

WALKING

MOSTAR:

DIS -

SECTION

Walking Mostar DIS-Section

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





Conflict in Cities: Europe and the Middle East

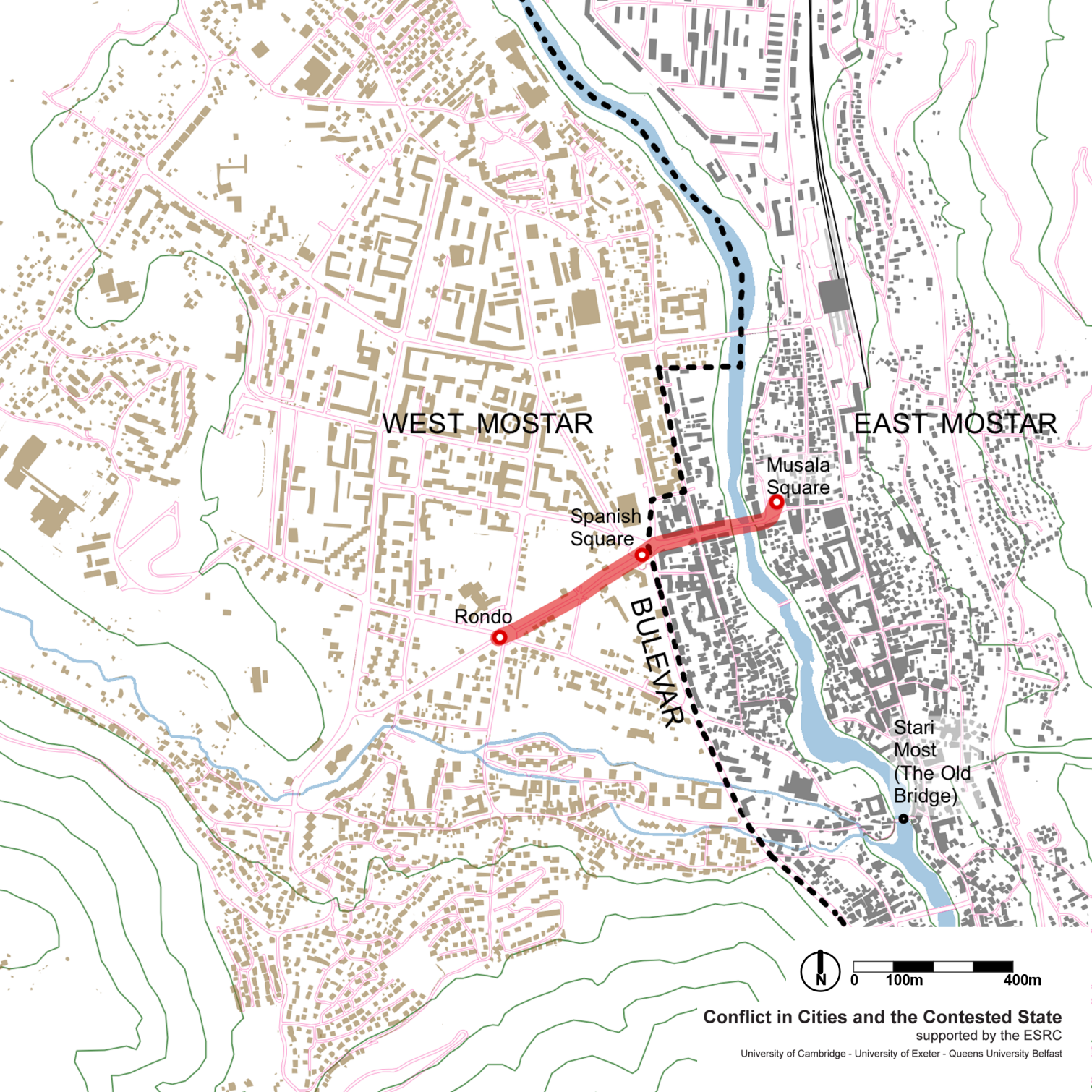


The city of Mostar is normally acknowledged to be divided along the Bulevar from north to south, between the Croatian and Bosniak parts of the city. This photo-essay challenges this social-spatial understanding by reading the city through a section which cuts the city from east to west. The area under analysis goes from Musala Square to Rondo passing by the main focal points for the two communities. This photo-essay presents an historical excursus of the changes in the physical environment, and expands on the relevance of the area for contemporary political and social life. By sectioning the city from east to west, the peculiarities and differences of the city are explored by taking a closer look at the ways in which the urban polarisation has affected urban growth and imaginaries. The material presented here was collected in Mostar between November 2010 and April 2011. It is part of the ongoing project (Re)collecting Mostar initiated by Abart in November 2010 (www.abart.ba) where I work as research consultant.

