

Across the River:  
A Library Reflected

by  
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## *author's declaration*

I hereby declare that i am the sole author of this thesis. This is a true copy of the thesis, including any required final revisions, as accepted by my examiners.

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## *abstract*

The thickening line crafted as a ‘temporary’ border thirteen years ago during the Dayton Peace Agreement –dividing Bosnia into *Republika Srpska* and the Federation of Bosniaks and Croats- is gaining an unsettling permanence in present-day Bosnia. As each of the three ethnic groups attempts to maintain their autonomy, they unwillingly share the divided country, while tangling the question of Bosnian identity into a perplexing web of religious and nationalistic ties.

This thesis traces Bosnian history with a story of a singular building, the National Library. The library’s physical and programmatic changes parallel Bosnian political transformation through time. The destruction of the library during the siege of Sarajevo on many levels symbolizes the destruction of multicultural Bosnia as well.

This thesis proposes a re-conceptualization of the Bosnian National Library as a new building where a dialogue between the segregated ethnic groups could to emerge through the use of a common shared secular space. This space will act as a point of cultural overlap that negates the idea of purity and homogeneity. Instead, through the building programme and its relationship with the city, the library will welcome diversity and encourage dialogue in order to attempt a dissolution of the boundaries between the group of inclusion and the “other”.



*Fig. 0.1: Vješčnica,  
main atrium, 1996*

*(FAR RIGHT)  
Fig. 0.2: Vješčnica,  
main atrium, 1993*



*“All over the city sheets of burned paper, fragile pages of gray ashes, floated down like a dirty black snow. Catching a page you could feel its beat, and for a moment read a fragment of text in a strange kind of black and gray negative, until, as the heat dissipated, the page melted to dust in your hand.”*

(Dr. Kemal Bakaršić, librarian of Bosnia’s National Museum, describing the burning of the National and University Library, 25-27 August 1992).

*“Serb fighters in the hills ringed Sarajevo peppered the area around the library with machine-gun fire, trying to prevent firemen from fighting the blaze along the banks of the Miljacka river in the old city. Machine gun bursts ripped chips from the crenellated building and sent firemen scurrying for cover. Mortar rounds landed around the building with deafening crashes, kicking up bricks and plaster and spraying shrapnel. When asked why he was risking his life, fire brigade chief Kenan Slinić, sweaty, soot-covered and two yards from the blaze, replied: “Because I was born here and they are burning a part of me.”*

(John Pomfret, “Battles for Sarajevo Intensify as Bosnian Peace Conference Opens,” Associated Press, August 26, 1992)

*“[The National Library] was blazing out of control Wednesday after the besieged Bosnian capital came under fierce bombardment overnight. Firefighters struggling with low water pressure managed to extinguish the blaze several times during the night but the building [...] kept coming under renewed attack. [...] By mid-morning, the north and central sections of the crenellated four-storey building were completely engulfed by flames. Windows were exploding out into the narrow streets and the building’s stone north wall was cracking and collapsing under the heat of the raging inferno. [...] The fire started shortly after 10 p.m. on Tuesday night and, despite the efforts of the city’s fire department, kept growing. The slender Moorish columns of the Library’s main reading room exploded from the intense heat and portions of the roof came crashing through the ceiling.”*

(Kurt Schork, “Sarajevo’s Much-loved Old Town Hall Ablaze,” Reuters, Wednesday, August 26, 1992)

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To those willing to traverse





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*Part 1*



Fig. 1.1

### Ottoman Empire

<i>Sarajevo Census</i>	<i>1878</i>
Muslim	14,848
Orthodox	3,747
Catholic	696
Jewish	2,077
Other	7
<b>Total</b>	<b>21,377</b>

### Sarajevo: Under the Hapsburg Rule 1878

The Congress of Berlin marked the end of the Serbo-Turkish War<sup>1</sup> in 1878. Here the great powers of Europe decided that Bosnia and Herzegovina, while remaining notionally under Turkish sovereignty, would be occupied and governed by Austro-Hungary. Fourteen years after the annexation, the capital city of Sarajevo got a new city hall. The building was envisioned as a testament of power and grandeur of the new rule while paying a tribute to the old.

With the implementation of an imperial vision of urban spatial design based on Western models and Viennese precedents, the city acquired a Western face to accompany its previous profile as a classical Ottoman town.<sup>2</sup> By 1900, Sarajevo found itself in an overlap of two contrasting cultural orbits: one largely traditional, centered in Istanbul and the other European and 'modern', emanating from Vienna. Architecturally the overlap manifested itself through the invention

<sup>1</sup> Serbo-Turkish War (1876-78), military conflict in which Serbia and Montenegro fought the Ottoman Turks in support of an uprising in Bosnia and Herzegovina and, in the process, intensified the Balkan crisis that culminated in the Russo-Turkish War of 1877-78.

<sup>2</sup> Nedžad Kurto. *Arhitektura Bosne I Hercegovine, razvoj Bosanskeg stila*. (Sarajevo Meducnardni Centar za Mir. Sarajevo, 1998), 65.

of a new building style by the Austrians that came to be known as “pseudo-Moorish” or “Oriental”. The city hall, or *Vjećnica* as it is called in Bosnian, is one of the most spectacular examples of pseudo-Moorish architecture.

In the late 19th century as a strategy of political stabilization, the Austrian administration invested significant effort in balancing its own traditional values with the variety of national styles of the conquered nations.<sup>3</sup> To do so they began employing local historical references of the conquered Hapsburg cities of central Europe, and architecture became a tool to ensure a seamless weave between the imperial and the regional. Pseudo-Moorish architectural style emerged as a by-product of this cultural campaign. It was composed of an eclectic mix of elements, which were all considered of “Islamic” influence by the Austro-Hungarian administration. Instead of borrowing from the Ottoman architectural style that dominated Bosnian architecture at the time, the Hapsburg architects took on elements from Egyptian and Moorish architecture and fused it with the Viennese style in order to realize a new ‘vernacular’ approach.

<sup>3</sup> Dijana Alić. *Acribing Significance to Sites of Memory, The Sarajevo’s Town Hall*. (Urban International Press, Great Britain, 2004), 70.

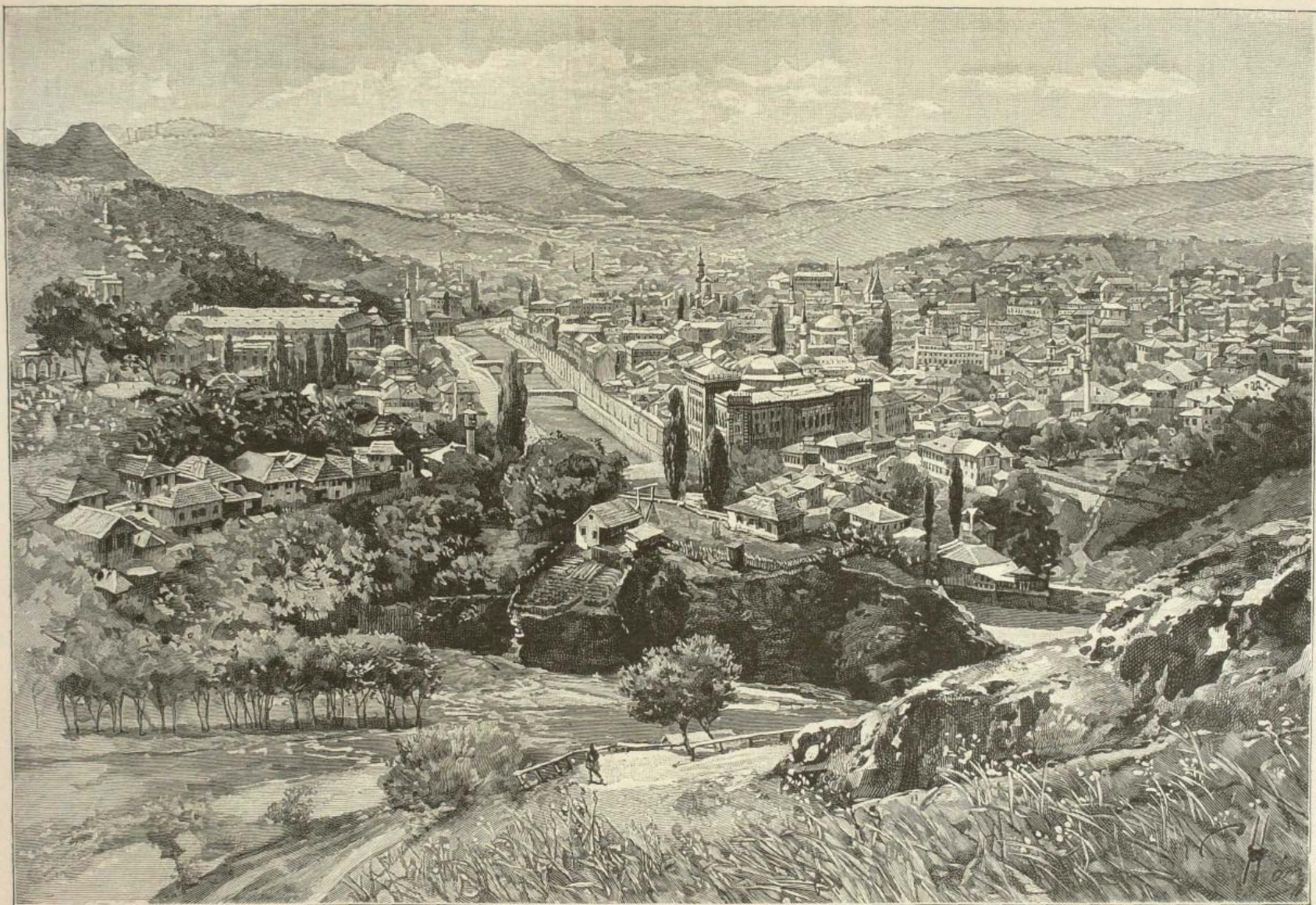


Fig. 1.2

### Austro -Hungarian Empire

<b>Sarajevo</b>	<b>Census</b>	<b>1910</b>
Muslim		18,603
Orthodox		8,405
Catholic		17,224
Jewish		2,908
Other		na
<b>Total</b>		<b>30,547</b>

1426-1878



Sarajevo.



The city hall was built on a site specially cleared for it at the far eastern end of the Ottoman-established city center *Bašćarsija*. Thus the building became a gateway to the city to those arriving from the west, while demarcating its edge from the east. A Bosnian-Australian architect Dijana Alić has argued that the imposing height of the building as well as its orientation, away from the Ottoman *ćarsija* (city center), was a political statement by the Hapsburgs. It was a way of asserting the power of the new empire over the old. The City Hall is greatly out of scale compared to the neighbouring Ottoman structures, while its “main entry faces the banks of the river Miljacka, denying any relationship between the building and the surrounding streets and shops of the *Bašćarsija* precinct”<sup>4</sup>.

Furthermore, Alić went on to argue that the application of a “pseudo-Moorish” architectural style to the city hall is closely linked to the broader cultural and political aim of the Austro-Hungarian administration in constructing a distinct Bosnian national identity so as to overcome the national debates that were taking place between the Muslims, Serbs (Orthodox)

<sup>4</sup> (Alić 2004, 66)

(TOP)

Fig. 1.4: Sarajevo  
Vještica, 1900

(BOTTOM)

Fig. 1.5: Sarajevo,  
1845

(OPPOSITE)

Fig. 1.3:  
Sarajevo, 1895

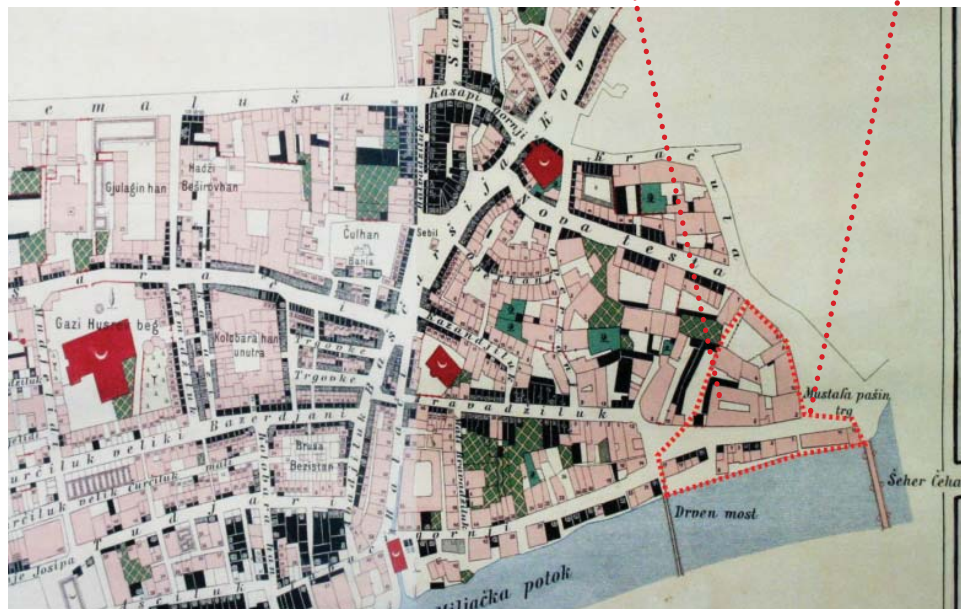
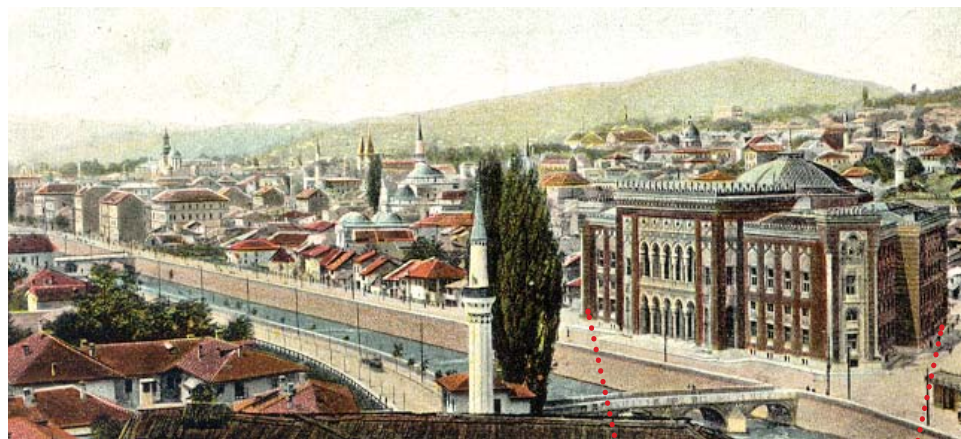
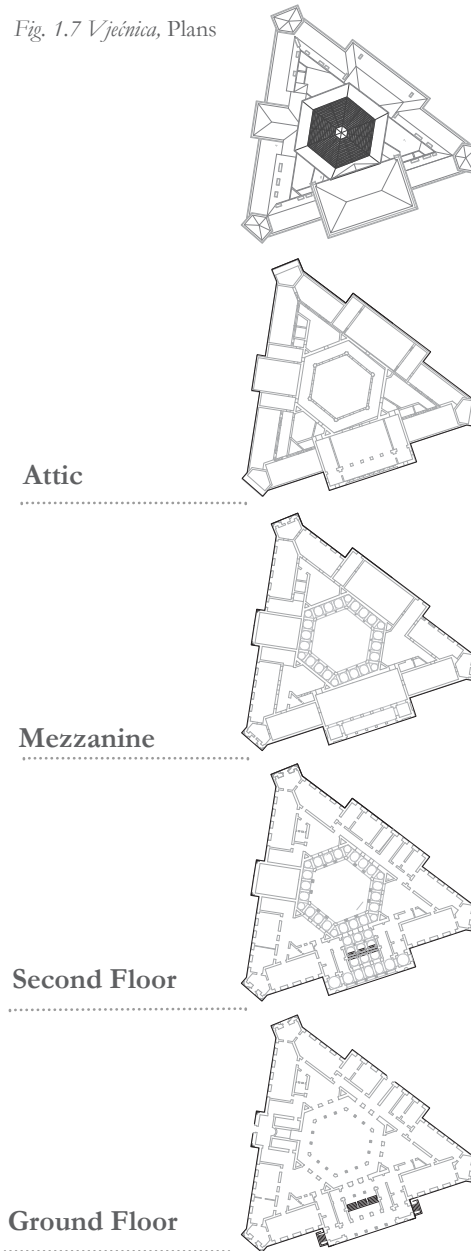




Fig. 1.6 Vjećnica, City Council, 1911

Fig. 1.7 Vjećnica, Plans



Attic

Mezzanine

Second Floor

Ground Floor

and Croats (Catholics) of Bosnia. She suggested that the Austro-Hungarian administration was particularly interested in constructing the identity of 'Bošnjak', ideally including all three main religious groups, but in reality leaning heavily on the Bosnian Muslims. She elaborates on the issue stating that the Austro-Hungarian rule was aware of the growing Croatian, and particularly Serbian nationalism harbouring in Bosnia and that they were aiming to strengthen the Bosnian national character by introducing the term *Bošnjak*: a Bosnian nation different from its neighbours. She states that:

*...although the Bosnian nation was to be one that consisted of the three main confessional groups, the articulation of its identity primarily relied on the Bosnian Muslims. The move aimed at counteracting the nationalist movements of Serbia and Croatia who managed to tie the Bosnian Orthodox and Catholic population to Serb and Croat national identities respectively, causing significant confusion over the national status of the Bosnian Muslims who had no direct 'sponsor' nation to rely upon.<sup>5</sup>*

Therefore pseudo-Moorish architecture also

<sup>5</sup>(Alić 2004, 84)

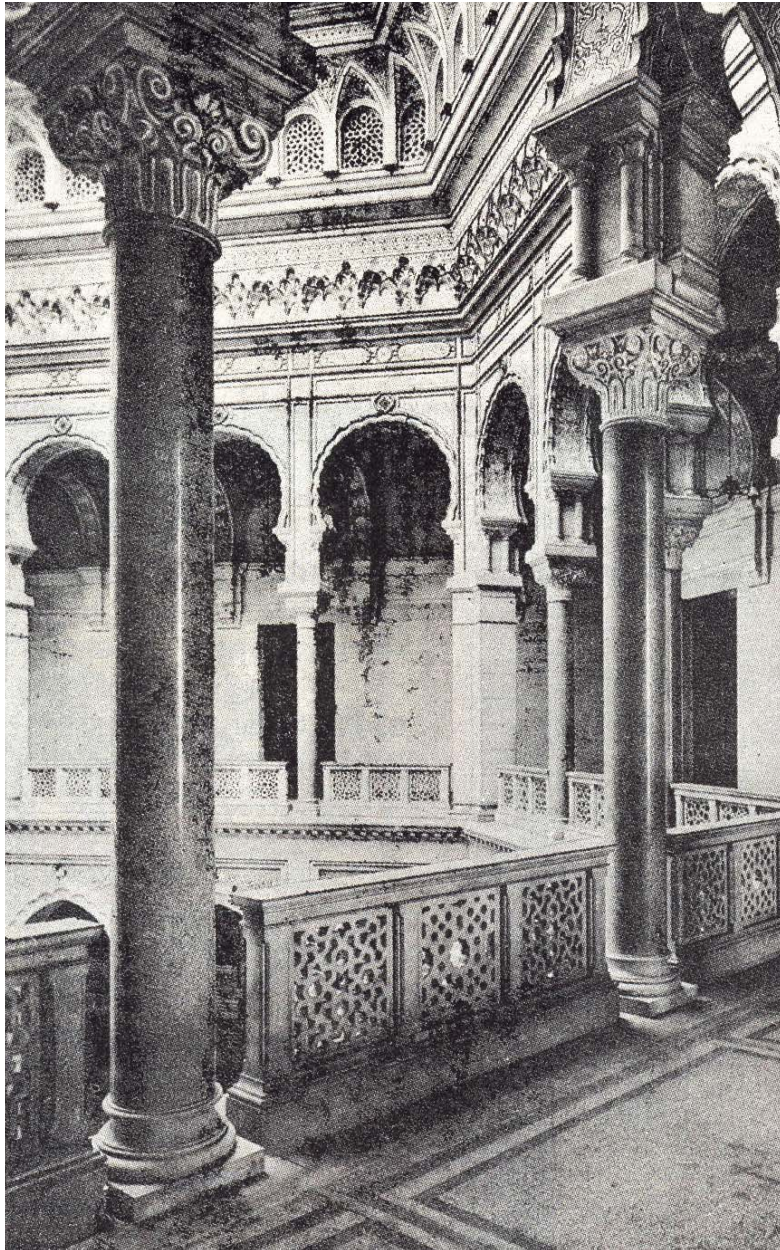
became a physical affirmation of the acceptance and inclusion of the Bosnian Muslim population. It was clear from the initial stages of design done by the Austro-Hungarian architect Karlo Prazik, as well from the further design development proposals, that the use of “Islamic” references was part of the original intent. Parzik’s proposal did not gain the support of the Austrian government officials and in 1892 he was replaced by the architect Alexandar Wittek<sup>6</sup>. However due to Wittek’s major health problems the design and execution of the Town Hall was soon entrusted to a third architect, Ćiril Iveković.

Its grand size and lavish décor established the Town Hall as the crown jewel in the series of public structures that the Austrian administration commissioned in Sarajevo. The plan of the executed building was in the shape of an equilateral triangle with its corners truncated and marked by towers. Incorporating a highly decorated central bay, the front elevation which faced the river was more articulated and elaborate than the two side elevations. Internally the building was centered on a hexagonal atrium covered by a steel and glass dome. The central space provided access to all other areas in the building and was connected to

*Fig. 1.8: Vjećnica grand staircase, 1984*



<sup>6</sup> (Kurto 1998, 63)



the upper level by a flight of marble stairs. Two conference halls that originally accommodated the meetings of the city council (*Gradsko Vjeće*) were located on the first floor of the building.

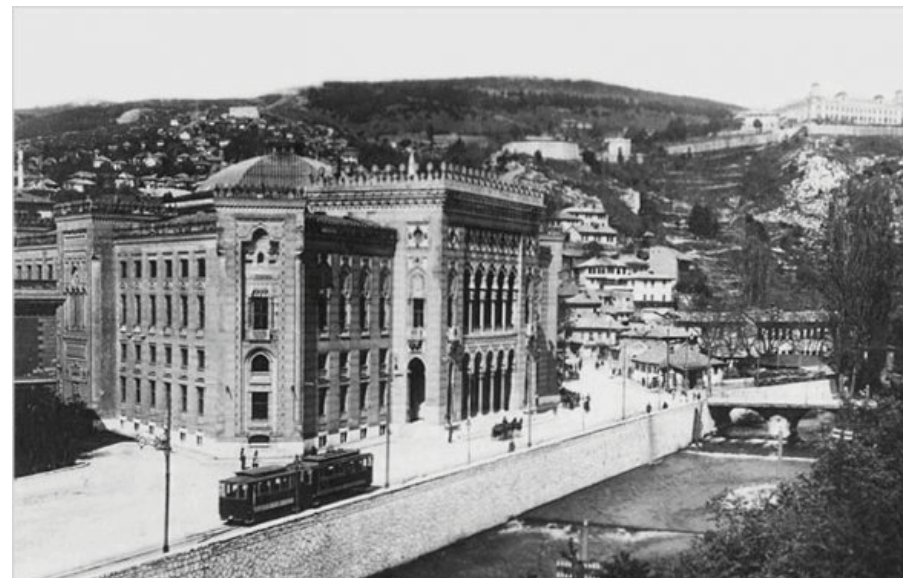
The building's short-lived use as the seat of the Bosnian Parliament was abruptly ended with the assassination of the Austrian Archduke Franz Ferdinand in 1914. In the decades that followed up until the end of WWII, various tenants occupied the building, in turn changing the interiors to suit their particular needs. This disjunction in the period between the two world wars, caused the building to become a morphing blend open to differing interpretations and changes of meaning.<sup>7</sup> Nevertheless the name *Vjećnica* (chamber of parliament) survived and carried through all the shifting functions the building undertook.

During the Hapsburg rule, *Vjećnica* never entered the daily life of the city due to its establishment as a colonial administrative building. However, the use of the city hall as the

<sup>7</sup> Dijana Alić citing Ingerson "Architecture and the scene of evidence, in Building, Dwelling, Drifting, Migrancy and the limits of architecture." (paper presented at the 3rd annual Other Connections Conference, University of Melbourne, June 1997), 143-149

signifier of ethnic tension rendered the building an important marker in the complex debates on Bosnian national expression and acknowledged the Austro-Hungarian efforts to establish close links between cultural production and political aims, thereby shifting the relationship between the colonizers and the colonized.<sup>8</sup> The city hall was a strategic attempt at Balkanization by the Austro-Hungarian powers for they realized that bridging the gap between the old and the new empire could also ensure a smooth transition of power.

