PUBLIC SPACE AS CULTURAL RESOURCE

KÜLTÜREL KAYNAK OLARAK KAMUSAL MEKÂN

Tülay ZIVALI TURHAN *

Abstract

Bosnia and Herzegovina is known by its multi-ethnic structure. The country's population consists of three major ethnic groups: Bosniacs (Bosnian Muslims), Croats (Bosnian Catholics) and Serbs (Bosnian Orthodox). Their relation through history varies, ranging from co-existence and respect to tensions and armed conflict. The armed conflict between 1992-1995 was one of the worst crises between the three ethnicities within the region. The hope was that the rebuilding in 2004 will encourage the definition of a new common identity of the country. Today, -for almost 25 years after war- in a lot of cities the consequences of the war are still remarkable; not only by observing the condition of buildings or spaces, but also in the way the public sphere has developed in these cities. It is interesting to understand this social interaction. Therefore, this paper investigates socio-spatial relations in Mostar, owning a remarkable cultural heritage but also known as the city which suffered due the consequences of having these historical sites. The research elaborates on the ethnographic study conducted as a part of a master thesis conducted in 2013. It aims at discovering the similarities between the two existing major ethnic groups regarding the spatial setting they belong through examining the socio-spatial patterns of each interest group. The objective is to seek for a common definition of public space in the context of Mostar despite of the ethnic differences.

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Özet

Bosna-Hersek çok etnikli yapısıyla bilinmektedir. Ülkenin nüfusu üç ana etnik gruptan oluşmaktadır: Boşnaklar (Bosnalı Müslümanlar), Hırvatlar (Bosnalı Katolikler) ve Sırplar (Boşnak Ortodokslar). Tarih boyunca bu grupların ilişkileri, birlik ve beraberlik içinde yaşamaktan gerginlikler ve silahlı çatışmaya kadar farklılık göstermiştir. 1992-1995 yılları arasındaki savaş, bölgedeki üç etnik grup arasındaki en kötü krizlerden birine neden olmuştur. 2004 Yılında kentin yeniden yapılandırma çalışmalarından beklenen, ülkenin yeni bir ortak kimliğinin tanımlanmasını teşvik edeceği yönündeydi. Oysa bugün, -savaşın nerdeyse 25 yıl sonrasında - birçok şehirde savaşın sonuçlarının izdüşümünü görmek sadece binaların veya mekânların mevcut durumunu gözlemleyerek değil, aynı zamanda kamusal alanın bu şehirlerde ne yöne doğru geliştiğini gözlemleyerek mümkündür. Bu doğrultuda kentte mevcut durumun sosyal etkileşimi anlamak ilginç sonuçlar doğurabilir. Bu kapsamda çalışma, göze çarpan bir kültürel mirasa sahip olan ancak aynı zamanda bu tarihi alanlara sahip olmanın sonuçları nedeniyle acı çeken kent olarak bilinen Mostar'daki sosyo-mekânsal ilişkileri incelemektedir. Makale, konuyu 2013 yılında yürütülen bir yüksek lisans tezi üzerinden detaylandırmak ve tanımlanmış iki ana etnik gruplarının bulunduğu mekânsal ortam içinde sosyo-mekânsal yapılarını inceleyerek benzerlikleri ortaya koymayı amaçlamaktadır. Dolaysıyla bu çalışmada hedef, grup farklılıklarına rağmen Mostar bağlamında ortak bir kamusal alan tanımı yapabilmektir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Etnik çeşitlilik, kamusal alan, Mostar, kültürel kaynaklar, sosyo-mekansal modeller.

INTRODUCTION

Through modern history, the borders of Bosnia and Herzegovina changed many times. Claiming territory and oppressing the 'others' is not new within this context. As noted by Calame and Charlesworth (2009, p. 2): "*Partitioned cities act as a warning beacon for all cities where intercommunal rivalry threatens normal urban functioning and security. Every city contains ethnic fault-lines or boundaries that give shape to "good" and "bad" neighbourhoods and lend local meaning to "the other side of the tracks".*" Public space plays a critical role in these urban settings, but the essence to create a shared and diverse public space through urban planning remains vague. The design, the users and the use of public space determine the main idea about the place. The design focuses on the factors of the physical built environment that can create a successful space as Gehl (2006) and Whyte (1980) are arguing. The demographical characteristics focus on the underlying social barriers to equitable public space access and use (Mitchell 2003). Public space is always contested through

while the same person's perception and comprehension may show changes over time too. The social position, activities, the change of environment and the impact, age, gender, the social environment of an individual create differences in perception and understanding. These variables are closely connected with culture and cultural image (Fig. 1). Experience is a factor that has an impact on environmental perception. Since the person's perception of his environment is directly related to time, his experiences in the space are effective in strengthening the perception and in creating an environmental image in person.

