

PAPERS FROM THE
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EAHN 2015 BELGRADE

ENTANGLED HISTORIES, MULTIPLE GEOGRAPHIES

**european
architectural
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ENTANGLED HISTORIES, MULTIPLE GEOGRAPHIES

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EAHN 2015 BELGRADE, SERBIA**

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INTRODUCTION

This book gathers the results from the EAHN 2015 BELGRADE Thematic Conference: ENTANGLED HISTORIES, MULTIPLE GEOGRAPHIES held in Belgrade, Serbia on 14-17 October 2015.

Papers presented bring together different responses to questioning architectural history to perplexing, competing and complementary perceptions and interpretations of the past, its geography and culture. The focus is on the multiple perceptual forms and interpretations of architecture and their entanglements regarding conditions of historicity, notions of geographical belonging, as well as concepts of cultural or political identity.

In this sense, the complexity of historical experiences and processes, along with geographical convolutions – as constructed or mediated by architectural narratives – is the main theme researched. It includes all historical periods from antiquity to the present day and all the regions of the world. It discusses how various narratives – in architectural history, theory or criticism – represent and reinforce broader cultural patterns by which we perceive interrelated phenomena of history, space and identity.

This collection of papers presents how different interpretations of architecture and the built environment have contributed to different readings of history, culture, nature and society, either simultaneously or in alternation, with special attention given to addressing conflicting and complementary views, explanatory systems and theories that stem from understanding and interpreting the past by means of architecture.

The conference was structured around three broad themes: historicity, tradition / innovation in architecture and the role of politics, both in terms of the direct interaction of (local) powers with the field of architecture and of the intermediate pressure of geopolitics. Out of those, eight different sessions arose and structured the chapters in the book of proceedings.

The first one, TRANSFER, focuses on realizing a link between different places through transferring and appropriating cultural and political propaganda in the built environment. The second one, POLITICIZED CITY, focuses on reading reflections that political and ideological issues have on spatial context as well as mechanisms that previously led to shape networks of political influences. The third one, IDEOLOGY, on the contrary delivers how architecture becomes a tool and an instrument of political and religious issues and more over how architecture communicates those and becomes instrumentalised. The next one, COMMUNITIES' ROOTS: PLANTING AND UPROOTING, in an unusual and innovative way, sheds light on a diversity of issues hidden under the commonly accepted platforms for building and developing different environments. Then, the session HISTORIOGRAPHY addresses mainly universal historical topics but in a particular geo-political contexts. It questions architectural history and its role in the simultaneity of multiple modernities, ideological restructuring of cultural and political discourse and similar topics. The session IDENTITY tries to intertwine different aspects of the place seeking for a new reading of history and architecture and seeking for the roles of architecture in the terms of construction. Finally, the sessions CONTESTED HERITAGE and CONSTRUCTED TRADITIONS include the appropriation and interpretation of the past from antiquity to the recent past addressing questions of centre-periphery, globalization, and cultural, political, or religious propaganda in the built environment.

This book of proceedings has introduced the theme of ENTANGLED HISTORIES, MULTIPLE GEOGRAPHIES and is looking to continue the discussion further – to elaborate further, to provoke and to challenge new questions and views, reconfiguring the whole of an idea.

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POSTWAR SARAJEVO AND EXAMINATION OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ARCHITECTURE, POLITICS, AND ECONOMY

Post-1990s war reconstruction in the city of Sarajevo – following the dissolution of Yugoslavia – serves as a valuable example of the post-communist architectural and urban developments in a transitional country. Consequences of war destruction and profound shifts in politics and economy of Bosnia and Herzegovina may be discussed through the ever-changing medium of architecture. This paper will address the postwar construction of shopping malls in Sarajevo, as well as the significances of foreign investments on local architecture, and the consequences of such events for the city population and the city itself. The focus of this paper is to identify occurrences of foreign influences in commercial architecture, and examine whether they are becoming a trend in the Bosnian and Herzegovinian capital. The city of Sarajevo had been at the intersection of Ottoman and Austro-Hungarian empires, as well as a part of the socialist Yugoslavia – consequently, architectural developments in the city had been under influences of political and economic shifts for centuries. This paper will attempt to investigate whether the current condition in Bosnian architecture falls under such classification, and whether such classification is even possible in this case.

