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Veröffentlichungsversion / Published Version

Zeitschriftenartikel / journal article

### Empfohlene Zitierung / Suggested Citation:

Bassi, E. (2015). Divided Sarajevo: space management, urban landscape and spatial practices across the boundary. *Europa Regional*, 22.2014(3-4), 101-113. <https://nbn-resolving.org/urn:nbn:de:0168-ssoar-461616>

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# Divided Sarajevo – Space management, urban landscape and spatial practices across the boundary

ELENA BASSI

## Abstract

*This contribution focuses on Sarajevo as a case study of divided city. As a consequence of Dayton Peace Agreement signed in 1995 Bosnia-Herzegovina appears internally split into the two entities of Federation of Bosnia Herzegovina (FBiH) and Republika Srpska (RS); at local level the administrative line divides two areas that before the war constituted a unique urban system: Sarajevo, including the historical neighbourhoods of the city and part of FBiH, and Eastern Sarajevo, a suburban area now included in the territory of RS. Considering the city's partition the paper discusses the extent to which the divisive power of the boundary is either reduced or renovated.*

*From the inhabitants' standpoint the crossing experience has become a common practice since the emotional burden related to the presence of the boundary has largely vanished among the population. Nevertheless ongoing processes of separation can be recognised in the rhetoric of space management as well as in the feature of the built environment. By looking at the way in which urban planning deals with the territorial separation the paper shows how the divisive logic is constantly fostered by the interpretations of local administrators and professionals, while interventions and initiatives suggesting an alternative approach result scarce and ineffective. As such, the implicit rhetoric of the normative frame fosters a vicious circle that reproduces functional, organizational and infrastructural division.*

*The power of separation can be further acknowledged by looking at the symbolical connotation of urban landscape. Despite the division is not marked by any artefact, the intentional use of symbols and signs across the boundary selectively celebrates specific collective identities simultaneously neglecting the presence of the counterpart. Moreover, such changes within the built environment have to some extent influenced inhabitants' daily life and collective representations.*

Sarajevo, divided city, boundary, space management, urban landscape, collective identity

## Zusammenfassung

### Das geteilte Sarajevo. Raumverwaltung und Stadtlandschaft über die Grenze hinweg

*Dieser Beitrag ist eine Fallstudie über geteilte Städte mit Schwerpunkt auf Sarajevo. Als Folge des 1995 unterzeichneten Friedensvertrags von Dayton ist Bosnien-Herzegowina landesintern in die zwei Entitäten der Föderation Bosnien und Herzegowina (FBiH) und der Republika Srpska (RS/PC) aufgeteilt. Auf kommunaler Ebene bezeichnet eine Verwaltungsgrenze zwei unterschiedliche Bereiche, die vor dem Krieg ein einzelnes städtisches System darstellten: Sarajevo (einschließlich der historischen Stadtviertel) als Teil der FBiH sowie Ost-Sarajevo, ein Vorstadtgebiet, das nun zum Territorialgebiet von RS/PC gehört. Im Hinblick auf die Teilung der Stadt beschäftigt sich die Arbeit damit, in welchem Ausmaß sich die entzweieende Kraft der Grenze entweder verringert oder erneuert.*

*Vom Blickwinkel der Bewohner aus gesehen ist die Erfahrung des Überschreitens der Grenze zu einer gängigen Praxis geworden, da die emotionale Last in Bezug auf deren Vorhandensein unter der Bevölkerung weitestgehend verschwunden ist. Dennoch lassen sich in der Rhetorik der Raumverwaltung fortwährend Separationsprozesse erkennen, gleiches gilt für die bebauten Umgebung. Indem sich die Arbeit mit der Art und Weise beschäftigt, wie die städtebauliche Planung mit der territorialen Trennung umgeht, zeigt sie, inwieweit der Separierungs-Logik durch die Auslegungen der kommunalen Verwaltungsbediensteten und Experten Vorschub geleistet wird, und dass gleichzeitig Einwände und Initiativen, die einen alternativen Ansatz zur Diskussion stellen, selten sind und sich als ineffektiv herausstellen. Entsprechend begünstigt die implizite Rhetorik des normgebenden Rahmens einen Teufelskreis, der eine funktionale, organisatorische und infrastrukturelle Teilung entstehen lässt.*

*Die Kraft der Trennung lässt sich außerdem erkennen, wenn man einen Blick auf die symbolische Bedeutung der Stadtlandschaft wirft. Obwohl die Teilung nicht durch Artefakte gekennzeichnet ist, würdigt die absichtliche Verwendung von Symbolen und Zeichen über die Grenze hinweg punktuell spezifische gemeinsame Identitäten, während gleichzeitig die Gegenwart des Gegenübers vernachlässigt wird. Darüber hinaus haben die Veränderungen innerhalb der bebauten Umgebung in gewissem Maße den Alltag und die kollektive Darstellung der Bewohner beeinflusst.*

Sarajevo, geteilte Stadt, Grenze, Raumverwaltung, Stadtlandschaft, kollektive Identität

Despite the idea of a borderless world, borders still represent a crucial research topic as new forms of division are constantly emerging at different scale (refer to NEWMANN 1999; 2006a; KOLOSsov 2005). Consequences and implications of spatial partitions involve challenging question since boundaries and symbolical meanings attached to them are changeable throughout time. In this perspective, the present contribution aims at discussing the extent to which the administrative boundary of Bosnia – Herzegovina is still able to exert its divisive power. The peculiar feature of this separation makes it a remarkable case study for different reasons. As the result of a violent conflict the boundary has been the bearer of a strong symbolical meaning for long; on the other hand, the divisive line lacks any physical elements of separation, such as walls or barriers, and nowadays it's regularly crossed from both sides. As discussed below, crossing the boundary from both sides has become a common practice while the emotional stress and symbolical meaning related to such experience have progressively vanished. From this standpoint the presence of the boundary scarcely affects inhabitants' spatial practices and feelings; nevertheless its divisive power can be clearly acknowledged by looking at regulations and interventions of space management. Thus the paper aims at pointing out the processes through which the division is constantly confirmed and reinforced focusing the analysis on the city of Sarajevo.

