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Cracks and Light: Observing the Resilience of the History Museum of Bosnia and Herzegovina

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ABSTRACT

Among the seven national institutions of the former socialist Yugoslav period that appear to have been assigned to the category of “contested” and “unwanted” heritage, the History Museum of Bosnia and Herzegovina stands out. Originally built as a Museum of Revolution, it bears a legacy of a specific identity and cultural narrative developed in the socialist period, which has been projected in the architecture displaying the hallmarks of early Modernism. Even though the Museum was listed as a national monument by the Commission to Preserve National Monuments in 2012, the building is in an alarmingly advanced state of disrepair, with little indication that such trend will be reversed any time soon.

The article firstly discusses the Museum in the context of current international developments and the aspects related to museum architecture. Secondly, the Museum is observed through a critical heritage lens and within phenomena of a deliberate destruction of heritage in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Since 2003 the Museum has a permanent exhibition, *The Besieged Sarajevo*, illustrating the practical modes of survival during the 1990s war, consisting of artefacts donated by citizens. Other exhibition themes, ranging from the labour movement traditions, the legacy of World War I, life in former Yugoslavia, the Dayton Peace Agreement mapping, and *The Obliteration of Cultural Heritage* project, posit critical questions for and about the contemporary society in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

This work combines two disciplinary fields, architecture and public history, to inquire into selected contemporary activities of the Museum. Its resilience is viewed as representative, symbolic, and symptomatic of an over-reaching cultural, political, and economic condition in the country.

KEYWORDS

Contested heritage, architecture and public history, renovation, resilience.



“Few museums, outside the nationals and any other rock stars of the tourist world, can continue to exist in their present form. [...] There must be equally rapid changes in the definition and public practice of museums if they are to remain relevant to twenty-first century audiences and, therefore, to survive. The challenges facing museums belong to two inter-related fields: those that are the result of wider societal change, and those that directly challenge the traditional roles of museums.
- Black 2012: 1

It has been estimated that some 90 percent of museums worldwide were founded after the World War II, creating a significant growth of activity, as well as academic interest in and publications on the subject (Fyfe 2011). The museums are examined from the perspectives of cultural heritage studies, art history and policy, memory and identity studies, and to some extent from the perspective of architectural history. Drawing on the reference framework in

A Companion to Museum Studies (Macdonald 2011), this article outlines the development of museums in general and focuses on the case study of the History Museum of Bosnia and Herzegovina in Sarajevo. The Museum was founded in 1945 to curate the national liberation narrative created after World War II, when Bosnia became a republic of socialist federal Yugoslavia. Damaged in the 1990s war, the original edifice, built in 1963 in Sarajevo, with its pronounced early Modernist design, is now in a state of decay.¹

The paper is part of a larger research that aims to understand the current situation of the Museum from a history perspective, starting with its foundation, and in comparison with other public history museums on the periphery of larger nations, which have been marked by major systemic transformations in the twentieth century. The Museum is studied as part of the cultural and architectural heritage of Bosnia and Herzegovina and as an institution of public history whose original narrative construction ceased to be viable. The qualification “public history” is used here in its broader meaning, as it emerged some thirty-five years ago in the U.S. among professional historians and history educators, as “a movement, methodology, and approach that promotes the collaborative study and practice of history; its practitioners embrace a mission to make their special insights accessible and useful to the public” (Weible 2008: 1).

Applying the concepts of “communicative discourse”² and “resilience thinking,”³ the research is seeking to address the transformation and the potential of an active and symbiotic condition of the Museum’s institution and architecture. It aims to identify and analyse the enabling conditions for the Museum’s continued relevance, function, and use, in a changing environment.

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Evolution of museums: place, form and content

The oldest eighteenth- and nineteenth-century museums are usually associated with the period of Enlightenment and their buildings with the architecture of Historicism, whilst the newer museum architecture explores “a range of stylistic modes and social roles” challenging Sir Nicolaus Pevsner’s claim that no new museum building types emerged after World War II (Giebelhausen 2011: 223). In fact, Pevsner’s view is formed through an architectural history lens and, according to Giebelhausen, “oscillate[s] between two paradigms: [museum as] monument and instrument,” a binary that often resurfaces in different disguises in the architectural critique of the last century in the Western world (Giebelhausen 2011: 223). Looking at the developments of museums in the last quarter of the twentieth century, she examines the same binary, coupled with the perceived articulation of an independent building type in museum architecture and “its symbolic and architectural lineage,” along with the global proliferation of museums (Giebelhausen 2011). Tracing the birth of the museum from the tradition of collecting in European princely palaces, she attributes the development of museum building types to French and German eighteenth-century traditions. In her view, the lectures of Jean-Nicolas-Louis Durand at the École Polytechnique in Paris, “provided European architects with blueprints for a wide range of old and new building types” (Giebelhausen 2011: 225). This included Durand’s “ideal museum” design that featured a symmetrical block with four wings into which four pavilions in the shape of a Greek cross were inscribed, with a central rotunda and four inner atriums. The plan became an influential template whose variations can be identified in a number of German museums, including the Glyptothek in Munich designed by Leo von

1) The authors of the winning architectural competition design in 1957 for the Museum of Revolution in Sarajevo were architects Boris Magaš, Edo Šmidihen and Radovan Horvat, all from Zagreb, Croatia.

2) The concept of communicative discourse has been adopted from the critiques of the “Theory of Communicative Action”, as discussed in Outhwaite (1994). The concept is not further detailed in this paper.

3) The concept of *resilience* as “the capacity of ecosystems to absorb change” (Holling 1973) has, according to Falke (2016), currently evolved to *resilience thinking*, a dynamic concept integrating Resilience, Adaptability and Transformability. The evolution of the concept is not further detailed in this paper.



Klenze and Karl Friedrich von Schinkel's Altes Museum in Berlin (Giebelhausen 2011).

New museum buildings in the last century often made a significant impact on their locations by generating a sense of public pride and belonging and by actively projecting an image to the outer world. Usually associated with initiatives by city mayors and local authorities, new museums and cultural quarters channelled political and economic ambitions, expecting that the public and tourists would be attracted to the spaces designed by world-renowned architectural practices. The museums and their architecture were thus conceived as a pivotal part of an urban regeneration and reinvention strategy, with a message that a city was open for business, tourism and cultural entertainment, a practice which continues to date. Associated with the European Capital of Culture initiative, one such example is the Museum of the Civilisations of Europe and the Mediterranean (MuCEM), opened in Marseille in 2013 (Delabroy 2013). Designed by the architect Rudy Ricciotti, in association with the architect Roland Carta, MuCEM connects the seventeenth-century Fort Saint-Jean with the new exhibition space in the form of a cube wrapped in an innovative black latticework made of fibre-reinforced concrete. It is the first French national museum outside of Paris whose exhibitions aim to address cultural encounters, including colonisation and conflict, or, in the words of its director, the "deep ties and intense exchange" (Delabroy 2013).

