UNDERSTANDING THE CONSTRAINTS OF CITY AMELIORATION: INSIGHTS INTO THE SPECIFICITIES OF SARAJEVO IN TRANSITION

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ABSTRACT: Sarajevo is a city of socio-spatial specificities – a tumultuous history of urban development and promising future abruptly halted by its siege from 1992 to 1995. This state administrative centre has been in transition for the past 28 years, which has become an excuse for its degeneration and lack of initiative for its development. This paper aims to examine the intricate web of administrative, legislative, planning, economic, and socio–spatial boundaries in order to offer answers to the question – what is constraining this city from moving forward?

To provide these answers, aerial photos and city plans were analysed, in particular their genesis, a historical review was conducted, and demographic and economic data were analysed, all with regards to the Inter-Entity Boundary Line (IEBL) and its lingering consequences. This paper offers an overview of the interrelationship of factors that create the current post-war transition ambience, and related problems that manifest socially and spatially.

KEY WORDS: Inter-Entity Boundary Line, liminality, transition, urban plan, vulnerability, Sarajevo

Introduction

Through its long and tumultuous history, Sarajevo has thoroughly changed and built on its previous socio-spatial context. Each political context shaped the city, defining spatial
and social relations, and leaving a legacy of numerous values and issues. After the Second World War, industrialisation encouraged mass migration, increasing spatial needs for the accommodation of new residents. The city authorities did not respond adequately to these challenges and the newcomers were compelled to fend for themselves, building informal and unregulated settlements, which are a feature of Sarajevo’s slopes even today. The breakup of Yugoslavia and the outbreak of war was manifested in Sarajevo through a siege from 1992 to 1995 and intense destruction, all of which was accompanied by radical changes of political system and the new administrative division of Sarajevo (into Sarajevo and East Sarajevo) and the new administrative division of Bosnia and Herzegovina (Federation of BiH (FBiH), Republika Srpska (RS) and Brčko District) establishing the Inter Entity Boundary Line (IEBL) through the Dayton Peace Agreement in 1995. The social and spatial indeterminacy caused by the state of transition, the consequent political, economic, and demographic changes, and the nature of globalisation, in general, leaves Sarajevo, the capital of BiH, in a limbo, opening the door to an abuse of this vagueness, especially in the area of spatial planning and development.

This paper aims to examine the intricate web of administrative, legislative, planning, economic, and socio-spatial influences, to offer answers to the question – what is constraining this city from moving forward? To provide these answers, aerial photos and city plans were analysed, especially their genesis, a historical review was conducted, and demographic and economic data were analysed, all with special regards to the IEBL and its lingering consequences.

**Administration and Planning Level**

Government fragmentation following the division of BiH and Sarajevo, led to excessive differentiation of (ethnically representative) institutions and the insufficiently defined scope of their responsibilities, on the one hand, and conflicts of interest, on the other. Decision-making power is decentralised, not only through the autonomous administrations of the two entities and Brčko District, but also through there being ten cantons in the Federation, which also operate autonomously. Furthermore, significant decision-making power is given to municipal and city authorities, which, as a result, produces one of the most complex models of government organisation in the world, characterised by horizontal and vertical non-compliance, reflected in Sarajevo, and BH cities in general.

The IEBL separated part of the peripheral urban area, which became East Sarajevo, and reduced the influence of the central zone on the suburbs, conditioning the separate asymmetrical development of the two parts, which led to a double administration and dysfunctional communication between Sarajevo and East Sarajevo, thus dividing and disharmonising planning documentation at all administrative levels.
The only remaining spatial planning document that treats Sarajevo as an integral space is the Urban plan of the City of Sarajevo for the period from 1986 to 2015. This plan reveals the vulnerability of a divided city – urban fabric changes that resulted from war and division were not updated, enabling unregulated spatial transformations that prevented the construction of planned state level social infrastructure (e.g., shopping malls prevent the construction of a concert hall), then, the area of confrontation between the two entities is treated differently in the documentation. One of the recently uncovered vulnerabilities regards the construction on Mount Trebević that overlooks Sarajevo – this area is a protected landscape on the Federation side, however, on the Republika Srpska side it is not, thus allowing construction, predominantly of luxury housing and catering facilities. This fragmented treatment of space affects Sarajevo not only visually and environmentally, but also puts strain on the traffic infrastructure.

Transition, in general, implies that private capital and the market economy ignore long-term development processes, putting short-term profit in the foreground, which is reflected through rapid housing construction. Privatisation without protection of future development processes related to the public interest caused the devaluation of urban regulation and produced inefficient and irrational land use. The post-war period included the loss of state-owned spatial resources (mainly pre-war industrial facilities) due to privatisation, and these areas were repurposed for residential construction without accompanying social, commercial and recreational facilities. Finally, multiple land value increases make it impossible to return these spaces to public ownership, after such an omission.