<sup>8</sup> (Ingerson 1997, 149)



OPPOSITE PAGE

(FAR LEFT) *Fig. 1.9: Vjećnica, 1914*

(TOP RIGHT) *Fig. 1.10: Alhambra, 2005*

(BOTTOM RIGHT) *Fig. 1.11: Alhambra*

Lion's Fountain, 2005

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(TOP) *Fig. 1.12: Sarajevo Vjećnica, 1910*

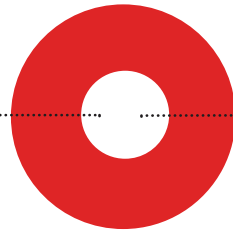
(BOTTOM): *Fig. 1.13 Sarajevo Vjećnica, 1928*



Fig. 1.14: Ottoman city formation



Fig. 1.15: Sarajevo 1697



Čaršija

## Sarajevo: From Ottoman Empire to Tito's Socialism

In order to understand the full impact of the subsequent change of programme from the city hall to the library it is pertinent to understand not only the political but also the social and cultural undercurrents that manifested themselves on an urban scale. Upon its foundation by the Ottomans in 1462, Sarajevo was settled by people from three monotheistic religions – Islam, Catholicism, and Eastern-Orthodoxy- therefore the languages spoken included Turkish, Arabic, Persian, Bosnian, Croatian, Serbian, Magyar, German, and Italian. Fifty years after its foundation, a large number of banished Jews from Spain also took refuge in Sarajevo. They brought to the city its fourth monotheistic religion with a distinct culture and language allowing Sarajevo to become “a new Jerusalem- a city of new linguistic mingling and a city in which temples of all faiths of the Book can be seen in one glance.”<sup>9</sup>

According to Ottoman conceptions of urban space, residential areas of the city were separated from commercial and religious centers. The

<sup>9</sup> Dzevad Karahasan, *Sarajevo, Exodus of a city* (New York: Kodansha International, 1994), 4-5.

central commercial and religious area known as the *Čaršija* (market) was organized parallel to both sides of the river Miljacka and like most other Ottoman cities the *Čaršija* was surrounded by residential neighbourhoods that were built on the inner slopes of the hills called *mabalas*. Each *mabala* was typically home to members of only one religious community, and was anchored by a house of worship that usually contained a small library. During the Ottoman era, Sarajevo was surrounded by hundreds of *mabalas* mainly of Muslim denomination which gave Sarajevo the name of ‘city of a hundred mosques’<sup>10</sup>.

*Čaršija* became the social center of the city, a place where those of all faiths and classes mingled in and among small shops crowded next to one another. The various Islamic religious buildings in the city center stood at the nexus of Islamic faith, conquest, administration, and prosperity that defined the Ottoman theoretical state ideal. In his novel *Sarajevo, Exodus of a City*, author Dževad Karahasan explains the cultural significance of the *Čaršija* in Sarajevo:

*Čaršija removes the differences among Sarajevans that exist because of their being members of*

<sup>10</sup> Mehmed Bublin, *Sarajevo u istoriji: od neolitskog naselja do metropolisa*. (Sarajevo: Buybook, 2006), 75.

Fig. 1.16: Diagram of Sarajevo’s urban formation

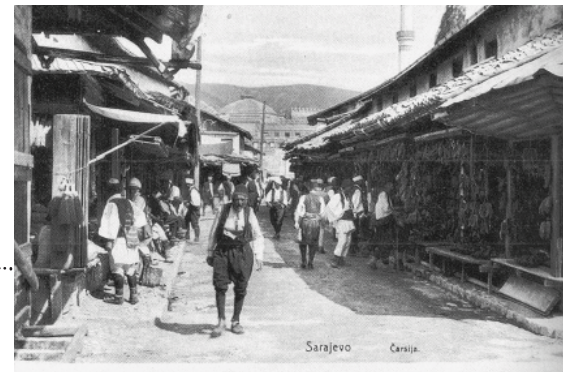
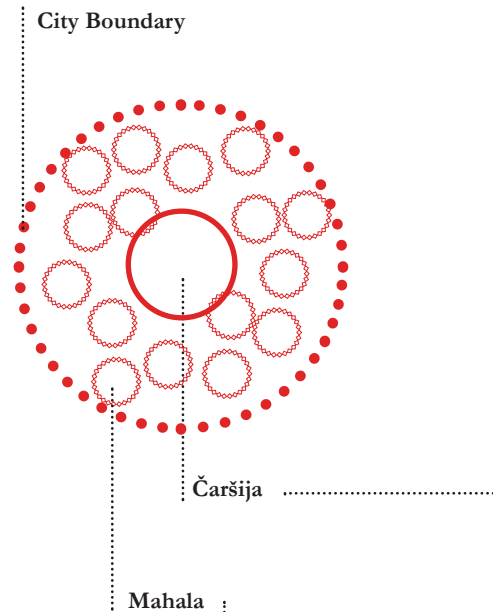


Fig. 1.17 and Fig 1.18 : Sarajevo Čaršija

Fig. 1.19: Sarajevo mabala



Fig. 1.20: Sarajevo mabala

(TOP) Fig. 1.21: Manuscript form Gazi-Husrev Beg Library

(BOTTOM) Fig. 1.22: Gazi-Husrev Beg Library, 2007



different cultures; it equalizes them in that which is common to them, what is universally human – in work, the need for material goods, love and envy, solidarity. At Čaršija, all of them are just people and Sarajevans, merchants and artisans, notwithstanding all the differences that exist among them. This is why Čaršija, the city center, is at once the most interior and the most open place.<sup>11</sup>

Libraries, as a place of gathered knowledge, have played a very important role in supporting the local government since the very founding of Sarajevo. Urban formations of Ottoman cities started with a mosque and a *mekteb* (primary religious school) construction. Mosques and *tekie* (sufi monasteries) as well as *medresas* (higher religious schools) became significant places for book collections. Calligraphy became a major part of schooling, and the copying of manuscripts was viewed as a form of art.

Libraries with the biggest collections were built by the donations of *vakuf*, money privately donated in the name of God. They were usually founded next to a *medresa*, *tekija*, mosque or other religious institution. Since state and religion

<sup>11</sup> (Karahasan 1994, 6)



were intertwined, the common establishment of a *vakuf* played a big role in terms of daily life and therefore all libraries belonged to the state as well as to religious institutions.

Islamic libraries during the Ottoman rule (1462-1878) had a head librarian (*sahib*) one or more book-keepers (*hazim*) and a servant (*farras*). The librarians at these libraries were often famous scholars and calligraphers. At the time there was also a large number of smaller private collections in the homes of *zanatlije* (small tradesmen), soldiers and wealthy citizens.

The most important library in Bosnia and Herzegovina built during the Ottoman Empire was commissioned by and named after Gazi Husrev-beg in 1527. Gazi Husrev-beg constructed a large mosque and with it the first *medresa* which was a precursor to the university in Sarajevo. With the *medresa* he founded a library that had the character of a public space in which anyone who wished to pursue further knowledge of spirituality and tradition, was free to use the books in the collection. Most of the Gazi Husrev-beg collection was in Turkish, a large part of it was in Arabic and Persian as well. Also, a number of works by Bosnian authors written in Turkish,

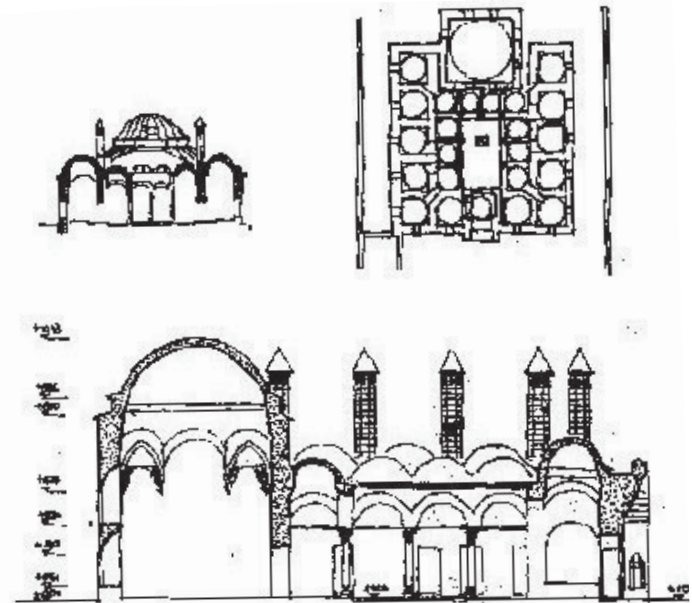


Fig. 1.23: Gazi-Husrev Beg Library and Medresa, plans and sections

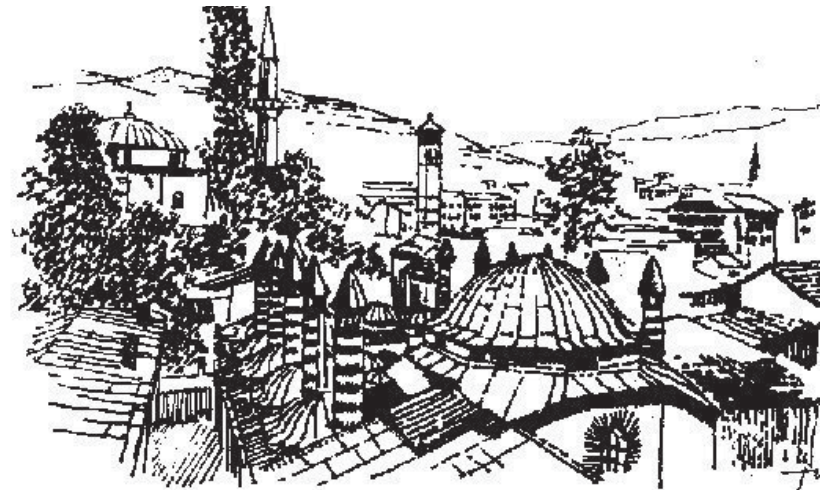


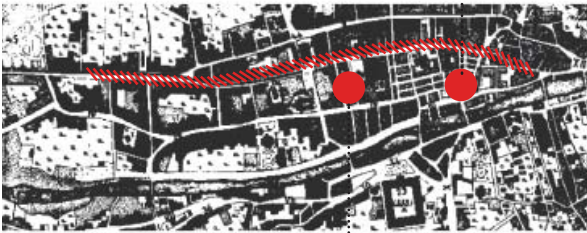
Fig. 1.24: Gazi-Husrev Beg Library and Medresa



(TOP)  
 Fig. 1.25: Sarajevo *Čaršija*, 1930

(BOTTOM)  
 Fig. 1.26: Sarajevo Viennese inspired reformed city centre, 1927

(OPPOSITE)  
 Fig. 1.27:  
 Sarajevo map, 1914



Arabic and Persian as well as in old Bosnian, in a modified Arabic script known as Arabica, were also collected and stored.

At the end of the Ottoman Empire and also during the Austro-Hungarian rule, Islamic libraries came to stagnation. Many disappeared while smaller collections both private and public were amalgamated into the Gazi Husrev-beg library. Under the Austro-Hungarian rule (1863-1864) the Gazi Husrev-beg library became an independent institution, separate from the mosque and the *medresa*. As a way of conveying a clear political message, the Hapsburgs moved the collection to a separate building next to the mosque where it stayed until 1935. At this time the remaining mahala libraries for the most part were amalgamated with the Gazi Husrev-beg library collection as well.

The first inclination of the imperial rule was to cultivate the Catholic population while instilling Habsburg imperial values in Bosnia's capital city through the rearrangement of central urban space. Major religious, cultural and educational institutions of each religious community were clustered around a city center square and placed in close proximity to one another. By 1900

two new secular buildings at either end of the city defined the east-west axis: the Regional Government Building in the west and City Hall on the east. Two clusters of religious structures were also built along this axis, one Orthodox and one Catholic, and in close proximity to each other. The central Christian house of worship was thereby divorced from the residential neighborhoods and located in positions of parity with those of the Muslims.

During the Austro-Hungarian rule the principal inspiration for Sarajevo's physical transformation was Vienna's Ringstrasse, where Viennese trends were copied on a more modest scale in hundreds of buildings. The rise of the new Socialist government in 1945 brought forth the need for a new architectural expression, a different one from the founding Islamic Ottoman government or that of the colonial Austro-Hungarian rule.

Under Josip Broz Tito's Socialism, the old city hall underwent yet another significant transformation. The first order of business of the Yugoslav Socialist Government of Yugoslavia (1945-1992) was to erase the memory of the colonial past, and to establish a new tone for a new regime. Part of this campaign included the transformation of

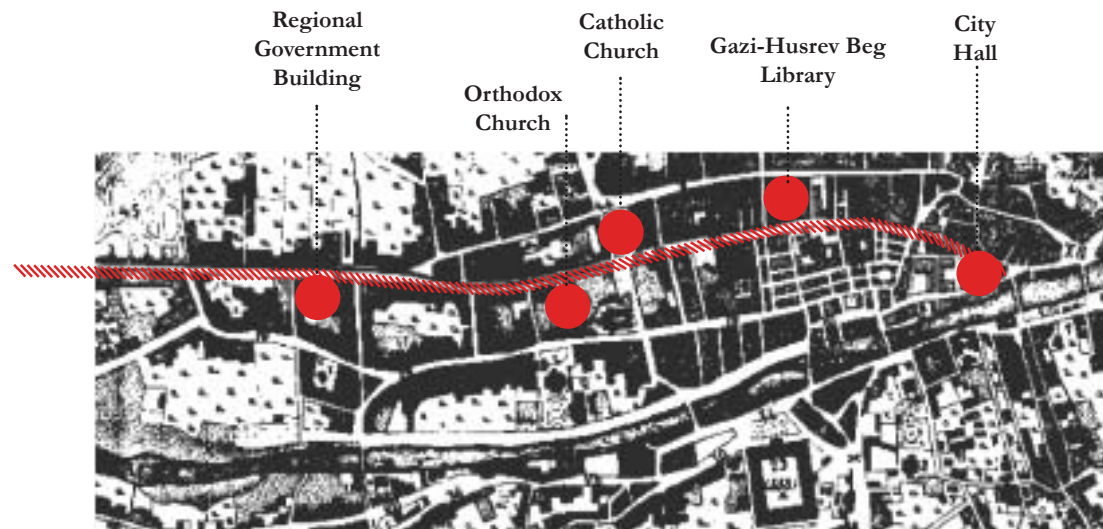
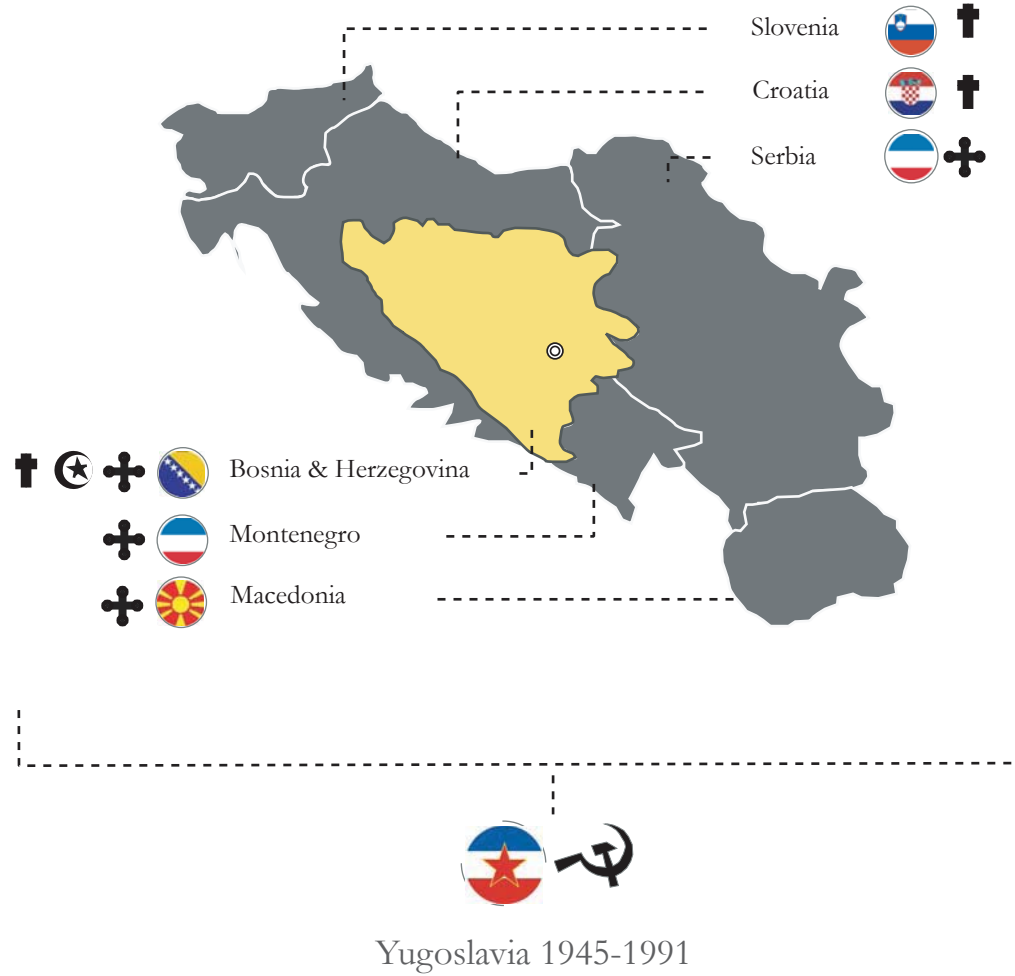




Fig. 1.28

Socialist Yugoslavia

Fig. 1.29



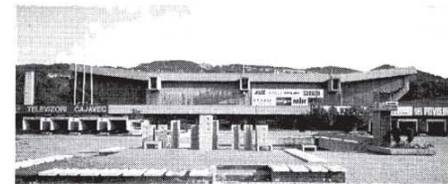
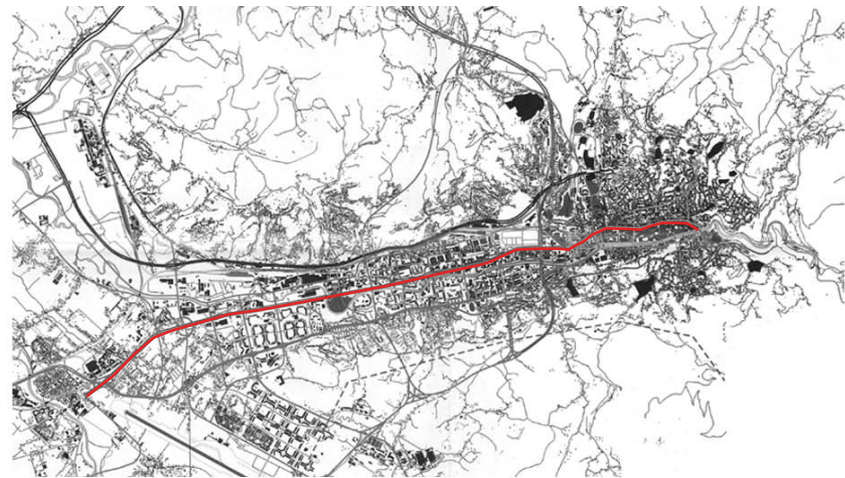
<i>Sarajevo Census</i>	<i>1991</i>
Muslim	259,470
Serbs	157,143
Croats	34,873
Yugoslav	56,470
Other	19,093
<b>Total</b>	<b>527,049</b>

the use of the old city hall building from one of administration to that of a civic institution; it was to be reinvented as the National and University Library. Knowledge needed to be secularized while fostering a closer link between the building and the rapidly growing city.

Sarajevo underwent an unprecedented transformation of its cityscape during its forty-five years of socialist life. Geographically it expanded to several times its former size while the previously separate spheres of political and social life, as well as the existing segregated residential areas, gave way to an array of integrated housing communities and social block buildings. Driving the transformation was a grand vision formulated by a relatively few party members clearly inspired by precedents in other socialist countries. The new spatial and physical development of the city was intended to satisfy the two most pressing needs of a dynamic, expanding working class: employment opportunities and housing for all. The buildings conformed to socialist ideals about the value and equality of the working class. Their uniformity sent a message of equality among workers of all professions, where buildings acted as rewards for the contribution to the collective social labour

(TOP)  
*Fig. 1.30*  
Sarajevo map, 1991

(BOTTOM CLOCKWISE)  
*Fig. 1.31, Fig. 1.32, Fig. 1.33,*  
*Fig. 1.34, Fig. 1.35*  
Socialist fabric



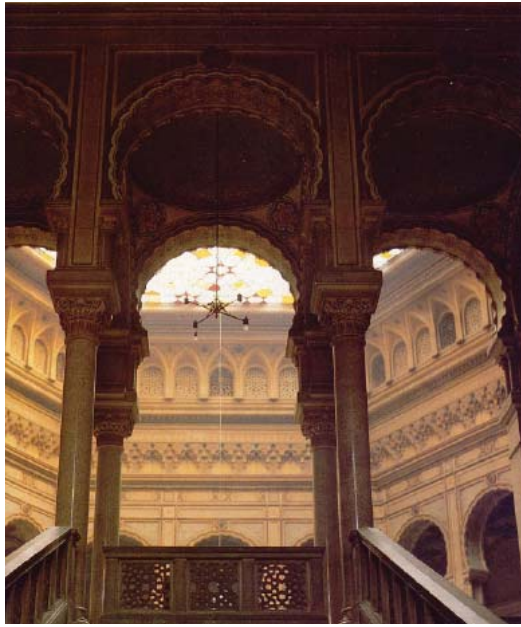


Fig. 1.36: *Vjećnica* atrium, 1984



Fig. 1.37: *Vjećnica* main reading room, circa 1984

of the country.

As a prime representation of both its colonial past and Ottoman roots, *Vjećnica* had no place in the construction of the new socialist, secular and modern Bosnia. The relevance of the building's colonial background was thus transformed if not diminished by the change in the building's use from a place of administration to one of learning, from a colonial center to a modern progressive research institution and the National Library.

This change of use, and therefore of the building's identity within the city, marked a shift in the symbolic significance of the building from the imposed colonial values to the constructed socialist ones<sup>12</sup>. The newly crafted identity as a library subsequently provided a gateway for *Vjećnica* into the daily lives of Sarajevans and into their collective memory. By the early 1990's *Vjećnica* had become a part of them; it was even accepted as a symbol of their city, proudly featured on chocolate boxes and city postcards.

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<sup>12</sup> (Alić 2004, 73)

(TOP)

Fig. 1.38:

*Vjećnica* exterior, 1986

(BOTTOM)

Fig. 1.39 & Fig. 1.40:

*Vjećnica* atrium, 1984



## Library Departments

*Acquisitions*

*Processing*

*Reference*

*Special Collection\_ 6,000 volumes*

- manuscript collection
- collection of rare books
- maps collection
- collection of graphics

*Periodicals*

- 18 000 journal titles
- 1 000 newspaper titles

*Bibliography of BiH*

*Stacks*

- 50 000 library units

*Reader Services*

- 420 seats for readers

The library employed 108 staff members



*"It was terrible. When I went into the house I told everyone. We all were very attached to the National Library building, because it was located on one of the main thoroughfares, and wherever you went in Sarajevo, you had to pass the National Library. By that beautiful wonderful building which was truly a symbol, a symbol of the city. I did feel sorry about that building, but I also thought we were finished. Yeah, because at that point we were afraid - we did feel sorry about our city - but we were more afraid for our lives. We were thinking, "this is it, this is the end, its coming closer, it'll be here soon."*

Zlata Huseincahajić,  
Boutique Owner

Excerpt From: Sarajevo survivor testimonies from OPSADA (The Siege) by FAMA  
International



## **Sarajevo: Under Siege 1991**

During the Yugoslav Socialist era (1945-1991) *Vjećnica* housed 1.5 million books of the Bosnian National and University Library. This included the collections of the University of Sarajevo as well as over 155,000 rare books and manuscripts, the country's national archives, deposit copies of newspapers, periodicals and books published in Bosnia.

On the night of August 25, 1992, the Serb nationalist army situated in the hills north of the city open fire on the Bosnian National and University Library. A series of explosions rocked Sarajevo as incendiary shells slammed through the roof of the library setting fire to the book stacks. The fire raged for three days reducing most of its irreplaceable contents to ashes.

While being under constant aim of the snipers many Sarajevans made their way to the library where they began a furious effort to rescue books from the advancing flames. They formed a human chain and passed the books out of the burning building. As firefighters arrived, they too came under attack. The soldiers in the hills released anti-aircraft shells and machine-gun



fire with the intent of disabling the water supply. Overnight, Bosnian soldiers pulled books from the library under the relentless fire from the hills. “We managed to save just a few very precious books. Everything else burned down. And a lot of our heritage, national heritage, lay down there in ashes,”<sup>13</sup> stated one of the volunteers the next day during an interview with an ABC News camera crew.

Rescue efforts continued over the next several days while the charred books fluttered through the streets surrounding the library. Onlookers recall the ‘black snow’, ash and paper from the library fire filling the streets, engulfing the entire neighbourhood. Among the volunteers was the Bosnian poet Goran Simić who later wrote a poem “Lament for Vjećnica,” in which he conveyed the senseless and heartbreaking destruction. “Set free from the stacks,” he wrote, “characters wandered the streets / mingling with passers-by and the souls of dead soldiers.”

The man responsible for issuing the order for the destruction of Vjećnica was Nikola Koljević, a onetime scholar who rose through the ranks of

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<sup>13</sup> ABC News Archive, <http://abcnews.go.com/international>

(OPPOSITE) Fig. 1.41:  
*Vjećnica* exterior, 1992

Fig. 1.42:  
*Vjećnica* exterior, 1992



*Lament for Vjećnica*

Goran Simić

*The National Library burned for three days last August and*

*the city was choked with black snow.*

*Set free from the stacks, characters wandered the streets,*

*mingling with passers-by and the souls of dead soldiers.*

*I saw Werther sitting on the ruined graveyard fence; I saw*

*Quasimodo swinging one-handed from a minaret.*

*Raskolnikov and Mersault whispered together for days*

*in my cellar; Gavroche paraded in camouflage fatigues;*

*Yossarian was already selling spares to the enemy; for a*

*few dinars young Sanyer would dive off Princip's bridge.*

*Each day--more ghosts and fewer people alive; and the terrible*

*suspicion formed that the shells fell just for me.*

*I locked myself in the house. I leafed through tourist guides.*

*I didn't come out until the radio told me*

*how they'd taken ten tons of coals from the deepest cellar of*

*the burned-out National Library.*

the nationalist Serbian government. His story tells much about the interwoven motives and resentments that drove the library's destroyers. Before the war, Koljević had been a noted authority on Shakespeare at the University of Sarajevo. Along with his scholarship, he wrote poetry and criticism, and he thrived in the cosmopolitan milieu of Sarajevo. When his son died in a skiing accident in the late seventies, Koljević descended into a depression that led him to turn to Serbian nationalism and orthodox mysticism, and thereby became an early disciple of the Nationalist Serb leader Radovan Karadžić. Fleeing with Karadžić to the nearby resort town of Pale in 1992, they set up a Bosnian Serb capital, and directed the siege of Sarajevo. To Koljević, it was *Vjećnica* that represented everything he hated about the city: it contained its diverse history and embodied its Ottoman legacy. Within its walls the scholarly life, which ultimately had alienated Koljević, thrived. According to Di Giovanni's account, in the end it was Koljević—a former scholar who over many years had made extensive use of the Bosnian National and University Library—who signed the directive ordering Ratko Mladić to shell *Vjećnica* and destroy the library.