Museum buildings play an important role in shaping an identity of locality or, in architectural parlance, they contribute to *place-making*. Giebelhausen reviews the evolution of the concept of the museum as an instrument for "embodying permanence," where the architecture of the nineteenth-century museum "was designed to make a symbolic statement, at once civic and educational" (Giebelhausen 2011: 231).

The twentieth century witnessed a shift to "the notion of the museum as time's arrow," attributed to Le Corbusier whose 1939 design for the Museum of Unlimited Growth combined the square and spiral shape to outline the building which could be extended in the future following that same form (Giebelhausen 2011: 232). Le Corbusier revisited the same idea in the Museum of Knowledge proposed for the Ahmedabad Cultural Centre in India in 1951, a design concept with characteristic *pilotis* supporting an elevated cubical spiral volume enveloping the central atrium from where the stairs rose to the main entrance at first-floor level.

The Modernist ideas and concepts of "neutrality," "flexibility" and an aesthetic of the "white cube" became the leading idea to be embedded in museum design and practice. The exhibition "Modern Architecture," curated by Hitchcock and Johnson at the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) in New York in 1932, presented the work of leading European architects to an enthusiastic American audience (Frampton 1992) which helped a global launch of Modernism manifested as International Style (Giebelhausen 2011). However, this "neutrality" of International Style was gradually abandoned and, in some cases, outrightly rejected in the West after World War II. Such rejection becomes evident in other art forms, which rebelled against the "neutrality" of forms perceived as aestheticized and depoliticised. Giebelhausen claims that "in the modernist aesthetic, architecture played a subservient and allegedly 'neutral' role" (2011: 234). Its subsequent departure from ascetic forms, as illustrated by Frank Lloyd Wright's Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum (1959), "modulate[d] [...] [the] museum's architecture [...] into a dynamic form [...] [in which] museum space is reconceptualised as sculpture" (Giebelhausen 2011: 234). In her view, this moment marked the rise of the "signature building" designed by an international star-architect, where location,



building design and museum fuse into the trademark or brand, increasingly pushing the concept of identity of place toward commodifying agency.

The 1980s brought about a “self-conscious and playful meditation on the building type,” as in Aldo Rossi’s unbuilt Museum of German History, whereas in the 1990s, Alessandro Mendini with Coop Himmelb(l)au and Philippe Starck designed the Museum in Groningen, the Netherlands, as a series of structures, each with a personalised architectural stamp rather than a unifying cultural interpretation of the brief (Giebelhausen 2011: 235).

Today, Modernist architecture has gained heritage status, joining older structures which are already the focus of the conservation and reuse discourses. Many older museums housed in historic buildings, have successfully integrated the original space and new additions, while meeting the needs of natural growth and conservation requirements. Similar approaches in reuse of Modernist heritage are rare and lack the necessary conservation framework and debate. If the concept of adaptive reuse is to be upheld, the future research, and practice, will need to bridge the gap between the inherent conservation aspects of the Modernist heritage and the best examples of modern interventions on older structures. For example, a recent new museum, the House of European History in Brussels (opened in May 2017), located in an old park near the European Union institutions, combines renovation and extension of a historic building to accommodate new collections spread over six floors. The Museum’s permanent exhibition is an attempt to present an evolving and inclusive European narrative. With an emphasis on rupture, some of the themes showcased here are: Accolades and Criticism; Shattering Certainties; Rebuilding a Divided Continent; Europe: A Global Power; Europe in Ruins; and Shaping Europe (House of European History 2017). The exhibitions include references to the

Yugoslav wars in the 1990s and display some twenty-eight related artefacts on loan from the History Museum of Bosnia and Herzegovina, an institution further discussed in this paper.

As these examples show, there is a dynamism and a pronounced hybridity in spatial organization and forms of museums, which points to the fluidity and changing attitudes in the way the museums represent and interpret their collections and how they engage with their audiences. In other words, the presentation of “museum narrative” as well as of “museum as narrative” is an active process, calling for new modes of observing, understanding and communicating, which is further explored here.

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Heritage, public history and museum narratives

Abt sees the evolution of the museum “as an institutional form [...] resulting from chance confluences of individual interests and ever-widening social demands” (2011: 132). And Kaplan argues that the “twenty-first century promises to challenge the identities that came to be assigned and defined by [...] [the nations and museums of the late nineteenth and twentieth century] as ideas and places, both imagined and experienced physically” (2011: 152). She examines the institutional birth of national museums in the Western hemisphere associated with “the early mix of early medieval mercantile capitalism and fifteenth-century European global expansion” and rooted in the humanism of the Italian Renaissance, which continued to flourish during the eighteenth-century era of scientific experimentation, rationalism and ideas of the Enlightenment (Kaplan 2011: 152). Initially, the royalty, aristocracy and educated elite collected rare objects, antiques and curiosities which then became the basis for the gradual establishment of the national museums in European capitals.



The edited volume *Heritage, Ideology and Identity in Central and Eastern Europe: Contested Pasts, Contested Presents* draws some parallels, but also highlights key differences, between countries in Western Europe and those in Central and Eastern Europe with regard to the development of the heritage discourse, and, by extension, the development of museums (Rampley 2012). According to Rampley, since the nineteenth century, the British heritage discourse and politics was marked by sentimentalism and a celebration of the Imperial past, transitioning to the twentieth-century heritage as an *industry* in its own right, and leading to a proliferation of museums and heritage centres in the latter part of the twentieth century. In his view, the British heritage policies were mainly responding and adapting to the changing nature of tourism, education and the dominance of “a commodity culture,” thus suggesting that identity as a national characteristic was obscured by the bias of modern consumerism.

Rampley (2012) further suggests that heritage is appropriated differently in Central and Eastern Europe, depending on the path to nationhood taken by each country, given the region’s history of foreign and colonial rule. Similarly to Kaplan (2011), he recognizes the complexity of identity formation in countries with a colonial past, as it involved both struggle with and rejection of foreign dominance and a complex social and ethno-national realignment (Harrington 2013), which impacted the sense of ownership of symbols and ritualistic representations of identity.

