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# **“Architects in War”: Wartime Destruction and Architectural Practice During the Siege of Sarajevo**

Dr. Armina Pilav

Lecturer in Landscape Architecture

Department of Landscape Architecture  
The University of Sheffield  
Floor 12, Arts Tower  
Sheffield S10 2TN

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## **Abstract:**

During the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina (1992-1996), the conventional ways of architectural investigation and design processes – such as visiting specific sites – became too dangerous. Located in a valley, Sarajevo was besieged for four years and subjected to constant military attacks. The destruction of the city by shelling, control, and remote occupation of public space by sniper gunmen, became a twofold process that, while undoing the city’s architecture, determined an extraordinary condition for the creation of ephemeral spaces for protection and survival. The military siege rescaled the urban landscape and people’s homes, and transformed the architectural programme of typical modernist dwellings into self-organised spaces, as documented by architect Zoran Doršner (1993). Documents produced by Sarajevo’s architects during the war show that the shelling of the city and its destruction lead to a direct engagement of the architects with the “city at war”. Relying on their survival experience and on their pre-war architectural practice, they created temporary methods for the architectural observation and documentation of the city under destruction. Ivan Štraus witnessed the destruction of the city from his terrace, his observations resulting in a diary entitled *Architects and Barbarians* (1995). Lebbeus Woods visited Sarajevo in 1993 and presented pamphlet *War and Architecture*, taking the journalist role. In order to understand the practices of architects in the wartime city, this article makes use of documents produced during the war: the above-mentioned diary and pamphlet, the reports on Sarajevo’s destruction published in *Warchitecture*<sup>1</sup> magazine (1993), as well as archive photographs, sketches and drawings. The work and role of “architects in war” remains largely unexplored in the domain of architecture theory and history. This paper offers an attempt to initiate a research lexicon of architectural practices and ephemeral interventions by “architects in war”, as seen through the methods used by Sarajevo’s architects and citizens during the war.

# “Architects in War”: Wartime Destruction and Architectural Practice During the Siege of Sarajevo

Armina Pilav

## Introduction

Before the dissolution of socialist Yugoslavia in 1991, architecture and its *design methods* were defined in Yugoslavia as something that served society and the state. The social position of the architect was that of a civil servant, even after 1 January 1985, when the legislation was changed, and architects and other intellectuals acquired the right to register private practices. Public, state-owned architecture bureaus of different sizes and expertise were generally located in the major Yugoslav cities of Skopje, Zagreb, Belgrade, Sarajevo, Ljubljana, and Podgorica, as well as in smaller urban centres. Regardless of their place of residence or practice, Yugoslav architects such as Bogdan Bogdanović, Ivan Štraus, Nikola Dobrović, Asja Selenić, Ranko Radović, Zlatko Ugljen, among others, worked across the whole Yugoslav territory as well as internationally, in Europe and in the newly independent African states within the Non-Aligned Movement. Their contribution to international modernist architecture and urban planning, through design competitions, built projects, and visions for several cities, was documented by specialised journals published across Yugoslavia.<sup>2</sup> In recent years, the legacy of Yugoslav architects has been presented in the research project,<sup>3</sup> exhibition and book *Unfinished Modernizations/Between Utopia and Pragmatism* (2012),<sup>4</sup> as well as in the documentary series on Croatian Radio and Television entitled *Slumbering Concrete* directed by Saša Ban (2016-2018),<sup>5</sup> and internationally with the exhibition *Toward a Concrete Utopia: Architecture in Yugoslavia 1948-1980* organised by Martino Stierli at the MoMA in New York (2018-19).<sup>6</sup>

Besides the presentation of the work of architects from socialist Yugoslavia, these research projects also reflect on the transition of architectural practice from the socialist/communist political, economic and spatial context, to the new contexts of post-Yugoslav independent states with parliamentary democracies, formed after the dissolution of Yugoslavia in 1991. The process of formation of the independent states began with the political crisis, and was followed by war, first in Slovenia in 1991, then in Croatia in the same year, and in Bosnia and Herzegovina in 1992-96. The final episode of the dissolution of Yugoslavia was the war in Kosovo, which took place between February 1998 and June 1999. Although the war in Kosovo ended in 1999 with the NATO intervention and bombing campaign against Serbia, including targets in Kosovo from 24 March till 11 June 1999, Kosovo's declaration of independence from the Republic of Serbia was made only on 17 April 2008.<sup>7</sup> As a consequence of the abovementioned wars, the physical and political system of (un)making and (un)governing the city and the wider national territory as a whole was transformed; also transformed

by the wars was the legislation that regulated the practice of (former) Yugoslav architects. The aim of this paper is to track the inevitable transformation of the role of the architect in former Yugoslavia, which started with the transition from a socialist federation of states with established architectural practices, to the war condition of the independent democratic states. The paper reflects on the re-production of architecture during the interstate conflict, focusing on the example of the destroyed urban environment during the military siege of Sarajevo, which started in April 1992. During the war, architects adapted familiar peace-time design tools to the war context, introducing an architectural language and *temporary methods of analysis*, in order to understand and document the processes of production of space under violent military operations, as well as the corresponding non-violent civilian reaction.