KEYWORDS:

Architecture, politics, Yugoslavia, post-communism, Sarajevo, investments

Introduction

The postwar construction in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and in particular in the capital of Sarajevo, plays a vital role in the formation of the country's urban identity.¹ Sarajevo experienced a devastating war, the demolition of urban fabric, and the city is currently in the process of creating a postwar identity, an identity of a capitalist, post-communist society. The architecture of contemporary Bosnian and Herzegovinian cities exhibits elements of the contemporary European architectural events, but also unveils variations in the city's urban fabric influenced by both political and economic changes in the contemporary Bosnian society, not necessarily following the prevailing architectural trends present in the Western Europe. This paper will focus on the examination of the shifts taking place in architectural trends – and whether such occurrences can even be identified as trends – in the Bosnian postwar and post-communist urban fabric through the examination of newly erected commercial structures in the city of Sarajevo.

The long Ottoman occupation of the country; short, yet architecturally eventful period of

Austro-Hungarian rule; two brief decades of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia; and the five decades of the communist Yugoslavia have all left significant impact on the construction of Bosnian and Herzegovinian political present, and as such must be acknowledged when discussing current events in both politics and architecture. I argue that the architecture of Bosnia and Herzegovina has been a mirror of political and geopolitical events that have taken place throughout the history, as well as today.

What is the architectural reality of Bosnia and Herzegovina now? And what role does politics play in this reality?

To begin with, we must determine what the architecture of post-communist Sarajevo is. In the last decade, after the still incomplete process of reconstruction was seemingly put on hold, the city of Sarajevo has become the city of commercial endeavours. Shopping malls have permeated the city centre, and the investors from Europe and the Islamic world are ever present in the city. But who are these investors? And what will be the consequence of such economic investments on the architecture of the Bosnian and Herzegovinian capital? Today, we can only speculate of the future of the architecture of Sarajevo, and acknowledge

the present of the local urban fabric as the one of unidentified fusion. One may argue it is the mixture of political and religious influences meshed with the know-how of local architects that created such architectural present, but it can also be argued that it is the organic development of the political and geopolitical relations in the country and region. Newfound religious freedoms in the post-communist Bosnia and Herzegovina play a significant role due to the predominant Muslim population of Sarajevo, as well as its political and religious favouritism toward the Islamic investors – this paper will attempt to examine such assumptions, and perhaps broaden the understanding of the postwar city of Sarajevo through its architecture. Current architecture conditions cannot be identified without difficulty – the architectural activity in the late 1990s and early 21st century was mostly focused on the reconstruction of war-torn buildings with a few new structures, but in the last decade the situation has significantly shifted and new architecture is slowly permeating the existing urban fabric. The structures erected are both of smaller and larger scale, funded by large investor groups as well as the smaller, private investors building private single-family homes. Design-wise, current architecture can be – only to an extent – identified as a mixture of contemporary European trends, and of neo-Ottoman architectural influences, mainly seen in the smaller scale structures. Hi-tech architecture that characterized the postmodernism – or its iteration – in the Balkans of 1980s is still present, with shopping centers' digital facades blinding Sarjevans in their everyday lives.

The architecture and the politics of the past

Bosnian present is an unfortunate one. Almost all of the countries transitioning from communist to capitalist societies and economies in Eastern and South-eastern Europe have been struggling in the past decades, but nevertheless, the conditions in the postwar Yugoslavian successor states have been significantly harsher. Shattered by the long war, Bosnia and Herzegovina and the city of Sarajevo exist in a perpetual struggle of self-identifying, and self-defining, both as a post-communist country, and as the country and the city in the region that has never politically settled since the early 1990s.

It is often argued that the present condition in the region is the result of the political events of the past. Ever since the Ottomans arrived in the fifteenth century, turbulent events have been pervading the lives of the people in the Balkans, leaving long existing marks. The Ottomans introduced new architectural style and elements in the architecture of Sarajevo, and constructed the city throughout the centuries of their presence by Ottoman architectural principles – mainly focusing on the housing and religious architecture.