According to the analytical perspective here adopted, the urban dimension is conceived as a crucial standpoint to investigate dynamics and processes related to spatial partitions. Indeed, cities are progressively characterised by different kind of physical separation – from ghettos to gated communities – confirming that processes of bordering and division are far from being overtaken in our globalized world. Moreover, dynamics and processes occurring at urban level are consistently linked with phenomena taking place at wider scale thus intervening

on urban space entails effects also at wider level in terms of conflicts' management (refer to BOLLENS 2000, 2007, 2009). As ANDERSON (2008, p. 3) states, "the city's potential rests not only on being a 'victim' where suffering is sometimes most concentrated, but also being a 'protagonist' where conflict is often most intense".

The field of urban studies specifically devoted to divided cities has often focused on the potential of spatial planning in affecting – either positively or negatively – the development of inter-group conflicts describing cities as urban arenas where tensions can be either mitigated or fostered through the shaping and control of urban space (refer to DOVEY 1999; BOLLENS 1998a, 1998b, 2000, 2001, 2007, 2009; STANLAY 2003; YFTACHEL 2006; PULLAN et al. 2007; ANDERSON 2008; CALAME and CHARLESWORTH 2009). In the case study of Sarajevo spatial planning regulations are analysed in order to unfold their implicit rhetoric, discussing the representation of the separation they imply.

The concept of boundary is here conceived as a socio-spatial category. Boundaries represent social constructs as the significance attributed to them in symbolic and political terms is always flexible and changeable. As such, their meanings can be always negotiated, challenged and redefined by different discourses and practices of social interaction. Drawing on the constructivist perspective suggested by DONNAN and WILSON (1998, 1999) boundaries result from an arbitrary process based on cultural conventions. The meaning and relevance attributed to spatial divisions can change throughout time since the social and symbolical separation that defines and distinguishes a group appears flexible and unstable. A community is symbolically constructed upon meanings negotiated and shared by all its members, but cultural tracts celebrated and highlighted to draw the distinction can change throughout time (CELLA 2006).

Geographical narratives about boundaries are always employed to stress the connection between land and nation, but

the symbolical meaning attributed to them can be renegotiated so that the same spatial element can assume different relevance depending on the prevailing discourse (refer to KOSTOVICOVA 2004). Territory constitutes an important component of our individual, group and national identities not simply because our state territories are delimited by fixed boundaries but because land has a symbolic dimension which determines our attachment and affiliation to particular spaces and places (refer to KOSTOVICOVA 2004; NEWMAN 2005; CELLA 2006). As such, territory can be conceived as a social and political construct; narratives on nationhood and territory are changeable throughout time, showing how the political and social meaning of spatial boundaries can be either emphasized or minimized (refer to KOSTOVICOVA 2004).

Furthermore, spatial and social demarcations intertwine in processes of identity construction providing the basis for practices of othering (NEWMAN 2006b, p. 176). Indeed, boundaries provide a solid basis to decline a sense of belonging in spatial terms fostering processes of intra-group identification and inter-group distinction. Not only boundaries allow separating groups that used to live together and constantly interact, but also allow the insiders to build and maintain their collective identities removing and hiding memories shared with the excluded portion of the population and sometimes denying the process of exclusion itself (CELLA 2006, pp. 181f.).

In conclusion the boundary is here conceptualised assuming a relation of mutual influence between spatial and social reality.

The paper originates from a PhD dissertation focused on the case study of Sarajevo and it's empirically based on the data collection carried out throughout nine months of ethnographic research. The fieldwork had taken place between May 2011 and January 2012 plus May 2012 and implied direct and participant observation, semi-structured interviews with experts, local administrators and inhabitants of both sides as well as collection

of official documents analyzed with techniques of content analysis.

**The boundary**

The separation of Sarajevo has its origin in the conflict resolution that followed the war of the Nineties. The end of the hostilities in Bosnia coincided with the peace agreement signed in Dayton, Ohio, USA, in November 1995 by the presidents of the three republics interested by the conflict: Alija Izetbegović for Bosnia, Slobodan Milošević for Serbia and Franjo Tuđman for Croatia.

Among its several dispositions the agreement contained the official Constitution of BiH based on the principles of a multinational legal order that recognised the same citizenship rights to Bosniaks, Bosnian Serbs and Bosnian Croats as the three constitutive peoples (refer to JOKAY 2001). Among its purposes, the political and institutional reorganization of the state aimed at guaranteeing the self-determination rights for the three national groups reinforcing the link between national affiliation and the organization of local government (refer to WOELK 2008).

The debate upon the controversies of Dayton peace agreement still represents an animated discussion since, according to some analyses, the main goals declared in the documents remained largely unattended (refer to JOKAY 2001; WOELK 2008). Among the complicated dilemmas involved by the post-war scenario, one of the most delicate issues concerned the return of displaced people forced to leave their home places by operations of ethnic cleansing. On the other hand the urgency to stop the war combined with the strife to find acceptable compromises for all the conflicting parts led to a hasty final solution that has been largely contested. As such, the main discussed Dayton paradox lies in the fact that instead of creating conditions to restore a multinational state, the institutionalization of territorial separation provided the basis to reinforce and stabilise national divisions (refer to WOELK 2008).

The international accord ratified the Washington agreement signed in 1994,



Fig. 1: Administrative division of Bosnia and Herzegovina

institutionalizing the internal line of division that Bosnian Serb nationalists had self-declared during the war and recognizing two different institutional entities within the state territory. With some spatial adjustments the Inter-Entity Boundary Line (IEBL) definitely divided the Federation of Bosnia-Herzegovina from Republika Srpska, two autonomous administrative entities provided with separated constitutions. The agreement also recognized the spatial unit of Brčko as an autonomous district directly put under the state sovereignty (Fig. 1).