In order to identify the architects' wartime working methods, I have used material from existing published architecture and art magazines from the war period, such as the *ARH* special issue on the theme of 'Warchitecture' (1993) published by the reorganised Association of Architects of Sarajevo (DAS),<sup>8</sup> and *LIFE* by FAMA collection,<sup>9</sup> as well as architects' private archives of drawings, photographs and texts from the war. I have also used the experience of war-torn Sarajevo of architect Lebbeus Woods, as well the interviews I recently conducted with a number of Bosnian architects.<sup>10</sup> By looking at the experience of architects living under military siege in Sarajevo from April 1992, I intend to reflect on what happens to the architect's standard role when they are deprived of their usual working environment in an organised design firm. I will also explore how these professionals redefined independent or group practice during the war, and what insight can be gained on the relationship between military destruction and the non-violent civilian spatial reaction to the brutality of war.

### **Architects in the Field and the Scale of War Destruction**

Sarajevo is located in a valley, and according to the *Sarajevo Survival Guide*<sup>11</sup> during the war there were there 260 tanks, 120 mortars, and innumerable anti-aircraft cannons, as well as sniper rifles and other smaller weapons entrenched across the natural landscape of the city's surrounding hills and mountains. Some of the city's neighbourhoods, such as Grbavica and Dobrinja, were divided in two, meaning that the front line ran through and in-between buildings, or engulfed opposing river banks and was used for both mounting attacks and putting up defence.<sup>12</sup>

**Figure 1: Survival Map of Sarajevo, representation of the siege in the period 1992-1996.**

**Source: ©FAMA Collection: Sarajevo Survival Map, 1996.**

Different archive documents – texts, projects, photographs and exhibition materials – show how the war became an urban subject, and architects had to adapt their pre-war activities of designing,

building, or writing about architecture and the urban environment to the war. In his interview for *LIFE* magazine in 1993, upon being asked ‘What words do you not use any more?’, Bosnian architect Ivan Štraus<sup>13</sup>, responds: ‘project, building, business trip, summer and winter vacation...’. The *LIFE* magazine interview goes on to detail how Sarajevo’s architects continued to work and live with terror, witnessing from their windows the destruction of their own buildings as well as of the entire city. As Sabahudin Špilja writes in his text *Attempts at (War) Reading the Town* published in *Warchitecture*, ‘In futile and unhappy times, when destruction exceeds construction, in the middle of an elementary chaos, when underground passions roar violently and destructively, the precious pictures of “earthly towns” goes [sic] either to the sky or under the ground!’<sup>14</sup> At the same time, just like the rest of the civilian population, architects had to struggle to survive. *Warchitecture*,<sup>15</sup> a special issue of *ARH* magazine published by the reorganised Association of Architects of Sarajevo, shows how architects offered their technical knowledge to further the understanding and rethinking of architecture and urban physical conditions during and after the military destruction. Furthermore, many architects, engineers and designers were killed in their homes, city streets or while at work during the war, such as Vesna Bugarski, Slavko Cindrić, Josip Gačnik, Munira Saltagić, among others listed at the beginning of the above mentioned *Warchitecture* magazine.<sup>16</sup> The constant shelling of the city not only transformed the existing buildings, streets, and neighbourhoods, but introduced a renewed use of existing and the construction of new underground spaces, thus creating an underground city. From the beginning of the war, new urban elements and functions were built: barricades and walls made out of sandbags and broken cars for protection against sniper fire (Figure 2), urban gardens, trenches as civilian passageways, temporary cemeteries, hospitals, water and electricity infrastructure, public kitchens for food distribution, centres for humanitarian aid and many other ephemeral spaces. Relying on the cross-media analysis of the materiality of the destroyed city learned from photography, documentary films, popular media and based on archive research and interviews with architects who lived in Sarajevo during the war – Ivan Štraus, Zoran Doršner and Nihad Čengić – I have identified the following forms of engagement by local architects in Sarajevo during the war: (1) as soldiers in the Bosnian army; (2) through self-chosen methods for documenting the continuous physical transformation of the city - for example: photographing the destruction of significant public and heritage buildings and housing blocks, and writing personal diaries and texts about the destruction of the city and the society as a whole; (3) by designing proposals for post-war reconstruction of the destroyed public, cultural-heritage, housing and other buildings; (4) by partaking in everyday activities in the production of space through the spatial reactions to military destruction, such as the preliminary estimation of war damage, equipping and organising hospital facilities for emergencies, working for the civil protection unit to build safe shelters for internally displaced people and remaining citizens; (5) by teaching at the Faculty of Architecture; (6) with interviews for the media, correspondence with architect friends in other countries, and through publishing activities, book presentations and the organisation of exhibitions. Along with the work of Bosnian architects, the

American architect Lebbeus Woods was professionally engaged during the Yugoslav wars, starting with his first visit and exhibition in Zagreb, Croatia in 1991, entitled 'Zagreb Free Zone'.<sup>17</sup> According to my research and Andrew Herscher's 'Wararchitecture Theory',<sup>18</sup> there is great value in the engagement of architects during the war from both a human and professional point of view. In the introduction to his text Herscher writes:

The term "warchitecture" emerged in Sarajevo as a name for the catastrophic destruction of architecture during the 1992–1996 siege of the city. Blurring the conceptual border between "war" and "architecture", the term provides a tool to critique dominant accounts of wartime architectural destruction and to bring the interpretive protocols of architecture to bear upon that destruction. Reflection on "warchitecture" can therefore open up new ways to examine and understand violence against architecture and to connect this violence with emergent discussions of war, violence, and modernity in and across other disciplines.<sup>19</sup>

Exploring the numerous adaptations of roles performed by architects who witnessed the war, and observing how their wartime work can be relevant to the post-war context of Sarajevo, or indeed to any other city subject to war and post-war urban conditions, I have found that the spatial experience of the war by Sarajevan architects, their related methods of work within un-institutional forms, and their independent but related practices, can add to the existing contemporary discourse on the role of the architect and architectural practice at large.<sup>20</sup> Emerging research and education projects about the wartime production of space look at resilience and survival, military transformations of the landscape and the city, ephemeral architectures and other spatial reactions of civilians to war damage in the city, where architects, as in the case of Sarajevo, are present and continue to work. Here I present the most significant reactions to the war in Sarajevo by three architects, through their different and unexpected roles and working methods.

