Memory and Form: An Exploration of the Stari Most, Mostar (BIH)

Sukanya Krishnamurthy[*]
Bauhaus-Universität, Weimar

This paper explores the performance of memory and forgetting through the urban palimpsest that is the Old Bridge (*Stari Most*) in Mostar, BiH. Drawing on the results of qualitative fieldwork done in the city in 2009/10 a framework is established to analyze the site through two axes: one as an object seeped in history and commemoration; and the other through its representation (pre-/post-destruction, monument for reconciliation). Through these axes, the paper aims to understand the role that architecture or form plays in performing urban memory and forgetting.

Keywords: Memory, forgetting, monuments, urban spaces, representation, identity

1. Introduction

It has been more than eight years since the symbolic Old Bridge[1] at Mostar, Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH), was rebuilt, but the arguments that surround it have not waned. Various voices, conflicting views and mediated stories can be heard when the people of the city are asked about its presence, responding with myriad explanations marked by remembering and forgetting. The presence of the Old Bridge is simultaneously a number of things – history, memory, monument, ruin, a glorious past and an ambivalent future. The confusion and trepidation can be read in the short excerpt from a narrative interview with a resident of Mostar during the course of the fieldwork conducted between October and November 2009, and March 2010.

Aida, the Head of the NGO RESCATE (Mostar office),[2] explains:

> Today they want to make a symbol of it, I don't know why. I suppose it is useful material for advertising. Which is wrong. [The] Old Bridge has its purpose, by itself, [of] connecting two sides. People are jumping from it; people are taking photos of it. First it's beautiful. It has its architectural value. Why can't it be like any other bridge?"

She continues vehemently:

> I simply refuse to connect the Old Bridge and the recent war. I don't want to connect it (!) I choose not to connect it. I don't want to see the bridge as a symbol. It's not a symbol of connecting two people. That is wrong. It's a bridge please. Please leave [let] the bridge to [just] be a bridge.

Five minutes pass before she continues along the same vein about the Old Bridge during the war.

> […] but then the Old Bridge was destroyed, it became a whole other [new] concept. That is why I said Mostar, as a city, and as urban settlement, goes together with the Old Bridge – those [these] two are one. So when the Old Bridge was destroyed, it was considered [that] Mostar is dead – totally killed. Because that component is [of the city was] destroyed, no one could even imagine this [ever imagined this possible]. Now it's an advertisement, it's some story that they want to sell. Much greater value of a bridge is its perception as a bridge, than as any other created symbol.

If on one hand there is this narrative that refuses to accept the Old Bridge as a symbol, then on the other an "official" (UNESCO) international narrative reads:

> With the "renaissance" of the Old Bridge and its surroundings, the symbolic power and meaning of the City of Mostar – as an exceptional and universal symbol of coexistence of communities from diverse cultural, ethnic and religious backgrounds – has been reinforced and strengthened, underlining the unlimited efforts of human solidarity for peace and powerful co-operation in the face of overwhelming catastrophes.[3]

The small city of Mostar was thrown into the limelight of the Croat–Bosniak War (1992–1994) when the Old Bridge fell into the waters of the river Neretva on 9 November 1993, with the image of the destroyed bridge being one of the many poignant images of the war. The Old Bridge that was built by Suleiman the Magnificent, the Sultan of the Ottoman Empire, in the sixteenth century, was not just an architectural marvel but progressed into part of the living history of the city and was a testament to the people of the city and the region, that took on a more complex definition and role after its destruction. Over the centuries (from its conception to

destruction and eventual reconstruction) it has grown to express and embody popular memories of the city through a complex interplay of (and as a site of) production, consumption and reconstruction practices.

By discussing one bridge[4] this paper explores the practices and the politics of how architectural elements play a role in mediating, constructing and performing memory/forgetting; particularly those that chronicle national pasts. The Old Bridge is used as a background to discuss the role that an urban element/urban artefact (Rossi, 1994) plays in narrating the city's social and collective memory, historic pasts, uncertain present and imagined futures.

Drawing on qualitative fieldwork[5] conducted in the city of Mostar between 2009 and 2010, and theoretical debates that are raised when questions of memory, forgetting and form come to the foreground, this paper uses the opportunity that comes with studying a highly contested site to get critical insights into the performance of urban memory and forgetting through urban artefacts/sites of memory. Stitching together various urban experiences, narratives and tactics of remembrance, a singular site of memory is explored to understand the myriad framework under which collective memory/forgetting and form can function both in tandem and disjunctively.[6]

Through the period of the fieldwork, it was evident that the physicality of the Old Bridge and what it represented were two distinct elements. Aided by the work of Mario Gandelsonas (1998), who expands on differentiating between architecture as building (or form) and the representation of the same, this paper approaches the subject similarly. Addressing the context in the city, and the evolution of the Old Bridge into a site of heightened importance, this paper traces the context of the changes within what was once a multicultural city through a singular example. Analysing this element of urban space opened up avenues of questions about the Old Bridge as a built object and its representation, calling to attention multiple layers of association from the space as a historic site to its current role as a space for reconciliation. This paper traces the development of the site progressively, exploring the context, the development of the Old Bridge into a site of memory before expanding on its physical manifestations and representations.

