



RE-CONNECTING MOSTAR

Rethinking the East-West Axis by using the
Neretva's water as natural catalyser

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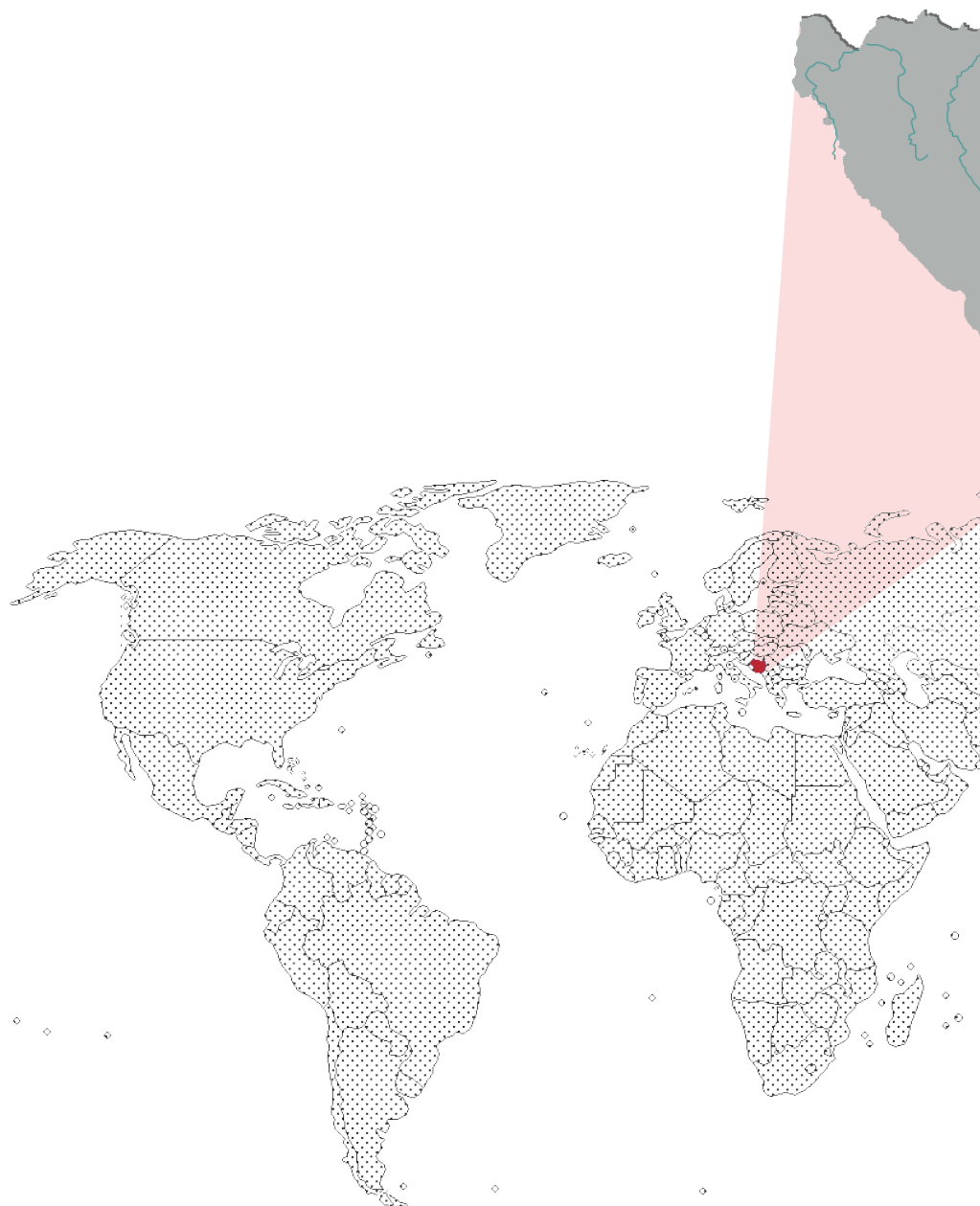
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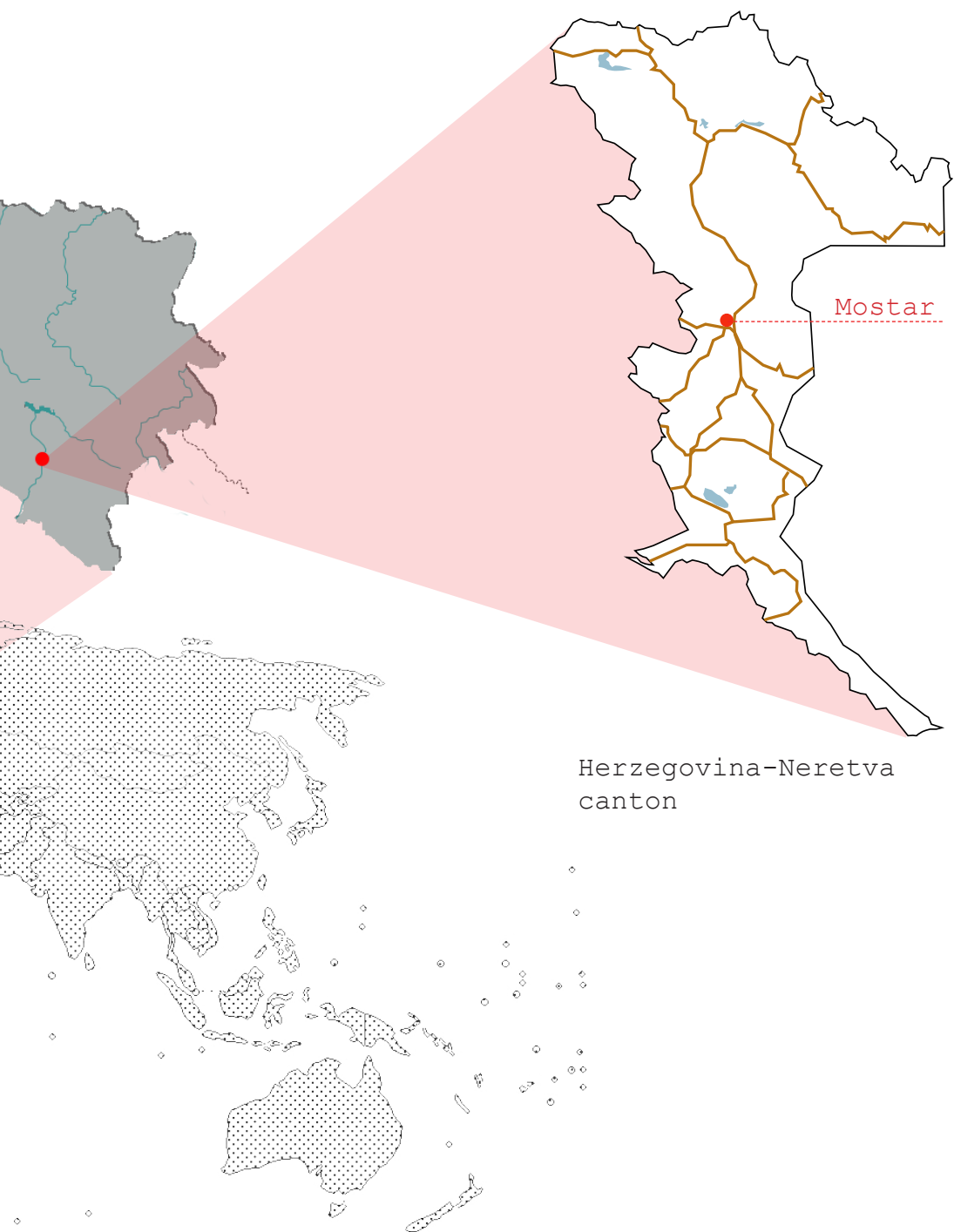
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INTRODUCTION

1 Site location

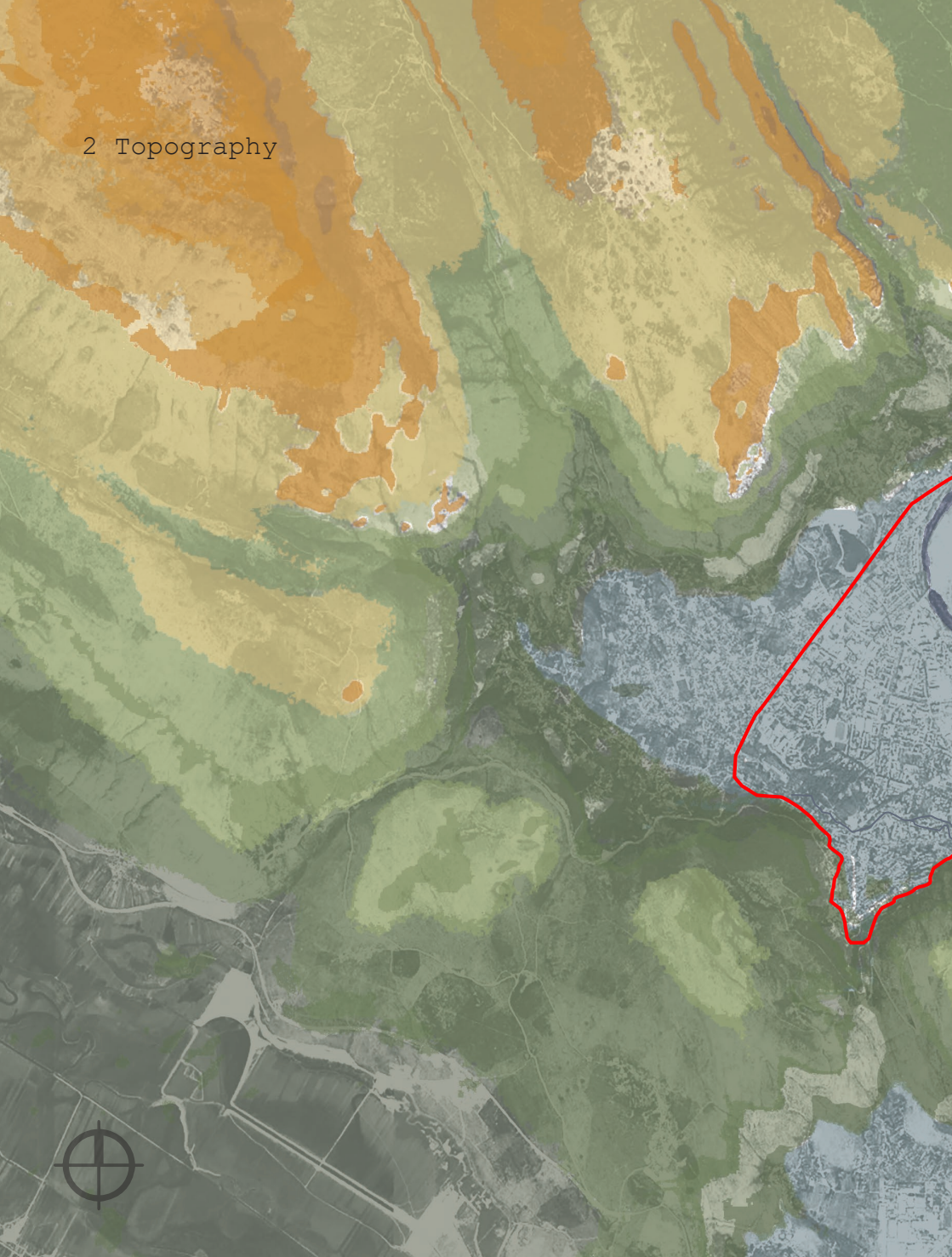
Bosnia-Herzegovina

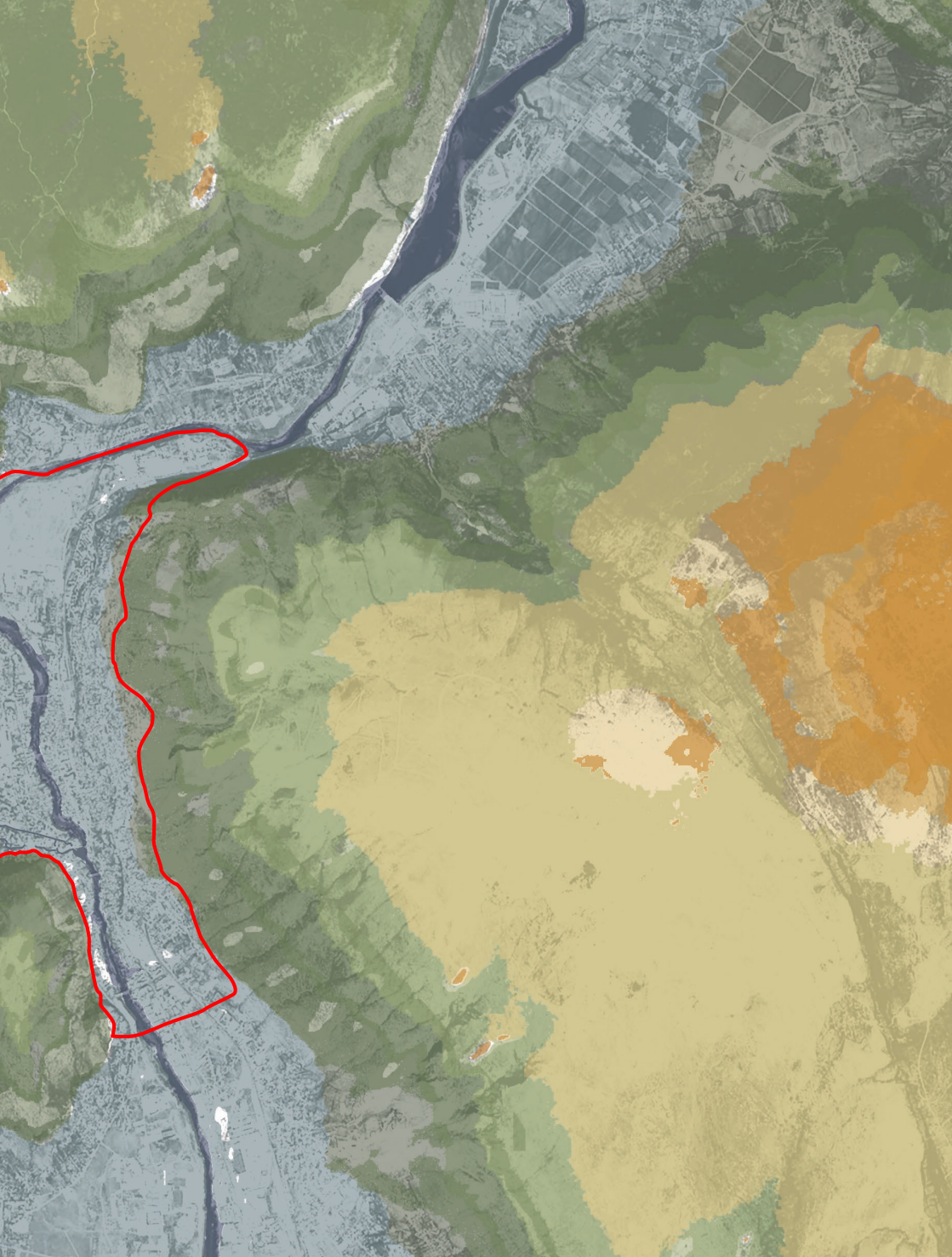




Herzegovina-Neretva
canton

2 Topography





3 Fascination

The city of Mostar in Bosnia-Herzegovina was the site of a bloody civil war between 1992 and 1994; this tragedy has caused extensive destruction of the urban area. The subsequent reconstruction took place without taking into account his past and above all his shared memory; the result was a cultural and social division between the Croatian and Bosnian communities that is clearly visible in the spatial division of the city.

It is precisely this discontinuation of memory and space that fascinated me and led me to choose Mostar as the subject of my Landscape Architecture thesis.

Currently Mostar is known as "the divided city", "the city of hatred", "the city without reconciliation"; these nicknames have been given to her by several scholars, journalists, political scientists who have always focused their reports on post-war problems that unquestionably remain, without considering the complex situation of the city. The final verdict was always pessimistic, condemning the city to an irremediable and unsolvable destiny, that is a city divided into two parts, East Mostar and West Mostar (Cateux A, 2017).

Surely the reconstruction took place according to an ethnic-based modality; in the western part of Mostar, street names referring to the socialist era have been replaced by Croatian heroes or warriors, while in East Mostar governors or protagonists of the Ottoman period have re-named several streets (Makcic A, 2016, pp 117).

A typical example is shown in Figure 1 where a street in West Mostar was newly named after a catholic priest born in 1871 "replacing" a street name honoring Yugoslavian Partisans.



Figure 1

Source: *The political life of urban streetscapes. Naming, Politics, and Place.* Edited by R. Rose-Redwood, D. Alderman, M. Azaryahu. Routledge, London and New York, 2018

To affirm religious or cultural identities, damaged buildings of religious or ethnic meaning were promptly rebuilt in East Mostar (Figure 2) or “de novo” built as shown in Figure 3 with the picture of Saint Peter and Paul Franciscan Church in the West part of the city.



Figure 2
photo by the author



Figure 3
photo by the author

According to some scholars, the spatial division undoubtedly reflects the ethnic and religious divisions. However, recent studies (Cateux A., 2017) (Ciardha EO & Vojvoda G, 2015, pp 120) reported the presence of stereotypes in many articles aimed to evaluate the city, in particular those that describe it inhabited by two hostile communities that live physically and culturally separate. Interviews with Mostarci belonging to different ethnic groups allowed to identify, in many of them, opinions and behaviors very different from those described by articles and books. In other words, - especially in the new generations - a subtle but progressive dichotomy between political positions and ordinary people's feelings is recognizable and it is exactly what I have perceived thanks to my interviews performed during my site visit in Mostar in October 2018. In most of the people I met, I found no cultural or religious prejudices against persons belonging to different ethnic groups; however, a serious problem reported by the vast majority of Mostarci I have talked to was the absence of a common, shared social area which - in the pre-war era - was constituted by the corridor connecting East to West Mostar. This axis starts at Musala Square and following the Korzo reaches the Old HIT Square; from there, it continues up to Rondo through Promenade Lenin.

The current situation of this corridor is challenging for a landscape architect. Despite a partial reconstruction of some areas, its past social function has disappeared due to presence of war ruins and void spaces; the absence of this social and cultural bridge between the two parts of the city has led the inhabitants to identify areas of socialization in other spots, worsening the urban streetscapes discontinuation.

Situation of of Musala Square-Rondo axis before the war:

W
E
S
T



The scenographic square in front of the old Hit Department store (1976). It was located at the beginning of the street Korzo and was an important gathering point.

Source: http://www.cidom.org/?page_id=256



This street was called "Korzo", which means 'promenade' and was the main axis connecting the eastern and western side of Mostar through the Tito bridge.

Source: http://www.cidom.org/?page_id=256

E
A
S
T



Razvitak Department Store, located at the end of the Korzo on the east side of the city.

Source: http://www.cidom.org/?page_id=256

Situation of Musala Square-Rondo axis after the war:

W
E
S
T



HIT Department store
after the war

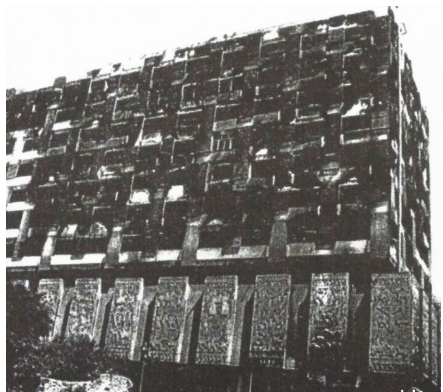
Source: www.cidom.org



The Korzo after the war

Source: www.cidom.org

E
A
S
T



Razvitak Department Store
after the war

Source: www.cidom.org

4 Problem statement

What is a street?

According to the Oxford dictionary a street is defined as "*a public road in a city, town or village, typically with houses and buildings on one or both sides*" ("Oxford Dictionaries", n.d.).

However, what the dictionary doesn't mention is that the streets are used by people, who become the main actors inside those linear public spaces of daily life.

This concept was well known by Mostarci (Mostar inhabitants), however during the war (1992-1994), the streets in Mostar became dangerous areas of shootings and bombings, as shown in Figure 4 where a man is sitting on a street hidden by a long curtain, used to protect people against shootings. People used the streets as corridors to obtain food and water and to visit relatives and friends (Figure 5). This was a normal use actually only in an unusual timeframe; moreover, for safety reasons, they were used mainly during the night. For this reason, the war transformed these linear spaces of socialisation in corridors of terror avoided by Mostarci during daytime.



Figure 4

Source:

http://www.cidom.org/?page_id=258

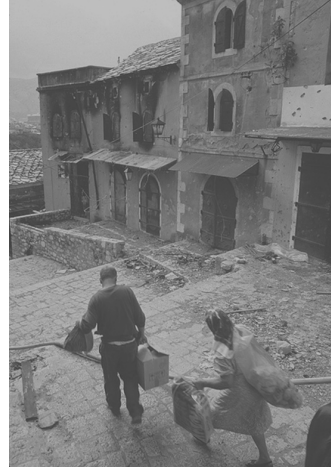


Figure 5

Source:

http://www.cidom.org/?page_id=258

In my research on the past uses, I was looking at how the streets were used before the war and what was their meaning for the Mostarci.

Apparently, streets in Mostar served as ways of communication and movement as well as every street in the world; people have many different reasons for moving. The most common reasons have to do with working and relational activities, shopping, leisure, cultural events, meetings.

However, before the war, the streets of Mostar represented something more: the possibility of a peaceful multiculturalism. In fact, they connected different districts with a total freedom of movement for each Mostar inhabitant, for Muslims, Catholics or Orthodoxies, Bosnians, Croatians or Serbs.

After the war, with the Dayton peace agreement, Mostar was divided into six municipalities, three prevalently composed by Bosnians and three by Croatian population, until 2004.

Unfortunately, the two ethnic groups did not cooperate and therefore there were two parallel reconstruction plans often in conflict with each other.

Since 2004, the six municipalities were abolished in order to induce a more democratic system of governance but this system of shared power was not successful. This disagreement has mainly involved the city's area crossed by the previous frontline, the so-called "Central Zone". In this area, reconstruction has been particularly slow and it is still incomplete, heavily influencing the social life which - on the contrary - was particularly intense and vibrant prior to the war.

One suggestive example are the streets composing the axis which connects East Mostar with West Mostar and crosses the Central Zone: this axis starts at **Musala Square** (East Mostar) and follows **the Korzo**, reaches **the Bulevar** which crosses the city from north to south and was the frontline during the war; from the Bulevar, the axis continues up to **Rondo** (West Mostar) through Promenade Lenin. I prefer to use the old socialist names of Rondo and Promenade Lenin because Mostarci still address these streets with socialist names rather than the new post-war denominations (Carabelli G, 2018). Mostarci loved walking along these streets which cross the whole city along the Tito bridge. It was an important meeting point, used both by Croatians and Bosnians, that is by Mostarci.