The destruction of *Vjećnica* attracted significant international attention including that of Harvard librarian, scholar, and activist András Riedlmayer. Riedlmayer points out the social and political significance of the destruction of cultural institutions in the following passage:

*“We should also take a closer look at the rubble itself. It signifies more than the ordinary atrocities of war, more than destroyed homes, shelled hospitals burned down business and civic institutions, entire neighborhoods reduced to ruins, cities torn apart by blasted bridges. Rubble in Bosnia and Herzegovina, signifies nationalist extremist hard work to eliminate not only human beings and living cities but also the memory of the past....The history that is being erased, both buildings and documents, speak eloquently of centuries of pluralism and tolerance of Bosnia. It is this evidence of a successfully shared past that the nationalists seek to destroy.”*<sup>14</sup>

In the context of a library, *Vjećnica* became a symbol of the country’s ability to accommodate

<sup>14</sup> András Reidlmayer, “Erasing Bosnia’s Cultural heritage” (testimony presented at a hearing of the Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe, April, US Government Printing Office, Washington 1995), 51.

Fig. 1.43  
*Vjećnica* interior, 1992



and integrate other cultures and transform the variety of influences into a “uniquely” Bosnian cultural expression, resonating with the original Austrian desires but casting it within the narrative of multicultural Bosnia. This is reinforced in the collective attitude towards *Vjećnica*, which shifted from a ‘foreign’ colonizing tool of control to a genuinely accepted and loved symbol of the city. Therefore its destruction symbolized much more than the destruction of a building.

There is something to be said about the act of book burning as well. After all “books and libraries are the living tissue of culture; the burning of books (as burning is often the means to their end) violates ideals of truth, beauty, and progress – and civilization itself”.<sup>15</sup> In addition to their innate vitality, books animate societies, and libraries collect the stories that give shape and meaning to our lives, helping individuals and cultures to orient and know themselves, to connect with each other, “self to self, past to future, and future to past”.<sup>16</sup> Therefore burning books implies the erasure of individual and collective stories; it is an act intent on erasing

<sup>15</sup> Rebecca Knuth, *Burning books and leveling libraries: Extremist violence and cultural destruction*. (Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 2006), 6.

<sup>16</sup> (Knuth 2006, 6)

history.

The destruction of the library was an attack on an inherent array of heterogeneous inclusiveness. In *Sarajevo, An exodus of a city*, Dževad Karahasan argues for the idea of “internal pluralism” as one of the inherent qualities of the Bosnian people. In Karahasan’s words:

*“Bosnian culture has not accepted the “dictatorship of the subject”- a relationship in which one subject, say a person, defines another subject, strictly in its own terms- perhaps precisely because of its internal pluralism. My image in someone else’s eyes depends both on him and me. What my interlocutor says is determined both by him and me. What I think and feel about someone else, depends both on him and me. The process of understanding does not occur between an active subject and passive object, as though to understand were dependent on the subject alone.”*<sup>17</sup>

In addition to demonstrating acceptance and openness, the notion of “internal pluralism” suggests the dialectical relationship between Bosnians and the cultures that have influenced

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<sup>17</sup> (Karahasan 1994, 34)

Fig. 1.44:  
Vjećnica, 1993



Fig. 1.45:  
Vjećnica, 1994





Fig. 1.46: *Missing Painting*, Nebojsa Seric Soba, 2007

Bosnia. Surprisingly, Karahasan located the origins of “internal pluralism” within the country’s colonial heritage and its continuous exposure to various and culturally diverse influences. It is through this exchange of ideas that, Karahasan argues, Bosnian culture became so open to different points of view, inclusive of different ideas and “internally pluralistic”. He bases this argument on two examples of cultural imports that were brought to Bosnia by the arrival of the Austrian administration.

The first is the *sevdalinka* songs and the second is the “pseudo-Moorish” architectural style. The folk love songs – *Sevdalinke* – were composed by German and Austrian poets on the themes that they thought represented Bosnian culture. They wrote about love and daily life from a position of assumed Bosnian identity, presenting the *sevdalinka* as an “authentic Bosnian” folk experience. Karahasan argues that because the *sevdalinke* are commonly accepted in Bosnia and “people sing them in Bosnia; they love them, believing that those songs speak about themselves and about their experience of the world”<sup>18</sup>, they demonstrate the inclusiveness and

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<sup>18</sup> (Karahasan 1994, 64)

openness of Bosnian culture.<sup>19</sup>

*Sevdah* bears the stamp of virtually every musical element in the Balkans: the music of Turkey, the Middle East, Dalmatia, Hungary, the Roma, Sephardi traditions among others; and blend into a force that speaks perpetually of longing, love and empathy, themes that also represent a unification of culture in the region

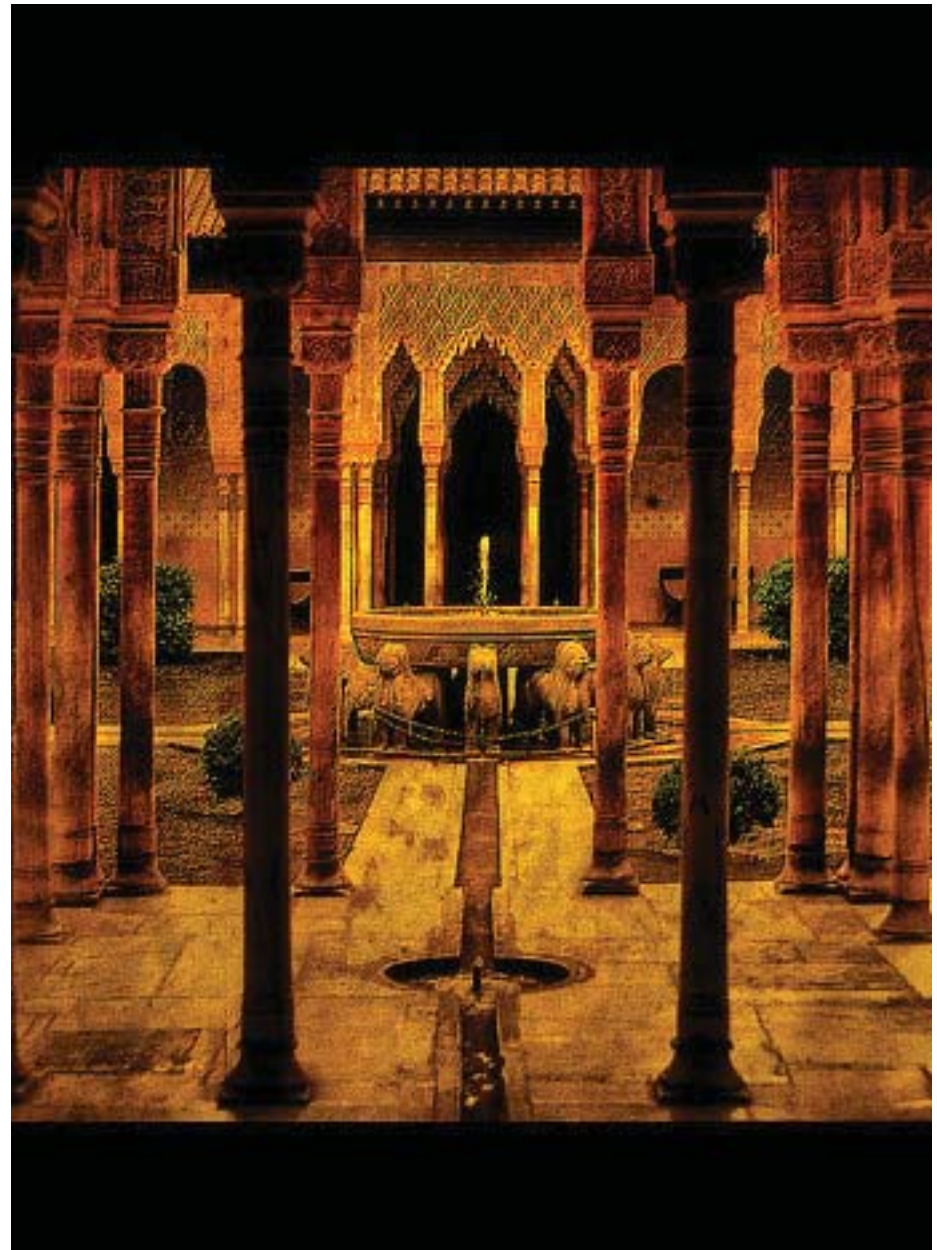
Similarly, Karahasan argues that the “pseudo-Moorish” architectural style introduced by Austrian architects was “accepted in Bosnia, and it still appears here and there – for instance when a wealthy man builds himself a house he wants to look ‘traditional’, he builds it in the pseudo-oriental villa style, akin to the way that Austrians used to build their houses in Sarajevo and Mostar”<sup>20</sup>. The importance of this, he suggests, lies in the fact that the “pseudo-Moorish” architectural style did not jeopardize the traditional Bosnian architectural expression nor was it indicative of a Bosnian’s lack of identity; quite the opposite, it reflected Bosnia’s readiness to acknowledge the relevance and the soundness of other cultures<sup>21</sup>.

<sup>19</sup> (Karahasan 1994, 64)

<sup>20</sup> (Karahasan 1994, 64)

<sup>21</sup> (Karahasan 1994, 64)

Fig. 1.47:  
Alhambra Lion’s  
Fountain





(TOP) Fig. 1.48: Vedran Smajlović. palying for *Vječnica*, 1992



(BOTTOM) Fig. 1.49: *Vječnica* atrium, 2007

It is noticeable that in the context of the 1992 war-induced destruction of Sarajevo, these very qualities of Bosnian culture presented in Karahasan’s book stand in startling opposition to the characteristics of the Serbian nationalist forces that surrounded the city, these including their intolerance towards the “other”, cultural exclusiveness and xenophobia. It is through the discussion of the aesthetic values of the building –its eclectic design, the use of an “invented style”- in relation to the spiritual-cultural values, that Karahasan presents *Vječnica* as a site of memory of multicultural Bosnia. It is in this building that the memory of cultural interactions, influences and multiple narratives are not only brought together but are transfigured and changed according to the specific sensibilities of the local people and culture. To quote Martin Coward, a scholar on war and ethnic cleansing:

*“The destruction of Vječnica is the destruction of a common, shared space. Insofar as the dynamic of ethnic cleansing is that of the carving out of separate, ethnically homogeneous and self-determining territorial entities, it comprises a denial of common space through a destruction of that which attests to a record*



*of sharing spaces – the heterogeneity of cultural heritage and the intermingling of civilian bodies. And yet the fundamental question for Bosnia is that of sharing a common space. Insofar as this is the demand made upon all those who observe, intervene in, or live in Bosnia it can only be achieved if a common, shared space exists.*<sup>22</sup>

<sup>22</sup> Martin Coward, “Urbicide In Bosnia,” in *Cities, War, and Terrorism: Towards an Urban Geopolitics*, edited by Stephen Graham. (Blackwell Publishing Ltd. 2008), 154-171.



(TOP) Fig. 1.50: Dobrinja neighbourhood, 1993

(BOTTOM) Fig.1.51: Vječnica atrium, 1993

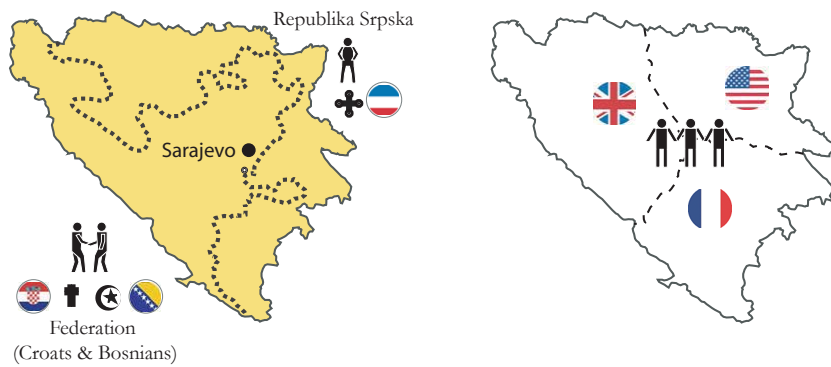


Fig. 1.52: Land Division after the Dayton Agreement 1995

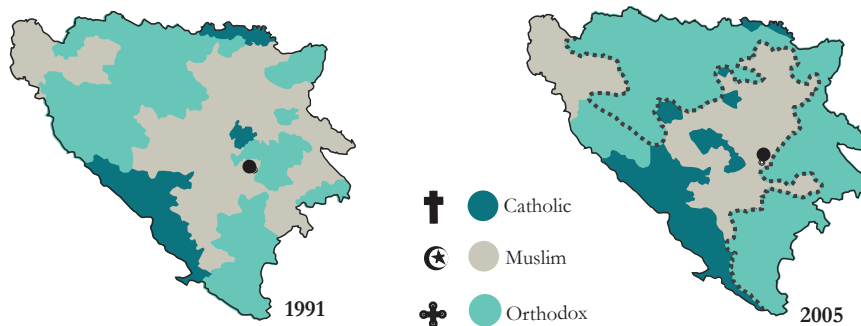


Fig. 1.53: Ethnic Population

## Sarajevo: The Aftermath 1996

In the post-war period of the late 90's, rebuilding the city hall appeared to be a question of national pride in the sense that its rapid and full recovery would symbolize the recovery of the entire nation. The local eagerness to rebuild the structure and the library collection was met by astonishing support from various international organizations, which included UNESCO, World Bank, Government of Austria and Harvard University Library.

Although calls for the reconstruction of the library collection resonated with great urgency, the physical rubble of the building itself also became a target of high press coverage. Highly publicized events such as the Sarajevo Symphonic Orchestra and Chorus performances of Mozart's Requiem in June 1994, conducted by Zubin Mehta amidst the ruins of Sarajevo's National Library seem to have, at the time, secured the city hall's place in the city's reconstruction process.

Understanding the weight of the post-war symbolism of the building, Jean-Luc Godard featured it in his 2002 film *Notre Musique*. Released in 2002 but filmed during the late 90's, the film is

divided into three parts following Dante's trilogy - Hell, Purgatory and Heaven - Purgatory being set in post-war Sarajevo. In one of the scenes we find the Spanish poet and activist Juan Goytisolo in the midst of the ruins of *Vjećnica* reciting Charles Baudelaire's poem, "Correspondences" from his 1857 collection, *Fleurs du Mal*. From the poem, we hear its opening quatrain: "Nature is a temple in which living pillars / Sometimes give voice to confused words; / Man passes there through forests of symbols / Which look at him with understanding eyes..."<sup>23</sup>

Baudelaire's haunting imagery echoes off the burned-out library walls which are charred with large pieces of blackened plaster crumbling to the filthy floor. Once a symbol of Sarajevo's multiculturalism, the library stands as a skeleton; a physical manifestation of a damaged nation. Taken as a literal illustration, the library is a "temple" with actual pillars whose revolting damage "give[s] voice" to the brazen destruction of war. The entire film is a vast "forest of symbols," of which the burned-out library is one of the more obvious and tragic.

Those who survived the atrocities of war wish

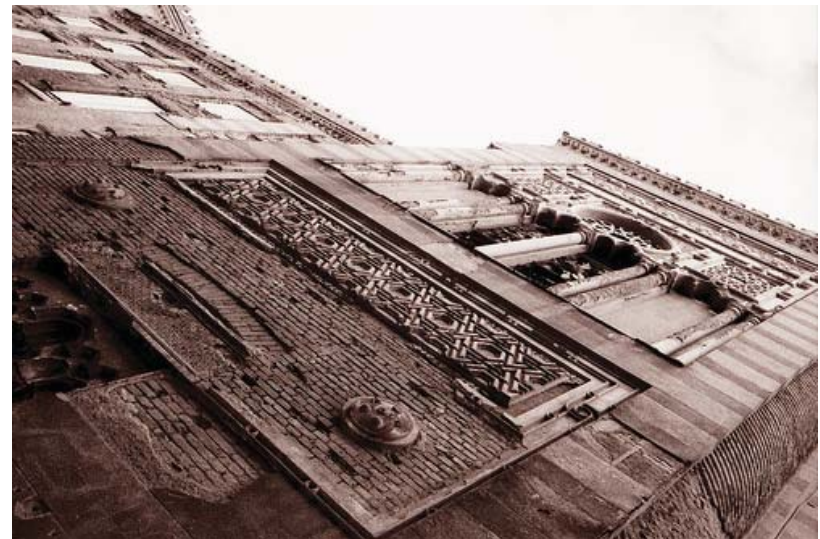
<sup>23</sup> William Aggeler, *The Flowers of Evil* (Fresno, CA: Academy Library Guild, 1954)

(TOP)

Fig. 1.54: View of *Vjećnica*'s side facade, 2007

(BOTTOM)

Fig. 1.55: Library scene from *Notre Musique*, 2004



to resume ‘normal’ lives with an intention to transform Sarajevo into a global city, a city that concerns itself with the current issues and not those of the past, especially when the past entails painful memories of loss and suffering. Thus *Vjećnica*, in its ruins, takes on an image of a monument relevant to the past rather than to present-day Bosnia. In this context the architectural features of the building gain a significant role in the process of determining the cultural value of the building in the collective memory of the city.

Between 1995 and 1996 phase one of the reconstruction was undertaken and further discussion was initiated about the future purpose of the building. Proposals included issuing to it the original function of city hall, assigning a part of it to the National and University Library (NUL) or leaving it in ruins as a monument of the city’s destruction. In 1996, the University of Sarajevo allotted facility No.2 on campus (former “Marshal Tito” military barracks) as a temporary housing for the library collection. Soon thereafter, facility No.7 was also assigned to the library, and facility No. 6 was converted to a binding department and center for preservation of library material. However, it wasn’t until

OPPOSITE

(TOP) Fig. 1.56: View of *Vjećnica* from above, 2007

(BOTTOM) Fig. 1.57: *Vjećnica* grand staircase, 2007

1999 that the reconstruction of these facilities was completed and the library moved into its ‘temporary’ home.

Between 1996 and 1997 many public buildings in the city were restored but this did not include *Vjećnica*. With the funds provided by the EU and Austrian Government, only partial recovery of the building was done, with major emphasis being placed on reconstructing the primary structural elements and the central hall. The high expense associated with the rebuilding, the lack of clarity on the relevance of the existing legal title of the ownership of the building, and the uncertainties that surrounded the future use of the city hall became the primary obstacles of the rebuilding initiative<sup>24</sup>.

Unlike their predecessors – the colonial government of Austro-Hungary or the Socialist government of Yugoslavia – the new powers of post-war Bosnia did not understand the relationship between the “pseudo-Moorish” style and the groups involved in the political negotiations of Bosnia’s future. Without clear

<sup>24</sup> Ismet Ovcina, *Nacionalna i univerzitetska biblioteka Bosne i Hercegovine 1945-2005: 60 godina u misiji kulture, obrazovanja i nauke*. (Sarajevo: Nacionalna i univerzitetska biblioteka BiH, 2005), 105.



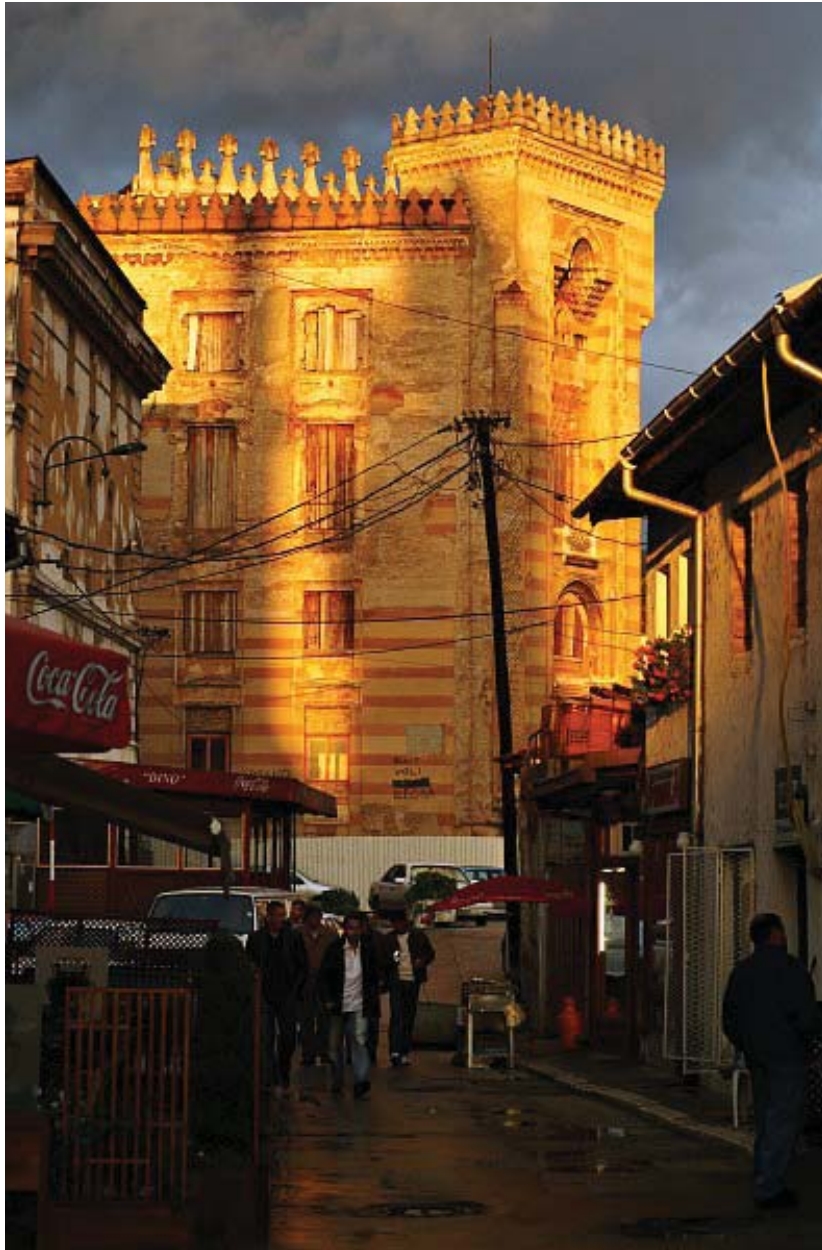


Fig. 1.58: View of *Vjećnica*  
from *Baščaršija*, 2003

links to any of the local ethnic or religious groups, the international organizations lost interest in *Vjećnica* and shifted their support towards projects less controversial in their meanings and more predictable in financial return. The change of the socialist and political context rendered *Vjećnica*'s significance to the “multicultural” agenda less significant. With the further development of the particular agenda of various parties supporting the redevelopment of their own religious buildings, and the weak support of the international community for the multicultural approach, the reconstruction was further losing its significance.

In 1997, with a unanimous decision of its 186 members, UNESCO declared the city hall as “the world monument of the interethnic peace” and placed it under UN monument protection<sup>25</sup>. UNESCO invested \$600 000 of German government money, not in the restoration of the building itself, but in the restoration of the library collection, staff training and the cost of equipment<sup>26</sup>. Between 2002 and 2003 the second phase of main structural reconstruction

<sup>25</sup> “Vjećnica proglašena svjetskim spomenikom” *Oslobodjenje*, November 12, 1997, BH Press.

<sup>26</sup> (Ovcina 2005, 107)

was carried out. On September 18, 2003 the administration of the Sarajevo Canton made a decision on the directive of usage of *Vjećnica*, to reestablishing its original purpose as city hall, with some premises allocated to the National Library. The final phase of reconstruction, restoring it to its original appearance, followed by the relocation of city hall, are scheduled to begin at the end of 2008. In the meantime the fate of the National Library, much like the nation itself, remains uncertain.