The changes of political rule and power, often abrupt, equally resulted in a sudden and revolutionary change of symbols and memory constructs, forcing changes of meaning, status and attitudes toward cultural heritage and its preservation. There are numerous examples of monument demolitions and overnight changes of street names and plaques, following political upheavals and situations that challenged the

identity of a particular group, community or society. This is by no means unique to Europe or exclusive to armed conflict circumstances, as demonstrated by the recent controversy and civil unrest in New Orleans due to the planned removal of four older monuments dedicated to the Confederate side defeated in the American Civil War (Teague 2017).

In case of many smaller Nordic nations or countries like Ireland, Scotland or Northern Ireland, which are or have been a part of a larger political structure, cultural heritage may be seen as a tool to assert their uniqueness, tradition, or specificity in order to distinguish one nation from another, the smaller culture from the larger one, the weaker from the dominant. Alternatively, it can be seen as a backdrop to address issues of what is contested and controversial. In other words, if there is a shift from content to context, cultural heritage can be approached as a canvas for new interpretations and creation of new narratives which may better serve present needs. Crooke argues that “away from museum debate and government policy, rural and urban groups are coming together to explore their history and heritage and forming their own exhibitions and collections” (2011: 170). She notes that some such initiatives in Northern Ireland address social exclusion and other forms of community breakdown (Crooke 2011).

In parallel, multiculturalism and free movement of people in Europe and elsewhere challenge the presentation and interpretation of heritage. What used to be an instrument for representation and preservation of local identity as distinct from the identity of “others,” can no longer serve the changed demographic profile of the communities. The fixed identity has become more and more an internal condition, necessitating a redefinition of what and how is manifested and whose heritage is being commemorated and preserved in public institutions. Bligaard (2000) asserts that there is a need for a broader



concept of heritage as a manifestation of identity, given that hardly any nation today can claim ethnic homogeneity and the numerous forces are at work within modern nationhood. Multiculturalism is an active process in a modern pluralistic society and has already gained various forms of an institutional recognition in many countries.

In contrast, the museums devoted to a singular memory narrative of particular value to a single group, community or nation, operate within the realm of exclusivity. The singularity of thematic narrative serves the purpose of enforcing a meaning and an identity of a group, selecting and conveying signs and messages that attract and preserve interest, empathy and support, which speak either of that group or only to such group. The exclusiveness of memory representation in such a case can become problematic if it can no longer serve a rapidly changing modern pluralistic society, making the representation either redundant or contested, as has been the case, for example, of the Sarajevo Assassination narrative (Harrington 2016).

If the need for exclusivity is recognized and treated with sensitivity, as argued by McLean and Cooke, the places of a singular memory can be transformed into “sites of discursive formation, a space where the ‘legends and landscapes’ of the nation are presented and represented and where identities are made and re-made” (2000: 9). This proposition is based on the example of the New Museum of Scotland which is currently showcasing the heritage of the “stateless nation” in a political union with others and brimming with the changing narratives that will always be open for debate and dispute (Harrington 2013).

Whilst the questions of identity gained prominence in museum studies in the second half of the twentieth century, the more recent focus has shifted towards the museum public. Understanding not so much *what the Museum is about* but *who is the Museum for* brings to the fore the concepts of “public engagement” and “public participation.”

Black (2012) argues for the transformation of museums by externalisation of purpose and by self-initiated collaborative engagement with users.

Museum professionals already operate in a climate of fluidity which has necessitated more frequent review and reflection on the details of museum exhibitions and their messages. The trend of democratising and decentralising the museums is broadening the scope and questioning the meaning of “national,” which points to the evolution of an institution and a potential redefinition of what a museum is.

This has been manifest more in practice rather than in any outward formal announcement. For example, the shift from the representation of a “national” to an “international” narrative has been observed in the National Museum of Ireland, in particular in the exhibitions preceding the commemorations of World War I and of the 1916 Easter Rising.⁴ It appears also that the drivers of policy have changed. The policy programming up to the 1980s seems to have been gender-biased in favour of male-dominated academia, only to shift in favour of education-led policy in the 1990s and, finally, in favour of marketing-led programming and curatorship in the 2000s (Dimitrijević and Harrington 2017). Under the influence of experts with cultural and museum studies backgrounds, it is also suggested, the current programmatic leadership places the emphasis on context and creation of innovative exhibition concepts favouring “narratives” over the traditional display of objects (Dimitrijević and Harrington 2017).

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Early heritage and museum practice in Bosnia and Herzegovina

The Bosnia and Herzegovina’s first museum was the *Zemaljski muzej* (Landesmuseum) in Sarajevo, founded in 1888 during

4) The exhibition *Soldiers and Chiefs in the National Museum of Ireland* at Collins Barracks is showing the engagement of the Irish at home, abroad and in the twenty-first century, drawing on Ireland’s military history from 1550 to present (National Museum of Ireland, 2018).

the Austro-Hungarian administration. Translated from German to English, according to Donia (2004: 4), the Museum had a Provincial or Regional status (Donia 2007: 6), with the mission to record, collect and preserve the heritage of the Province. Under direct rule from the Joint Finance Ministry in Vienna and close supervision by Minister Kallay, a purpose-designed complex of four pavilion-type buildings grouped around an interior botanical garden was built at the edge of the provincial capital Sarajevo, near the Army Barracks, in 1913.⁵ It was designed by Czech-born architect Karel Pařík, who was employed in the Building Department of the Provincial Government (*Zemaljska vlada*). The design of the Museum was in “a late Historicist” style, in line with the Central European museum traditions which were extensively studied while preparing a brief for Sarajevo’s museum (Dimitrijević 1991).⁶ The Museum comprised Departments of Archaeology (Prehistory and Antiquity), Natural Sciences and Ethnography, a Library, staff offices, conservation workshops and storage space.

Despite the patronising element of Habsburg officials who “saw themselves as missionaries of a cultural revival [...] [designed to] [...] end the backwardness and particularism [...] that bedevilled Bosnia’s peoples” (Donia 2007: 1), the fact remains that with *Zemaljski muzej* they have set up a significant cultural centre for preservation, research and learning with “combined [...] functions of archive, library, museum, scientific institute and archaeological research” (Donia 2007: 6).⁷

Since Bosnia and Herzegovina was under the direct rule from Imperial Vienna for forty years, from the occupation in 1878, it can be said that the country’s museum practice draws direct lineage from Austro-Hungarian practices and attitudes to heritage. Together with Germany, the Habsburg Empire laid the foundations to theories of restoration, conservation and preservation, based on the principles

of recording and documenting. In the nineteenth century, heritage acquired almost cult status in both countries, which enabled the foundation of modern heritage practices (Rampeley 2012).

