



POLITECNICO  
DI MILANO

DASU

DEPARTMENT OF ARCHITECTURE AND URBAN STUDIES  
LABORATORY OF INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

POST GRADUATE PROGRAMME

# COOPERA(C)TION KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS FOR SUSTAINABLE CITIES IN THE GLOBAL SOUTH



## ART FOR MEMORY'S SAKE

### PARTICIPATORY ARCHITECTURES FOR POST-CONFLICT BALKANS 20 YEARS AFTER

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**“I’m very tired of all our stories, of the  
Jugoslavian delirium for monuments,  
for remembrance and death.**

**I think it would be better and happier a  
society without monuments, a society  
with no need to build new ones.**

**The Flower [of Jasenovac] is a  
reminder of horror story but it should  
have not awaken other conflicts, other  
blood. [...]”**

**Bogdan Bogdanovic  
[architect, teacher, politician]  
[Belgrade, 20th August 1922 – Wien, 18th June 2010]**

**Art for memory's sake.  
Participative architectures for places of conflict**

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## 01 // \_Proposal's structure

### 01.1 // Background

Thanks to their strategic position between Eastern and Western Europe and between Adriatic and Black sea the Balkan area has always been a fundamental strategic spot to be conquered and occupied by different empires and monarchies. The result of such a continuous occupation and counter-occupation is a complex mixture of different religions, populations and traditions. This peculiar mixture of cultures and traditions somehow survives today as a sort of 'balkan style'.

If the actual economical situation is quite problematic, the political one is possibly even worse and young generations are suffering a lack of perspectives. According to a recent study done by Friedrich Ebert Stiftung only 17% of people of the area under thirty years of age are satisfied with the level of democracy in their country and only 20% trusts their own national government. This means young generations do not feel they can change the situation and very few of them participate in political life; although it has to be said that many of them are involved in social organizations within their community. In such a framework religion is gaining importance as element to express political positions. Many factors are slowing down the integration process both with European Union and among different countries of the Balkan area contributing to a permanent situation of low intensity conflict between different communities. In spite of these issues the Balkan area and its capital cities like Sarajevo or Belgrade are slowly becoming again important cultural centres attracting people from neighbouring countries and beyond.

What probably differentiated so much the conflict in the Balkans from other civil wars around the world was the deliberate and striking violence against cities and urban fabrics. This phenomenon has been described very well by Martin Coward in his book 'Urbicide' (2009). Cities like Vukovar, Dubrovnik, Sarajevo or Mostar were deliberately attacked, besieged and destroyed as symbols of different ethnic groups. One interesting questions posed by Coward was related to how 'violence against material objects (such as buildings) is integral to a political formation such as ethnic nationalism' therefore introducing a further topic of this proposal which is related to collective memory and its formation process. Urbicide has been defined as "the destruction of the built environment in a manner that recognises its role in negating plural communities and constituting homogeneous exclusionary political programs" (Coward 2009). Most of the Yugoslavian cities were important magnets for all the Eastern countries before the war (it is enough to quote the Olympic winter games of 1988 in Sarajevo for example) and so their deliberate destruction has to be intended as a way to cancel every possible common ground between ethnic and religious groups. Attacking cities was meant to be an attack to people and their culture. After such premises it is quite evident how difficult could be to establish a process to build a common memory ground in the area. Our relationship with destroyed cities is always difficult and put us in front of extremely complex choices about what to do with leftover buildings. In his book 'Memory, history, forgetting' Paul Ricoeur explores these processes from a philosophical point of view trying to understand what are the relations between remembering and forgetting and therefore how our perception of history is shaped and consequently how we will act on our heritage afterwards. Yugoslavian architect Bogdan Bogdanovic wrote several articles after the war trying to arise a debate about what to do with historical monuments and centres. He always fought against the idea of monumentality and musealization of buildings and cities as ways

to simply remove the problem of sharing memory. Places of war must not become 'museums of themselves' as it happens when they are conceived as unchangeable symbols of a political regime or historical event.