The boundary line peripherally crossed the area of Sarajevo so that as a consequence of the post-war agreement two autonomous local administrations were established: Sarajevo, part of the Federation, and Eastern Sarajevo, part of Republika Srpska (Fig. 2). The first included the old town centre and a large portion of the former city while the latter included the

south-eastern neighbourhoods plus several municipalities located in the surrounding rural area.

The separation of Sarajevo actually led to a definitive separation of its population along national lines. After the IEBL was drawn some districts and suburbs of the city controlled by Bosnian Serb troops during the war became part of the Federation. Within a short time Bosnian Serb inhabitants of those areas became the target of a double attack: while Bosniak gangs occasionally harassed them expressing their resentment, Bosnian Serb nationalists begun to destroy their properties in the attempt to force them to abandon Sarajevo. Such attacks went in parallel with a massive Serb nationalist propaganda that pictured Sarajevo as an unsafe place for Bosnian Serbs and incisively promoted their resettlement within the new born Republika Srpska. Therefore Bosnian Serbs progressively

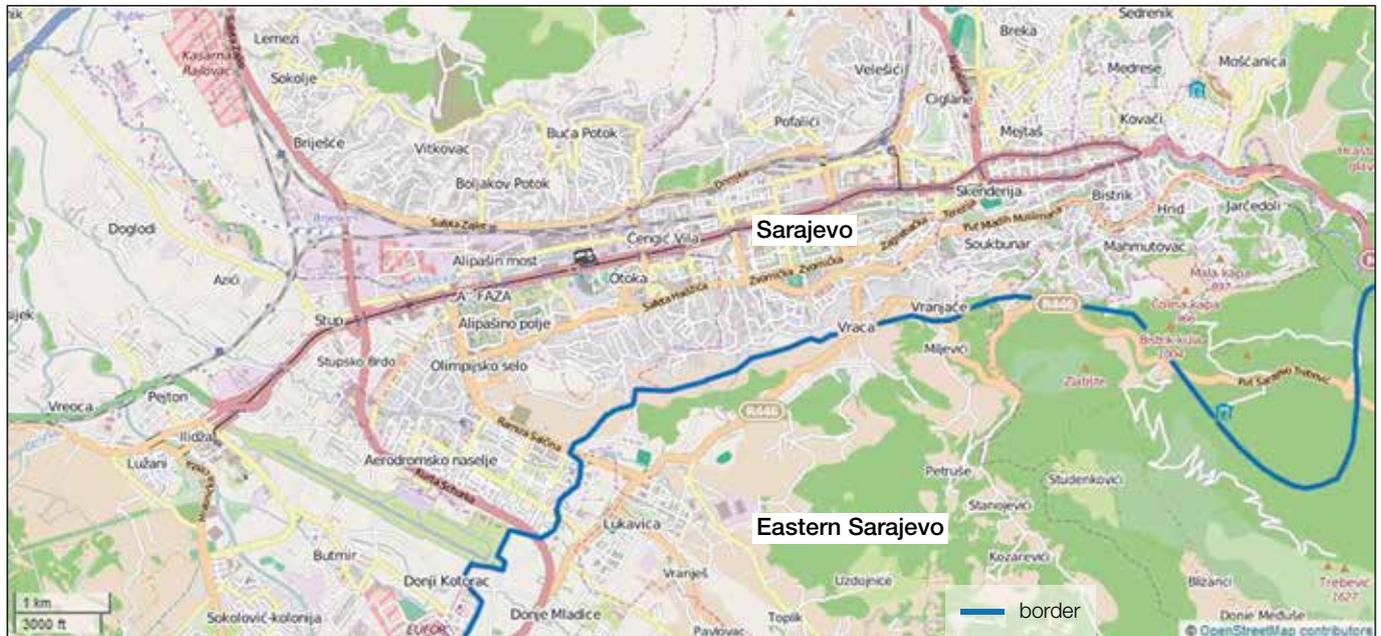


Fig. 2: Territorial partition of Sarajevo

left Sarajevo moving to the municipalities of the new city of Eastern Sarajevo (refer to SEKULIĆ 2002; BOLLENS 2007; MAZUCHELLI 2010).

At the same time people escaping from ethnically cleansed territories and seeking shelter in Sarajevo during the war rarely returned to their home villages definitely settling in the city. Such processes led to a strong homogenization of the population in national terms: nowadays Sarajevo is constituted for about 80 % by Bosniaks and for 12 % by Bosnian Serbs while before the war the ratio was 50 % and 30 %; on the other hand, Eastern Sarajevo is mainly populated by Bosnian Serbs (BOLLENS 2001, p. 171).

After Dayton agreement was signed, international forces – IFOR – took control over the new institutionalized line. Despite the end of the war, episodes of violence didn't immediately stop and from time to time news reported reciprocal offensive actions carried out by armed gangs still active in the area. In such a strained atmosphere, the overwhelming emotional burden lasted in people's mind for long. While the war had come to an end, the distressed civilian population on both sides of the boundary had to deal with their reciprocal feelings of resentment.

After a time, episodes of violence slowly decreased, the situation progressively stabilized and civilians were enabled to cross the boundary in safety. Moreover, soon after the war the international community started several programs to foster the process of reconciliation and in Sarajevo many NGOs begun activities involving inhabitants of both sides of the new boundary. Nevertheless, only few people could initially deal with the emotional stress aroused by crossing that line. Such an experience often entailed a double source of strain: on the one hand, people going on the other side often perceived a general feeling of diffidence aroused by their presence; on the other hand, they had to face the moral judgment of those blaming them for going in the former enemy territory.

Feelings of mutual distrust and resentment had lasted long after the war, progressively vanishing but not disappearing. Even when individuals could move across the two sides of the boundary without any risk, for many of them the recognizable origin of their names and surnames continued to represent a serious deterrent. As they personally told me, most people were concerned about the likelihood of being recognized as members of the national counterpart by simply introducing themselves, especially

Bosnian Serbs who used to live in Sarajevo.