Central Zone



Pedestrian street



Driveway



Main streets crossing the Axis



Former Frontline

Hrvatski Dom
Herceg Stjepan
Kosača

Croatian Theater

Hotel Neretva

Main buildings
along the Axis

Veliki park

Old HIT
Square

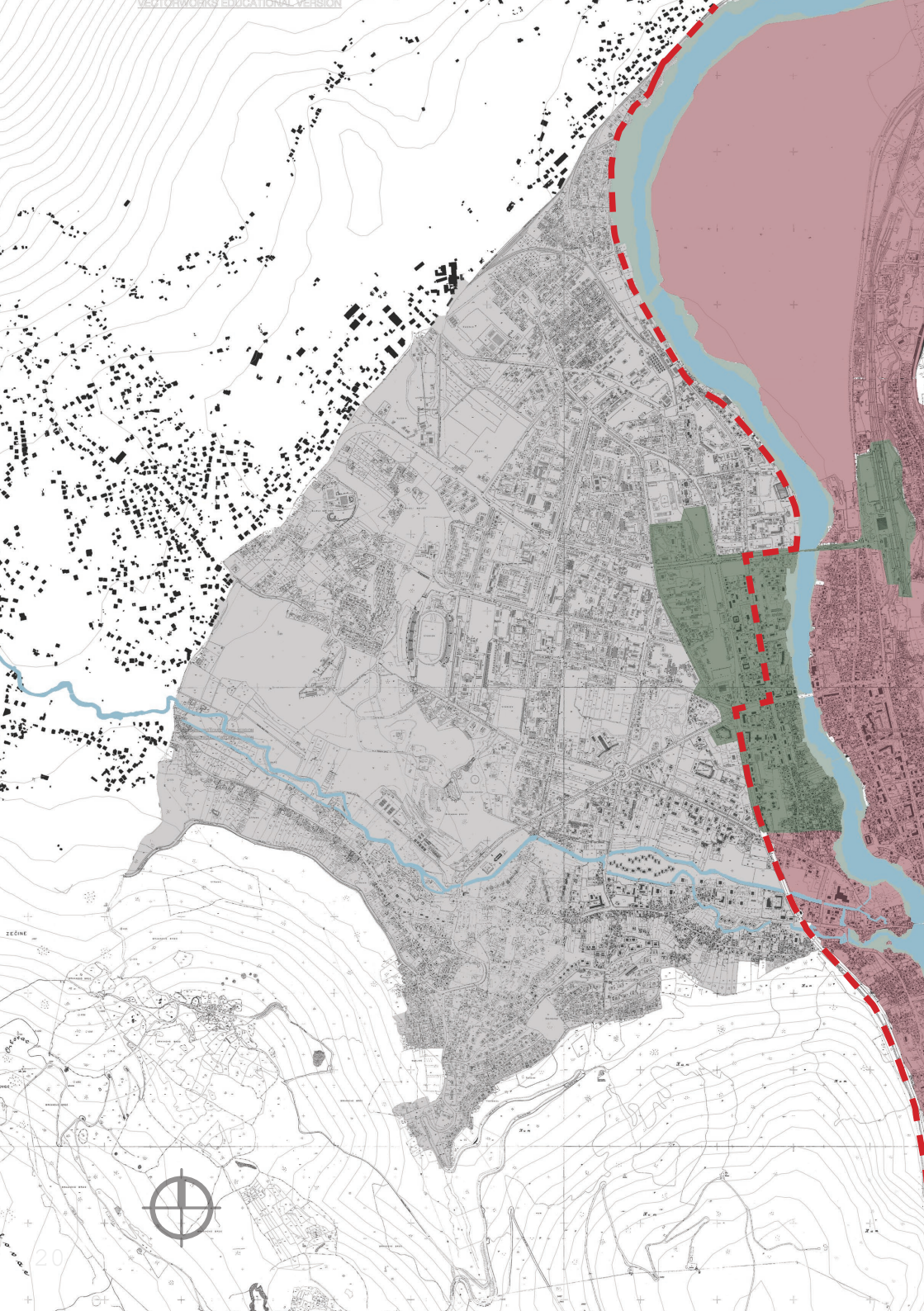
Promenade Lenin

Rondo



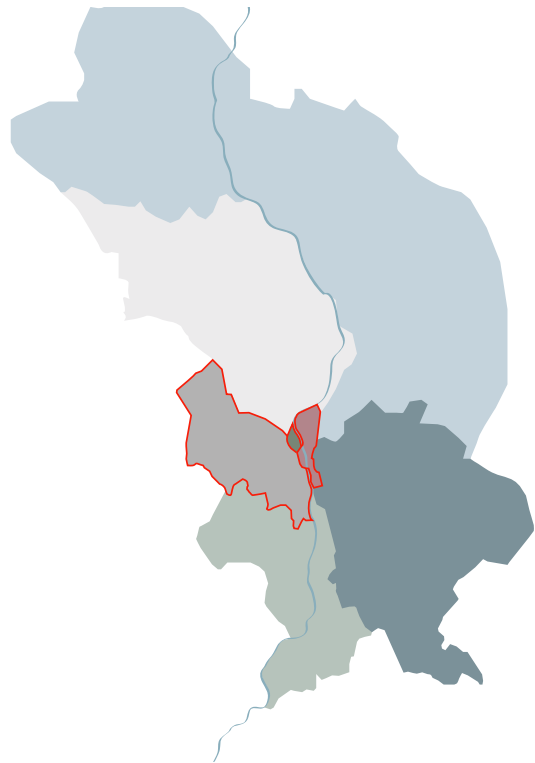
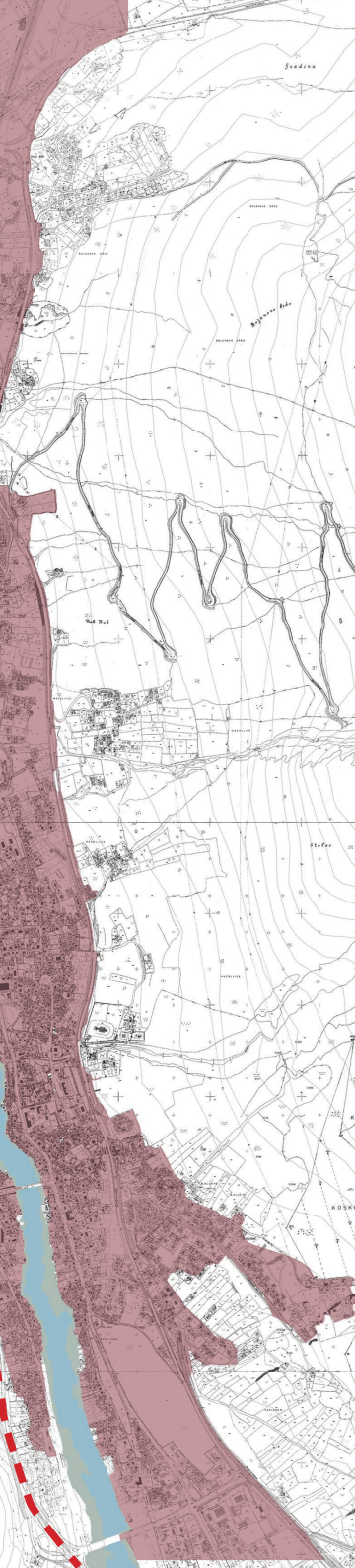
Streets forming the East-West Axis





City of Mostar division from 1996 until 2004

-  Bosnian side
-  Croatian side
-  Central Zone
-  Former Frontline



Map of Mostar showing the six administrative municipalities + one Central Zone.



City of Mostar today



Former Central Zone



Ruins



Leftover spaces



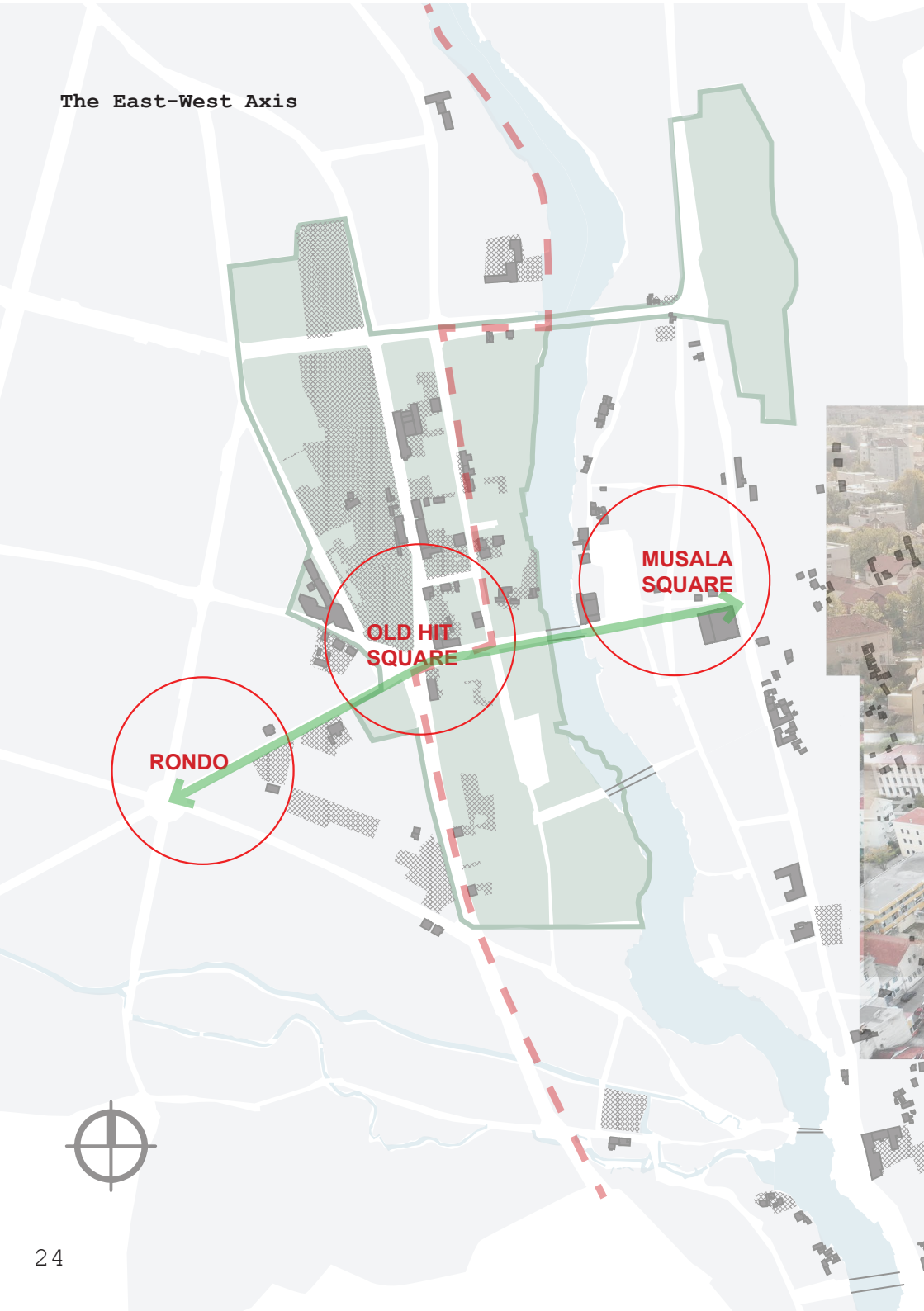
Former frontline



East-West axis



The East-West Axis



Nowadays the signs of the war are still visible in many streets and also the axis connecting the western part to the eastern part of the town has been marked in different spots by the injuries of the war, such as ruined buildings or shooting signs on the walls. This axis seems to be partially activated thanks to the reconstruction of promenade Lenin by the Mostar 2024 European Cultural Capital Team but a lot of ruins and leftover spaces are still visible, enhancing this fragmented urban pattern.



Nowadays the people in Mostar seem - apparently - to have found their own social corridor , but along streets that are not crossing the river anymore. It looks like as the frontline in Mostar has defined an invisible path that people prefer not to cross. This is mainly because people can't read the city anymore and identify in it due to discontinued streetscapes of the main axis connecting West to East Mostar.

Also, the frontline is nowadays part of the Bulevar, which is a highline traffic street and in this sense still represents a physical barrier between East and West side (Figure 6).



Figure 6

Photo by the author

In conclusion streets represent a fundamental element of the city, not just because of their function of connecting different parts of the city but because they are one of the main owners of Mostar memory that need to be improved in order to rescue the sense of unity lost during the war.

5 Research Objective:

To reactivate and restore the Axis Rondo-Old HIT Square-Musala Square in order to create a social, ecological and spatial connection between east and west Mostar by a landscape architecture approach.

My project started by analysing this particular section of the town: the **axis Rondo-Old HIT Square and Musala Square**.

According to interviews performed with Mostar inhabitants during the site visit, this axis was formed by streets connecting Mostar citizens to each other; many of the interviewed residents acknowledged that before the war not everything was idyllic regarding the inter-ethnic social life but, according to them, interaction - especially among young people - was much more present than today.

How this axis has changed after the war? And how the streets that once were the main social and gathering points along this axis representing the principal memories owners of Mostar, are now the main leftover spaces?

During the years after the war until today Mostar became an experimental laboratory for artists from all over the world who adopted the art as a way to give a new image of the city and possible future solutions for the several ruins and leftover spaces.

Some of these artworks have been really criticized by the community while others became part of the cityscape such as the several graffiti spread around the war ruins, drawn by international artists in occasion of the annual Mostar Street Art Festival.

One of the most important projects performed in the axis Rondo-Old HIT Square-Musala Square was "Recollecting Mostar" by Abart. About 30 people were actively involved in collecting archive material. However, it was mainly an art focused project, thus the subsequent evaluation of its success and impact on the community was questionable.

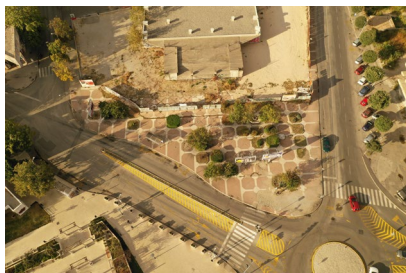
Surely, all these interventions represented a useful stimulus for the community to rethink and redesign the city but due to the transitory nature of the events, they did not significantly influence the discontinued landscape of the Axis.

For this reason an intervention from an urban and landscape point of view appears necessary.

Thus, considering the axis Rondo-Old HIT Square-Musala Square as the case study of my research, **what are the design strategies and the resulting principles that can be adopted to reactivate this axis as a social corridor?**

To reach my research objective, **which are the possible design interventions?**

Finally, should these interventions merge into one unique design or should they remain separate along the axis?



Square in front of the area where there was the old Hit Department Store. Today it is completely abandoned

Photo by the author



Musala Square today, used as a parking area and almost abandoned

Photo by the author



Terraces gardens today: ruins and vegetation overgrowth

Photo by the author

6 Methodology

1. Historical and social analysis

As the structure of the questions indicates, the research thesis derives from several readings of historical books of the site in order to understand the most crucial elements of Mostar memory. In particular three books were the key elements helping me in my research:

a. **"The Divided City and the Grassroots: The (Un) making of Ethnic Divisions in Mostar"** by Giulia Carabelli, which accurately describes the past and current social feature of Mostar, focusing on the East- West axis

b. **"Mortal cities - forgotten monuments"** by A. Mackic, which enabled me to understand the pre-war social life of Mostar and its relationship with streets and squares of the axis.

c. **"Our side, their side and all those places in-between: neutrality and place in a divided city"** by A. Aceska: an acute, update, on-site analysis of the current situation of the Central Zone of Mostar, helpful to individuate stereotypes and real problems regarding the spatial and mental division of the city.

2. Field research and diary

During my site visit in October 2018, I had the opportunity to observe and analyze several sites of interest, walking not just along the main streets but also through the not-named streets reaching the Neretva River. Methods I have adopted to record my impressions and to deeply analyze the areas of interest were:

2a. Writing of the research diary

I used a memory diary where I have collected first impressions of the sites, brief but meaningful stories told by natives, sketches of specific spots of the city in different hours of the day. What has particularly impressed me was the visit to the Partisans' Cemetery (Sketch 1) and to the War Museum (Sketch 2) where I could observe simple ordinary objects during the war and papers written by visitors. Details of Spanish Square where the Front line passed during the war are reported in Sketch 3 and 4, while the current situation under the Stari Most and Tito Bridge is described in Sketch 5 (stones of the Old Stari Most used as memory elements and seats for people) and Sketch 6 (difficult walking along the riverbanks due to ruins and vegetation overgrowth). Finally, my personal view of the Korzo is shown in sketch 7.

Visit to the Portisan Cemetery

-
- A hand-drawn sketch of a street scene. In the foreground, a street with a railing runs from the bottom left towards the center. Several figures are walking along the street. To the right, there is a building with a large window and a doorway. Above the street, a large, irregular shape resembling a puzzle piece is drawn, with the text 'Sapın mehmed' and '1922 Master 1942' inside it. To the left of this shape, a list of characteristics is written: 'Silence', 'High position', 'View of the city', 'Crested', 'Wide', and 'Promenading'. Above the puzzle piece, a long, winding shape resembling a cake is drawn, with a small figure of a person sitting on it. To the right of the puzzle piece, the text 'puzzle shaped shoes. There bird is Baskin?' is written. The drawing is done in a simple, sketchy style with lines and some shading.

21.10.18

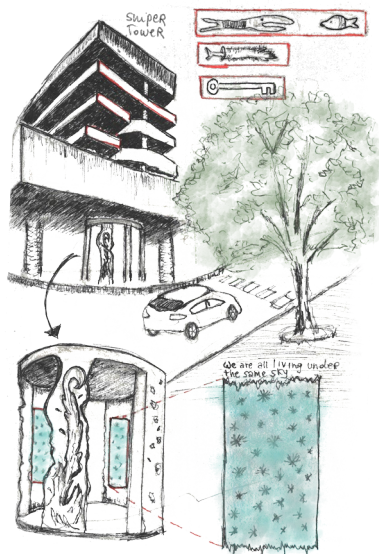
At the end of the tour there was a wall with ~~pos~~ made of post it with sentences in different ~~po~~ languages



24.10.18

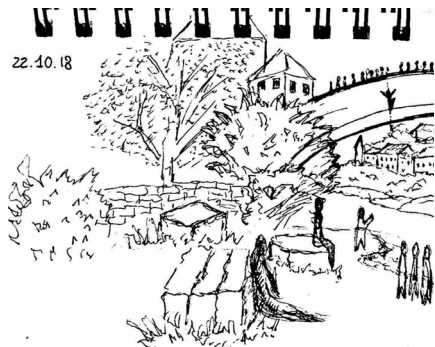
Sporth Square

Sketch 3



31

22.10.18



Under the Stari Most
it is possible to see the stones of the old bridge,
when it was destroyed by the Croation Army.
Today those stones are part of the landscape and
they are used as sites to relax and watch people
jumping from the bridge.

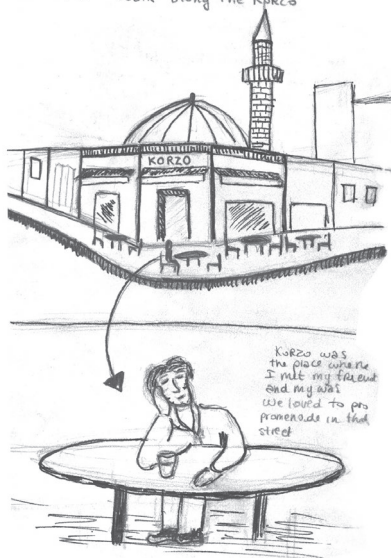
sketch 5

25.10.18 River Walk (under Lito bridge)



sketch 6

26.10.18 Walk along the Korzo

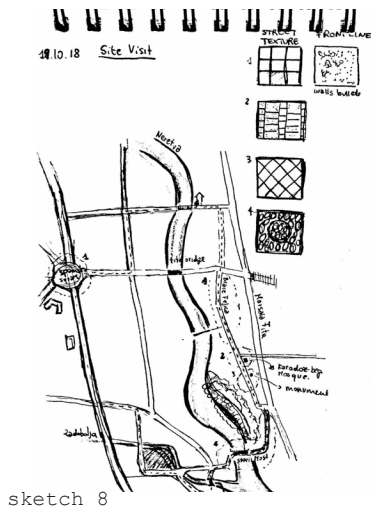


Korzo was
the place where
I put my head
and my feet.
We loved to pro
promenade in that
street

sketch 7

2b. Mapping

Initially, I have performed a hand-made map of the so-called "central area" (Sketch 8). Subsequently, I tried to map different layers of the sites on different scale.



2c. Drone filming

The possibility to take aerial videos and pictures with a drone was really helpful to have a more extensive analysis about how the streets network is related or in many cases not related with the Neretva River. Moreover I had a global view of all the ruins and leftover spaces caused by the war, almost impossible to identify, just walking in the streets.

2d. Interviews and audio recording

During the site visit, the analysis was completed by a combination of several interviews to local inhabitants, data collection through actual and historical pictures provided by the city archive, videos and sound recordings.

3. Modelling

In a second phase the analysis was deepened through the creation of spatial models of the site in order to understand the relation between the built and unbuilt environment, the ruins and leftover spaces.

After having classified the spatial qualities of those spaces, I have made experimental design models where I applied some simple principles taken from the urban acupuncture theory, in order to see if those principles could work on my site. These experiments were the starting phase to create my initial design scenarios.

4. Interactive workshop

The aim of my second site visit in Mostar in March 2019 was to define my final design by the realization of a workshop in Mostar with locals. Different games were played with them in order to understand which kind of feelings and memories specific sites provoke them.

The choice of using old photographs and graphic material as mean of communication was really useful: working with old images is a good strategy to awaken lost memories of the older generations and instill a sense of curiosity in the younger ones..

Eventually, the citizens were asked to give new insights of these spots, according to their memories or their "dreams" for the site. This group project, performed with people who lived in the city in different periods, represented a good opportunity to understand how specific streets, neighborhoods, squares of the city were perceived by people immediately after the war and what they mean now for the new generation.

2 Workshop in Mostar: Recollecting
memories of the East-West Axis

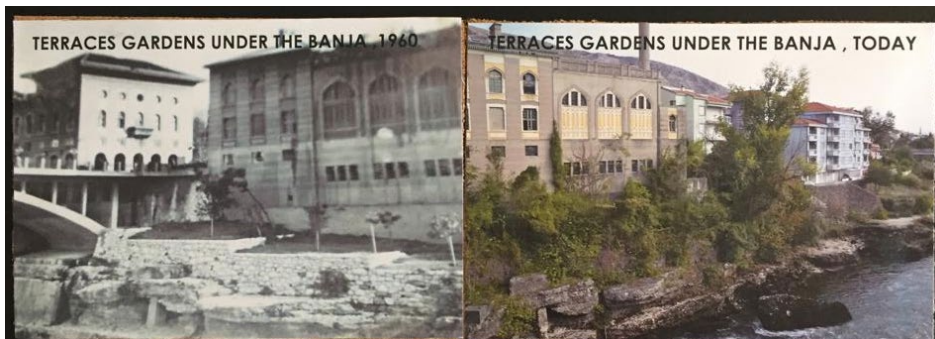
Participant: 32
Age range: 20-40



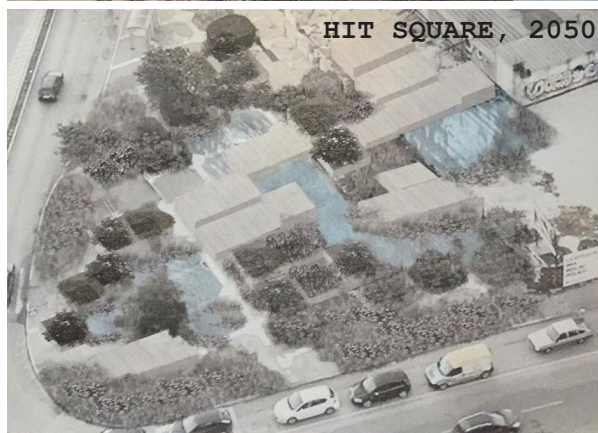
Experiment rules

Part 1: you will see old and current pictures of three different spots in the city:

- 1) Musala Park
- 2) terraces gardens under the Tito Bridge
- 3) the HIT Square

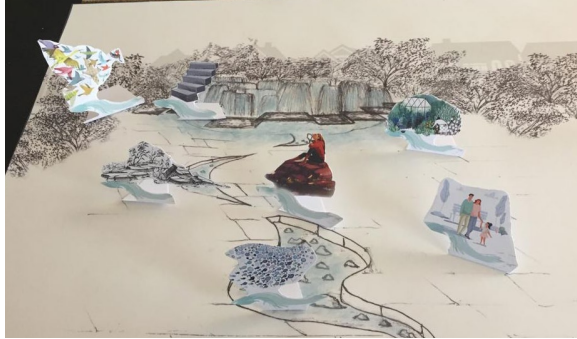


Part 2: Under each image you will see a new scenario proposal for each site. There will be a common element in each scenario: The **water** taken from **the Neretva river**



Part 5: Then fill the three scenarios with some of those elements according to your feelings, memories and possible desires for those spaces.

MUSALA PARK SCENARIO EXAMPLE



TERRACES UNDER THE BANJA SCENARIO EXAMPLE



HIT SQUARE SCENARIO EXAMPLE





GROUP





WORK



7 Scope and relevance

Despite its recent reconstruction, Mostar is still a city traumatized by the war. The ruins and leftover spaces spread around the city represent a fresh memory for the inhabitants who lived during the war but also for the new generations.

However, the reason why those areas are still avoided by the community is because there are no inputs to improve them or to create the conditions for the inhabitants to gather around, along and inside those spaces, that are becoming day by day urban voids used as parking places or as rubbish dumps.

In particular, one of the most problematic areas is represented by the axis Rondo-Old HIT Square-Musala Square, which was, before the war, the main social corridor connecting East with West Mostar.

For this reason, **the scope of my thesis will be to identify those spaces that, after the war, have shifted their social meaning, from important gathering areas to urban voids in order to activate them again, being respectful of their previous meaning.**

8. Reading itinerary

The introductory part of my thesis (Introduction) deals with the choice of the place, its topography and why the chosen city fascinated me, what are its problems and its needs that can be faced in terms of landscape architecture. Individuation of a particular part of the city, the so-called East-West axis, is a fundamental step in the thesis because this area has always represented the beating heart of the social and cultural life of Mostar and - currently - due to the post-war wounds, it is an abandoned space.

Subsequently, once the research objectives were identified, my thesis describes (Methodology) the means adopted to analyze the problem.

The second chapter of the thesis focuses on the theoretical framework, that is the theoretical background adopted to solve the problem of the fragmented streetscape of this part of Mostar. In the third chapter (Site analysis), the thesis identifies 3 particularly meaningful sites of the axis and analyzes their pre-war and current situations.

The fourth (Design strategy) and fifth (Design principles) chapter deal with the design strategy and design principles used to revitalize the east-west axis from a landscape architecture point of view.

In the sixth chapter (Design) the proposals and the masterplan to revitalize the area are reported, all based on a single thread that is the use of Neretva water as a unifying symbolic element. In particular, the contribution given by the population of Mostar or -in any case - by a significant part of it in the final design set-up is highlighted.

Conclusions and Reflections are the final chapters of the thesis.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

1 Streetscapes: an overview

1.1 Meaning of urban streetscapes

Streetscape is "the view or scene of streets" (Davis CJ., 2018 , pp 6)

Streetscape is composed by several elements: streets, roads, squares are obviously crucial but they are insufficient if not accompanied by buildings, sidewalks, streetlights, trees, benches, fountains and public street arts.

The harmonious mixture of these components allows the creation of an open linear space that should be interpreted by people as a meeting place, an entertainment spot, a relax site and not just as a mere communication route.

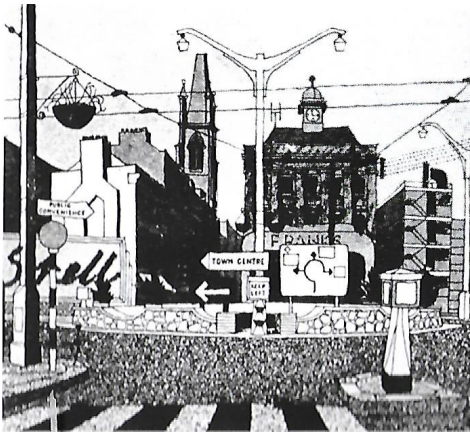
In a divided city, the streetscapes are fundamental because they evoke the memory of a shared past when the way of socializing of the Mostarci was mainly based upon specific roads considered meeting areas.