### Demography and Economy Level

Demographic data are always influenced by economy, and in the case of Sarajevo by safety aspects correlated to its devastating siege. Pre-war economic, industrial, education and health development, and the standard of life development in general, led to mass migration into the city, quadrupling the population.

However, the Sarajevo siege was followed by both immigration and emigration (Table 1.), caused by systemic city destruction by the RS Army, resulting in significant population decrease – post-war data imply a population drop of 52,000 people. A lot of the population left the city, aiming for Western Europe and neighbouring countries. On the other hand, there was a post-war trend of immigration to Lukavica (today the centre of East Sarajevo), which lead to ethnical homogenisation and polarisation - most of the population in Sarajevo being of Bosniac ethnicity, and most of the population in East Sarajevo of Serb ethnicity. Owing to these circumstances, BiH today is facing a brain drain, basically “producing” a young workforce for (mostly) Western Europe countries.
Table 1. Demographic data comparison for Sarajevo, in the years 1991, 2013 and 2022 (Ibrica Jašarević, 2023)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Municipalities</th>
<th>Census 1991</th>
<th>Census 2013</th>
<th>Estimation 2022</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>City of Sarajevo</td>
<td>79,286</td>
<td>79,286</td>
<td>55,181</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FBiH</td>
<td>24,300</td>
<td>24,300</td>
<td>23,891</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RS</td>
<td>67,937</td>
<td>60,430</td>
<td>75,077</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canton of Sarajevo</td>
<td>25,184</td>
<td>24,733</td>
<td>451</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canton of East Sarajevo</td>
<td>195,791</td>
<td>195,791</td>
<td>1,018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Novo Sarajevo</td>
<td>95,086</td>
<td>91,051</td>
<td>4,034</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pale</td>
<td>16,356</td>
<td>2,044</td>
<td>14,408</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stari Grad Sarajevo</td>
<td>50,744</td>
<td>49,652</td>
<td>1,112</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trnovo</td>
<td>6,995</td>
<td>3,426</td>
<td>3,505</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vogošća</td>
<td>28,647</td>
<td>26,647</td>
<td>26,343</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Municipalities after 1995:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Municipalities</th>
<th>2013</th>
<th>Estimation 2022</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Istošna Ilidža</td>
<td></td>
<td>14,765</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Istošno Novo Sarajevo</td>
<td></td>
<td>14,695</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Istočni Stari Grad</td>
<td>1,333</td>
<td>972</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sokolac</td>
<td>12,078</td>
<td>10,744</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total | 527,040 | 495,027 | 12,112 | 475,100 | 413,593 | 61,516 | 480,000 | 419,880 | 60,120 |

Figure 1. GDP growth comparison for BiH in the years 2005, 2010, 2015 and 2020, in accordance with the administrative division. This shows that almost 2/3 of the total GDP is achieved in FBiH, led by Sarajevo Kanton and the city of Sarajevo. On the other hand, East Sarajevo’s role in GDP for RS is insignificant. This is indicated by everyday work commutation by the East Sarajevo population to Sarajevo (Ibrica Jašarević, 2023).
In 2008, the global economic crisis brought a collapse of the real estate market, which was followed by an uncontrolled financial fever and an increase in real estate prices. Space became the most sought-after resource, and square metres the measuring unit for economic growth and the commodified success of a consumerist society. This is tied to the administrative and legislative level - market logic with the enormous capital pressure on space handcuffs the power of responsible institutions to plan future development. Well established standards of urban planning and architectural praxis barely exist, since everything is subordinated to the individual interests of capital, reinforced by political pressure on the said institutions.

Figure 2. Survival map 1992-1996 (FAMA Collection)

**Socio-Spatial Level and the Role of the Inter-Entity Boundary Line**

The division of BiH and Sarajevo is a spatial representation of a conflict – the IEBL was positioned on the UNPROFOR road map with a scale of 1:600 000, and a topographic line map with a scale of 1:50 000. The boundary was drawn with the margin of tolerance of 50 m (UN, 1995), leading to imprecisions that caused numerous conflicts and prolonged territorial disputes. Liminality related to the IEBL represents Sarajevo’s post-war urban paradigm, marked by socio-spatial *status quo* and mutual *othering* of ethnic groups.

Historically, the development of Sarajevo was guided by natural, morphological boundaries, however, the IEBL is an antistructural, political act of division translated into cartography that does not correspond to cultural and morphological landscape and logic, thus, changing the principles and common sense of spatial planning, development, and
management. Since the IEBL separated Sarajevo at its periphery, the urban wholeness of today’s Sarajevo remained mostly unchanged; however, East Sarajevo strove to create a new urban identity, which is dictated by its manner of building and the use of specific ethnic language and symbolism, making this “invisible” border very visible. The division caused the duplication of functions and a non-existent public transport connection between the two areas. However, the economic, informational, and human connection remains, making this border a contact and a barrier at the same time (Figure 3.).