Eighteen years after the end of the war, the situation is rather different from the one recalled by my interlocutors. For many people of both sides the crossing experience has become a usual practice and feelings of discomfort connected to being on the other side of the boundary have progressively vanished since the post-war time. Comparing the experiences and narratives related to the immediate post-war period with those referring to the present situation, it emerges that for many people the separation and its spatial demarcation have lost most of the past emotional burden.

To different extent, people from both sides cross the boundary quite regularly without psychological strain: some inhabitants cross the boundary on a daily basis while others cross it only in rare occasions, but beyond such different habits the crossing experience has become a quite usual practice mainly related to utility reasons. As such, the presence of the boundary has progressively lost its emotional burden for people living on both sides.

As we will see below, the power of partition manifests through other dimensions concerning in particular regulations and interventions of urban space man-

agement. Focusing on the rhetoric of planning issues as well as on local administrators' interpretations the following paragraph discusses how the logic of separation results predominant at institutional level, pointing out the intentional effort to make Sarajevo and Eastern Sarajevo two separated spatial environments, functionally autonomous and strongly connoted in cultural terms.

### The rhetoric of space management

The territorial partition has brought significant consequences on the institutional level, since the two cities are separately managed and different city councils autonomously deal with planning issues, services and responsibilities. The normative frame regulating such activities results deeply affected by the institutional reorganization of the whole country. Indeed the Bosnian central power appears rather weak, while the majority of functions and duties is accorded to the two entities, including spatial planning (refer to JOKAY 2001). Entities represent the leading administrative level where normative documents are produced but responsibilities can be eventually devolved to lower hierarchical level. That happens in the case of Federation, where the ten cantons are put in charge of issuing the main spatial plan that represents the normative frame to which any other planning document needs to account for. The strong top-down approach is common in both contexts and the main regulatory document is represented by the spatial plan (*Prostorni plan*) issued by the planning institute at canton or entity level.

In functional terms the two contexts appear completely separated therefore conceivable as separated urban systems. Infrastructures and connections are separately managed and organized, while joint projects result scarcely effective. Thus, recalling the concept implied by KLIOT and MANFIELD (1999, pp. 202f.), the boundary can be described as completely impermeable.

The self-referential logic and the relative dysfunctional consequences are sig-

nificantly expressed by the issue of inter-state transports and communication. Despite both sides equally stress the urgency of developing and reinforcing infrastructures and connection network, inter-entity collaboration has not led to successful results so far. Considering the existence of two separated international bus stations, the selective organization of inter-state connection represents another revealing element through which separation manifests. Busses run from Eastern Sarajevo to Belgrade seven times per day, each day of the week, while from Sarajevo there is only one bus during the day, running only three days a week. Croatian main cities – Zagreb, Split, and Dubrovnik – are daily connected with Sarajevo bus station, while from Eastern Sarajevo there are no connections at all. With regards to internal connections it is particularly significant the fact that Eastern Sarajevo station exclusively serves destinations within Republika Srpska.

Local public transports represent a further significant example as the two sides completely lack direct connections. Bus companies are separately managed and the existing projects of providing a shared service have eventually failed. The last attempt in this sense, dating back to 2007, was part of activities of the Sarajevo Economic Region Development Agency (SERDA), an international office established by European Union. The project was presented as an intervention of crucial importance and it had been already elaborated in its details, but it has never been realized.

Despite the absence of physical barriers and material separation, infrastructures as well as service delivery and resources management are separately developed and organized. Different companies operate across the boundary while new infrastructural constructions are carried out without any particular joint initiative. After the war the local administrations started to build ex novo infrastructures carrying out separated projects from the beginning. Considering the general lack of infrastructures combined with the post-war urgency of reconstruc-

tion operations, the new local administrations put great effort in restoring and developing services and connections. Within the changed political and institutional scenario such initiatives were autonomously carried out leading to the development of separated urban areas. In several cases, the Federation's spatial plan was taken into consideration by professionals in Republika Srpska in order to organically extend the new infrastructures – such as waste water system – but such activities were carried out without any particular attempt to collaborate. In many cases Eastern Sarajevo planned and realised its own infrastructures by simply referring to those already existing in Canton Sarajevo and the area progressively transformed from a peripheral underdeveloped zone into an autonomous urban system.

Beyond specific interventions of space management it assumes particular relevance the rhetoric involved both in normative documents and institutional actors' discourses; as I will argue, such representations express an explicit effort to define Sarajevo and Eastern Sarajevo as clearly separated environments both in spatial and cultural terms.

Representations and discourses produced in this sense stress the promotion of the local context emphasizing the city's potential in economical terms. Within such general frame different elements are defined as crucial tools to attract foreign investment. Cultural identity, environmental protection and technological development are conceived as fundamental aspects to be valorised in order to promote the image of the city at international level, in the light of a future European integration. Sarajevo and Eastern Sarajevo make equal effort to promote their specific image of the city, simultaneously ignoring the counterpart as a potential partner.

The promotion of local context based on economical attractiveness represents the main rhetoric in both documents as well as in local administrators' discourses. General goals of development and economic growth are translated and articu-

lated using a constant reference with other countries and capitals simultaneously neglecting the city across the boundary. Both discourses are justified by the fulfillment of European standards in the perspective of a future integration.

In the case of Sarajevo a strong emphasis is put on the development of a communication network with other cities worldwide. Moreover, the representation of Sarajevo as an international capital city is fostered producing the image of a new cultural, educational and scientific centre able to attract foreign professionals; the same discursive strategy is retraceable in the case of Eastern Sarajevo. Both cities are pictured as centres of cultural and technological innovation insisting on the relevance of international network, but on the other hand any reference to the counterpart as a possible partner for potential collaboration or knowledge circulation is completely absent.