EVALUATION OF SUCCESSFUL PUBLIC SPACE IN THE CITY

Urban open space is one of the components of city that forms and transfers during the history of a nation in several periods. In the late 1960's, Whyte began applying direct observation techniques from the social sciences to the study of urban spaces. Direct observation was the most fruitful technique and the user experience was the
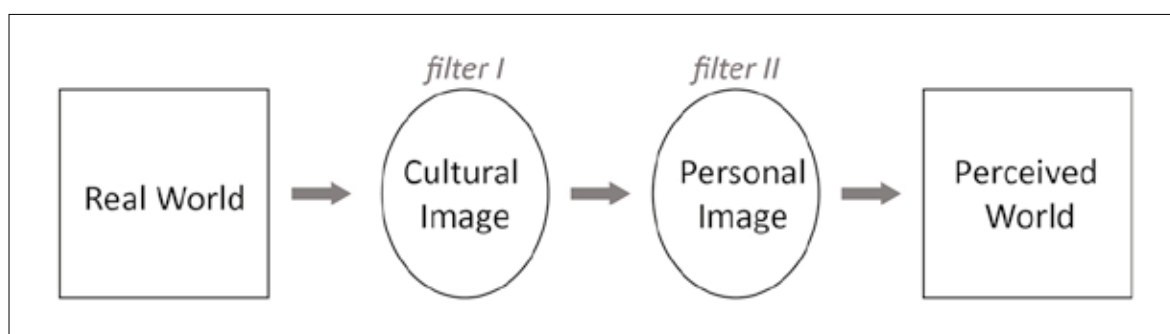

Figure 1. Spatial Comprehension Process (Rapoport, 1977) / *Mekânsal Kavrama Süreci (Rapoport, 1977)*

the existence of various kinds of people and is made in the very contradictions that take place in it through interconnected but often exclusive intimacies and their spaces. Some groups with social norms may be self-segregating on public space and affect how and whether people have the opportunity to engage with others. On the other hand, it is a challenge to seek for similarities between the different communities in order to be able to create conditions for shared space.

'Space building' meets different disciplines such as sociology and psychology regarding the fact that it is unthinkable that the creation and the meaning of space is independent of people. Since people's perception of space is crucial, it is important to understand this perception as well as to measure it. Perceiving and comprehending may be different according to individuals,

most important aspect. From the 60's on, the postmodern movement focused on the socio-spatial quality (the relationship between places and pattern of activity). Over the years, there has been a split of sorts amongst urban designers over what constitutes urban quality or the sense of place. The writings of Jane Jacobs, Kevin Lynch, Gordon Cullen and Christopher Alexander became authoritative works for the school of Urban Design.

Cullen emphasizes with a rational objective classical view in the discipline on physicality. He states that connecting diverse structures in order to create a "demonstration of art of the city". So should various specialist corporate with each other. It will express the spirit and glossiness of the living environment. According to Cullen, people perceive and rate their environment by visual ability or visual sense.

Jacob's' Death and Life of Great American Cities (1961) is based largely on behaviour observations that Jacobs made while a resident in New York's Greenwich Village. Her perspective enabled her to describe empathetically what it is like to live on a street where people look out their windows at passers-by, children play on the sidewalk in view of neighbours and parents, and shopkeepers serve as news outlets and street guardians.

Alexander and Lynch mainly emphasize on the psychology of place and they support their statement through the notion of 'mental maps' which function as internal guides to the urban environment. This approach is the romantic subjective view of urban design. Because in a way, they rely on people's senses to describe and value a place. In his book (1960), Lynch emphasizes the importance to recognize the structure of space specifically through imageability /legibility.

Life Between Buildings: Using Public Space (2006) describes the public space as one of the most important elements of the city and describes it as the place where people meet, socialize and experience the city. Gehl distinguishes between necessary/functional activities, optional/recreational activities and social activities in public spaces as evaluation tools. Necessary activities take place regardless of the quality of the physical environment, while optional activities depend on what the place has to offer for the users. Thus, the quality of public space does not affect the necessary activities, but it does affect the optional activities. If all types of activities occur on a certain public space, communal space become meaningful. Communal spaces in cities and residential areas become meaningful and attractive when all activities

Figure 2. Quality criteria for successful public space (Zivali, 2013) / *Başarılı kamusal alan ölçütleri (Zivali, 2013)*

of all types occur in combination and feed off each other. Gehl refers to Whyte's (1980) approach and the research 'Project for public spaces (PPS)' as he tries to define the functionality of small-scaled contacts and encounters. Street activity and quality are critical for a vital urban life (Gehl et al., 2006). Streets and other public spaces that are linked to these streets has potential to improve the human activity and so the social interaction of them. It is crucial in such a case where human activity and sharing space is sensible, observe the human behaviour. In order to evaluate public spaces in different locations and different contexts around the world, PPS has found that successful ones have four key qualities. They developed 'The Place Diagram' (Fig. 2) as a tool to help people in evaluating any place. The criteria are been used to value the detected public spaces and thus detect successful public spaces.