For this reason, the success of a site depends on the people who make it alive and vital; people become part of the streetscape just interacting with it.

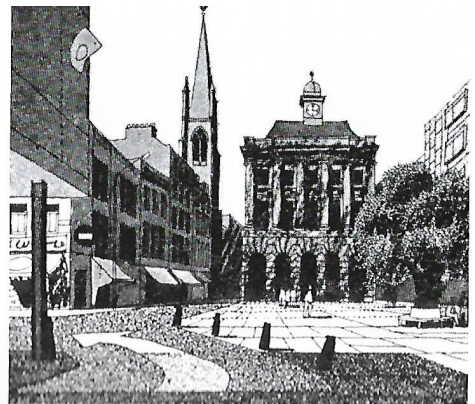
1.2 Streetscape as a public realm

The concept of streetscapes as a "public realm" was developed by Gordon Cullen (Nairn I., 1957) in the fifties. What is a "public realm" ? It's what we all can share: the open park, the tree-lined road, the pedestrian square, the sunny quiet corner. Cullen was concerned with renewing post-war urban scenarios by adopting the point of view of a static and moving observer. He drew several sketches of urban street scenes, explaining how it would improve their visual impact.

Linked to the theme of sight, it emphasized that to increase the impression of those who look at a particular place it was necessary to study carefully the materials that compose it: roads, trees, sidewalks, walls, lighting, advertising. Important is the floorscape (a neologism created by Cullen like so many words in the expedient book used to demonstrate the novelty of this art form) that is the landscape from the pavement as a privileged place from the perception of the urban community. In addition, he proposed high population density as a remedy for sprawl, so that the high concentration of inhabitants put citizens back in motion and no longer the isolationist character that is created in the New Towns.



" Typical urban street of the 1950s: semi derelict buildings, sign clutter and over-elaborate traffic arrangements" (Davis CJ., 2018)



"The same street: repaired buildings, revised traffic systems and a new public space" (Davis CJ., 2018)

Sixty years later Colin J. Davis in his book "Streetscapes" (Davis CJ., 2018, pp 9) takes up Cullen's work introducing some indispensable concepts in the improving street design. According to him, there are five key design objectives that should be met to obtain a successful streetscape: 1) attractive places 2) efficient movement 3) road safety 4) user-friendly design 5) commercial usability

The combination of beauty and efficiency coming out from these objectives is intriguing because poses as main protagonist of a successful streetscape the people. If a place is not attractive, does not allow people to move easily and safely and does not provide leisure (shopping, meeting, fun, relax), will inevitably be little visited and disattended.

In other words, to improve a streetscape, people cannot be ignored; on the contrary, they should be considered the main protagonists of streetscapes

Considering Mostar, one more point should be taken into account if we want citizens to be encouraged to go to a particular place: the new streetscape has not to show evident or subliminal symbols evoking past painful memories but possibly clear and shared unifying elements.

FIELD RESEARCH

Site analysis

1 Urban streetscapes of Mostar

1.1 The social use of Mostar streets between 1468 and 1992

According to the architect Senada Demirovic (Demirovic S. 2003, pp 2-5), Mostar experienced two main urban planning periods during the Ottoman and Austro-Hungarian Empire; the current urban landscape of Mostar has been greatly influenced by these historical periods . The city was governed by the Ottomans for about 4 centuries (1468-1878): they developed long narrow streets which crossed Mostar from north to south. Short streets named sokaks connected the principal streets with the housing blocks (mahalas) which were autonomous residential areas provided with a mosque, a high school (medresa), an inn and a public kitchen (imaret). In order to protect the family's privacy, the mahala was surrounded by high walls. Thus, streets were considered just as communication ways while the social life was held inside the mahalas or in the mosques. To enhance this concept, the facades of the ground-floors had no windows; on the other hand, protruding bow windows were present at the first floor to provide an optimal view of the minaret (ICOMOS, 2005).

OTTOMAN PERIOD

- Ottoman settlement
- Mahalas
- Neretva River





Typical Ottoman street
Sketch by the author



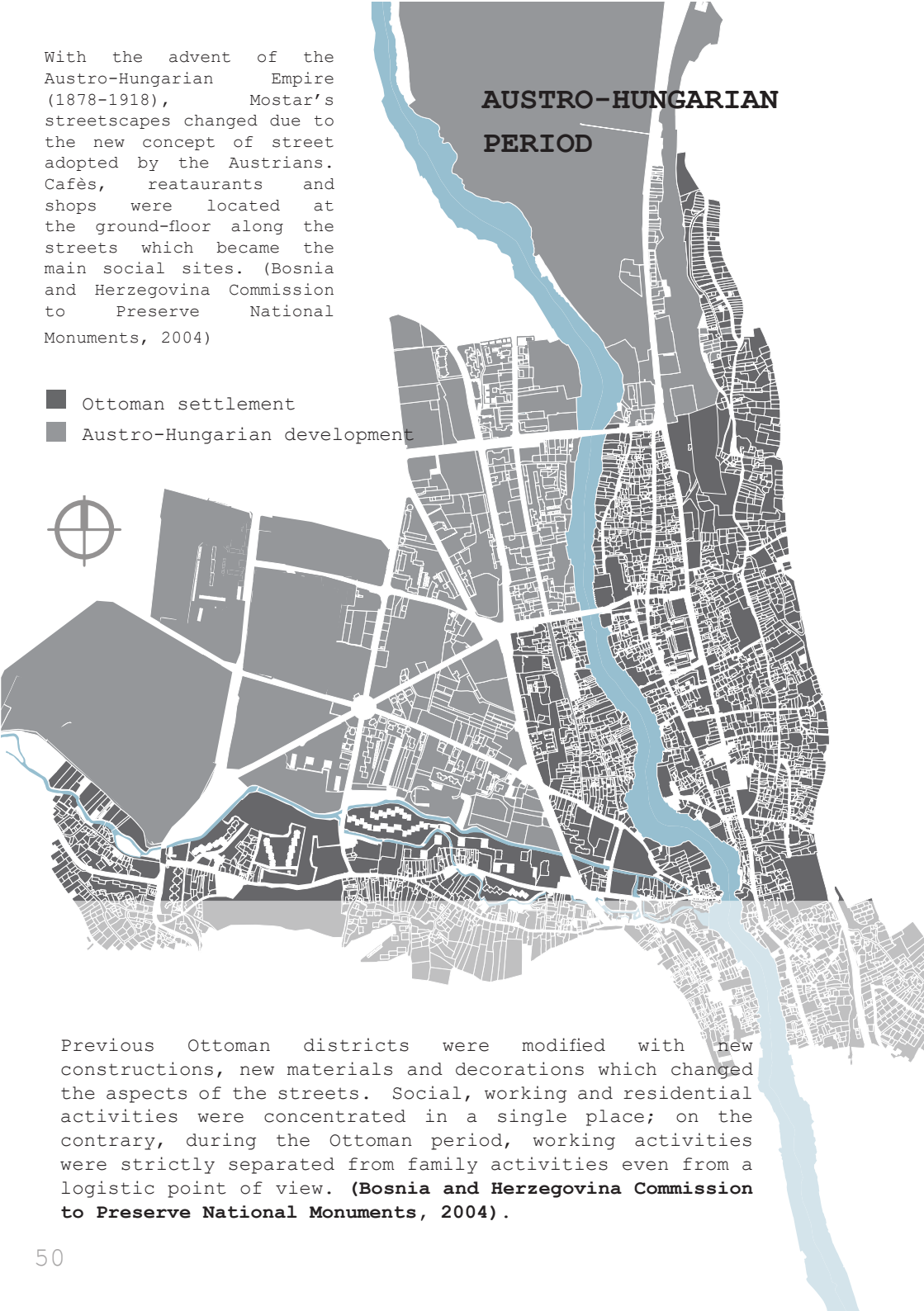
View of Fejicéva street in 1916. In forefront is visible a typical Ottoman house with projecting bay windows on the first floor to have a view of the minaret. No commercial facilities on the groundfloor.

Source: http://www.cidam.org/?page_id=245

With the advent of the Austro-Hungarian Empire (1878-1918), Mostar's streetscapes changed due to the new concept of street adopted by the Austrians. Cafés, restaurants and shops were located at the ground-floor along the streets which became the main social sites. (Bosnia and Herzegovina Commission to Preserve National Monuments, 2004)

AUSTRO-HUNGARIAN PERIOD

- Ottoman settlement
- Austro-Hungarian development



Previous Ottoman districts were modified with new constructions, new materials and decorations which changed the aspects of the streets. Social, working and residential activities were concentrated in a single place; on the contrary, during the Ottoman period, working activities were strictly separated from family activities even from a logistic point of view. (Bosnia and Herzegovina Commission to Preserve National Monuments, 2004).



Street groundfloors transformation during the Austro-Hungarian dominion

Sketch by the author



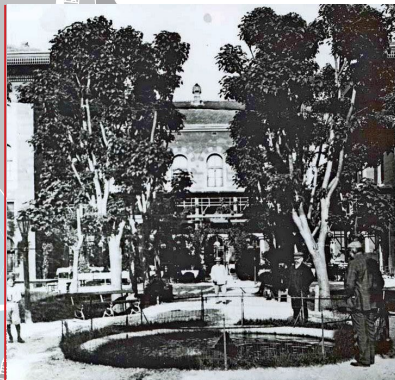
Famous Austro-Hungarian café "Café Willomitzer" built at the groundfloor of the previous "Vakuf Palace".

source: http://www.cidam.org/?page_id=245

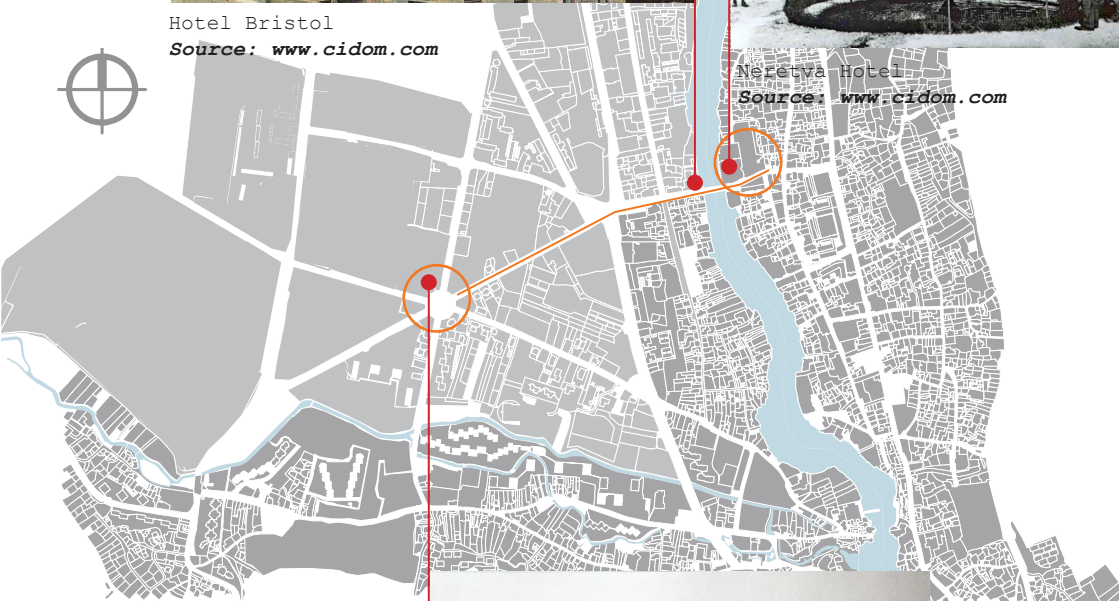
Austro-Hungarian period (1878-1918): the new social axis connecting east and west Mostar



Hotel Bristol
Source: www.cidom.com



Neretva Hotel
Source: www.cidom.com



Square in front of Rondo
Source: www.cidom.com



The iron bridge built under the Austro-Hungarian in 1888, which connected Musala neighborhood with the West side of the city.

Source: www.cidom.org



View of the Iron bridge and Hotel Neretva during the Austro-Hungarian period.

Source: www.cidom.org



YUGOSLAVIAN PERIOD

- Ottoman settlement
- Austro-Hungarian development
- Yugoslavian development



Yugoslavian period (1918-1992): a new commercial axis

HIT department store, 1970

Source: www.cidom.org



Razvitak department store, 1970

Source: www.cidom.org



1.2 The East-West Axis of Mostar: historical and social meaning. Main landmarks of the axis

The East-West axis of Mostar is represented by the area expanding from Musala Park (East Mostar) towards west, up to the Rondo (West Mostar). It starts at Musala Square and following the Korzo reaches the Old HIT Square; from there, it continues up to Rondo through Promenade Lenin. This area is recognized as the main space of socialisation before the war (Carabelli G, 2018, pp 91).

Pre-war situation

Previous reports (Carabelli G., 2018, Mackic A, 2016) showed that the main spaces of meeting, socialization and entertainment were distributed along this axis before the war; during my site visit, talking with older Mostarci, I realized that the social function of this area was very strong in the pre-war era. In fact, a common feature of all spots of the axis was the presence of bars, restaurants, cinemas, cultural centers and meeting areas.

Musala Park was an important venue for gatherings and from there all the commemorative parades departed (example: the celebration of Marshal Tito's birthday), continuing along the Korzo up to the stadium (Carabelli G, 2018, pp. 88). Musala Square was and is connected to the West Bank of Neretva River by the Tito Bridge from where many jumpers dived into the river; people used to see this show from the riverbanks and the terrace gardens overlooking the river.

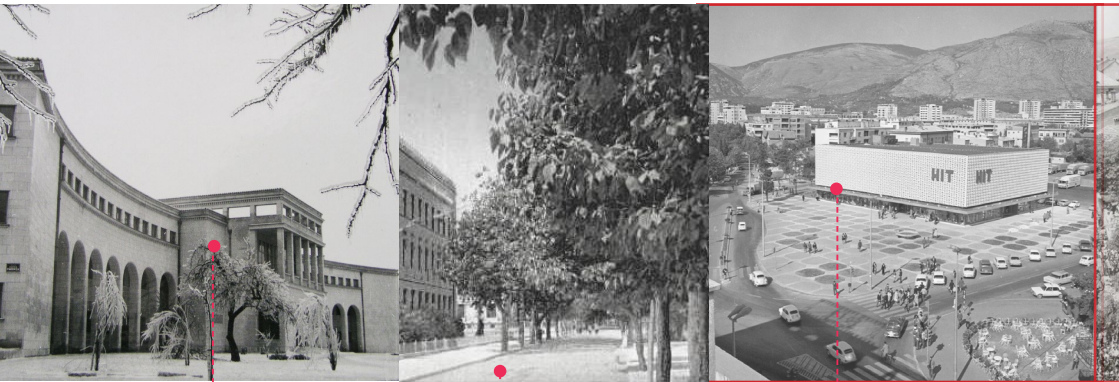
The Korzo - i.e. the street connecting Musala Square to the Old HIT Square - was a very busy road where people loved promenading, a typical urban activity of Mostarci. In particular, during the night, the Korzo was transformed into an open-air theater where the inhabitants of Mostar could perform in a kind of cabaret, named Liskaluk (Mackic A, 2016, pp. 61); at night, ordinary people could gather in the bars along the Korzo to show jokes or report funny responses regarding urban issues. The Korzo flows into the Old HIT square (the name comes from a popular department store present in the middle of the square) which was the site usually chosen by young Mostarci for daily gatherings (Carabelli G, 2018, pp 89): it was provided with benches, trees and a fountain. Students coming out from the Old Gymnasium - a high-ranking high school very close to the Old HIT Square - used to reach the square and relax, have fun and chat on the benches. Finally, Promenade Lenin started from the square and connected it to the Rondo: it was an elegant street where people could stroll, sit on benches and hang out (Carabelli G, 2018, pp 88).



Main social activities along the Axis before the war: parades, outdoor festivals, public performances

Source: www.cidom.org

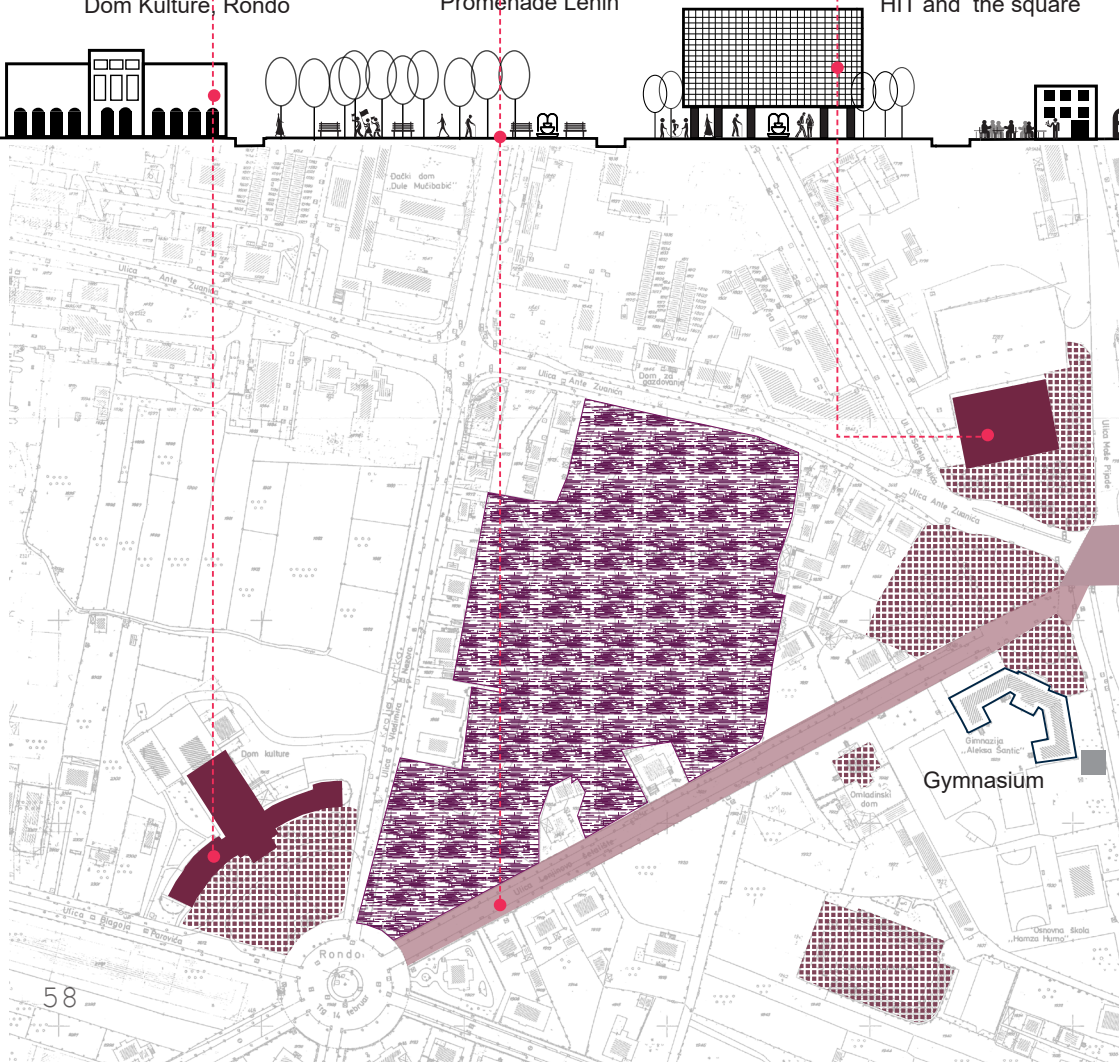
East-West Axis: pre-war social spaces

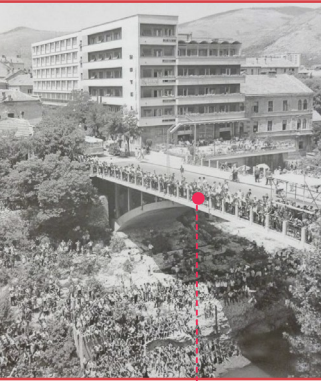


Dom Kulture, Rondo

Promenade Lenin

HIT and the square

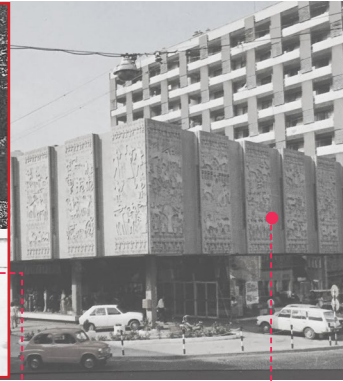




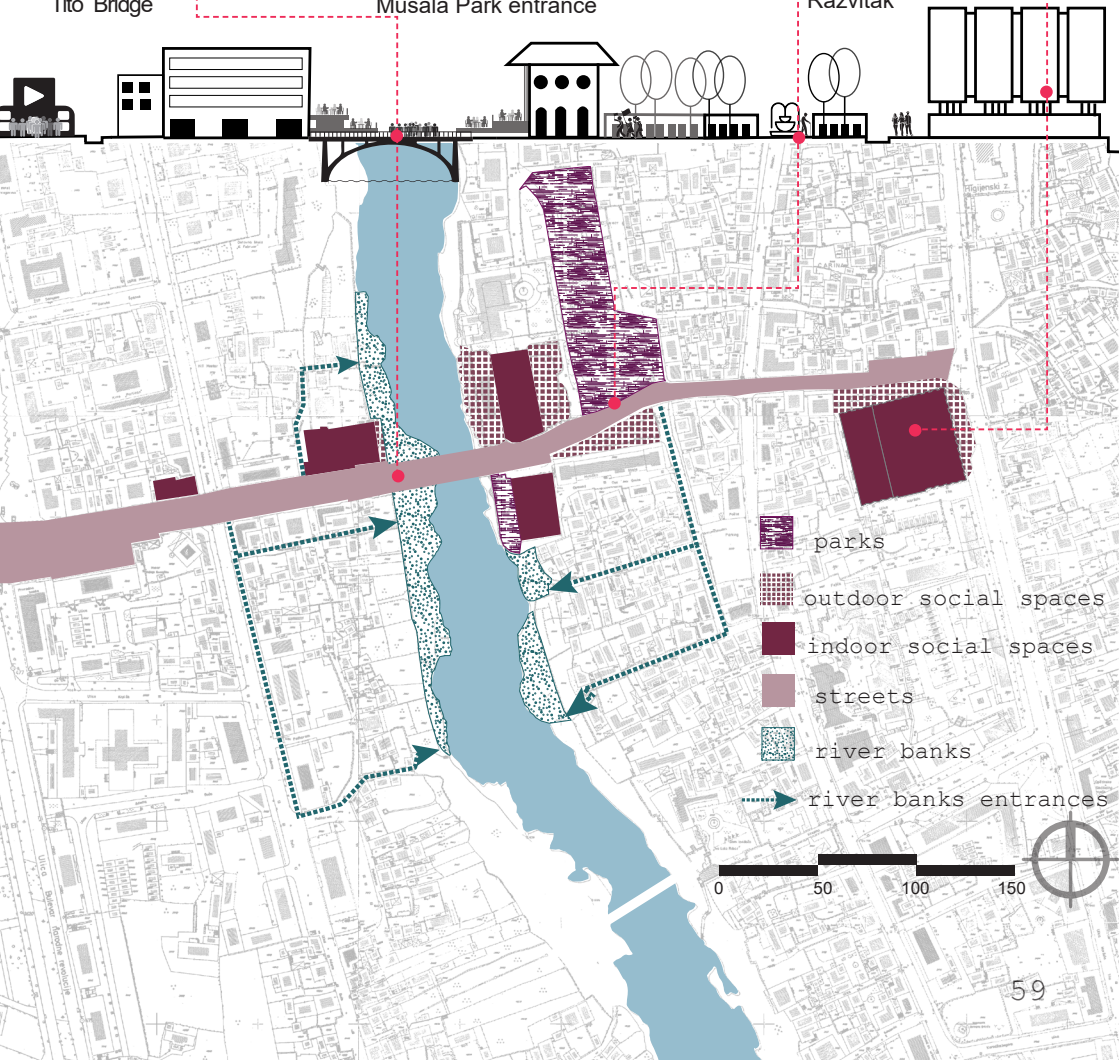
Tito Bridge



Musala Park entrance



Razvitak



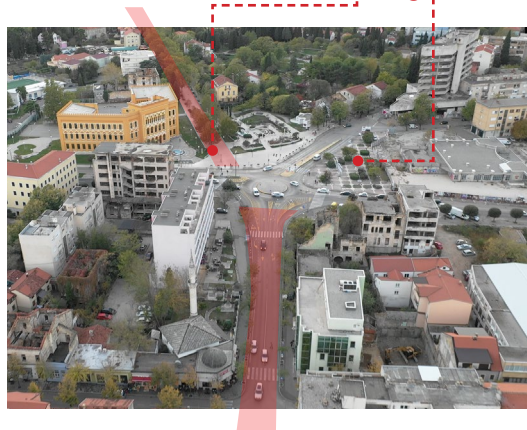
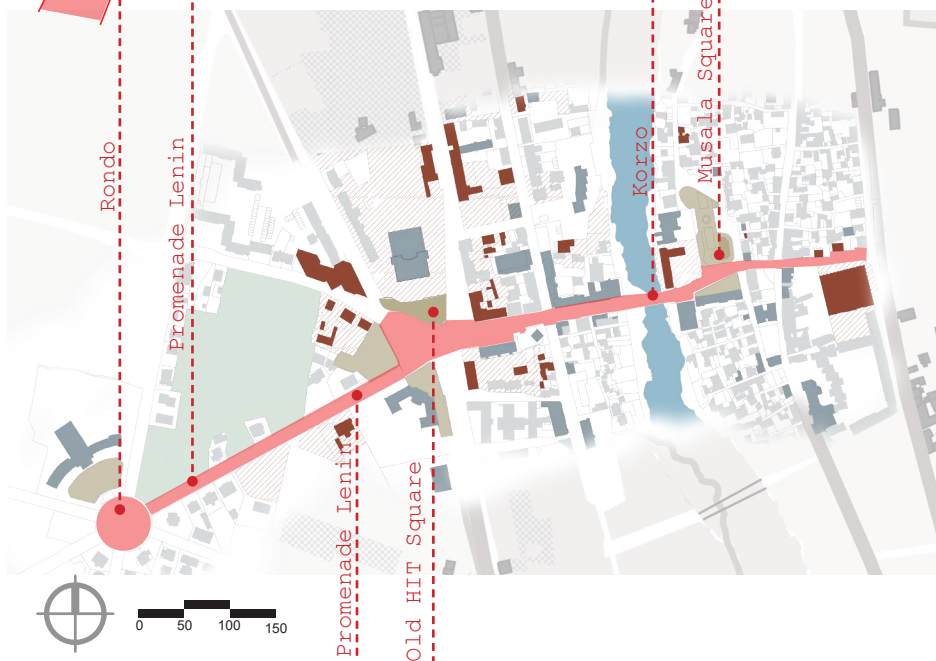
- parks
- outdoor social spaces
- indoor social spaces
- streets
- river banks
- river banks entrances

0 50 100 150

East-West Axis today

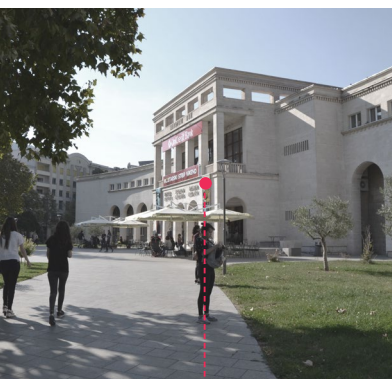
Mostar is still a very social city and Mostarci still like promenading; however, war consequences have determined the social life polarization into the two sides of the city (Carabelli G., 2018, pp. 91). People of West Mostar usually promenade along Blejiceva Street while Eastern Mostarci prefer to promenade on Brace Fejica Street (Mackic A, 2016, pp. 63). These spots have the highest numbers of cafes, restaurants and meeting points in the city showing that young people continue to look for socialization but separately (Carabelli G, 2018). The main cause of this polarization is the war destruction of the "central zone", that is the central area of the axis where the front line passed. This area was only partially rebuilt after the war and remained a neutral area with all the negative implications that followed. The choice of belligerents to concentrate destructive efforts on this area was defined by Coward (Coward 2006, pp. 428) as "urbicide", i.e. the conscious willingness to erase not only all the cultural or religious symbols of the opposing party but to remove all the urban infrastructures used as socialization areas in order to affirm incontrovertibly the impossibility of a reconciliation. After the war, attempts by International Organizations to foster reconciliation have actually led to the social death of the area as making it "neutral" have induced its substantial immobility (Aceska A., 2016, D'Alessio V, Gobetti E. 2009, Laketa S. 2017). In fact, they decided to locate administrative offices in this area, hoping that this decision would represent a symbolic act of neutrality and reconciliation. On the other hand, fearing to arouse the resentment of the different ethnic communities, they have not encouraged the opening or re-opening of socialization centers with the final result of a devitalized zone (Bjorkdhal A, Gusic I., 2016). According to Laketa (Laketa S., 2017, pp 12), this area has become "a place where affect and emotion congeal to create the effect of boundary between the two ethnic entities". In other words, the previous main social hub has disappeared and what was an inter-ethnic bridge is now a desert zone from a social point of view.