1.1 The context: Mostar

The city of Mostar is the second largest in BiH, located geographically southwest towards the Croatian border with a population of around 126,000 inhabitants according to the 1991 census, with the diversity in population as follows: 29% Croats, 34% Muslims, 19% Serbs and the remaining 18% Yugoslavs or other (Pašić, 2005). Historically the city of Mostar was a cosmopolitan city, as a result of the number of regimes that the city experienced, leading to a diverse and mixed population. Moreover, it was not just the demography of the city that was entwined with the various regimes, but also the city's urban structure. The Ottomans, from the mid-fifteenth century, followed by the Austro-Hungarians, from the late nineteenth century, left a landscape dotted with institutions of various faiths. The socialist regime under President Josip Broz Tito, after World War Two, led to industrial and agricultural reforms and growth, making it one of the most productive regions of BiH.

It was after BiH seceded from Yugoslavia in 1992 that the pressures on this multi-ethnic city mounted. Serbian units of the Yugoslav People's Army (JNA) attacked BiH in 1992 and arrived in Mostar the same year. The siege on the city lasted three months until a Croat–Muslim counter-offensive defeated the aggressors in June 1992. A year later the Croatian Defence Council (HVO) attacked the Muslim/Serb community in the city proclaiming Mostar to be an exclusively Croat city, the capital of the envisioned Croat-led state Herzeg-Bosna. It was after this strife that the city was truly divided into two halves.

This period of war between the years of 1992 and 1995 led to the redefinition of space within the city and the relationship between the inhabitants themselves, and in turn of how urban space was used and perceived. The fragmentation of the urban scape into the Croat/Catholic West bank and a Bosniak/Muslim East bank led to the city being ethnically divided by the two national groups. The process of division itself was the result of a prolonged power struggle and the culmination of nationalistic sentiments. This division of urban space, city and its populace has garnered much academic attention.[7] Beyond the sheer human tragedy of the war, many historic buildings in the old city were damaged or destroyed (75% of the city's fabric)[8], including most of the city's important religious structures, gymnasiums, government offices, and the Old Bridge, which was a favoured target throughout the HVO's

assaults. After 1997[9] there were attempts to reunify the city by both international and national consortiums, but these achieved little success.

Post 1995-96, the city of Mostar faced the uphill task of rebuilding ties between the local populace, the lost economy and the monumental task of reconstruction. Through the years (from 1996 onwards), the city has been trying to rebuild itself physically (and in terms of urban fabric and infrastructure) to encourage visitors from all over the world and – even more importantly – to resume its function as a truly multicultural urban centre, providing an example of a place where people of different cultures, religions, and ethnic affiliations live and work side by side (Pašić *et al*., 2004). Though efforts at rehabilitation are in place, at the time of the case study analysis and site work, the city remained fundamentally politically fragmented[10] and was subject to territorial disputes and segregation in terms of social and religious preference.

2. Establishing the Old Bridge as a site of urban collective memory

Pierre Nora (1989) defines 'site of memory' as a place 'where memory crystallizes and secretes itself'. Kevin Lynch calls the same 'landmarks' or points of reference considered to be external to the observer; these are simple physical elements which may vary widely in scale. Landmarks become more easily identifiable, more likely to be chosen as significant, if they have a clear form, if they contrast with their background, and if there is some prominence of spatial locations. Once a history, a sign, or a meaning attaches to an object, its value as a landmark rises (Lynch, 1972).

These 'sites' perform the primary duty of conveying the message of yesterday to tomorrow, of remembering and helping to facilitate certain forms of attachment to the place; or, as Rossi understands them, serving to bring the past into the present, providing a past that can still be experienced (Rossi, 1994). People make places of memories work emotionally, socially, culturally and politically for their needs and, in the process, search for meaning about themselves, their world and their times. The promise of a reconstructed past through symbols, desires and material objects, through place-making, gives people hope. For some it is a promise of redemption (Till, 2004). Certain sites within an urban settlement seek to provide mental equilibrium to its inhabitants through its physicality that seems to change little or not at all (remains constant), providing an image of permanence and stability, writes Auguste Comte (Halbwachs, 1992).

Mostar as an urban settlement came to grow around a wooden bridge in the mid-fifteenth century. After the Ottomans occupied the city, they replaced the wooden bridge with a stone one, the presence of the bridge lending its name to the city[11] (Mostar means "bridge keeper"). Being a fixed point of reference in the city, it is a place of familiarity for the inhabitants and is instantly recognized when the name Mostar comes up. The seemingly unchangeable Old Bridge provided that point of constant reference to the city, creating a point of attachment.

