning and managing services for local communities. According to data from the Register of Settlements, which is kept by the Kosovo Agency of Statistics there were 1469 settlements in Kosovo. If there were 1.771,604 inhabitants living in Kosovo at that time (31 December 2015) [2], then there were 1206 inhabitants living on average in each settlement.

Table 1. Settlements with more than 10,000 inhabitants in Kosovo in 2011 [3]

Settlements	Number of inhabitants	% of inhabitants in Kosovo	Cumulative % of inhabitants in Kosovo
Prishtinë	145,149	8.2	8.2
Prizren	85,119	4.8	13.0
Gjilan	54,239	3.0	16.0
Pejë	48,962	2.8	18.8
Mitrovicë	46,230	2.6	21.4
Ferizaj	42,628	2.4	23.8
Gjakovë	40,827	2.3	26.1
Vushtrri	26,964	1.5	27.6
Podujevë	23,453	1.3	28.9
Rahovec	15,892	0.9	29.8
Matiçan	13,876	0.8	30.6
Fushë Kosovë	12,919	0.7	31.3
Suharekë	10,422	0.6	31.9
Kaçanik	10,393	0.6	32.5

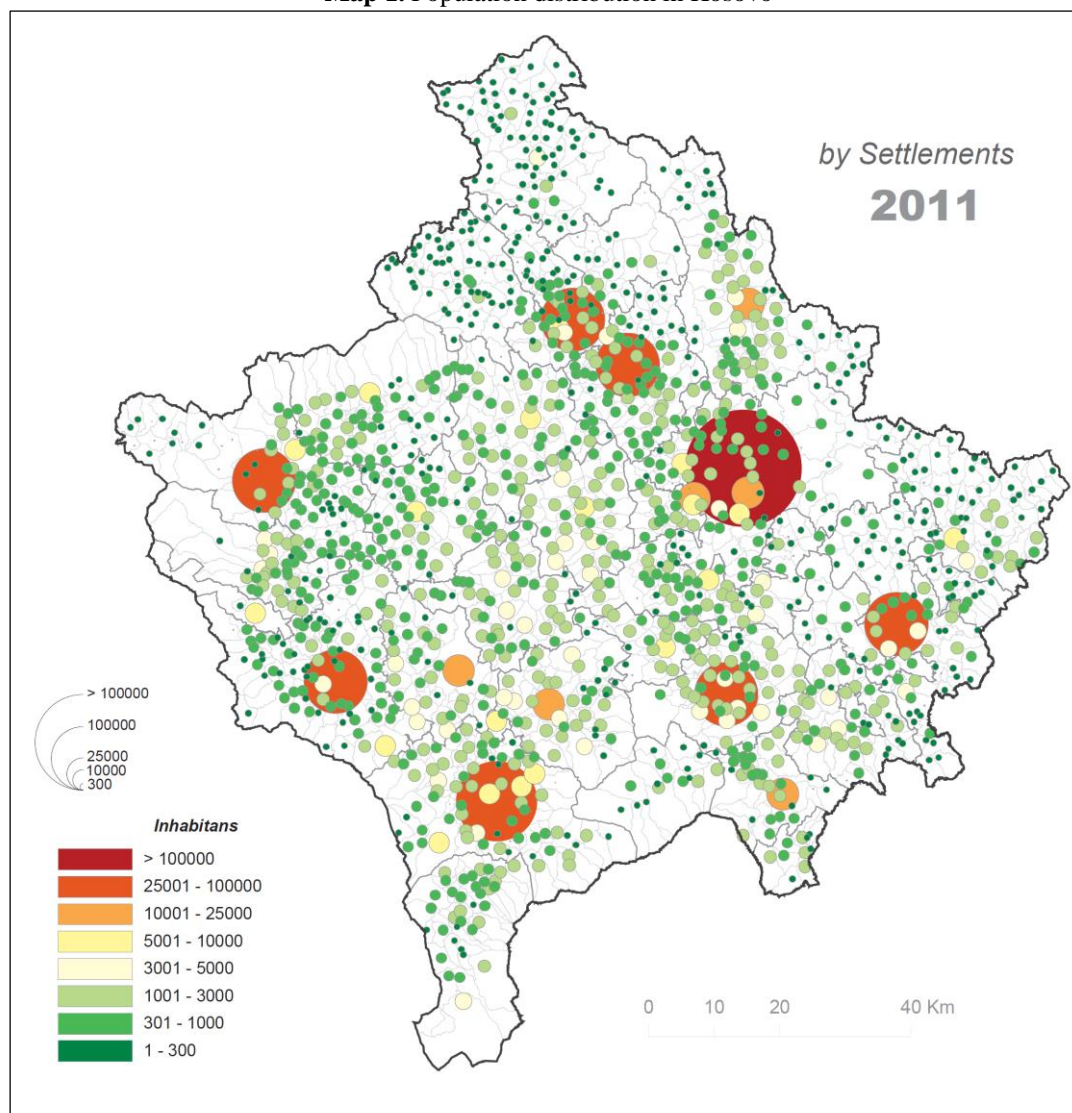
Table 2. Groups of settlements in Kosovo according to the number of population in 2011