The government's decision to restore *Vjećnica's* function back to city hall was not met without controversy among Bosnians. Many Sarajevans associate the function of the building as a library with the city's identity. Furthermore, assessing the cultural significance of the building and its remarkable ability to manifest and react to the political and social circumstances that shaped and reshaped Bosnia throughout history, UNESCO's decision to put it under the Monuments Protection Act is to be questioned as well. To declare *Vjećnica* as a monument is to freeze it in time, no longer allowing it its reflective role, thus undermining not only its past but also the past of Bosnia. To quote Andreas Huyssen, a contemporary cultural historian:



Fig. 1.59: Kounellis Installation, 2004 (Part of Ars Aevi Contemporary Art Museum)

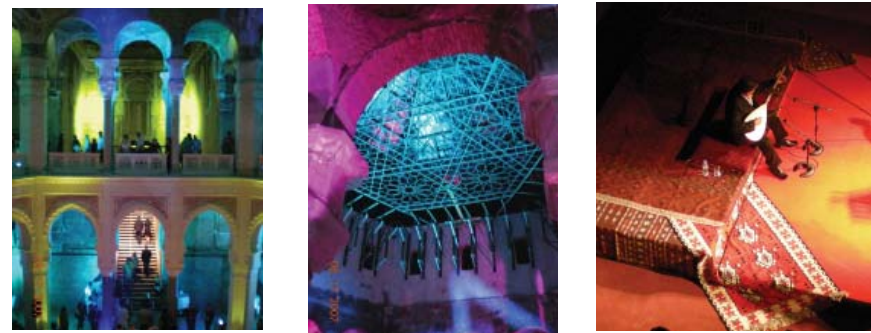


Fig. 1.60: Sarajevo Film Festival, 2007 (Part of opening ceremony)

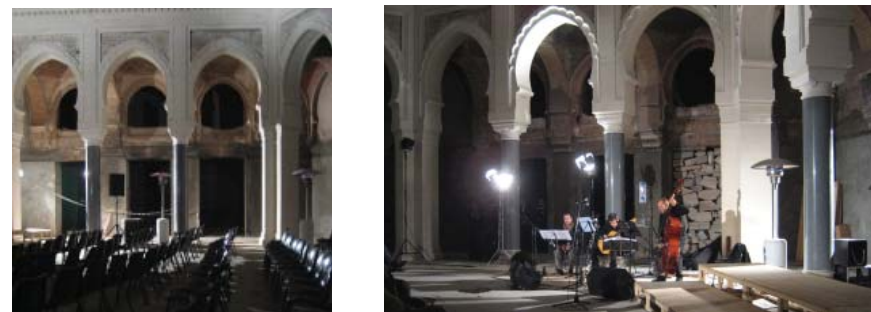


Fig. 1.61: Sabine Mayer and Choir Concert, 2007



Fig. 1.62: Elementary School classroom during the siege

*Remembrance shapes our links to the past, and the ways we remember define us in the present. As individuals and societies, we need the past to construct and anchor our identities and to nurture a vision of the future. In the wake of Freud and Nietzsche, however, we know how slippery and unreliable personal memory can be; always affected by forgetting and denial, repression and trauma, it, more often than not, serves a need to rationalize and maintain power. But a society's collective memory is no less contingent, no less unstable, its shape by no means permanent. It is always subject to subtle and not so subtle reconstructions. A society's memory is negotiated in the social body's beliefs and values, rituals and institutions. In the case of modern societies in particular, it is shaped by such public sites of memory as the museum, the memorial, and the monument. Yet the permanence promised by a monument in stone is always built on quicksand. Some monuments joyously toppled at times of social upheaval, and others stand simply as figures of forgetting, their meaning and original purpose eroded by the passage of time.*<sup>27</sup>

<sup>27</sup> Andreas Huyssen, *Twilight memories : marking time in a culture of amnesia*. (New York: Routledge, 1995) 249-250



If becoming a monument is the death of *Vjećnica*, what is then the 'anti-monument' approach? How does one begin to design a National Library for a broken country? Whose 'nation' is Bosnia?

As Goytisolo finishes his recital of "Correspondences" in *Notre Musique*, a Native American couple approaches and the man speaks about the destructive legacy of Columbus on his people. "Isn't it about time for us to meet in the same age?" he asks. "Both of us strangers in the same land," the woman continues, "meeting at the tip of an abyss."



## *Part 2*



## Sarajevo: August 22, 2007

After a long sleepless night and three romantic comedies my head is spinning but I manage to survive a bumpy Toronto-Budapest flight. Out of breath from a cross-terminal sprint, I barely make the connecting flight to Sarajevo. On board a very small Malev airplane, I find myself among twenty or so other expatriates. Although a bit late in the season, the broad grins across their faces and restless shuffling in their seats reveal the tip of what must be a large iceberg of excitement that accompanies their annual pilgrimage to Sarajevo.

A German film crew takes up the rest of the half empty plane. While waiting for the lady with two kids, six bags and a very slow husband to take their seats, I gather that the German crew is arriving from Frankfurt. They are to screen their documentary the next day at the Sarajevo Film Festival and their excitement is of a somewhat different type. It is not so much an emotional iceberg but rather a thin sheet of ice, and although coated with a sense of curiosity and caution, it is slippery nonetheless. A number of rather thin looking *Lonely Planet* guides to Bosnia and Herzegovina highlighted from cover to cover neatly hold the exploration and conquest strategy for their week in Sarajevo, the chaotic and puzzling city that exasperatingly seized endless hours of their news-broadcasts during the early 90's.

I take my seat by the window next to a jolly looking businessman. His dated cross-breasted grayish-brown suit, his unmistakably Balkan features and the longing for conversation that emanates from his childlike eyes all point to a long winded life-story exchange that I was not prepared to have. In an attempt to avoid eye contact, I lean into my seat as far as it would allow me, wishing to disappear into the pattern of the blue and white seat fabric. My heart pounds as I flip through *Oslobodenje* in another weak attempt at keeping thoughts away from my exhausted mind.

Despite my best efforts at a Bosnian crossword puzzle, my mind flees on its own, returning over and over again to the long list of questions that have been haunting me for days. Well, to be honest for

OPPOSITE

Fig. 2.1. Fis. 2.2 & Fig. 2.3

years: *Am I ready for the long postponed reunion with my former life? How will my city receive me? Will it recognize me? Will I recognize it? How will I explain my absence? Will it forgive me? Will...?* The thought reel just keeps spinning faster and faster, round and about in circles, until finally after an hour of mental agony, the pilot's announcement of our descent into Sarajevo halts it to a stop. I swallow the knot in my throat and gather enough courage to look through the window. Beneath me in a valley surrounded by green I am faced with an old friend, a sight so familiar that I feel like I am looking into my own reflection. Sarajevo sits there smiling at me exactly where I had left it so many years ago. I take a deep breath and try to smile for the first time in days.

Upon disembarking the plane and arriving at customs I find myself in front of a fifty-something-year-old customs lady with that distinctly Eastern European dyed-red hair and the generously applied make-up which so often accompanies that particular hair colour. As I approach the counter she glares at me without lifting her head up. She remains indifferent to my auto-smile. I cannot decipher whether she has an aversion to imported auto-smiles from the West or whether it is simply out of fear of potentially cracking layers of maliciously applied make-up. She does, however, manage to scowl as I pass her my Canadian passport. She then proceeds to flip through the pages back and forth a number of times. After reading all of the stamped visas, an extensive collection acquired during my frequent travels in undergrad, she looks at my picture, then at me, then at the picture again, then pauses her passive gaze at me for a while. Finally reluctantly, and with a heavy sigh, she stamps the passport and without looking at me tosses it back. Not exactly the welcome I was hoping for.

Sarajevo International Airport seems much smaller than I remember it. It is a familiar building to me, a place that embodied grief many years ago. When I was a child my father worked in Libya and during those years I got to see him for a few weeks every three or four months. The airport was the place where the magic of those brief visits ended; it was a place of our perpetual good-byes. On top of that, it was also the place of my most painful good-bye, of my final farewell with Sarajevo only two months before my city would face its terrible fate without me.

At the arrival gate I recognize my aunt and cousin in the sea of heads all waiting for their Sarajevan foreigners. I was ecstatic to see all of my family, there were even tears of joy shed, but the notion of an extended family had become a strange concept to me. Were they up to the task of putting up with my language barrier and my ignorance of finer Bosnian manners? How are we all going to deal with the undeniable gap left by my cultural uprooting? I was nervous but determined more than ever to re-Balkanize myself, to bridge the gap between my two worlds.





## Sarajevo: August 23, 2007

My first morning in Sarajevo was spent walking. I walked everywhere. I found comfort in the familiar streets, which I often walked in my mind during my many years of absence. However, experiencing them in their physicality was a whole other phenomenon, it was an affirmation of the city that I carried for so long only in my memory. There was a sense of relief but also a sense of uneasiness. For everything was where it was supposed to be, yet somehow it all seemed so different. So I just kept on walking. I needed to physically trace my city, feel its streets under my feet in order for us to re-acquaint, in order for us to establish a bond rooted in the present.

At some point in the afternoon, exhausted by hours of walking, I ended up on Ferhadija Street and decided to sit on a bench across *Optika* to catch my breath. Beside me an older gentleman was reading the newspaper. After I greeted him politely and we made our comments about the weather he said to me, “You have a bit of an accent, you know that? Where are you from?”

Funny, I hear that comment all the time in Canada about my English, but to hear it about my Bosnian was very unsettling. I felt that the man was questioning one of the few things I am absolutely certain about: the fact that I am Bosnian. Since the notion of my identity was at stake, in a somewhat defensive tone and in my best Sarajevan accent I replied “From *here!* I am from here!”

“Sure, your parents might be from here, maybe you were even born here, but where do you live now?” he insisted.

I felt like I was caught in the midst of a lie. A sense of shame, guilt and confusion came over me. “I was born here but we left before the war. I live in Canada now,” I replied reluctantly.

“Ah Canada. My nephew lives in Canada, in Vancouver. Senad Hadžibahrić. Do you know him?” he asked in a warmer tone now.

OPPOSITE

Fig. 2.4. Fis. 2.5 & Fig. 2.6

“No, we live in Toronto and besides I don’t know very many Bosnians,” I said abruptly but soon after realizing that my comment did not make me sound very Bosnian I added, “but my parents do. They have *many* Bosnian friends.”

“Oh,” he said disappointedly. “You know, you young people are the future of this country but all of you, every last one of you, wants to leave. And once you leave you stop talking to each other and you stop caring.”

It is true; I have read the statistics and I know that 70% of Sarajevo’s original pre-war population has left the city. Taking their place now are mainly rural refugees and those displaced due to post-Dayton ethnic segregation. Regardless though, it is not true that we stop caring once we leave, and I had a convincing argument for this gentleman so I interjected.

“Now, sir, that’s not entirely true”, I declared boldly. “ You know I am doing my Master’s thesis on Sarajevo,” I said very proudly and then added, “ it is going to be on the National Library. I am going to propose a new building.”

“You’re going to build a new library?!” he exclaimed. “That is wonderful! About time someone did something about the library. You will move back and do something for your country. That is great!”

“Well... umm...not really. It’s just a theoretical project really. I am not going to *build* it, I am just going to propose a scheme for it and I am certainly not moving back,” I clarified.

Pausing for a second with his head lowered, his face softened and his eyes filled with sorrow he said, “So my child, tell me something. Who do you think will clean this mess up?”

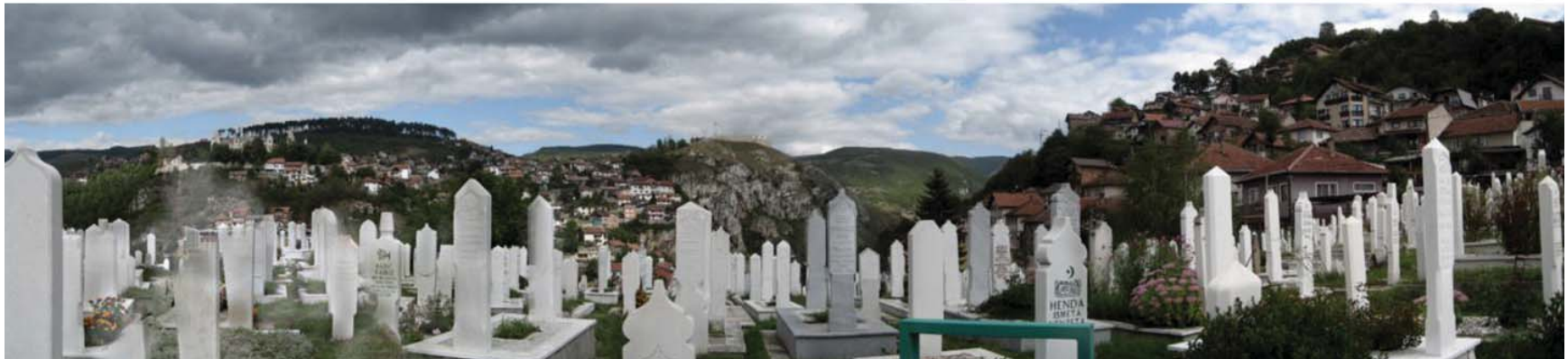
I did not answer. I was not exactly sure which mess he was referring to although I had my share of guesses. As a result of my thesis research and five years of architecture school my first guesses were all architectural, bordering on political. Was he talking about the uncertain fate of the library as an institution, or the physical building itself? Maybe he was referring to the overly complicated bureaucracy that makes action impossible. That of course is linked to the current political system; well in short, Bosnia is engulfed in mess. I wasn't going to guess out loud. I decided to wait for him to expand.

Finally he raised his head and looked straight into my eyes. I felt his gaze pierce right through me as he said, "Who do you think will make things right again? Old folks like me? What good are your theoretical projects and your degrees and your *parent's* friends, if Bosnia is left at the mercy of thieves and corrupt puppet masters running the whole show? The only people left to fend for it are old people, old farts like me. What did we fight the war for? What good is any of it?" he paused again and then added, "Are you married?"

"No," I replied, somewhat apprehensively wondering about the relevance of the question.

"Good!" he said with a renewed sense of optimism in his voice. "There is still hope for you. You know, there are Bosnian girls who marry English boys or Italian or Spanish and then they change their last names and you wouldn't even know that their children are Bosnian. Soon there will be no Bosnians left. My dear child, when you marry keep your name and remember where you are from, where you are really from. Who knows maybe someday all of you, all Bosnian youth in Diaspora, will return and then we can start again. We will put everything behind us, and we will start again."

He didn't wait for my reply. Instead he got up, neatly folded his newspaper and wished me a good day. Then turning his back to me, he slowly shuffled his way towards a group of elderly chess players in the park behind us, leaving me to wrestle with my thoughts on the question of my identity and responsibility.



## Sarajevo: September 6, 2007

After my visit to *Vjećnica* today, I decided to cross the pedestrian bridge, make a left at *Inat Kuća* and climb up to the Alifakovac cemetery. I wanted to visit my grandfather's tomb and to take a good look at the city and the library from a higher altitude. I don't remember the cemetery from my childhood, but the downhill view of Alifakovac Street from the cemetery to *Vjećnica* is a very familiar one. It is the subject of one of the four Berber paintings hanging in my parents' Toronto living room.

Once I arrived to the top of the hill, the entire city opened up beneath my feet, each building in the distance measuring against a white tombstone. The number of tombstones dating from 1992 to 1995 outnumbered all the other stones combined. In the distance I saw forests of cemeteries all lined with white or black tree-like stones. I could not help but wonder about the fate of the city lying in the valley if it was not for so many tombstones surrounding it. During the war, Sarajevo was attacked by the enemies positioned in the surrounding hills and now the hills are occupied by the people who once loved it.

While the rest of the world sprinted ahead, time had stopped for Bosnia between the years of 1991 and 1995. In fact, not only did it stop, it went back so far that it reached a period of unprecedented savagery manifesting itself in ethnic cleansing, concentration camps, mass graves, systematic rape, urbicide, etc. I am not aware of what it feels like to physically survive a war and because of that I carry an immense amount of guilt. I have heard and read terrible stories about the war but none of those will ever compare to having lived them.

Trauma of any kind is unique in its circumstance and in the way a victim deals with it. Suffering cannot be quantified or compared, justified or diminished. However, for years I have felt that my pain is somewhat less valid than the real pain of those who lived through the siege. My dad's job in Libya was the reason my parents, sister and I did not suffer the terrible fate of so many other

OPPOSITE

*Fig. 2.7 & 2.8*

Sarajevans. We suffered in a different way; we waged the Bosnian war mentally, exiled in a country that had forgotten time all together.

I do not like to talk and am reluctant to write about Libya. Even as an adult I still carry an irrational amount of resentment towards it, for (in my mind) having stolen my childhood, for having turned my summer vacation into a five-year stay, for never indulging me in any type of childhood normalcy and thus never allowing me the luxury, not even for a moment, to forget what was happening in Sarajevo.

My sister and I grew up among adults, on top of a hill in a compound for foreigners, in a country under sanctions whose dictator had abolished time in 1969. Our only window into the world was an illegal satellite dish our dad had installed in the walled-in backyard in the hopes of giving his children a glimpse of a 'normal' life, and a promise of a life they might get to lead once again in some distant future.

Days in Libya were long and hot. It felt like we were serving a prison sentence. The terrible situation in Bosnia called upon us to be grateful; grateful and patient. Every day we would watch the news and with each new massacre I would pray silently for each person I knew, going over everyone in my head making sure that I did not exclude anyone for that could have meant their disappearance forever.

During those days I spent a lot of time in my imagination, in Sarajevo, reliving the most mundane moments that now took on a whole new elevated meaning. In my mind I would trace the shapes of every room and piece of furniture in our old apartment, every street and park bench in the city. I went over the names of my classmates, of the kids and the streets in my neighbourhood, over the lyrics of the songs Fikret used to sing under the grape vines on warm summer evenings. I'd go over the changes of the ground textures on my walk from home to school, over the items on the lunch menu displayed on the plastic sign on the kiosk in front of Ivan Goran Kovacic Elementary School. Once having traced school memories, I'd go over the store fronts that lined Titova Street from the

Big Park to *Bašćaršija* where my parents would take me for evening strolls. I re-lived every moment spent in Sarajevo and I even added new imaginary memories. At one point the lines between memory and imagination got so blurry that I began to question the existence of pre-war Sarajevo.

I did not fully comprehend the reasons for things that were happening in Bosnia during the war. I grew up believing in the notion of Brotherhood and Unity that was propagated during Socialist times. According to Socialist ideology we were all equal regardless of our names or religion; we were all Sarajevan, all Bosnian, all Yugoslavian.

Once the war broke out I was confused as to whom the enemy was. I was confused as to why anyone would want to damage Sarajevo of all cities; why were they determined to destroy *my* city? What confused me even more was that some of those people throwing bombs from the surrounding hills were born and raised in Sarajevo. Why were they determined to destroy *our* city? It was then, at the age of nine that I started grasping the extent of the atrocities that a group of people is capable of committing in the name of nationalism and religion and for the sake of carving out a separate *mine* from ours; a *mine* that is to be very different from *yours*.





## Sarajevo: September 15, 2007

It is my last week in Sarajevo and I find myself conflicted between the feeling of exhilarated relief and that of deep sadness. I am relieved to have the luxury to leave all the messy after-math of the war behind, to deep-freeze it until I am ready to deal with it and to defrost it in the comfort of my Canadian life when the time comes. At the same time I am saddened by a number of reasons.

I am sad for not having been an active participant in my city's life, for having missed so much due to my absence from it and from the lives of those who define Sarajevo for me.

I am also saddened by the immense corruption that takes place on a daily basis; the small scale corruption on which average people have to rely in order to feed their kids and then the large scale stuff on which fraudulent politicians are slowly but surely building a small private empire.

I am also very saddened to see the religious flare, brighter than ever, gradually engulfing the city, its smoke clouding the views of those who once used to gaze at wide horizons.

Finally what saddens me the most is the immense absence. I am not talking merely about the absence of so many, who like myself have transformed their temporary condition of exile into a more permanent alter identity. I am referring to the absence left by the homogenization of the population as a direct result of geographical division of Bosnia and Herzegovina during the Dayton Peace Agreement.

With the geographical division of the country, inevitable ethnic segregation has given way to singular views, where new collective fabrications rooted in religion are becoming conflicting realities in different parts of Bosnia. In *Republica Srpska* all historic and physical evidence of Muslim existence has been erased, while in the Federation, Catholics are strongly leaning towards a Croatian identity rather than a Bosnian one, and thus leaving the Muslims to recreate a new identity for themselves, that of a *Bošnjak-*

OPPOSITE

*Fig. 2.9 & Fig. 2.10*

in other words more Bosnian than Bosnian.

Due to a set of orchestrated political decisions Sarajevo has fallen under the predominant *Bošnjak* jurisdiction. Although I believe in the existence and the importance of *Bošnjak* identity as a piece of the Bosnian mosaic, I do not believe that it or any other 'alternative' identity should supercede the notion of an all-inclusive Bosnian one. The month of Ramadan commenced last week and there seems to be a great amount of importance placed on fulfilling one's religious duties. The language in Sarajevo has changed; the use of Islamic references and greetings has become an everyday affirmation of belonging to the right side.

I find myself suffocated by the new social codes based on religious affiliation that seem to be imposed on everyone. I can't breathe, how do I come up for air? What if there is no longer a possibility of a multicultural Sarajevo? Even if the task was left solely up to me with my naïve optimism cranked to high, I cannot think of a miraculous building or architectural scheme that I can possibly employ to 'fix' this nation or to resurrect the soul of a broken city.

In the last three weeks I have had serious doubts about my ambitions and hopes for this thesis and for this city in general. I will admit that I have come very close to giving up. However in somewhat of a serendipitous way on my last site visit to *Vječnica*, two days ago, I got invited to a concert that was to be held there tonight. Assuming the program was to be of a religious nature, since it is the month of Ramadan, I accepted the invitation reluctantly, curious to see the space transformed into a concert hall. To my great surprise, however, the main act was a multi-faith choir singing religious and traditional Jewish, Catholic, Orthodox and Islamic Bosnian songs. So here they were, Bosnians of all faiths singing together, celebrating each other's differences during the month of Ramadan in *Vječnica* on my last night in Sarajevo.

I had't been this moved by a pleasant experience in a long time. The void that followed me everywhere during my stay in Sarajevo had vanished, even if only temporarily. In that moment I realized that in

order to start formulating an idea of restored multiculturalism in present day Bosnia I will have to turn to the individual. It will have to come out of the individual's perception of belonging to a larger whole through his/her connection to a physical and symbolic place, as well as his/her willingness to allow others different from themselves to share that place, to allow for the (re)formation of *our* place, *our* city, *our* nation.





## *Part 3*



For better waters, now, the little bark  
of my poetic powers hoists its sails,  
and leaves behind that cruelest of the seas.

And I shall sing about that second realm  
where man's soul goes to purify itself  
and become worthy to ascend to Heaven.

...

“Who are you two, who challenged the blind stream  
and have escaped from the eternal prison?”  
he said, moving his venerable locks.

“Who guided you? What served you as a lamp  
to light your way out of the heavy night  
that keeps the pit of Hell forever black?”

Are all the laws of God's Abyss destroyed?  
Have new decisions now been made in Heaven  
So that, though damned, you come up to my cliff?”

*Dante's Divine Comedy: Purgatory. Canto I 1-6 / 39-48*



Fig. 3.1: *Oslobodenje* ("Liberation") - Bosnia's main newspaper before and during the war- Headquarters, 1996

The word "purgatory" has come to refer to a wide range of historical and modern conceptions of postmortem suffering short of everlasting damnation, and is often used to mean any place or condition of suffering and torment, especially one that is temporary. It is therefore of no surprise that war-ravished Sarajevo became the setting of Godard's "Purgatory" in his *Notre Musique*. Godard uses Sarajevo as the set for a free-ranging exploration of the tension between myth and reality, victors and victims emerging out of territorial disputes throughout the ages. The theme of conflict over land - whether between Israelis and Palestinians, or European settlers and American Indians- hangs loosely over the proceedings.

It is significant that, both in the film and post-war period, ruins became the cities' physical testament to the loss and destruction of war. In a sense ruins reside in a temporary and transitory state, of once having been architecture and of potential resurrection or obliteration.

As a result of war in former Yugoslavia, a great deal of discourse has been generated on 'urbicide' -a war strategy of 'city-killing'- and 'warchitecture' - war carried out through and



as the destruction of architecture<sup>1</sup>. Andrew Herscher, an architect and architectural theorist, examines the notion of warchitectural theory and the relationship between violence, culture, war and architecture. He argues that violence against architecture transforms, often fundamentally, the values, meanings, and identity of architecture where transformation is conditioned both by perpetrators, and by the experience of victims, witnesses, and audiences<sup>2</sup>.

Thus the nature of rebuilding becomes a complex question:

*Rebuilding can be as symbolic as the destruction that necessitates it. Construction can be used to cement a violent sundering of the built environment or to weave the fabric of a former life back together. Doing so creates new touchstones for collective memory. What were once unintentional monuments—the places of worship, libraries and fountains of everyday life—by their rebuilding can become new, international monuments to the vents that cause*

<sup>1</sup> Andrew Herscher, *Journal of Architectural Education* (2008) 61:3

<sup>2</sup> (Herscher 2008, 42)



Fig. 3.2: Sarajevo under siege



Fig. 3.3



Fig. 3.4: Bosnian Parliament Building, 1997

*their destruction. History moves forwards while looking over its shoulder; how much to commemorate and remember, how much needs to be forgiven then forgotten in the interest of peace within and without? There is a danger in life becoming reified in permanent honour to memories of suffering. Rebuilding, whether carried out by perpetrators or their victims, can also serve to mask the past; to erase the gaps, the voids, the ruinations that bear witness to history.<sup>3</sup>*

It is estimated that 80% of Sarajevo's city centre has been rebuilt, most of the façades restored to their original condition predating even their Socialist look. Ottoman shops in the old city *Bašaršija* were re-roofed, their wood and stone structures reconstructed. Left grey during Socialist times, the facades of the Austro-Hungarian buildings beam again with their fully restored colours. Even the Socialist housing blocks have been refreshed and updated to match the new image of the city. Thus history has been reaffirmed by the local powers, re-establishing what the Serbian forces attempted to erase. However, the act of re-mastering history begins

<sup>3</sup> Robert Bevan, *Destruction of memory : Architecture at war.* (London: Reaktion, 2006), 176.

to blur the lines between memory and forgetting, and poses the question of whose version of history is being reconstructed. According to architectural theorist Robert Bevan:

*Memory and forgetting are roped together forever; tension between the two do not loosen this bind. Forgetting is normal; most of our lives are consigned to oblivion. What is remembered, both individually and collectively, is partial and not necessarily accurate in an attempt to create a meaningful, coherent narrative and identity. The pitfalls of reconstruction in circumstances where other has been an attempt at forced forgetting by the destruction of material culture are particularly treacherous. Not to rebuild, though, would be a counsel of despair. In addition to pragmatic reconstruction necessary for the resumption of life there remains a need to remember, a need to call to account, and a need to prevent destruction from being repeated. Above all, there is a need for truth to be expressed in the raising of buildings. But whose truths are being constructed? Are false memories being erected?<sup>4</sup>*

<sup>4</sup> (Bevan 2006, 176-178)

Restoration of the city-centre fabric, maps indicating present-day urban fabric layered in historic time period of initial construction

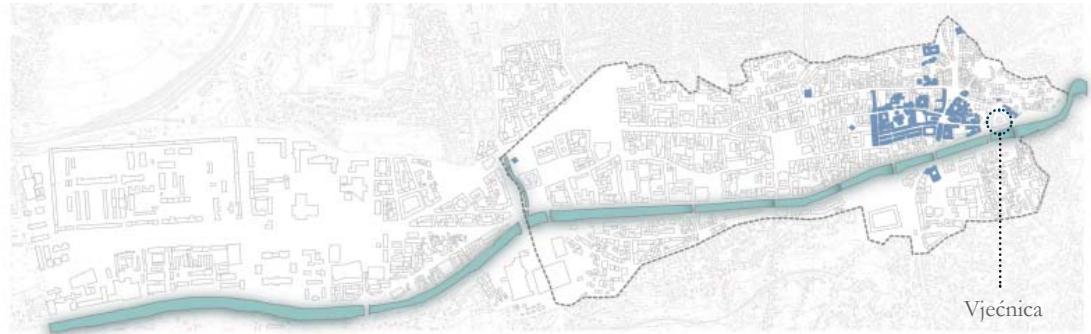


Fig. 3.5: Ottoman Period Structures with an out line of Ottoman city-boundaries



Fig. 3.6: Austro-Hungarian Structures indicating the extension of the city

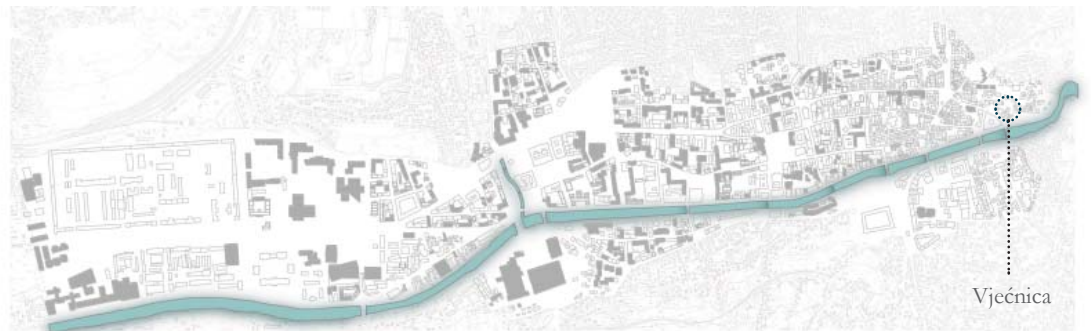


Fig. 3.7: Socialist Structures, city centre stays at the AH boundaries, but the city expands five times its original size



Fig. 3.8: Destruction of  
Electropivreda building

If censored rebuilding gives rise to the formation of possibly false memories, not building to a constant state of war, and rebuilding to pre-war conditions ordains those buildings as monuments, what then is an alternative option?