Comfort & Image

Comfort and Image requires a physically well-arranged public space. It is crucial if a space can present itself and has a good image by the users. A good image derives from positive perception. Variables as safety, cleanliness, availability of places to sit availability and the possibility for choice for places to sit, the level of maintenance etc. are determinants for measuring if the place is comfortable and if the place is favourable by the users.

Access & Linkages

Accessibility describes the ability -both visual and physical- to reach activities and other users but also resources, services and information needed to be able to perform on the certain place. Successful places are depending on variables as circulation, connectivity, proximity etc.

Sociability

Sociability explains the possibility and need to encounter with others on a certain public space. Sociability not only increases vitality in public spaces but also allows people to connect and to exchange information. It influences also their attachment to the place itself, because they feel a stronger sense of place. Variables as interactive, cooperative, stewardship etc. increases the value of sociability.

Uses & Activity

Uses and activities, when attractive for people, are the main reason for people to go to public space again and again. Activities are the basic building blocks of a place. When there is nothing to do, a space will be empty and

that generally means that something is wrong. Variables as vital, active, sustainable, useful are critical measures to determine if a place meet the sufficient requirements in order to distinguishes successful urban places from each other and attach people to a certain place.

THE CASE OF MOSTAR

Ethnic classification in the context of Bosnia and Herzegovina is associated with the religious facet. Not only does ethnic group contain a sense of race and tribe, a consciousness of kind, nationalism, it also must contain a spiritual foundation. According to Weber *"group interest without 'spiritual wings' are lame"* (Bendix, 1977, p. 47), so he contends that religious facets are the core of the identity of ethnic groups. Religion helps to generate meaning, reinforcement and justification for group interest. It supports to generate ideology of the life process expressed in action. The largest ethnicities within Bosnia and Herzegovina are Bosniacs, who identify themselves as Bosnian Muslims; Croats, who identify themselves as Bosnian Catholics; and Serbs, who are identified as Bosnian Orthodox. The 20th century (and even before) conflicts were indeed caused by this occurrence. Still, todays' political arena reflects the complexity of the phenomenon.

The political divisions of Bosnia and Herzegovina is a result of the post-war Dayton Agreement, which recognized a second layer of government in Bosnia and Herzegovina, comprising two entities: the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (FBiH), where mostly Bosniacs and Croats are settled, and the Republika Srpska (RS) where mostly Serbs are settled and a third

small autonomous entity named Brčko in the North (Fig. 3). These entities have representative capitals -where Sarajevo is the capital of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and Banja Luka the capital of the Serbian Republic of Bosnia- (Fig. 3) and are divided in a politically complex canton system within. Mostar is situated in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and is the capital of the Herzegovina region and belongs the Herzegovina-Neretva Canton. The city is embedded by hills and has a rich and fruitful natural landscape (Photo. 1).

