

## Two cities with no soul: Planning for division and reunification in post-war Mostar

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### Introduction

Urban planning has played different roles ever since cities first came into existence – it has been used to build defensible cities, cities that are symbols of power and prestige, cities that are functional, and cities that are sustainable and equitable. Its role in the aftermath of conflict has also changed and evolved over the years, sometimes driven by design, sometimes by circumstance. Recent wars and intra-national conflicts, whether in Iraq or Afghanistan, or earlier, in the Balkans, have clearly taken on an urban character. Cities are strategic targets in and of themselves, and conflicts can divide cities, both *de facto* and *de jure*, causing lasting damage.

Signifying a particular type of “hyper-dynamic” environment, post-conflict settings pose special challenges for urban planners. When conflicts (apparently) end, the situation is often chaotic and evolves rapidly. How can planners act effectively in such situations? How can they guide the reconstruction of war-affected cities in a manner as that supports mutual reconciliation and sustainable recovery rather than mistrust and division, economic stagnation and environmental degradation? Is it possible to unify divided cities through planning efforts? In fact, is there a role for planning, and planners, at all, in the immediate aftermath of war?

These issues are explored within this paper mainly in the context of Mostar, a historic Bosnian city divided by the conflict between Bosniaks, Croats and Serbs. Today, seventeen years after the war ended, Mostar remains a divided city. It still bears physical, economic and social scars from the conflict that lasted between 1992 and 1995 and claimed nearly 250,000 lives. The European Union Administration of Mostar (EUAM) was established in 1994 to reunify and reconstruct what was perhaps the most destroyed and clearly divided city in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Its efforts met with little success, and subsequent efforts by other actors also failed to reunify the city, revive its economy, or initiate any kind of sustainable development<sup>i</sup>. Is this a failure of planning? Could planners have done more, or done things differently, in the years following the war? What lessons can be learnt from the failed reunification and recovery of Mostar, for other war-affected cities? What are the common principles for planning in post-war settings? There are no perfect answers to these questions, but this paper attempts to explore these issues and provide some thoughts for future planning interventions in post-conflict settings.

### Setting the scene: War and peace in Bosnia

The documentation, analysis or reinterpretation of the Bosnian conflict is not the objective of this paper – that has been adequately covered by numerous historical accounts. However, as the conflict forms the backdrop and the basis for this paper, it is important to review some salient aspects, especially the causes of the conflict, which is interpreted by some as the war between the rural and the urban. In terms of simple historical facts, the conflict was triggered by the collapse of the formal structures of Yugoslavia in the early 1990s. Slovenia and Croatia were the first to secede, declaring independence in June 1991. The Bosnian government also declared independence on 5 April 1992, and was recognized as an independent state by the European Commission and the United States on 6 and 7 April, respectively (du Pont 2002; Malcolm 2002).

However, Bosnia had always been a multi-ethnic republic, unlike Croatia and Slovenia which were quite homogeneous, and conflict broke out between the Serbs, Croats and Bosniacs (Bosnian Muslims) as soon as independence was declared. The Serb artillery moved into

positions surrounding the capital Sarajevo, initiating the (in)famous the Siege of Sarajevo, which lasted for over 3 years. In July 1992, the Bosnian Croats also proclaimed their own quasi-state (or 'statelet', as it is referred to by some) of Herzeg-Bosna, with the southern town of Mostar as its capital (see Figure 1). By 1993, this had led to a breakdown in Muslim-Croat relations, and precipitated heavy fighting not just for the control of Mostar but also the areas around it (Bose 2002; du Pont 2002) <sup>ii</sup>.



Figure 1: Bosnia and Herzegovina, 2005 (Source: UNESCO Old City nomination file, courtesy S. Demirović, urban planner, Grad Mostar)

Approximately 250,000 people (nearly 6% of the pre-war population of 4.3 million people) are estimated to have been killed and about 50% of the pre-war population was forcibly displaced during the war in Bosnia (UNDP BiH 2007). Undoubtedly, the destruction of major cities of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and widespread ethnic cleansing of populations to establish ethnically homogeneous territories, was a key feature of the conflict (Coward 2004). Almost all the major Bosnian cities lay in ruins at the end of the conflict. Peace came to Bosnia and Herzegovina through the Washington Agreement between Bosniacs (Muslims) and Croats, signed in March 1994; and the Dayton Accords between all three parties, concluded in November 1995. The Washington Agreement provided a framework for establishing the Muslim-Croat Federation. Among other provisions, the Agreement established that Mostar would be governed by an EU Administrator for upto two years (Washington Agreement 1994; ICG 2000) <sup>iii</sup>. The fighting formally came to an end in November 1995, the Dayton Accords (also known as the Dayton Peace Agreement, DPA), were signed.

### A small town on the Neretva

Historically, the development of the settlement of Mostar coincided with the arrival of the Ottomans in the Balkans - the document that first mentions Mostar is dated 1474 (Pašić

2004). A number of authors describe the development of Mostar from a minor rural hamlet to a thriving urban settlement and the major city in the county of Herzegovina, within a few decades, emphasizing its culture of religious tolerance and its functioning as a multicultural entity (Puljić 1992; Yarwood 1999; Pašić 2004). The urban form was characteristically Ottoman, with a clear division of business ('*bazaar*') and residential districts ('*mahalla*'). The main street ran parallel to the river Neretva, with winding narrow streets perpendicular to it leading down to the river. The *bazaar* in Mostar was the centre of manufacturing, commercial and social activity during the Ottoman period, and it is estimated that it attained its peak in the mid-sixteenth century. The old bridge or the *Stari Most*, the best-known symbol of Mostar today, was also built at this time (1566). There are said to be eleven craft-guilds in Mostar in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, with the leather guild the most prominent and successful of these. The residential neighbourhoods extended across both banks of the Neretva, and along the Radobolje, at this time.