Over the centuries the Old Bridge has taken on the role of a familiar landmark and a physical biography both for the city and the people. This simple, single arched bridge gained prominence from its inception due to its construction techniques, proportions and beauty, which drew visitors from all over the world. Ivan Lovrenović writes, 'the image and the meaning of the Old Bridge embodied the meaning and spirit of all Bosnia. The essence of the bridge is meeting and linking, the opposite of separation and division' (Lovrenović, 1993). Historically, the surroundings of the Old Bridge developed with bazaars, cafes, mosques and adjacent churches into the cultural/social core for the inhabitants of the city. Places, like persons, have biographies in as much as they are formed, used and transformed through practice. Stories acquire part of their mythic value and historical relevance if they are rooted in concrete details of locales in the landscape, acquiring material reference points that can be visited, seen and touched (Tilley, 1994).

Seeped in history and 'secreting' memories, the Old Bridge is a place and site of memory but its influence goes beyond a spatial fix, expanding on what Linda McDowell, who builds on Pierre Nora's theory, calls 'regimes of place'[12], the process that defines how people build relationships with space, location and form. Playing a larger than life role within the city and as a platform/backdrop for social/cultural events, the Old Bridge has in its own right become a cultural phenomenon and has various regimes associated with it (explored in detail in the next section).

For the people of the city, it was a constant reminder of "good times", as a number of respondents in the city highlighted when the city of Mostar was known internationally and locally as one of the most historically rich urban settlements in the Balkan region. The Old Bridge, remained this point of constant reference and sign through which the people of the city distinguished themselves from others: 'Most people knew of Mostar, when I would say that's where I am from. They would reply "the city with the beautiful bridge"!'[13]

Lynch (1972) describes the process of collective material attachment as evoking specific kinds of meanings, and serving as spatial coordinates. The latter are instrumental in the construction of identity, developing notions that are distinctive to the making of a unique "us", thus contributing to a sense that collective memories are both socially determined and socially determining (Bélanger, 2000). The memories that surround the Old Bridge are many and varied, and inseparable from the way the citizens of the city live both around and in constant engagement with the structure (as a physical object and its metaphorical value). Lefebvre asserts the same, saying that the relationship between space and sequences of historical events are metaphorical and dialogical, making space into one that is both production- and consumption-based. Architecture or form then behaves as a product that is constructed for the people and by the people, making both of personal and communal interest. Maurice Halbwachs (1980: 130) writes about groups and their spatial relationships, which are bound by certain constants that seep not just into general life but into daily routines:

> The group not only transforms the space into which it has been inserted, but also yields and adapts to its physical surroundings. It becomes enclosed within the framework it has built. The group's image of it's external milieu and its stable relationship with this environment becomes paramount in the idea it forms of itself, permeating every element of its consciousness, moderating and governing its evolution. This image of surrounding objects shares their inertia.

These spatial images play an important role in collective memory, providing a stable, reliable recall for the image of the bridge that brings to the forefront an imprint of "good times", making it not just a site of urban memory but also a mnemonic device for civic identity narrative, shared values and hopes for the future (Osborne, 2001). Places or sites where collective memory plays a strong role become necessary and reinforce existing identities and associations, making them what Nora (1989) calls 'lieux de mémoire'. In its physical presence it goes beyond a site of reference and memory, it is almost mnemonic in its behaviour, providing a marker that helps in the act of remembering.

As a site of social importance and production, the Old Bridge is more about a site that provides a space for collective memory to be acted upon and out; as a site of more than individual importance. Not just of a symbolic presence but also one of physical importance, as is discerned in the excerpt from the interview conducted with Aida Omanović that formed part of the introduction to this paper, where she argues about the bridge's physical manifestations.[14] A similar sentiment is expressed by

Edin Batlak, a businessman in the city, who speaks of a metaphorical bridge in the absence of the physical one: 'it was here, even when it was not here'.[15]

3. As an object: historical meanings and constructions

With the Old Bridge, meanings have been made and remade. The dichotomy between its presence as an object seeped in history, and the addition of new meanings created by its destruction and reconstruction, made studying the bridge a complex and layered endeavour. Studying the Old Bridge as an 'object' and 'representation' works within Gandelsonas' (1998) theory on reading architecture and Anderson's (1995) understanding of architecture as containing both social (collective) and individual memory. Anderson classified the relation between the two as 'memory through architecture' (a form of cataloguing) and 'memory in architecture' (contents of). The former is remembrance that is evoked by architecture as a representation- the projected meanings associated with architecture or the elements under consideration (as a metaphor); the latter, memory in architecture, is primarily 'disciplinary memory', i.e. it must be there for others to see and remember (the presence of the urban element in order to remember).

The memory encompassed in the bridge was mainly driven by direct association of the people with the bridge, highlighted by a number of city respondents who stressed that the Old Bridge was more than just a physical entity/artefact for the city, but was instead an actual being living and walking in the city. As a marker/site of memory in urban space, the familiarization of/with the bridge has led to deep unbreakable associations and the creation of tangible memories with the inhabitants of the place in the process. To the city and its people the bridge behaves as both a collective and personal artefact having "always" been a part of the landscape of the city (as a historical marker for the city and its people for centuries).