The Congress of Berlin in 1878 allowed the Austro-Hungarian Empire to conquer Bosnia and Herzegovina. By 1908, when the country was annexed by the Austro-Hungarians, the Empire had already engaged in transformation of the urban fabric of Sarajevo, but also in the creation of the civic society, one constructed by the Central European standards. The architecture played a significant role in the exhibition of political change in the occupied country – now, imperial architects mainly focused on the construction of public buildings – city hall, main postal office building, as well as the multi-family residential structures. Austro-Hungarians introduced construction laws and codes. The Ottoman Sarajevo was 'Europeanized' through "strictly regulated new neighbourhoods populated by historicist buildings."²

The interwar period in Sarajevo was characterized by only a few examples of early modernist architecture – mainly housing – yet the following period of communist rule brought true exploration of modernism, albeit in the iteration of a socialist country. Strikingly, and as a consequence of such historical permutations in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the "resultant built environments (...) brought large architectural traditions into proximity that is rarely found elsewhere."³ The Old Town constructed by the Ottomans with its small neighbourhoods, *mahalas*, and tall minarets; the Austro-Hungarian expansion westward, and exhibits of public buildings designed by Austrian architects of the time period; modernist interwar buildings of Kadic brothers; and the socialist modernist architecture of the Yugoslav period all create a unique mesh of styles, all to be extended into the present of the city – the present architecture we are examining as it is being created, and as the history is unfolding.

Architecture now

Ethnically and religiously diverse, Bosnians and Herzegovinians are searching for the political and financial stability. In 1994, during the war, Charles Gati argued that "mainly because of the powerful lasting impact of communist political culture, the road to democracy in east-central Europe is paved not only with bumps but with long detours that could lead to dead ends."⁴ The story of Bosnian architecture in the post-1990s concurs with such assertion. I argue that the lack of political clarity and constant economic struggle in the last two decades conditioned the creation of a distinct path in Bosnian architecture, constructing it as a mixture of foreign and local influences, mainly directed by investors, and not in the tradition of the local architectural narrative. The lack of a defined architectural direction in Sarajevo – the one with *precise* and easily identifiable characteristics – and architecture's intertwined narrative with the everyday politics can be identified as the *trend* in the Bosnian contemporary architecture, meshed between the local people, local traditions, and tenuous politics of the time period.

The war in Bosnia and Herzegovina ended in November 1995.⁵ In regard to architecture, overwhelming processes of reconstruction, of both urban fabric and infrastructure, characterized the last years of the twentieth century. In the first decade after the war some new construction did take place – mainly in the housing sector with few exceptions (*Mercator* and *Wisa* shopping centres) – yet the real wave of postwar construction took place in the late years of the first decade of the twenty-first century. The reconstruction process was seemingly put on hold, or at least downsized, and the construction of new structures emerged in full effect.

Shopping centres

Three recent commercial centres, *BBI Centre Sarajevo*, *Alta Shopping Centre*, and *Sarajevo City Centre*, that are to be examined in this paper, were constructed in the city centre region, the former Austro-Hungarian residential part of the town, and the administrative centre from the period of socialist Yugoslavia.⁶ The oldest of the three, *BBI* was constructed in 2009, on the location of the former *Robna kuća 'Sarajka'*, an iconic shopping

centre from the communist period. After an early outrage amongst the people of the city of Sarajevo, war-ravished *Sarajka* – once a 'pearl of a socialist society' – was demolished to leave room for a shopping centre of a new society – a post-communist one.⁷ The construction took place in the period between 2006 and 2009, and the building today houses a shopping mall, but also the Al Jazeera Balkans TV channel, and Bosna Bank International offices amongst others. The architect of the building was Sead Golos and his *Grupa ARH*.⁸

The shopping centre *Alta* was completed in 2010 – constructed on a previously empty, green area in Marijin Dvor neighbourhood, it stands now amongst the residential buildings from both Austro-Hungarian and Yugoslav periods, as well as the government and office high-rises from the later decades of socialist architecture. UNIS skyscrapers and Holiday Inn Hotel – some of the most recognizable symbols of the war destruction in Sarajevo – stand in the proximity of the building of *Alta* shopping centre, home to mostly commercial stores, designed by Sanja Galić Grozdanić and Igor Grozdanić.