By the eighteenth century, however, the town had begun to decline, mirroring perhaps the decline of the Ottoman empire as a whole. The Austro-Hungarians, who occupied the city in 1878, initiated its revival by establishing military zones to the north and south of the city, west of the old city, the *Stari Grad*. This restricted development along the river in the North and South directions. Mountains on the east created a natural boundary. Hence the town could grow only towards the north-west, which was originally agricultural land (see Figure 2).

The Austro-Hungarians also revived the economic fortunes of the town by initiating industrial production in Mostar. Industrial zones were created to the north-west of the city, and a new railway line connected the inner city to these (Yarwood 1999; Pašić 2004). Along with timber and coal, attention was also paid to development of vineyards and the tobacco factory. In 1911, the construction of a power plant brought electricity to the city. In Austro-Hungarian times the present-day *Bulevar* was the line of the railroad tracks leading to the station. According to Plunz et al. (1998), "*The tracks separated the city from the new garden extension to the west that was the province of the Austrians*" (p.14). 10,000 Austrian officials formed a new social group in the city.



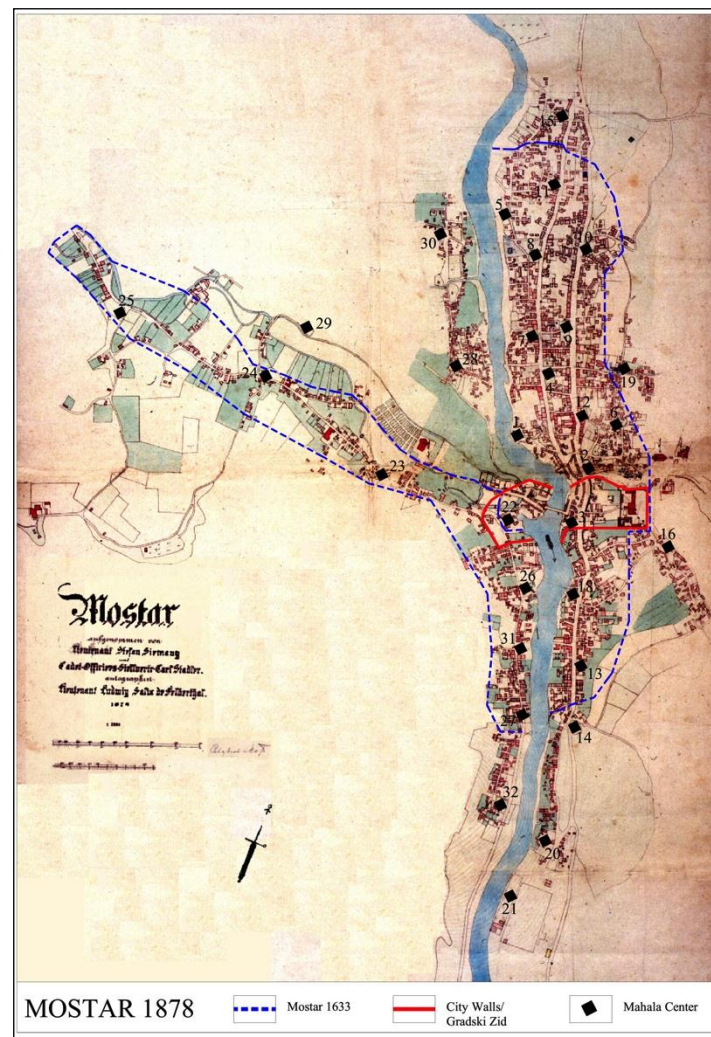


Figure 2: Map showing the development of Mostar in 1878  
(Source: UNESCO Old City nomination file, courtesy S. Demirović, urban planner, Grad Mostar)

During the rule of the Austro-Hungarians, Mostar also became the seat of the Diocese, and a number of prominent Catholic religious buildings came up. In 1866, the Church of St. Peter and Paul was built, followed by the construction of the monastery as well as other Catholic churches. The new town was laid out according to European principles, with wide streets and boulevards, and single-family villas. With all the development activity taking place outside the historic core, and new infrastructure and public facilities located in the new city centre on the western bank of the river, the flourishing old town began to die a natural death in the nineteenth century. It was only after 1977 that concerted efforts were initiated to restore, protect and revitalize the rich architectural heritage found in the historic core of the city (Čadra 1992).

While the inter-war period was generally characterised by stagnation in urban and industrial development, bauxite mining became a prominent activity in Herzegovina during this period. After the end of the Second World War, in the Yugoslav era, industrial development proceeded apace with the establishment of a variety of industries in and around Mostar, including lumber, tobacco, cotton, the aluminium smelter 'Aluminij', automobile and aircraft manufacturing company 'Soko', Hercegovina auto, wine-making, and others. The Mostar region was home to a large proportion of the vineyards in BiH, which occupied an area of about 5000 hectares along the Neretva river. 40 per cent of this area was controlled by HEPOK, an agro-combine which produced about 96 percent of commercial wine, and

remaining area was composed of small private vineyards (ESI 2004). A number of hydro-electric power plants were also established on the Neretva during this period. Housing for the employees of various enterprises, public and semi-public, was provided by the employers. The 1970s and 1980s also saw a building boom and significant foreign investment in the urban core (Pašić 2005). Figure 3 illustrates the different phases of development of Mostar since the Ottoman era, until 1997.