Mostar

KEY

-  West of Former Frontline: Predominantly Croat
-  East of Former Frontline: Predominantly Bosniak
-  Former Frontline during the Bosnian War, 1993
-  River
-  Hills
-  Main Streets
-  Section Addressed in Photo-Essay



WEST MOSTAR

EAST MOSTAR

Musala Square

Spanish Square

Rondo

BULEVAR

Stari Most
(The Old Bridge)



Conflict in Cities and the Contested State
supported by the ESRC

University of Cambridge - University of Exeter - Queens University Belfast

Hotel Neretva

Historically, Mostar was one of the most cosmopolitan cities in the former Yugoslavia, containing a very mixed and intermingled population. Following the 1992 secession of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and its international recognition as a sovereign nation state, this multi-ethnic city experienced a three-month siege by Serbian units of the Yugoslav People's Army. A Croat-Muslim counter-offensive repelled the siege, and yet a year later the city was shattered by another war, between Croat and Muslim forces, with heavy fighting centring on the north-south Bulevar. Efforts to overcome the urban polarisation started in 2003, aiming to create a joint city government. The reconstruction of the city has not been completed yet. Musala Square has always been one of the main gathering spaces in Mostar. Here, major political leaders have been triumphantly welcomed by an acclaiming crowd, demonstrations have been held and heads cut off. Hotel Neretva strikingly is the only ruin in this fully renovated space. Close by, there are a shops, cafes, banks and a night club which loudly invite turbo-folk lovers on weekends. Although the reconstruction process started in 2009, and significant changes occurred here since, the ghostly presence of this colourful ruin stands out as an uncomfortable reminder of the war's legacy; an outburst of the past amidst fast-moving contemporary urban life.



Benetton

This building, which housed a travel agency prior to the war, was rebuilt as a retail space. Its facade has been used by kings and presidents to display political messages throughout the history of the city. The photograph shows the neon sign at the top of the building about to be lit at the end of Ramadan, celebrating this important festival for the Muslim community, and marking the ethnic identity of the square.



Bajram šerif mubarek
olsun



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PAO
1985

new collection

Biosphera Shopping Centre

This shopping complex was constructed after the war to accommodate retail facilities. This pink building was not designed to blend in with the architectural character of the city, but rather to boldly follow post-modern ideals. As such, the complex constructs a dialogue with a city that is looking outside the national borders to catch up with more 'international trends'. The fancy cafés, restaurant, shops and the underground club represent an important entertainment venue especially for the younger generations .



Razvitak

Not too far from the buzz of Musala Square silently lies the charming ruin of Razvitak. This huge and decaying building was one of the main retail spaces in Socialist Mostar before the 1992 war. Due to a lack of interest in its reconstruction, it lingers on as a vanishing memory of the Socialist times, fenced off for security reasons, overlooking a busy parking space and waiting to disappear.



RA
1984

LOVE GANG

Kuwait Monument

It is now, not unusual in Mostar to find monuments or commemoration plaques thanking the various donors who helped in the process of reconstruction. International grants, donations and loans played a crucial role in the rehabilitation of the destroyed infrastructure, housing blocks and monuments such as the famous Stari Most, a symbol of the city. As is often the case with reconstruction efforts, there were controversies around the management of the funds. This monument was erected in 2001 to mark the efforts made by the Emirate of Kuwait in rehabilitating Musala Square.



U spomen na prijateljstvo između
naroda Kuvajta i naroda Bosne i Hercegovine
(2001)

Spanish Square

Spanish Square represents the central point of the east-west section. Positioned on the old buffer zone, the square appears today abandoned and is surrounded by war-ruins. Since the official reunification of the city in 2003, the once duplicated administrative systems have been merged and the city is meant to be able to deal with the often antagonistic claims of its communities by negotiating and fostering a productive dialogue. In practice, the polarisation is still one of the main issues to be addressed in contemporary urban life, and many everyday issues are still handled separately and differently by each of the two main communities. Some local NGOs are promoting the idea that the ethnic marker is not a sign of ultimate difference, but rather a sign of diversity, and yet many find this notion difficult to accept.