Figure 2: Sniper protection wall made from destroyed cars.

Photo: Architect Nihad Čengić, 1992–1996.

### **Adapting the Role of the Architect**

In disaster circumstances, such as the war in Sarajevo, urban changes are rapid, unpredictable, and difficult to control. As a consequence, the well-established planning and design practices employed by the Yugoslav government, its planners and most of the state-supported architects to control urban transformations in Sarajevo, ceased to work. Architects and planners accustomed to working in public design and urban planning offices, according to official plans, prints and drawings, integrated in, for example the General Urban Plan that every capital city of Yugoslavian Republics had, began

operating in dangerous and ever-changing urban environments, and hid in their flats and bomb shelters during heavy shelling. The 1994 exhibition *Sarajevo Dream and Reality*,<sup>21</sup> featured, among others, a group of architects who dedicated themselves to the rethinking of urban and architectural space, starting from the actual wartime socio-spatial emergency —building from and with the ruins and attending to the survival needs of civilians. Examples of this are architect Zoran Doršner, and urban planner and Professor of Urbanism, Vlasta-Jelena Žuljić. Another group of architects were looking ahead to the post-war future, already proposing reconstructions of existing buildings, and even proposing constructing new public buildings such as the project of a building for Muslim, Catholic, Orthodox and Jewish religious services by Erdin Salihović. In the documentary *The Destruction of Memory*,<sup>22</sup> the architect Muhamed Hamidović, interviewed in the film while walking across the iconic stone bridge in Mostar – built in the Ottoman Empire, destroyed in the war, and reconstructed in 2004 – states that ‘The best thing for us architects during the war was to continue to work’. The most representative cases of architects adapting their professional role and work methods to wartime conditions are the diary entries of Ivan Štraus, the architectural drawings and descriptions for the *Destructive Metamorphosis* project by Zoran Doršner, and Lebbeus Woods’ visit to Sarajevo in 1993 that was followed by his theoretical reflection and drawings on the city’s future and post-war radical reconstruction. The following selected examples show the architects’ adaptation to the everyday changes of the city and the invention of a new architectural vocabulary that emerged from the spatial consequences of the war.

### **Ivan Štraus. Diary Writing: Architect and Barbarians<sup>23</sup>**

Several months before the war began, on 1 September 1991, Ivan Štraus, the architect who had designed the most significant public buildings<sup>24</sup> in Sarajevo, started to write a diary as a symbolic beginning of his retirement. As he writes in the diary’s introduction,<sup>25</sup> the purpose of his informal writings was to remember and describe the forty years of working as a public architect in the design bureau ‘Arhitekt’. Following the beginning of the war in Croatia and the destruction of the cities of Vukovar and Dubrovnik, and the war in Bosnia, Štraus’s diary takes on a different form and becomes a text with a *parallel theme*, describing the reverse processes of construction – the destruction of the city. Štraus writes:

My way of constructing or my wish to build was with the aim to serve ordinary people and their needs in life, while destruction is exactly the opposite way of thinking and doing – to deprive people of their habitat, as well as of spaces for their life and work, and even to kill them within their spaces.<sup>26</sup>

In the above quote Štraus is referring to his architectural practice before the war in Yugoslavia. The

pre-war generation of architects within the Yugoslavian territory had a certain autonomy in designing under the socialist political system. Before the dissolution of socialist Yugoslavia in 1991, architecture and its design methods were defined as something that served society and the state. A careful reading of the diary and of Štraus's writings, reveals two correlated themes across the texts. The first theme is autobiographical, and regards the author's career as an architect, his awards for design competitions, and the effect on his work of the political disputes that emerged in 1990s Yugoslavia. Štraus describes how interstate political disputes started to influence every domain of the architectural discipline, such as design competitions, publishing, cross-country architecture congresses, and national award nominations.<sup>27</sup> Štraus includes also extracts of the correspondence between architects across Yugoslavia who shared their concerns on the destruction of the cities – for example, Bogdan Bogdanović texts about the destruction of Vukovar, Dubrovnik, Sarajevo, Mostar,<sup>28</sup> and the idea in them that the related actors in the architectural field should remain in conversation, united, and independent of separatist politics.<sup>29</sup> There were also cases where some architects did not wish to continue to operate united, but rather chose to limit themselves to the state they were living and working in at that critical moment, as shown in the letter to Štraus from Croatian architects Tomislav Odak and Branko Siladin.