Group	Number of settlements	% of settlements	% of inhabitants	Nr of inhabitants
> 50,000	3	0.2	15.9	284,507
10,000 – 50,000	12	0.8	16.4	292,566
5,000 – 10,000	19	1.3	6.8	120,783
1,500 – 5,000	213	14.5	28.2	501,386
500 – 1,500	496	33.8	25.1	446,458
50 – 500	525	35.7	7.4	131,310
< 50	201	13.7	0.2	3,011
Total:	1469	100	100	1,780,021

Pristina, the capital of Kosovo, had 145,149 inhabitants (8.2 % of population in Kosovo in 2011). Pristina is the only settlement in Kosovo with more than 100,000 inhabitants, while Prizren, the second largest town in Kosovo, had 85,119 inhabitants in 2011. Gjilan, the third largest settlement in Kosovo, had 54,239 inhabitants at the 2011 based census 2011.

Only 14 settlements in Kosovo had more than 10,000 inhabitants in 2011 in which there lived almost one-third of the national population. One of the basic characteristics of the settlement network in Kosovo is therefore a small number of larger settlements.

Map 1. Population distribution in Kosovo



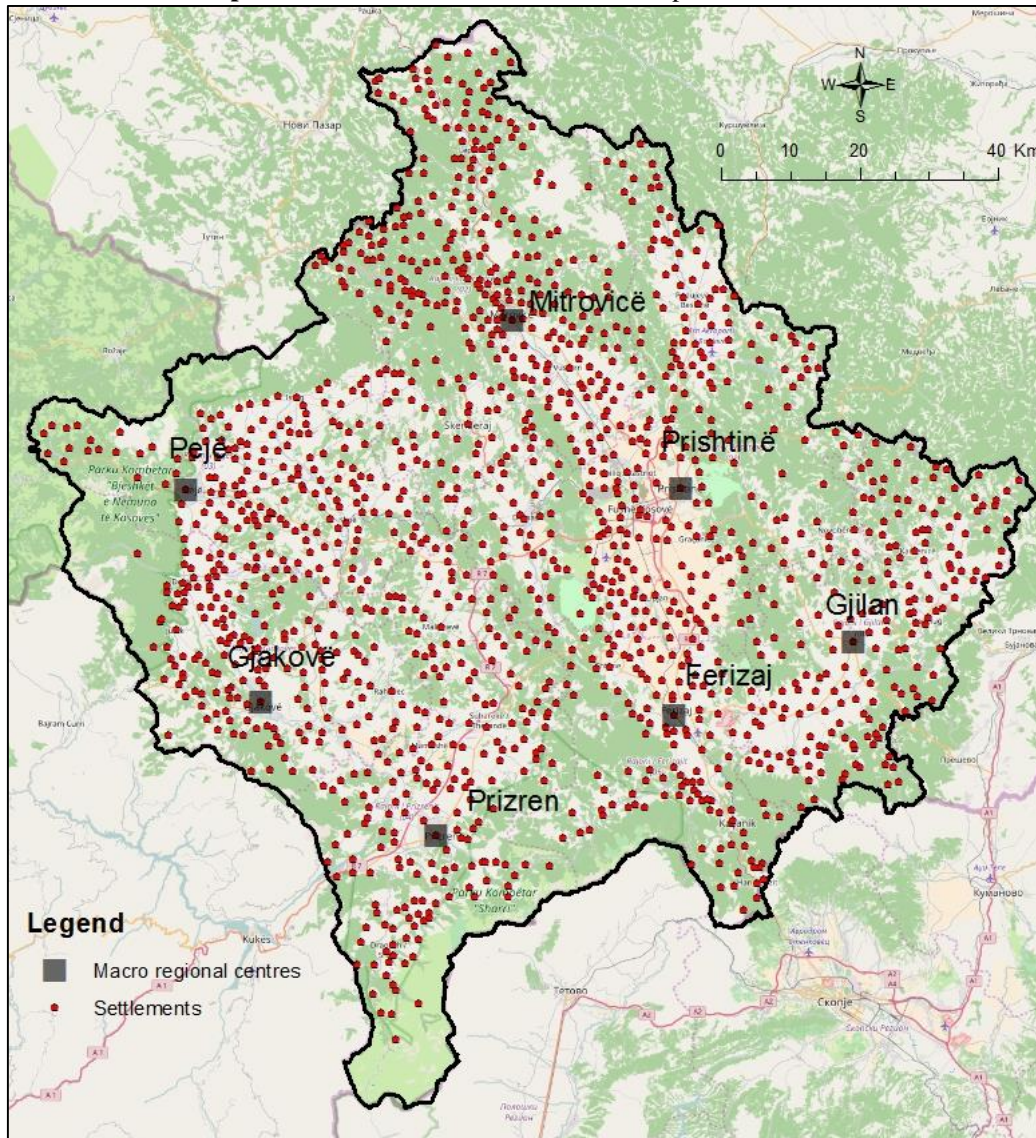
Namely, the majority of Kosovo settlements developed in the period when agriculture was the basic activity, which is also reflected in their location, density and size. Natural conditions were important for development of the network of settlements as well. Diverse relief of Kosovo was not suitable for centralization and growth of a single center.