Lebbeus Woods argues for a radical reconstruction through the creation of 'freespace'. This is an attempt to heal the wounds, by creating entirely new types of space in the city not rooted in the programme. His approach lies within 'scarring' the building as a reminder of the trauma leaving the intended usage of the building up to the interpreter.

*My answer was that architecture, as a social and primarily constructive act, could heal the wounds, by creating entirely new types of space in the city. These would be what I had called 'freespaces,' spaces without predetermined programs of use, but whose strong forms demanded the invention of new programs corresponding to the new, post-war conditions. I had hypothesized that "90% of the damaged buildings would be restored to their normal pre-war forms and uses, as most people want to return to their old ways of living...but 10% should be freespaces, for those who did not*

want to go back, but forward.” The freespaces would be the crucibles for the creation of new thinking and social-political forms, small and large. I believed then—and still do—that the cities and their people who have suffered the most difficult transitions in the contemporary world, in Sarajevo and elsewhere, have something important to teach us, who live comfortably in the illusion that we are immune to the demands radical changes of many kinds will impose on us, too.<sup>5</sup>

Regardless whether ‘scarring’ buildings as a means of healing is the most convincing proposition, the strength of Wood’s argument is in that he recognizes the inevitability of the full reconstruction of the majority of the city fabric. Moreover, he highlights the necessity for a different type of architecture to emerge, one that would become ‘the crucible for creating new thinking and social-political forms’.

One could not help but wonder whether a public institution -- such as the National Library-- could take on that function, given the symbolic role of *Vjećnica* and its relationship with the city.

<sup>5</sup> Lebbeus Woods, “The Reality of Theory” (published February 6, 2008). <http://lebbeuswoods.wordpress.com/2008/02/06/the-reality-of-theory/>

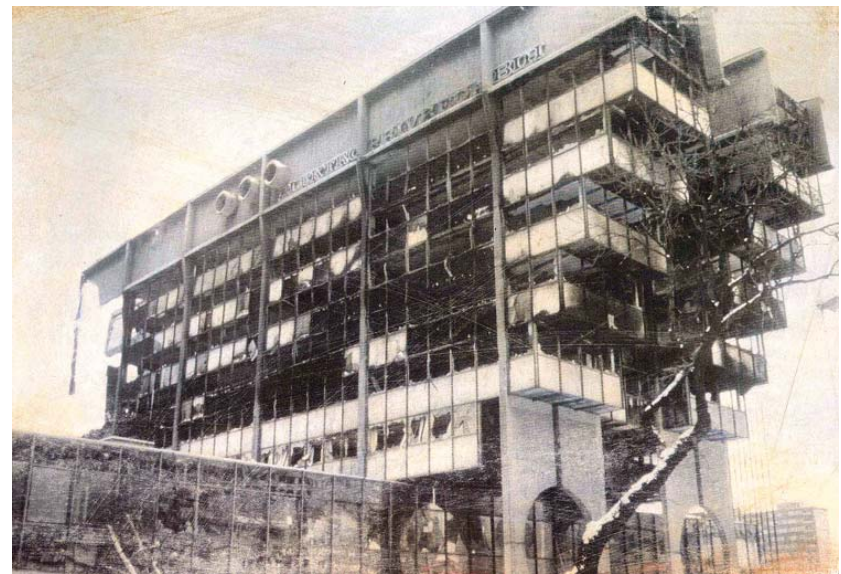
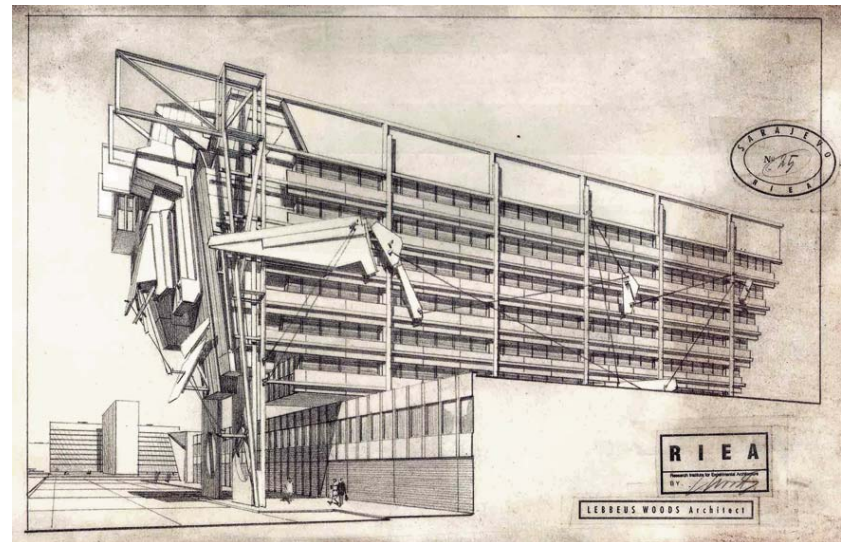
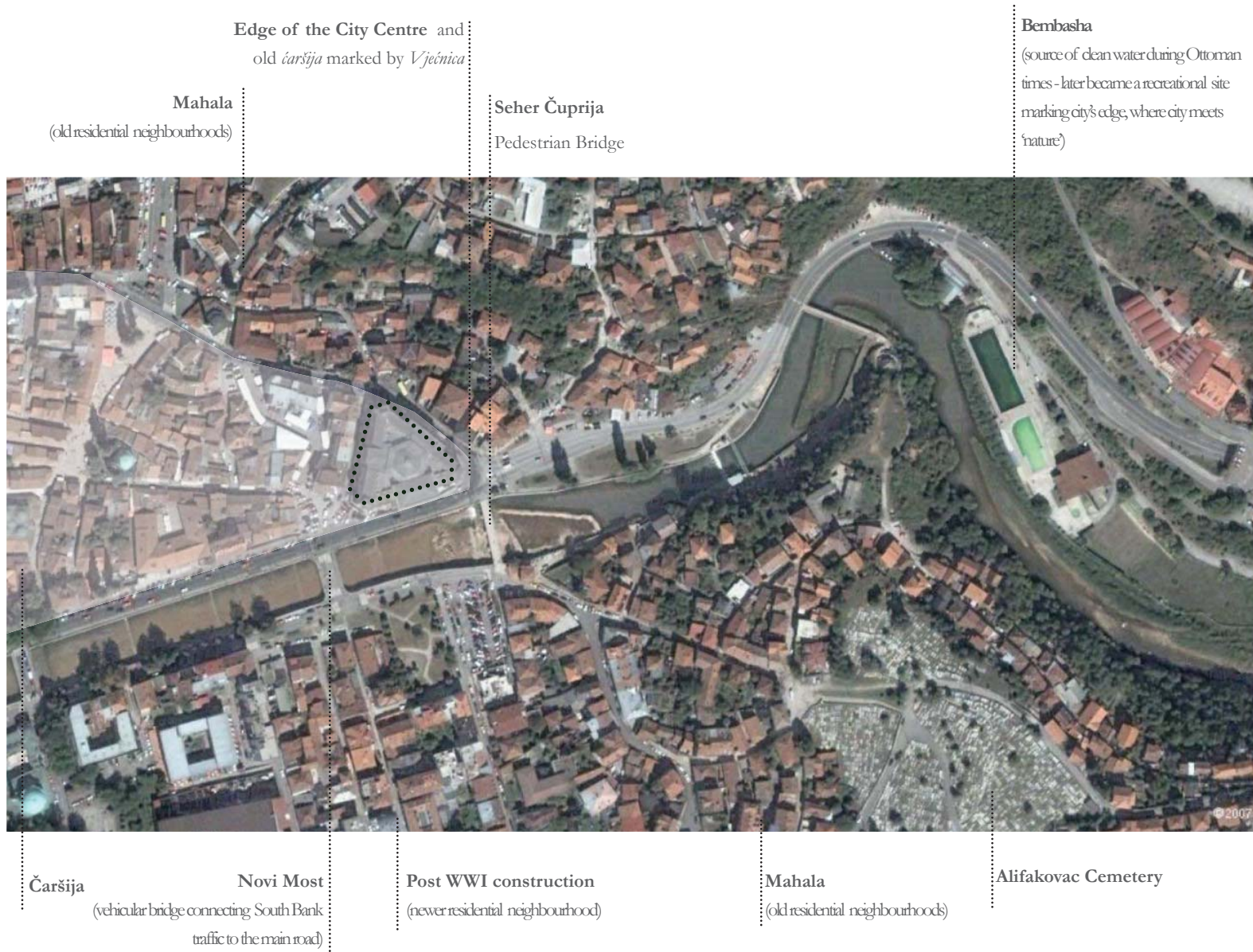


Fig. 3.9: Post-war condition, of Electroprivreda building



3.10: Woods’ proposal for a new building for Electroprivreda building

Fig. 3.11



*Vjećnica* sits at the very edge of old *Čaršija* (see left), demarcating the pedestrian zone that dominates the *Čaršija* quarter (see middle map on the right). It also acts as an anchor point around which the city's main road, the entrance road from the west and the tram line loop (see right). Thus *Vjećnica* is a gateway to the city, its guardian, negotiating its edge with the surrounding hills and *mahalas*.

Turning its back to *Baščaršija*, *Vjećnica* faces Miljacka River. In front of the building, the river is negotiated by two bridges. On the west side by *Seber Čuprija*, (one of the oldest bridges in Sarajevo, now a pedestrian bridge) and by *Novi Most* on the east, constructed during Socialist times to connect traffic from the South Bank to the city's main road on the North Bank.

The river Miljacka runs through the heart of the city while twenty five bridges span across the two shores, each holding a special place in history. For example, Latin Bridge, formerly the Gavrilo Princip Bridge, is where the assassination of Franz Ferdinand and his wife took place, marking the beginning of WWI. Skenderija Bridge is an iron bridge designed by Gustav Eiffel, while bridges like the Roman Bridge and the Goats

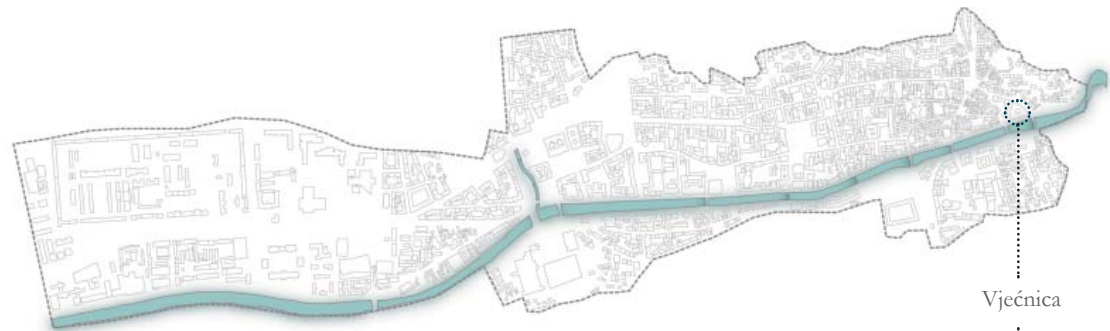


Fig. 3.12: City Centre

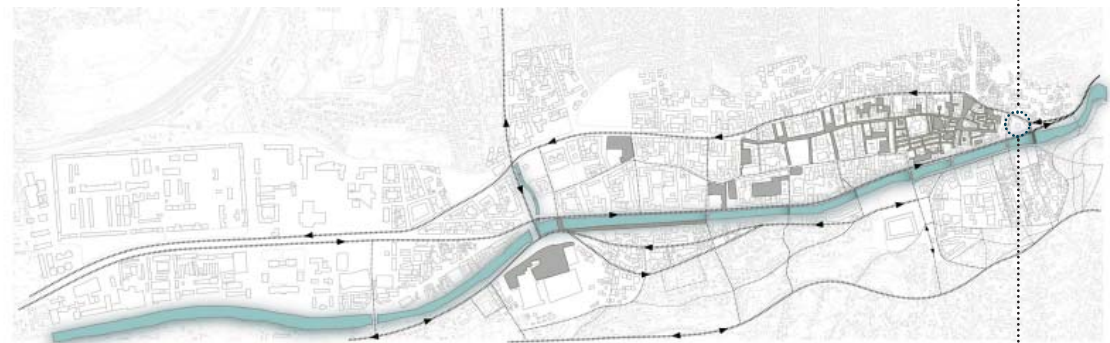


Fig. 3.13: Major Roads

Main road on the North Bank loops around *Vjećnica*/Grey pedestrian zone in the old city culminate at Vjećnica

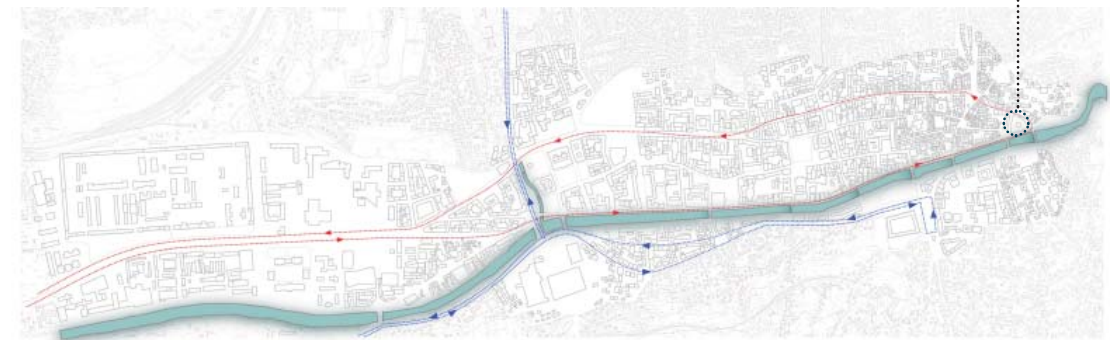


Fig. 3.14: Main Public Transportation

Red line represents tram line servicing North Bank loops around the building / Blue line is the trolley bus servicing South



Fig. 3.15: Novi Most Bridge and Šeher Ćehajina Ćuprija Bridge

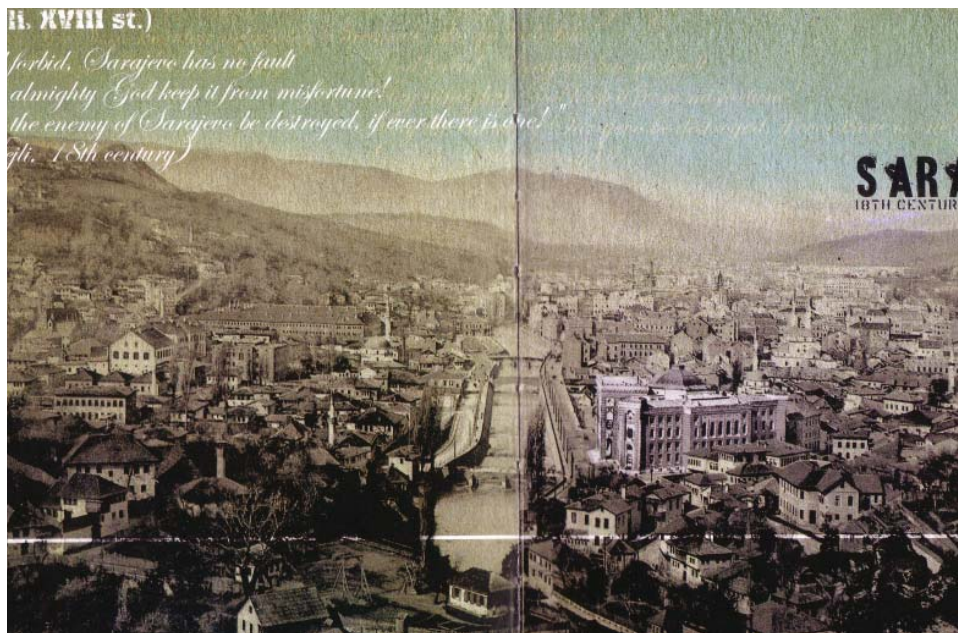


Fig. 3.16: Sarajevo panorama 1910

Bridge serve as a testament to Ottoman bridge-building techniques.

In many ways Sarajevo has itself been symbolically considered a bridge; geographically sitting between the East and the West, physically bearing traces of both.

Like in many other cities, the river played a major role in the development of Sarajevo; it is the life force that gave birth to it. Although a shallow tributary river, Mijlacka River is unique to the city and holds an important place in its collective memory. Miljacka springs at the foot of Mount Igman just west of Sarajevo. It runs through the city and into the Bosna River, after which the country takes its name

Rivers also play a very important role in the Bosnian psyche. They determine the location of many Bosnian cities, but more importantly, they symbolize duality. A river maintains a permanent presence, for even when dried up it leaves a mark, yet its flow is always transient. So, although rivers determine the location of many Bosnian cities, they also create geographical boundaries between Bosnia and its neighbours. Bosnia River flows northwards from Sarajevo



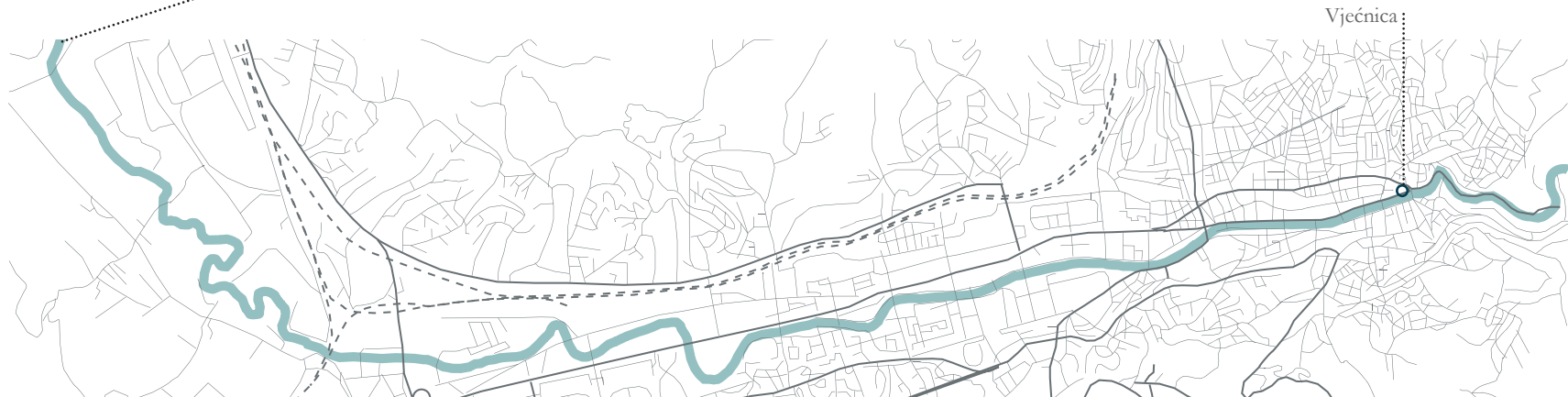
into River Sava and in turn Rivers Sava and Drina are the two rivers that divide Bosnia and Serbia. At times of war these rivers become sites of terrible massacres; their waters turned blood-red and their bridges destroyed.

Symbolically, rivers have the power to offer absolution as well, whether through their perceived holiness or by offering a chance to change one's vantage point; a chance to cross over to the other side.

It is upon this notion of crossing over to the other side, of changing one's vantage point, that the project for a new Bosnian National Library rests.



Fig. 3.17



**Modra<sup>1</sup> Rijeka**

*Mak Dizdard*

Nitko ne zna gdje je ona  
Malo znamo al je znano

Iza gore iza dola  
Iza sedam iza osam

I još huđe i još luđe  
Preko mornih preko gorkih

Preko gloga preko drače  
Preko žege preko stege

Preko slutnje preko sumnje  
Iza devet iza deset

T`amo d`olje ispod zèmlje  
I ònamo ispod n`èba

I još dublje i još jače  
Iza šutnje iza tmače

**Dark Blue River**

*Mak Dizdard tr. Francis R. Jones*

*Where it might flow nobody knows  
Not much is known but this we know*

*Beyond the hills beyond the ghylls  
Beyond the seven and the eight*

*From noon to night from vale to height  
Across the dour across the sour*

*Across the haws across the thorns  
Across the fires across the pliers*

*Beyond all mind beyond all sense  
Beyond the nines beyond the tens*

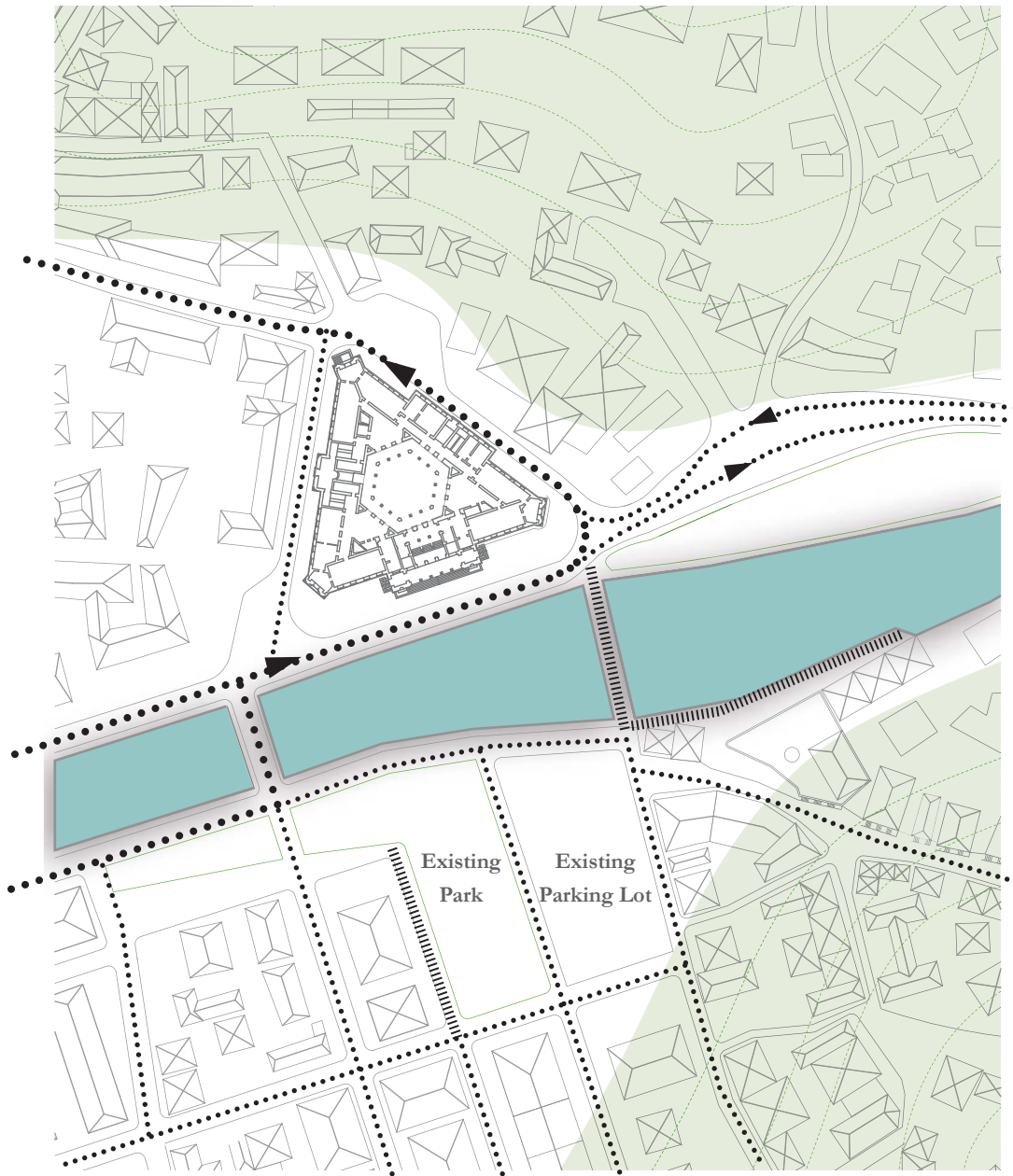
*Down there below beneath the earth  
Up there on high above the sky*

*From depth to depth from strength to strength  
Beyond the quiet beyond the night*

---

*<sup>1</sup>The word modra/o in Bosnian implies the dark  
blue discolouration that occurs as a result of busing.*

Gdje pijetlovi ne pjevaju Gdje se ne zna za glas roga	<i>To where the cock-crow is not heard To where the horn's call is not known</i>
I jos huđe i jos luđe Iza uma iza boga	<i>From good to bad from sad to mad Beyond our mind beyond our god</i>
Ima jedna modra rijeka Široka je duboka je	<i>That's where a dark blue river flows A river that is wide and deep</i>
Sto godina široka je Tisuć ljeta duboka je	<i>It is a hundred winters wide It is a thousand summers deep</i>
O duljini i ne sanjaj Tma i tmuša neprebolna	<i>About its length don't even dream The black the bleak cannot be healed</i>
Ima jedna modra rijeka	<i>That's where a dark blue river flows</i>
Ima jedna modra rijeka Valja nama preko rijeke	<i>That's where a dark blue river flows The river that we need to cross</i>



The site of the new library sits between the two bridges-- one pedestrian the other vehicular-- on the opposite side for *Vječnica*. Located in a predominantly multi-story residential neighbourhood it is embedded in the city but can be visible from a wide radius. Presently one half of the site is a poorly maintained park and the other half a makeshift parking lot. The major road on the south shore turns at the first of the two bridges, significantly minimizing the traffic at the site.