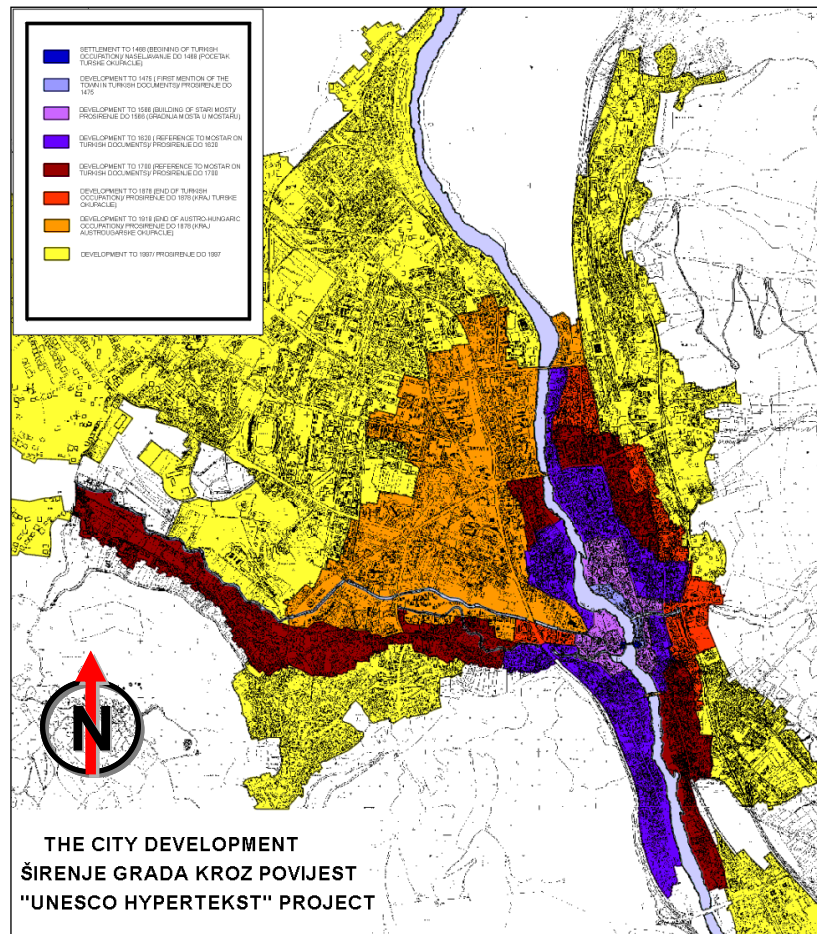


Figure 3: Historical development of Mostar since the Ottoman period, until 1997 (Source: Grad Mostar, courtesy Z. Bosnjak, urban planner)

The area around Mostar was also an important military centre. Not only did it house the aircraft factory *Soko*, but was also home to the Secondary/Academy school '*Vazduhoplovna Gimnazija Josip Marsal Tito*', based in the southern part of the city. Young boys who wanted to attend military school were trained in this Gymnasium. Garrisons of the Yugoslav National Army (JNA) also existed to the north and south of the city (Božić, interview)<sup>iv</sup>.

During the Yugoslav era, because of the aforementioned factors, migration to the municipality of Mostar from surrounding rural areas increased considerably. According to the 1991 census, the municipality had 126,668 residents, of which 75,865 lived within the urban core. Just before the war, there were 43,866 workers in the city, of whom nearly 40 per cent were employed in industry (Yarwood 1999).

### The destruction and division of Mostar

The destruction and division of Mostar – a city believed to be symbolic of heterogeneous and multicultural Bosnia – captured international attention like no other city in the Balkans. Lying at the heart of one of the two mixed Cantons in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the city was battered by the conflict. It was first attacked by Serb-controlled Yugoslav National Army (JNA), which was driven out by an alliance of Croats and Muslims. Subsequently, fighting



broke out among the former allies, with the Croats aiming to cleanse the city of the Muslims. As the Muslims resisted, they were driven out of west Mostar into the areas east of the *Bulevar*, which became the main dividing line. The city was split into two, and Mostar became a 'divided city' (see Figure 4).

The theme of divided cities has become increasingly fashionable in recent years. Many authors have attempted to address the nature and impact of urban divisions in cities such as Johannesburg, Nicosia, Beirut, Jerusalem and even Mostar, and proposed policy as well as design tools to reunify them.<sup>v</sup> However, the focus here is on whether urban planners could have played a more significant and a more positive role in reunifying this divided city.