## **1.2 // Goals**

The research proposal tries to establish new possibilities to read and build the collective memory of this area of Europe and therefore works with art and architecture to demonstrate that such disciplines and events related with them are the right key to establish this needed common ground. Activating not only territories and places but also people and communities in order to establish seeds for a new coexistence. A second possible output of the proposal is young people's involvement in an exchange and sharing process between different ethnic groups and religions as an instrument to avoid new generations to build walls again. Involving young art and architecture students in building pavilions to host events and performances related with collective issues means also to spread among population a new and different awareness of what happened. Such pavilions will also revitalize and give back to citizens places otherwise abandoned and leftover. Temporary and artistic installations will help not to transform such places in 'monuments of themselves' or in open air museums. The goal of the proposal is to 'bring them back to light' making available for citizens to use and rethink these spaces. Temporary installations will offer time by time different representations of life and memory therefore making possible for different groups to share and exchange experiences and memories. Moreover, the fact that these places will be designed by transdisciplinary and transnational groups of young students and professionals will avoid the transformation in 'sanctuaries' of one particular ethnic or religious group as project proposals will be the result of a shared design process. Last but not least while the process will go on the transnational network will grow and will include more and more private and public actors making possible to spread the work in a wider area fostering collaboration between different research realities and between Balkan and European institutions.

## 02 // Proposal's framing

### 02.1 // Chronological map

**1945**

Foundation of Federal Socialist Republic of Yugoslavia  
[even if it will officially adopt this name only in 1963]

**1953**

Marshall Josip Broz (named Tito) becomes president of the Republic. [after 6 years in duty as Prime Minister]

**1956**

Briuni (Croatia), first conference of non-aligned countries.  
[3 participants: Nasser (Egyptian president),  
Nehru (Indian Prime Minister) and President Tito]

**1961**

Belgrade (Serbia), first official meeting of non-aligned countries.  
[25 participants at that time; grew later to 75]

**1974**

Constitutional law is modified in order to give President Tito a lifetime duty and Yugoslavia became a Federal Republic.  
[6 states with autonomy rights (Bosnia I Hercegovina, Slovenija, Hrvatska, Makedonija, Crna Gora and Srbija) and 2 Provinces without autonomy rights (Kosovo-Metochia and Vojvodina).

**1978**

Venezia (Italy), foundation of Alpe Adria cooperation community in order to strengthen cooperation between Eastern Alpine regions in spite of different political regimes.  
[signed by leaders from Italy, Austria, Germany and Yugoslavia]

**1980**

Ljubljana (Slovenia), 4<sup>th</sup> March. Marshall Tito died

**1988**

Sarajevo (Bosnia), 8<sup>th</sup> February. Opening of XIV Winter Olympic games

**1989**

Markovic government in Slovenia, nationalist opposition parties asking for independence are founded (Croatia will follow).  
[These protests originated from the bad economic situation of the Federal Republic.

**1990**

Slovenia and Croatia abandoned Communist Alliance of Yugoslavia.  
First elections multi-party elections in both countries  
Zagreb (Croatia), 30<sup>th</sup> May. Franjo Tudiman becomes Prime Minister  
Ljubljana (Slovenia), 23<sup>rd</sup> December. Kucan government declares independence



Zagreb (Croatia), 19<sup>th</sup> May. Independence declared

[Starting of independence wars in Slovenia (10 days) and Croatia (5 years)]

**1991**

Vukovar (Croatia), August-November. JNA (Yugoslavian National Army) attacks and sieges the city.

Skopje (Makedonia), 8<sup>th</sup> September. Independence declared

Bruxelles (Belgium), 19<sup>th</sup> January. European Union recognizes Slovenia and Croatia as independent countries.

Sarajevo (Bosnia), 3<sup>rd</sup> March. Prime minister Alija Izetbegović declares independence after results of the referendum.

**1992**

Bruxelles (Belgium), 6<sup>th</sup> April. European Union recognizes Bosnia I Hercegovina as independent country.

[JNA and Croatian forces occupy the main cities]

Beograd (Serbia), Srbija and Crna Gora declares themselves as Federal Republic of Yugoslavia under Milosevic government.