In both cases discursive strategies fostering the promotion of local context provides exclusive spatial representations where each side of the boundary is conceived as a single and autonomous city. As such, both Sarajevo and Eastern Sarajevo are discursively pictured as peculiar social, economical and cultural environments provided with a crucial attractive potential.

A further element deserving particular attention in the case of Eastern Sarajevo is the emphasis accorded to Serbian identity as a fundamental aspect of the local cultural heritage. The creation of the city is represented as a crucial political achievement while space is openly connoted in national terms, stressing the territory of Republika Srpska as the main reference spatial unit. Much emphasis is accorded to the promotion of local community's well-being and the preservation of the territory's natural resources. Moreover the document openly states a political intention to guarantee and maintain the city's integrity fostering its internal cohesion and preventing its fusion with Sarajevo.

"Eastern Sarajevo represents a shelter for Serbian people, a safe place that has been defended and main-

tained throughout the hardest times. Therefore, its origin should not be forgotten and its symbols and values should be protected from oblivion" (Spatial plan of Republika Srpska, p. 7, own translation).

Throughout the document it is widely remarked that the city's representation as a crucial centre for Serbian identity and culture has been often left in the background. Thus, new effort should be addressed in promoting the identitarian context's peculiarity not to forget the roots of the local community and its land.

In conclusion, the underlying logic of spatial planning regulations and goals reflects a rooted approach of reciprocal denial: on the one hand, such logic emerges from the planning regulative framework as well as from representations of interviewed actors; on the other hand, such self-referential approach spatially concretises in the separated functioning of the two spatial contexts since the two urban systems don't share any infrastructures and joint planning initiatives result largely unsuccessful. Within this scenario, administrators and professionals from both sides express a general acceptance of such self-referential approach.

"Spatial plan in Federation and Spatial plan in RS: each part works on its own plan and is independent. Since we are the same country we should have a common spatial plan and hopefully we will have it in the future, but for now we still have to think separately for each entity" (Interview n. 1, Općina Stari Grad, Sarajevo).

"[Eastern Sarajevo] it's just a suburb of Sarajevo, so urban development it's not affected by this separation at all. They are doing everything by themselves so it really doesn't affect the city of Sarajevo at all" (Interview n. 7, Općina Novo Sarajevo).

"With regards of issuing spatial plans there is no communication or negotiation between the two administra-

tions because each of them is responsible for its own part. [This situation] does [affect urban development] in the sense that everything is managed separately, infrastructures and so on, but I wouldn't say that this represents a problem" (Interview n. 2, Općina Istočni Novi Grad).

"Maybe it would be better if we could have a common and general view of the context and the problems, but I don't know ... We've already learnt to live this way so I don't think there's any need to work together, to plan together" (Interview n. 4, Općina Centar, Sarajevo).

Discourses and representations involved by the planning normative frame foster a vicious circle that reproduces functional, organizational and infrastructural division, crystallizing a situation that doesn't entail visible political tensions and declared mutual distrust, but rather manifests through less visible forms of reciprocal non recognition. Furthermore the political purpose to celebrate a well defined collective identity while neglecting the counterpart, contributes to physically shape urban space in different features across the boundary.

### Landscape of division

As in the case of urban development and regulation, the shape of urban landscape confirm the existence of two separated social contexts that have reciprocally erased every elements of their common past, undertaking a self-referenced path towards future development. Despite the division is not physically delimited, there are several marks within urban landscape connoting space in different identitarian terms so that the absence of walls or check-points doesn't make the crossing experience less significant.

As a relevant example, the different use of alphabet and colours in road signs doesn't entail a simple aesthetic choice, but implicitly contribute to strengthen an identitarian connotation that simultaneously excludes the counterpart. As I will



Photograph 1: Ali Pašina mosque, Sarajevo (E. Bassi 2012)

discuss below, such exclusive identitarian celebration insists on different characterizing elements: on the one hand, Sarajevo is becoming progressively connoted in Islamic terms, while the peculiar feature of Eastern Sarajevo is represented by a constant reference to Serbian identity. Such contrasting symbolic connotation of urban space is differently accepted within the two contexts: on the one hand, the celebration of Serbian identity remains uncontested as it implicitly legitimises the existence of Eastern Sarajevo itself; on the other hand, the progressive connotation of Sarajevo in Islamic terms has fostered a deep political debate upon the city's religious radicalization under the growing influence of Saudi Arabia.

The image of Sarajevo as a cultural melting pot seems to have inexorably faded while the diffusion of some peculiar elements of Islamic culture and identity has contributed to gradually connote the city in mono-religious terms. Different circumstances and events have contributed to such change, in particular, the growing incidence of Bosniak population as a demographic aftermath of the war and the strengthening of economical and cultural ties with Islamic countries, in particular Saudi Arabia, that played a consistent role in financing both the construction of new mosques and the resto-

ration of damaged ones (refer to AKŠAMIA 2010).

The visual impact of urban landscape's change strongly emerges through the comparison between the city centre's aesthetic and the new mosques built in the western neighbourhoods of the city, in particular Otoka and Alipašino Polje. Despite their destruction during the war, the old town centre and the adjacent Austro-Hungarian part have not been structurally altered by the following intervention of reconstruction. Restorative measures of mosques and other historical buildings had been carried out following the principle of reproducing the pre-war feature (MAZZUCHELLI 2010, pp. 199ff.). On the other hand, the changed feature of the city's landscape is particularly visible in Novo Sarajevo and Novi Grad, the western area of the city developed under the socialist period. The new mosques dominate the view with their spatial extension and high minarets reproducing the architectural feature of Middle-East mosques (refer to AKŠAMIA 2010). The construction of such mosques clashes with Islamic building principles that Bosnia inherited from the Ottoman tradition

since they are built in much more sumptuous and majestic features and are spatially set in the higher level of the city to be visible from several standpoints (LOFRANCO 2008, p. 59). This trend represents another difference with the Ottoman tradition, that privileged buildings gently and discretely integrated within the whole urban landscape (refer to AKŠAMIA 2010) (Photograph 1 and 2).