The bridge today is a reconstruction of the stone bridge that stood as a crossing between the banks of the river Neretva for nearly four centuries. The city, founded by the Ottomans, initially had a wooden bridge to cross the river that was replaced to a stone bridge in the sixteenth century.[16] Due to the city's strategic location to the Adriatic coast, it flourished under the reign of Sultan Suleiman the Magnificent, who commissioned the construction of the said bridge. Known by many names such as the Sultan Suleiman's Bridge, Turkish Bridge and, by some western

travellers, also Roman Bridge[17], it eventually came to be called Stari Most, or Old Bridge in English.

Surrounded by myths and stories about its inception and execution, from the king to the builder, these are repeated even today. For instance, it is said that the builder (Mimar Hajrudin) was terrified that the bridge would not hold and fled the town before the scaffolding was removed. Another tells the story of two lovers buried within the two towers that flank either side of the bride.[18]

From the time of its construction the Old Bridge attracted historians, painters, poets and travellers.[19] It formed the subject of various poetry and paintings through the centuries, as seen below:

> *I took her to the bazaar dives*
> *I took her everywhere*
> *I hid her in caves carried her to a balcony*
> *under bridges we played hide and seek the neretva a filly*
> *under an old bridge I spoke of crnjanski*[20]
> *how marvellous he is how marvellous*
> Pero Zubac (1965), *Mostar Rains*

As a result of both local and international attention, the Old Bridge moved into the realm of a monument that served as the city's icon. The icon of the Old Bridge was used from official paraphernalia to tourist's trinkets. It was depicted on postcards, book covers, guides, magnets, and is the symbol of the city as well as the football team, and shows the various ways in which a physical element came to represent the city. Apart from its iconic status, the Old Bridge's physical presence played the role of a central meeting point in the old city; it was where people met for coffee and was a romantic location for the city's lovers.[21] The Old Bridge plays many a different roles in the city: it is a rite of passage for the youth of the city, who jump off the bridge during summer, and for newly married couples who stand together with the single arch as their backdrop for their wedding pictures. As a resident of the city said: 'It is something that the people have – when you are born in Mostar, you don't have a choice. The Old Bridge is always present. The whole city is equated to the Old Bridge.'[22]

Other residents expressed similar sentiments:

For everyone here the first association is the Bridge – whomever you ask they will all tell you the same. Everyone was/is connected to it. Kissing on it, jumping off it [...] The Bridge here is local patriotism! [23]

> What is important is that there were no religious thoughts; the Old Bridge
> has a specific value. For it was like the connections of the people from
> different parts of the world. A lot of loves were created here, as were
> friendships and businesses, and many searching for life's inspiration, they all
> found it on the bridge […] I still remember the time when I was a youth and
> meeting my love on the bridge […] [24]

> Before its destruction, the Old Bridge was a familiar landmark, one that was
> almost taken for granted, it was old and grainy, but still very white.[25]

Before its destruction, the focus on the symbolic qualities of the Old Bridge
was markedly lesser than those of its physical manifestation as a monument or
artefact of the city. Though the bridge came to represent the city in terms of various
icons and through the spread of its fame (due to its physical appearance), it was only
after its destruction that it came to be physically linked with various other constructs.
Mainly due to its international fame (through visual and written material), the focus
of the world fell on the city during the course of the war.

3.1 Post-destruction constructs

Having withstood the World Wars, and the first of the two sieges on the town of
Mostar during the Bosnian War (1992–1995), the Old Bridge was brought down 10
days after the start of the second siege in the city by Croatian forces (HVO forces) on
9 November 1993. The brute force of continuous shelling brought down a space
symbolic to the city and its people, echoing Bevan's (2006: 12) linkage of space and
identity:

> Buildings and shared spaces can be a location in which different groups
> come together through shared experience, collective identities are forged and
> traditions invented. It is architecture's very impression of finity that makes
> its manipulation such a persuasive tool: selective retention and destruction
> can reconfigure this historical record and the façade of meanings bought to
> architecture can be shifted. Buildings are not political but are politicized by
> why and how they are built, regarded and destroyed.

Bevan, who in his book makes a study of buildings that were the primary target in
conflicts, can be used as a reference as to the targeted destruction of the Old Bridge
due to its heightened sense of meaning and memory, collectively for the city and the
people. As a container of meanings, histories and memories, it was an object of both
collective and personal memories that came under attack due to what it represented
(in terms of its history/heritage) and the position that it commanded in the memory of
the inhabitants and the city. Not only did destruction of the Old Bridge have a

powerful effect on the city, but it also brought the world's focus onto the city of Mostar.[26] Emir Balić (2003), the famous diver from Mostar, wrote in *TIME* about the destruction*:*

> I could not talk. I cried for days whenever I was left alone. I could not believe that I would live longer than the old bridge. It was our bridge [...] we spoke of it as our friend, the oldest Mostarian whom we all respected and were proud of. Many people were killed during the war, but it was when the bridge was destroyed that Mostarians spontaneously declared a day of mourning.