Before war, Mostar was one of the most treasured and liveable cities of former Yugoslavia due to its strategic setting, cultural heritage, natural sources and its intermingled population. The symbolic division is worldwide known by the destruction of the Old Bridge (*Stari Most*) in 1993 which connected for centuries long the western -mainly Croat- part and the eastern -mainly Muslim- part of the city. The spatial development of the city lies parallel to the natural setting and the socio-economic conditions (Fig. 4). First mentioning of the city of Mostar according to Turkish documents was during the last quarter of the 15th century. The historic city area of Mostar was formed according to the usual pattern for Ottoman cities with business zones (čarsjia) and residential zones (*mahala*). It is the result of the interaction between natural phenomena and human creativity over a long historical period. The key structures that shaped the city were the Old Bridge with fortified towers and city walls. The structures in the historical core are simple, logical and functional, spontaneous with an exceptional relationship with their ambience. The arrangement of the historic city area, in order to preserve the original values, ensures the survival of outstanding cultural diversity, and illustrates the effectiveness of restoration techniques
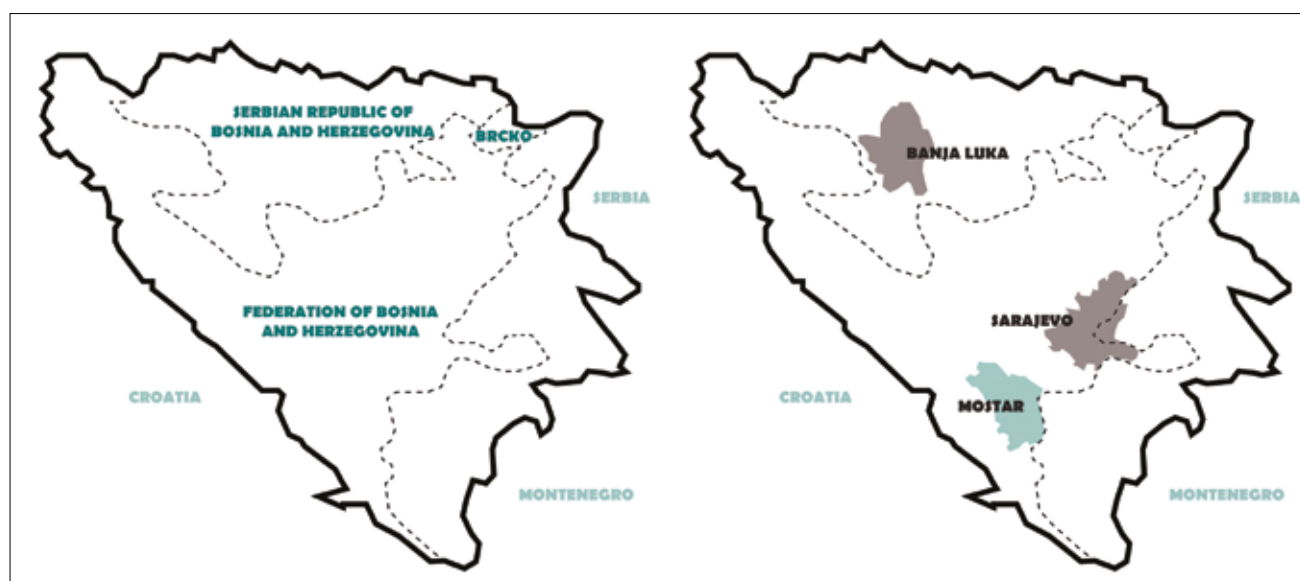
Figure 3. The entities within Bosnia and Herzegovina, their capital cities and the location of Mostar (Zivali, 2013) / *Bosna Hersek'te entiteler, başkentleri ve Mostar'ın konumu (Zivali, 2013)*

Photograph 1. Panoramic view of Mostar (author, 2012) / *Mostar'a panoramik bakış (yazar, 2012)*
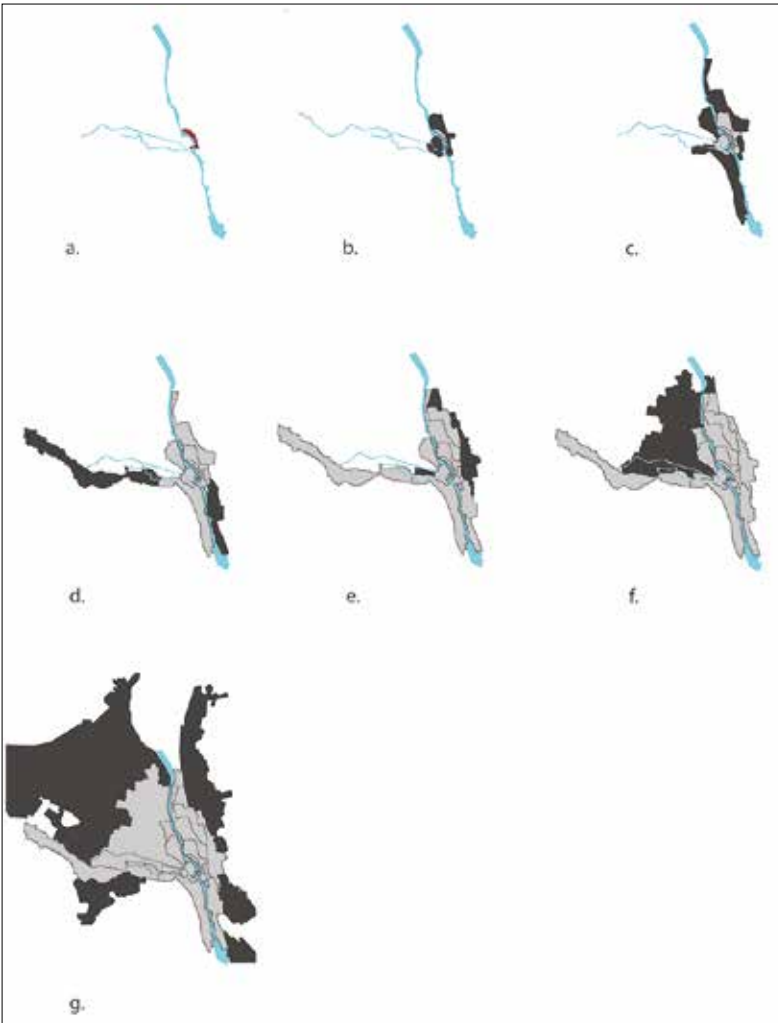