The latest and the largest structure of the three, Sarajevo City centre was completed in 2014. Located just across the street from *Alta*, *SCC* is another building designed by *Grupa ARH* and Sead Golos. Comprised of four segments – hotel, commercial and office space, entertainment centre, and parking garage – the structure covers over 49000 square meters, and it has replaced war-demolished tobacco factory. Two defining architectural elements of the building are the hotel tower, supposedly to be occupied in the future by a world-class hotelier group, and the *SCC Media Façade* – a video billboard, broadcasting news, weather, and advertising.⁹ Almost a year after the construction was completed and the shopping centre opened for public, the hotel remains uninhabited, and offices partially empty.

All three shopping centres are located at the city centre, amongst historically and politically significant works of architecture. I argue, that as such, they represent the permeation of the new architecture styles in the city core, and are engaging in the process of the constructing of *new, interwoven architecture* of Sarajevo, the architecture of a post-communist city. While *BBI* may be considered an urban extension,¹⁰ located

in the site of a previous shopping centre, both *Alta* and *SCCare* insertions into the fabric of the city, and aggressive ones for that matter.

As of the early years after the war, the capital inflow from the European and American companies has been constant, yet in the last decade a new trend in investment emerged – an introduction of companies from Islamic countries in Bosnia and Herzegovina. It can be speculated that the presence of Islamic countries based companies in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina lays in diplomatic relations forged by a great percentage of Muslim population living in the Federation entity, and such speculations would be proven accurate. *Foreign Investment Promotion Agency of Bosnia and Herzegovina* (hereinafter FIPA) stated in its 2012 report that the largest investor in the past two decades has been the Republic of Austria with the investment worth of €1,194 billion, surpassing all others but the character of the investment of Islamic countries differs in its public presentation, resulting in high visibility and public presence.¹¹ *SCC* and *BBI* are visible features in the urban fabric of Sarajevo, and banking investments (main interest of Austrian companies) bear different presence.

Shopping malls, in particular if located in city centre, make a significant mark on daily activities of Sarajevans – they are present in everyday interactions as the great majority of people living in the city work in the city centre. The argued relation between architecture and politics can be identified here through the newly opened channels in the post-communist period – due to re-established religious freedoms and political connections to the Islamic world the urban fabric of Sarajevo is changing, once again exhibiting the political change taking place in the Bosnian society.

Urban fabric development

How do new shopping malls permeate the existing urban fabric and can these be considered an organic development? Elaborate projects have been developed for Marijin Dvor neighbourhood during the communist times, and brought into question the issue of historic heritage in the westward expansion of the city.¹² Nevertheless, and regardless of the failures and successes of communist architects and planners, in the five decades of socialist Yugoslavia the city of Sarajevo developed without any dramatic

intrusion in the pre-existing urban fabric, and shows the feats of the socialist modernism in Yugoslavian architecture not interfering with the preexisting condition. The urban development during communist times was under more rigorous legal regulation and, arguably, such legal regulation can be credited for a more organic urban development.

When we speak of the postwar architecture – the architecture of new, post-communist Bosnia and Herzegovina – I argue that the lack of regulations, and governmental supervision allows for both architects and investors to fully control the process of design and construction of any structure on their property, and “according to the Law on Foreign Direct Investment Policy in B&H there is no any [sic] restrictions and limitations regarding buying [sic] or possessing the construction land and buildings by the foreign investor who is allowed to be a 100% owner of the land or building and has the same rights such as a local owner.”¹³ The local government does propose the purpose of the land, but due to the local laws, the investor is entitled to change the design and features of the proposed building.

Architecturally, the shopping malls in question can be examined through particularities of their designs, and it is arguable whether they resemble the existing commercial centres in the home countries of investor companies, but that cannot be seen as a sole issue of contention in regard to the construction of such buildings. I argue that these structures add to the uncontrolled expansion of urban fabric of Sarajevo, but also that the interpolation of large projects in the existing historic fabric causing uninhibited development is not conditioned by design or investors’ plans – such expansion and development is caused by the lack of regulations in Bosnian and Herzegovinian local governments. The full control over one’s investments is a feature of a capitalist society, yet the creation of urban fabric should be prone to open public and professional debate, as the uncontrolled construction in the city will result not in organic development and exploration of contemporary architectural styles, but in the destruction of historic and architectural heritage, and it will negatively affect the quality of life of Sarajevans. Such lack of regulations and supervision may be seen as one of the crucial characteristics of the new trend in the architecture of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Concluding note