The diffusion of such mosques has not been embraced by all Sarajevans and within the city's political debate many criticisms have been fostered against the excessive celebration of a particular collective identity that doesn't represent the whole population. Indeed such a spreading tendency represents a crucial issue in the general political debate, as many inhabitants hardly accept the progressive connotation of Sarajevo's urban identity in mono-religious terms. On the one hand, criticisms come from observant Muslims who don't feel represented by the new religious tendency and its imposed architectural principles; on the other hand, non-Muslim population claim for the past multicultural urban identity where religion belonged to a more pri-



Photograph 2: King Fahd mosque, Alipašino Polje neighborhood, Sarajevo  
Source: [http://www.mirzak.com.ba/photo/nocna\\_fotografija/sarajevo\\_2/02+Dzamija+Kralj+Fahd.jpg.php](http://www.mirzak.com.ba/photo/nocna_fotografija/sarajevo_2/02+Dzamija+Kralj+Fahd.jpg.php)  
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vate sphere. In many occasions media and press portrayed the construction of new mosques as a further example of territorial demarcation in ethno-national terms, perpetrated by architectural means (refer to AKŠAMIA 2010).

Once the boundary with Eastern Sarajevo has been crossed, any reference to the Islamic tradition drastically disappears leaving space for architectural elements connected to the Orthodox culture. Beyond the mono-religious connotation of urban landscape, there are other significant examples that show how the redefinition of collective identities across the boundary has systematically dismissed the counterpart.

Among signs used in a selective and excluding way alphabet appears the most evident one and reflects a reciprocal effort to celebrate the group's identity through the negation of the other. Indeed in Bosnia both Latin and Cyrillic scripts are officially recognized and allowed, but while throughout the Federation Latin script is conventionally used as the official alphabet, Cyrillic script is adopted throughout Republika Srpska as a sign of Serbian heritage. With the exception of the signs positioned along the boundary, written in both alphabets, each part of the country exclusively employs just one of them. In the case of Eastern Sarajevo – and Republika Srpska in general – the symbolic reference to the Serbian imaginary assumes a radical connotation since in Serbia, despite the official adoption of Cyrillic script, road signs are always displayed using both alphabets. The use of alphabet becomes here a clear tool of identity maintenance fostered through the intentional negation of the counterpart.

Such a reciprocal contraposition can be caught not only by looking at streets signs, but also at house numbers that are displayed on backgrounds of different colours: green in Sarajevo (Photograph 3) and blue in Eastern Sarajevo (Photograph 4). Such a choice is not simply an aesthetic matter, but entails in both cases an intentional symbolic allusion. On the one hand, green recalls the



Photograph 3: House number in Bosnian Parliament square, Sarajevo (E. Bassi 2011)

Islamic imagery as it is conventionally used in representations of the official religious symbol, the half moon. On the other hand, blue is the same colour used for street signs in Eastern Sarajevo as the one used in Serbia. Once again, simple material elements are provided with a strong symbolic meaning that entails the selective celebration of collective identities declined in religious and national terms.

Other examples concerning Eastern Sarajevo reflect the strong effort in maintaining and promoting the Serbian identity of the population. Stressing the symbolic bond between people and land such efforts aim at fostering the internal cohesion of the national community, highlighting the importance of the IEBL as a fundamental boundary and providing a basis to further legitimize Republika Srpska's territorial sovereignty.



Photograph 4: House number in King Alexander Square, opposite side of the street, Eastern Sarajevo (E. Bassi 2011)



Photograph 5: Coat of arms of Republika Srpska and Orthodox icon, University of Eastern Sarajevo, Eastern Sarajevo (E. Bassi 2014)

The most evident effort in this sense concerns the use of Serbian flags and other national symbols. In my several visits to institutional offices for interviews I had many chances to spot Serbian coat of arms and flags both in internal rooms and outside the buildings (Photograph 5). Moreover, their clear symbolic meaning acquired further relevance as Bosnian state's flags were

rolled up instead of hanging sideways (Photograph 6).

The examples discussed above illustrate the extent to which the configuration and reshape of urban architecture and aesthetic always reflects a selective celebration of the collective memory (refer to DELL'AGNESE 2004; MELA 2006; WAGENAAR 2010; MAZZUCHELLI 2010). On the one hand, the reshaping of Sarajevo's



Photograph 6: Flags hanging at the entrance of the University of Eastern Sarajevo, Eastern Sarajevo. The Bosnian flag in the middle is rolled up. (E. Bassi 2014)

urban feature combines the growing celebration of Muslim identity with the progressive cancellation of the Serb component of collective memory, contributing to demolish the traditional multicultural identity of the city. On the other hand, Eastern Sarajevo incisively promotes the exclusive celebration of Serbian identity, similarly ignoring the perspective of a multi-national and multi-religious milieu. As such, the selective celebration of collective identities is achieved through a mutual denial of the elements testifying a shared past and a common tradition: the complex and heterogenic Yugoslav identity has been progressively concealed and replaced with mono-national and mono-religious specificities that oppose and neglect each other.

Such strong identitarian connotation of urban landscape in both sides contributes to spread a sense of detachment in people living on the other side. Among inhabitants of Sarajevo the issue of Cyrillic alphabet is often raised as an example of the deliberate attempt to draw a line of distinction by the counterpart. While the use of Cyrillic was formerly part of a common tradition, today its exclusive use in Republika Srpska is interpreted by people in Sarajevo as a strategy to celebrate the separation. On the other hand, people in Eastern Sarajevo refer to the progressive diffusion of mosques in Sarajevo to express their feelings of extraneousness as they lack any cultural or religious linkage with Islamic world.