Crossing the central area, the East-West axis was heavily involved in this streetscape discontinuation. The West part of the axis - that is Rondo and Promenade Lenin - has been partially restored by the Mostar 2024 European Cultural Capital team, through cultural programs; for this reason, this site will not be object of my thesis.



- squares
- ruins
- public buildings
- private buildings
- park
- leftover spaces

East-West Axis: post-war social spaces



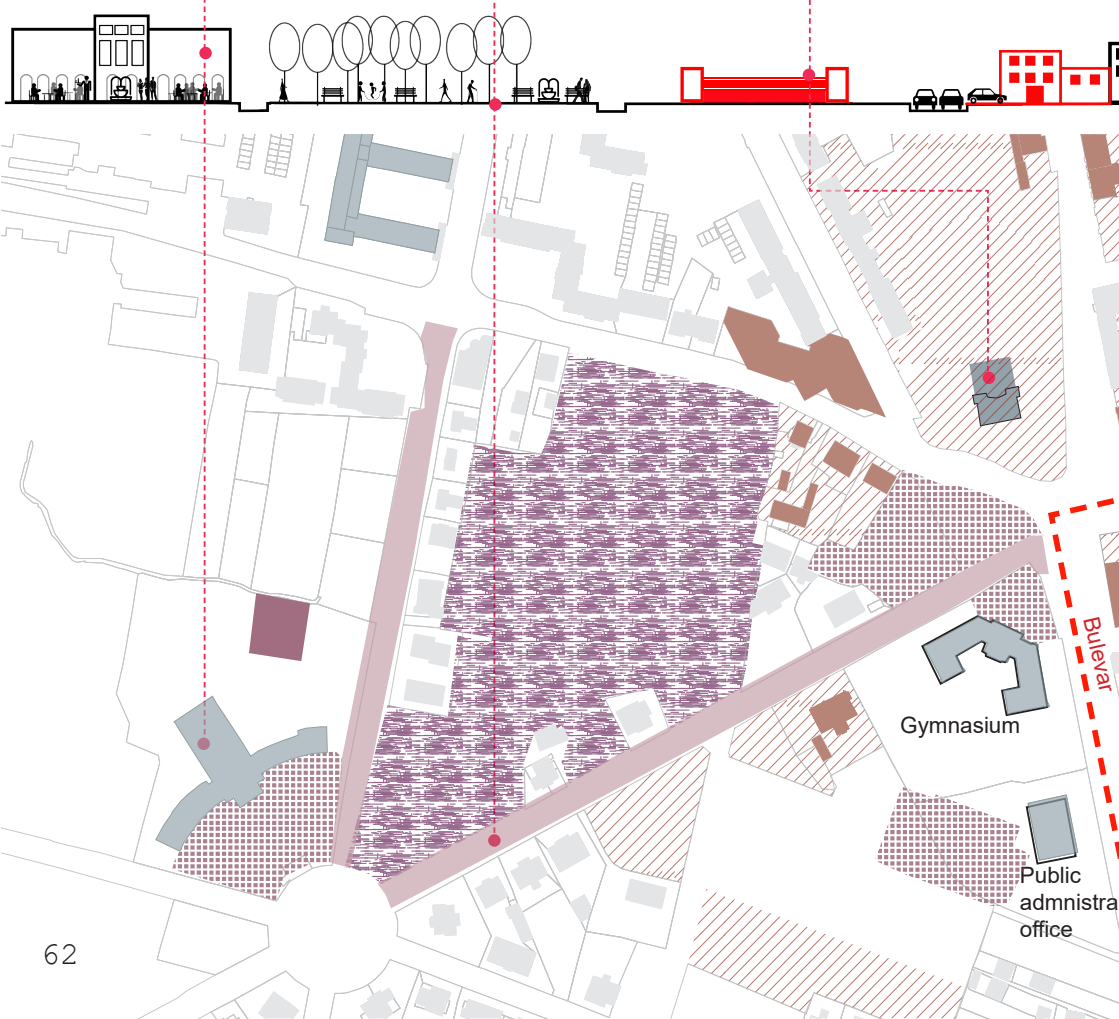
Croat House, Rondo



Nikole Subica Zrinskog



The Croatian Theater and the square





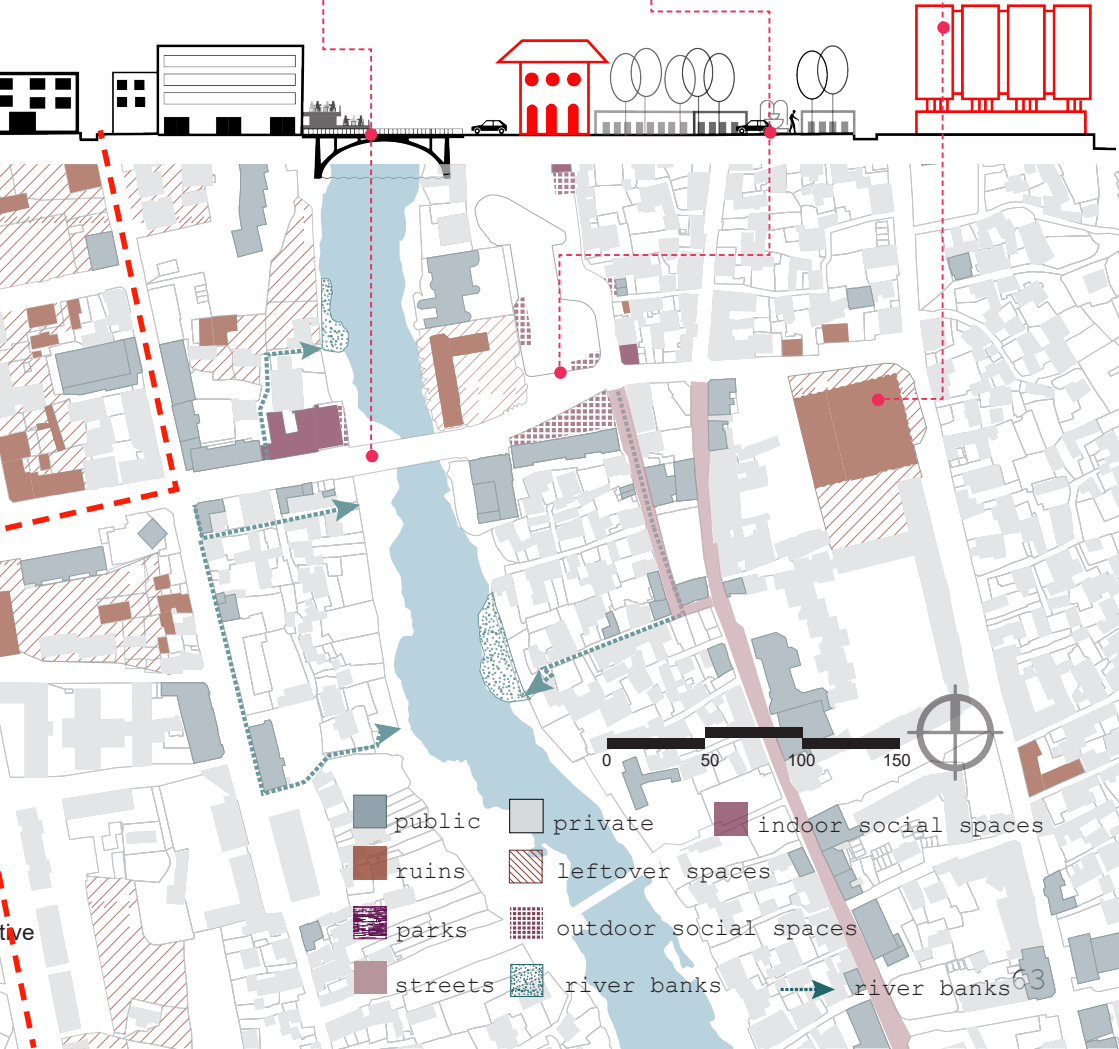
Tito Bridge



Musala Park entrance



Razvitak



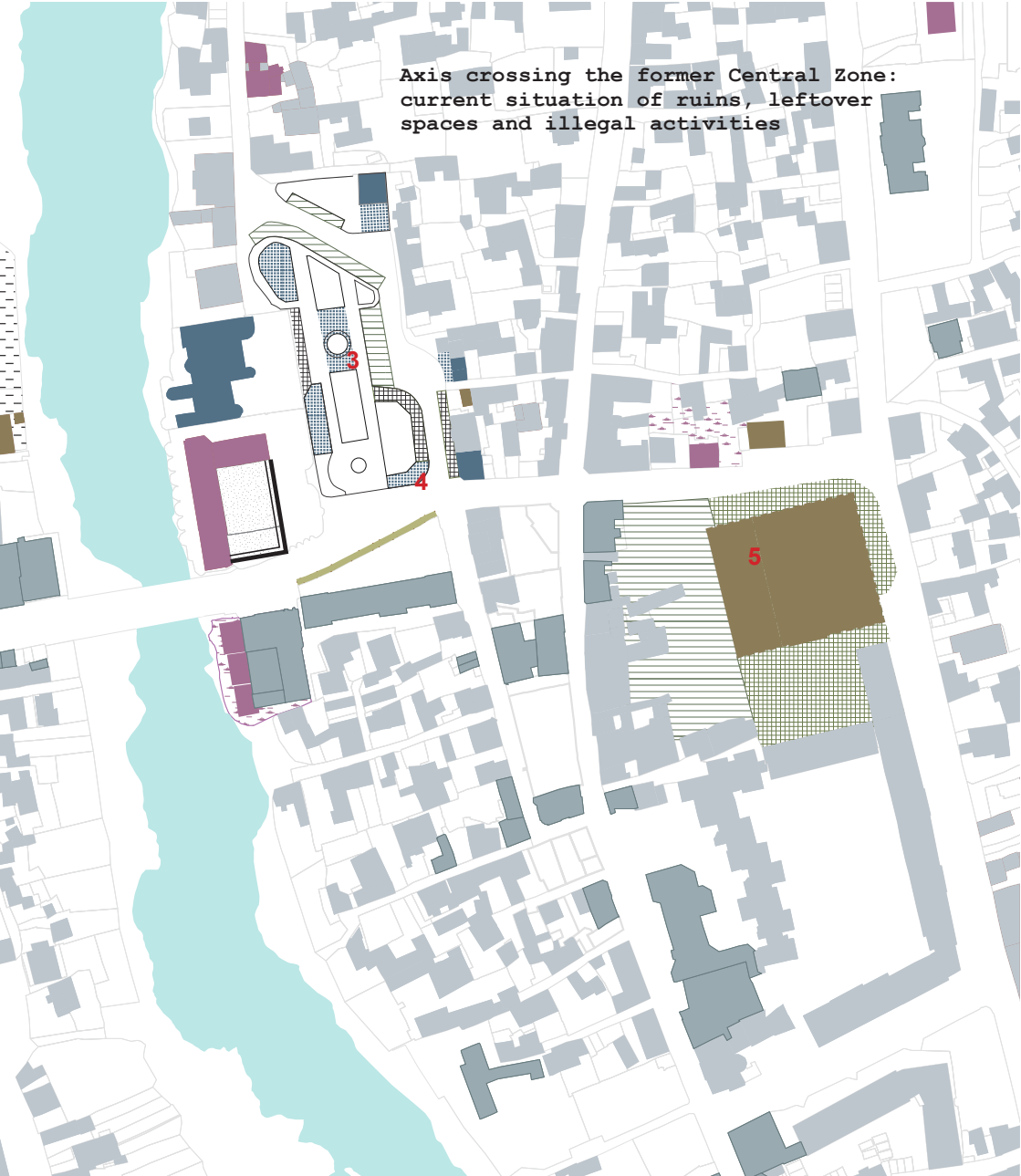
The current use of the Axis: abandoned spaces



Ruin with roof Ruin without roof Bar and restaurant

Legal parking Illegal parking Bus stop

Axis crossing the former Central Zone:
current situation of ruins, leftover
spaces and illegal activities



Illegal commercial activities



Public buildings



Private buildings



Overgrown vegetation



spaces under
reconstruction

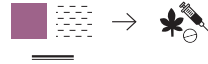


Fences



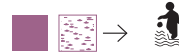
Hybrid spaces

Sketch 1: Old library



ruins partially surrounded by natural and manmade fences create an hidden space ideal for illegal activities.

Sketch 2: Former frontline ruins



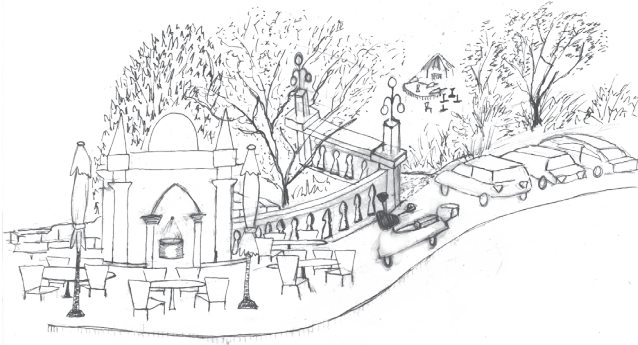
ruins completely buried by vegetation create an anonymous space used as uncontrolled dump.

Sketch 3: Musala Park



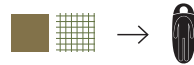
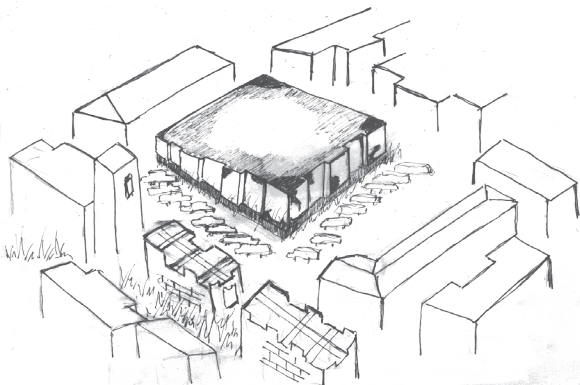
Public space illegally used as storage by surrounding bars and restaurants

Sketch 4: Musala Park



Illegal expansion of commercial activities in public spaces and transformation of pedestrian paths in abusive car parkings

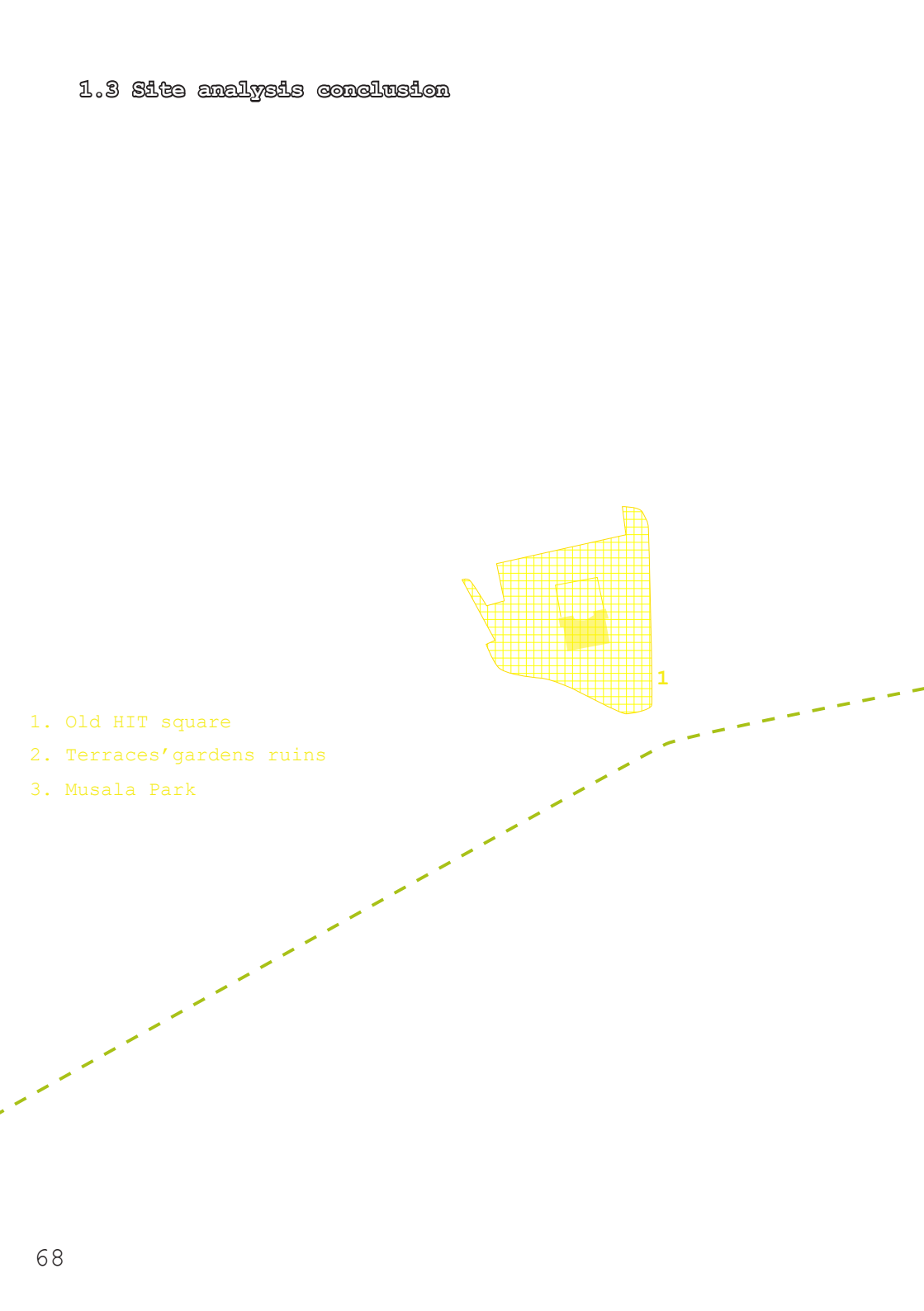
Sketch 5: Razvitak area

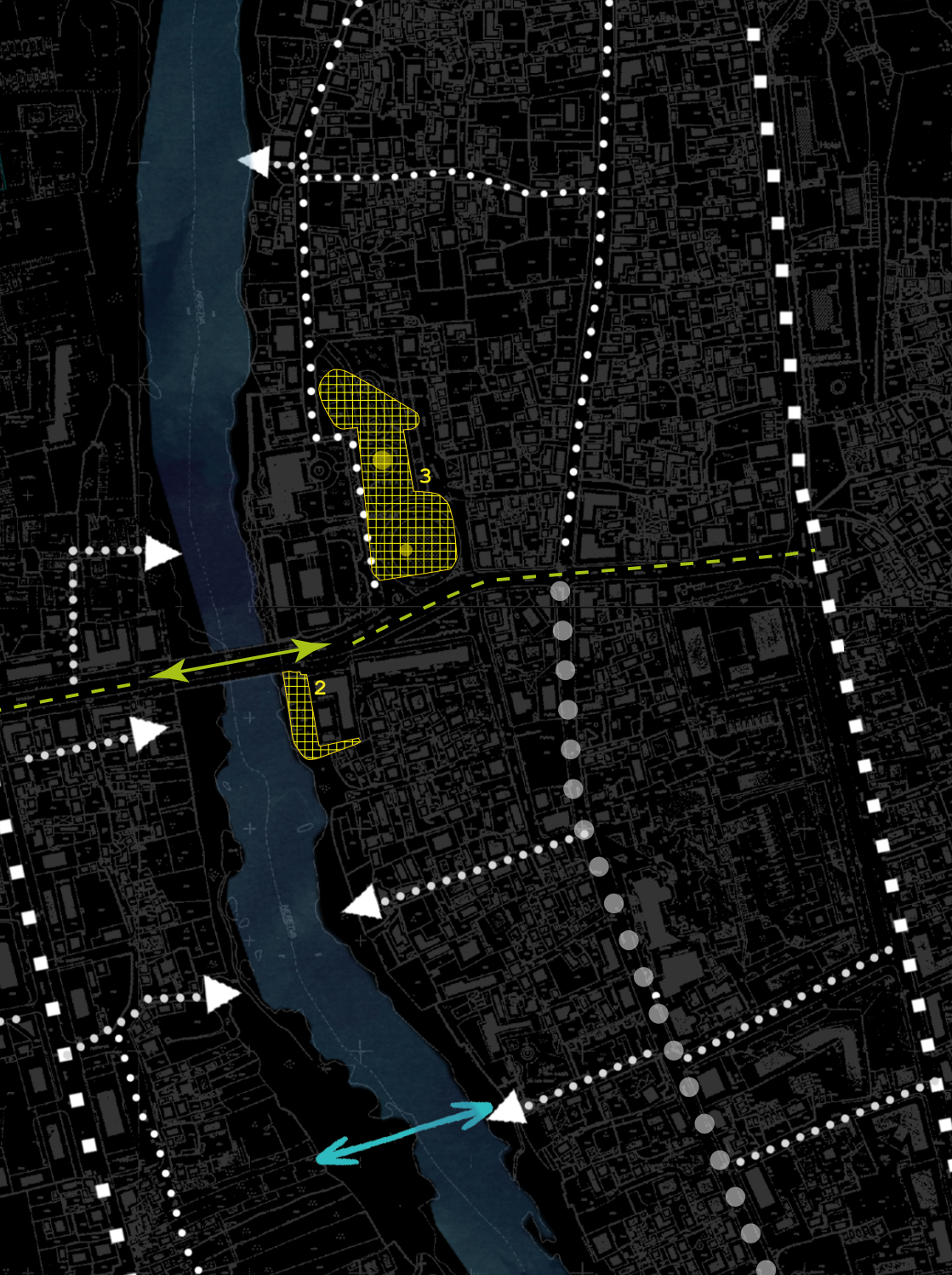


The combination of ruins covered by roof with illegal car parkings transforms abandoned spaces in night refuges.

1.3 Site analysis conclusion

According to the previous analysis, 3 problematic sites have been identified, which - adequately restored - may contribute to renovate the Axis giving it its past role as social corridor.

- 
1. Old HIT square
 2. Terracés'gardens ruins
 3. Musala Park



1.3.a Old HIT Square

The HIT Square represented the main hub of the so-called central area because it is the crossing point between the North-South axis (the Bulevar) and the East-West axis (the Korzo-promenade Lenin).