**1992**

Sarajevo (Bosnia), 5<sup>th</sup> April. JNA starts to siege the city. The longest city siege of modern history.

**1996**

February. After 12.000 deaths, 50.000 wounded and the city destroyed Sarajevo's siege ends.

Srebrenica (Bosnia), July. Srebrenica genocide

[Serbian troops killed almost 10.000 Bosnian people under the eyes of UN Dutch troops]

**1995**

Dayton (USA), 21<sup>st</sup> November. Dayton agreement signed; Srebrenica is left to Serbian part of Bosnia [Republika Sprska]. War is officially over even if paramilitary groups are still operative in various part of the Balkans.

**1998**

First riots between Serbian army and Albanian paramilitary groups [UCK] in Kosovo

**1999**

24<sup>th</sup> March to 10<sup>th</sup> June. NATO launches Allied Force operation bombing Belgrade and Serbia for 78 consecutive days.

Slobodan Milosevic lets control of Kosovo to NATO troops.

**2000**

Beograd (Serbia). Milosevic resigns as Prime Minister

**2003**

21<sup>st</sup> February. Croatia starts the process to become part of EU.

Serbia and Montenegro (Crna Gora) form a single country

12<sup>th</sup> March. Serbian Prime Minister Zoran Dindic is killed.

**2006**

21<sup>st</sup> May. Crna Gora declares independence.

**2008**

17<sup>th</sup> February. Kosovo declares independence.

**2013**

Serbia recognizes Kosovo government in spite of Northern

Kosovo status; Prishtina government recognized partial autonomy, Serbian government asks for annexing the province.

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### 03 // \_Mapping

The proposal tries to find and investigate some places which could become places where to start a sharing process of collective memory. Places that, in spite of tragic events that took place, are recognized as common heritage by various religious and ethnic populations of the region.

Regarding some possible places where to promote and implement the proposal the study selected some of them according to their current status (renewed, abandoned, used, etc.) and according to their 'role' during the war (public places, strategic points, memorials, etc). In this abstract I'm listing just few of them such as Vijecnica national library (Sarajevo, BiH), Generalstab Yugoslavian army headquarter (Beograd, Serbia), Kozarac-Omarska national park (Prijeedor, BiH) or Vukovar city centre (Croatia). All of them are contested places still unable to 'find their role in the contemporary society'.

#### 03.1 // \_ Places

### **43°51'16" N 18°24'17" E**

#### **Vijecnica National Library \_ Sarajevo \_ Bosnia i Hercegovina**

After 17 years of restoration works this symbol of the siege of Sarajevo it has been given back to its ancient beauty. It is probably the most powerful potential symbol of peace and possible coexistence between different populations. Restoration process, although, erased many of the previous characteristics of the building and transformed it in a beautiful 'monument of itself'. Serbian representatives refused to be present at the inauguration exactly because it has been transformed in a monument unable to speak to all the Balkan area as it was originally. The entire archive has been destroyed during the war; this is why the new one should be rebuild again as a symbol of the collective identity erased by the conflict.

### **44°48'15" N 20°27'32" E**

#### **Generalstab, Yugoslavian National Army Headquarter \_ Beograd \_ Srbija**

Originally built as the central headquarter of the Yugoslavian National Army [JNA] during Tito's regime it has been bombed during NATO attacks at the end of the nineties. During the civil war the JNA army (where the majority of soldiers were Serbian) was responsible of various episodes of violence against civil population. It is actually abandoned and left in ruins. There is a strong debate around opportunity to destroy it and erase everything about what it has represented or to make it as monument of Serbian strength against Western countries invasion. Together with Television central headquarter is a symbol of 2001 war.