The second theme of the diary, following the initial impressions of the war in other parts of Yugoslavia, which Štraus learns about through correspondence with his colleagues and newspaper, radio and TV news reports, is the transition of Bosnia and Herzegovina from peace to a country at war, with the description of the first instances of the conflict. Štraus follows daily changes in Sarajevo: the movements of military vehicles, equipment and soldiers, the first barricades and check points in the streets, the landscape changes in the surrounding hills due to military excavations, the destruction of buildings, the new organisation of civilian life in his apartment block. According to the diary, as a consequence of the Serb army bombardment at the beginning of May 1992, Sarajevo's urban image started to undergo a violent architectural and physical transformation. Štraus, along with his family and neighbours, moved to the underground shelters. He continues to write his diary every day and uses the radio as source of information to learn which public building had been destroyed. On 8 June 1992, at three o'clock in the morning, Štraus goes to his balcony and sees that one of the towers that he had designed, known as Unis, is on fire. In the diary, he notes that despite the hardship of living in a country where many people are killed and expelled from their homes, he wants to continue to write in the domain of architecture, because that was the reason for starting the diary (Štraus, 1995).<sup>30</sup> Instead of writing about his career as a successful Yugoslav architect, Štraus's diary turns to documenting the manner and timing of the destruction of Sarajevo's buildings on a daily basis. He also introduces the term 'systematic destruction of the city' which, as it becomes clear when looking at his daily descriptions of the destruction of the buildings, was an organised and planned destruction of the public buildings necessary for the everyday needs and survival of Sarajevo's citizens. Examples of these are: the post office and telephone communication systems building



(Figure 3), the electric power distribution building 'Elektroprivreda', designed by Štraus (Figure 4), water supply facilities and hospital facilities. One can view Štraus's writing of the diary during the war as the product of both a civilian and a professional: he develops fast observations from a distance, he writes about and decodes the modernist building plans, whose structural elements are positioned in the repetitive, grid construction system. Štraus extracted forms and meanings from the modernist design practice, selecting the relevant cases of the destruction of public buildings while translating his observations into writings on the violent processes of the un-building of architecture.

Figure 3: The main post office in Sarajevo during the destruction in 1992-1993.

Source: Un-war space research archive.

Figure 4: The electric power distribution building in Sarajevo after the destruction in 1992-1993.

Source: Elektroprivreda archive.

### **Zoran Doršner. Architecture Illustration: Destructive Metamorphosis**

Zoran Doršner used the title *Destructive Metamorphosis* for his architectural project that was part of the *Sarajevo Dream and Reality* exhibition. In his proposal for the exhibition, dated 20 December 1993, he writes:

Proposal for the exhibition in New York: To present like a caricature, realistically, a graphic representation of a typical floor plan of a flat from the newer series of social housing at scale 1:10 with an emphasis on the metamorphosis of the flat's interior during the war and with the details of the wartime dwelling design.<sup>31</sup>

Doršner's work contains working sketches, drawings and texts for the exhibition proposal and explanation of the work. Working sketches are free-hand overlaid drawings showing the socio-spatial changes taking place in individual residential units from pre-war to war conditions (Figure 5), and of the civilian rescue equipment used for survival during the siege (Figure 6).

Figure 5: Working sketches of the changes of the residential unit in Sarajevo by architect Zoran Doršner created in 1993.

Source: ©un-war space digital archive, accessed 14 November 2018.

Figure 6: Drawings of civilian rescue equipment used for survival during the siege of Sarajevo by the architect Zoran Doršner, created in 1993.

Source: ©un-war space digital archive, accessed 14 November 2018.

The material shown in the New York exhibition are images of the partially destroyed facade of a typical socialist apartment building (Figure 7), a floor-plan of a residential unit before wartime changes (Figure 8), a floor-plan of a residential unit with the wartime changes (Figure 9), and drawings of the civilian rescue equipment (Figure 6).

Figure 7: Destruction of the façade and apartments of the housing block in the neighbourhood Pofalići. The photograph was used as illustration of the typical modernist apartment building for the *Destructive Metamorphosis* project of architect Zoran Doršner, 1994.

Photo: Zlatan Filipović, 1994. Source: ©un-war space digital archive, 2018.

Figure 8: Floor plan of the typical pre-war modernist family apartment. Architectural drawing by Zoran Doršner, 1994.

Source: ©un-war space digital archive, 2018.

Figure 9: Floor plan of a residential unit transformed during the war via the self-organisation of space. Architectural illustration by architect Zoran Doršner, 1994.

Source: ©un-war space digital archive, 2018.

The idea of a destructive metamorphosis proposed by Doršner is represented through a complex drawing process of the death of the city, its reconstruction, and a simultaneous reproduction of space and life through a ‘metamorphic process’. This is not unlike the one proposed by Goethe in *The Metamorphosis of Plants*,<sup>32</sup> where he describes it as the ability of ‘going backwards as well as forwards’.<sup>33</sup> Like Štraus, also Doršner describes the spatial war experience in Sarajevo as a model for future studies of cities experiencing analogous conditions. He writes in the exhibition text that

the documentation is terrifyingly didactical for possible new subjects at the faculties of Law, Philosophy, Political Sciences, Architecture – about civilian resistance against the endangerment of elementary rights to life, freedom, peace, home, privacy, culture, religion, about universal human rights and the achievements of civilisation. This experience may also serve for a new section of the famous encyclopaedia of architectural standards by Ernst Neufert, for a tragic section of the book dedicated to the elementary survival of cities and civilisations that are undergoing a process of deliberate destruction.<sup>34</sup>

Doršner’s drawings of wartime dwelling can be seen as architectural illustrations. They show the reorganisation of the citizens’ everyday activities such as sleeping, eating and the use of the interior spaces. These drawings are not precise in measurements, they show irregular forms of furniture and

other objects in the apartment. At the same time, they are informative and show the tenants' use of architecture for survival, and the significant rescaling of everyday living spaces where the activities that used to take place in four rooms are now concentrated in one room. Doršner's drawings are an important contribution to the architectural education on the physical transformation of modernist housing buildings in war-afflicted cities.