Pre-war situation

The HIT Square was the centre of pre-war Mostarian “promenading” and an important social and cultural hub. Its name comes from the presence of a big department store (HIT); in front of it, there was a public space with trees and benches, frequently used by Mostarians. The opposite side of the square was dominated by the ‘Prva’ or ‘Stara’ Gimnazija (‘First’ or ‘Old’ Gymnasium), whose initial name derived from the poet Aleksa Šantić; the Gymnasium was built in 1898 during the Austro-Hungarian Empire and was one of the city’s architectural landmarks (Carabelli 2018) due to its peculiar and pleasant architecture, inspired by the Moorish Alhambra palace in Granada, Spain.



HIT Square, 1970

Source: www.cidom.org



Fountain of the HIT Square, 1980

Source: www.cidom.org

Old HIT Square: current situation

Where the old Hit department store used to be, there is now a one-floor building (the Croatian Theater) and in its back a large car parking; the spot in front of the new building - once extensively used as a public space - is now underused.

The current social use of the square mainly regards people gatherings for protests, political manifestations and - sometimes - violent soccer's fans clashes (Carabelli G, 2018, pp 89). No more sitting for a drink, no more planned or occasional meetings for lovers, no more hang out....in other words, no more social life. However, the presence of a multi-ethnic and international school (The Gymnasium) makes this square a potentially ideal spot to create a shared public space; the pros are based upon the concept of "neutral space" currently perceived by Mostarians about this square: it is a place which does not belong to any particular group but can be used by all Mostarians, irrespective of their ethnic or religious group. The challenge will be to plan a structural intervention devoid of ethnic symbols but recalling a collective (and lost) memory, able to induce in the citizens a sense of belonging.



Old HIT Square today

Picture by the author



Fountain of the Old HIT Square today

Picture by the author

1.3.b Terraces gardens ruins

Pre-war situation

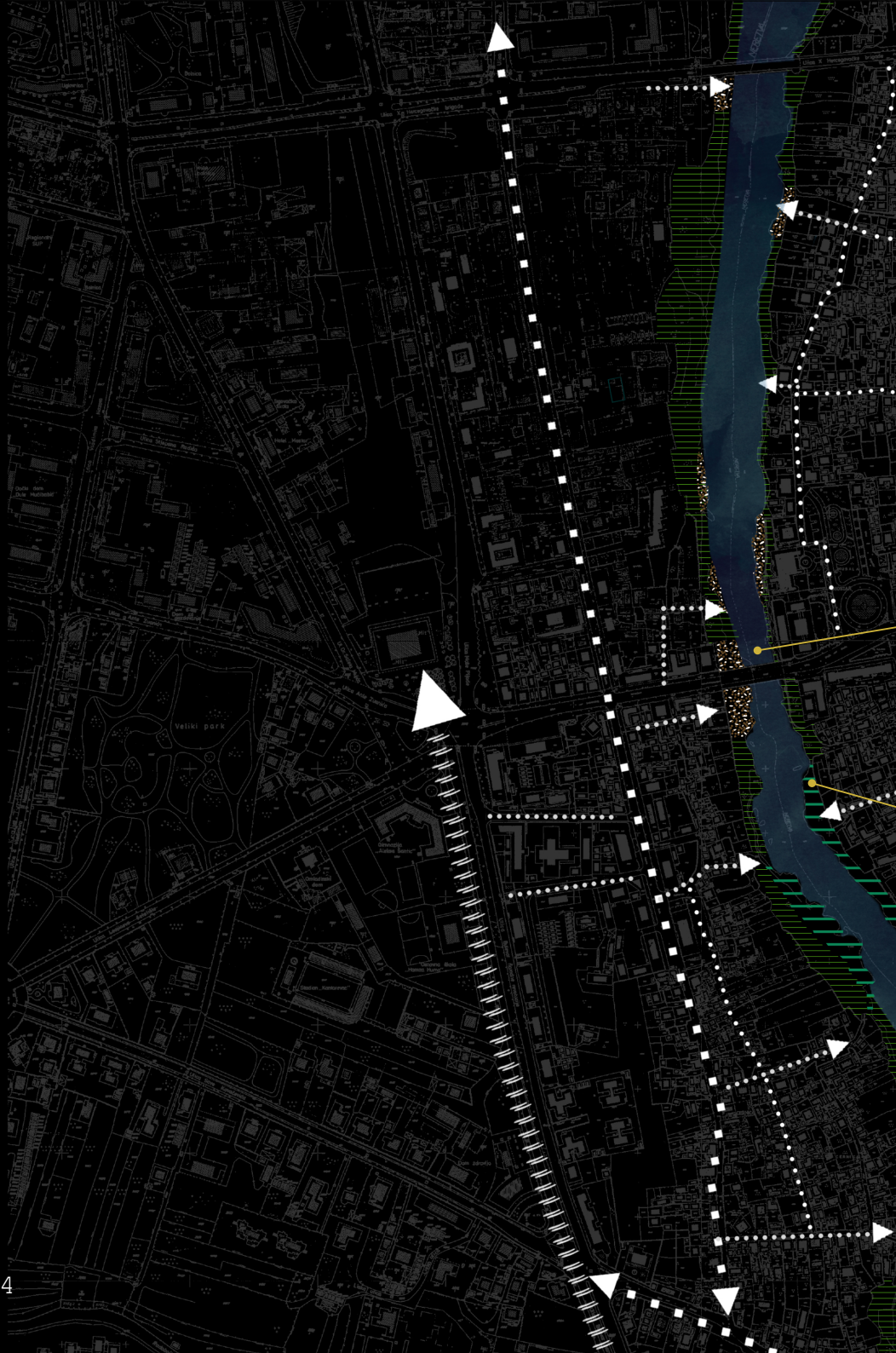
Several old photographs show that many jumpers dived into the Neretva river from the King Franz Joseph I, renamed Tito Bridge, with the advent of the Socialist regimen. People used to see this show from the riverbanks and the terrace gardens overlooking the river.



Terraces gardens ruins: current situation

Today the Tito Bridge is mainly used as a transit corridor, as many events like the jumping from the bridge moved to the Stari Most. Also the river banks are mostly inaccessible due to the overgrown vegetation and the creation of a sewage system on the West side of the Neretva.





Access to the river: the vegetation

.....▶ Accessable path

..... Primary street

..... Secondary street

..... Pedestrian street

..... Boulevard



Rocky river banks



Dense vegetation



Sparse vegetation

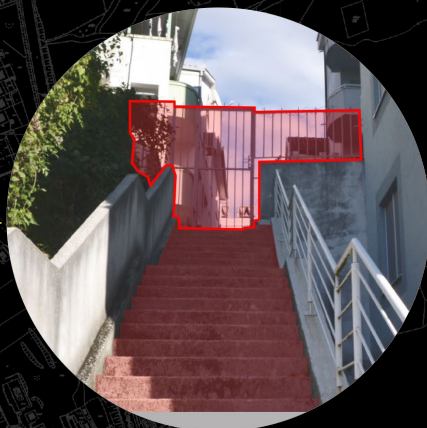


Several natural and manmade fences make this part of the river almost unreachable, discouraging the inhabitants to get the river



Access to the river: the river paths

- Dead - end path
- Accessible path
- Primary street
- Secondary street
- Pedestrian street
- Boulevard
- Coastline path
- Bridge



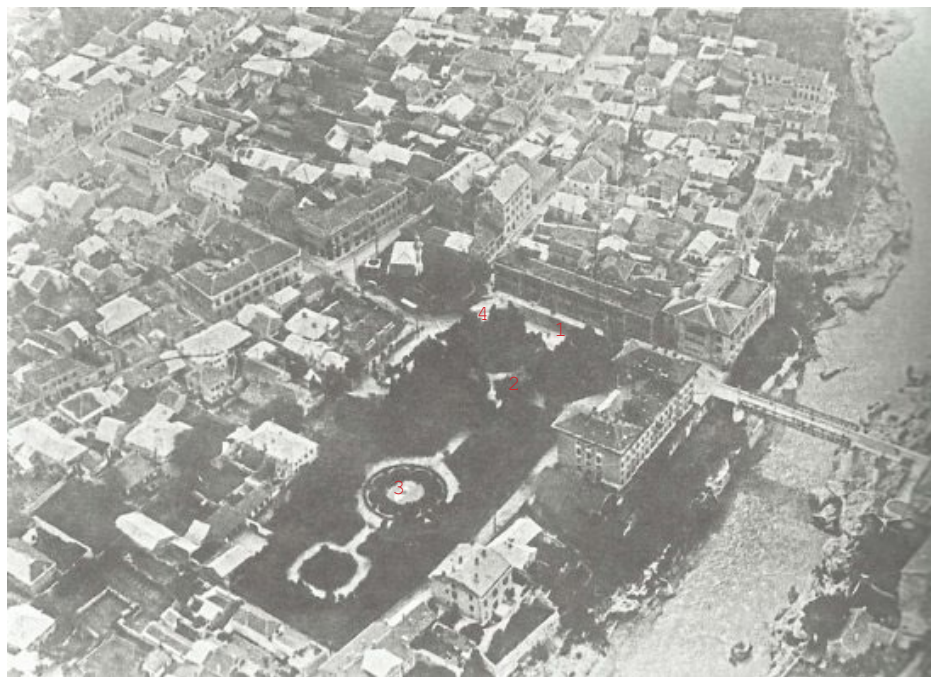
1.3.c Musala Park

Pre-war situation

Musala square was built during the Ottoman empire in front of the ancient Mosque Roznamedži Ibrahim-efendiye džamija: it was an important space used by Muslims for their religious rites.

With the Austro-Hungarian dominion (1878) Musala square and its surroundings have completely changed their function and aspect: several important public buildings were built such as The Banja (Public Bath), a school of music next to it and the Neretva Hotel. Moreover, a bridge on the Neretva river was completed in 1882 in order to connect Musala with the West side of the city (Spago S., 2016).

To create a sense of unity between all these public buildings, a big city park was built in front of Musala square in 1929 on the gardens of a previous cathedral.



Musala Park 1929, bird-eye view

Source: http://www.cidom.org/?page_id=15398

The entrance to the park reminded the wall of a castle made of limestone fences, decorated in oriental style.

Several paintings and photographs describe the park as a green oasis with palms where people could sit below their shadow, admiring different species of vegetation. In the middle there was a big circular fountain plenty of colourful fishes. Both children, tourists and locals used to spend their time, relaxing, strolling or playing in the park. It was considered the main green city core (Spago S., 2016).



Main entrance to Musala Park 1930

Source: http://www.cidom.org/?page_id=15398



Circular fountain in front of the Neretva hotel

Source: www.cidom.org



Circular fountain, Musala Park

Source: www.cidom.org



Drinking fountain at the entrance of Musala park

Source: www.cidom.org

After the II World War and with the advent of the Republic of Yugoslavia, Musala became the starting point of important public events such as Tito's birthday parades, festivals and open-air concerts (Spago S., 2016).



Socialist parade in Musala square, 1949

Source: http://www.cidom.org/?page_id=256

However, in the 1960s the area of Musala was completely transformed in order to create a new bus station and more parking places. For this reason the square and the park were reduced in dimension in favour of a larger street that could guarantee a better traffic circulation. In this way the previous feature of Musala was completely erased (Spago S., 2016).



View on Musala square, 1969

Source: http://www.cidom.org/?page_id=256

Musala Park: current situation

Today the area has been partially rebuilt but without reaching again its previous aim. It works as a semi-abandoned square, occupied by parking places on one side. Moreover several cafes and restaurants around the square are illegally occupying the ground with tables and seats during the warm seasons, while in winter they use part of the square as a storage area. In this way the park doesn't work anymore as a public social space but as an extension of these private activities and unauthorized parking attendants use the benches in the square as their working places. For all these reasons the square is used as a crossing area, just to reach the parking or the other side of the street.

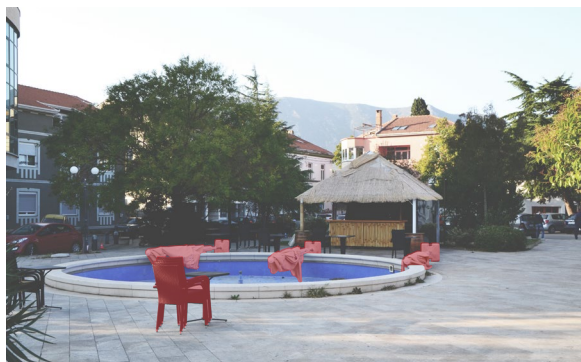


playgrounds





Illegal commercial activities





Illegal parking



DESIGN STRATEGY

To individuate the most appropriate design strategy for my thesis, I had to deal with the streetscape problems I have found.

Discontinued streetscapes represent one of the main urban problems of Mostar, in particular of the West-East axis connecting West Mostar to East Mostar. Revitalizing these urban voids can be the starting point, for example, by adding elements that may be missing.

They can also be temporary structures to rescue failing services or establishments (Lerner J, 2014, pp 1) - i.e. a flower market or a concert hall - but the main goal is to create the lost urban function. In this way, the previously unfrequented district becomes attractive not only because it provides a service or a function but also because the new visitors attract people and good acupuncture is when people are stimulated to go out to the streets through the creation of meeting places. According to me, Urban Acupuncture represented an ideal design strategy to solve these problems.

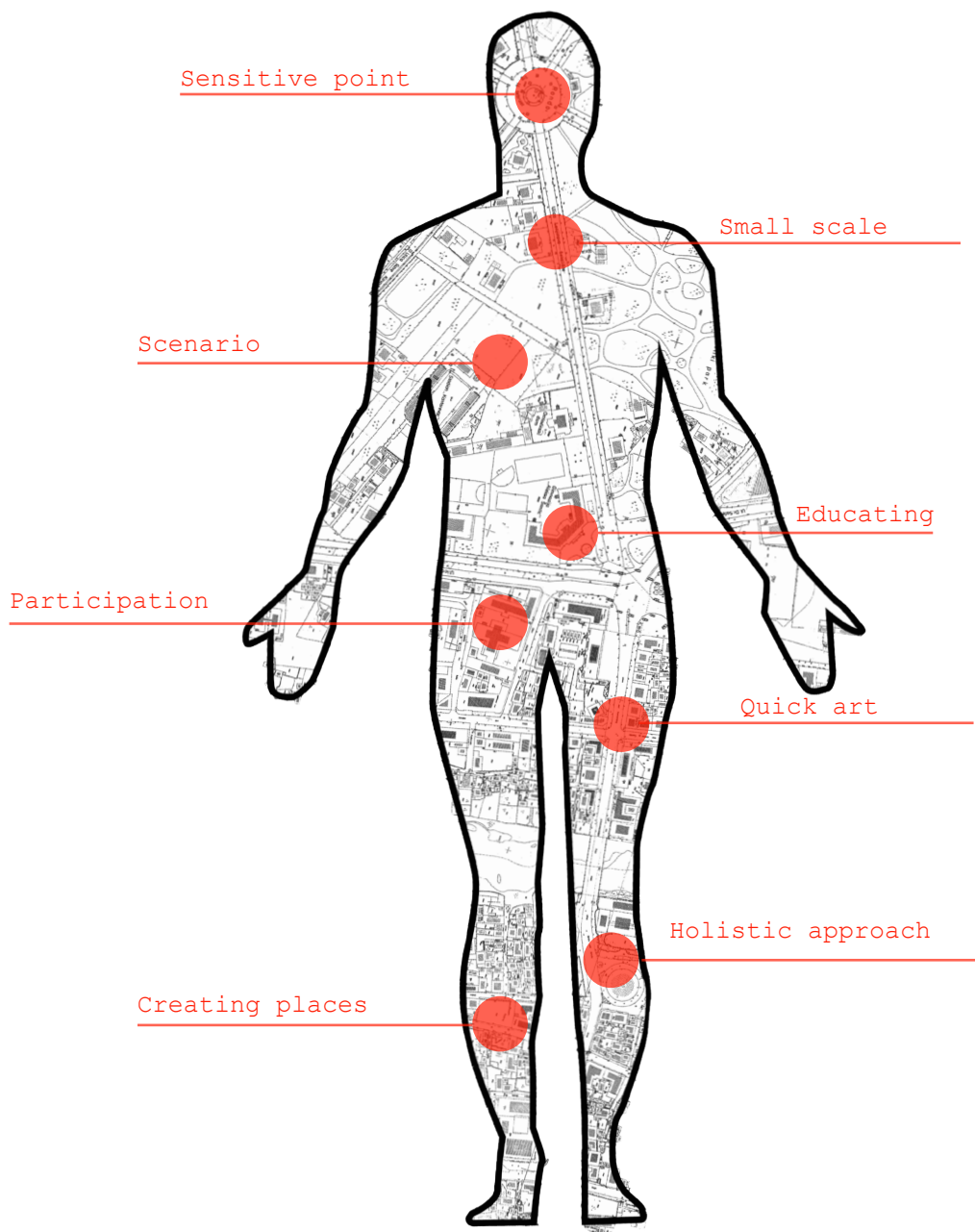
1 Urban Acupuncture as a catalyst of social awareness

1.1 Theory

Urban acupuncture is a small-scale interventional approach aimed to revitalized urban void spaces or city's places without energy or with negative energy. It is a concept derived from medicine in which small pinpricks with tiny needles on strategic areas of the body determine a general well-being; in particular, according to the traditional Chinese medicine, the punctures - if well performed on strategic points of the body - not only are of benefit on the treated area but also on the surrounding parts. According to Lerner (Lerner J. 2014, pp 3), De Sola Morales (De Sola Morales M, 2008, pp 86) and Casagrande (Casagrande M, 2009) this can and should be applied to cities.

In which way ? Through small interventions: these pinpoints of action are able to restore the urban landscape. This new architectural philosophy is based upon 8 principles: 1) sensitive point 2) small scale 3) scenario 4) educating 5) participation 6) quick art 7) holistic approach 8) creating places (Hoogduyn R, 2014, pp 19-20)

The final aim of this new approach is to induce a higher livability through small but meaningful interventions in accurately chosen site in order to maximize the effects on social aggregation; in fact, according to the Authors, the social and democratic aspects of urban life are extremely important to make cities work as friendly groups of citizens.



I analysed different examples of urban acupuncture and I found San Francisco's revitalized Cannery district or Guell Park in Barcelona, as well as the Centre Pompidou in Paris or Frank Gehry's Guggenheim Bilbao Museum (Lerner J., 2014, pp 11-14). Treasure Hill in Taipei, Taiwan, was an illegal settlement of urban farmers: through small interventions such as stairs between the houses and the actual urban farm, the site was revitalized and legalized (Casagrande M, 2011); Moll de la Fusta in Barcelona was a 8 lane car road running along the harbor of Barcelona: it has become a 2 lane road with an elevated walking area with restaurants and cafès at one side and a promenade plenty of palm trees at the other one (Hoogduyn R, 2014, pp 17). Recently, what can be considered an evolution of Urban acupuncture because focuses on public spaces, i.e. public space acupuncture, was reported by Casanova and Hernandez (Casanova H, Hernandez J , 2015). According to them, interventions to revitalize public spaces should be based upon 3 crucial points: 1) time-based strategies 2) citizens participation 3) place making.

1.1.a Ecological approach

During the industrial era, industrialism convinced the citizens that they could live independently from nature, which was considered as unnecessary; meanwhile, urban natural resources were exploited. A typical example regards the rivers: they usually were turned into industrial sewage sites.

In our current post-industrial period, cities aim to restore their polluted rivers and tend to reunite with them; in Seoul, South Korea, a stream named Cheonggyecheon crossing the city had been bulldozed in order to hide its degradation and pollution (Lerner J, 2014, pp 11-14). Now, the stream has been restored and its adjacent areas revitalized. In Paris, France, the old Canal Saint Martin has been rescued, recalling the nostalgic view of Paris in the Thirties.

Conversely, the use of vegetation represents a good acupuncture. Urban gardening - such as community gardens and urban farms - is more and more present and requested in order to keep the urban machine alive (Casagrande M., 2008).



1.1.b Social approach

Small interventions directed towards areas where social life has disappeared are the main goals of Urban Acupuncture. As previously reported, there are several examples describing how pinpoints urban projects have changed the social and cultural life of the city where they have been performed, i.e. the Centre Pompidou in Paris or Frank Gehry's Guggenheim Bilbao Museum (Lerner J, 2014, pp 3); however, it is not always necessary to plan ambitious and expensive projects to trigger socialization. For example a 24-hour ethnic shop in a "difficult" district in New York, the Old Cinema Novo in Paraná, Brazil (Lerner J, 2014, 5-10), the requalification of a neglected corner in Groningen, The Netherlands, (Hoogduyn R, 2014, pp 16-17). Moreover, lacking or insufficient public system of transport may be a cause; Lerner (Lerner J., 2014, pp 65-68) proposed and carried out several interventions regarding this issue: the Bus Rapid Transport (BRT), pedestrian ways and portable streets in Curitiba, Brazil.



1.1.c Combined approach

Urban Acupuncture proposes small scale intervention in order to trigger a catalytic process aiming to obtain a maximum effect with regard to the immediate surroundings (Frampton K., 2000, pp 21). For instance, if we improve or create a park, the benefits will involve the immediate surroundings - that is - people inhabiting the place around the park. If community gardens are encouraged and boosted, urban landscape will improve but at the same time opportunities for socialization will occur. There are examples of combined approaches as: creation of a district garden by local residents in Amsterdam, the Netherlands, (Hekkens A., 2014) and of a "smart" square in Piazza del Risorgimento, Turin, Italy (Planet: the smart city, 2017).



2 Urban space revitalization

Initially, I took the concept of urban acupuncture and public space acupuncture as a starting point because it represents a good method to “heal” wounded parts of the city but probably its mere application to the context of East-West axis does not work. The current state of the 3 public spaces I have considered rather asks for a revitalization in order to also reactivate the surroundings. Thus, I have decided not to propose and project small-scale interventions but to restore previous functions through an ecological/social approach; the concept of “metropolitan garden” (De Wit S, 2018, pp 367-374) helped me in conceiving this approach. Finally, thanks to what I have learnt from the public space acupuncture theory, Mostar’s citizens have become the real protagonists of my design strategy helping me during the on site workshop in March 2019 to individuate the most appropriate scenarios of each design.

URBAN ACUPUNCTURE



PUBLIC SPACE ACUPUNCTURE

Citizens participation



PUBLIC SPACE REVITALISATION

To re-activate previous functions by using a
common thread

DESIGN PRINCIPLES

1 Case studies

1.1.a Ecopolis Plaza



Project: Ecopolis Plaza

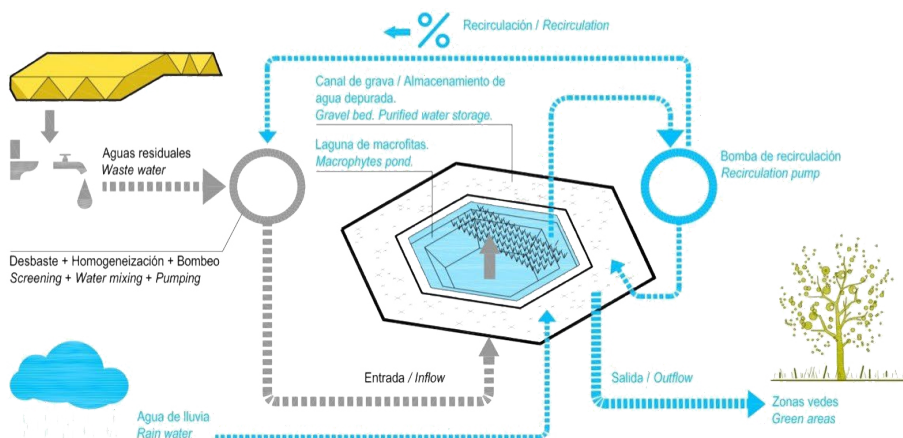
Architects: Ecosistema Urbano

Location: Rivas Vaciamadrid, Madrid, Spain

Ecosistema Urbano created in the center of the school park an artificial lagoon with macrophite plants, which purify rain water and waste water coming from the school.



Source: <http://ecosistemaurbano.com/portfolio/plaza-ecopolis/>



Source: Gallery of Ecopolis Plaza / Ecosistema Urbano - 36,
<https://www.archdaily.com/111143/ecopolis-plaza-ecosistema-urbano/500761d728ba0d4148002085-ecopolis-plaza-ecosistema-urbano-macrophytes-system-diagram-03>

1.1.1.b Planet Smart Square



Project: Planet Smart Square

Architects: Planet Idea

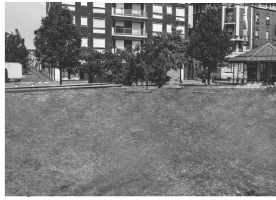
Location: Piazza del Risorgimento, Torino, Italy

Piazza del Risorgimento is the first Smart Square in the city of Turin and the demonstration of how an urban space can be improved by combining architecture, innovation, and sustainability.

The creation of a community garden inside Piazza del Risorgimento is a successful example of renovating an abandoned square, asking the inhabitants their participation and contribution.

In fact, once the garden was realized, the planters were given to different families to create a sense of belonging and to encourage new forms of socialization.

