



Urban development after the Bosnian War: The division of Sarajevo's territory and the construction of East Sarajevo

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ABSTRACT

At the end of the Bosnian War in December 1995, an internal boundary was drawn within the State of Bosnia and Herzegovina. It came to be known as the Inter-Entity Boundary Line (IEBL). Its implementation caused a profound alteration in regional and urban systems, dividing the new State into two entities, the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (FBiH) – Croat and Bosniak majority – and the Republika Srpska (RS) – Serb majority. In this paper, the consequences of this boundary on urban and regional development are analysed, focusing on the effects observed in Sarajevo. The emergence of the IEBL has transformed the city since its region has been divided into two halves analogously to the entities newly created. This division has not affected the main urban area, but has altered the eastern suburban zone due to the creation of East Sarajevo, a new city in the Republika Srpska. The new urban nucleus of East Sarajevo is being built adjacent to these eastern suburbs, causing spatial and social alterations on the border. This complex situation is analysed at different scales – from the scale of planning to that of ethnography – in order to evidence that although the IEBL neither divides the historic city nor is a physical frontier, contrasting processes of homogenisation do exist on each side which maintains a significant social and morphological differentiation.

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1. Introduction

There are many cities in the world that suffer from conflicts between communities, where violence occurs between diverse ethnicities with opposing nationalist convictions. In Jerusalem, Belfast, Nicosia, Mostar, Johannesburg and Sarajevo ethnic conflicts have led to the division of the city, promoting circumstances that profoundly mark their development (Benvenisti, 1982, 1986; Bollens, 1999, 2000, 2007; Calame & Charlesworth, 2009; Klein, 2001; Marcuse, 1993; Sorkin, 2002). The existence of a frontier creates specific spatial and social meanings. Border cultures arise and produce divergent, though not always exclusive, attitudes ranging from the glorification of national differences to fluid economic exchange (Donnan & Wilson, 1999). From this it may be seen that there is a broad spectrum of divisions which do not always lead to similar patterns. The question as to whether Sarajevo is a truly divided city has many answers, some of which are contradictory, given that the socio-political and geographic reality affecting the present capital of Bosnia and Herzegovina is complex and difficult to classify.

The current situation in Sarajevo represents an urban paradigm caused by the Bosnian War that took place during the 1990s. Preceded by the war in Croatia, the armed conflict in Bosnia and Herzegovina (April 1992–December 1995) was exposed to the manoeuvring of

both internal and external leaders across a territory mainly composed of three ethnic groups: Bosniaks (Bosnian Muslims), Serbs and Croats (Silber & Little, 1996). Bosnia and Herzegovina became the shock absorber between Serbs and Croats until its own self-determination led to the outbreak of inter-ethnic conflict (Andjelić, 2003). Sarajevo was besieged by the forces of the Army of Republika Srpska (VRS) and the Yugoslav People's Army (JNA) who isolated the city provoking a state of emergency that lasted for 1425 days and cost 11,541 lives.¹ The end of the conflict led to the internal division of Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) into two new entities, the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (FBiH) and the Republika Srpska (RS). This involved the construction of a state structure deeply conditioned by the treaty which ended the war (Bose, 2002), known as the Dayton Peace Agreement (DPA) which determined the limit between the RS and the FBiH, called the Inter-Entity Boundary Line (IEBL). This brought about modifications to both the social and spatial structures of the city, creating an urban centre pertaining to the Federation with an ethnic Bosniak majority, and a number of suburbs in the east, of largely Serbian ethnicity, which became part of the Republika Srpska (Bollens, 2000).

Indeed, in Sarajevo the main geopolitical factors that have determined the territorial and urban situation after the war appear to be the following: First, the necessary and imminent rebuilding and

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¹ Sarajevo was the site of the longest siege of a European city in contemporary history. For further detail, see the Fama Collection: <http://www.famacollection.org/> and anthropological studies by Andreas (2008); Maček (2000, 2009) and Softić (1994).



Fig. 1. View of Sarajevo (FBiH) from Mount Trebević (FBiH - RS), the city in the Miljacka river valley, February 2014.
Source: The authors.

restructuring of institutions, infrastructures and buildings (both public and private) (Bădescu, 2014; Garcia & Kotzen, 2014; Hasić, 2004). Second, the change of economic model from the socialist system to the neo-liberal and capitalist system and as a result, the entry of foreign investment which would lead to globalisation and is frequently connected to Turkish and Arabic capitals (Karčić, 2010a, 2010b). Third, the territorial division of Bosnia into two entities and the consequent displacement of the population from one region to another (Toal & Dahlman, 2011).² Following the war, the urban development of the city was determined above all by physical, social, administrative and structural recovery. It should be born in mind that after an armed conflict, this recovery must deal not only with the devastated environment, but also with restoring the physical and social fabric of the city, with structural reform through creating and/or eliminating parts of the administration and with reorganising the system of institutional headquarters (Kumar, 1997). Furthermore, in the case of the post-war period in Yugoslavia, the city had to confront not only territorial division and the devastation of war, but also the sudden occurrence of radical political and economic change. With the break-up of Yugoslavia, Socialism also dissolved. The cities of the former Yugoslavia lost their old socialist status and entered into a process of profound restructuring similar to the other states of Eastern Europe (Andrusz, Harloe & Széleányi, 1996).

Whilst some post-socialist cities have been analysed both physically and economically (Andrusz et al., 1996; Hirt, 2006; Hirt, 2008; Kovács, 1999; Stanilov, 2007; Tsenkova & Nedović-Budić, 2006; Tsenkova & Polanska, 2014), the urban study of the Bosnian cities has scarcely touched on the impact produced by the changeover to the capitalist system (Martín-Díaz, 2014). Eclipsed by the devastation of war, the

transition to capitalism has still not become a subject of in-depth debate. Economic studies concentrate mainly on the country's state of emergency and its development based on the Priority Reconstruction for Recovery Program (PRRP) managed by the World Bank.³ The difficulty of creating a holistic socio-political analysis is understandable given the combination of the similar conditions brought about by the post-socialist and post-war context.

Many of the reconstruction projects in Bosnia and Herzegovina have been developed by non-governmental organisations (Garcia & Kotzen, 2014) and under the strong presence of the International Community (IC) which has intervened in the politics of development as much in economic as in political terms at the heart of the new state (Bose, 2002). The framework of reconstruction has centred on repairing that which had been destroyed, reconstructing symbolic buildings and historic city centres, relegating to the background other more structural needs linked to the ethnic divide. However, this activity is becoming insufficient in the mid and long term, above all in cities with territorial divisions marked by inter-ethnic problems (Calame & Charlesworth, 2009).

Of the three main factors which affected Sarajevo after the war, this article focuses on analysing the consequences that the internal boundary of Bosnia and Herzegovina has on the urban development of the city, in order to discover both its effect on planning and the human and geographic consequences of the division of the old territory of the urban and peripheral areas of Sarajevo. The case of Sarajevo differs from that of other divided cities, such as Jerusalem, Mostar, Nicosia, Beirut and Belfast (Calame & Charlesworth, 2009). In Sarajevo, the consolidated central urban area has been left untouched by the territorial dividing line, which, up to the present moment, has remained as an

² As explained below, this process began with the outbreak of the war and has continued to a lesser degree although without being forced displacement, up to the present day.

³ By way of example, the First EU/World Bank Donors' Conference for BiH in Brussels launched the \$5.1 billion Priority Reconstruction Program, and an initial \$600 million was pledged. See: http://www.ohr.int/ohr-info/key-events/default.asp?content_id=35971.

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