To establish a connection between the site and the city, it became important to expand the pedestrian zone of *Bašćaršija* across and along the river. By constructing a new Riverwalk on the south side, I can extend the building beyond its physical boundaries.

In order to address the presence of both the river and *Vječnica*, it became important to establish

Fig. 3.18: Site Plan

- Primary Road
- ..... Secondary Road
- ||||| Pedestrian Pathway

a pedestrian ‘connective tissue’ between the two bridges, thereby directly engaging the river and the buildings at its edge. A south facing public plaza and an outdoor public gathering space, can start to speak of the new role of the library.

Libraries are constantly evolving as their collections increase and change. With the advent of the internet and new media the library’s role is shifting from that of being primarily an archive to a place of social interaction. Examples of recent projects such as the Seattle Public Library and Idea Store in London both reinforce the social role of the library by creating interaction spaces, and also by incorporating more community based programme into the buildings. One of the key endeavors of this project will be in the articulation of the library’s social space. The social space will act as the city’s living room, in which interaction and dialogue will be encouraged through the orchestration of the library’s program.



Fig. 3.19: View of the site from *Vječnica*



Fig. 3.20: Seattle Public Library



Fig. 3.21: Idea Store Whitechapel

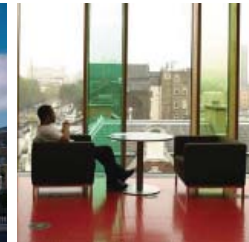




Fig. 3.22: Extending



Fig. 3.23: Digging



Fig. 3.24: Bridging

In an attempt to incorporate the library and river as symbolic extensions of the city, I have generated a number of models, that physically address this concern.

Envisioning the building as an extended pathway along the river, emerging from the landscape behind, renders the building no longer an object in space but both a trajectory and a rooted mass at once. Condensed mass is left off in front of the old library and extended by two outstretched arms in either direction of the river, allowing the building to extend beyond itself, upstream and downstream.

In the opposite manner, rooting the building into the ground confines it within its own parameters, impermeable to the surrounding city. The building appears frozen, locked in a dual relation with the old library and the bridges on either side locking it in. What if the building is a bridge?

Spanning the building between two bridges, allows the library itself to become a bridge, inviting the city to pass through and along it. The river floods the site reasserting not only its own presence, but also the presence of the new

and the old libraries through multiple reflections upon its surface and that of the flooded site. What if landscape took on a more prominent role in the project and became a catalyst for blurring the edge between the building and the city?

Thinking of the library as a procession of descent, allows it to become a landscape of stepped platforms, where light and transparency become a registrar of one's descent into the layers of the earth. What if I bury the whole building?

Burying the library is a symbolic gesture of protecting it, of embedding it into the earth. Above it, hoisted on the building's shoulders rests a large open space into which all the surrounding paths converge, inviting the city over onto it and below into the library. The inevitable monolithic form that emerges out of this scheme begs for a fragmentation of program. What if the library became a light floating landscape?

Perhaps this could be addressed by building the library as a series of floating bridges that mediate between the water, the city and the old library. How could the building become more responsive to the city and the site, but also to the

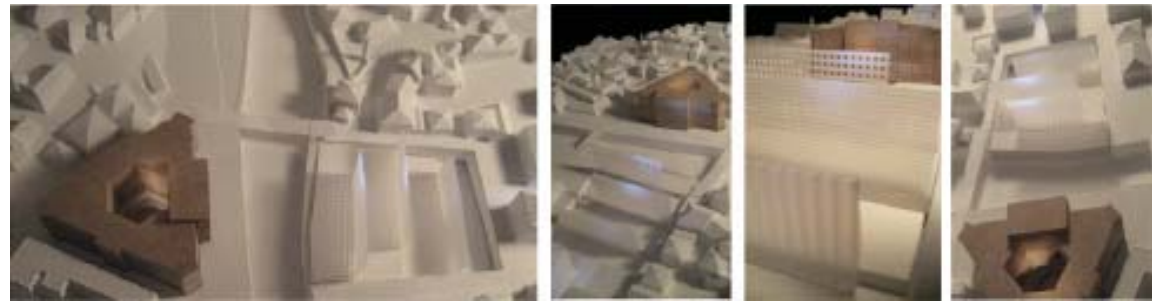


Fig. 3.25: Layering

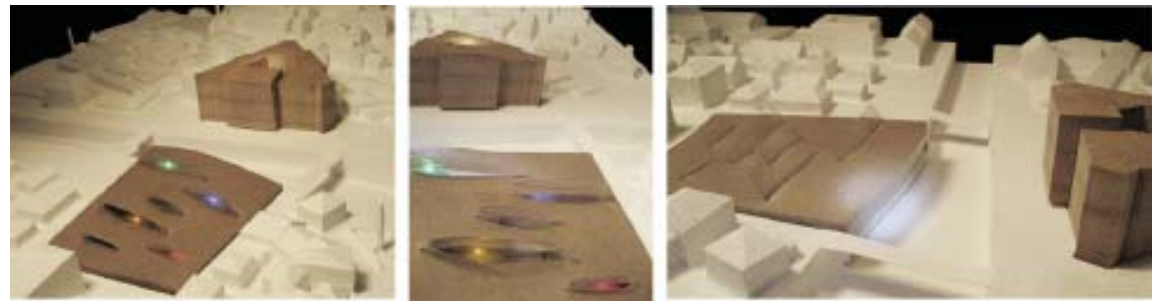


Fig. 3.26: Burying



Fig. 3.27: Floating

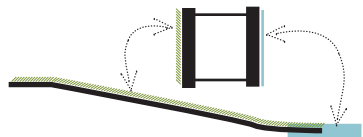


Fig. 3.28: Mirroring



Fig. 3.29: Folding

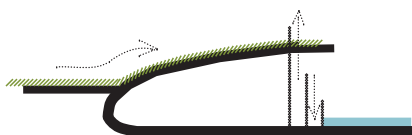


Fig. 3.30: Connecting



old library?

What if the building allows for the extension of landscape from the surrounding hills, all the way through itself, and down into the river? The landscape will warp itself up onto the south façade, projecting the green of the hills in the city's backdrop onto the main stage. The north façade will be transparent and reflective; mirroring the river while the river reciprocates. A sense of tension between the old and the new libraries dominates this scheme. What if, instead the building form became less confrontational and more receptive?

This allows for the possibility of creating a library that folds onto itself, still allowing for a reflective face on the river front and a public space on the south side, but at the same time forming a more complex set of relationships between the new and the old library, the city and the river. Could one start connecting the existing pathways on the site in order to create a more centrifugal space; a space that draws the city in but at the same time allows for the expansion of the library beyond the boundaries of its footprint?

Could the library become a set of orchestrated pathways that not only connect the existing paths

and bridges on the site, but also begin to embed the library program into, under and through?





Fig. 3.31: Site plan

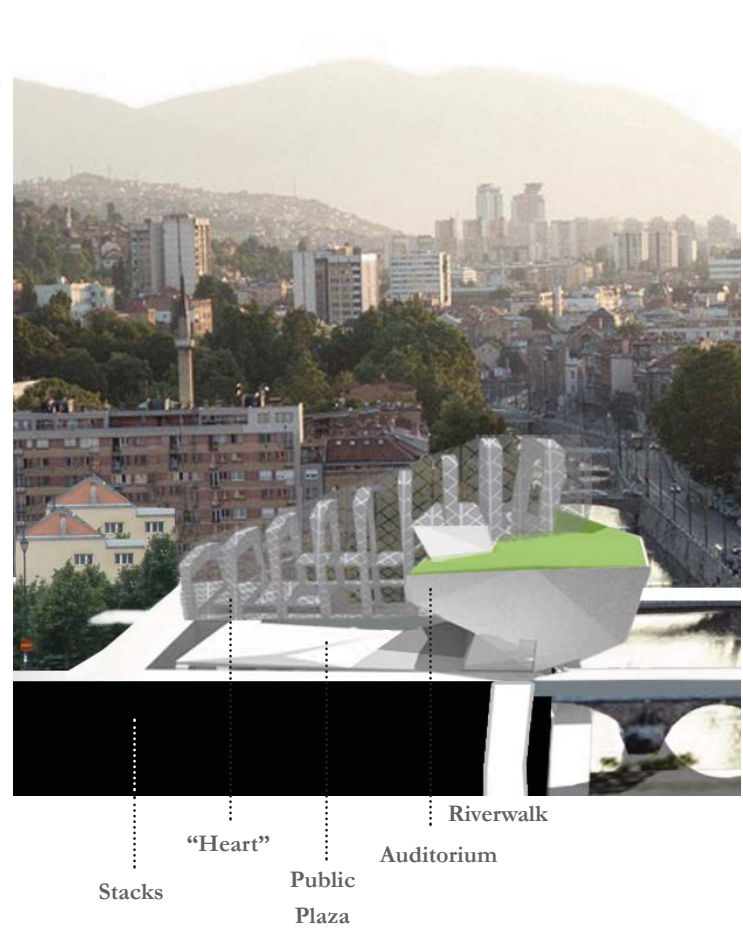
Riverwalk  
 "Spine"  
 "Heart"  
 Auditorium  
 Public Plaza  
 Stacks

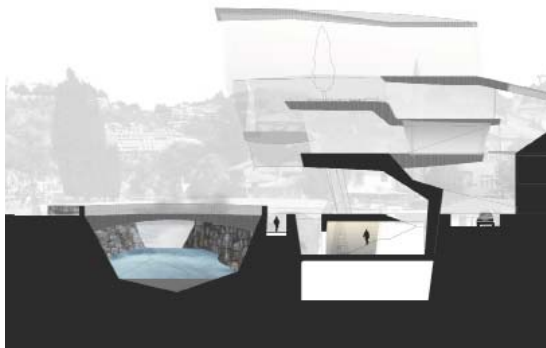
After going through this exploration it became clear that the new library cannot be based on a singular prescribed idea, but rather on a series of vertical and horizontal relationships that respond to the river, the old library, the existing urban fabric and the surrounding paths. By means of a combination of approaches, the structure of the new library, in contrast to the solid edges of *Vjećnica*, will engage with its urban landscape and with the old library both by means of placement and of its physical characteristics.

By establishing a new Riverwalk that will simultaneously extend the pedestrian paths and will join itself to the river-walks that are already in place, the city will be invited in towards the library, and the building itself will project out towards the city. Its placement across the river from *Vjećnica* will establish a relationship with the old library—by placing an active building across from one which has become a monument, I am trying to assert the cultural and active role of the new library, while simultaneously preserving *Vjećnica's* former function and significance. In further contrast to the *Vjećnica*, the new library's physical contours consciously respond, open and bend according to the contours of the river

it faces and the cityscape in which it is placed. This is most evident in the building's articulation of its three main elements: the spine, the heart, and the stacks.

Fig. 3.32:  
Building Perspective



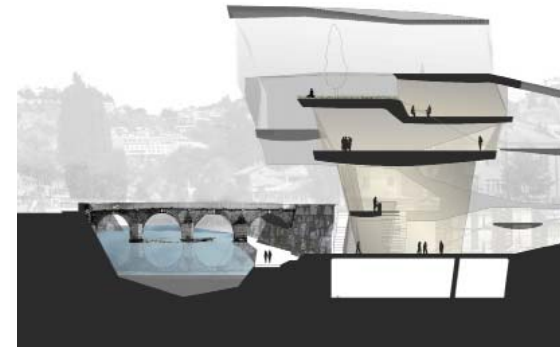


1. Sunken Garden

Fig. 3.33: Building (Spine) Sections



2. Bridge



3. Atrium



Fig. 3.34: Conceptual studies: tracing the river

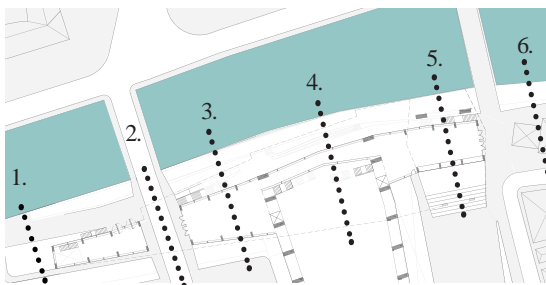
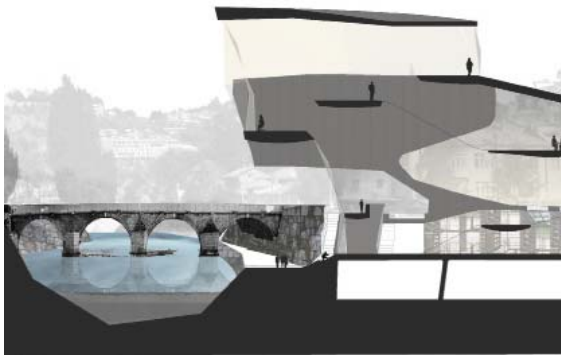


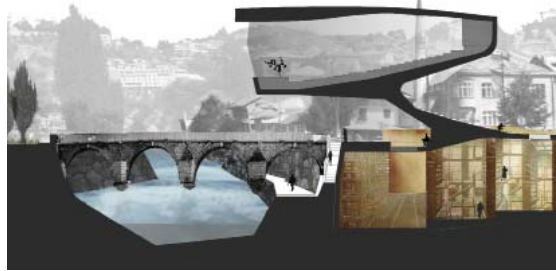
Fig. 3.35: Plan (spine)

*The spine:*

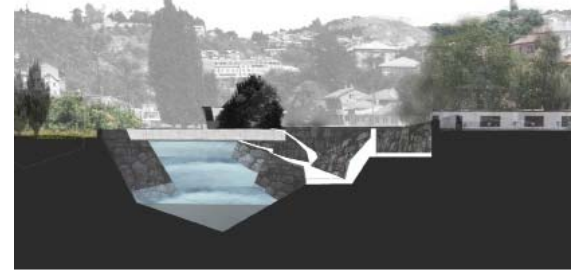
The spine traces the river's movement. In addition to housing support services, it plays an important role in establishing a continuous pedestrian zone at the ground level. Furthermore, it shares two key programmatic components at its intersections with the heart and the stacks. With the stacks it shares an independent performance theatre, and with the heart, the library's main reading rooms. Through its progression, the spine's relationship with the river changes – at the stacks it is narrow, while at the heart it widens, and at certain points it joins the pedestrian path. After passing the second bridge, it slowly slopes up and joins the sidewalk, thereby re-emerging into the city. This gradual expansion of height mimics that of the buildings surrounding it. In contrast to *Vjećnica's* physical austerity with regard to its existing urban surroundings, the new library extends out to *Bašćuršija* through the pedestrian walk as well as allowing the city in visually through its transparent skin. In addition to the support it provides in making all the library's elements possible, the spine works principally to invite the city in, which in turn leads it to the heart of the library.



4. Reading Rooms



5. Performance Space



6. Riverwalk



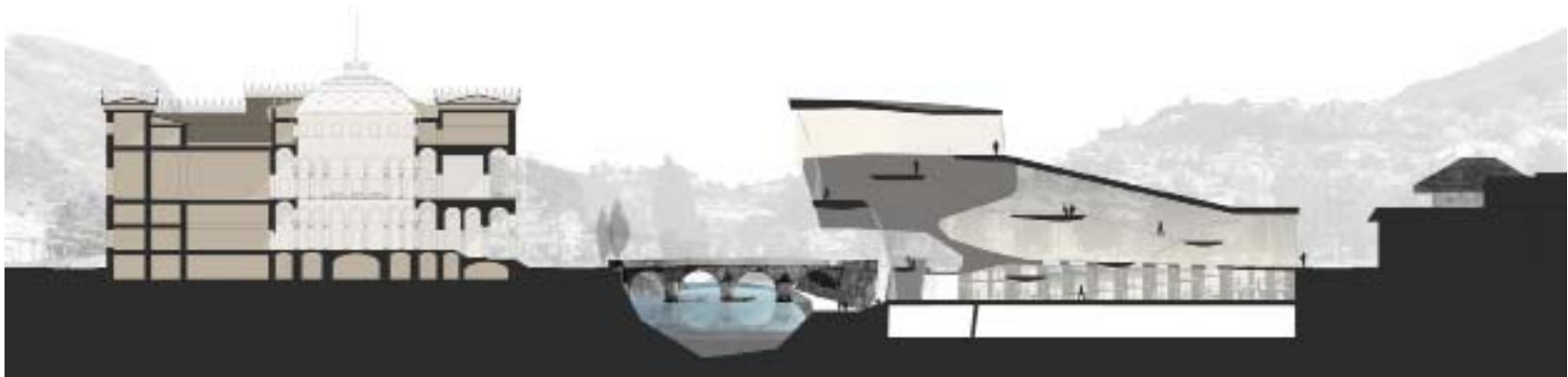
Fig. 3.36: Front Elevation

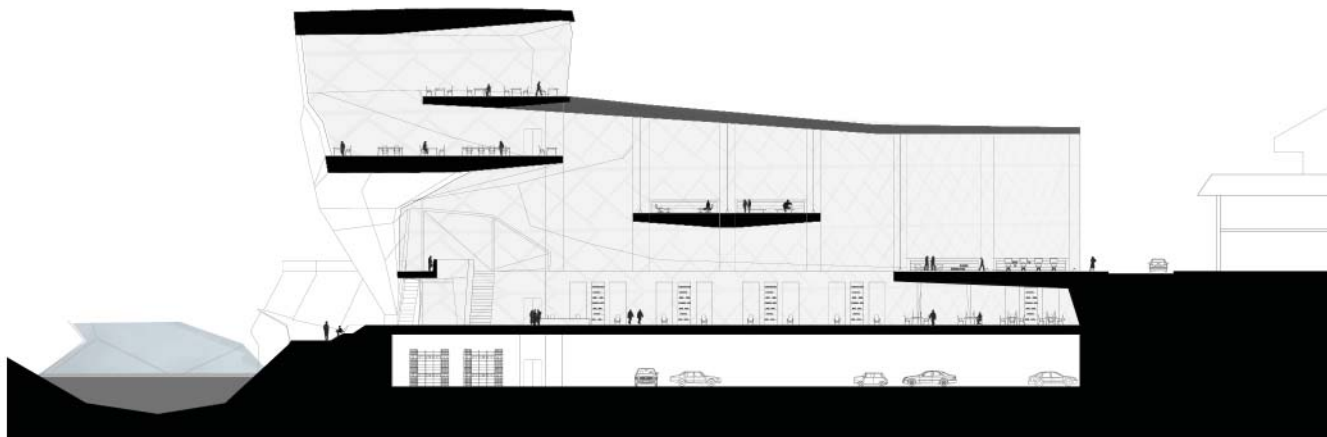
*The heart:*

The central space of the building, where all the axes converge, drawing the city in, is the heart of the library itself. The heart is the social center, entrance and gateway to all the other programmes. It is the main activity center that houses the main reference desk, computer stations, magazines and newspapers, music archives, a children's collection, a variety of lounge spaces, and lastly, at the very top, a reading room. Notably, the heart's open central public space with a stepped forecourt mirrors that of *Vjećnica*, so as to bring attention to the old and the new reading rooms, calling to each other over the river.

Physically, the journey through the heart is that of ascent. The program is arranged in a series of hanging platforms, each bearing a visual relationship to either the stacks, the city, *Vjećnica* or back onto itself. The heart is the main shared space of the building, which gives way to interaction and dialogue.

Fig. 3.37: Section through the Heart





*Fig. 3.38: Detailed Section through the Heart*

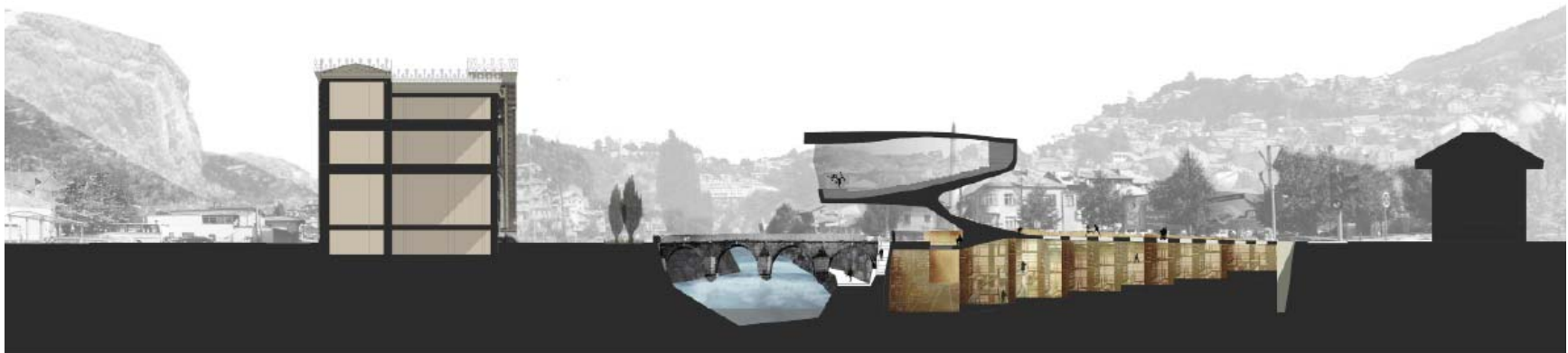


*The stacks:*

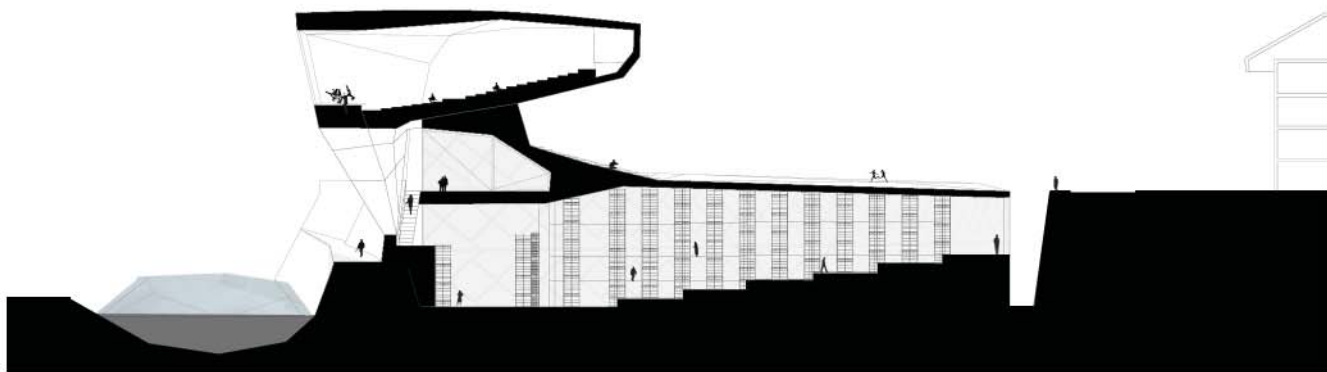
Contrary in nature to the heart, the stacks act as the underbelly of the library, sunken into the ground by the weight of the books they house. Above-ground rests a public plaza, further accentuating its special placement and significance. Nested in the deepest layer of the stacks is the library's most valuable asset - the special collection. This collection rests, consoled by the depths of the earth, indifferent to the outside elements. The stacks are delineated by a cut in the ground, which allows for light but no view to or from the outside. The view one gets from the stacks is of the river at the beginning of the descent, and partial views into the 'heart' through careful cuts in the wall.

The journey through the stacks from the heart to the special collection is one of descent. Arrival at the special collection signifies the end of the descent. Conversely, as one begins the ascent upwards, the stacks gradually open up. Their fullest manifestation concurs with that of the 'heart'.