**44°52'21" N 16°53'51" E**

**Kozarac-Omarska mines \_ Prijedor \_ Republika Sprska [Bosnia I Hercegovina]**

Located on the Northern part of Bosnia I Hercegovina within autonomous region of Sprska Republic (Serbian majority). During Yugoslavian times it was a famous mountain holiday resort. During the war in the nearby mine of Omarska (one of the biggest European iron mines) a concentration camp was established and both Bosnian and Serbian armies have been accused of episodes of ethnic cleansing. Today there are still episodes of tension between different ethnic groups and administrative situation of Sprska Republic is one of the reasons why Bosnia I Hercegovina still has to begin European integration process. It has to be said that many immigrants are coming back making this area again a valuable and recognized spots for holidays therefore contributing to reduce tensions.

**45°20'28" N 18°59'57" E**

**Vukovar historical city centre \_ Vukovar \_ Croatia**

Located in the Eastern province of Sirmia it has been sieged in 1991 by Yugoslavian troops loyal to Serbian government. Thanks to European Union intervention citizens were able to leave the city after months walking along the main road for hours under control of Yugoslavian army. Every year Croatian nationalists organize a procession along the road to remember what happened. Regional government introduced double alphabet (Latin and Cyrillic) in all public offices in order to reduce tensions between ethnic groups. The presence of an active local community together with Croatian adhesion to European Union will be starting points to avoid the city to become another 'useless monument'. Particularly interesting is the aqueduct tower which has been left ruined as it was during the siege.

**43°20'37" N 17°48'35" E**

**Mostar historical city centre \_ Mostar \_ Bosnia I Hercegovina**

Entered in UNESCO World Heritage list in 2005 the city is the capital of Hercegovina province. Sieged by JNA troops it was the occupied by Croatian and Bosnian militia in 1993. Only in 1996 became again possible to move freely between Croatian part (catholic) and Bosnian part (muslim) of the city. Thanks to UNESCO funds the city centre (and its very famous bridge) have been restored exactly as they were before the war therefore 'erasing' what happened during the war. Acting on this city means to find creative ways to read the memory and to reconnect people.

### 03.2 // \_ Actors

The proposal is quite simple yet complex and ambitious as it tries to use architecture and art to reactivate particular places related to conflict's memories. In order to obtain significant results both academic and institutional realities must be involved. In particular few universities of the Balkan area have been selected such as Faculty of Architecture of Sarajevo University or Belgrade University or the Universities of Skopje and Prishtina. Also local and international NGOs will be involved in the project in order to build bridges between the Balkans and Europe but also to share and spread activities within a larger network. One possible example could be TraMe Lab from University of Bologna (Italy) which works on topics related to "research and study of individual and cultural memory genres, places and representations within conflict and post-conflict situations. In particular, much attention is devoted to violence, collective traumas and the role of forms of testimony in the broader projections of post-conflict issues. Collective traumas are inscribed in representations, texts, places and spaces through which they are confronted, re-elaborated, described and remembered by a community."

Other international NGOs that could be involved will be Osservatorio Balcani e Caucaso from Italy or Dokukino from Croatia.

## **04 // \_Proposal's phases**

The working group will promote and coordinate workshop activities involving students from all over the area to 'reactivate' specific places connected with memories of war through architectural and artistic performances. Reactivating these places means to avoid the risk for them to become mausoleums for 'war-nostalgics' or to be abandoned. First workshops will be lead by architectural and design students to build small temporary or permanent spaces to colonize these areas. In the second stage, while other pavilions will be built in other places, the first ones will be used to host artistic performances and festivals with the help of both schools and local users. All the events will have to focus on the topic of 'sharing memories' in order to foster a debate on this problematic issue.

Only by letting citizens reuse these places a contamination and exchange process will start. The idea is to establish a transnational net of actors able to go beyond the single project or workshop in order to strengthen cooperation also outside the area.

### **04.1 // Synthesis**

#### **Disseminate**

After a first phase devolved to reciprocal knowledge one or more mapping workshops will be proposed to share ideas and projects on selected areas. In this phase the goal is to build an 'archive' of different experiences and interventions to promote reciprocal knowledge between students, academics and stakeholders. Shared mapping of possible intervention areas is fundamental in order to open the process to all possible communities and to their 'memories'.