Figure 4. The spatial development of Mostar; a. Settlement to 1488 (beginning of the Turkish occupation); b. Development to 1588 (construction of the Old Bridge); c. Development to 1620; d. Development to 1700; e. Developments to 1878 (end of the Turkish occupation); f. Developments to 1918 (end of Austro-Hungarian occupation).; g. Development to 1997. (Zivali, 2013) / *Mostar'ın mekansal gelişimi; a. 1488'e kadar gelişimi (Türk işgalinin başlangıcı; b. 1588'e kadar gelişimi (Mostar köprüsü'nün inşası); c. 1620'ye kadar gelişimi, d. 1700'e kadar gelişimi; 1918'e kadar gelişimi (Avusturya-Macaristan'nın işgalinin sona ermesi). G. 1997'ye kadar gelişimi. (Zivali, 2013)*

After the growing economy during the Ottoman occupation, Austro-Hungarians also revived the economic fortunes of the town by initializing industrial production in Mostar. Industrial areas were shaped in the north-west of the city and a new railway line connected the inner city to these areas (Yarwood,1999; Pašić, 2004). The rail track was on the Bulevar itself at that time. The residential areas expanded to the west side of the Bulevar. In the 21st century the city expanded towards the hills the city is embedded in as outer villages. A shift from socialism to market-economy made it possible to develop in metal-, tobacco- and food-industry. The transition from the socialist to free market let also to the privatisation of nationalised properties, which often resulted in ownerships being disputed in longwinded juridical processes which causes a gap in reconstruction of buildings and the city structure. Due to this, illegal constructions increased radically in the post-war period. This resulted in a lack of strategic planning in the city which is still noticeable today.

During war the production of industries stopped and barely recovered in the post-war period. Currently, the economy in the western side is based on trade and industry, while the economy in the historic centre in east is based on tourism (D'Alessio, 2007).

The river can be read as a unique element in the centre. The green structure is fragmented through the city and is not connected to each other. Types are forest (natural) green, city park, inner block green, sport fields and organic landscape (hills and mountains). The traffic structure follows the river direction. There is a strong north-south traffic connection. Three main roads are situated on this direction and the Bulevar is one of them. The former frontline during war, today's psychological division line between

throughout the centuries. As a result of the construction of the old bridge in the 16th century the city grew on both sides of the riverbank.

Figure 5. Ethnic distribution in the municipality of Mostar and the Bulevar crossing through the heart of the city centre (Zivali, 2013) / Mostar belediyesinin etnik dağılımı ve Bulevar'ın kent merkezdeki konumu (Zivali, 2013)
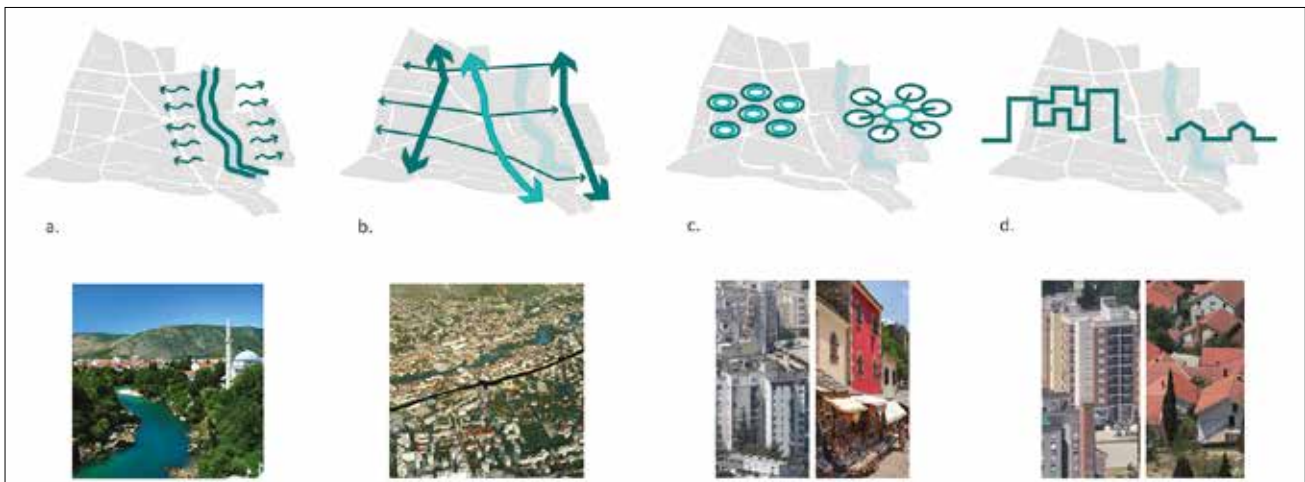