Existing



Concept



Design



Realisation



Pictures by the author

DESIGN

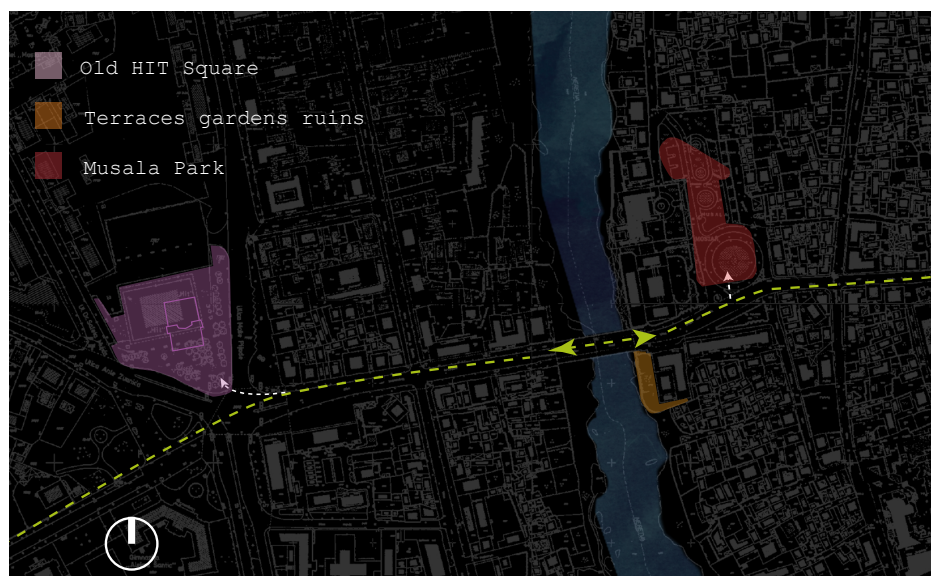
1 Sites for the design project

The main reason that influenced my decision was the finding that all three are directly part of the axis and two of them (Old HIT Square and Musala Park) face directly onto it, forming the western end (Old HIT Square) and the eastern end (Musala Park). The terraces are placed under the Tito Bridge in the middle of the axis and represent a crucial element for restoring the Neretva river banks. The second reason that guided my choice is related to the fact that both the Old HIT square and Musala Park sites are ideal for the combined ecological and social approach theorized by urban acupuncture.

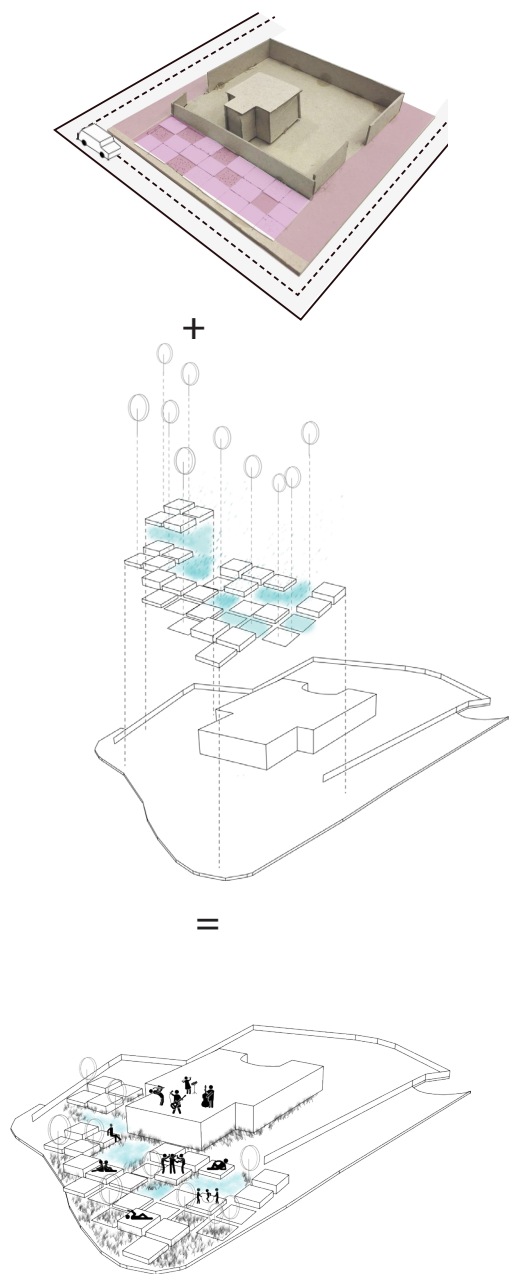
Obviously, the design regarding the terraces' ruins has followed only the ecological approach but it cannot be excluded that the ecological improvement achieved in this part of river bank could beneficially impact on the inhabitants' social life.

Last but not least, all these areas occupy an important place in the memory of the Mostari; during the socialist republic - rightly or wrongly considered a peaceful period - the main political parades started from Musala Park while the Old HIT Square was an important meeting point. In the sixties, many jumpers dived into the Neretva river from the Tito Bridge: people used to see this show from the riverbanks and the terrace gardens overlooking the river.

For this reason, re-connecting the axis is not conceivable without revitalizing these sites.



1.1 Old HIT Square: a multifunctional space

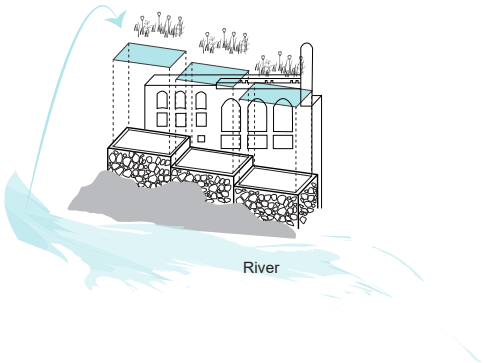


Multifunctional space

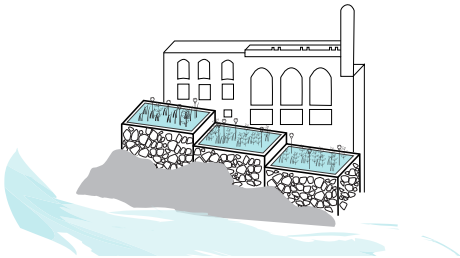
1.2 Terraces gardens ruins: water plant terraces



+

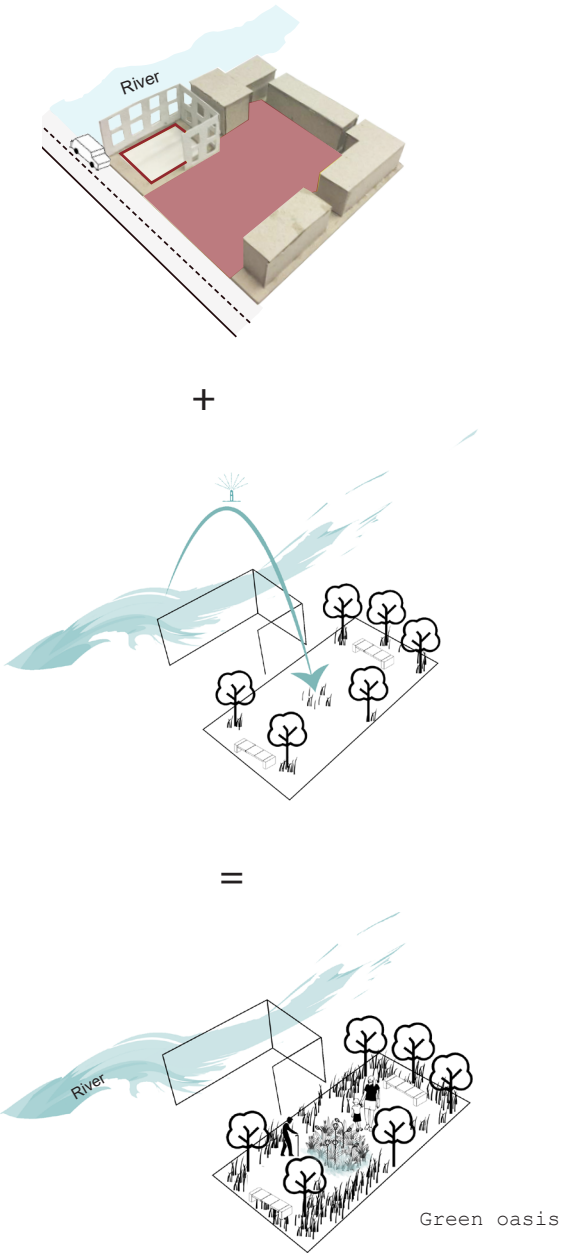


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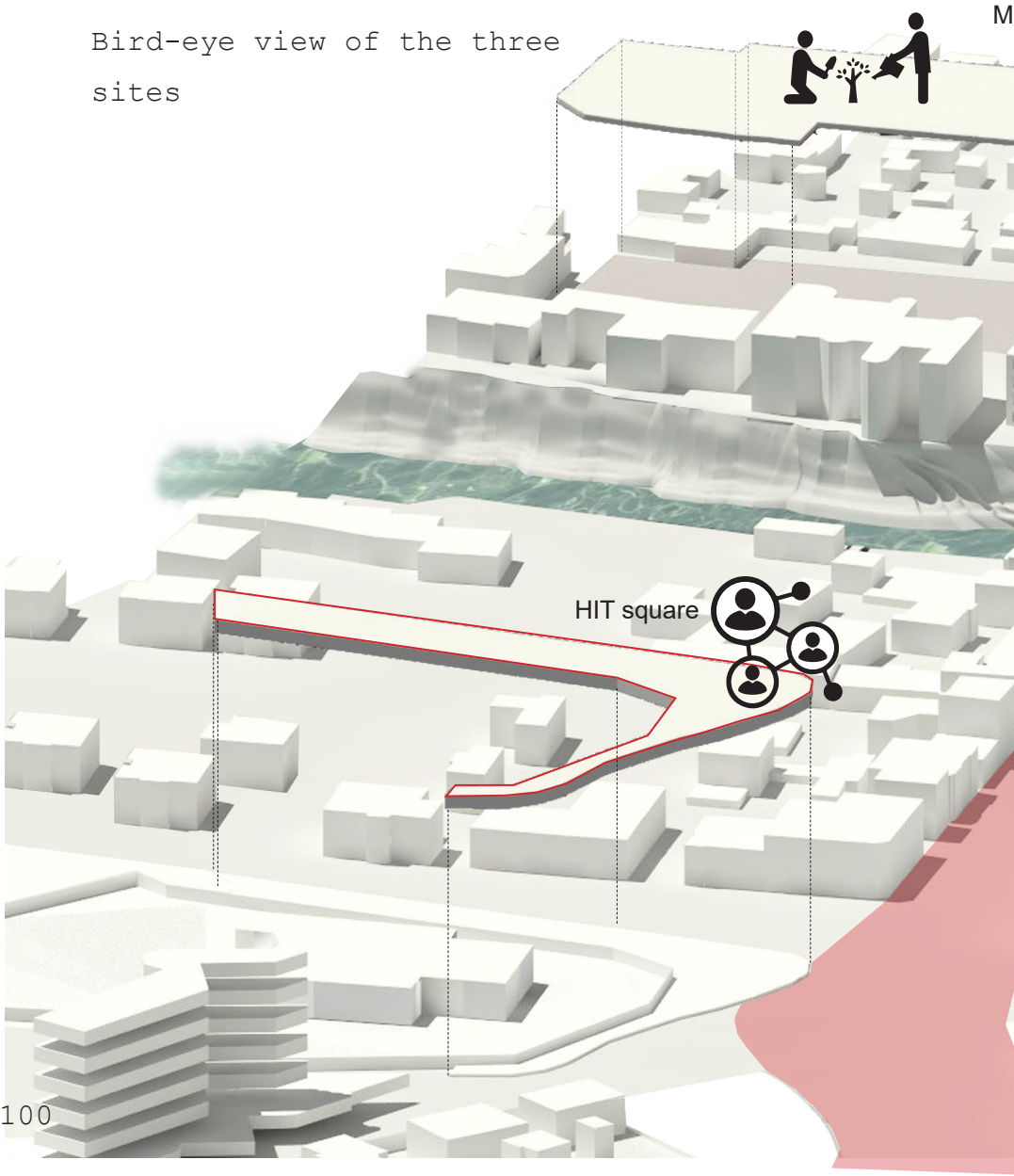


Water plant terraces

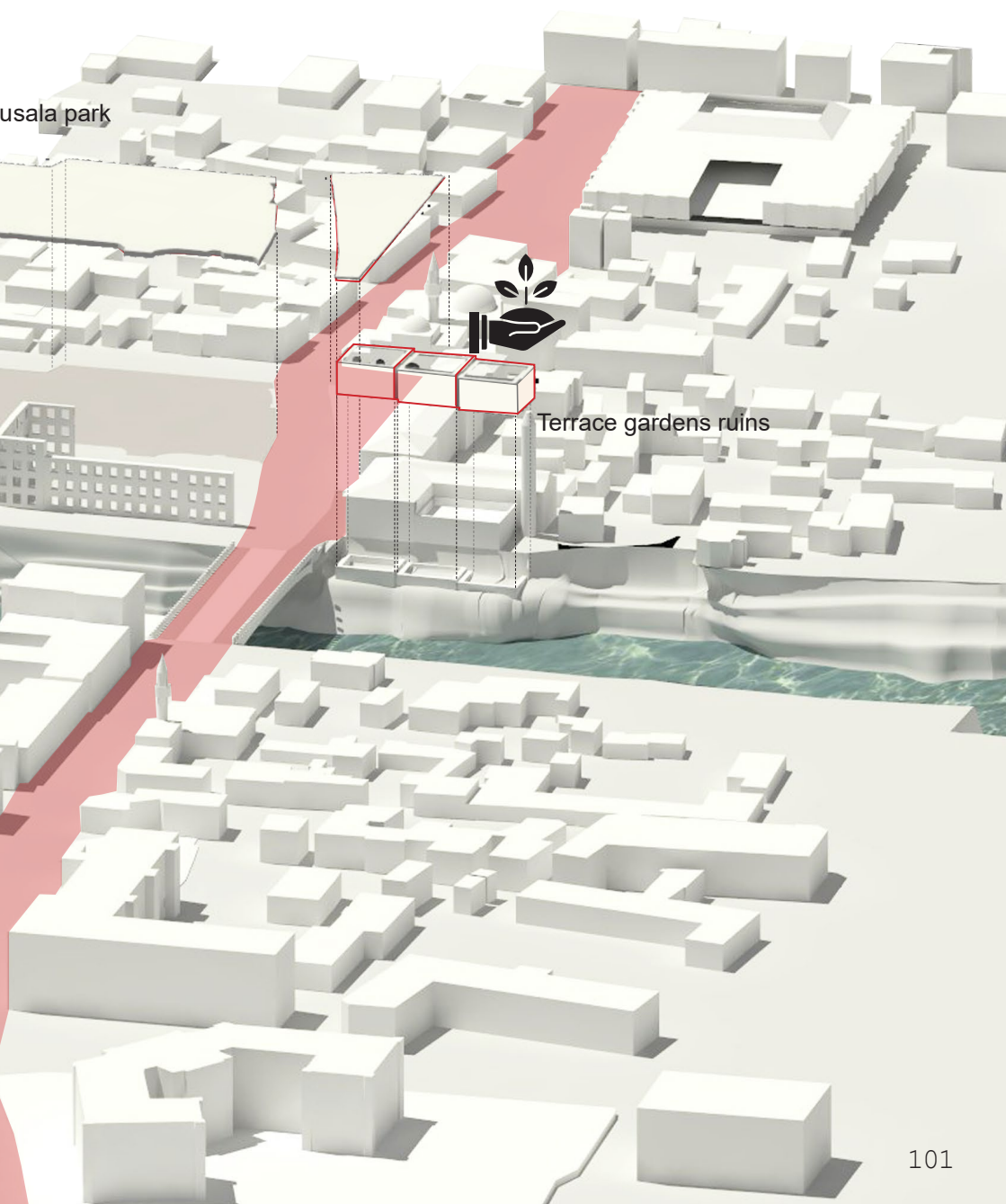
1.3 Musala Park: green oasis



Bird-eye view of the three
sites



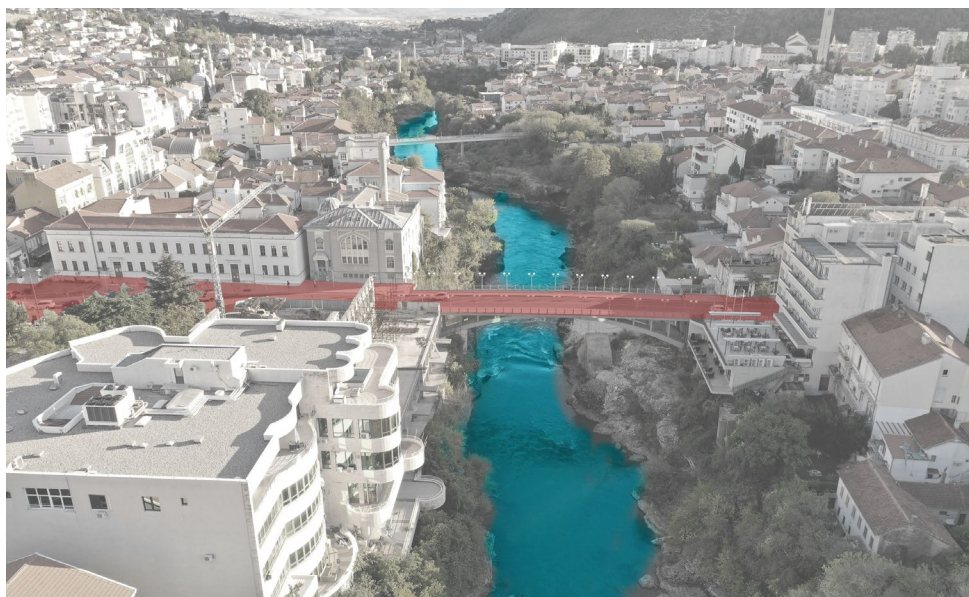
usala park



Terrace gardens ruins

2 Bringing the Neretva river to the city

2.1 The Neretva river as a shared corridor



The results of the previous analysis have shown the necessity of reconnecting the Axis through a design strategy, which will have a dual nature: renewing three degraded areas facing the axis through pinpoint interventions and, at the same time, introducing into those spaces a shared unifying element, present in each intervention. As previously reported, urban acupuncture promotes small scale interventions aimed to revitalize distinct parts of the city. What is new in my design concept compared with the traditional theoretical framework of this methodological approach is the insertion of a common symbolic catalyzer: the Neretva River, which is one of the most important, natural and partially forgotten shared symbols of Mostar.

In fact, while identifying Musala Park, the garden terraces ruins and The Old HIT Square as the crucial points to be revitalized, I felt a lack of a common thread able to provide the design with a logical continuity.

The use of a natural, dynamic and “memory keeper” element - the river - to connect those three spaces could represent the link missing in the Axis and create a new social use, enhancing a sense of responsibility for a common heritage that nowadays is mainly used as a public dump.

Thus, the main challenge is how to take the river in those spaces. The solution is inside the spaces themselves: Musala Park and the Old HIT Square were very famous for their scenographic and refreshing fountains which contributed to make these areas the main urban oasis of Mostar. They were a green and refreshing refuge for citizens who wanted to escape from daily life. Currently these fountains are out of use and transformed in temporary storage areas or playgrounds. Reactivating them by introducing the Neretva's water could represent not just the rebirth of these spots but of the whole Axis.



Main fountain in Musala Park, out of order, transformed in a playground area

Picture by the author



Small fountain at the entrance of Musala Park, out of order

Picture by the author



Ruin of the drinking fountain in the Old HIT square

Picture by the author

2.2 The fountains of the Axis

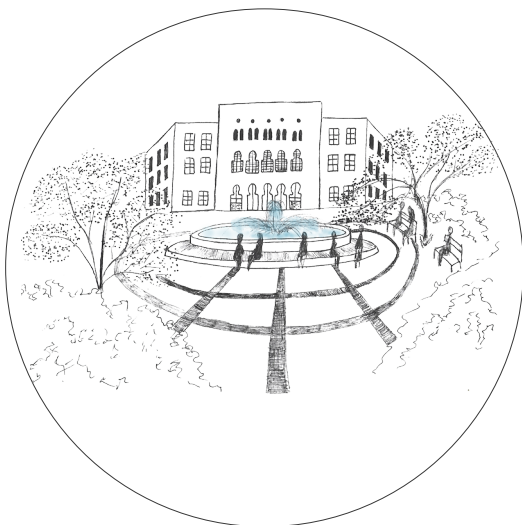




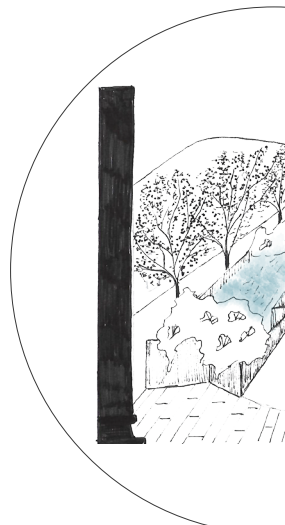
Musala Park

Terraces' ruins

Operating fountains along the Axis



1 Fountain in front of the Gymnasium

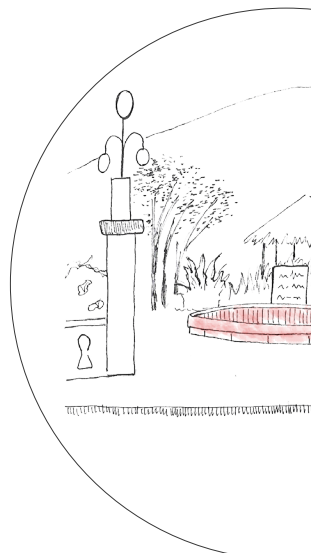


2 Fountain in Sp

Out of order fountains along the Axis



4 Out of order fountain in the Old HIT Square



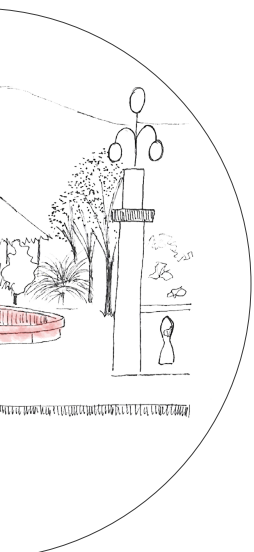
5 Out of order



Spanish Square



3 Fountain outside Musala Park



fountain in Musala Park



6 Out of order main fountain in Musala Park

2.3 Design concept: the role of Neretva's water in reactivating the Axis



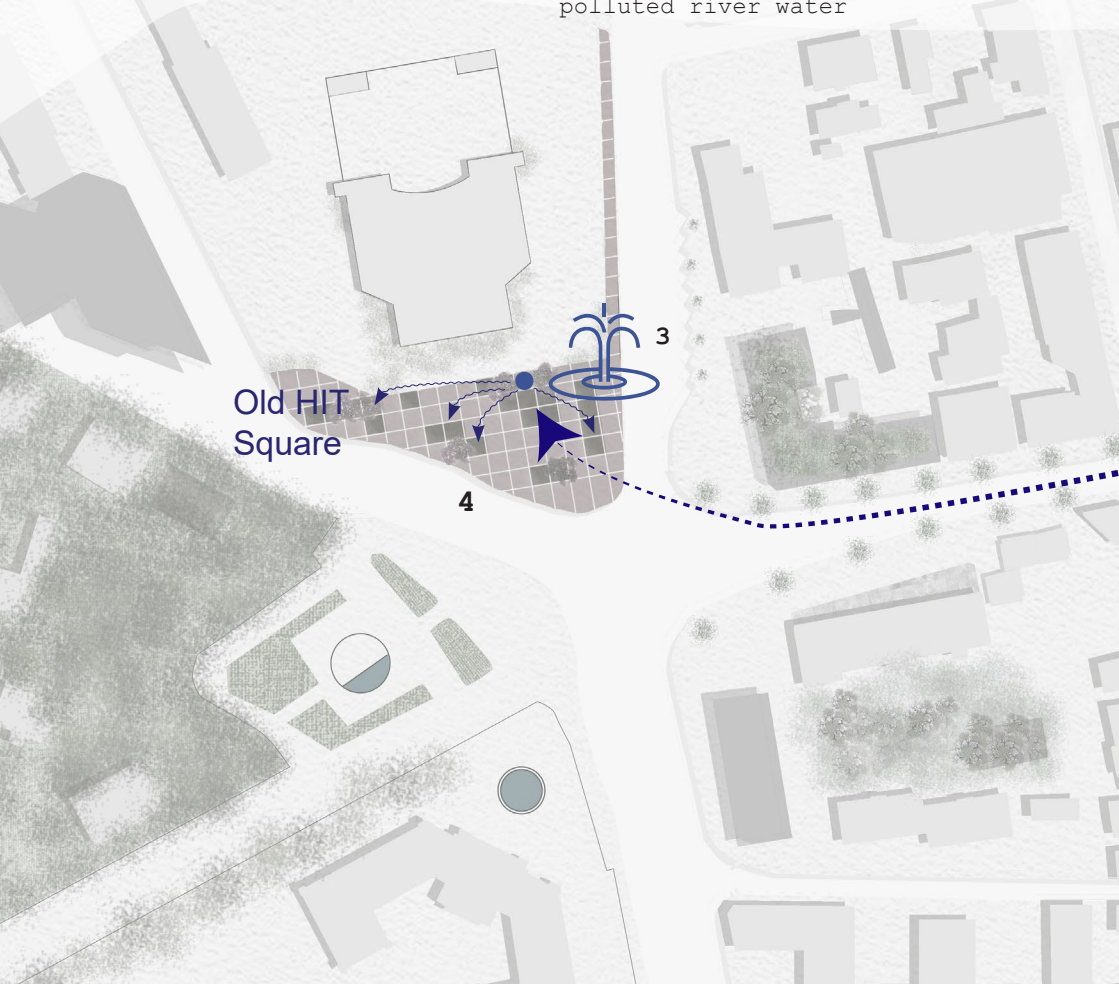
1 Taking polluted water from the Neretva River