However, the approaches differed between the two countries as a result of a different composition of their territories and population. The official German policy was formulated to secure the integrity of German national heritage within its national territory, and therefore the institutions associated with national heritage had a mission to shape the national identity. The situation was different in Austria-Hungary, a monarchy comprising, in addition to the two nations, a number of other territories inhabited by different, mainly Slavic populations. The heritage policy of the dual monarchy had been significantly shaped in Vienna through the work of Inspector General for Monument Protection of Austria-Hungary Professor Alois Riegl. His views underline “the multi-valent nature of architectural monuments [in the Monarchy] [...] [in which] there were only a few cases where a single group—or ethnicity—could lay sole claim to being the heirs of a particular site or structure” (Rampeley 2012: 2-3). This might imply that Riegl had developed and practised a sensitivity based on direct experience of a multi-ethnic cultural space, which at the time also incorporated Bosnia and Herzegovina. Riegl’s significant contribution to the development of modern art history and theory (Reynolds Cordileone 2014) and the preservation of monuments (Arrhenius 2012) must have at least indirectly influenced the cultural policy of the Monarchy in Bosnia and Herzegovina, a period briefly considered in this paper.

Operating only four years from its new premises until the demise of Austria-Hungary after World War I, the *Zemaljski muzej* fulfilled its public function throughout the subsequent historical periods—the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, socialist Yugoslavia and the 1990s war—till present. Closed on and off in recent years

5) Recent research suggests that the significance of the institution of *Zemaljski muzej* and its purpose-built structure as a “most ambitious example of early museum architecture in a vast region between Budapest and Athens, Vienna and Istanbul” (Hartmuth 2012:1), has been extraordinarily overlooked. During the campaign for the reopening of the Museum in 2012, the author seeks to reinterpret the original conditions predating the building and credits the Museum staff for pushing for its completion.

6) Pařík was posthumously dubbed “The Builder of Sarajevo,” having designed and built a staggering number of buildings in Bosnia, out of which some forty-three in Sarajevo (Dimitrijević 1991: 229-232).

7) A number of Bosnian (Juzbašić 2002; Kamberović 2013) and international historians (Vervaeke 2007; Donia 2007) have revisited this period, examining, among others, how its colonial and postcolonial undertones became instruments of various current political agendas.

8) The seven “unresolved” national institutions are: *Zemaljski muzej BiH*/ National Museum; *Historijski muzej BiH*/ History Museum; *Muzej književnosti i pozorišne umjetnosti BiH*/ Literature and theatre museum; *Nacionalna i univerzitetska biblioteka BiH*/ National and University Library; *Kinoteka BiH*/ Cinematheque; *Umjetnička galerija BiH*/ Arts Gallery; and *Biblioteka za slijepa i slabovidna lica BiH*/ Library for the Blind and Visually Impaired (Kujundžić 2012).

9) First named the Museum of National Liberation, it was changed shortly after to the Museum of Revolution (Leka 2010).

due to the lack of funding, the Museum reopened in 2015 following a public campaign (Kujundžić 2012). Like other six institutions associated with the socialist period, it has been in a legal and financial limbo since the 1990s war, receiving so far only partial and limited government support.⁸

The original permanent exhibition in the Ethnography Department of the *Zemaljski muzej* shows the domestic life of an affluent urban family in a replicated interior décor from a Sarajevo merchant house. Together with the replica of a traditional courtroom setting with mannequins in period costumes, it all evokes the lifestyle, power and prestige vested in the Bosnian elite. The exoticism of Ottoman Bosnia that imbues these largely unchanged displays and its encounter with the Habsburgs’ rule have sparked a new interest and a postcolonial reading of this “Little Orient” (Ruthner 2008; Hartmuth 2012). The Museum collections gathered in the socialist period have been extended to include the representations of rural culture and crafts.

From Revolution to History: a new Museum for a new society

In 1963, next door to the *Zemaljski muzej*, a new purpose-designed modern building was completed, showing off its architecture in a manner of Le Corbusier and Mies van der Rohe, in stark contrast with its neighbour (Fig. 1). It seems that the architecture of the building matched the determination of the authorities to create and support an institution representative of a new foundational narrative, aimed to speak of a new society and its alignment with progress. Originally founded as the Museum of Revolution in 1945, today’s History Museum of Bosnia and Herzegovina was given the task to collect, document and commemorate the country’s anti-fascist and



Fig. 1: The History Museum of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Sarajevo, view from *Zemaljski muzej*, April 2017. Photo credit: Selma Harrington.

national liberation struggles during World War II (Leka 2010).⁹ Similar institutions were also established in other parts of Yugoslavia.

The legal creation of the Museum of National Liberation in Sarajevo was ratified in the National Assembly of Bosnia and Herzegovina, on 13 November 1945, some six months after the liberation of the country from fascist rule (Kaljanac 2010). It defined the Museum as a national institution to be overseen directly by the Ministry of Education of the National Government of Bosnia and Herzegovina (Article 1), whose funding would be provided by the government (Article 3) (Anon 1945). The rules regulating the internal organization and the functioning of the Museum were within the authority of the Minister for Education (Article 4) (Anon 1945).

The content, wording and timing of the law show awareness, ambition and determination to mark, celebrate and commemorate liberation as a huge popular achievement, even though a lot of detail could not be planned at the time, and it would have taken more than a decade to have a fully functioning Museum in place.

By all accounts, the Museum of Revolution had a modest output in its first decade, suffering from the lack of professional expertise and adequate

premises for offices and archives. The Museum staff initially organized exhibitions in other public institutions in Sarajevo. Up to 1950, these were mainly photographic exhibitions with records from the liberation war in other parts of Yugoslavia and commemorations of the liberation of the city of Sarajevo. As the collections of military artefacts grew, including small and large weapons, uniforms and medals, the exhibitions expanded to the narratives of major battles in Bosnia and Herzegovina, including the works of painters, visual artists and writers. Only in the early 1960s new professional curators, historians, art historians, architects and photographers joined the Museum staff, coinciding with the appointment of an energetic new director, Dr Moni Finci, who oversaw the construction of the new building (Leka 2010: 9).