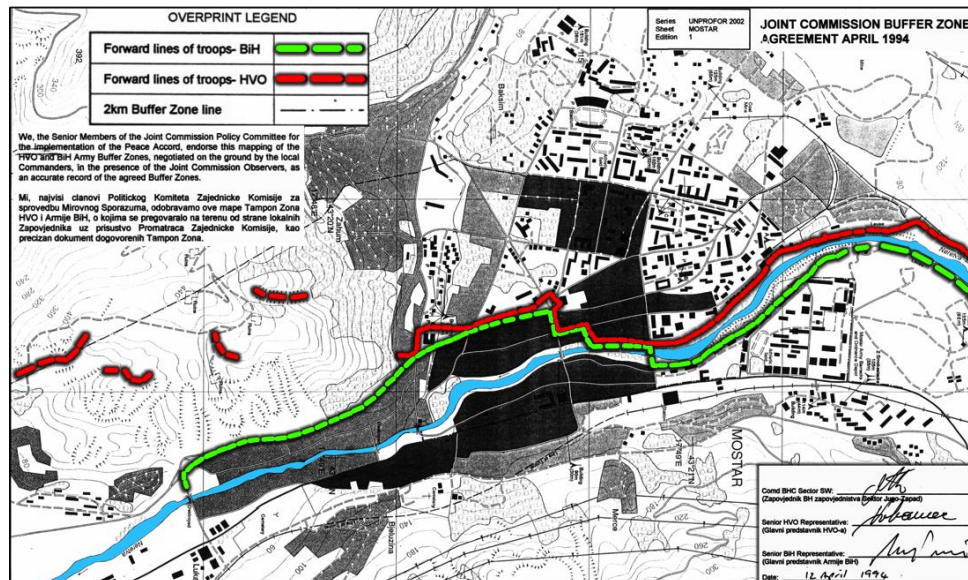


Figure 4: 1994 map of Mostar showing the division of the city along the river and the Bulevar (map courtesy Z. Bosnjak, urban planner, Grad Mostar)

By the time the fighting ended in Mostar in 1994, 2,000 persons had been killed, 26,000 displaced, over 5,000 buildings damaged or ruined, all 10 bridges destroyed (nine by the Serbs, and the *Stari Most* by the Croats) and the urban infrastructure shattered (EC 1998; Yarwood 1999). Muslim east Mostar had suffered the greatest destruction, along with the central core of the city – the area around the *Bulevar*. Historic monuments, religious buildings and cultural symbols were apparently deliberately targeted. According to estimates prepared by the EU Administration of Mostar, the cost of repair and reconstruction of the damaged urban core was about DM 400 million, excluding the new industrial estates, peripheral villages, and historical monuments. If those were included, the cost would have doubled. Measured in terms of repair costs, the east had sustained four-fifths of the damage (Yarwood 1999).



*Figure 5: Visual impressions of the destruction caused by the war in Mostar. All photographs by author, taken over a decade after the conflict concluded.*

Urban destruction during the war also included the destruction or removal of cadastral and property records, plans and maps. According to the World Bank, systems for the registration of property rights in BiH have been disorganised since the Second World War, during which a large proportion of records were damaged or destroyed. During the socialist period, changes in ownership were often not registered due to the high transaction costs and taxes. During the war (1992-95), more records were lost as many public buildings were bombed. This destruction of records and archives, displacement of large numbers of people, and the breakdown in institutional capacity in the aftermath of the war has led to a situation wherein legal records (where they exist) no longer match the situation on the ground. In Mostar, the Spatial Planning as well as Cadastral Institutes split into two parts – east and west – as a result of the war, and most technical and office equipment was destroyed. The cadastral records themselves were intact, but in the hands of one side (the Croats) who refused to share them with the Bosniacs (Yarwood 1999). As a result, urban plans and maps which survived the war are also out of date, and no longer reflect the *de facto* boundaries, land use or occupancy (World Bank 2006).

### **Reconstruction without reunification**

The main goal of the Washington Agreement mentioned earlier, which was also reaffirmed in all the follow-up agreements, was the establishment of a multi-ethnic, unified Mostar. For many, the issue of Mostar was not (and still is not) simply about reunifying a city but symptomatic of the larger Bosniac-Croat conflict in the Federation. A breakthrough in Mostar, thus, could be one step forward in resolving the issues of ethnic segregation and mistrust in other cities and towns as well. According to the ICG:

*“The future of the Federation lies in Mostar. If the international community can successfully unite Mostar, then the Federation will function.” (ICG 2000: 3)*

### ***Role of the EUAM***

The European Union Administration of Mostar (EUAM) was thus established in July 1994 with the objective of initiating and supervising the reconstruction of the city and the reintegration of its communities. Its mandated duration of two years was later extended by six months, and the Administration finally lasted from until January 1997. During this period, it poured in almost 300 million Deutsche Marks (DM) of donor money into the reconstruction of the city, with the poorer and more damaged east Mostar sector receiving two-thirds of that assistance. (EUAM 1998; Yarwood 1999) As a result, utilities such as gas, water and electricity were restored fairly quickly, schools and hospitals also opened in due course, and the repair of damaged houses and buildings took off.

Over the course of its term, however, the EUAM primarily focused on establishing basic security and freedom of movement across the city, unification of the police force, and the repair and reconstruction of what the EUAM saw as the most essential buildings and infrastructure. Of the total EUAM budget of about 300 million DM, nearly 90% was spent on reconstruction (EUAM 1998; Yarwood 1999). A rapid building damage survey helped to identify structures which had suffered light, medium or heavy damage, and prioritise the repair and reconstruction projects. A large number of individual houses and apartment blocks were repaired, as were bridges, electricity networks and water supply systems. Schools, hospitals and other facilities were also reconstructed<sup>vi</sup>. The notable point, however, is that there were two of everything in Mostar - separate services and infrastructure networks for the Bosniac and Croat zones; segregated schools, hospitals and other facilities; and of course separate institutions governing the two zones.

While the Administration worked with representatives of both east and west Mostar, there were attempts to use the reconstruction process as both a carrot and stick towards reunification. In 1996, the Administration proposed that the territory of the former municipality of Mostar, including the town and the hinterland surrounding it, be divided into six "city-municipalities" (three each with Croat and Bosniac majority), and one central zone (under the control of a 'neutral' central city administration), the size of which was initially substantial, but later drastically reduced under Croatian pressure. The city was subsequently handed over to these local administrations, to be overseen by one city government responsible for key functions such as finance and tax policy, urban planning, infrastructure, economic policy and public transport. Unfortunately, the six city-municipalities rarely deferred to the city government in the matters which were not under their mandate, and the result was a further and deeper fragmentation of the city which has till date proved to be difficult to reverse.