Bevan explains the concept of how, by destroying the fabric of a city, the people who are connected to that fabric are threatened. This is the sole reason why architecture and urban elements become as much as a victim as the people of the city during its strife and wars.

Questioning not just where lines are drawn in times of war, but also the selective destruction of Ottoman heritage within the city, brought to the surface issues of ethnicity. Though built by the Ottomans and completely on the Muslim side of the city, the bridge was an artefact that belonged to the city as a whole and not to a specific ethnicity. With its destruction the interpretation of the bridge's symbolic connection to the city's multiculturalism was immediate. The destruction of the Old Bridge and the memory induced by this image (here, specifically, that of the image of the war-torn bridge) is difficult to quantify or be understood, as the Croatian writer Slavenka Drakulić (1993) wrote in *The Observer*:

> Why do we feel more pain looking at the image of the destroyed bridge (in Mostar) than the image of the massacred people? Perhaps because we see our own mortality in the collapse of the bridge. We expect people to die; we count on our lives to end. The destruction of a monument to civilization is something else. The bridge, in all its beauty and grace was built to outlive us. It was an attempt to grasp eternity. It transcended our individual destiny.

A local economist from the city explained in an interview that, despite the physical absence of the bridge from 1993 to 2003, the memory of the bridge was so strong that it was alive in the hearts of the inhabitants. This was echoed by another resident of the city when he stated that 'all that is missing is the patina on the surface, it was always here'[27], reflecting on the bond between the physical object and the memories associated with it, by both its presence and absence. Playing a deep-seated role in the memory of the people, the Old Bridge behaved as a consolidation of the

people. Due to its ingrained presence in the city, a large consortium of international donors came to rebuild what was lost.

The rebuilt bridge opened in 2004 amid large fanfares and gatherings from across the world. The difference was that the Old Bridge was now called by a new name: the "New Old Bridge". The people of the city seem to rejoice at the resurgence of a familiar landmark rather than exploring its implications.[28]

> The bridge I see today is not a new bridge, it is just a better kept bridge than before.[29]

> When people see the bridge now, they are shocked to see how white it is, people remember both old and the new. It happens all the time, regular people thinking about the bridge […]. When you see the bridge now, it brings back the past. Happier times. [30]

> I said at the time that it should be left as a reminder for future generations of what mad people in mad times are capable of doing. But now I hope its reconstruction will make this town less divided, and that it will bring the two sides together again. I'm proud, of course. But, you know, I still feel that something has been murdered here. The old bridge had its recognizable patina. (Balic, 2003)

Though the boundaries between the two bridges are blurred, in the act of rebuilding the Old Bridge and the old core of the city, attempts were made to bring back the most familiar landmark of the city and rejuvenate memories once more. The idea of retaining old and familiar forms were driven by the need to bring a certain form of normalcy to the city, and in turn new understandings of space and associated memories. Halbwachs (1992: 40) writes: 'memory is always being reconstructed in the present context, but it is rarely dissociated from considerations of power'.

Here though, discussions of the bridge in its physical form range from past icons to modern symbols. As an integral part of the city's urban form its physical presence encourages encounter and thereby connections to the past/present/future depending on the viewers' connection/attachment. With the Old Bridge/New Old Bridge, its position as a site of memory is marked in various ways: in the past it was a monument of the city and it continues to function as site marked for memory with the addition of now being a reconstructed monument for the city. It satisfies the role of "memory in architecture" where its physical presence encourages and performs the act of remembering. However, the difference in nomenclature gives the necessary opening into representations of the said object, leading to the second part of this paper.

4.   As a representation

In 'The Task of the Translator' Walter Benjamin questions the relationship between the original and its putative copy, and what occurs in the terrain of the former is retold to produce the latter, the translation from the original (Harootunian, 1996: 70). Paul de Man (2002: 80) elucidates on the same, saying that 'any translation is always second in relation to the original'. Here what is compared and questioned is between the represented and the referenced, between the two bridges where are the lines between the original and the rebuilt original drawn? Benjamin gives the opening foray into what will always be an enactment of the original.

When queries are raised about what is real about the Old Bridge now, it opens up many-faceted questions and answers – those of what is remembered, what is forgotten, who wants to remember and whose narrative is looked at. Jarzombek (2001) and Halbwachs (1992) assert that reconstruction and representation happen within the context of various different agendas and notions. As example of an urban palimpsest, the site presents an opportunity to question what is represented, between its existence as an official symbol (a constructed monument to the lost one) and the resurgence of a familiar landmark and its role as a monument for reconciliation.

As a site of memory, its deep-seated role in urban life dictated that its presence would signify certain rituals (as a meeting point, for diving off, as a place to have coffee, etc.), giving it its recognition and representation. Though through time the "physicality" of the bridge may have undergone various metamorphoses, associations with the bridge and the memory of the bridge have both remained constant, and have been constantly questioned (e.g. why reconstruct it? what is its purpose?).