From this standpoint the strong identitarian connotation of the built environment provides the basis to renovate the separation as it strongly affect people's representations and interpretation of reality.

### Daily practices in a changed built environment

Despite the presence of the boundary scarcely affect people in emotional terms, the deep changes of the built environment have to some extent influenced inhabitants' daily life and collective representations. On the one hand the crossing experience has lost much of its emotion-

al burden, but on the other hand spatial and relational practices carried out on a daily basis foster a reciprocal sense of extraneousness between inhabitants of the two sides. As discussed below, the way in which people experience space and negotiate a collective sense of belonging reflects a deep detachment towards the other side.

In the case of Sarajevo the inhabitants' discourse stresses the urban-rural divide as a tool of differentiation: the spatial separation becomes socially relevant as it distinguishes the city's inhabitants from the rural world. Sarajevo is constantly represented as the real city through discursive strategies that stress urbanity as a desirable value. From this perspective Eastern Sarajevo is conceived as a built up area striving to present itself as a new city but still perceived as a village. Although the crossing experience represents a quite common practice for utility reasons, Sarajevans express a general sense of extraneousness and indifference towards the other side and Eastern Sarajevo is often pictured as a rural area struggling to build an artificial urban identity.

On the other hand, daily spatial and relational practices reveal how Eastern Sarajevo has been progressively redefined as the home place for its residents. Through the re-spatialization of daily practices, Eastern Sarajevo is represented and experienced by its inhabitants as a city itself rather than the peripheral side of a divided urban system.

In the last ten years the area has been provided with a growing supply of services and structures – such as schools and university, a hospital and a new sport centre – thus the opportunity to enjoy proximity has limited the inhabitants' necessity to go to Sarajevo for basic needs or leisure time activities. From an external standpoint the area still looks like a developing periphery and lacks any historical location that could promote the aesthetic value of the place. Nevertheless the progressive provision of services and structures has influenced the residents' experience of space, encouraging new

spatial practices typical of urban environments rather than rural contexts. Despite the absence of a proper old town centre, the central area offers bars, restaurants, clubs and all the services that individuals could need on a daily basis. People walking down the streets or sitting in bars and restaurants contribute to provide space with a specific meaning: through their spatial and social practices inhabitants negotiate and elaborate a collective representation of that place as the centre of a city. Indeed inhabitants have progressively developed a new sense of belonging towards that specific spatial context and such aspect appears particularly relevant considered that a large portion of people was formerly living in Sarajevo. Among my interlocutors, people born in Sarajevo minimized their emotional tie with their birthplace as their new settlement coincided with the rebuilding of a new sense of belonging. Indeed, through daily social and spatial practices people have attached a new collective meaning to Eastern Sarajevo simultaneously developing an emotional detachment towards the other side of the boundary.

In conclusion, urbanity is generally represented as a desirable value and a tool of distinction by inhabitants of both sides; nevertheless, people experience and perform their urban life-style in different spatial contexts fostering a reciprocal sense of extraneousness and disinterest. While Eastern Sarajevo has functionally developed as a separated urban system, its inhabitants have progressively redefined and negotiated a new sense of belonging and cohesion. In parallel, people in Sarajevo have assisted to such process with indifference and detachment, employing the separation as a spatial reference to celebrate their urban identity in opposition with the counterpart's rural character. Such a scenario provides a further element to acknowledge the divisive power of the boundary as Sarajevo and Eastern Sarajevo represent two separated urban systems not only in institutional, functional and structural terms, but also in people's representations.

## Conclusions

The paper has discussed the division between Sarajevo and Eastern Sarajevo showing how the divisive power of the boundary has progressively decreased to some extent but persists and renovates itself through other processes. While inhabitants appear much less emotionally affected by the separation than before, their daily practices and sense of belonging prove to be influenced by the changed built environment. At institutional level the divisive power is constantly and intentionally renovated by the rhetoric of spatial planning: indeed the self-referential organization of space within the two cities doesn't simply involve a functional and infrastructural separation, but rather implies an intentional effort to create and define two different spatial units specifically connoted in cultural terms. Such rhetoric emerges both through normative documents and institutional actors' representations and finds its physical manifestation within the shape of urban space. As it has been presented, symbolical elements expressing a specific religious and national identity characterise the built environment on both sides of the boundary.

In conclusion, Sarajevo and Eastern Sarajevo are progressively structuring as two different cities rather than the two sides of a partitioned urban system. Such empirical results warn against the long-lasting effects of separation as well as the generative power of division since territorial separations imposed as solutions to inter-group violence entail long-lasting consequences much harder to remove than physical barriers. The results discussed within this paper confirm the interpretation suggested by BOLLENS (2007, 2009, 2012) in his wide contribution, according to whom the new post-war reconfiguration is likely to reinforce centrifugal forces and separate futures. As the author states "The misplacing of the city in the state's new political geography foregoes a major opportunity for Sarajevo to constitute a multicultural center in an otherwise fragmenting state" (2007, p. 84). After seven years such re-

marks prove still appropriate as the scenario has not significantly changed. Therefore it appears even more urgent to investigate possible alternatives to promote future societal transformations.

