

and at every street crossing some public buildings could be found: a mosque and school, market or drinking water fountain. Houses developed according to unwritten architectural laws based on two major postulates: access to sun and access to view with respect to the neighbourhood. To achieve what we would call today an excellent base for ecological design, Sarajevo developed a major longitudinal east-west axis, widely open towards the sun and views.

Whenever it was possible, the houses were placed at street crossings where a picturesque view could be obtained. If the house was erected on the street leading to the market place, attempts were made to give it such a position that the market place with its life could be overlooked. The neighbour who built his house later, placed it in such a manner that he, too, had a fine view but at the same time he took care that his house did not obstruct the sun and the view from the neighbouring house.<sup>4</sup>

Over the centuries, Sarajevo became a cosmopolitan city where many religions and nationalities took root and learned how to live together. From the Ottoman-inspired eastern end of the city, narrow and steep, Sarajevo gradually spread to the west, under the influence of the Austro-Hungarian culture. Built in the 19th. century, this core is typified by wider streets and a mix of trade on the ground floors and residential living above. This made up the typical secession style urban block. Later in the 20th. century and further west the socialist "sleeping quarters" of urban housing blocks, similar to most European suburbs after World War II, were built. These were characterised by higher density and often inadequate urban infrastructure. By the 20th. century no particular area of the city was occupied by any one cultural group. The fact of daily life was a total mixture of nationalities and religions.

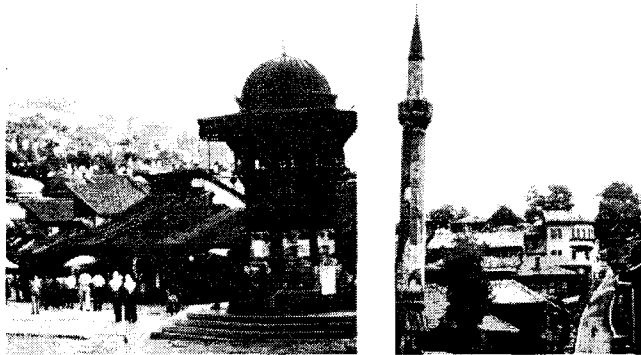


Fig. 2. Charshija (left) and Mahala (right).

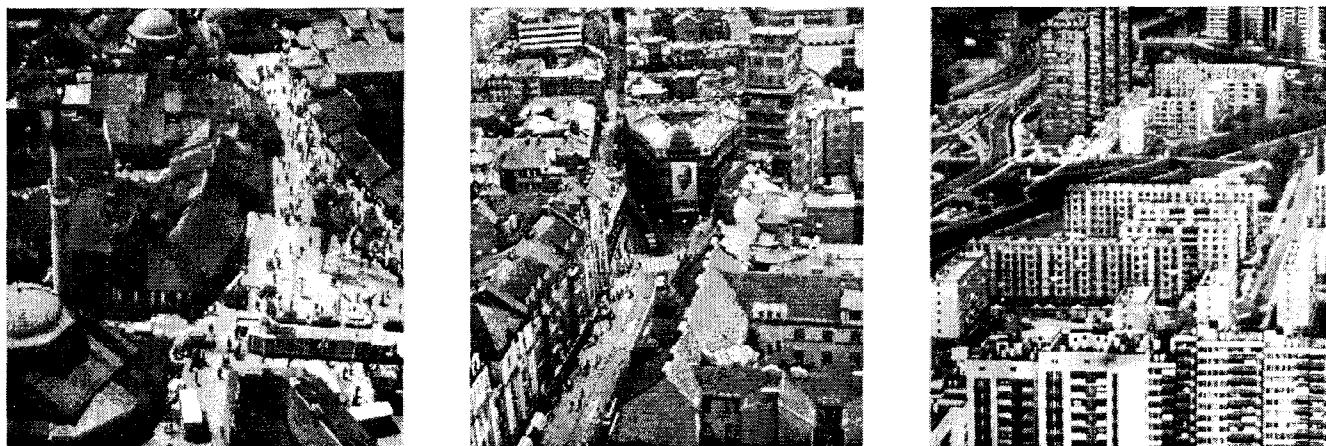


Fig. 3. Ottoman (left), Austro-Hungarian (middle), Socialist (right).

## DESTRUCTION

What I sense deep in the city destroyers, panic-ridden souls is a malicious animus against everything urban, everything urban that is, against a complex semantic cluster that includes spirituality, morality, language, taste, and style.<sup>5</sup>

In this paper we will not discuss the political, nationalistic or religious reasons which triggered the war in Bosnia. What interests us is the devastation of Sarajevo on such a large scale and to what extent the urban form and the urbanity enabled and provoked such a long and painful destruction.