When Anderson (1995: 23) defined the term 'memory through architecture', he spoke primarily of how architecture serves the cause of memory, with urban artefacts doing the same by playing the role of duty to remember. The Old Bridge and the New Old Bridge have been transformed into a cause of memory, moving from an intentional bridge to an unintentional monument of the city:

> Though the memory associated with the bridge has changed, the bridge by itself has remained the same for the people of the city.[31]

> If tearing down of the Old Bridge is a symbol of the destruction of Bosnia and Herzegovina, then its rebuilding will symbolize the restoration of this

country and the reconciliation of its people who will come together to rebuild the Old Bridge, and all of Mostar's bridges, linking them as people once again. The Old Bridge became a symbol of the restoration of the multi-ethnic society of Bosnia and Herzegovina (Pašić, 2006).

4.1 From unintentional to intentional monument

The advancement of the Old Bridge from an unintentional monument (as a historic stone bridge) to one that was built as a symbol of reconciliation took place over the last decade. An architectural and structural element built solely for the purpose of ease of movement has taken on the role of an intentional monument, mainly due to the emphasis that has been given to it post-destruction by the people of the city, scholars and the international community.

The making of the bridge into a symbol of the city makes for a powerful story relating to the city's multicultural past and its current state as a divided city. The metaphor of a bridge in terms of connecting sides has been constantly used in relation to the New Old Bridge, even though it is physically on the Muslim side of the city. The fall of the bridge during the time of war, its long association with the city and its people, the addition of the layer of its sense of multiculturalism, all added to the making of a symbol. A symbol that came to stand for people's past, the unity of the city, and the idea of reconnecting different sides once again. Though the war saw the fall of various mosques, churches, synagogues and other city infrastructure, the neutrality of the bridge and its associated symbolism was perceived as representing everyone in the city.

The decision to rebuild not just any other bridge, but the replica of the very same destroyed Old Bridge as a monument and testament to what was lost, speaks not just about the role of the Old Bridge's physical presence and importance but also about the degree of attachment to its physical presence/appearance. The focus of the international community on the bridge's presence/absence as a symbol of post-war reconstruction escalated the importance of a singular element within the city.

The making of the bridge into an intentional monument, specifically that of a monument depicting multiculturalism and reconciliation, was driven both locally and by the international community. The change in nomenclature from the "Old Bridge" to "New Old Bridge" is just one of the starting points for the discussion of differentiating between unintentional and intentional monuments.

To understand this differentiation between the two "bridges", Pierre Nora introduces certain phrases that are helpful to this argumentation. By his definition the historic bridge can be seen as a 'milieu de mémoire', an object that plays a critical role and an environment that is seeped both in history and memory (Nora, 1989). The historical bridge described above played a central role within the city and among the people, a place that was a cornerstone and environment of memory. But over the last decade of post-reconstruction the Old Bridge has come to represent more than a crossing, with the overwhelming emphasis on its presence in the urban landscape it has now taken on a role as 'lieu de mémoire'.

We have to be content with lieux de mémoire, places which remind us of the past, of a (broken) memory (Morley and Robins, 1996). The bridge has taken on a role of a place of designated memory, a place that reminds one of the pasts. When Nora talks about 'lieu de mémoire', he focuses on places of that have imbibed memory of past events onto themselves, ones created specifically for the purpose of remembering. This differentiation comes up when the nomenclature associated with the Bridge (before/after) is examined: the Old Bridge (before demolition) versus "the New Old Bridge" (reconstructed).

The Old Bridge became significant for the historic and cultural values associated with it through the ages, every bit like the "patina" that develops with age; by comparison, the New Old Bridge not only had to take on all that the "previous" bridge represented but was also built intentionally to remember the one that was lost and to represent politically a symbol of multiculturalism for the city and region. Though it appeared physically similar, what it represented had changed, transforming the New Old Bridge into an intentional monument for reconciliation and echoing more than was originally intended. Below is an excerpt from a discussion with a group of recent graduates in the city:

> There is a big difference between the old bridge and the new old bridge, before it was a historic monument. As the city was a small one, everyone knew each other and the old bridge was almost like a family member! Now, it's not comfortable anymore, not like it used to be anyway; it is more commercial as well. It used to be everyone's bridge, now it is not that way. With the reconstruction they said it will bring us all together, how can we all come together? […] It is not family any more really […].[32]

4.2   *The unseen monument and an exact replica*

As stated by Alois Reigl (1998), physical monuments in our environments are created as a human reaction to keep alive certain memories/events for future generations. The transformation to the causes of memory (and forgetting) are introduced not just by the rebuilt bridge as an exact replica and intentional monument, but also by the stones that graze the floor of the rebuilt bridge that have the potential to behave as counter-monuments. On the shores of the river Neretva, at the foot of the towering bridge, lies the "Old-Old Bridge"[33], not in complete form but as stone blocks that have been dredged out of the river. Quiet and unseen, the stones bear material witness to the new bridge.