Figure 6. Main conclusions conducted from the spatial analysis of Mostar; a. River works as green divider; b. Main infrastructure is situated in north-south direction, while the east-west directions are secondary; c. West Mostar has a polycentric model, while East Mostar has a monocentric model; d. Housing types in west are mainly mixed high rise building blocks with mixed facilities, while in east private houses with private gardens. / *Mostar'ın mekansal analizinden çıkan sonuçlar; a. Nehir doğal ayrıştırıcı işlevi görmektedir; b. Kentte ana hatlar kuzey-güney yönündedir, doğu-batı aksaları ikincildir; c. Batı Mostar'ın çok merkezli bir modeli var; Doğu Mostar da tek merkezli bir modele sahiptir; d. Batı'da karma fonksiyona sahip yüksek katlı konut blokları mevcut iken, doğuda özel bahçeli tek katlı veya dubleks konutlar bulunmaktadır.*

West Mostar and East Mostar goes through the heart of the city. The east-west connection is of secondary importance and less dense in the city. The pedestrian paths are the only structure that has no division and is connected through all the main spots in the city. The five bridges that joins west and east are a part of this pedestrianized infrastructure. Housing types differ in east from west. Residential buildings in east are small scaled and have private gardens and garages, while in west the housing typology is build up as apartment block with public plinths.

This affects the living area of both sides. The east part has residential neighbourhoods separated from public facilities. They must travel to an area with public facilities, while the west part exists of public facilities within the building or building block.

USER PATTERNS IN MOSTAR

An ethnographic study conducted in 2013 on the site reveals the city use regardless what the ethnicity of people are. Thus, the main objective of the field study
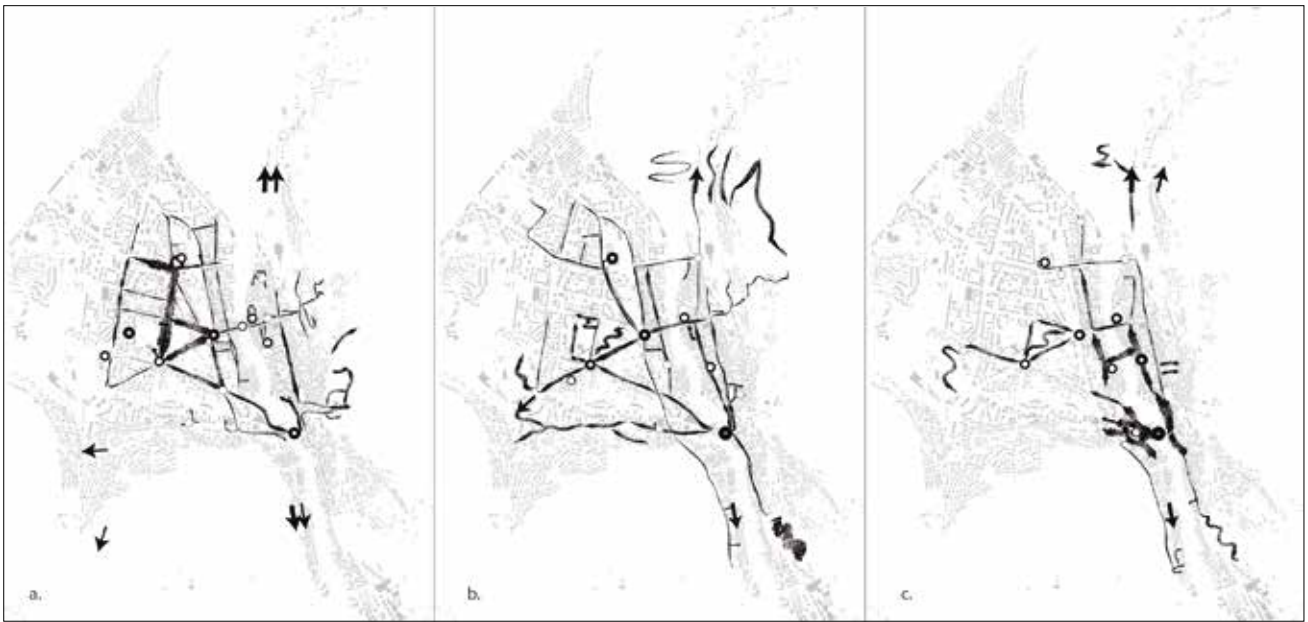
Figure 7. User patterns of participants in West Mostar (a), the Bulevar (b) and East Mostar (c) (Zivali, 2013) / *Batı Mostar'da (a), Bulevar'da (b) ve Doğu Mostar'da (c) bulunan katılımcıların kullanıcı dağılımı (Zivali, 2013)*

was to explore the user patterns of the residents and seeking for common public spaces used by everyone. Three main spots each in West, East and on the Bulevar are selected to ask people walking by about their use pattern. A total of 45 participants are asked to draw on the city map of Mostar the routes they usually use daily, weekly, monthly and occasionally. Finally, they are asked what their meeting spots are within the centre if they are meeting a someone. These resulted in movement maps which reveals the user patterns of each area (Fig. 7).