How can it be that such excellent bases for urban and architectural design were also contributors to such destruction? Access to the sun and views opened up Sarajevo like the palm of a hand. The defenceless city was exposed to brutal shelling from the relatively safe and comfortable positions in the mountain strongholds above. Such open urban form that promoted the value of good neighbours plainly did not serve the city in a time of war!

Another reason for the city's destruction may not have been that it was merely defenceless but that it was *a city* at all. "From the fourteenth century onward, the word urbanity in most European languages stood for dignity, sophistication, the unity of thought and word, word and feeling, feeling and action."<sup>6</sup>

The ferocious power with which Serbs pounded the city suggested an enormous hatred of this urbanity. Their military strategy was the old Mediterranean strategy of siege. One that employed long suffocation rather than the rapid gaining of territory which was practically so possible with Sarajevo in the early stage of the war. Ed Vulliamy journalist of *The Guardian* described the siege of Sarajevo as "a piece of violent theatre", an operation that was designed to destroy the morale of a country by removing its heart. It is widely known that the Serbian army comprised many rural Serbs. Serb leaders exploited their mistrust for urbanity with a siege strategy that gained momentum to become a massive and relentless insult to a civilian urban population. 35000 Sarajevo's Serbs stayed inside the city during the war experiencing shelling, humiliation and death from non-urban Serbs. As a journalist said:

...Sarajevo was a sophisticated, urban, modern city quite unlike the villages and small towns of the rest of the country. This difference has had an awful consequence. Many of those shelling the city from the hills are Serbs from surrounding villages or Serbs who had migrated to Sarajevo from country side. No one, including the urbanised Serbs of Sarajevo, has any time for them.<sup>7</sup>

This suggests that this conflict was also about rural vs. urban values. Lebbeus Woods argues that the growth of a cosmopolitan

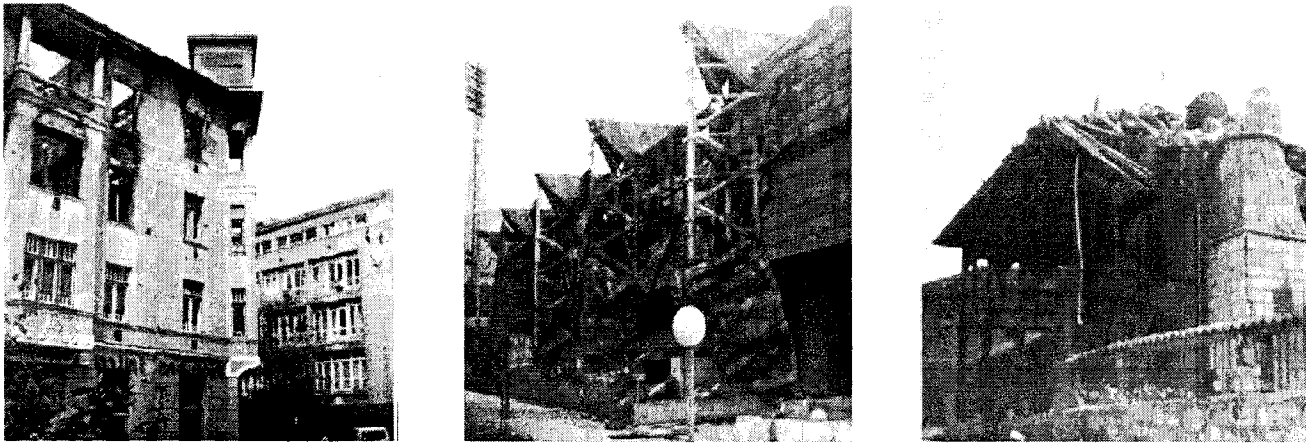


Fig. 4. City Centre, 1992 (left), Olympic Hall Zetra 1992 (middle), and *Magribija* Mosque 1992 (right).

environment in the city generated hostility from the rural areas that had remained sectarian and xenophobic. This view is also supported by Bogdan Denitch who argues that: "The war in Bosnia was an "urbicide", an act of revenge on the part of the "local rednecks", who had always hated the city community."<sup>8</sup>

Throughout history, urban centres were frequently targeted by non-urban destructive powers (Huns, Tartars, Vandals etc.). To be specific, wild tribes, destroyed cities because: they didn't understand them, couldn't use them, couldn't live in them. The historian Ibn Khaldun, for one, highlighted this fact in his famous *Prolegomena*, in referring to the dynamic of power between the Bedouins and the City-dwellers in North Africa and the Near East. But to think that in modern times the same pattern still applies, that buildings, centres of culture and civilisation could be erased because of their urban connotation is very disturbing.