If these ruins can be seen as challenging the traditional role of the monument, they can be represented as "un-intentional counter memorials". Laid out on the banks of the river, they appear to blend in with the landscape rather than call attention to themselves. Questioning the paradox that is the reconstruction, it is a narrative space caught between a state of survival and a state of not being fully alive (as they are not given the same prominence). They exist in an open zone and not in an artificially created museum. Open not only to the forces of nature, but also to human nature (to memory and to forgetting), the stones present a narrative state that brings together what Jarzombek (2004: 71) states as questions on memory and public space. For Jarzombek the process of retrieval and representation happen in open public spaces.

Though they are highly visible in the environment and exist in an open zone, they go unquestioned and unnoticed, unless specific questions are asked.

The presence of these stones is not to force them on to the memory-industry, but to be used as a space (/platform) for contemplation on the issues of memory and forgetting through built form, and in this specific case an unintentional memorial. Through their presence and representation, these stones have an inherent value for understanding the temporality of memory, either in or through material form. Respondents said during interviews:

> I do not understand why they decided to build it again. Probably because there was no political unification, they focused on the Bridge. It will calm down the tensions; it will give the people a sense that something has come out of this. People were killing each other and they were supposed to stop and suddenly forget everything that happened. You had to give them something if you cannot give them civil society. So if you gave them something, it would calm down the tensions. It would give a sense of movement, a final evaluation, a certain sense of closure. Although even now people are in

clutches – it is a pretence – we are all living normally, driving cars – I do not know how! It was a sense of normalcy, even though it is east side and west side (laughs loudly).[34]

[…] the tourists coming here only know about the Bridge. It is what is remembered when the word Mostar comes up. So everyone wants a picture with the Bridge. But that is all they can see in the few hours that they are in Mostar. They come from Dubrovinik or Međugorje, they take a few pictures and they leave. It is important to remember so that you don't repeat the same mistakes. But the question is, you can forgive – but how can you? For the Bosnians how can we expect that? I cannot forgive someone who has harmed my mother, it would be very hard, or my sister. If my father has disappeared… how can I? […] Just because you rebuild, you cannot forget.[35]

Both the stones on the floor and the exact replica of the previous bridge are telling, not only about the situation within the city, but also about how dialectics of memory (and forgetting, in terms of the act of iconoclasm and erasure of spaces) work through the expression of built form. The form that memory takes within the city is in the shape of an exact replica, built on nostalgia, familiarity and the need to reclaim/reestablish a certain collective memory and space. Quoting Robert Bevan (2006: 201), restoring architecture can never resolve conflict but how can the recognition of guilt or the explanation upon which reconciliation depend, emerge if there is no memory of the crime?

5. Conclusion

Memory of architecture, therefore, seems to depend more on our ability to perceive the embodied situation, rather than something that can be easily "read" off a surface. Moreover those situations are subject to particular catalytic moments in time – those instances in which the energies of both the container and the contained become virtually indistinguishable. The timing of those moments is uneven, poetic, and anisotropic. It would be impossible for the constituent elements of a place-memory to sustain a constant equilibrium or frequency of resonance in time (Bloomer, 1987).

As a container of meaning and memory, architecture resonates with the possibilities that are given to it. Woven together as a rich texture, the container of meanings is largely dependent on people's or inhabitants' interactions with the same. The experience of former usages and remembrances invokes a memory, making the object and the place both personal and collective. The meanings associated with the buildings/architecture take on an almost autobiographical outlook for memory associated with that space. The notion of memory plays an undisputed role in

everyday lives, and understanding it in conjunction with built objects gives more layers of meanings to architecture. Architecture then resonates with memories and experiences that are projected onto it, thereby making it both a collective and an individual notion.

Memory is sustained through various practices and narratives – architecture being a "product" containing within it infinite possibilities of understanding memory, forgetting and the tangential process of attachment through various tactics of remembrance. The uniqueness of this example lies in the rhetoric between the act of history and memory followed by the representation of the same through commemorative building. The construction, reproduction and projection of the material, its memory and collective spaces are pivotal in perpetuating forms of distinctiveness for both space and its inhabitants.

The Old Bridge and its many manifestations are embedded not just in history but also within the collective memory/forgetting of the city, contributing to the identity of the city and its people (before, during and after the war) and moving beyond a stage where actions merely take place either on it or around it. It presents a case where an urban artefact enables interaction with a site of memory, and connection to a collective past. It embeds the entire process in a performance where the viewer (if s/he so chooses) is saddled with the responsibility of carrying out the act of remembering/forgetting.

This study of the Old Bridge has shown that, not only do the dynamics and dialectics of physical structures come to the foreground, but that objects that are part of daily landscapes bring forth issues of complexity of attachment, discussions of reconciliation and memory/forgetting, making way for deeper investigation into an understanding of the surrounding physical or built environment.