Participants in West Mostar are daily present in the direct neighbourhood. They use social facilities along the wide, straight lanes on the West side of the Bulevar. Zrinjavac Park is a central spot that is been used during daytime. The walkability rate of the city is high as the users walk through the whole city. Participants cross the Bulevar via the Spanish Square, the Musala Square and the Old Bridge. Participants explain they weekly go to the East to visit the Old Town. Besides, they go to the northern outskirts during weekend. Their yearly destinations are mainly in the West of Bosnia and Herzegovina or Croatia. Meetings with others take place at the Rondo, the Spanish Square, Mepas Mall and at several corners on the Bulevar. It seems that club ART is an important spot for the youth.

The use patterns of the participants who are interviewed on the Bulevar is distributed through the whole city center. Their daily use take place on both sides of the main road. Participants cross the Bulevar via the Spanish Square and cross the river by the northern bridge (Carinski Bridge) and the Old Bridge. A few times per

year, people go to the villages on the hills around the city (e.g. Podvelezje) to their seasonal residences for gardening activities. Meetings with others take place at the Rondo, the Spanish Square, Mepas Mall and the Old Bridge. Club ART is again an important meeting place for young people, especially during the weekend.

The participants stay mainly at the East part of the city. The Brace Fejica Street, the main shopping street, and the Old Town are the most popular destinations of this area. A mixture of local and authentic shops in this part covers the daily needs of the people. For weekly shopping, people go to the Mepas Mall on the west or to big malls in the northern and southern suburbs. Participants cross the river by the Musala Bridge and the Old Bridge and cross the Bulevar via the Spanish Square. On yearly basis, the participants stay mostly at the Eastern part of the city. Meetings with others take place at the Rondo, the Spanish Square, Mepas Mall, Musala Square and the Old Bridge. In addition, it is interesting to note that the corners of the bridges are used to meet others. Club ART is again an important meeting place for young people, especially during the weekend.

Main findings from the interviews and observations are as following:

An overall result is that 100% of the participants visit the Old Town at least once a week. There can be stated that the Old Town area is embraced by everyone and seen as a common value and that ethno-cultural values does not have an influence to neglect this area.

Figure 8. Meeting points used by all the participants can be considered as successful public spaces (Zivali, 2013) / *Tüm katılımcılar tarafından kullanılan buluşma noktaları başarılı kamusal alanlar olarak kabul edilebilir (Zivali, 2013).*

According to the maps, the participants interviewed in the west are more sprawled in the city, while the participants in the east stay in the east in a greater extend.

There are different signs of representation of ethnic values in the city. The language on both sides differ from each other -even it is hard to recognize-. In East Mostar people tend to use Ottoman words more. One can find regularly Croatian flags in the Western part, while on the eastern part green Islamic flags are noticeable.

The division though is not only based on ethnicity, as we expected. The structure of the city is built very logically and has a high rate of legibility, where the two 'sides' have different purposes to favor the city.

People tend to use the bike through the centre. The potential lies especially by the youth and students that are going to the north campus, but there are simply no bicycle paths and space reserved for bicycles.

Mepas Mall is especially used by young adults and people who go out during the evening. The users are mixed and are coming from all over the town.

The Spanish Square is used frequently by more than 80% of the participants. The place functions as a crossroad for people who come there especially daily and weekly.

There are certain public spaces through the whole town which are used by all of the participants. These are the Brace Fejica Street, the Old Bridge, the Rondo, the Musala Square, the Spanish Square and Mepas Mall (Fig.8).

The successful public spaces are evaluated according to the quality criteria in order to grade and discover common values over public space (Fig. 9). According to the results, shared values are translated into conditions which describes a common sense of public space;

- Public space in Mostar encourages human contact and social activity. People like to greet each other and encounter. They have a flexible agenda when it comes to meeting, so they do not make a strict appointment but meet by chance. They use free time (e.g. lunch time during working days) to socialize, mostly outside.

- Public space in Mostar promotes centrality. Centrality scores higher than comfort. Even there are not a lot of benches to sit, people create initially space to sit. For other activities too, the users are not seeking for specific urban designs and like to experience flexibility and to take initiative to 'create their own public spaces'.