*Fig. 3.39: Section through the Stacks*







*Fig. 3.40: Detailed Section through the Stacks*



Fig. 3.41: Level: Minus Two

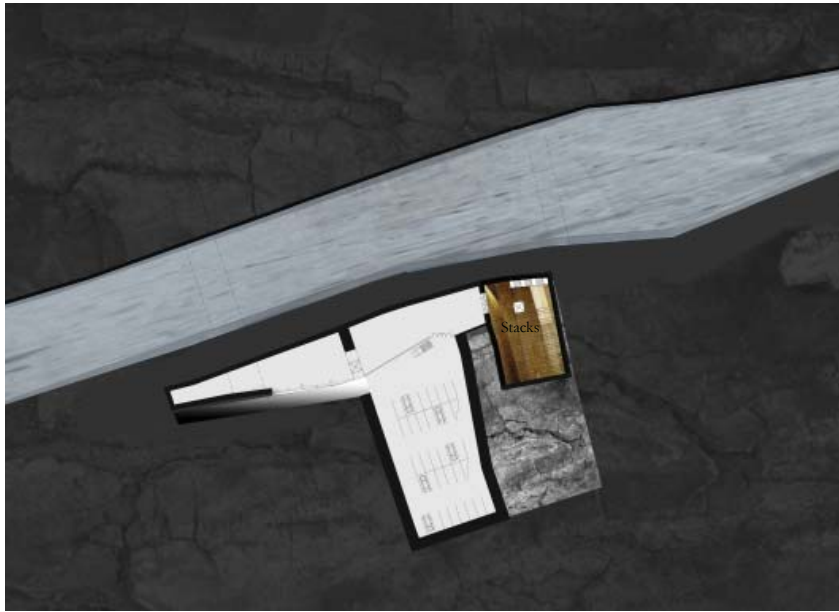


Fig. 3.42: Level: Minus One

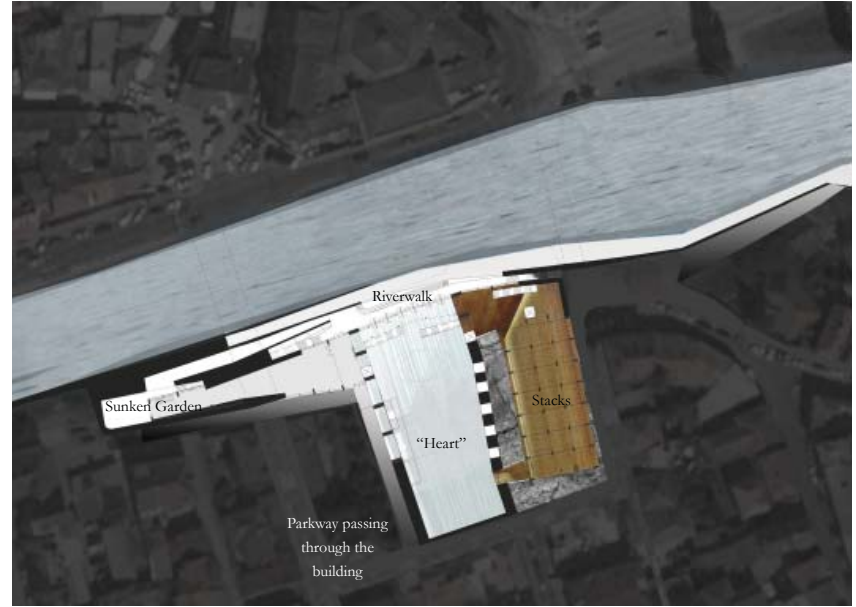
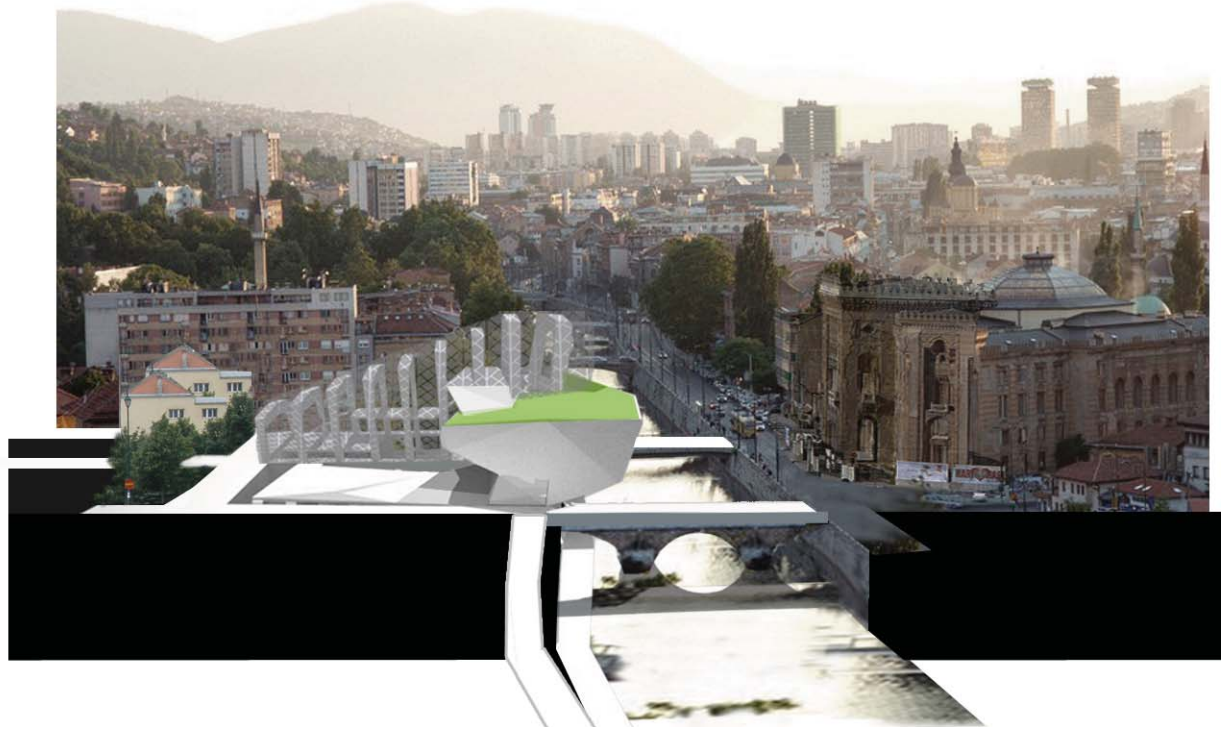


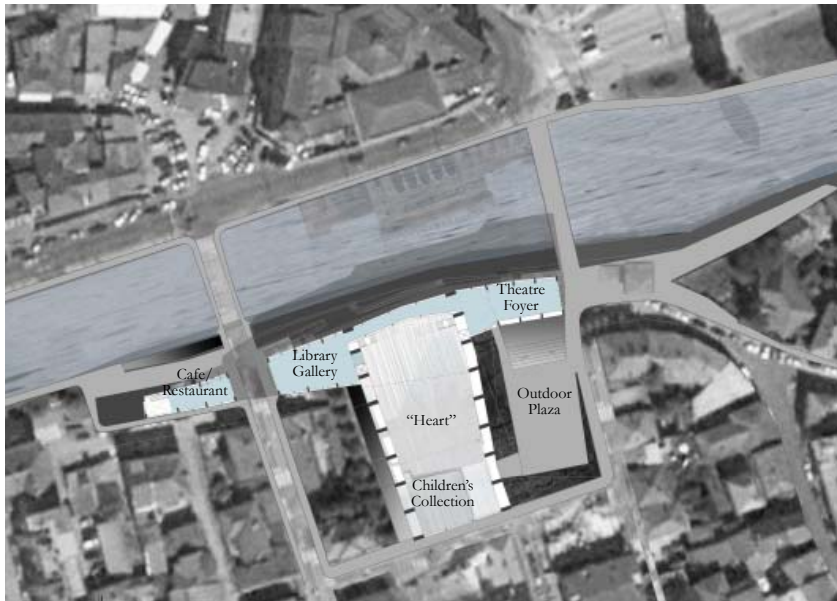
Fig. 3.43:  
Exterior Perspective



I scurry to get here, out of breath, my heart pounding like a ticking bomb. With one location so firmly in mind, I had barely cast a second glance at the sights in my sprint across *Baščaršija*. *Vjéčnica* has been restored since my last visit, an idea that renders me both excited and anxious. I want to see the new main atrium, the grand stair, the former reading rooms – have they been altered or simply restored? When I get to the front façade facing the river, I am surprised to see that *Vjéčnica* is not alone – it is engaged in a mutual gaze across the river, a dialogue with a new building. I direct my sight across to the other shore, and examine this strange building, one unlike any other in the city. I take a moment to absorb its presence, to trace over its contours.... This must be the new National Library.

Spanning from *Šeber čebajina čuprija* Bridge to just past *Novi Most* Bridge, the new building looks like an organic, living component of the city, its various pedestrian and river paths extending to and fro, some along the river and some into the city itself. From each of the two bridges a set of stairs lead down to the river, and once at the water, all along its edge, a pedestrian path snakes its way from the direction of the library. This is the Riverwalk, acting as an extension of the building's physical boundaries of eastward towards *Bembaša* and westward towards the city; simultaneously, its location ordains it the task of mediating the boundary between the building and the river. In front of what I assume to be the main part of the library, the Riverwalk widens, allowing the building to open onto it. In the water I see

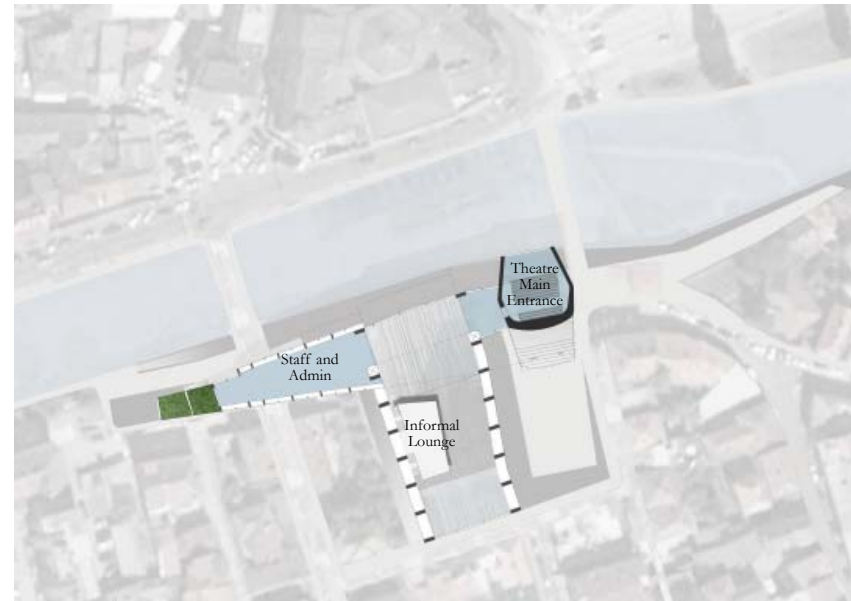
Fig. 3.44: Ground Level



reflections of both buildings - *Vjećnica* and the library - merging into one, the river slowly carrying them both downstream and into the city.

Standing by the *Šeber čebajina čuprija* Bridge, I notice a bewildering sight - a floating theatre stands suspended just above *Inat Kuća*, above a sloping road which makes its way right underneath it and into the library. I begin to examine the other roads around the library more closely, only to realize that they are all engaged in a game with the building, some passing under, others brushing by and yet others passing right through it. I shift my gaze back at the theater and notice a performance unfolding. The stage faces both myself and *Vjećnica*, and behind it the city's enveloping hills serve as

Fig. 3.45: Level: Plus One



a backdrop. For an instant I contemplate the observer and the observed in this setup - where is the stage and where is the audience?

I cross the street with eyes fixed on the *Novi Most* Bridge above me. Once reaching the other side, I find myself underneath the building and in front of a large door that leads into and through a spacious open gallery space. I continue on until I reach a grand staircase which descends to the floor below. Upon reaching the bottom, I am in a vast open space, on one side of which I see the Riverwalk, the river and the old library reflected in it, and on the other side of which I am faced with a series of ascending platforms. The view out of this part of the building does not look directly onto the city, but lifting my head up enables me to see the street. The space in which

Fig. 3.46: The Stacks



I stand is filled with light. I take a deep breath to allow myself to take everything in. I sit and listen to the buzzing sound of people, of life, of Sarajevo.

I begin to think of Mak Dizdar and Hamza Humo and other great Bosnian poets. I wonder if somewhere within these walls I could find the original drafts of their poetry; I decide to head over to the Special Collection. I ask a librarian for directions and she points me to a cut in the wall at the other end of this large space. I slip through the cut and make my way over an enclosed bridge. Below it, a deep void separates the two parts of the building.

Upon entering the stacks, I find myself in another open space; here the light is softer and dimmer than where I had previously sat. The stacks gradually slope downward, slowly opening up in the direction of the river. There is no visible view to the outside except for tiny glimpses of the river through the cuts in the wall at the opposite end. The smell of books, old and new, lingers in the air; they seem countless, and upon their surfaces I detect the slow shadows of curious book seekers. I start my descent down towards the river and into the depths of the earth, lower and lower. Upon reaching the Special Collection the light is warm and filtered from above. I feel calm and protected. I start reading through the pages of drafts and the space fills with the voices of Bosnian poets.

Fig. 3.47: The Heart



After what feels like a long spell of absorption, I start to become aware of my body and surroundings again. I am curious to explore the rest of the building and make my way back up to the main atrium. Emerging out of the stacks, this space now feels even larger than before. It is filled with laughter and chatter - children running and squirming with laughter and surprise, people engaged in conversation of various sort and intensity, etc. I notice a path outside sloping down along one of the walls and into the building. This path cuts right through the library at all hours of the day, for even when the library is closed, this path is allowed through. Along the inside of the wall a number of stairs and platforms are ascending up towards what must be the reading rooms - I have already seen these from the outside. I make my way up to the first platform which hangs at the street level. Here

I find myself in the Children's Collection, surrounded by tiny computer stations and a group of kids huddled around a storyteller, all seated on large cushions on the floor. I carry on to the second platform, where I encounter a group of people watching an intense game of chess. No one seems to notice my presence so I slowly make my way further up to the next platform. At last I am now in the immense main reading room, which opens up towards *Vječnica* on one side while the rest of the entire library unwraps beneath it on the other side. The atmosphere here is almost dreamlike - I feel as if I am flowing on top of the library. As people studiously bend over their books, I sit and watch the river flow by, studying the meticulously restored details of *Vječnica's* façade.

Fig. 3.48: Level: Plus Two

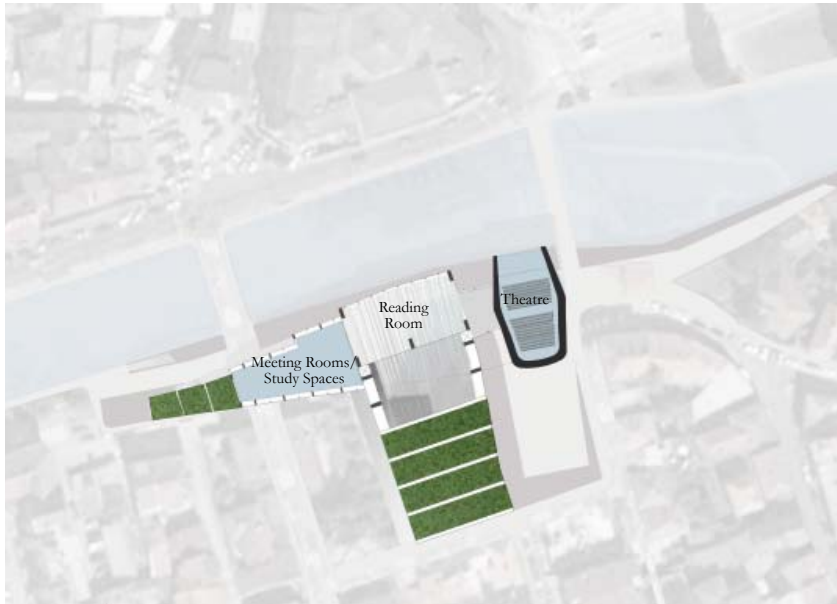
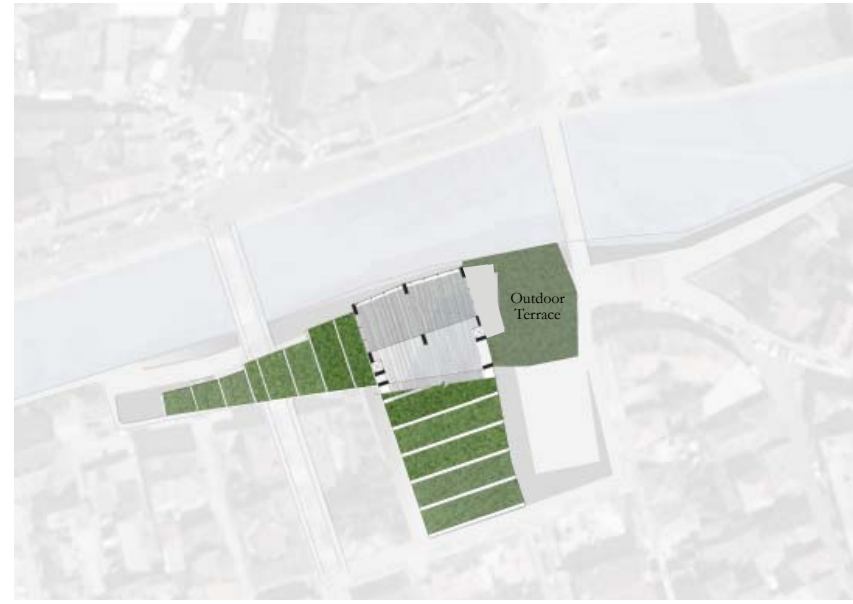


Fig. 3.49: Level: Plus Three



Noticing my wide-eyed reaction to the view, the lady beside me leans over and suggests that I climb to the final platform, for it opens onto a large outdoor terrace. I take her advice, not realizing the full potency of the space before reaching it. As I step outside, the entire city opens up around me, as if putting me on stage. *Vjećnica* stands with its immersed gaze immediately across from me. On the other side of the terrace beneath me sits an open plaza delineated by a cut in the ground. Street musicians, boisterous children, and people sitting in small groups occupy the plaza. From this viewpoint, I can more clearly trace all of the paths that converge into the library. To the west the city opens up - first the Ottoman *Čaršija*, then beyond it the Austrian buildings, and in the distance further still, the

rising Socialist towers. The hills surround the entire city like a blanket, deep green; the green roofs of the library rising quietly and blending into them. I feel overwhelmed. I think of the old funicular lifts of the city's mountains. Regardless of their geographical location, mountains always remind me of these ones surrounding me now – Igman, Jahorina, Bjelašnica - enormous to a child, sublime, revered. I long to stay here, but as usual, my visit is brief. I am expected elsewhere.





*Sections*



*Fig. 3.50: Site plan F*      *E*      *D*      *C*      *B*      *A*

Fig. 3.51





Riverwalk

Fig. 3.52

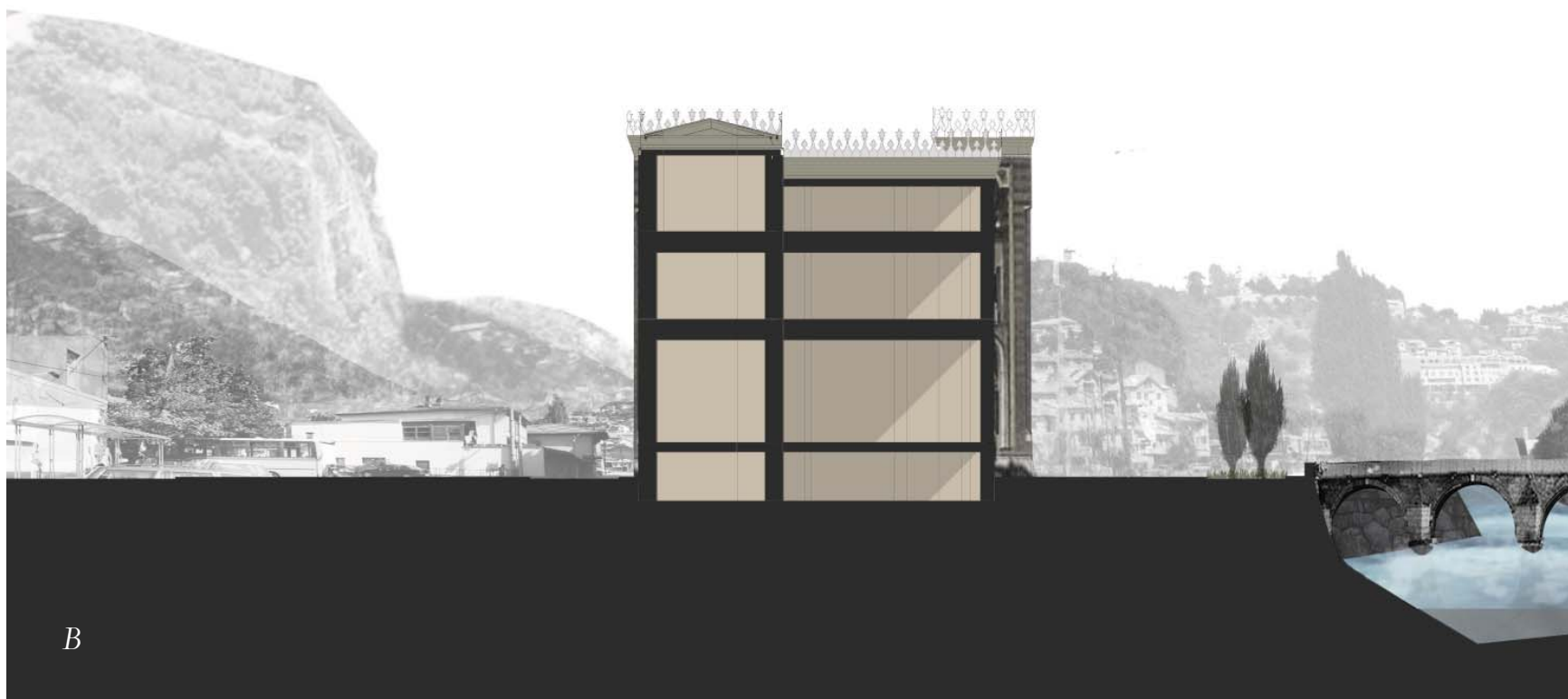
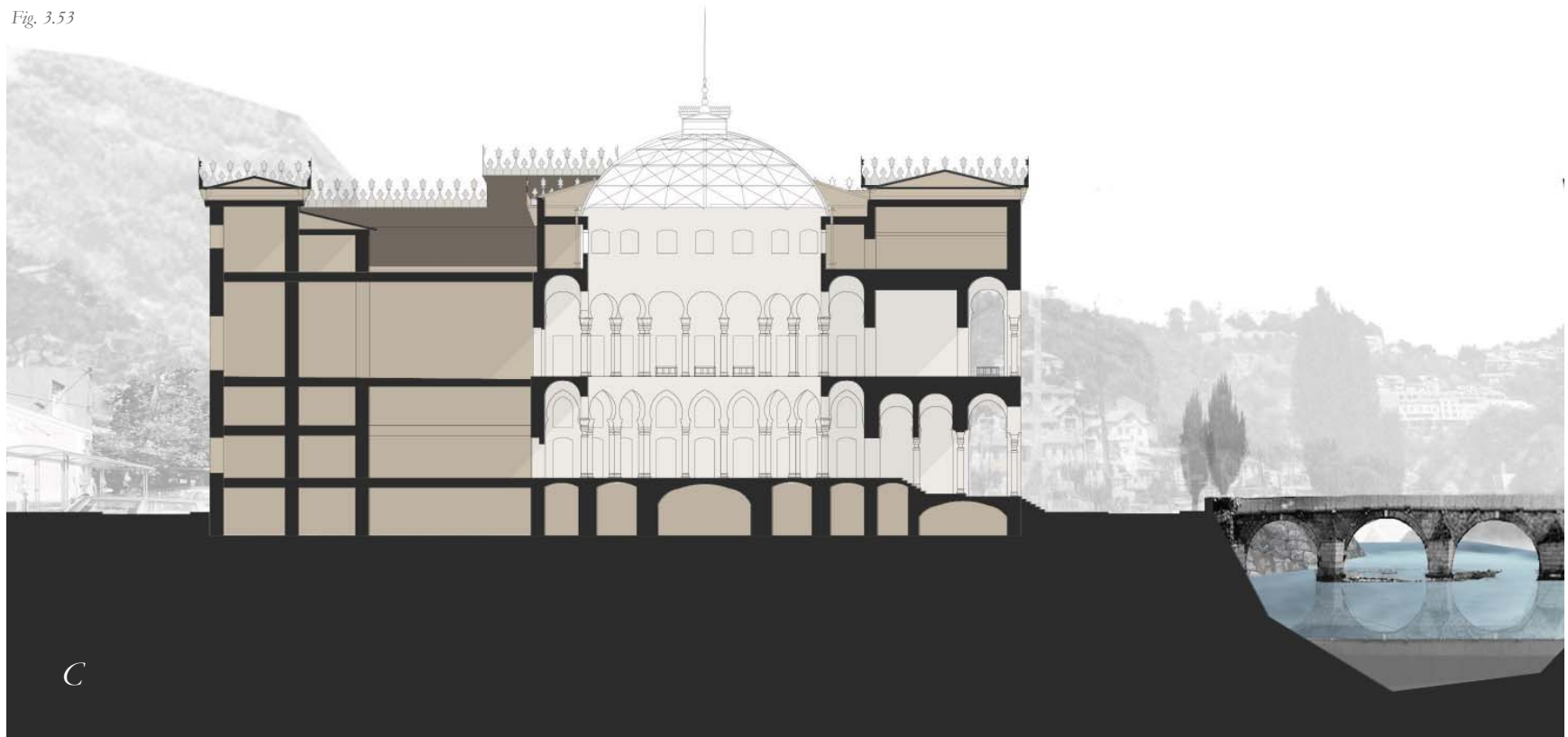