The EUAM clearly made some major assumptions about the pre-war context which influenced its strategic approach towards reconstruction. These assumptions and choices could perhaps be the result of the lack of time and commitment to build an adequate understanding of the situation, but they have had serious long-term implications on the reunification of the city and its population, and they can also provide significant lessons to other transitional administrations engaged in reconstruction. Key among these were:

- (a) multi-ethnicity, multi-culturalism in pre-war Mostar, which seems to have been but a chimera, true only for the central core of the city rather than the entire municipal area, which had in fact definite pockets of concentration of different ethnic groups even before the war (see Figures 6 and 7);
- (b) societal transformation during the war (a large chunk of the current population of the city is made up of immigrants from small towns or rural areas which are largely mono-ethnic, which made it extremely difficult to re-establish the pre-war character of the city);
- (c) establishment of six city-municipalities, which were intended to break down the hardening divisions between East and West Mostar, but which usurped a lot of power from the central city administration, particularly vis-à-vis planning; and



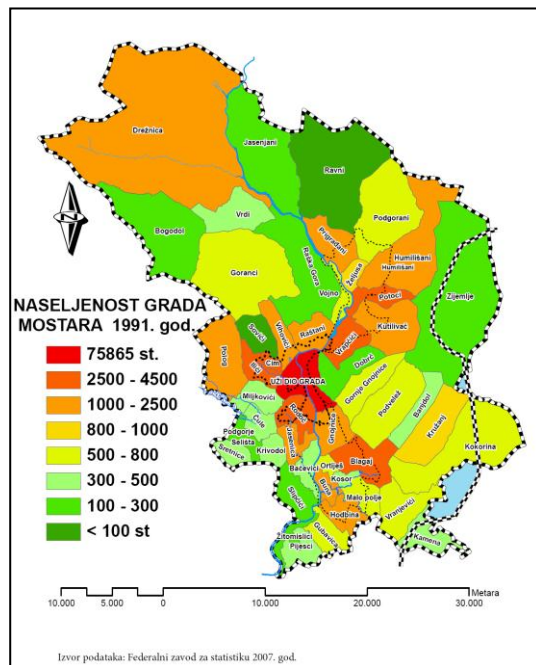


Figure 6: Boundaries of Mostar municipality and the total population of various settlements within, 1991 (graphic courtesy Z. Bosnjak, urban planner, Grad Mostar)

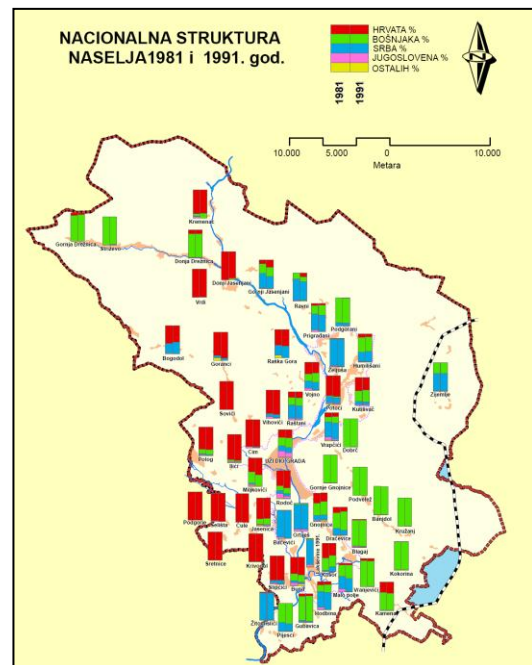


Figure 7: National distribution of population across Mostar municipality, 1981 and 1991. Hrvata – Croats; Bosnjaka – Bosniacs; Srba – Serbs; Jugoslovena – Yugoslavs; Ostalih – Others. (graphic courtesy Z. Bosnjak, urban planner, Grad Mostar)

- (d) excessive reliance on tourism to drive the economic recovery of the city, based on the (false) assumption that tourism was and would continue to be the mainstay of Mostar's economy (see Figure 8). This led to a neglect of manufacturing and other economic activities that had flourished before the war.



Figure 8: The economy of east Mostar, in particular relies heavily on heritage tourism and tourism-related activities such as pensions and internet cafés, and other small businesses such as souvenir shops, betting shops, bakeries and restaurants (Photographs by author)

### Other international actors involved in reconstruction

The EUAM, however, was by no means the only financier of reconstruction in Mostar. The World Bank was another important donor – it made a major contribution to reconstruction of the Old Bridge, and steered the reunification and revival of the water utility as well as the development of a solid waste landfill site. It also extended a loan for the preparation and

implementation of a strategic plan for the city, although that never really took off. Other donors are known by the buildings, monuments or a few public spaces they helped to renovate - e.g. the Danish and Norwegian refugee councils rebuilt some apartment complexes on Santica street which were destroyed in the war; the Spanish helped develop the 'Spanish' square and the reconstruction of the Gymnasium; UNESCO, Italy, Turkey and others contributed to the Old Bridge and Old City reconstruction, etc.



*Figure 9: Post-war reconstruction efforts in Mostar until 2008. Clockwise from top – the Gymnasium; the old bridge, Stari Most, and old town, Stari Grad, in the background; housing on the Bulevar. Photographs by author.*

### **The role of planning in pre- and post-war Mostar**

One of the critical assumptions that the international community made in Mostar, and in other former Yugoslav cities, was that no institutions existed, or were functional, during the war in Yugoslavia, and that all pre-existing socialist structures merited dismantling. In fact, there were very strong institutional structures in former Yugoslavia – nowhere is this more evident than in the area of development planning.