### **Lebbeus Woods. A Professional Visit: Architectural Control of the Destruction of Sarajevo**

Lebbeus Woods' engagement with the Yugoslav territories started in 1991, with his exhibition *Zagreb-Free-Zone* at the Museum of Arts and Crafts of Zagreb,<sup>35</sup> Croatia. In the same year Woods travelled to Sarajevo, invited by the Association of Architects of Sarajevo, and delivered a public lecture. In November 1993, after receiving an invitation from Haris Pašović, a local theatre producer, Woods returned to a besieged Sarajevo. He was accompanied by another architect, Ekkehard Rehfeld, although Woods himself travelled to Sarajevo as a journalist, since going in and out of the city at the time was heavily controlled and limited, and media workers were allowed the easiest access. As Woods writes in his blog, 'my goal, put simply, was to help architects there begin thinking about the role architecture would play both during and after the siege. I was able to see first-hand what the people were enduring and many damaged buildings'.<sup>36</sup> Commenting on his visit in an interview with Leo Modrčin and Ivan Rupnik, Woods stated: 'So, I took the position that reconstruction should not cosmetically erase the traces of the violence Sarajevo had suffered, but transform them into a new type of space, one that would provoke new ways of thinking about being in a post-siege, post-socialist, post-Yugoslav Sarajevo.'<sup>37</sup> Woods carried to Sarajevo forty copies of his freshly printed pamphlet *War and Architecture*, in which he defined the three stages of reconstruction – "injection", "scab" and "scar"<sup>38</sup> – for a post-war, future Sarajevo. His proposals referred to public buildings and small urban areas while the war was still going on in both Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina. Ivan Štraus also spoke at the pamphlet's presentation event, which was symbolically staged in the destroyed building of the Olympic Museum. Beside the public pamphlet presentation, Woods visited the city with the architects who were in Sarajevo during the war (Figure 10), active in the documentation of the destruction of the city, whose engagement, as mentioned before, was published in *Warchitecture* (1993), special issue of ARH magazine.

**Figure 10: Lebbeus Woods and group of local architects during his visit to Sarajevo in 1993. Woods is in conversation with architect Said Jamaković.**

**Photo: architect Nihad Čengić.**

Besides this public event, Štraus and Woods met privately, and Štraus stated during our interview<sup>39</sup> that 'Lebbeus showed up in a bad moment of my life'. Nevertheless, after his visit to Sarajevo, Woods

remained in contact with Štraus during and after the war, leading to exchanges of architectural drawings for the reconstruction of the destroyed 'Elektroprivreda'<sup>40</sup> building designed by Štraus in 1978. Woods' integrated proposal for the reconstruction of the Elektroprivreda building and other parts of Sarajevo was presented in his book *Radical Reconstructions*.<sup>41</sup> According to Štraus statements, his interventions on Woods' drawings of 'Elektroprivreda' were never made public and remained sketches attached to their correspondence. Over time, their initial idea to collaborate on the *Elektroprivreda* reconstruction process changed, the change probably related to the overall aesthetics and the final image that the *Elektroprivreda* building would have taken. Eventually, *Elektroprivreda* was rebuilt following Štraus's post-war design project, which technically integrated some parts of the destroyed pre-war building not visible on the façade, as was the case with Woods' proposal for the *Elektroprivreda* reconstruction that was primarily focusing on exposing the destruction on the facade. Lebbeus Woods' visit of war-torn Sarajevo and his meeting with local architects is important because with his drawings, sketches and models, Woods made it possible to start a wider discussion on the possibilities of post-war reconstruction. If we look at the use of his work related to Sarajevo, however, and his proposed strategies for intervention, it becomes clear that it has remained in the domain of a general fascination with the aesthetic side of his work, admired by architecture students, exhibition curators and other professionals. Woods hypothesises that 'ninety percent of the damaged buildings would be restored to their normal pre-war forms and uses, as most people want to return to their old ways of living, but ten percent should be 'freespaces' for those who did not want to go back, but forward'<sup>42</sup>. The 'going forward', according to Woods' vision, means integrating the physical war destruction into the post-war reconstruction. Teresa Stoppani is critical of Woods' approach in her article *The Architecture of the Disaster*, where she contrasts Woods' work with the engagement of Bosnian architects. She observes:

Woods's project embraces and inhabits the disaster as one of its tools, in a too easy and too obvious translation of its effects. Architecture here becomes the formal language for the concretion of the disaster, thus reducing any tension and stifling any possibility of change.

Woods's projects "write" the disaster too soon, too quickly, too literally, without constructing any distance from it.<sup>43</sup>

Thus, one may pose the question: when should architects start thinking about post-war reconstruction in a city subject to war destruction – as the war goes on, or immediately after? Architects might be familiar with the subject of war destruction either through personal experiences or popular media coverage. However, in very rare cases they are trained to work and operate in war cities. If they are working in war or post-war cities, their work is mainly focused on providing humanitarian aid facilities and post-war reconstruction without any critical attachment to the context itself and without knowing the architectural production prior to or during the war destruction. Camillo Boano, architect,

urbanist and educator, confirms this from his own experience. Interviewed by Isabelle Doucet for the journal *Candide*, he reflects on his work experience in several cities in Bosnia and Herzegovina:

In the early 1990s, I started working in a conventional conflict area in the Balkans, including Sarajevo and Mostar where conflict was of macro dimension. I was working for the UN, NGOs and what is now called the humanitarian system, where the intervention, wheatear in water and sanitation, housing, or refugee assistance was completely devoid of any critical thought.<sup>44</sup>