Figure 3. Schematic representation of IEBL aspects and effects (Katarina Bošnjak Karadža, 2023)

Conclusions

Sarajevo’s tumultuous history includes genesis of its role within various political contexts, the siege, and a post-war transition that created a socio-spatial vagueness halting its proper development. This paper aimed to examine the interrelation of administrative, legislative, planning, economic, demographic, and social influences, and the consequences of said vagueness on the space, regarding the role of the IEBL.

Analysis of administrative and planning levels revealed that the change of political con-
text, stance of privatisation, global influences, vertical and horizontal complexity and dis-
harmony of planning institutions and documents, led to the degeneration of urban fabric
and social infrastructure. The IEBL creates further vulnerability, since this contact zone
is disputed and planned separately, disregarding the past vision of a whole Sarajevo that
acts in unison.

Analysis of demography and economy points out the asymmetrical development of Sara-
jevo and East Sarajevo and underlines the role of the IEBL in ethnic homogenisation, the
country’s brain drain and falling standards of living. This is tied to the previous chapter,
emphasising the pressure on space, considered the most valuable marketable resource.

Finally, the paper examined the specificities of the IEBL itself as an antistructural, po-
litical act of division translated into cartography that doesn’t correspond to cultural and
morphological landscape and logic, that changed the principles and common sense of
spatial planning, development, and management, leading to the above-mentioned prob-
lems.

Regarding the scientific contributions, this paper offers an overview of the interrelation-
ship of several factors that create the current post-war transition ambience, and related
problems that manifest spatially and socially. We offer general guidelines for possible fu-
ture solutions. There are three possible scenarios – either Sarajevo and East Sarajevo reu-
nite, or, they continue to grow and develop as two (almost) completely separate cities (as is
the direction today), or they grow and develop separately, but under an overarching com-
mon set of rules that help them function better both spatially and socially. The first sce-
nario is, in the current climate, highly unlikely, the second one offers the least favourable
future. The third one is, thus, amongst the two currently probable scenarios, the preferred
one. In either case, Sarajevo continues to develop as a capital city and the administra-
tive and institutional centre of Bosnia and Herzegovina (as is the case today), and (in the
scenarios of two separate futures) East Sarajevo continues to develop an urban identity,
with regards to the real needs of its population (in terms of creating urbanity and gen-
eral improvement of its built environment). Both sides should maintain and protect the
infrastructure connections (the unbuilt road connections that have been planned since
the 1960s), and they should introduce public transport connections – new bus lines that
connect Sarajevo and East Sarajevo, and trolleybus and tram lines which currently oper-
ate only in Sarajevo. Furthermore, since the division of a city always causes duplication
of city functions, this process should be controlled – these functions are more often than
not built in inappropriate locations, causing various problems (location overload in terms
of building footprint and infrastructure) stemming from the fact that the buildings were
not supposed to be there in the first place. The development process of two cities should be
coordinated with regards to their mutually beneficial future. Institutions inherited from
the previous political and social system should be reformed, so they can cope with the actual problems. This current liminal state requires a change of planning approach, such as a precise definition of public-private relationship, the definition of urban rules for creation of rational land use preconditions; a framework definition for urban consolidation implementation with a clearly defined relationship of ownership structure; and definition of a new development strategy based on the land management policy. Furthermore, the development of cohesive social capital is needed by investing in the free flow of goods, services and people, and the economic exchange should be simplified, through reduction of bureaucracy that drains the budget. Finally, one should be aware that mainstream media affect everyday life greatly, so their disengagement from ethno-capitalist narrative is in order, as well as the obligation of objective, responsible reporting and following ethical principles. However, none of this is possible without political cooperation on both sides – the rigid political framework caused by the division dismisses even the projects that are mutually beneficial. Both sides of the IEBL share similar issues, so local cooperation is the starting point, and it does not have to wait for administrative cooperation on all levels, which is sometimes used as an excuse for the status quo, and which leaves a lot of vulnerable grey areas, that are regularly abused.

Footnotes

[1] This plan is in effect until the new Urban plan, which is in the final stages of development, is adopted.
[2] The Urban plan of Sarajevo treats the military barracks in Lukavica as special purpose areas and green zones without construction, while the Urban plan of East Sarajevo treats them as zones for development of residential areas.
[3] Oversized buildings are built, far exceeding the capacity of space and ignoring the context.
[4] This caused fragmentation of large commercial areas into a multitude of small plots, creating chaotic geometry and distribution, which, along with their private character, create obstacles to acceptable urbanisation.
[6] This process is present in both entities – human displacement is evident in the pattern of ethnical switch between the two, giving fertile ground for the nationalist policy that has dominated in BiH since the war.
[7] Welcome signs to the Republika Srpska and Sarajevo Kanton, use of the Cyrillic and Latin alphabet, and the colours blue and green for signs respectively. The Cyrillic alphabet and blue signs reinforce the presence of the Serbian ethnographic identity, since blue is the colour used in Serbia. Furthermore, naming streets and public spaces and building can imply the glorification of certain unacceptable figures – even war criminals.
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