Spanish Square / Gymnasium

A restored and freshly painted orange Austro-Hungarian building hosts the 'two schools under one roof' Gymnasium. Due to the coexistence of two different curricula in Mostar, students are studying either according to the Croatian or Bosnian systems. This school materialises the attempts (mainly international) to offer the students the possibility of meeting the 'Other' during recreational activities. So far, this solution is the best to have been achieved. The lack of willingness (if not open opposition) to merge the two educational systems leaves little hope for change and, as a side effect, reinforces the division of the city on ethno/national basis.



Spanish Square/Croatian National Theatre
The Croatian National Theatre. Interestingly, in Mostar there is another national theatre (in east Mostar) but its nationality is not declared. In fact, issues of 'nationality'/ ethnicity are still among the hottest topics in the country. Constitutionally a Bosnian identity does not exist, and citizens are forced to choose between one of the prescribed ethnic groups; Bosnian-Muslim, Bosnian-Serb and Bosnian-Croat. Yet, the power-sharing paradigm hardly works when a community feels it has less rights than the others and strives to achieve get more or when the political balance cannot be achieved... a clear illustration of the difficulties is the fact that it took more than A year for the city councillors to elect the mayor in Mostar!

OBJEKT : HRVATSKO NARODNO KAZALIŠTE
M O S T A R

INVESTITOR : HRVATSKO NARODNO KAZALIŠTE MOSTAR
PREKO ODBORA ZA IZGRADNJU

PROJEKTANT : VENCESLAV LONČARIĆ, dipl. ing. arh.
IZVOĐAČ : "INTER INVEST" d.o.o. MOSTAR

NADZOR : JP "URBING" MOSTAR

ULTRAS

REKLAM

University Library

This building was the pre-war university library and it has not been rebuilt. It stands on what was once the main promenade of the city, and is today a forgotten street off the buffer zone leading towards west Mostar. Walking in this part of the city is made difficult by continuous disruptions and the perennial construction works... Now in Mostar there is no longer one university, but two.



City Park

This park is the only one in the city. Several years ago, in the midst of the reconstruction process and the various sharp conflicts it involved, a group of activists decided to erect a monument dedicated to Bruce Lee here, a common hero for those for all Mostarians who grew up before the war. The idea was to re-focus the attention on what the Mostarians had in common rather than what divided them. The statue was removed after it was vandalised.

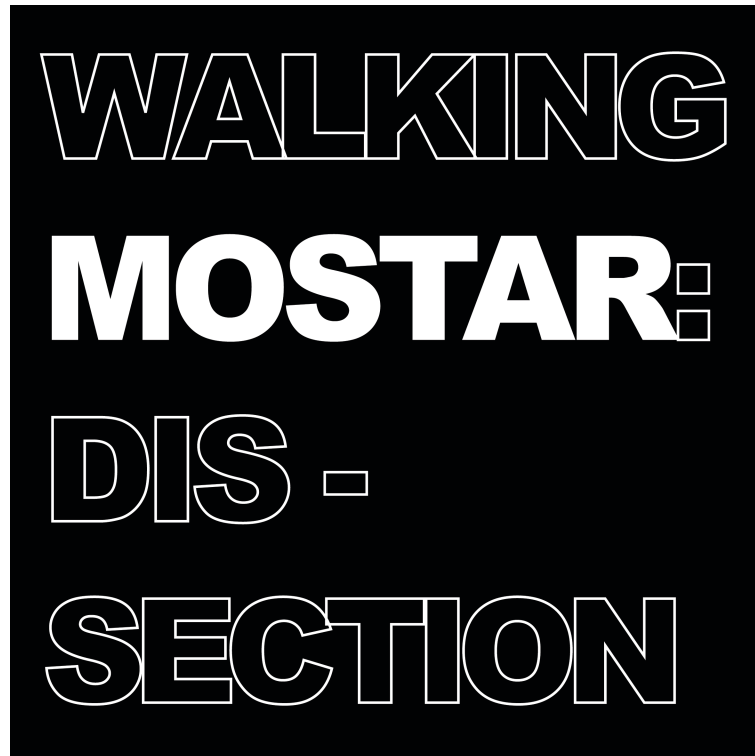


Herceg Stjepan Kosaca/Croatian House
This space represents another historical public space in Mostar. The first big shopping centre was built in front of this space after the war and still functions as the main retail space. Today this building, called Herceg Stjepan Kosaca/Croatian House is home to a library, a cafe and venues for temporary art exhibitions. The space outside the building is often used for political purposes. This picture was taken on March, 17th 2011 when students demonstrated in favour of better recognition for Croats in Bosnia and Herzegovina.



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