#### ***The Yugoslav planning system***

The socialist system was extremely strong in the area of planning, and the whole of former Yugoslavia was covered by economic and spatial plans and planning institutions for different levels (national, republic, cantonal, local). Urbanisation under socialism was based on two principles – (a) egalitarianism (equalisation of living conditions, both between and within settlements), and (b) planned urbanisation (i.e. central allocation of development funds/investment resources and a strict hierarchy of settlements in order to reduce regional inequalities and increase efficiency) (Nedović-Budić 2001). Due to the emphasis on public interest, the state was naturally the most powerful actor in planning – not only as the main decision and policy-maker, but also the chief land developer and provider of housing.

#### ***Ottoman and Austro-Hungarian Planning traditions in Bosnia***

In Bosnia the planning tradition went even further back, to the Ottoman times. Indeed, the Ottomans laid the foundations of urbanisation in Bosnia, focusing both on the renovation of old cities and building of new ones, as well as construction of strategic structures such as roads and bridges (Bublin 1999). Under Ottoman rule, all cities in the Balkans gradually began to demonstrate Turkish characteristics, as described above in the context of Mostar. The Austro-Hungarians, following the Ottomans, brought industrialization and further

urbanization followed in its wake. They built an extensive network of roads and railways (the railway network expanded from 290 km in 1880 to nearly 1510 km in 1910), waterworks and power stations, and refurbished and extended urban centres across Bosnia and Herzegovina with new European-style neighbourhoods, wide streets on grid-iron patterns, a mix of high rise apartment blocks and villas. A number of military structures, prisons, barracks and military hospitals were also built in this period, as were key administrative and public buildings, public libraries, and schools (Taylor 1981; Williamson 1991; Bublin 1999; Yarwood 1999; Pašić 2004).

The last known urban plan of Mostar, prepared by the pre-war spatial planning institute (*Zavod za Prostorno Uredjenje Mostar*), was approved in 1980. A later document was the spatial plan of Mostar, prepared in 1986, with a fifteen-year perspective (it was valid until 2000). Pre-war Mostar had about 57 settlements, urban and rural, and regulation plans existing before the war covered about half of the municipal area.

It is clear, therefore, that planned urban development was not new to Yugoslav or Bosnian cities. Field research reveals that the capacities for planning existed at various levels even during and after the war. However, these were brushed aside by the EUAM in its reconstruction programmes. The failure to take the old plans, planning systems and capacities into account, and the consequent attempts to start up parallel structures and introduce new forms of planning, didn't meet with much success, and reconstruction remained a piecemeal exercise with no long-term perspective.

### ***(The absence of) planning by the international community***

Clearly, while the rehabilitation of housing and infrastructure has clearly been a priority for the international community in BiH, urban development and planning have hardly featured at all, even in the development phase. Most donors simply cherry-picked reconstruction projects without much consultation with the local stakeholders or professionals. In the absence of any overall plan for reconstruction of the city, and little by way of a vision for its development, this also seems inevitable. In fact, no role seems to have been accorded to strategic thinking or planning for the future of Mostar, at any stage in the process of demolition, repair and reconstruction. Although the recovery of the planning system was "...a vital objective for the EUAM and particularly that it was a vehicle to build unification" (Yarwood 1999: 28), yet, the former officials of EUAM also recall that strategic planning of any sort was seen as a waste of time and resources, and urban planning was pushed to the bottom of the priority list because of the urgency to spend money (Yarwood, Puljić, Raspudić, interviews).

### ***The (mis-)use of planning by local actors***

As the urgency of post-war reconstruction faded, international agencies took a backseat and local actors began to drive the process of rebuilding the city. At this time, the political nature of planning, and the tussle to control land, began in right earnest. Two planning institutes were established, which provided advice on revision of plans to the respective city-municipalities (*Urbing* to the three city-municipalities in the west, and *Urbanisticki Zavod* to the three in the east). The two post-war municipalities and their successor city-municipalities consistently exploited the absence of an implementable planning framework or any regulatory system in the aftermath of the conflict. They issued a large number of plans and construction permits without any reference to the central administration, allowing construction in contravention with the spatial plan provisions, supporting the construction of controversial religious structures, or simply sold off public land to private investors. Many changes were made to the regulation plans of Mostar covering the two sides, mostly without any discussion or consultation whatsoever with the stakeholders. Most were land use changes were made ostensibly to allow for the construction of housing for refugees and displaced persons, which in itself is a hugely controversial issue, or for the construction of new facilities such as hospitals. Some green areas within the urban core were also notified as construction land. All



these developments not only hindered trust-building and reconciliation, but also undermined the existing development plans and made planning a highly politicised activity.

Some bigger initiatives were also undertaken by the city-municipalities, such as the preparation of a master plan for the old city, initiated by the 'Mostar – Stari Grad' city-municipality in 2001. This, too, clearly contradicted the provisions of the Interim Statute of Mostar, which had assigned the city planning function to the City of Mostar **only**.