### Methodological appendix

#### List of interviewees: Local administrators and professionals

1. Mirsada Smajić, office of Urbanism, Općina Stari Grad Sarajevo, Sarajevo (12.07.2011)
2. Gorjana Piljak, office of Territorial Planning, Transport and Public Services, Općina Istočno Novo Sarajevo, Eastern Sarajevo (16.09.2011)
3. Branislav Todorović, office of Territorial Planning, Transport and Public Services, Općina Istočna Ilidža, Eastern Sarajevo (08.10.2011)
4. Alma Sadović, office of Urbanism, Općina Centar, Sarajevo (22.10.2011)
5. Miroslav Lučić, office of Territorial Planning, Transport and Public Services, Grad Istočno Sarajevo, Eastern Sarajevo (01.11.2011)
6. Biljana Marković, representative of Istočno Sarajevo within the NALAS network, Eastern Sarajevo (17.12.2011)
7. Nermana Oručević, Općina Novo Sarajevo, Sarajevo (10.01.2012)
8. Stanislava Marinović, Office for Development Planning of Canton Sarajevo, Sarajevo (12.01.2012)
9. Amira Dedović, Grad Sarajevo, Sarajevo (14.05.2012)
10. Snježana Milinković, office of Urbanism, office of Territorial Planning, Transport and Public Services, Općina Istočni Stari Grad, Eastern Sarajevo (18.05.2012)

#### List of interviewees: inhabitants Sarajevo

- B. Male, age 30 (15.09.2011)  
 N. Male, age 35 (18.10.2011)  
 A. Female, age 22 (24.10.2011)  
 N. Female, age 26 (25.10.2011)  
 L. Female, age 23 (26.10.2011)  
 M. Male, age 38 (09.01.2012)  
 D. Male, age 43 (16.05.2012)

- L. Female, age 32 (17.05.2012)  
 S. Female, age 28 (20.05.2012)

#### Eastern Sarajevo

- K. Female, age 42 (01.10.2011)  
 J. Female, age 35 (05.10.2011)  
 D. Male, age 27 (14.12.2011)  
 L. Male, age 23 (03.11.2011)  
 D. Male, age 33 (07.11.2011)  
 M. Female, age 28 (10.12.2011)  
 O. Male, age 31 (19.05.2012)  
 S. Female, age 24 (21.05.2012)  
 V. Female, age 39 (21.05.2012)

#### Consulted documents:

- Spatial plan of Canton Sarajevo (*Prostorni Plan Kantona Sarajeva*)  
 Spatial plan of Republika Srpska (*Prostorni Plan Republike Srpske*)  
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## Резюме

ЕЛЕНА БАССИ

### Разделённое Сараево. Территориальное управление и городской ландшафт по обе стороны границы

В статье представлено исследование, посвящённое разделённым городам, на примере Сараева. Как результат Дейтонского соглашения, подписанного в 1995 г., Босния и Герцеговина была разделена на два субъекта, а именно: на Федерацию Босния и Герцеговина (ФБиГ) и Республику Сербскую (РС). На муниципальном уровне административная граница разделяет два района, которые до войны составляли единую городскую систему: Сараево (в том числе исторический городской квартал) как часть ФБиГ, и Восточное Сараево в пригородной зоне, которое в настоящее время относится к территории РС. Что касается разделения города, в работе исследуется, в какой степени разделяющая, враждебная сила границы уменьшается либо восстанавливается

С точки зрения жителей, пересечение границы стало обычной практикой, поскольку эмоциональная нагрузка в значительной степени исчезла. Тем не менее в риторике властей постоянно можно заметить сепаратистские устремления, то же самое относится и к застройке. Говоря о том, как градостроительное планирование справляется с территориальным разделением, предлагаемая статья показывает, в какой степени логике сепаратизма содействует соответствующая интерпретация местных органов власти и экспертов и что как возражения, так и инициативы, представляющие альтернативный подход для обсуждения, оказываются редкими и неэффективными. Соответственно неявная риторика нормативной базы способствует формированию порочного круга, который приводит к созданию функционального, организационного и инфраструктурного разделения.

Силу этого разделения можно увидеть также, если обратить внимание на символическое значение городского ландшафта. Хотя разделение не отмечено артефактами, преднамеренное использование символов и знаков по обе стороны границы отмечает точечную специфическую общую идентичность, в то время как присутствием живущих напротив пренебрегают. Кроме того, изменения в застроенной окружающей среде в определённой степени влияют на повседневную жизнь и коллективные представления жителей.

Сараево, разделённый город, граница, управление территорией, городской ландшафт, коллективная идентичность

## Résumé

ELENA BASSI

### Sarajevo divisée. Gestion de l'espace et paysage urbain de part et d'autre de la frontière

Cet article porte sur Sarajevo, à titre d'étude de cas d'une ville divisée. Suite aux Accords de paix de Dayton signés en 1995, la Bosnie-Herzégovine est divisée intérieurement en deux entités: la Fédération de Bosnie-et-Herzégovine (FBeH) et la Republika Srpska (RS). Au niveau local, la ligne administrative divise deux zones qui, avant la guerre, constituaient un système urbain unique: Sarajevo, y compris les quartiers historiques de la ville, faisant partie de la FBeH, et Istočno Sarajevo, zone périurbaines faisant désormais partie du territoire de la RS. Étant donné la partition de la ville, cet article aborde dans quelle mesure le pouvoir de division de la frontière est soit réduit, soit restauré.

Du point de vue des habitants, les traversées sont devenues pratique courante depuis la quasi disparition du fardeau émotionnel dont la population souffrait en raison de la présence de la frontière. Néanmoins, les processus de séparation en cours peuvent être admis dans la rhétorique de la gestion de l'espace mais aussi dans les particularités de l'environnement bâti. En observant la manière dont la planification urbaine traite la séparation territoriale, cet article montre comment la logique de division est constamment nourrie par les interprétations des administrateurs et des professionnels locaux, alors que les interventions et les initiatives suggérant une approche alternative sont rares et inefficaces. Ainsi, la rhétorique implicite du cadre normatif entretient un cercle vicieux reproduisant la division fonctionnelle, organisationnelle et infrastructurelle.

Le pouvoir de séparation peut être également admis en regardant la connotation symbolique des paysages urbains. Malgré l'absence d'artéfact marquant la division, l'utilisation intentionnelle de symboles et de signes de part et d'autre de la frontière commémore de manière sélective des identités collectives spécifiques et néglige par la même occasion la présence de l'autre partie. De plus, ce type de changements opérés au sein de l'environnement bâti a, dans une certaine mesure, influencé la vie quotidienne et la représentation collective des habitants.

Sarajevo, ville divisée, frontière, gestion de l'espace, paysage urbain, identité collective