Once established and with a privileged position and support by the political structure, the Museum's scope broadened to create and lead the network of thematically similar regional centres. Between 1975 and 1984 it continuously organized scientific conferences and published a periodical *Zbornik radova* (*Almanac*). The contributors came from former Yugoslav centres like Zagreb, Belgrade and other towns, but also included distinguished guests such as Zbynek Z. Stransky from former Czechoslovakia.¹⁰ Thematically covering Museology and Museum functions, at a glance, *Zbornik radova* features recurring topics on the museum exhibit and its objectification, including the examination of the current situation of museums and the implications for future practice (*Zbornik* 1975-1984).¹¹

The latter years show a preoccupation with the perceived general crisis of museums (Bauer 1982) and the critique of the existing practice (Hasanagić 1982). This included ideas to further develop the specific societal themes to examine the economic conditions, civic engagement and history of political parties and revolutionary

workers' movement. Critical of museum stagnation, Bauer listed problems, such as the "inadequate condition for the protection of museum collections; lack of working space; professional crisis due to inadequate structure of expertise and absolute lack of technical expertise; internal academic, scientific and professional deficiency; communication fatigue towards the public; negative attitudes to the funding of culture; lack of active promotion and educational work of museums" (1982: 17-8). He strongly called for a change in local practices, for a move from "passivity" at the workplace, and for the establishment of a formal Museum Network (Bauer 1982: 24-7).¹²

In summary, the contributions to the *Zbornik radova* issues show that it was already clear in the late 1980s that the existing museum concept in the region was, as Leka puts it, ideologically "frozen" (2010: 16). The internal debates about the need to widen the Museum of Revolution's mission and focus began to be externalised, including the initiatives to change its name.¹³



Charting Bosnian sovereignty up to the break-up of Yugoslavia and the post-Dayton peace

The transformations of the Museum of Revolution and its current incarnation, the History Museum, are in many ways symbolic of Bosnia and Herzegovina, a country seeking to reconstruct its identity and to steady its course to a durable prosperity. The break-up of Yugoslavia and the 1992 aggression, whose aim was to "carve up" Bosnia between neighbouring Croatia and Serbia, have also exposed the underlying issues of historical continuity, territorial integrity, state sovereignty over the entirety of its territory and equal rights to all its citizens. These were all gravely violated during the disintegration of Yugoslavia, the

10) Stransky is considered the "father of scientific museology" rooted in the social sciences and the founder of the School of Museological Thinking in Brno, which aimed to connect museum practice to a specific theoretical system.

11) The information from the original sources in Bosnian/Croat/Serbian language is translated by the lead author.

12) Bauer's authority and expertise may have been strengthened by his international networking through the International Council of Museums—ICOM and the participation at the General Assembly themed "The Responsibility of Museums for World Heritage" in 1980.

13) The name History Museum was printed in some tourist brochures prior to the official name change in 1993 (Sarajevo Tourist Guide 1990).

14) Bringa astutely observes: "Since being Bosnian was a synthesis of the historical and cultural experiences of all three *nacije* living on common territory where the different sources of people's identities were acknowledged and even emphasised, it represented a contradiction of the logic of nationalism which, after the defeat of the Yugoslav credo of 'brotherhood and unity,' seems to have been the only viable recipe for political mobilization and state building" (1995: 33).

15) As an example, a copy of the Charter of Ban Kulin, written on August 29, 1189, in the name of this Bosnian ruler and granting trade and passage rights to Ragusan traders, is today kept in the entrance hall of the Government building in Sarajevo.

16) The First Yugoslavia was founded as the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, 1918-1929. It was subsequently renamed The Kingdom of Yugoslavia, 1929-1941. Having been proclaimed in 1943 in Jajce, Bosnia and Herzegovina, during the World War II national liberation struggle the country was first named Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia (FNRJ), 1945-1963. This was changed to Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRJ), 1963-1991 (Ramet 2006).

17) Socialist Yugoslavia was the founding member of Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), which was officially established at Belgrade Conference in September 1961 at President Tito's initiative (Government of Zaire 2001).

period briefly sketched here, with reference to the earlier history of the country.

Caught between the external threat and an internal vulnerability due to its composition which defies the "logic of the ethnic nation-state,"¹⁴ the official Bosnian identity narrative sought its roots in the Medieval Bosnian Kingdom (1180-1463).¹⁵ According to Malcolm, it was during this time that, "despite its intermittent civil wars and invasions, Bosnia had achieved real prosperity" (1994: 24). After that, the country and the wider region fell under the military, political and cultural domination of the Ottoman Empire for some four hundred years. This was followed by the forty years of Austro-Hungarian rule (1878-1918) and the subsequent incorporation of Bosnia and Herzegovina in the two Yugoslav states after World War I.¹⁶

Malcolm maintains that "Bosnia was the only constituent element of [Kingdom of] Yugoslavia which retained its identity" (1994: 156-173), by way of retaining its territorial integrity within the reorganized thirty-three regions of the newly formed Kingdom. This changed in 1929 with the abolition of the constitution and King Alexander's dictatorship. This "imposed a completely new division of the Yugoslav territory [...] arranged [...] to cut across the old borders of the constituent elements of the Yugoslav state," which meant that "[f]or the first time in more than four hundred years, Bosnia had been partitioned to the detriment of each of its communities" (Malcolm, 1994: 169). The internal political crisis in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, fuelled by Serbian nationalism and matched by the Croat one, further escalated ahead of the Nazi occupation. The secret 1939 Agreement between the Croat and Serb leaders Maček and Cvetković eventually led to the break-up of the Kingdom and, consequently, the absorption of Bosnia into the Independent Croatian State allied to Hitler's occupational force.

After World War II, Bosnia and Herzegovina became one of the six consti-

tuent republics and two autonomous regions of the "second Yugoslavia," a country forged as a socialist federal project, through the national liberation movement of partisans led by the Communist Party of Yugoslavia (Ramet 2006). The successive federal Yugoslav constitutions were designed to maintain a balance of power among the republics and prevent more populous ones from dominating the smaller ones. Despite the strong one-party state system, "the country was decentralised to an unprecedented extent" (Silber and Little 1995: xxvi). Having broken away from the Soviet-dominated Eastern Bloc in 1948, Yugoslavia navigated between East and West under President Tito, also forging political and commercial alliances with developing and non-aligned countries in Africa and Asia.¹⁷ Its political and economic model was based on the Marxist principles, characterised by the privileged public ownership and distribution of wealth, managed by institutions and mechanisms and defined as a socialist self-management system of governance. The system permeated all aspects of life, but it is important to distinguish it from the so-called "state socialism" models characteristic to countries in Eastern Europe at the time (Bošković 2011). The socialist agenda was to make culture accessible and participatory for "working people," as opposed to the perceived older exclusive or elitist practices. Culture and sports were seen as means to promote socialist values, whose definition remained a work in progress. The participation of the left-leaning intellectuals, writers, poets and painters, in the national liberation war gave them a prominent role in the foundation of the new state, its narratives, identity formation and its institutions (Bošković 2011). This also included architects.