In addition to the land use changes and preparation of a few new plans, the city-municipalities, advised by their respective institutes on the east and west, also permitted the construction of some extremely controversial buildings. Very early in the reconstruction process, the Croats in particular started “...claiming and nationalizing public space along the former front line, and turning it into an image of the nation they intended to build. To this end, they started, from the mid-90s onwards, a transparent strategy of claiming national space, by either appropriating existing buildings, or erecting new ones” (Wimmen 2004: 5). The Franciscan bell tower and the cross on the Hum, are examples of the abuse of urban planning and regulatory power for consolidating national interests (see Figures 10 and 11). Even so-called non-ethnic projects such as the redevelopment of Hotel Ruža are mired in controversy, and the differing opinions reflect a distinct nationalist tone, which makes it yet another divisive element between the Croats and the Bosniacs.



Figure 11: View of the Bulevar, looking south. The Franciscan bell tower and the cross on the Hum are powerful Croatian symbols. Photograph by author.



Figure 11: The Franciscan bell tower dominates the Mostar skyline from every viewpoint. The incomplete Hotel Ruža complex is in the foreground. Photograph by author.

### **Learning from the incomplete recovery of Mostar: the role of planning and planners in post-war situations**

Field research findings from Mostar point to diverse opinions on the stage at which planning could have been introduced in the process of reconstruction or the role it could have played in reconciliation. It was clearly not possible to initiate a full-fledged long-term planning process in the immediate aftermath of the war, given that the level of mistrust between the different groups was extremely high in 1994, and there was evidently no political commitment to sharing even basic data and information, let alone towards planning or reunifying the city. However, most respondents to agree that the EUAM had the opportunity and resources to prepare some kind of a reconstruction agenda or plan which would extend beyond their mandate, and which could have been used for planned or coordinated interventions towards physical and economic reconstruction. It is generally felt that the EU Administration of Mostar was short-sighted, focused too much on visible results, didn't engage adequately with local professionals, failed to rebuild local institutions, and didn't do enough to develop a strategic framework for development, which would be useful after the end of the Administration. The Office of the High Representative, which took over where the EUAM left off in 1997, didn't do much better either, concentrating its efforts on the legal and administrative aspects of reunification of the city, rather than its development or sustainability.

Most residents of Mostar feel that although the city may have been partially reconstructed thanks to EUAM and administratively reunified (to an extent) due to the OHR's efforts, real reunification and re-integration of the city and its communities is an unrealistic goal set by the international community with little reference to ground realities. A large number of Mostar's citizens have sold or exchanged their pre-war properties (houses/ apartments) and decided to move permanently to areas where they are in a majority, or to settle abroad (numbers unknown). Even now, there are two major hospitals on the east and the west; two primary schools, one high school (Gymnasium) but with three separate curricula (Bosniac, Croat and the International Baccalaureate) taught on 3 floors; different shopping centres; two (ethnic-based) football clubs, etc. Most people also state that although some young people from both sides sometimes cross over to visit clubs and bars on 'the other side', a large majority chooses to socialise in their own part of town.

A possible planning approach in the immediate aftermath of the conflict in Mostar could have included:

- (a) enforcing a moratorium on changes to land use and building plans, and on random rebuilding and reconstruction by the city-municipalities, thus gaining control over those agendas and firmly establishing the rule of law;
- (b) at the same time, re-establishing the planning institute at the city level, empowering and supporting it to review the old spatial plan and prepare an updated version, which could have been an 'apolitical' way of initiating planning; and
- (c) start rebuilding the land and property cadastre in order to restore order and prevent illegal occupation and construction.

The inability (or unwillingness) of the EUAM and other actors to take a long-term view of the development of post-war Mostar has resulted in many challenges for the city. The absence of any kind of reconstruction or development plan for the city, and the lack of capacity-building of existing institutions and professionals, have significantly impacted the way the city looks today. The over-reliance on tourism, and the failure to rebuild other sectors of the economy such as industry, has left many city residents, especially the youth, unemployed and disenchanted. Haphazard and unregulated construction activity has transformed the urban fabric of the city. Finally, the failure to protect, maintain and reconstruct records or archives, especially land records and cadastral information, has proved to be a key "missing link" in the reconstruction and reunification of Mostar.

It is also clear that while the international community wasted their window of opportunity to plan a better future for the whole of Mostar, local actors used planning tools to 'continue war by other means', reinforce the results of ethnic cleansing, appropriate or mark territory, and establish symbolic and actual control over contested areas. This further entrenched the divisions across the city and made reintegration much more difficult in the long term. It is a near-consensus view that the city can never achieve its pre-war status, that it is not one city but *"Two cities with no soul"* (Destito, interview), and *"all we can hope for is the absence of conflict, and that the two sides can live together side-by-side, even if it is on two different banks of the river."* (Francic, interview).

## Conclusion

This is a time when we are witnessing the revival of planning as an instrument of sustainability, good governance and inclusion, especially in "hyper-dynamic", or rapidly changing, situations. Yet, as far as contemporary post-conflict situations are concerned, planning still plays a marginal role (if any) in the reconstruction of cities and towns after a conflict. This is despite the fact that historical experience, for example after the Second World War, has demonstrated that planning can be a vital ingredient in the process of national recovery after wars. In more recent conflicts, however, urban planning has been marginalized, which has important implications for the revival of the post-war economy, sustainable development of war-affected cities, as well as reconciliation and reunification in

the long term (for example, in the Balkans). Alternatively, it has become an instrument in the hands of dominant political forces with divisive agendas, with extremely disturbing results (for instance, in Jerusalem). It is becoming imperative, therefore, for the international community to pay attention to this area in the immediate aftermath of the conflict.