#### **Reactivate**

In this phase workshops will be clearly more practical and related to building temporary or permanent structures in selected places. Students will be involved both in the design and construction of the pavilions thanks also to the help of local craftsman. These workshops shall concentrate design and building activities in not more than ten days. Examples of similar activities can be found in the works of BELLASTOCK or CAMPOSANZ collectives. Involving local communities and institutions must be done in order to foster active commitment and engagement.

#### **Rethink**

Spaces built or renewed in the previous phase will become places to host exhibitions, performances and meetings about topics of peace, memory or conflict. In this case exhibitions and performances will be chosen by a jury composed by representatives of the local community and of universities and NGOs which are part of the project. Competitions will be open to everyone and must promote creative ways to move a step forward the debate regarding the conflict. In some cases these performances can be connected to some important festivals such as the Prishtina Common Ground Summer Festival or the Mikser Festival in Beograd.

In the end the idea is to create an active and open cultural platform able to involve all those different actors with their ideas in a shared process to slowly overcome divisions and conflicts in the area. This platform will hopefully engage students and local communities helping them to build a 'common ground' where to rethink a new identity for the entire Balkans. It is quite thought provoking the idea to start this process with architectural and artistic performances and especially to involve young generations letting them free to express their ideas. To me this is the only way out from current sterile debate around conflict and memory. Putting in common lives and thoughts through this kind of experiences is fundamental also to 'create' a memory which is expression of all the factions involved. Moreover young generations are the ones responsible to build the future of a land where more than half of the population is less than 45 years old and where politicians are still following the divisive logic of pre-war times.

## **05 // \_Financial aspects**

Following first experiences a GECT (European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation) could be implemented in order to raise funds by European Union. These instruments are thought to finance and fund initiatives able to put together different countries and realities in order to foster the integration among EU-member states and other countries. By constituting such a group there will be also the possibility to access Horizon 2020 financing regarding cultural projects promoting peace, diversity, tolerance and coexistence values. Horizon 2020 is the current framework for all European funding programs and, among other categories, contains the sub-program "Creative Europe 2014-2020". This line of financing regards in particular all the initiatives for a smart, sustainable and inclusive growth also by creating new job opportunities within the fields related with arts, design and creative industry. In this way the proposal could not only reactivate abandoned spaces but also create new professional figures able to manage and organize such kind of events like workshops, festivals and so on.

### **05.1 // European framework**

In 2014 European Union launched Horizon 2020 program as a global framework putting together all different European funding programs in different sectors. Connected with Horizon2020 there is 'Creative Europe 2014-2020' program that, exactly as Erasmus+ program, collects different lines of financing and different sectors of application. There is also a growing interest in the Balkan area by European institutions in recent years. A Macro-regional strategy for Adriatic-Jonic region has been implemented and dialogue has been opened with Albania and Serbia in order to include them in European Union. All these news open for sure new opportunities for future integration and initiatives. European Strategy 2014-2020 includes few 'lighthouse initiatives' (anticipatory or particularly innovative programmes) for an intelligent, sustainable and shared growth of the European Community. Creating new working opportunities in innovative and creative fields related with culture, design and art is therefore a fundamental pillar of such policies. These policies are related together with another important feature of these European programmes which is related to activities regarding 'education and social inclusion'.



Creative Europe 2014-2020 is structured along three 'components' called Cultural, Trans-sectorial and Media dedicated respectively to cultural sector, art-related economical activities and audiovisual sector. Cultural component is dedicated in particular to strengthen transnational capacities of related companies and activities in order to make them able to spread across Europe. European Union promotes actions "through which cultural and creative operators acquire capacities, competences and know-how to contribute to use innovative digital technologies or experimental business and management models not only for a better diffusion of the initiatives but also to involve public and spectators in a different way". This component calls also for long-term strategies in order for European cultural and creative businesses to operate all over the EU and the world.