The rise of Serbian nationalism among Belgrade intellectuals in the mid-1980s, the subsequent harnessing of nationalist rhetoric by Slobodan Milošević and a matching reaction in Croatia, led eventually

to the dismantling of the Yugoslav system which, according to Silber and Little “was deliberately and systematically killed off” (1995: xxiii). The aggression on Bosnia and Herzegovina and war on its territory has already been recognized as targeted destruction (Malcolm 1994), genocide (Gutman 1993), and ethnic cleansing (*etničko čišćenje*) (Silber and Little 1995). The conflict was engineered from outside, fuelled initially from Belgrade, and performed by nationalist Serb forces made of paramilitary units and the former Yugoslav army, which effectively transformed itself into an eighty-thousand strong Bosnian Serb Army. Stationed in Bosnia in 1992, it soon occupied some 70 percent of the territory expelling non-Serbs (Silber Little 1995: 268; Baumann *et al.* 2015).

This was further complicated from 1992 to 1994 by the outbreak of fighting between Bosniaks and Bosnian Croats and the formation of the Croat-controlled autonomous region (Malcolm 1994; Silber and Little 1995). Mindful of the complexity of the war which cannot be detailed here, it can be said that, in effect, the multiple localised fighting added a civil war dimension with atrocities happening on all sides (Shrader 2003).

For almost four years, the international news broadcasted the details of the shelling, atrocities, expulsions, killings, concentration camps, mass rape, the siege of Sarajevo and the destruction of infrastructure throughout the country, including the targeting of the Old Bridge in Mostar by the Croat paramilitaries (Silber and Little 1995: 323). The Dayton Peace Agreement (1995), launched in the U.S. on November 21, 1995 and signed in Paris on December 14, 1995, put an end to the war. The parties to the agreement were the new successor states of former Yugoslavia—Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (now the Republic of Serbia)—as the countries with responsibility and vested interest in the conflict.¹⁸ It was agreed that the Republic of

Bosnia and Herzegovina would comprise two “entities:” the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (FBiH) and the Republic Srpska (RS),¹⁹ with a separate District of Brčko. The overall governance was by order of the Office of the High Representative (OHR) assigned to the State on March 8, 2000 (Anon 1997). The Federation was further divided into Cantons and these into Municipalities, whereas the Republic Srpska was divided into Municipalities.

The OHR in Bosnia and Herzegovina is charged with overseeing the civilian implementation of the Dayton Agreement but is deemed to close as a precondition even for a candidature for EU membership (Anon 2009). However, the recent address by the High Representative to the UN Security Council in fact calls for the increased efforts by the international community to promote reconciliation, including the need for more “prescriptive” measures concerning necessary reforms, and for maintaining “all of the tools at [...] [OHR’s] disposal to prevent any further deterioration of the situation” (Inzko 2018).



Destruction of heritage and fragmentation of memory and institutions

The catastrophic scope and intensity of the 1990s war shattered the trust and all previously shared cultural narratives, but also profoundly altered the institutions of governance. These are now dominated by the three main nationalistic parties, representing Bosniaks, Bosnian Croats and Bosnian Serbs, who have risen to power during the war and have benefited from the post-war transition and privatization of the economy in line with a neo-liberal doctrine. This means that the institutions of the former system were replaced, subsumed or demoted within an asymmetric, complex and complicated system with built-in

19) This is not to be confused with Republic of Serbia which is one of the successor countries of former Yugoslavia.

18) Article I of the Dayton Peace Agreement (1995) states: [...] the Parties shall fully respect the sovereign equality of one another, shall settle disputes by peaceful means, and shall refrain from any action, by threat or use of force or otherwise, against the territorial integrity or political independence of Bosnia and Herzegovina or any other State.

tensions and separatist tendencies. The impact on spatial and urban planning, building control and heritage protection is a further fragmentation of responsibility and an exposure to crude neo-liberal developments and foreign investment with limited regard for place-making (Ugljen Ademović and Turkušić 2012).

This situation places cultural institutions (re)constituted after the Dayton Peace Agreement in a precarious position, between numerous designated patrons at the state, entity, district and cantonal level, which is further complicated by the post-war transition in economy and society (Bray 2004). Whilst the deliberate destruction of cultural heritage and institutions in the war were acts of “obliteration of memory,” the post-war political structure allowed a “segmentation of memory,” in which Sarajevo’s archives, libraries and museums have been either devastated or actively neglected by the authorities (Donia 2004). The selective undermining and marginalizing of the institutions that survived the war, means that the “de(con)struction” by military means has been effectively replaced by peaceful measures, or the lack of them, with the same effect.

The UNESCO overview shows that there are only two state-level institutions in charge of protection and preservation of heritage in the country: the Commission to Preserve National Monuments and the Ministry of Civil Affairs; nine other institutions have this responsibility in the two entities (Republic Srpska and Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina) and the Brčko District, with six other institutions at the cantonal levels (Mekić 2006). The status of the Commission to Preserve National Monuments is based on the constitutional provisions in Annex 8 of the Dayton Peace Agreement, where the right to cultural heritage is linked as a condition for the return of communities. Given the scope and aims of the war, the Commission’s task of compiling the list of protected monuments is enormous, as elucidated in a comprehensive

study *Bosnia and the Destruction of Cultural Heritage* (Walasek *et al.* 2015). Its role is also limited and stops short of implementation of protection, which then becomes the duty of owners, local authorities or entity institutions without adequate enforcement provisions. The lack of political consensus on the significance, ownership and care is also complicated by a commonly adopted classification of heritage, which often favours the ethnoreligious criterion rather than a qualification by a historic period.