Unfortunately, however, the international community – including an array of actors such as the UN, EU, occupying powers, international financial institutions, donors, and NGOs – has been slow to embrace urban planning as a critical element in its own relief and recovery approaches. There are no clear answers as to why this is the case. One of the factors could be the dominance of the liberal market paradigm. In the aftermath of conflict, most international agencies, particularly the World Bank but also other organisations and donor countries, prescribe a formula combining physical reconstruction, economic development, and structural transformation to facilitate recovery (Bojčić-Dzelilović 2002; Caplan 2005). An overwhelming emphasis on the last of these – stabilisation and structural transformation – has meant that planning, which is traditionally associated with centralised/socialist systems and large scale land acquisition by the state, has been discarded in favour of market-driven approaches.

Another consideration could be related to whether it is actually appropriate or legitimate for international actors to take a long-term view on behalf of the places and people under their jurisdiction.<sup>vii</sup> Alternatively, this neglect of planning could be attributed simply to the inefficiency of large international operations, and their unwillingness to do more than what is absolutely necessary.

A final possibility, of course, is that there is a general lack of understanding of the importance of planning in post-war reconstruction. Due to a paucity of baseline data, which takes time and resources to generate afresh, and often changes by the time plans are prepared, planning is seen as a long-drawn exercise and therefore set aside, as piecemeal interventions take priority. To some extent, this is also because the traditional forms of planning have failed to respond to the particular needs of post-conflict situations. Planning for conflict-affected - “hyper-dynamic” - cities would thus need to be:

- (a) more selective, rather than comprehensive;
- (b) action-oriented and participatory, involving all sections of society;
- (c) focused on immediate sectoral and spatial priorities, but at the same time, promoting a collective vision for the future;
- (d) linked to budgets and resources; and,
- (e) incorporate concerns of environmental sustainability, poverty, and exclusion.<sup>viii</sup>

The approach of the international community in recent years has been to gradually move from humanitarian relief to recovery and development. Urban planning can in fact be a positive force in all these phases, and can help in building economically self-reliant, sustainable, peaceful, and stable communities and societies in the aftermath of conflict. While there is no single successful paradigm or model for achieving reconciliation and preventing future conflict, there can be no doubt that historical, present, and future needs of all communities must be taken into account in the process of post-conflict reconstruction. Urban planning is an important tool in this regard, and a space must be created in order for it to evolve into an instrument that is useful and responsive to complex and rapidly-evolving post-conflict situations.

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## Interviews

- Mirsad Behram, Journalist, Radio Television Mostar (RTM) – Interviewed by author, 08/09/08
- Amela Božić, Political Officer, OHR, Mostar, ex-EUAM – Interviewed by author, 03/09/08
- Jlenia Destito, Local Democracy Agency, Mostar – Interviewed by author, 23/09/08
- Vesna Frančić, World Bank – Interviewed by author, 11/09/08
- Aida Omanović, RESCATE – Interviewed by author, 02/09/08
- Amir Pašić, urbanist, Mostar – Interviewed by author, 29/09/08
- John Yarwood, former Director of Reconstruction, EUAM – Interviewed by author, 06/03/08

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<sup>i</sup> This paper is based on extensive field research conducted in Bosnia and Herzegovina, with key informants including a mix of current and former urban planners within the municipality or the planning institute of Mostar; other urbanists or planners in Bosnia; political leaders; NGOs active in the area of reconstruction, reconciliation or local governance and democracy; journalists (both Bosniac and a Croat); and international agency officials, both in Sarajevo and Mostar. Other data including old maps, plans, statistical and other documents and reports have also provided useful insights.

<sup>ii</sup> Whether the war was primarily a case of internal conflict or 'civil war' among Bosnians, or that of 'aggression' of Serbia (and later Croatia) against Bosnia is still being debated amongst academics, practitioners and analysts. For a more comprehensive discussion on the causes and trajectory of the Bosnian conflict and the Dayton Accords, see accounts by Silber and Little (1996), Kumar (1997), Holbrooke (1999), Bose (2002), and Malcolm (2002).

<sup>iii</sup> A follow-up to this came in April 1994 in Geneva, when a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) was signed to empower the European Union (EU) to administer Mostar until the parties themselves could agree to a more permanent solution. Many of the principles set forth in this document formed the basis for later agreements, in particular the Rome Agreement and the City Interim Statute (February 1996), whose provisions superseded those of the Geneva MOU. A report by the International Crisis Group (ICG 2000) provides the complete list of all agreements relating to Mostar.

<sup>iv</sup> This was the reason why lots of military-educated Serbs lived in Mostar. It also partly explains the presence of JNA troops in such large numbers in and around Mostar when the war broke out (Božić, interview).

<sup>v</sup> See, for instance, Davie 1993; Khalaf and Khoury 1993; Yiftachel 1995; Makdisi 1997; Bollens 2000; Yiftachel 2000; Beall, Crankshaw et al. 2002; Charlesworth 2003; Bollens 2006; Makaš 2006; Pullan, Misselwitz et al. 2007)

<sup>vi</sup> For more details see Yarwood (1999).

<sup>vii</sup> To an extent, this was also seen in post-World War-II Germany. The occupying powers, in particular the British, made concerted efforts to rebuild (and reform) the administrative infrastructure as well as the Civil Service, but refused to intervene in matters that could be handled by local administrations, or were deemed to be the prerogative of a future German national government, including planning.

<sup>viii</sup> A UNDP strategy paper prepared in 1999 for regional socio-economic development of South Lebanon, which aimed to formulate a coherent vision and integrated development strategy for the region in the aftermath of the war, is a rare example of a more strategic approach towards post-war urban planning and reconstruction. An important element of this strategy was achieving a balance between the priorities of large and small cities, urban and rural areas, rich and poor populations, and the different ethnic groups/communities. It was, however, never implemented.