2 Phytoremediation as a mean to clean the polluted river water



3 Re-activating the water to oxygenate





=



Activating fountains
generate river water

4 Creation of green and
social urban oasis

Musala
Park

4



3



3

1

2

4

Phytoremediation terraces



0

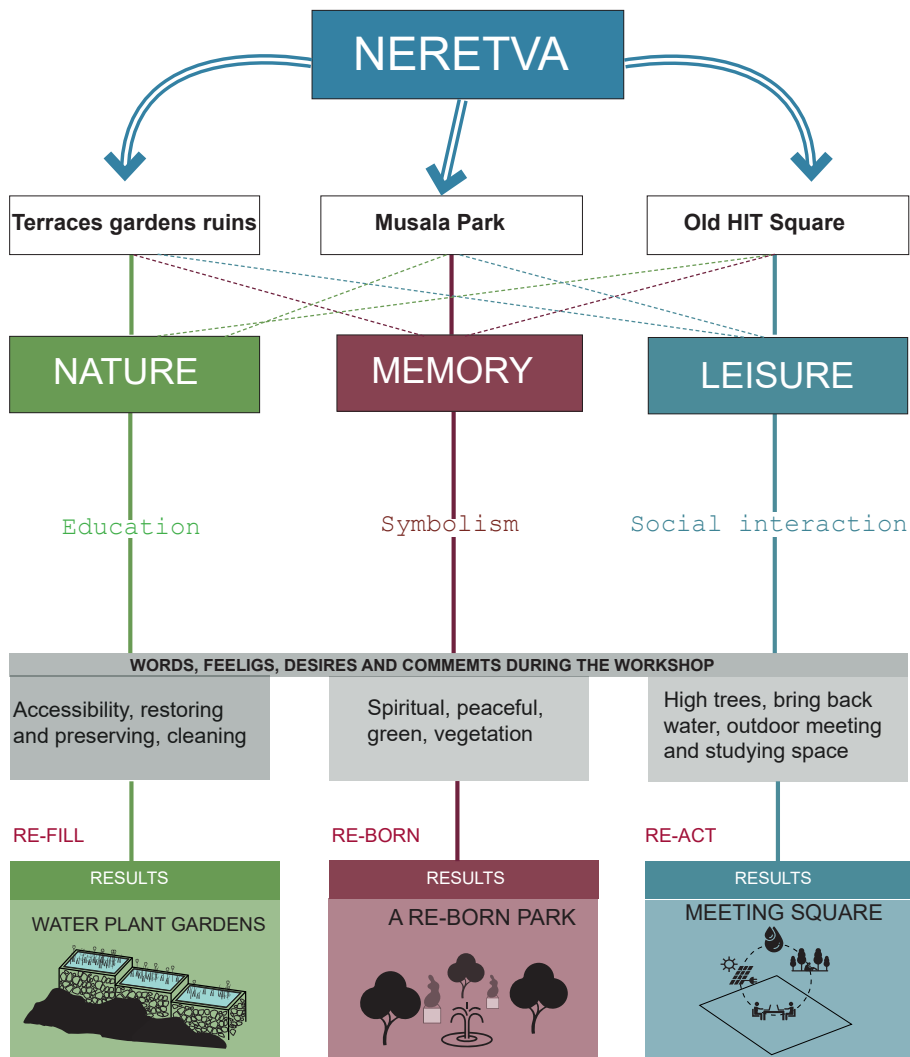
50

100

150

3 Workshop in Mostar: Recollecting memories of the East-West Axis

3.1 Citizens as designers: design inspirations





4 Masterplanning

4.1 Masterplan of the Axis



RE-ACT
THE OLD HIT SQUARE

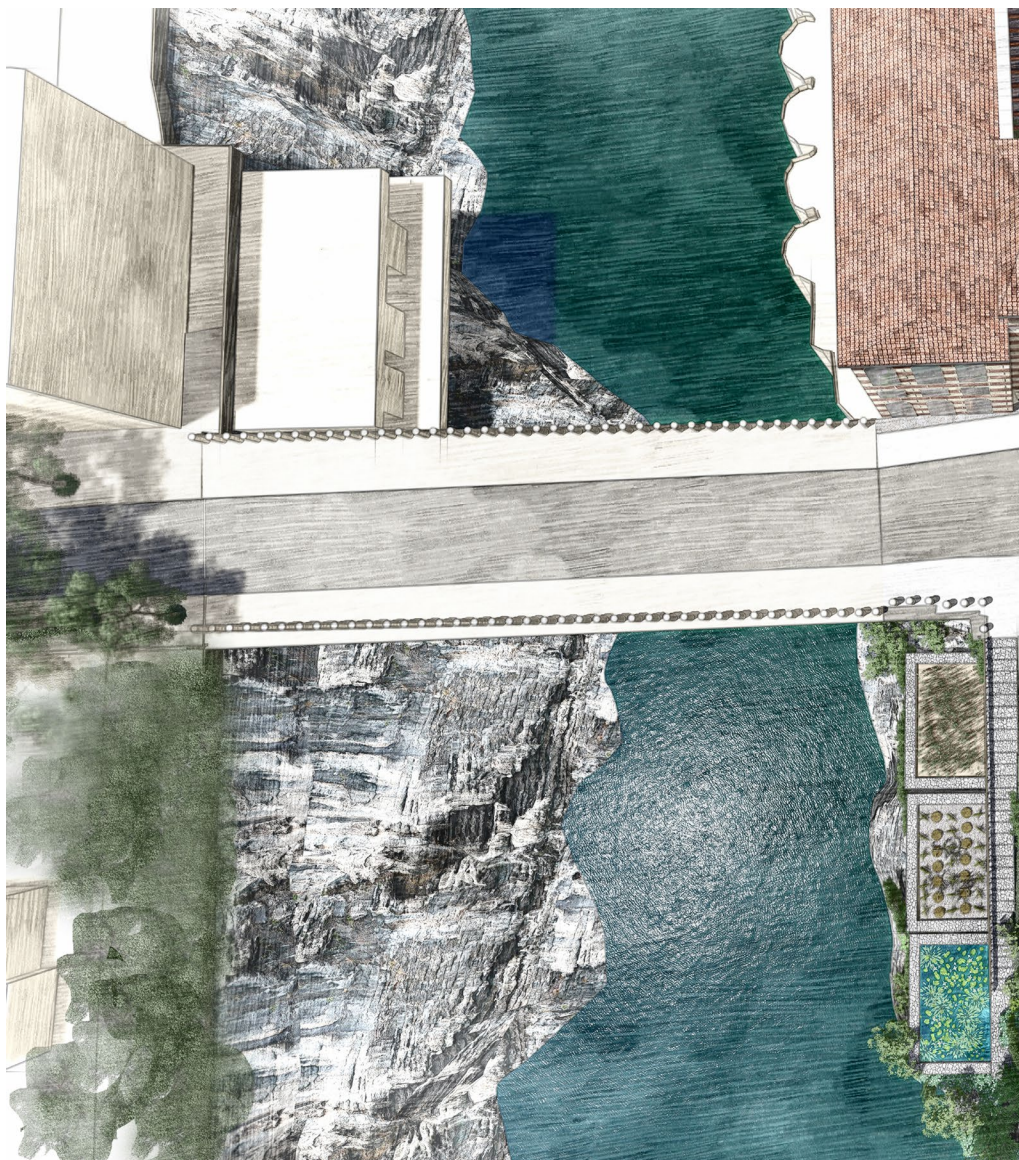


RE-BORN
MUSALA PARK

RE-FILL
WATER PLANTS GARDENS

4.2 Detailed design of three areas

4.2 a Re-fill: Water plant gardens



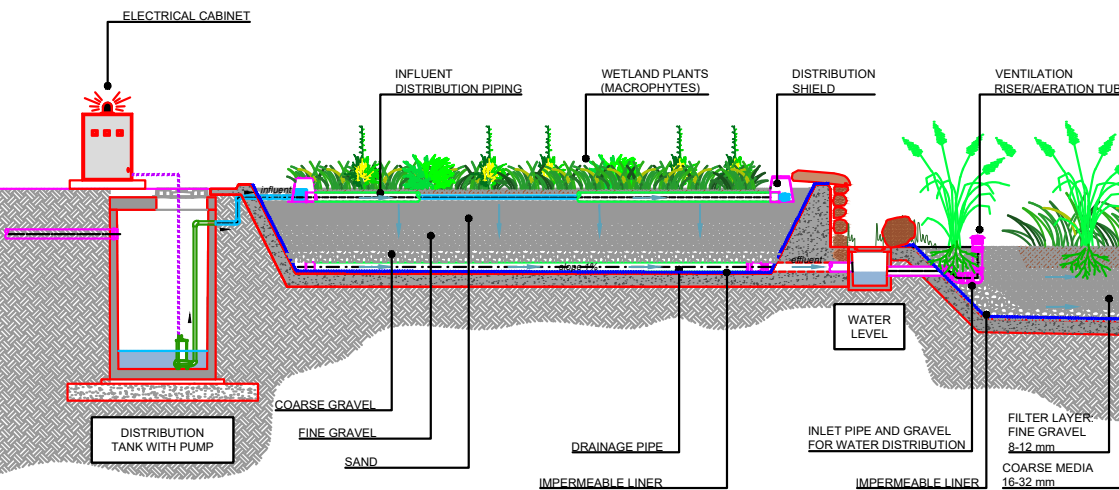
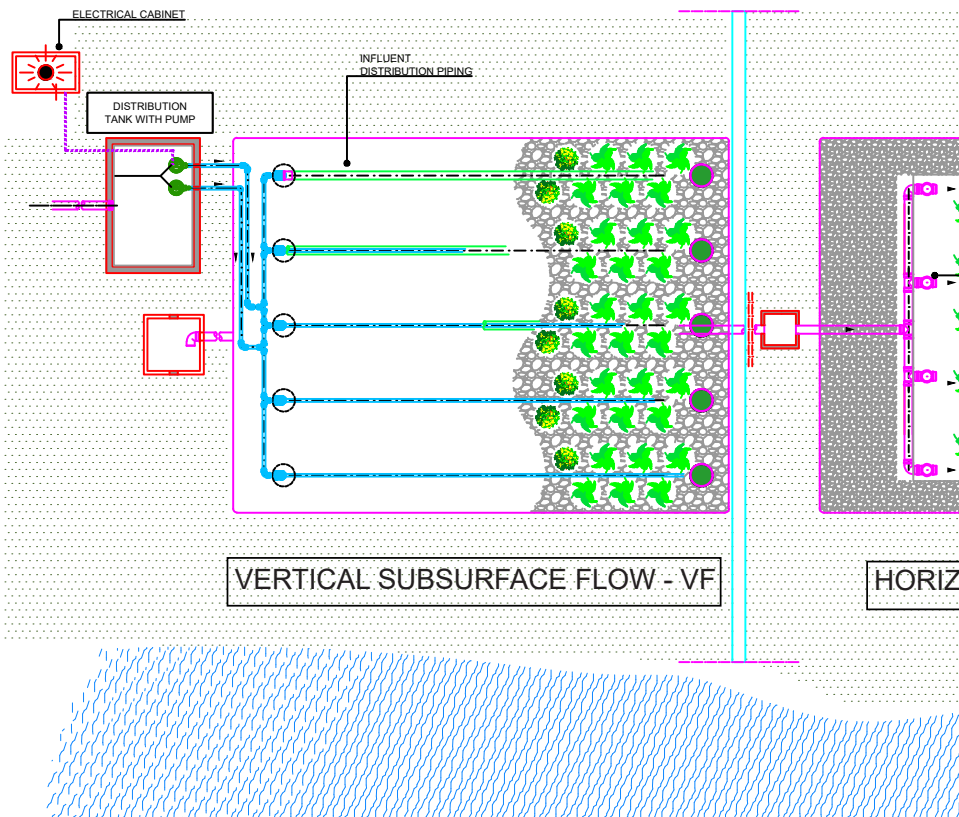


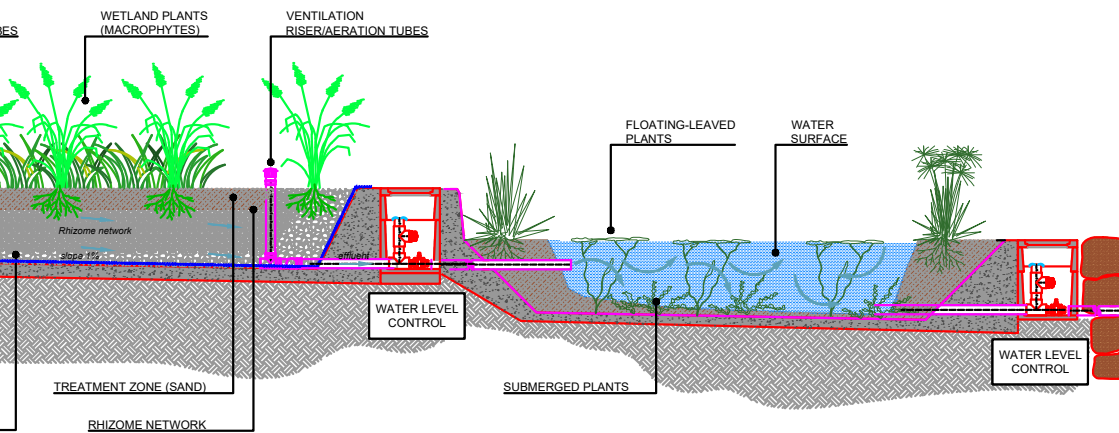
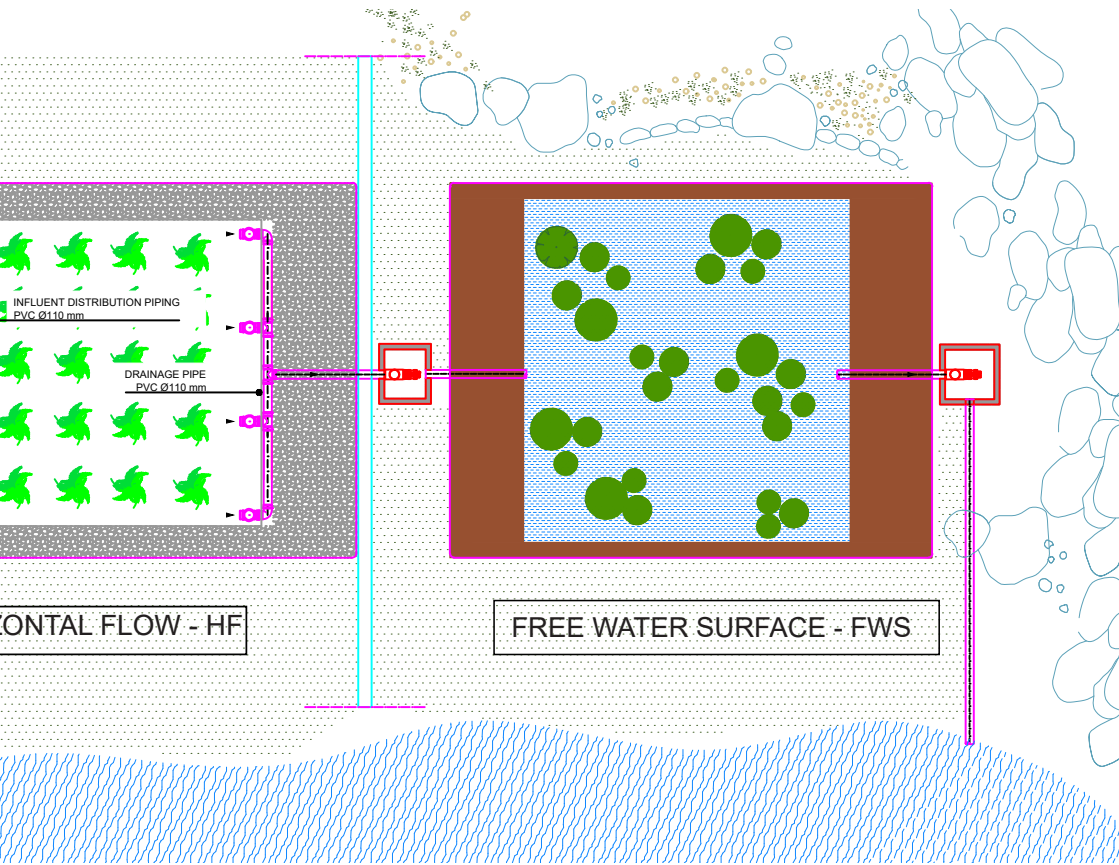


The terraces gardens ruins have been transformed in a phytoremediation system ma
surface. These three flows, combined together, are a natural and efficient way of c



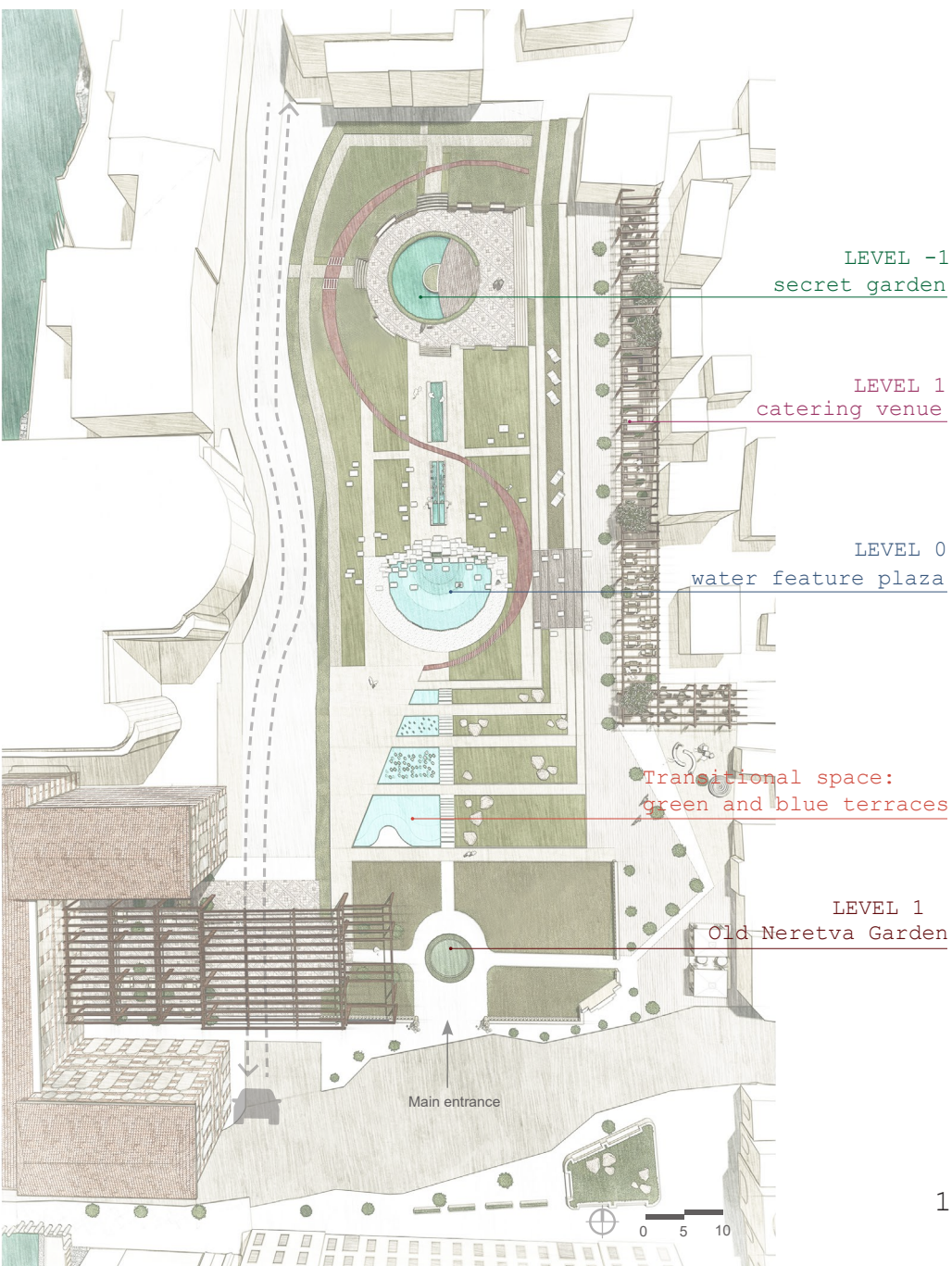
side of 3 different flows: vertical subsurface flow, horizontal flow and free water
cleaning the river water before getting fountains along the Axis



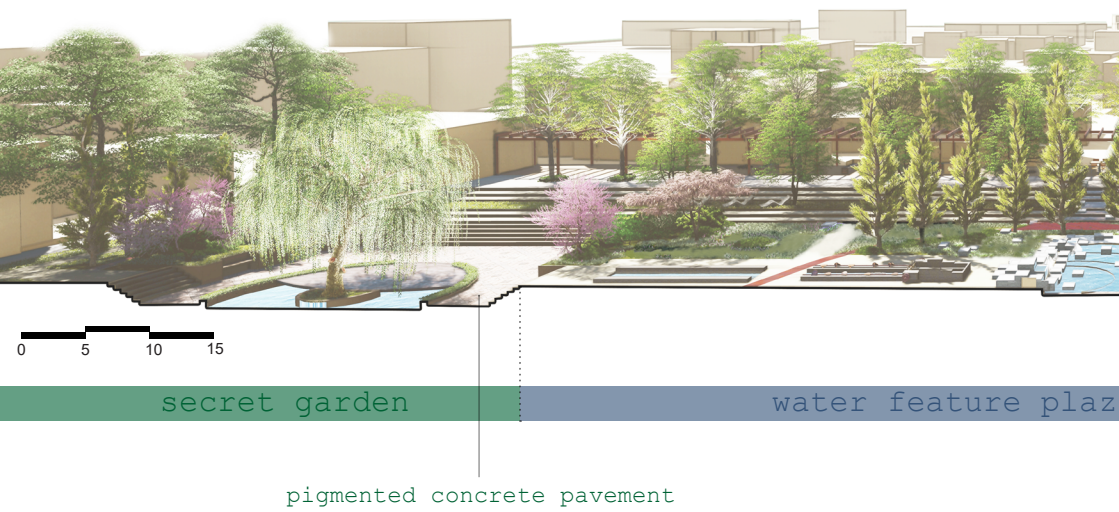


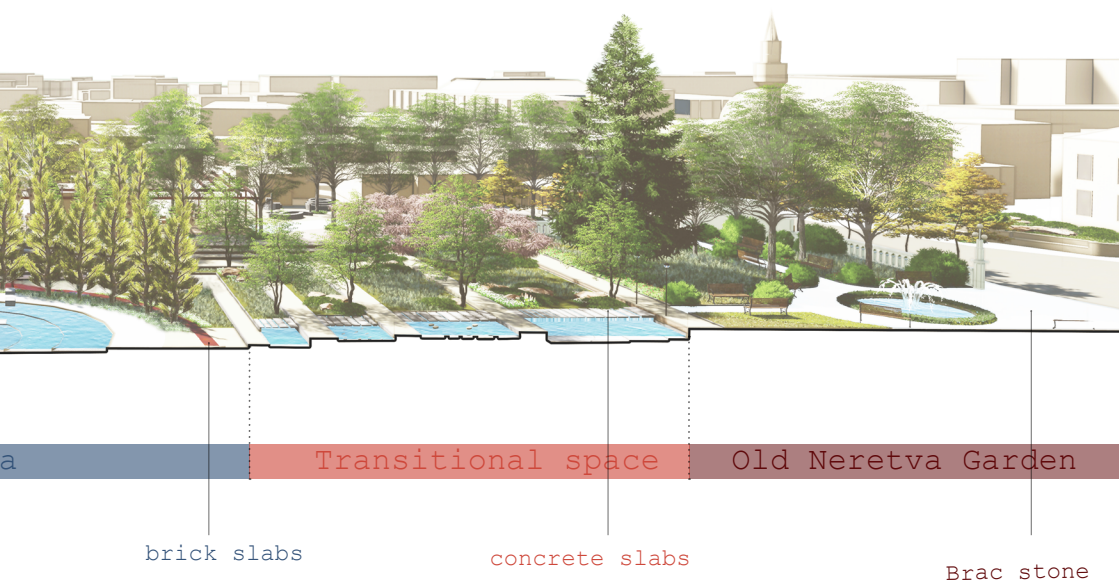
4.2 b Re-born : Musala Park



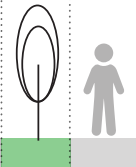


SECTION AA'