In order to strengthen transnational cooperation and operational capacities of cultural sector European Union identifies different levels and therefore different possible actions ranging from financing international festivals, exhibitions or artistic projects to awaken interest in cultural products among the public. All these policies have in common the idea to extend as much as possible the sharing of material and immaterial European heritage among different countries and populations. Sharing policies are also related to 'accessibility' and diffusion (not only in material terms) of European heritage. The proposal moves towards building a network of public and private institutions able to develop innovative policies to spread knowledge of the Balkan cultural and historical heritage as to express its importance for all European countries.

Going more specific about such financial instruments we can find cooperation projects regarding creation of European nets of cultural organizations, transnational mobility of artistic companies and artworks. There are also actions related to fund translation of literary artworks or culture-related prizes. It is clear that European funds are related especially to non-profit projects and activities.

All the mentioned proposals are strictly related with European guidelines fostering transnational cooperation and intercultural exchanges. As the proposal goes in direction of building a cross-border cooperation group managing workshop's organization and related events it is quite evident how it can be financed under various European policies.

Among others financial instruments we can find 'Horizon 2020' program which contains 'Societal challenges' line of funding related to social well-being and predictable societal changes.

According to European Union "Horizon 2020 reflects the policy priorities of the Europe 2020 strategy and addresses major concerns shared by citizens in Europe and elsewhere.

A challenge-based approach will bring together resources and knowledge across different fields, technologies and disciplines, including social sciences and the humanities. This will cover activities from research to market with a new focus on innovation-related activities, such as piloting, demonstration, test-beds, and support for public procurement and market uptake. It will include establishing links with the activities of the European Innovation Partnerships (EIP)".

There are different areas and sectors involved such as:

Health, demographic change and wellbeing

Food security, sustainable agriculture and forestry, marine and maritime and inland water research

Bioeconomy

Secure, clean and efficient energy

Smart, green and integrated transport

Climate action, environment, resource efficiency and raw materials

Europe in a changing world - inclusive, innovative and reflective societies

Secure societies - protecting freedom and security of Europe and its citizens

The most interesting action for this proposal is the one related to 'inclusive, innovative and reflective societies' (Europe in changing world); this action includes several proposals and call for projects to which apply.

We can recall few words from the call description: "At the same time, there is great potential for Europe through opportunities provided, for example, by new forms of innovation and by the engagement of citizens. Supporting inclusive, innovative and reflective societies is a prerequisite for a sustainable European integration.

[...]European and national policies need to continue modernisation while acknowledging the socio-economic and cultural diversity in Europe, and improved knowledge about how our modern societies work.

EU research and innovation will address social exclusion, discriminations and various forms of inequalities. It will explore new forms of innovation and strengthen the evidence base for the Innovation Union, the European Research Area and other relevant EU policies. It will promote coherent and effective cooperation with third countries. Finally, it will address the issues of memories, identities, tolerance and cultural heritage".

As of 2013 there are few interesting call for projects worth to be mentioned such as the one called "Support to innovation, human resources, policy and international cooperation" [H2020-INFRA-SUPP-2014-2 published on 11th December 2013]. In this case topics regard development and promotion of transnational academic and research structures in order to train experts able to manage and coordinate these institutions at European level. This call could finance the first phase of the proposal as it will be concentrated on building the international group of researchers and universities that will manage all different initiatives. The mentioned call contains different sub-projects such as "Strengthening human capital of research infrastructures" [INFRA-SUPP-3-2014] or "International cooperation for research infrastructures" [INFRA-SUPP-6-2014]. All of them are related with the first phase of the proposal.

A second call for projects called "Reflective societies: cultural heritage and European identities" [H2020-REFLECTIVE-6-2015] is dedicated to cultural heritage development as a pillar to build a new common European identity. Again this call for projects contains different sub-topics with related call for projects which it is worth mention such as "The cultural heritage of war in contemporary Europe" or "Emergence and transmission of European cultural heritage and Europeanisation". All these financial proposals could be a fundamental support throughout all the duration of the project also to structure different interventions in space and time.

As European Institutions are starting to look with renewed interest at the Balkan area the possibility to obtain financial support for these initiatives is, as said, fundamental. There is the need for a deep and coherent process that faces topics of conflict, memory and identity. In search for a real and shared integration of the Balkan countries into European Union.

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