Wars are often considered human made disasters and emergent spatial conditions. Emergency and temporary spatial solutions for citizens' survival are necessary – water supply systems, first aid units, or refugee camps to mention a few –, and they often remain in use long after the war, because the recovery of people's homes take time. While Boano is critic that the *critical thought* by architects is absent in war contexts, we can observe that Lebbeus Woods did try to propose a critical thinking process through the use of existing ruins as the future architecture for Sarajevo. Today, his projects proposals for *radical reconstructions* of the Sarajevo architecture in 1993 remain the *radical exercise* of an architect with visionary and apocalyptic representation skills. Instead, what Zoran Doršner shows in *Destructive Metamorphosis* is that citizens' non-violent reactions to destruction in which they used debris to shelter themselves create transitional spaces that could turn at any moment into another type of ruin, sometimes more dangerous. However, emergency spatial reactions to war still remain in the domain of the humanitarian system, while the proposals for post-war reconstructions are more in the domain of the real-estate speculation, and do not form an integral part of the disciplinary and critical discourse in architecture.

### **Conclusion. Architects of Design Intentions or Architects of the Control of Destruction**

The variety of unpredictable situations during the Bosnian war meant that architects responded by applying their professional skills in different ways. Each witnessed the events of the physical destruction of Sarajevo, and reacted individually or in organised groups. Štraus and Doršner adopted the role of 'documentarist architect', recording the destructive processes and the rise of ephemeral architecture where the architectural project in its traditional form was absent or simply impossible. One can view their work as both that of a civilian and of an architect: fast observations from a distance, redrawing and decoding of the modernist housing plans while extracting forms and meanings, and selection of the relevant cases of the destruction of public buildings; listening to the radio and the sounds of destruction, and translating them into writings on architecture.

The architects' observations under such conditions, experiencing fear, for example, create transitional images of architectural forms, since their observation of a building may show the object having a different form some hours later, due to the constant bombing. In the work of these "architects in war",

the traditional building form is missing, and geometry is replaced with asymmetry, imprecision and irregular forms. If we look at the difference between the wartime work of Sarajevo architects and that of Lebbeus Woods, we will find not only aesthetic differences in their drawings, but also different intentions and modes of production. Doršner's work focuses on the epistemic space formed during military destruction, and the corresponding non-violent civilian response through ephemeral reconstructions, without dramatic visual effects. Woods' work, on the other hand, includes the dramatic side of destruction, represented with colours and sharp forms. Woods attempts to re-design and control the image of destroyed buildings as a reminder of the physicality of the city, as produced by the bombing.

Perilous circumstances required that the architects in Sarajevo be fast observers, resulting in what can be termed as *instant observations* – temporary forms representing the physical instability of all structures at the time, different visual layers and complex representations of transitional architecture formed between the processes of destruction and reconstruction. As Bruno Latour writes in his text *Drawing Things Together*, 'Every time there is a dispute, great pains are taken to find, or sometimes to invent, a new instrument of visualisation, which will enhance the image, accelerate the readings'.<sup>45</sup> Ivan Štraus's act of writing a diary is also an act of mediation between architectural practice, military destruction and an architectural culture of reaction, by architects in a state of chaos.

In Sarajevo, architects were forced to transform their traditional role and become new actors, responding with flexible tools and methods. They engaged in re-drawing, extracting building materials and other objects from the ruins and city streets. They juxtaposed the real and the imagined while observing the process of undoing architecture and the city. Finally, by observing quotidian and transitional spaces, they gained insight on the relationship between military destruction and the non-violent civilian spatial reaction to the brutality of war. During our interview, Ivan Štraus argued that the architect should have been concerned with 'the present of the city', rather than with imagining what will be its future and how cities should look like.<sup>46</sup> City re-construction includes several parallel socio-spatial processes, and individual and collective experiences of the architectures of the city. Construction from pre-war periods, destruction caused by the war, and reconstruction organised after the war are processes related to the collective imaginary of formation and disappearance of the city. In Woods' *radical exercises* in Sarajevo in 1993, any attempt to propose 'design' on the destroyed buildings or parts of the city, while excluding the present situation of the military destruction and citizens' survival activities, remain in the traditional modernist architectural design practice. On the other hand, analysing works of architects Štraus and Doršner practices during the war, we can argue that the role of the architect living "in the war" changes every day, and their practices were more concerned with the material mediation between built and destroyed than about designing for the future. They were forced to change the role of the architect, but at the same time, they adapted and altered the architectural practices of single authorship. Through their work during the war, they went beyond architecture as a problem-solving discipline. They proposed critical documents and

approaches for site-specific and ephemeral architectural practices during and after the war in Sarajevo, providing examples that could inform any other context subject to war destruction, as well as the analytical and theoretical contemporary architectural discourse.

## Notes

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<sup>1</sup> ‘*Warchitecture*’, special edition of *ARH – Časopis Društva Arhitekata Sarajevo/Magazine of, Sarajevo Association of Architects*, focusing on war destruction of the city, *Sarajevo Association of Architects’ Special Issue*, 1993.

<sup>2</sup> Before the war many professional journals for architects, designers and engineers were published within the territory of former Yugoslavia. These included *ARH* in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and *Čovjek i prostor (ČIP) / Man and Space* in Croatia. Both *ARH* and *ČIP* published several issues even after the dissolution of Yugoslavia in 1991, providing an account of the war destruction. The 1991 issue of *ČIP* showed on the cover page the destruction of Eltz Castle (1749-1811) in Vukovar, one of the most war damaged cities in Croatia.