Conveniently positioned on the mountains overlooking the city, the Serbs were killing the body of Sarajevo, by destroying the buildings, but also the spiritual base and the intellectual fundaments which are the very soul of the city. The physical damage is repairable, but to repair the damage to the soul of Sarajevo is a much more difficult task. 11000 citizens of Sarajevo were killed, 62000 were wounded and more than 120000 fled the city.<sup>9</sup>

The cultural heritage of Bosnia-Herzegovina suffered major destruction. The result is what a Council of Europe Report has called "a cultural catastrophe." Historic architecture including 1200 mosques, 150 churches, 4 synagogues and over 1000 other monuments of culture, works of art, as well as cultural institutions including major museums, libraries, archives and manuscript collections have been systematically targeted and destroyed. The losses include not only the works of art, but also crucial documentation that might aid in their reconstruction.

Bosnia's National and University Library, a handsome pseudo-Moorish building, and a recognisable symbol of Sarajevo from 1896 was shelled by incendiary grenades and burned for three days. Most of its irreplaceable contents were reduced to ashes. Before the fire, the library held 1.5 million volumes, including over 155,000 rare books and manuscripts. Three months earlier Sarajevo's Oriental Institute, home to one of the largest collection of Islamic and Jewish manuscript texts and Ottoman documents in South-eastern Europe, was shelled with incendiary grenades and burned. In each case, the library alone was targeted; adjacent buildings stand intact.<sup>10</sup>

What we are trying to stress here is that Serb forces did not target the destruction of militarily important buildings and districts but systematically destroyed all urban structures. A spiritual, cultural genocide occurred by targeting the places where people gathered to live out their collective lives and where their collective memory was stored. This is why repairation of the damage can not be limited just to reconstruction but also to the comprehensive renovation of the social structures in the urban area.

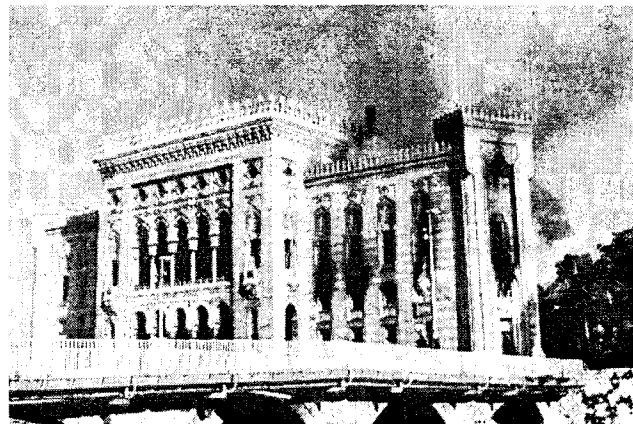


Fig. 5. National and University Library 1992.

## RECONSTRUCTION

Yet again and again the positive forces of co-operation and sentimental communion have brought people back to the devastated urban sites, to repair the wasted cities, the desolation of many generations. Ironically, yet consolingly, cities have repeatedly outlived the military empires that seemingly destroyed them forever. Damascus, Baghdad, Jerusalem, Athens still stand on the sites they originally occupied, alive though little more than fragments of their ancient foundations remain in view.<sup>11</sup>

European cities, destroyed in the Second World War, generally followed two trends of reconstruction. The first one is the "nostalgic approach": the recapturing of the past by faithfully reconstructing the historic fabric of the area; Warsaw is a good example of this. The second one is the "brave new world alternative", where an entire new city is built, like Coventry for example.

Both examples, offer some similarities to Sarajevo, in that the cities' centres received extensive bombing, and entire cultural-historical areas suffered comprehensive damage. These cities however, did not experience civil war. Besides they were united against a common enemy. Reconstruction did not have to solve the complicated problem of multicultural co-existence within the city. In this sense, the right approach to Sarajevo will not be a simple one. The damage done to the city was not caused by the typical random shelling of an ordinary war, aiming at military and economic targets, but the systematic destruction of all urban installations, cultural and symbolic targets. The result was not only the devastation of architectural heritage, but also the cultural and spiritual fundaments of the

city. Therefore repair cannot be limited to the usual reconstruction activities of war-torn cities.