- Public space represents and reflects the local culture or/and history. People are bounded to historical and cultural values. They play chess -a traditional game- on public space and drink '*Bosanska kahva*' (Bosnian coffee). Some say that 'coffee connects'.
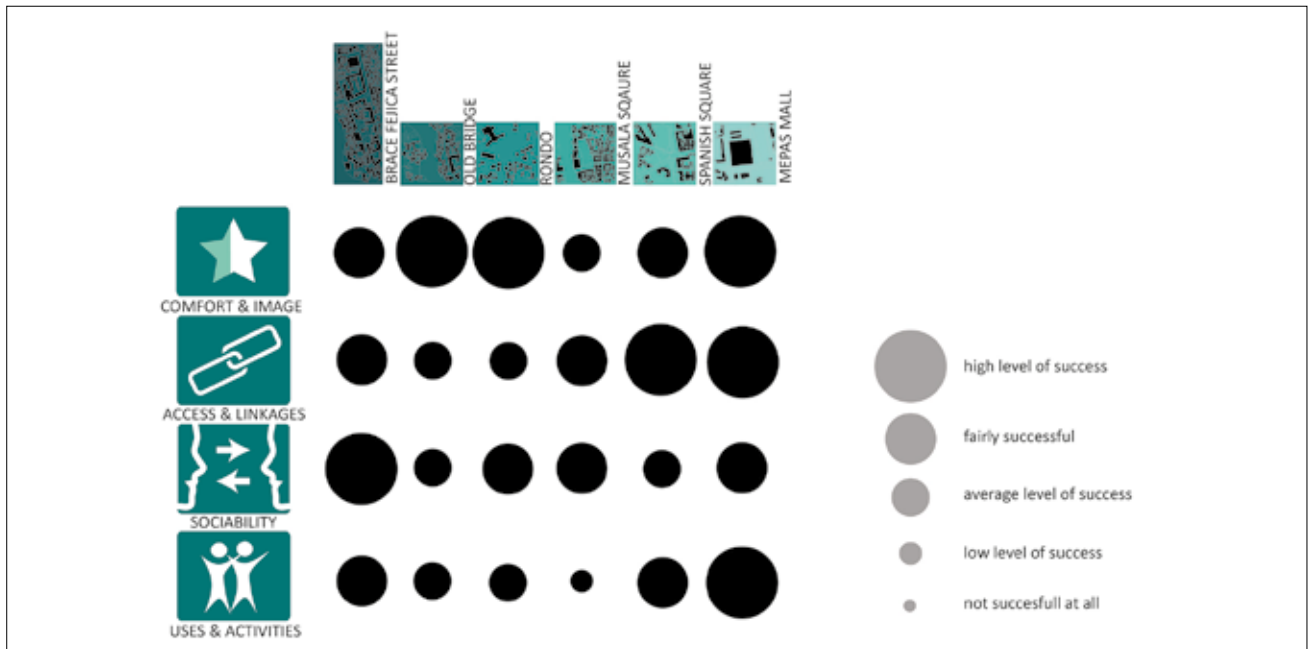
Figure 9. Successful public space scores (Zivali, 2013) / *Başarılı kamusal alan puanları (Zivali, 2013)*

Photograph 2. Public space as a cultural resource (Flickr, 2012; Zivali, 2011) / *Kültürel kaynak olarak kamusal alan (Flickr, 2012; Zivali, 2011)*

CONCLUSION

This paper investigates socio-spatial relations in Mostar. The research elaborates on a previous ethnographic study aims to discover similarities between the two existing major ethnic group regarding the spatial setting they belong through examining the socio-spatial patterns of each defined interest group. The objective is to seek for a common definition of public space in the context of Mostar despite its group differences. By exploring and evaluating an (hidden) existing layer of public space, a common meaning for successful public space has been formed. The approach in Mostar opens a new field of debate within the context of Bosnia and Hercegovina. However, a divided city is unnatural and presumably temporary, but viewing today after more the two decades, the city working with the persistence of parallel institutions maybe it can be assumed as two cities. The restored bridge, in addition to its symbolic value, has its characteristic role as the place of meeting in the urban matrix of the city. Thus, while the case of Mostar reveals a concept as divided city in its social and urban structure, there is a layer of public space that unites the city. The strength of this layer of public space carries cultural characteristics that are shared values of the 'Mostarian' citizens through centuries. These specific characteristics reflects public space as a cultural resource. This might be a potential to create conditions to rehabilitate by implementing cultural inventory as a part of cultural planning.

A question that raises is that if it is possible to implement this approach in a similar context -and if yes- a similar result is expected. An opportunity to retest the approach might give an insight on if and how the perception of public space according to the users of Mostar has been changed over time. Another selection might be another town in a similar context. The social facet of Mostar determines the spatial use of the city. The major ethnic groups are equally ranged in the city, thus there are no dominant groups which causes oppression or suppression one over the other. Sarajevo, the capital city of Bosnia and Herzegovina, - and known as the Jerusalem of the West (which is another subject open for debate)- might be understand as a united city with much more shared spaces and a mixed living. The polycentric city model of Mostar makes it possible to enhance their own residents of the neighbourhoods. The linear city of Sarajevo has a moreover monocentric model over a polycentric model. In Sarajevo there is a majority-minority relation between ethnic groups. Though, there is no evidence that there will occur a certain oppression/suppression, but it is worth to mention that the relation between the groups and the socio-spatial relation is expected to differ than in Mostar. The motivation to test this approach on a city as Sarajevo might widen up the current issue on cultural resilience and peacebuilding in the region.

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