<sup>3</sup> The main purpose of the project was to re-examine the socialist architectural legacy of Yugoslavia, and to awaken the strong and productive connections that are ever present in the urban spaces of the former Socialist Federal Republic. The *Unfinished Modernisations* project was supported by the EU (Culture 2013), and was the work of several institutions: UGM/Maribor Art Gallery (Maribor), UHA/Croatian Architects’ Association (Zagreb), MAO/Museum of Architecture and Design (Ljubljana), DAB/Association of Belgrade Architects, KOR/Coalition for Sustainable Development (Skopje) and Oris, House of Architecture (Zagreb). The project connected fifty experts researching Yugoslav architectural and urban planning heritage. The project was shared with the public across the former Yugoslavia and internationally through the exhibition and publication entitled *Unfinished Modernisations/ Between Utopia and Pragmatism* (2012), curated and edited by Maroje Mrduljaš and Vladimir Kulić.

<sup>4</sup> Maroje Mrduljaš and Vladimir Kulić, *Unfinished Modernizations/ Between Utopia and Pragmatism* (Zagreb: Udruženje Hrvatskih Arhitekata/Croatian Architects’ Association, 2012).

<sup>5</sup> For more information on the TV series, see: <http://www.hulahop.hr/en/project/betonski-spavaci/> [accessed 05 January 2020 ].

<sup>6</sup> The exhibition *Toward a Concrete Utopia: Architecture in Yugoslavia 1948-1980*, organised by Martino Stierli, was held at the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) in New York from 15 July 2018 to 13 January 2019. For more information on the exhibition, see: <http://www.moma.org/calendar/exhibitions/3931> [accessed 05 January 2020 ].

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<sup>7</sup> For more information on the NATO bombing and Kosovo independence, see:

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2008\\_Kosovo\\_declaration\\_of\\_independence](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2008_Kosovo_declaration_of_independence) [accessed 05 January 2020].

<sup>8</sup> DAS stands for *Društvo arhitekata Sarajevo* – the Association of Architects Sarajevo.

<sup>9</sup> *LIFE* magazine was published only one time, and contained interviews of artists, architects, theatre actors and other intellectuals living in Sarajevo during the war (Sarajevo: FAMA Collection, 1993).

<sup>10</sup> Since 2012, I have conducted several interviews with Bosnian architects regarding their experience and engagement during the war and post-war reconstruction. They are: Vlasta Jelena Žuljić, Ivan Štraus, Nihad Čengić, Zoran Doršner, Dragica Doršner.

<sup>11</sup> *FAMA, Sarajevo Survival Guide*, ed. by Aleksandra Wagner and Maja Razovic, one of the projects of FAMA Collection on Siege of Sarajevo, author of the project: Suada Kapić (Croatia: Workman Publishing, 1993), p. 5. For more information on FAMA Collection, see:

<http://famacollection.org/eng/fama-collection/fama-original-projects/04/index.html> [accessed 05 January 2020].

<sup>12</sup> For more details on the destruction of the city, and on the urban and social resilience in Sarajevo during the war see: Armina Pilav, 'Before the War, War, After the War: Urban Imaginaries for Urban Resilience', *International Journal of Disaster Risk Science*, 3(1) (2012), p. 23-37.

<http://link.springer.com/content/pdf/10.1007/s13753-012-0004-4.pdf> [accessed 05 January 2020].

<sup>13</sup> *LIFE magazine*, (Sarajevo: FAMA Collection, 1993), p. 28.

<sup>14</sup> Sabahudin Špilja, 'Attempts at (War) Reading the Town', in *Warchitecture*, special edition of *ARH* magazine of architecture from Sarajevo focusing on war destruction of the city, *Sarajevo Association of Architects' Special Issue*, (1993), 20-23 (p. 23).

<sup>15</sup> *Warchitecture*, special edition of *ARH* magazine of architecture from Sarajevo focusing on war destruction of the city, *Sarajevo Association of Architects' Special Issue*, 1993.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>17</sup> More details about the exhibition are available at: <http://archpaper.com/2016/07/lebbeus-woods-zagreb-free-zone/#gallery-0-slide-0> [accessed 05 January 2020].

<sup>18</sup> Andrew Herscher, 'Wararchitecture Theory', *Journal of Architectural Education*, 61, 3, (2008), pp. 35-43.

<sup>19</sup> Andrew Herscher, 'Wararchitecture Theory', *Journal of Architectural Education*, 61, 3, (2008), pp. 35-43 (p.35).

<sup>20</sup> Recent publications on the topic include, among others, Giovanna Borasi, ed., *The Other Architect: Another Way of Building Architecture* (Montreal, Leipzig: CCA, Spektor Books, 2015) and Salomon Frausto, ed., *Lexicon No 1, On the Role of the Architect*. (TU Delft: The Berlage Center for Advanced Studies in Architecture and Urban Design, 2016).

<sup>21</sup> Urbanists, architects and students of architecture from Sarajevo who were working on their projects and studying during the war took part in this exhibition, which was organised by the Association of



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Architects Sarajevo. In February 1995, the exhibition *Sarajevo Dream and Reality* was set up at the gallery of Parsons School of Design in New York. It presented ‘14 projects by student architects and professionals from Sarajevo that respond creatively to the city’s destruction’, as Herbert Muschamp wrote in the text dedicated to the exhibition ‘Mourning the Gorgeous Mosaic That Was Sarajevo’, *New York Times*, 10 February 1995, p. 1. The exhibition, under the title ‘*Warchitecture—Sarajevo: A Wounded City*’, was originally made in 1994 by members of the Association of Architects Sarajevo and curated by Professor Rajka Mandić, and was displayed at Arc-en-Reve Centre d’Architecture in Bordeaux, the Centre Georges Pompidou in Paris in 1994, and at the gallery Storefront for Art and Architecture in New York in 1995.