Lessons for the reconstruction of Sarajevo could also be drawn from yet another example. Beirut suffered from ethnic and religious differences for almost a decade. Like Sarajevo, the level of destruction of urban structures and architecture was extensive, and focused around the central district and the historic core. Multicultural co-existence in the city also suffered a similar fate.

The reconstruction program for Beirut, according to Angus Gavin,<sup>12</sup> recognised that the city had become socially and psychologically split. The preliminary plans for reconstruction were based on encouraging the city to celebrate its heritage but also to look forward to the future. Surviving buildings and spaces were integrated within a new environment of modern architecture and new infrastructure that replaced the old inefficient systems. The central district became the focus of the healing process: redesign of the public domain, establishing areas around the city to which people were drawn and encouraged to mix. This has produced a large pedestrian-friendly environment and diverse cultural heritage attractions, which helped rebuild the national and pluralistic identity of Beirut. Most importantly, the plan recognised the special qualities of place, and exploited the features that had originally brought people to the area.

Beirut went for a compromise opting for a balance between new development and the restoration of the older city structure. The “nostalgic approach” was combined with the “brave new world” approach of building a new environment. For the citizens of Beirut, a very significant part of the healing process was the references made to their different cultures and history. It was expected that these references should happen in the public realm, in the open space network within the city to provide locations that would promote multi-cultural co-existence by encouraging the community to mix. This method of reconstruction provides principles that could be applied to the reconstruction program of Sarajevo. Learning from the Beirut experience Sarajevo should:

First and foremost focus on the reconstruction of all common, centralised and decentralised urban structures permitting a normal co-existence of various cultures. Furthermore, the material expressions of the different ways of life must not be sacrificed in favour of some forced kind of uniformity. Even though all districts have suffered damage to a greater or lesser extent, the aim of the reconstruction activities should be to simply repair the damage while retaining the specific features of the corresponding district. The multi-cultural co-existence should also find an expression in the various urban life-forms.<sup>13</sup>

A more radical theory for the reconstruction of Sarajevo is the one advanced by Lebbeus Woods. His theory is based on the nature of the relationship between war and architecture. War acts as an aggressive stimulant to the design profession. It exposes the need for a response to the changing social and political climate, revolutionising design concepts for the urban environment. The natural reaction of the public, according to Woods, is to restore the city by introducing a copy of the original fabric. But that is also an attempt to deny that war ever existed by wiping out all traces of its occurrence, erasing the memories of destruction and loss that linger in the old city.

Important civic and cultural monuments no doubt should be restored to their undamaged condition, as tokens of past coherence that might serve as models of civilized thought and activity, though never as re-affirmations of a past social order that ended in war. The attempt to restore the fabric of old cities to their former condition is, however, a folly that not only denies present conditions, but impedes the emergence of an urban fabric and a way of life based upon them. Wherever the restoration of war-devastated urban fabric has occurred in the

form of replacing what has been damaged or destroyed, it ends as parody, worthy only of the admiration of tourists.<sup>14</sup>

Woods’ concept design sketches for a new Sarajevo honoured the scars of bomb damage on the city’s structures, exhilarating the healing process through confrontation and constant reminders of the effects of the war. I found this concept, of scars and scabs left behind by war, too brutal. It is more likely that the citizens of Sarajevo require a more subtle approach to commemorate the war. This multi-ethnic community is too fragile to accept such a bold statement which could possibly obstruct reconciliation. Stability of the community must be re-established to contrive a city that fosters multiculturalism to the degree that was present before the outbreak of the war.

To renew Sarajevo means to simultaneously renew its body and its soul. This can be achieved only if the process of rebuilding its architecture is accompanied by the process of restoring its social structure, simultaneously with the totality of its environment, its ecology, and its landscape. In the case of Sarajevo, it is precisely this unity of the local landscape, the regional ecosystem, and the city’s architecture that has been so characteristic of the way of building and living in the city through the centuries of its existence. This is what I previously referred to as Sarajevo’s centuries-long tradition of ecological urbanism. It is therefore my position that the most appropriate model for Sarajevo’s post-war reconstruction is the eco-city model. But, there is no need to import an eco-city model, the eco-urbanist principles have been a basic ingredient of Sarajevo’s vernacular urban design from its beginnings in the 16th century.