The examination of Sarajevo’s museums by Gunsburger Makaš outlines the key thematic narratives and tracks the gradual change and fragmentation of alignment from the socialist period (Gunsburger Makaš 2012). She observes the display of periods of ruptures: Histories of the 1914 Assassination of Franz Ferdinand, Histories of World War II, and Histories of the 1990s Siege of Sarajevo, as the representations of major conflicts that have marked the country. This implies a trend of singularisation of narratives tailored to each institution. Equally, the multicultural message persists across a number of institutions displaying the “self-reliance and clever resourcefulness of Sarajevans who managed to survive the forty-four months they were cut from the rest of the world” (Gunsburger Makaš 2012:12). In her view, “[t]his multicultural identity [...] [is] stressed through some major omissions [...] [so that] World War II, the interwar and communist periods are not discussed in any branch [...] [I]t is as if Sarajevo and Bosnia and Herzegovina were never part of Yugoslavia. [...] [The] contemporary historiography [...] more generally has overwhelmingly shifted to a focus on the Austro-Hungarian and Ottoman eras as well as the medieval Bosnian kingdom” (Gunsburger Makaš 2012:13).

However, in view of the more recent developments and the persistence of commemorations with the anti-fascist narrative, these observations deserve

further scrutiny. According to the Director of the History Museum of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the only two regular remembrance events, the Day of Liberation of Sarajevo (April 6, 1945) and the Day of the Bosnian statehood (November 25, 1943), receive funding by the City of Sarajevo or the Cantonal Government with predictability.²⁰

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Transition and the *Besieged Sarajevo* exhibition

Located close to Government buildings and Trščanska ulica, which became known as the Sniper Alley,²¹ the Museum building suffered from shelling and fighting in the war. Close-up, there are bullet holes, severe marks of water damage, steady loss of stone cladding, exposed concrete and corroding steel. Its once-sharp edges and smooth volumes are deformed. The dilapidation caused by war damage and post-war lack of maintenance is slowly turning the building into a seemingly abandoned urban ruin. Walking past the entrance towards the river Miljacka and negotiating by an armoured vehicle from World War II, the view opens to Café Tito, named after the former Yugoslav President. Occupying part of the former plant room, its walls and alcoves are adorned with posters, slogans and memorabilia themed on the leading figure and symbols of the socialist period (Harrington *et al.* 2017).

Having overcome a period of bare survival until the early 2000s, the History Museum in Sarajevo has taken a new course. Although, since 2012, it has been formally recognized as a national monument based on the quality of its modernist architectural composition and its public mission, it lacks the security of funding and general care. While continuing the institution's public function, the Museum's small professional team is almost completely left to its own devices.

Entering the main exhibition hall on a gloomy and cold winter day, the space looks bleak. The ceiling tiles are missing, exposing the light aluminium grid and concrete soffit underneath the damaged glazing of the roof-lights. Scattered around are a few original tube-and-glass display cabinets with unusual exhibits—a plastic crate on wheels, a recycled cardboard lamp pedestal, a remodelled pressure cooker/stove, a “hand-made lamp of cannibalised bicycle parts [...] with the handle of a coffee grinder,” and so on (Goodman 2014: 55). To a typically young Western visitor, it is at first difficult to understand what the exhibition is about (Fig. 2).

The memories of personal experiences expressed through these real and virtual records represent what might be termed as a “heritage of destruction.” The objects are displayed with sparse descriptions and commentary open to interpretation by the visitor. Seemingly a deliberate avoidance of dissent is visible in “a thematic approach with objects and information grouped under headings such as water, light, food, weapons, communication, hygiene, medicine, sport, and so on” (Gunsburger Makaš 2012: 11). Close-up, the artefacts donated by citizens who experienced the siege of Sarajevo between April 5, 1992 and February 1996, convey how the city (and the country) was cut off from normality, during almost four years of constant shelling from the surrounding hills. This was accompanied by shortages of electricity, gas, food, water and dependence on, at times, “perversely unhelpful” humanitarian aid (Goodman 2014: 55). The ironic take on the quality of such food aid is expressed in the nearby monument in the shape of an enlarged military food can.

The current permanent exhibition themed on the siege is a work in progress. First installed as an improvised display in 2003, titled “Survival Skills,” it gained support from Sweden as a touring exhibition “*Opkoljeno Sarajevo* (Besieged Sarajevo)” in 2004 and 2005. It returned

20) Lead author's interview with the Museum Director, May 6, 2016.

21) This area was heavily targeted by the besieging Serb-nationalist forces in an attempt to split the city in two parts.



Fig.2: The *Besieged Sarajevo* exhibition, the History Museum of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Sarajevo, July 2017. Photo credit: Selma Harrington.

home in 2007 to broadened display in the main hall of the Museum, which had in the meantime opened after a period of closure due to lack of funds (Gunsburger Makaš 2012). Although the displayed material and objects “suggest the senselessness of the siege and the innocence and helplessness” (Gunsburger Makaš 2012: 11), they are also proof of the Sarajevans’ will to resist it “by preserving their dignity and maintaining the memory of normal life by ingenious improvising” (Goodman 2014: 55).

A number of recent temporary exhibitions relate to the workers’ movements like the “*Husinska buna* (The Husino Miners’ rebellion)” (Anon 2014) and the “*Dostojanstvo rada* (The Dignity of Work),”²² thus linking to the legacy of the socialist period. Other projects, such as “*Nikad im bolje nije bilo?* (They never had it better?)” with the Museum of Yugoslavia in Belgrade (M.Ču. 2015), or the Open Archives project, use the material loaned from public and the Revolution collections, respectively. Whilst making up for some previously observed gaps, these, as well as the permanent exhibition, tend to be

curated in a manner which speaks for itself. In as much as that might be obvious to generations of local public, many of the messages of this clearly important and rich period might be missed by other visitors, due to the sparse interpretative material.

The Museum team, like six other “unresolved” national institutions, continues to operate within the systemic vacuum, colloquially described as “*ni na nebu, ni na zemlji* (neither in the sky nor on earth)” (Šimić 2013). This means that state or other government funding is sporadic and the Museum competes with other institutions for project grants from the Ministry of Civil Affairs or from the City authorities. Such situation is a huge challenge, but “being off the radar” also leaves a possibility for a creative resourcefulness, on which the Museum seems to thrive.

The openness to creative networking and alignment with the global commemoration themes and trends brings new forms of transnational collaboration. With responsiveness, adaptability and a relaxed formality, the Museum has undertaken joint

22) The latter was in partnership with the *Sindikat radnika trgovine i uslužnih djelatnosti BiH (STBiH)* (Syndicate of Trade and Service Workers of B&H) in 2016 (Anon 2016).

projects, among other, with institutions commemorating the Holocaust, such as the Museum Jasenovac in Croatia, the Shoah Memorial in Paris and with the Imperial War Museum in London (Šimić 2013).