The architecture of Sarajevo, the capital of Bosnia and Herzegovina, once again is a stage of the historical changes and shifts – the ones creating the face of the city, and profoundly permeating the lives of Sarajevans. Just as throughout the history, architecture is now the façade of the political and economic developments and changes, as profound as they are in any country in transition. Nowadays, the historical heritage of Sarajevo is in peril and the question of what architecture is today remains to a certain extent impermeable. While researching new shopping centres in Sarajevo, located within the historic Austro-Hungarian core, one may determine the architecture of today as undefined in traditional terms. But what else have we learned from the new structures overshadowing buildings from the early nineteenth century? The relationship between investors and the design of the buildings is clearly an important one – architectural trends in the home countries of investors do play a role in determining the main principles of design and construction, as well as the principles of conducting business in a multi-religious and multi-ethnic city (e.g. no alcoholic beverages can be purchased in either *BBI* or *SCC*) – yet the problematic of the foreign investment in regard to architecture is vital in a different concern. Foreign investors have no limitations or restrictions in regard to purchasing land or buildings, as well as their control over the property in question. Hence, one cannot anticipate an investment group to engage in research of architectural history of a city or a country (although, it would be an ideal practice), but the local government is to deal with any possible issues accordingly and take into consideration all possible ramifications of such investments on architecture and the development of urban fabric of a city. Charles Gati wrote back in 1992 that “democracies, unlike communist systems, base their claim to legitimacy more on respect for proper constitutional procedures than on economic performance.”¹⁴ Warning of the unrealistic expectations of people and politicians on the path to democracy for any former communist society, Gati foreshadowed difficulties for any post-communist society in particular the one in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The architecture of Sarajevo seems to be a mirror of the political shifts and changes in the country’s politics and economy – the city façade is changing as the society is changing,

adapting to all present influences, showing the brutal face of transition. What will the face of the city be in the following years? We are to see – the architecture of the new post-communist Sarajevo is in the constant and evolving process of invention just as the country itself dealing with political, economic, religious, and legal repercussions of the times past.

Endnotes

- 1 Term *postwar* in this context signifies the time period after the dissolution of Yugoslavia and 1990s wars in the region.
- 2 Maroje Mrduljas and Vladimir Kulic, *Modernism in Between: The Mediatory Architectures of Socialist Yugoslavia* (Jovis, 2012). 24.
- 3 Ibid. 23.
- 4 Charles Gati, “From Sarajevo to Sarajevo,” *Foreign Affairs*, Fall 1992. 65.
- 5 At the end of the war, per Dayton Peace Accord the country was divided in two entities one with the predominant Serb population – Republika Srpska, and the other with population divided between Muslims, Croats, and Serbs – Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina.
- 6 Further referred to as *BBI*, *Alta*, and *SCC* respectively.
- 7 See Nebojsa Seric Shoba, “Robna Kuca Sarajka,” [shoba.blogger.ba](http://radiosarajevo.ba/novost/108628/nebojsa-seric-soba-robna-kuc-sarajka), 2006, <http://radiosarajevo.ba/novost/108628/nebojsa-seric-soba-robna-kuc-sarajka>.
- 8 Information obtained from www.bbcenter.ba, Accessed on 5 May 2015
- 9 Information obtained from www.sarajevocitycenter.com, Accessed on 7 May 2015
- 10 Per www.planningportal.gov.uk *urban extension* is defined as development that “involves the planned expansion of a city or town and can contribute to creating more sustainable patterns of development when located in the right place [...].” Accessed on July 20 2015
- 11 *Investment Opportunities in Bosnia and Herzegovina* (Sarajevo: Foreign Investment Promotion Agency, March 2012). 18.

- 12 Nina Ugljen Ademovic and Elsa Turkusic, "Sarajevo Marijin Dvor: The Formation of a New City Centre," in *Unfinished Modernisations: Between Utopia and Pragmatism*, ed. Maroje Mrduljas and Vladimir Kulic (Zagreb: UHA/CCA, Croatian Architect's Association, 2012), 232–45.
- 13 *Investment Opportunities in Bosnia and Herzegovina*. 58.
- 14 Charles Gati, "From Sarajevo to Sarajevo." 65.