Fig. 3.53



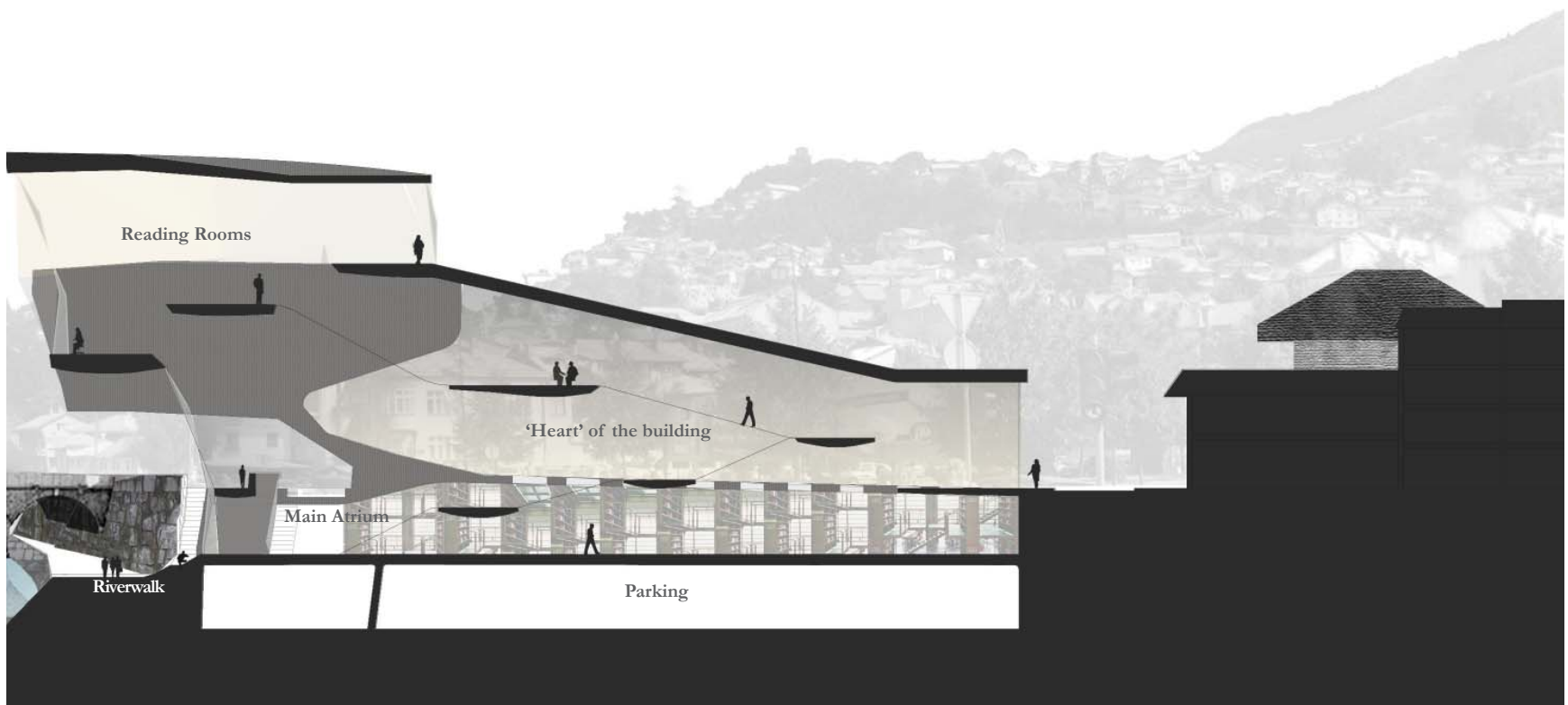
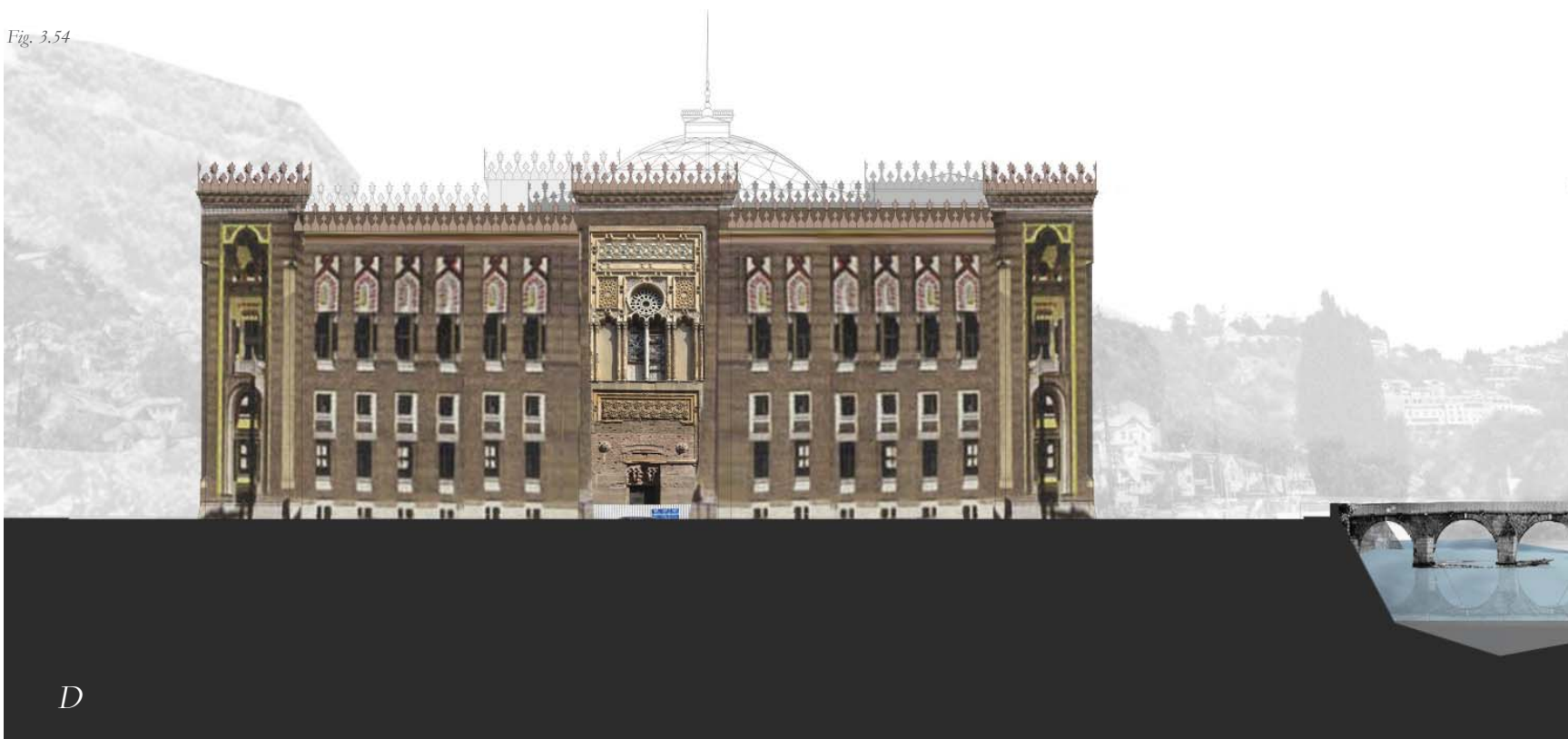


Fig. 3.54



*D*



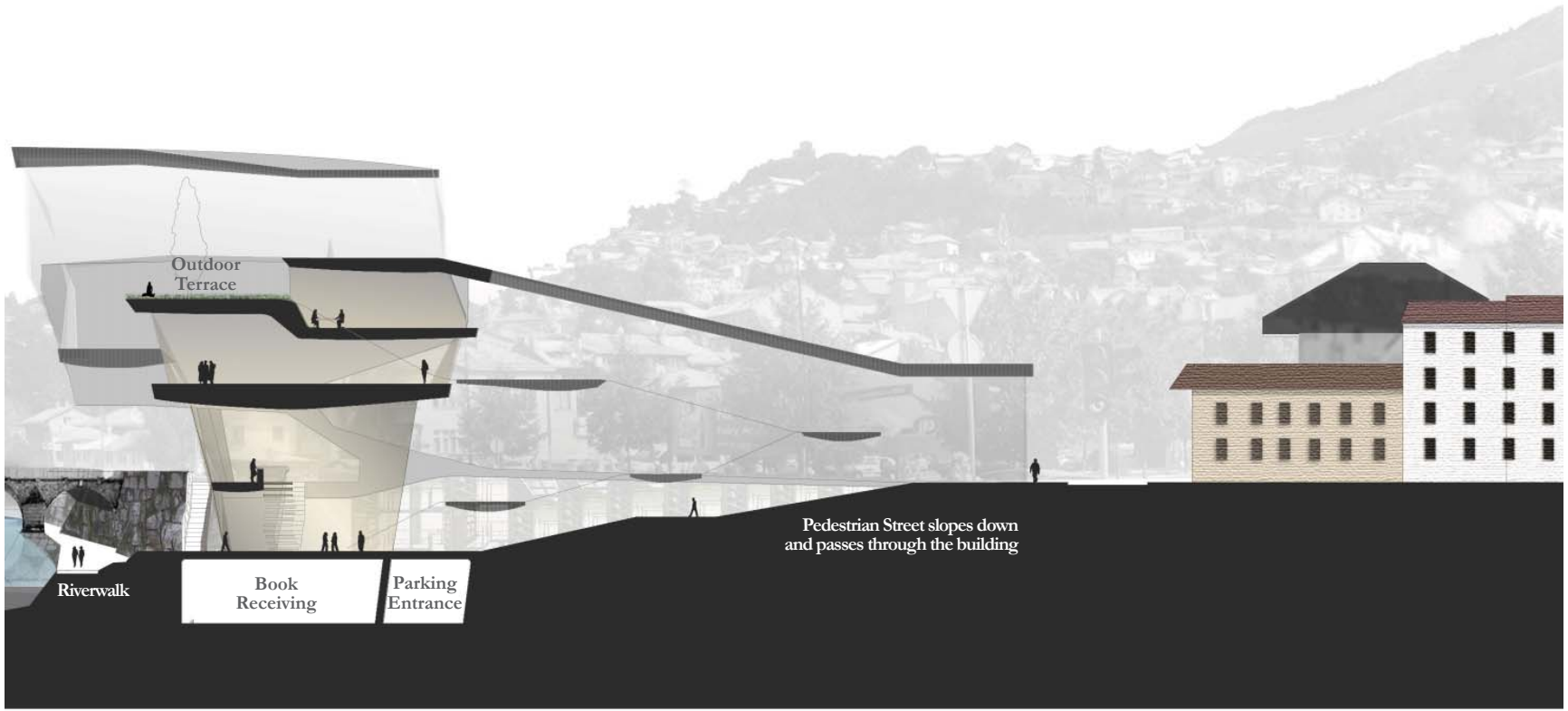
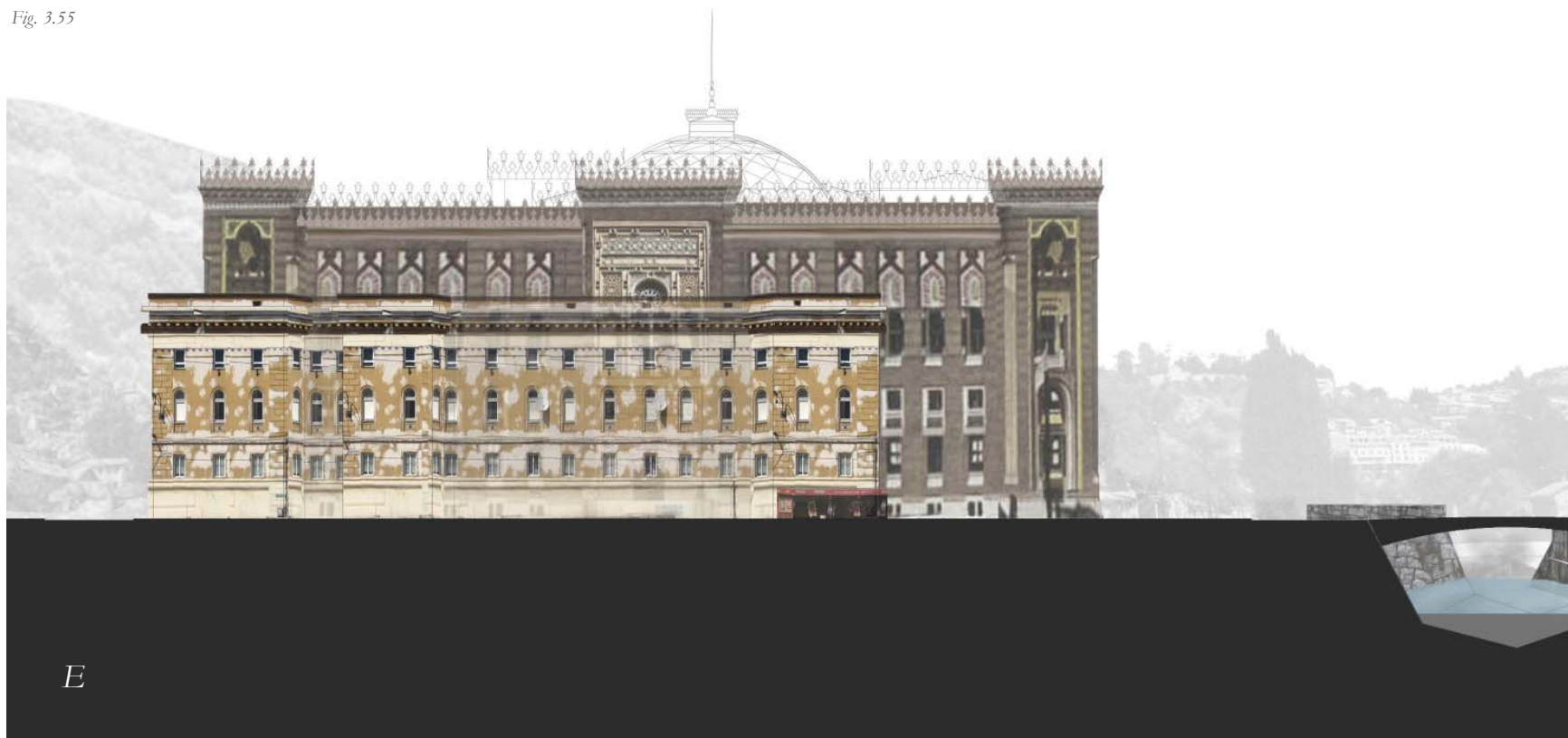


Fig. 3.55



*E*



Fig. 3.56



F

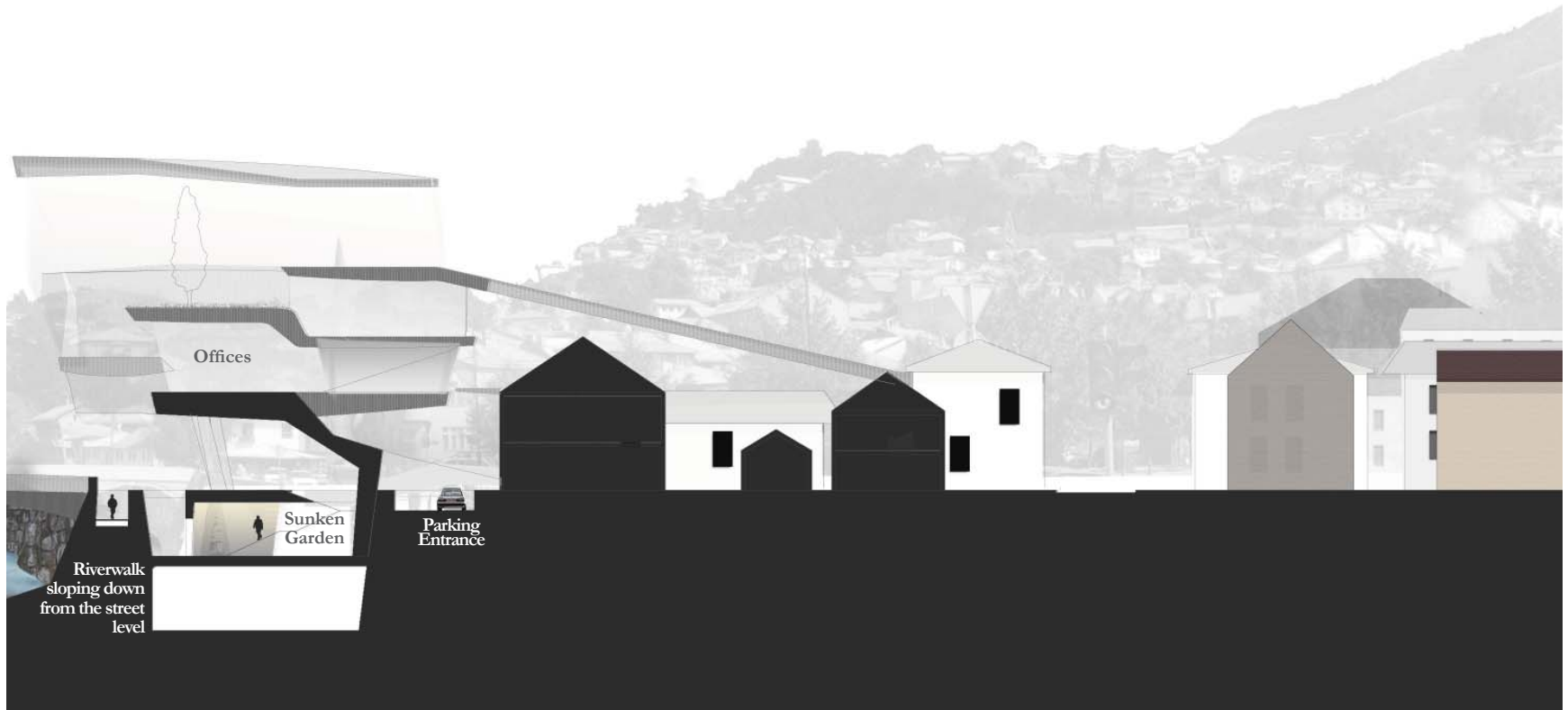
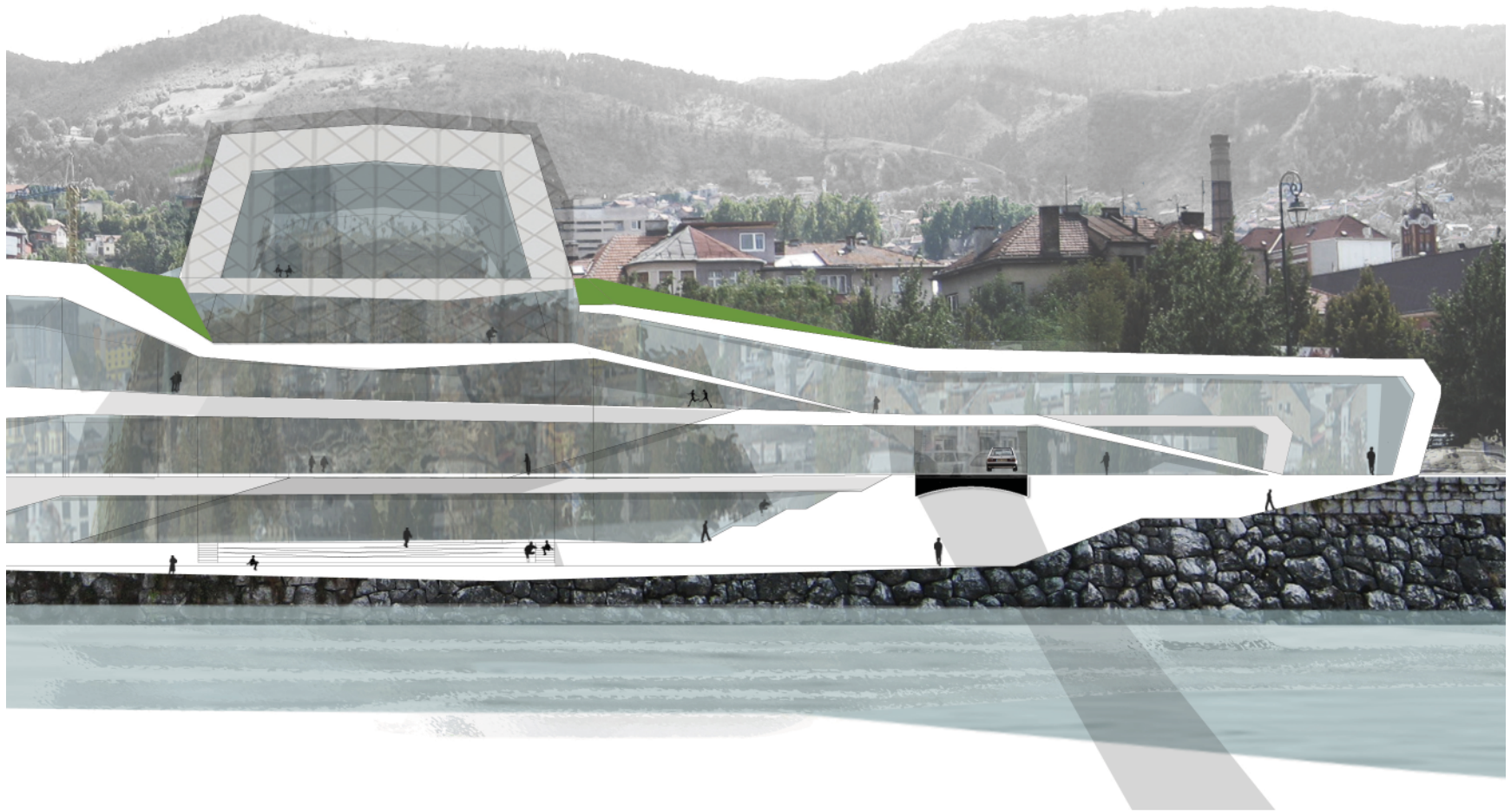




Fig. 3.57





*Fig. 3.58*







In the context of the present Bosnian situation, I feel that my views are hopelessly unpopular. If a Bosnian Serb were to read this thesis, for instance, s/he might likely take me for a naïve fool, nostalgic for days gone by. A Muslim, on the other hand, might regard me as a traitor due to my failure to stress adequately the Muslims' suffering and great loss during the war, as it often seems to be the case with the international community itself; perhaps s/he would also feel helplessness, disappointment and anger towards me for the very same reasons. My own perspective still bears traces of confusion; after having gone through this process, I am still apprehensive to claim that I feel clear about my role and sense of belonging within the current Bosnian situation.

Despite these feelings of doubt, however, I am certain about my desire to see a separation established between the notion of a Bosnian citizenship and ethnic affiliation. It is for this very reason that I feel uneasy at the thought of settling in present-day Sarajevo, a city in which I was born and spent my formative years, a city where I formally belong to the majority, the Bosniaks, but where, by the same token, I feel that I am forced to repress a large part of myself.

I also feel pressured to take a side, and to speak the newly-coined phrases of ‘my’ side.

I do still feel and sense that, in large part, no side in this war has any desire to reconcile. Perhaps it is impossible for me to offer a consequential perspective on this matter, one that the Bosnian people will take heed of, due to my lack of involvement in and experience of the war. For this very same reason, however, as an outsider who longs to be an insider once again, I would like to offer up my optimism and speak of Bosnia as one country.

By means of undertaking this project, I am trying to address my principle concern of preserving Bosnian culture in its entirety, one that is comprised of multiple ethnic and religious contributions. While Sarajevo has undergone numerous cultural changes throughout history, and will in all likelihood continue this trend, the prominent difference that this last conflict carries with it is the exclusive carving-out and claiming of shared songs, poems, phrases, stories, spaces and so on. My aim with the library is an attempt at preserving, or at least acknowledging, the presence and history of this heterogeneity. In the absence of such an affirmation, Bosnians

(OPPOSITE) Fig. 3.59: Bosnian Parliament Building, 1996  
(BOTTOM) Fig. 3.60: Kounellis Exhibition, *Vjećnica*, 2004





(TOP) Fig. 3.61: Sarajevo sign. Today Cyrillic is used to delineate that which belongs to Serbia.

(BOTTOM) Fig. 3.62: *Under All Those Flags*, by Nebojsa Seric Shoba, 1999



are implicitly demanded to give up part their memories, their past, and what they have come to regard as their identity, one that is inextricably tied to contributions from a number of ethnic groups. For this reason, I wish to make this library a place for the acknowledgement of a shared past, of everything that *Vjećnica* and the city itself contained not so long ago, and also as a transition place of addressing and confronting the dichotomies that accompany these heterogeneous binds. For such an undertaking, a space which encourages both conceptual and social, therefore physical, engagement, is necessary.

There isn't so much as a single philosophical view of the world grounding this thesis as an attitude grounded on intellectual doubt, moral caution and a deep emotional craving to see things torn asunder somehow brought back together.

A spirit of reconciliation dominates Godard's "Purgatory." Why Sarajevo? "I wanted to see a place where reconciliation seemed possible," says Judith (Sarah Adler), an Israeli journalist, explaining why she has come to the literary conference.

The gracefully shots in this movie are both beautiful and prosaic. The talk, even including Godard's typically dry lecture on the politics of the reverse shot, lingers in an air of melancholy and yearning -- for a place and a time before war and hatred, or beyond them, as in the final section ("Heaven") which makes everything human simple again, like the elements.

Godard's "music" is the film medium itself, and he spends a lot of time exploring the significance of film as a symbol of our current contemporary condition. The questions of Godard's narrative, bring us closure more than any answer could. Will "our music" play any longer?

Much like Godard's *Notre Musique*, this thesis recognizes the impossibility of an 'answer' that can reconcile, overcome the losses or dismiss the suffering of war. It only speaks of the possible affirmative role of architecture and knowledge through collective shared space that offers a possibility of an overlap. It does so in the hopes of shrinking the abyss by pointing to a bridge for those who chose to cross the river.

Godard devotes a long passage to the famous Stari Most ("old bridge") of Mostar in Bosnia-

(RIGHT) Fig. 3.63 & Fig. 3.64:  
Godard's lecture on shot/  
counter-shot , *Notre Musique*





Herzegovina, less in bitterness over the bridge's destruction by Croatian artillery in 1993 than in hope over the symbolism of the effort to rebuild it. Architect Gilles Pecqueux, who supervised its reconstruction, talks about the symbolic meaning of his work. Speaking to Godard, he says: "It's not to restore the past; it's to make the future possible."

(LEFT) Fig. 3.65: *Notre Musique*, pieces of destroyed *Stari Most*, numbered for reconstruction.





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