<sup>22</sup> The film is based on the book of the same name by Robert Bevan ‘The Destruction of Memory’, published in 2007. The film was written, directed and produced by Tim Slade in 2016. For more on the film see: <http://destructionofmemoryfilm.com> [accessed 05 January 2020].

<sup>23</sup> Ivan Štraus, *Architect and Barbarians* (Sarajevo: Medjunarodni centar za mir / International Center for Peace, 1995).

<sup>24</sup> Štraus’s buildings in Sarajevo include the UNIS Towers (1986), the BH Electric Power Building (1978), the Holiday Inn Hotel (1983), the Olympic Press Centre in Bjelasnica (1983). During the war (1992-1996), all his buildings were partly damaged or completely destroyed.

<sup>25</sup> Ivan Štraus, *Architect and Barbarians*. (Sarajevo: Medjunarodni centar za mir / International Center for Peace, 1995), p. 5.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> Štraus devotes a few pages to the ‘Borba/Struggle’ award for the best architectural achievements in Yugoslavia, which changed its name and coverage as a result of the war in Croatia and the dissolution of the country. Until December 1991, it had been issued for twenty-six years by the Yugoslav Association of Architects for the best in Yugoslav architecture. In 1972, Štraus himself had received a Borba award for the highest achievement in Bosnia and Herzegovina for the *Sun* neighbourhood in Sarajevo.

<sup>28</sup> Here I am referring to Bogdan Bogdanović’s essays mentioning Vukovar, Dubrovnik, Sarajevo and Mostar collected in the book *Tri ratne knjige/ Three War Books* (Novi Sad: Mediterranean Publishing, 2008).

<sup>29</sup> A group of architects reacted to the destruction of the Croatian cities of Vukovar and Dubrovnik through public letters asking the Yugoslavian National Army to stop killing the people and destroying the city.

<sup>30</sup> Ivan Štraus, *Architect and Barbarians*. (Sarajevo: Medjunarodni centar za mir / International Center for Peace, 1995), p. 104.

<sup>31</sup> This quote is from the original document written by Zoran Doršner as explanation of his drawings entitled *Destructive Metamorphosis* and part of the exhibition *Sarajevo Dream and Reality* (translation by the author). All the documents were donated by Doršner to the @un-war

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space physical and digital archive created by the author. The contents of these documents or parts of them have never been published before.

<sup>32</sup> Here I refer to the influential text by Johan Wolfgang Goethe, *The Metamorphosis of Plants* (1790). In 2009 the book was published by MIT, with photographs by Gordon L. Miller and an introductory text on his work in relation to Goethe's text.

<sup>33</sup> Gordon L. Miller, *Metamorphosis of Plants*. (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2009), p. xix.

<sup>34</sup> The original Zoran Doršner document was part of the exhibition *Sarajevo Dream and Reality* (translation by the author). All the documents were donated by Doršner to the ©un-war space physical and digital archive created by the author. The contents of these documents or parts of them have never been published before.

<sup>35</sup> The exhibition was organised in April 1991 by the Croatian Association of Architects and its president at the time, Andrija Rusan.

<sup>36</sup> Lebbeus Woods' text on his visit to Sarajevo during the war can be read at the blog: <http://lebbeuswoods.wordpress.com/2008/02/06/the-reality-of-theory/> [accessed 07 January 2020].

<sup>37</sup> Excerpt from a conversation between Lebbeus Woods, Leo Modrčin, Ivan Rupnik, published as an interview in the Croatian magazine *Oris*, March 2001, pp. 22-42.

<sup>38</sup> Lebbeus Woods, *Pamphlet Architecture 15: War and Architecture*. (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1993), pp. 21-31.

<sup>39</sup> In 2014, I met with Ivan Štraus several times at his home, and interviewed him with the aim to learn more about his life as an architect during the war, and his contribution to the post-war reconstruction. We also visited the reconstructed building Elektroprivreda/ ElectricPower Building together.

<sup>40</sup> Electric Power Building.

<sup>41</sup> Lebbeus Woods, *Radical Reconstruction*. (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1997).

<sup>42</sup> For a detailed analysis of his engagement with Sarajevo architecture during the war, read the full article 'Elektroprivreda | reconstruction and "freespace"' by Lebbeus Woods on the blog: <http://dprbcn.wordpress.com/2009/11/23/electroprivreda-reconstruction-and-freespace-designed-by-lebbeus-woods/> [accessed 07 January 2020].

<sup>43</sup> Teresa Stoppani, 'The Architecture of the Disaster'. *Space and Culture*, 2(15), (2012), pp. 135–150.

<sup>44</sup> Camillo Boano, 'Disruptive Design: On Design Gestures, Breathing and Non-Doing'. Guest editor Isabelle Doucet in conversation with Camilo Boano, London, May 2016. *Candide Magazine* 10+11. December 2016, pp. 114-115.

<sup>45</sup> Bruno Latour, 'Drawing Things Together', in (editor), *Knowledge and Society Studies in the Sociology of Culture Past and Present*, ed. by Kuklick. H. (1986), p. 17.

<sup>46</sup> Here I am referring to my 2014 interviews with Ivan Štraus, mentioned above.