Processes of deagrarization, industrialization, centralization and polycentric development policies from the 1960s on influenced on the development of some settlements, while others stagnated. The result is uneven distribution of population in Kosovo.

But even rural settlements are modernized. Polycentric development of Kosovo and improvement in the quality of the road network enabled people living in the countryside in (transformed) rural settlements and commuting daily on their place of work. Therefore, small settlements in Kosovo are usually not typical rural settlements with agriculture as

the most important economic activity of their residents: they have important dwelling functions, while rural centers also some services and manufacturing.

Map 2. The network of settlements in the Republic of Kosovo



The structure of settlements by size is expressed at the level of economic - social development.

The settlements have been differentiated by demographic size for all censuses after the Second World War and the number of population to be calculated by modalities of demographic size for all settlements of the Republic of Kosovo.

This is the way how had been found the structure of settlements by size and the share of population under this structure.

In 2011, the structure of settlements by demographic size has been very unfavorable for half (½) of settlements. (49.4%) belonged to the category of small settlements (up to 500 inhabitants), around 40.4% of the settlements were medium size (500-1999 inhabitants), and only 10.2% of settlements have been large (over 2000 inhabitants).

Table 3. The structure of settlements by size across the censuses 1948 – 2011 [4]

Size of Settlements	Number of Settlements				
	Census 1948	Census 1961	Census 1971	Census 1981	Census 2011
Less than 199 Inhabitants	389	248	229	230	425
200-499 Inhabitants	586	580	471	404	301
500-999	367	430	469	421	312
1000-1999	74	149	217	295	281
2000-4999	10	19	47	79	116
5000-9999	4	2	3	8	19
10 000 - 19 999	4	2	2	3	6
20 000 - 49 999	1	5	6	4	6
50 000 - 99 999	0	0	1	3	2
More than 100 000 Inhabitants	0	0	0	1	1
Total number of Settlements	1435	1435	1445	1448	1469