Through association with a number of architectural initiatives, the campaign continues for the renovation of the building by emphasising its value as part of a Socialist Modernity (Ugljen Ademović and Turkušić 2012). The Museum was a guest at a prelude to the Venice Biennale 2016 under the banner “People’s Museum” (Korody 2016). It has also received funding from the U.S. Embassy for emergency roof repairs.

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Conclusions

The gaze back to the first incarnation of the History Museum of Bosnia and Herzegovina, as the Museum of Revolution, points to the importance of political will and secured government funding, as essential at the time of its foundation. Ideologically biased, there was a determination to create the material expression of the revolutionary character of evolving socialist Yugoslav narrative. This created a solid position and space for the Museum to evolve professionally in keeping with the regional and international trends. Its thematic narrative gradually lost the appeal to the public, not only for ideological but also for cultural reasons. Its original concept was *inclusive*, “people” oriented, but the singularity and fixity of memory could no longer respond to the changing society in the same format. When the 1990s war necessitated the Revolution collections to be moved to the basement, this also symbolically turned them into the repository of the past and opened up a vacant space to be filled with new thematic content.

To architecture enthusiasts, despite its rundown appearance, the Museum building still represents an embodiment of a Modernist dream, of the ideal “neutral,”

“white cube,” whose abstraction and asceticism was well matched to the early development of Bosnia and Herzegovina in socialist Yugoslavia. Taken as a materialisation of a pure possibility, it is shocking and ironic to observe this “ideal” slowly turning into a ruin.

The answer to the question: “Why is a protected national monument left to such ruination?” lingers in the gap between the two state entities, where the only prop available to the Museum team is resilience. Such resilience is underpinned by self-reliance and a will to transform while reframing and reaffirming the core values set at the foundation of the Museum (Fig. 3).

The evident orientation to the realm of “public” rather than “national” is redefining the meaning of “people’s museum” (Urban Think Tank 2016). An inclusive and international approach and sensitivity with specific narratives are demonstrated by several temporary exhibitions and events, so that even without a structured process of reconciliation in the country, the Museum is effectively opening up as a safe space for a dialogical communication between communities. Engaging on a collegial basis and outside of the formal institutional framework, it is often defying the entity divisions. Its resilience as an institution is an illustration and a metaphor for the fragile and resilient State, as both are daily



Fig. 3: Main entrance hall with original stained glass artwork, including anti-fascist and independence slogans, History Museum of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Sarajevo, October 2016. Photo credit: Selma Harrington.



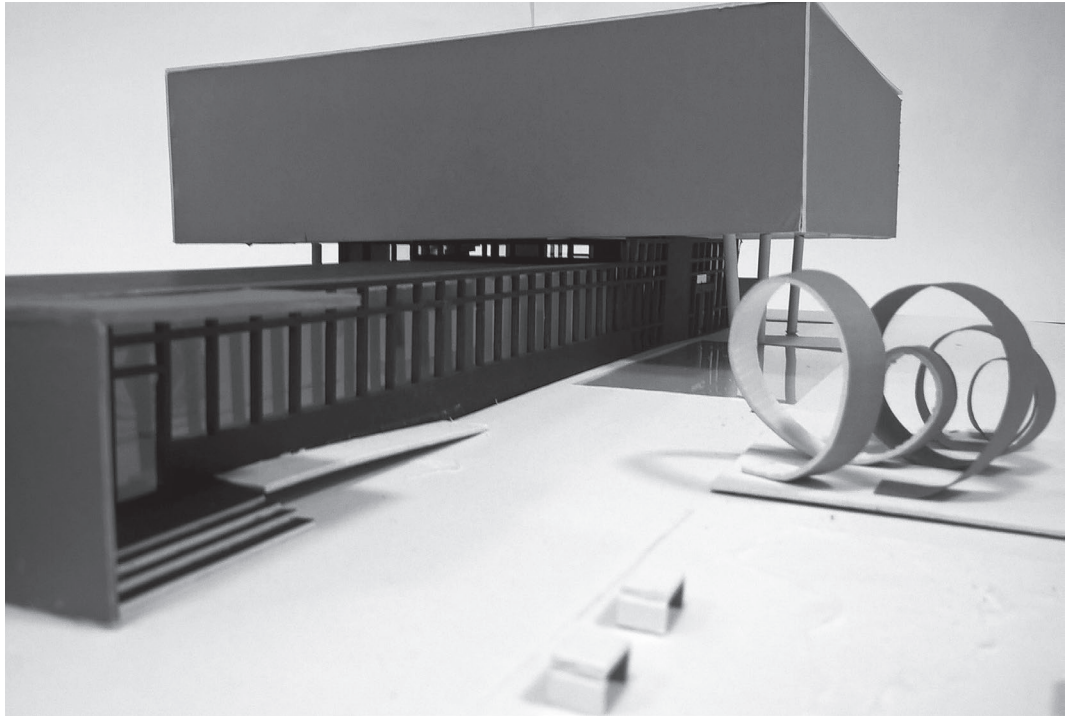


Fig. 4: Group Design Studio project-GCD 2016. Lead author's photo archive.

negotiating the present while defragmenting the recent past in order to move forward.

The original architectural structure of the Museum has to be understood, evaluated and brought to a condition which suits the present needs. The symbiotic bond of original architecture with the core mission of the Museum is an embodiment of the shared social achievements, a heritage whose universal values could provide a template, an open space and a new frame for a (re)construction of the public narratives in contemporary Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The permanent “Besieged Sarajevo” exhibition and its public ownership is an important part of living memory. This evolving narrative has placed the Museum amidst local, regional and trans-national professional collaboration and remains crucial for the process of questioning the past for the benefit of the present. Its dominant message of resourcefulness and survival may well indicate that in future this will become the Museum of Resilience, with a mission to research, study and educate in

self-reliance and inventiveness, which are all necessary and universal skills in a world of recurring war-and-peace cycles.

The Museum’s outreach is signalling the potential for a wide range of co-creational projects in education and public engagement (Fig. 4). That is gradually changing the perceptions and understanding of public, private and inter-institutional collaboration, leading to the development of new business models and interaction. Whilst the biggest challenge remains to be an adequate institutional support at the level of decision-making and funding allocation, the new research needs to focus on systemic issues, identification of obstacles and development of new forms of facilitation and support methods for the new, emerging museum practice.





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