Notes

1. *Stari Most* is also called the "Old Bridge" or the "New-Old Bridge" (post-2004) in English. Unless otherwise specified the nomenclature refers to the current bridge in the city of Mostar, BiH.
2. Interview with Aida Omanović, Head of RESCATE (Mostar office). Mostar, October 2009.
3. UNESCO. "Criterion" (Justification for Inscription). 2005. http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/946. Retrieved: Feb. 03, 2011.
4. Though there were a number of structures (religious, social and other infrastructure) destroyed during war (including the famed gymnasium, designed by Frank Blazek; the Hotel Neretva; the Partisan Monument Complex, designed by Bogdan Bogdanović, and

other bridges), the Old Bridge stands out as one of the focal points in the old town. A shared space between the general population and tourists, it was a favoured target during the war due to its heightened sense of meaning and attachment. As the focus of this paper was on a singular element, the Old Bridge was chosen because of its linkages to attachment, history, identity and its role in the city.

5. The fieldwork for this paper was conducted in the city of Mostar between 2009 and 2010, when 20 narrative interviews were carried out with residents of the city. Participants were planners, architects, civil society workers, artists, students and members of the general public. Participants ranged from people who were in the city during the war (and stayed on), people who left and came back, and people who did not return fully but still had connections to the city.

6. As the paper and the research draw on narrative interviews conducted in the city, I draw on people's understanding and representation of how they feel and talk about the presence of the Old Bridge in their lives. As a site of everyday encounter, the role that the structure played in their lives shows its importance and the sense of attachment/questioning experienced by the people of the city. The use of a narrative approach led to the construction/reconstruction of situations and realities that highlighted one structure's role in the life of the city and its people.

7. See Bose, 2007; Calame and Charlesworth, 2009; Charlesworth 2006; Chesterman, 2005; Gaffikin and Morrissey, 2011.

8. See World Monument Fund. http://www.wmf.org/project/mostar-historic-center. Retrieved: Feb. 03, 2011.

9. In fact, the process first began in 1994, when the European Union Administration (EUAM) came to Mostar.

10. At the time of the research period though a joint administration was in place, wherein Muslim and Croat officials alternated in the posts of mayor and deputy mayor, discord among those interviewed was evident.

11. The original bridge was replaced by a timber one in 1481, which was in turn replaced in 1566 with the stone arched bridge that stood until 1993. See Pašić, 2005, for more details.

12. Linda McDowell is a geographer who defined the term 'regimes of place' as how people think about a place's location, social function, landscape form and aesthetics, about international commemorative display, and even personal experiential qualities. See McDowell(1999) for more details.

13. Interview with Jasenka Vuk, representative of civil society. Mostar, November 2009

14. Reference to the introduction and the interview with Aida Omanović, Head of RESCATE (Mostar office). Mostar, October 2009.

15. Interview with Edin Batlak, businessman. Mostar, October 2009.

16. The original bridge was replaced by a timber one in 1481 that was replaced in turn with the stone arched bridge in 1566 that stood until 1993. See Pašić 2006, for more details.

17. Details of various nomenclature obtained while in conversation with Dr. Pašić. Also in Pašić (2006).

18. For summaries of the legends and history surrounding the Old Bridge, see Monnesland, 2001.

19. For example, see Wilkinson, 1848; Aldiss, 1966.

20. The poet Zubac uses 'speak of crnjanski', to indicate he is reciting poems from the famous Serbian poet Miloš Crnjanski to his companion. His companion/girl replies about 'how marvelous he is'. Here 'he' can be read as either the poet or the bridge under which they are standing, highlighting the poet's word play on 'he'.

21. The central role that the Old Bridge played as a meeting point was driven by its importance in the old city and was also discerned from the interviews conducted in the city.

22. Interview conducted with Aida Omanovic, Head of RESCATE (Mostar office). Mostar, October 2009.

23. Interview with Edin Batlak, businessman. Mostar, October 2009.

24. Interview with Salka-Salem Bubalo, city planner. Mostar, November 2009
25. Interview with Senada Demirovic Habibija, urban planning advisor. Mostar, November 2009.
26. Some post-war discussions have sought to explain the significance of the demolition as specific targeting of the Ottoman heritage of the city. For an interesting take on the city's heritage and the significance of all identities of the city, see Grodach, 2002.
27. Interview with Edin Batlak, businessman. Mostar, October 2009.
28. In some interviews, participants were not sure about the reasons behind the need to rebuild.
29. Interview with Senada Demirovic Habibija, urban planning advisor. Mostar, October 2009.
30. Interview with Tihomir Rozic, Project Manager, Bridge Reconstruction. Mostar, November 2009.
31. Interviews with Prof. Dr. Amir Pašić, professor at the Faculty of Architecture, University of Sarajevo. Mostar, October 2009 and March 2010.
32. Interview with a group of young artists at OKC Abrašević Youth Centre. Mostar, November 2009.
33. The term "Old-Old Bridge" used by the author refers to the bridge that was demolished in 1993. The remains of this "original" bridge are the stones that graze the banks of the river Neretva at the foot of the reconstructed bridge. They lay as material witness to the past and, though visually present, go unseen.
34. Interview conducted with Aida Omanović, Head of RESCATE (Mostar office). Mostar, October 2009.
35. Interview with Fernando Mazzaro, worker with RESCATE. Mostar, October 2009.

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