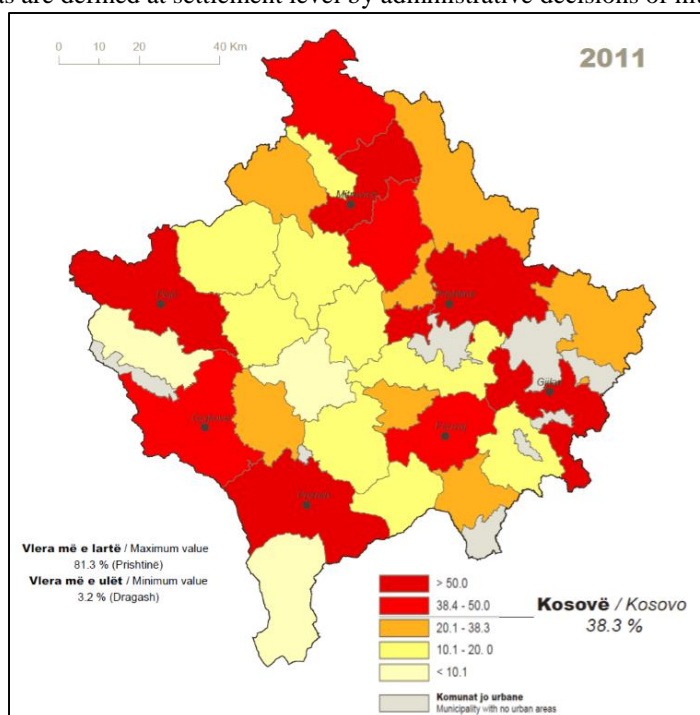
Over the period of 63 years (1948-2011) the number of small settlements up to 500 inhabitants was reduced to 25.5%.

The number of medium-size settlements increased for 34.5%, the number of large settlements was eight times higher (from 19 to 150). The number of cities was three times higher (from 9 to 29). These values indicate a positive trend of changes of the structure of settlements by demographic size.

URBAN SETTLEMENTS IN KOSOVO

When discussing the role of urban settlement in Kosovo, it needs to be pointed out, that level of urbanization reaches only 38.3 %. The official level of urbanization was around 38.3 % in 2011 [5].

Map 3. Urban population: Ratio of persons in urban areas to the total population, in %. Urban areas are defined at settlement level by administrative decisions of municipalities.



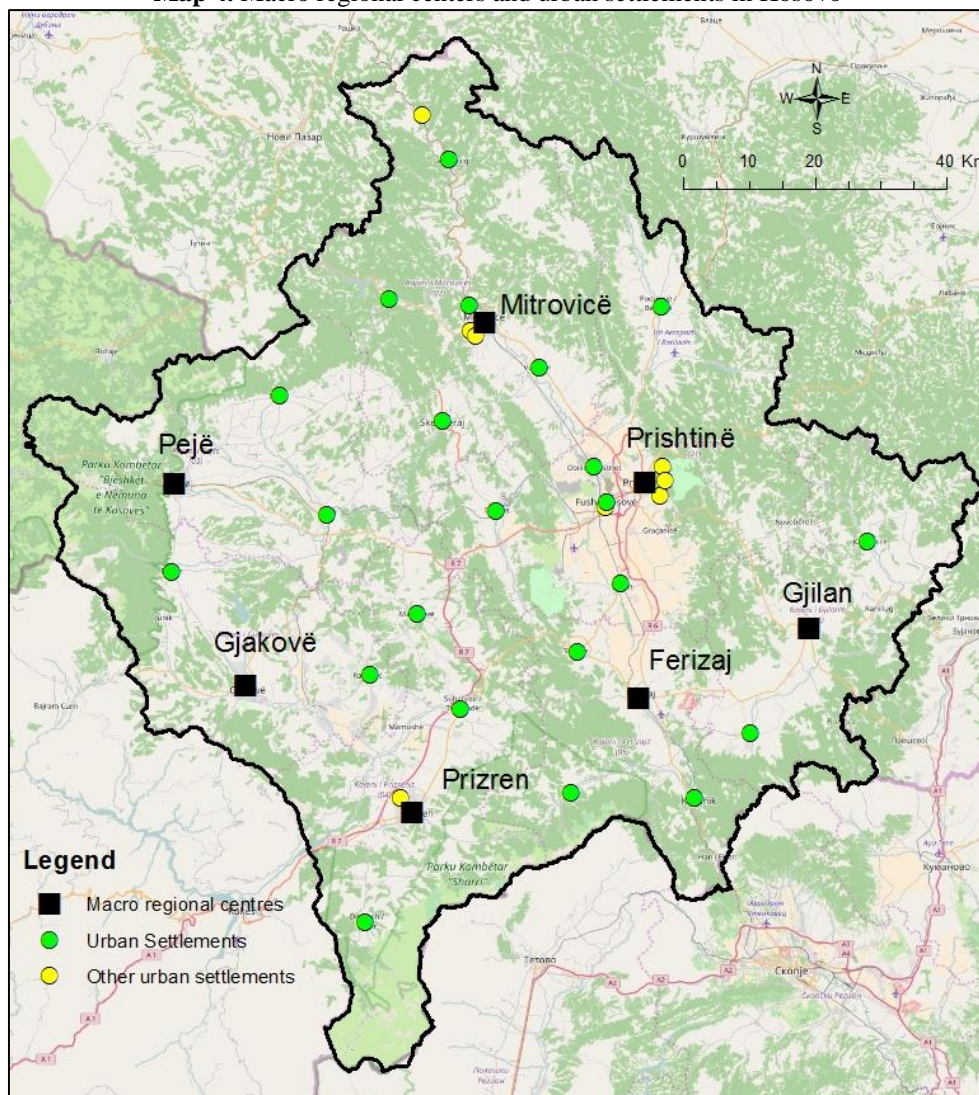
But a vast majority of them work in manufacturing and service sector, since agriculture employs only 4 % of active population in Kosovo. The countryside is urbanized, especially around larger settlements. Suburbanization and periurbanization are important geographical processes, because residents are leaving towns to live in the countryside with lower prices of dwellings and better quality of life. But this is possible only on areas with good infrastructure that links settlements with important economic centers.