Sustainable urban development and the ecological design and planning of cities are concepts which are well researched and established in contemporary theory.<sup>15</sup> One particularly interesting version of the theory of the sustainable city has been developed by architect Richard Rogers. It could be very relevant to Sarajevo, as a bold and new approach, but one which citizens could identify with. According to Rogers:

The concept of the sustainable city recognises that the city needs to meet our social, environmental, political and cultural objectives as well as economic and physical ones. It is a dynamic organism as complex as the society itself and responsive enough to react swiftly to its changes. The sustainable city is a city of many facets.” One of them is: “An ecological city, which minimises its ecological impact, where landscape and built form are balanced and where buildings and infrastructure are safe and resource-efficient.<sup>16</sup>

Future sustainable development of Sarajevo, understood in Rogers’ terms, should be based on the creation of the *Compact City*. Rejection of single-function development and the dominance of the car, Compact City, should depend on a clean transport system and streets which belongs to the pedestrian and the community. Public transport nodes should be developed around the centres of social and commercial activities, to provide focal points around which neighbourhoods should be developed. A network of these neighbourhoods, each with their own public spaces, should accommodate a diversity of overlapping private and public activities.

Sustainable Compact Cities could, I contend, reinstate the city as the ideal habitat for a community-based society. It is an established type of urban structure that can be interpreted in all manner of ways in response to all manner of cultures. Cities should be about the people they shelter, about face-to-face contact, about condensing the ferment of human activity, about generating and expressing local cultures.<sup>17</sup>

In Sarajevo’s case, the Eco-City model is one that can provide a meaningful and healthy environment by involving the citizens in reconstructing their city in accordance with the principles which both revive the past and build a better future. It is through respect for

the ecological principles of city building that Sarajevo can recover both its body and its soul. Eco-City Sarajevo is the project which all ethnic and religious groups in the city should embrace in their effort to restore a multicultural and tolerant society. Ecological urbanism is the very core of their common heritage. Restoring these principle will declare the final defeat of the perpetrators of *urbicide*.

The aim of the present paper is not to debate the detailed technicalities of this view, however. Future studies will hopefully carry on this task.

## NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> Marshall Berman invented a word: *urbicide*, the murder of a city, in the early 1980s. The term was also used during the war by a group of Architects from Sarajevo to refer to the atrocities committed against the urban life of the city.
- <sup>2</sup> Dusan Grabrian, *The Bosnian Oriental Architecture in Sarajevo* (Ljubljana: DDU Universum, 1984), p. 136.
- <sup>3</sup> Juraj Neidhart and Dusan Grabrian, *Arhitektura Bosne i Put u Savremeno* (Ljubljana: CZP, 1957), p. 50.
- <sup>4</sup> Dusan Grabrian, *The Bosnian Oriental Architecture in Sarajevo* (DDU Universum, Ljubljana 1984), p. 170.
- <sup>5</sup> Bogdan Bogdanovic, "Murder of the City," *The New York Review* (May 27 1993), p. 20.

- <sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 20.
- <sup>7</sup> Belgrade correspondent, "Requiem for Sarajevo," *The Economist* (August 21st 1993) p. 57.
- <sup>8</sup> Bogdan Denitch, *Ethnic Nationalism: The Tragic Death of Yugoslavia* (University of Minnesota Press '94), p. 27.
- <sup>9</sup> see, Zavod za Planiranje i Razvoj Grada, *Strategija Obnove I Razvoja* (Sarajevo 1998), p. 17-20.
- <sup>10</sup> see, Andras Riedlmayer, 61st IFLA General Conference, Harvard University (Aug. 20-25, 1995)
- <sup>11</sup> L. Mumford, *The City in History* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1961), p. 54.
- <sup>12</sup> see, Angus Gavin, *Beirut Reborn*, (London: Academy Edition, 1996).
- <sup>13</sup> Raymond Rehnicher, "Muslims, Serbs, Croats and Jews Used to Live Together in Peace," *Documentation of the 4th International Conference on Architectural Heritage* (Graz, 1993), p. 51.
- <sup>14</sup> Lebbeus Woods, *War and Architecture* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1993), p. 10.
- <sup>15</sup> See in particular the works of: M. Breheny *Sustainable Development and Urban Form*; H. Girardet *Cities*, S. Van der Ryn and P. Caltrope *Sustainable Communities*; S. Van der Ryn and S. Cowan *Ecological Design*; R. Rogers *Cities for a small planet*; L. Arkin *Sustainable Cities*.
- <sup>16</sup> Richard Rogers, *Cities for a Small Planet* (London: Faber and Faber Limited, 1997), p. 167.
- <sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 40