There are different concepts how to define urban settlements, namely, each social science (geography as well) uses its own criteria to define them [6]. In order to prepare the unified list of urban settlements experts from the national statistical office decided to use the method that is entirely based on statistical data. The most recent list of urban settlements and settlements in urban areas was prepared and is used exclusively for statistical surveys and analysis [7].

According to all four above mentioned criteria the list of urban settlements and settlements in urban areas includes 36 settlements, which can each be represented by one urban settlement or an urban settlement with suburban settlements.

Taking into account the 2011 based census data, when total population of Kosovo was counted to 1.780,021. That gives the urbanization rate of 38.3 %.

Map 4. Macro regional centers and urban settlements in Kosovo



RESULTS

Settlements used in the categorization were delineated on 7 regional centers, 21 local centers.

Seven regional centers are the most important settlements, nodes of population and economic development which are relatively evenly distributed throughout the national territory.

During the old municipal system they got many central functions (schools, health service, and administration) and economic activities from secondary and service sectors. Therefore, their role as inter-municipal centers is still evident in the system of settlements in Kosovo. Some of categorized settlements are spatially adjacent. They can be incorporated into agglomerations. Agglomeration is a group of neighboring categorized settlements that are spatially adjacent with possible functional connections.

The importance of agglomeration is determined according to the highest-ranked settlement in the agglomeration. Pristina agglomeration of macro-regional importance is the largest agglomeration in Kosovo covering majority of the Pristina functional region and stretching along the highway corridors. On the other hand, categorization of settlements in Kosovo points out, that hierarchy between settlements still exists. But the hierarchy inside the system of settlements is changing, especially on lower levels.

CONCLUSIONS

The system of settlements in Kosovo is characterized by a large number of settlements, their dispersion and low level of urbanization. There are only two larger towns, of which Pristina is much larger than Prizren, and many small towns. Urban system of Kosovo is relatively weak from the European point of view.

The system of settlements in Kosovo is, independently on the used categorization, governed by settlements in which main economic functions and majority of population are situated. They are either small rural villages or larger settlements located mostly in suburban areas with emphasized dwelling function.

Rural settlements are of vital importance in Kosovo since their number and number of population settling in them remains high. As important part of rural population commutes daily in economic center's work it is expected, that pressures on building new houses in rural areas will continue.

Although this might cause additional environmental pressures due to pollution of air, consumption of non-renewable resources, building on agricultural land and further dispersion of settling the process will be important from the point of the national regional policy goals that emphasize polycentric development and prevention from depopulation. However, rural settlements around important economic nodes are in a better position, but on the other hand it is expected that the most peripheral settlements will be confronted with further depopulation.

Therefore, future research on the system of settlements in Kosovo should be directed toward integrating traditional indicators and indicators presenting development dynamics together with European dimension of individual settlements.

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