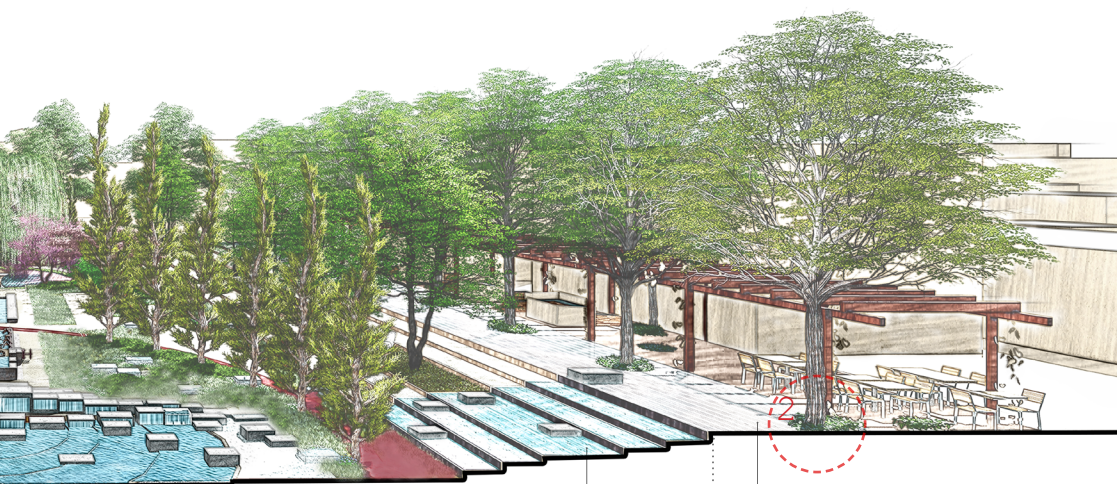
SECTION BB'



car street

water feature

anti-slippery concrete



ture plaza

Transitional space

catering venue

treated wood

continuous combed
concrete

1

0,05 m concrete

0,10 m compact sand

0,20 m gravel

0,05 m brushed concrete

0,05 m compact sand

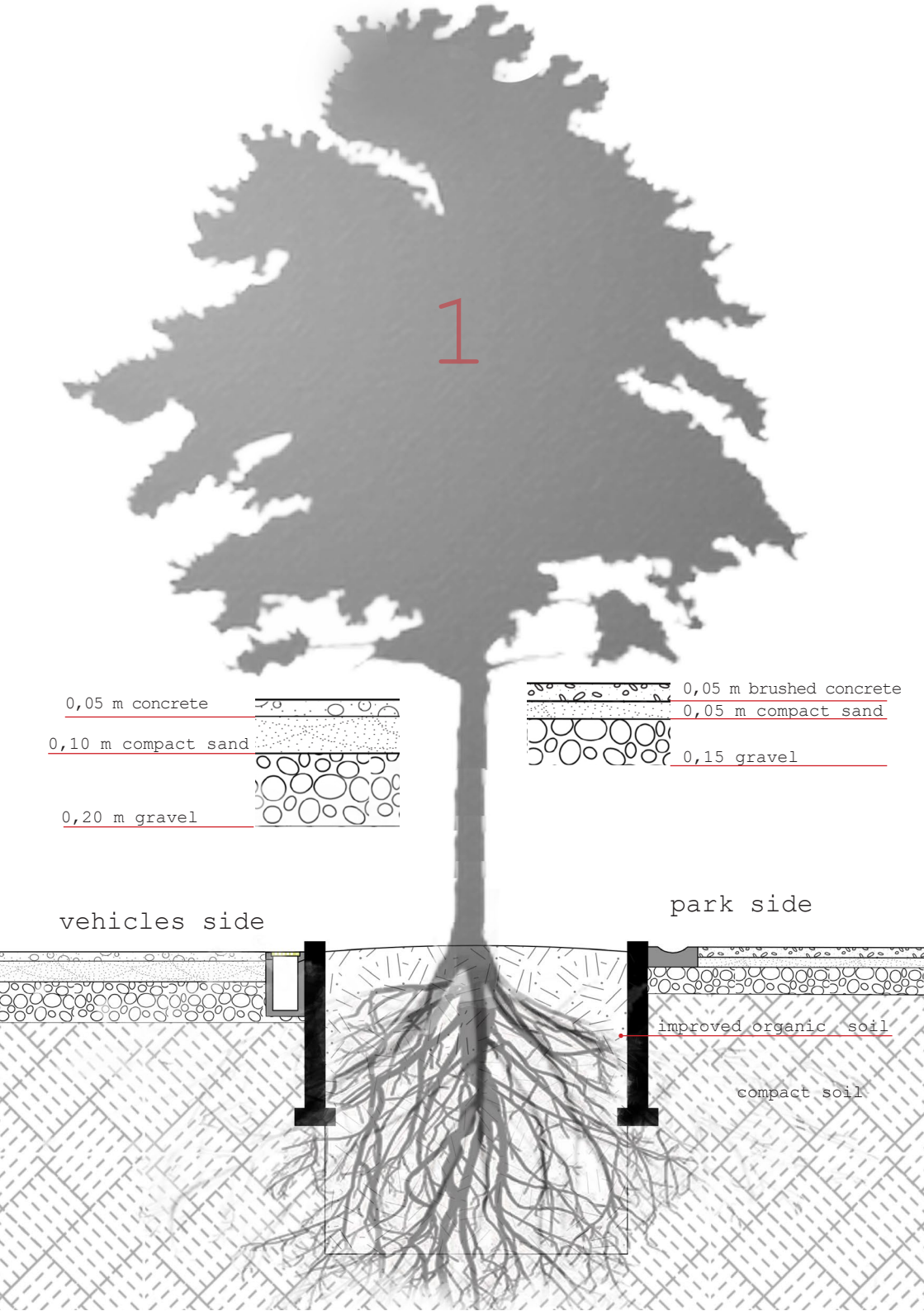
0,15 gravel

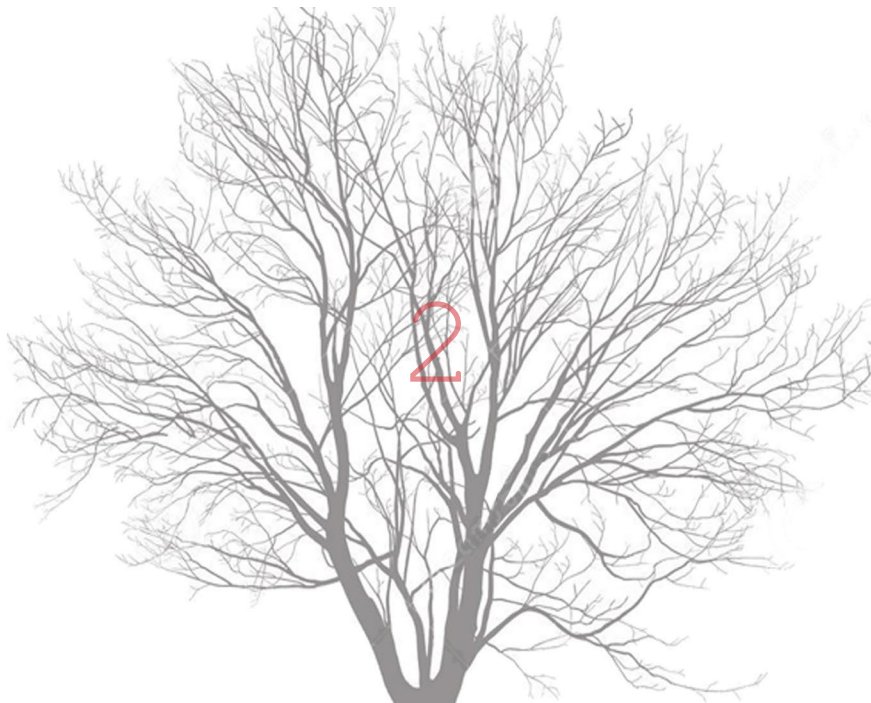
vehicles side

park side

improved organic soil

compact soil

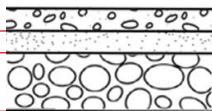




0,05 m brushed concrete

0,05 m compact sand

0,15 gravel



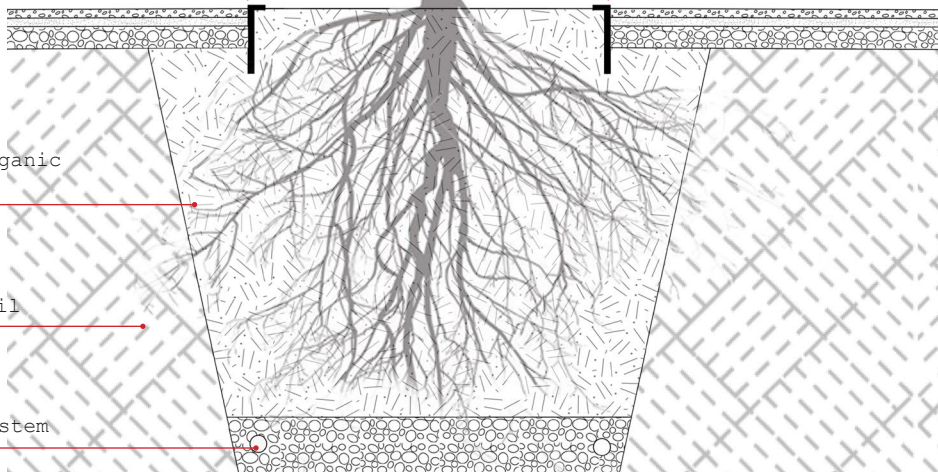
3 m

2 m

improved organic
soil

compact soil

draining system



✓
1



Main entrance to Musala Park, the wall was built with the Brac stone, a white and lighting stone coming from Brac Island, Croatia

✓
2



Reactivation of the fountain and the garden in front of the Hotel Neretva built during the Austro-Hungarian period. The red fishes in the fountain, called Gambusia, once grown up, were realeased in the low part of the Neretva River to eat the mosquito's larvs, fighting malaria

✓
3



Transitional area of the park: from these terraces is possible to access to the hearth of the park, walking along trapezoidal water screens

4 ✓



Interactive fountain: from the white cubes, made of Brac stone, the water flows in form of waterfalls. In this way a playful atmosphere shows the principle of oxygenating water, an ancient system to clean polluted water

5 ✓



Letting people play with these devices increasing the water speed has an educational aim.

6 ✓



Entrance to the secret garden, a lower, enclosed space, where people can isolate themselves, sitting on benches surrounded by high vegetation

Planting scheme Musala Park



Tree lines

Catalpa bignonioides

Liquidambar styraciflua

Cupressocyparis leylandii

Ornamental trees

Picea omorika

Cedrus libani

Salix babylonica

2nd and 3rd order trees

Acer negundo

Schinus molle

Cornus florida

Lagerstroemia indica

Cercis siliquastrum

Low vegetation

Ilex crenata

Juniperus horizontalis

Festuca Arundinacea

Lolium perenne

Tree lines



Catalpa bignonioides

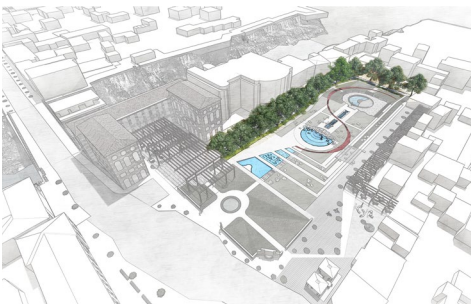
1st order tree

Deciduous tree

Family: Bignoniaceae



Source: <https://www.giardinaggio.it/giardino/alberi/catalpa/catalpa.asp#ixzz5nMWNFUVU>



Liquidambar styraciflua

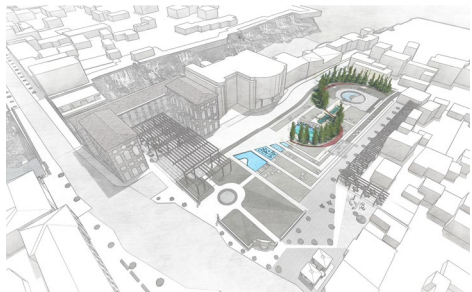
1st order tree

Deciduous tree

Family: Amamelidaceae



Source: <https://www.giardinaggio.it/giardino/alberi/liquidambar/liquidambar.asp#ixzz5nMWvPorj>



Cupressocyparis leylandii

1st order tree

Evergreen tree

Family: Cupressaceae



Source: <https://www.manomano.it/p/24-pi-ante-cipresso-di-leyland-cupressocyparis-leylandii-altezza-80-100-cm-9357422>

Ornamental trees

Picea omorika
1st order tree
Evergreen tree
Family: Pinaceae



Source: <https://www.pinterest.it/pin/381609768399157261/?lp=truesource=1->

Cedrus libani
1st order tree
Evergreen tree
Family: Pinaceae



Source: <https://www.giardinaggio.net/giardino/alberi/cedrus-libani.asp>

Salix babylonica
1st order tree
Deciduous tree
Family: Salicaceae



Source: <http://antropocene.it/2018/12/17/salix-babilonica/>

2nd and 3rd order trees



Acer negundo
2nd order tree
Deciduous tree
Family: Sapindaceae



Source: <https://www.kisspng.com/png-tree-royalty-free-acer-negundo-4788207/download-png.html>

Schinus molle
2nd order tree
Evergreen tree
Family: Anacardiaceae



Source: <http://www.tecnowoodgarden.it/home/81-falso-pepe-schinus-molle.html>

Cornus florida
3rd order tree
Deciduous tree
Family: Cornaceae



Source: <https://www.amazon.com/1-White-Flowering-Dogwood-cornus-florida/dp/B01D12HHFO>

Lagerstroemia indica

3rd order tree

Deciduous tree

Family: *Lithraceae*



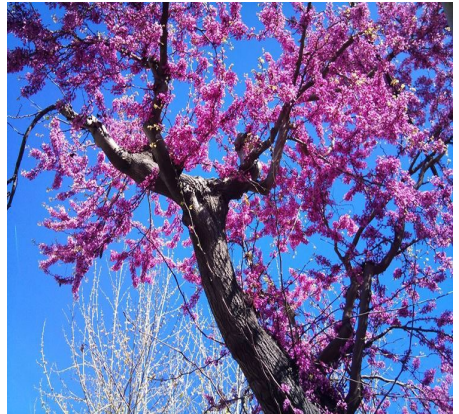
Source: https://doctor-computer.com/334586_lagerstroemia_siepe/334605_lagerstroemia_siepe_2019/

Cercis siliquastrum

3rd order tree

Deciduous tree

Family: *Fabaceae*



Source: <https://www.giardinaggio.it/giardino/singolepiante/alberodigiuda/alberodigiuda.asp#ixzz5nMe7YZ21>

Low vegetation

Ilex crenata

Evergreen tree

Family: *Aquifoliaceae*



Source: <https://www.etsy.com/it/listing/541523771/10-semi-di-ilex-crenata-ilex-crenata>

Juniperus horizontalis
Evergreen tree
Family: Cupressaceae



Source: <https://www.giardinaggio.it/giardino/singolepiante/ginepro/ginepro.asp#ixzz5nMf93200>

Festuca Arundinacea
perennial vegetation
Family: Poaceae



Source: <https://www.bestplant.shop/products/festuca-arundinacea-reed-fescue-seed-wei-zhuang-yang-mao>

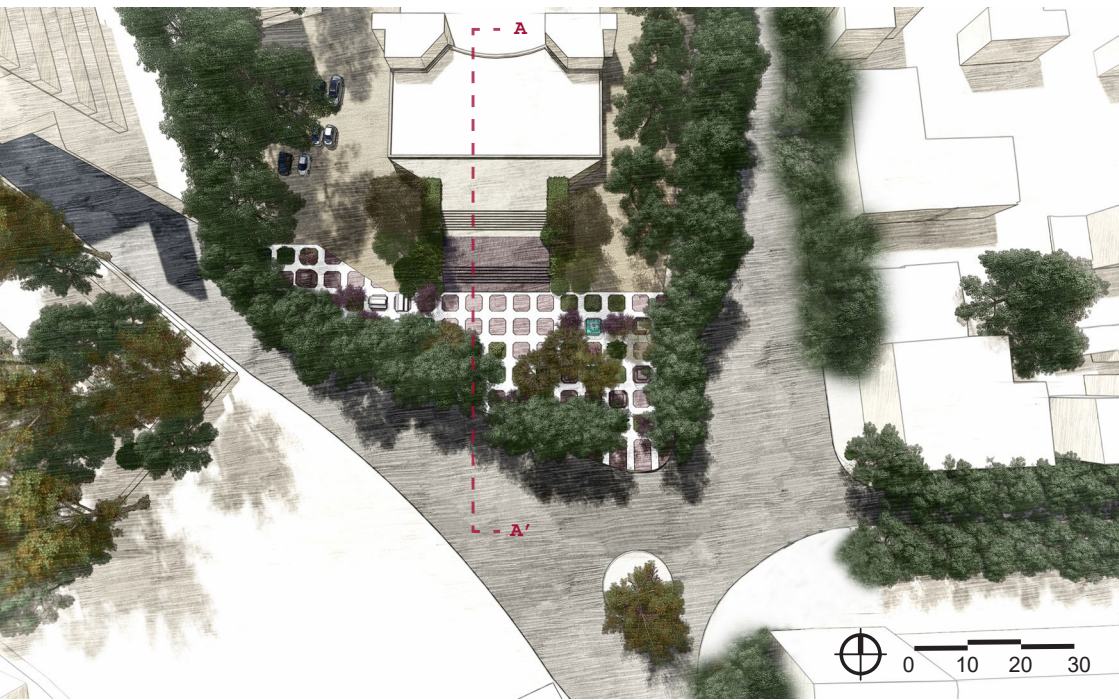
Lolium perenne
Perennial vegetation
Family: Poaceae



Source: <https://www.giardinaggio.it/giardinaggio/prato/lolium-perenne.asp>

Transitional space: planting scheme and
detail sections

4.2 c Re-act: Old HIT Square





Creation of modular enclosed walls made of concrete, with tables and benches.



The fountain of the Old HIT Square is reactivated, becoming again a landmark for the city of Mostar



Extension of the existing stairs on the roof of the Croatian Theater and subsequent use of this new space as a stage for concerts or public performances

CONCLUSIONS

My research objective is to design a social, ecological and spatial connection between Musala Square and Old HIT Square in Mostar by a landscape architecture approach in order to reactivate the East-West axis of Mostar.

To achieve this objective I have to address several issues; the first is represented by the historical analysis of the streets and squares composing the axis. In particular, I have to document the social meanings of them and how they changed through the centuries, what was their use before the war and what is their current situation.

Once recognized their important role as social connectors and gathering points during the pre-war era, I found that this social function has disappeared due to the war consequences. What was the main shared social hub, is now a succession of void spaces with no sign of social life. Finally, I focused my research on revitalisation of three crucial sites along the axis.

The second issue I have to address is the finding of the most appropriate design strategy and resulting principles. As theoretical framework, I have adopted the concept of streetscape as public realm; the definition of public realm is fascinating: it is what we all can share, the open park, the tree-lined street, the pedestrian square. Thanks to this definition, citizens become the main protagonists of the streetscapes. In the case of Mostar, this is particularly true; for this reason, I carefully checked my design proposals in order to avoid evident or subliminal symbols possibly evoking past painful memories and I tried to share my ideas with Mostarci .

The choice of my design strategy was challenging; as backbone strategy, urban acupuncture was surely useful. It is a small-scale intervention approach aimed to revitalize urban void spaces or sites without energy or with negative energy; in particular, public spaces acupuncture (i.e. a landscape architecture approach directed towards public spaces) appeared particularly appropriate for the sites I had identified. In my design strategy, I have adopted the combined (social/ecological) approach proposed by Lerner, De Sola-Morales and Casagrande but suggestions coming from Casanova & Hernandez regarding the citizens' participation were also very pertinent. However, I realized during my research that the mere application of this strategy on the axis reactivation would have not worked because interventions on the axis need a shared symbolic aspect to be effective. In other words, the three sites have to be revitalized through different pinpoint projects but in all of them the same unifying element should be present. According to me, the Neretva river is the ideal common catalyzer; in fact, it is one of the most important, natural and partially forgotten shared symbols of Mostar. It belongs to every citizen of Mostar and no one could affirm that it belongs to a determined ethnic community.

This finding helped me to address the third issue: the possible design interventions. Using the Neretva's water as common catalyzer, I designed three different interventions regarding Musala Park, the terraces ruins under the Tito Bridge and the Old HIT Square.

Musala Park was an important gathering point in the pre-war era but now is an almost abandoned area, illegally occupied by tables and seats coming from cafes and restaurants during the warm season while it is used as storage during the winter season. The design renovates its past function by a combined approach (ecological/social); during my interactive workshop with some Mostar's inhabitants in March 2019, I tested my idea with them and the feed back was positive; they suggested to improve the landscape features recalling the concept of "memory". For this reason, I decided to improve the natural feature with vegetations, plants and flowers and its usability by benches, footpaths and playground but my principal efforts were focused on the two fountains that were re-projected with a small stream between them.

The second site I have taken in consideration is the terraces ruins under the Tito Bridge; before the war, they were terrace gardens easily accessible by people who could walk along the east bank of Neretva. Now, they are completely abandoned and the area is almost inaccessible due to the vegetation overgrowth. The design reactivates the terraces ruins as water plant gardens with Neretva's water inside them. Due to the severe pollution of Neretva river, the design re-thinks the terraces gardens with a phytoremediation function. In this way, people can walk again along the riverside but at the same time know a natural and sustainable means of water remediation.

The third site, the Old HIT Square, was an important social hub during the socialist era. Now, it is occupied by an one-floor building, the so-called Croatian Theater, and a large car parking. The space in front of the new building - once used as a public space - is now abandoned. The design reactivates its past public function mainly by a social approach; the feed back from Mostarci was encouraging but the principal feeling associated with the requalification of the site was "leisure". Thus, the design is focused on providing the area with benches, seats, facilities for reading, studying and having fun; the fountain - currently out of order - is re-projected in order to give the same subliminal message: the Neretva's water is not mine or yours, but of all of us irrespective of our religious or ethnic belonging.

In conclusion, three different interventions adopting the same common thread, the Neretva's water, are aimed to revitalize three crucial sites of the East-West axis of Mostar; conversely, the streetscape discontinuation is re-composed transforming what is currently an incosscious boundary line into a shared social bridge between the two parts of the city.

REFLECTIONS

This graduation thesis aims to reactivate an old axis connecting two different parts of the city of Mostar. The choice of this particular corridor has been adopted not just because of its strategic location - it crosses the city from East to West, two sides that have been rebuilt after the Bosnian war without a coherent urban strategy - but also because every street, square, park and building along it belong to a common heritage, which after the Bosnian war is lost.

Therefore, this axis (I will name it Axis Rondo-Old HIT Square-Musala Square, due to the main squares that it crosses) is ideal for a design strategy, which will have a dual nature: renewing three degraded areas facing the axis and, at the same time, introducing into those spaces one of the most important, natural and partially forgotten heritage: the Neretva River. The use of a natural, dynamic and "memory keeper" element - the river - to connect those three spaces, in particular two squares and one ruin of a terrace garden, could represent the link missing in the Axis and create a new social use, enhancing a sense of responsibility for a common heritage that nowadays is mainly used as a public dump.

1.ETHICAL ASPECTS

Although the new generations have not experienced the tragedy of war - except through the stories of parents or grandparents - Mostar still lives a reality of division documented by the absence of a single administration. Formally there is a single mayor but in reality the two communities are self-administering, setting vetoes on the redevelopment of the so-called "central zone", i.e. where the front line passed. However, what I have realized during my site visits is that this ethnic division is mainly desired on a political level and is not shared by most of the population; this means that there is a dichotomy between political representatives and the people. The problem most perceived by the Mostarci, in addition to unemployment and corruption, is the lack of a shared social space where the ethnic, religious, or cultural identity does not play a predominant role.

For this reason, I have focused my analysis on this part of the city: revitalizing this area would have an undoubted symbolic and therefore political significance because the restitution of the cultural and social role to the axis would probably prompt people - and their representatives - to improve the integration and collaboration between communities.

2.ANALYSIS AND IDEATION

The initial phase was characterized by an accurate historical analysis of the places belonging to the axis, in particular their configuration before the war but above all their social meaning. This analysis is developed through research on texts and articles, as well as interviews carried out during the site visit.

The comparison between the before and after is shocking: beyond the structural and architectural aspect (where there were parks and meeting places, now we observe void spaces and ruins), what is evident is the disappearance of social life - tragically, as if centuries of coexistence has been wiped out. However, I realized as a result of my analysis that this trait of social no man's land is not the irreversible and unchangeable result of the war but the result of political decisions, far from the common feeling of most of the population.

These considerations allowed me to develop the concept of the project: not recreating the past but designing the future combining memory and the sharing of common spaces.

The Neretva river has the historical, natural and symbolic aspects necessary for the Mostari to activate those mechanisms of shared memory that are dormant. First, it belongs to each citizen, irrespective of his/her ethnic group, culture or religion. For this reason, it can be considered one of the few shared symbols of the city.

Secondly, it recalls past periods, when people strolled along its banks without wondering what nationality the other strollers belonged to, or when the young Mostari dived into its waters and swam carefree. Currently, the river is polluted and its banks are difficult to access due to poor maintenance and the overgrowth of vegetation. This caused the Mostari to turn away from their river. I conducted this analysis myself, in situ, walking along the Neretva river banks, overcoming natural and manmade obstacles such as steep slopes, dense vegetation and ruins. The walk under the Tito Bridge was particularly hard: several natural and manmade fences make this part of the river almost unreachable, discouraging the inhabitants to get to the river. This observation is the core of the research question: if the Mostari no longer go to the river, why not take the river to the Mostari?

3.THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN RESEARCH AND DESIGN: THE AXIS AND THE RIVER

Restoring the axis through a landscape architecture approach means considering every feature affecting that particular part of the city. Previous and current spatial configuration was carefully evaluated through texts, photographs and videos. On site interviews enabled me to understand the social meaning of the axis in the past and what is remaining. In the early stages, while identifying Musala Park and the Old HIT Square as the crucial points to be revitalized, I lacked the single common thread able to provide the design with a logical continuity.

Eventually, I identified in the Neretva the unifying element at the core of the project; not just the river itself but also the river's water used in fountains, currently out of order, which will symbolically represent the rebirth of the axis. However the concept of "taking the Neretva to the city" cannot be simplified in a design strategy aimed simply at reactivating a few fountains along the axis by using the river water.

The Neretva is not just flowing water, it is a keeper of memories: stones, ruins, steps, paths... some of them still visible, others erased by the time and by its corrosive power.

All these elements comprise an infinite heritage which needs to be given back to the city.

4.THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE AND DESIGN: A CITY OF FLOWS

The courses attended during the first year of my Master in Landscape Architecture have been crucial to reach my research objectives on the city of Mostar.

At the beginning of my graduation year I became aware about the different flows necessary for a city's survival. I consider a city not as a static and lifeless entity but as a living organism made of both metabolic and human flows. I adopted this way of looking at a city during my analyses in Mostar.

The possibility of working on a thesis that is part of a design graduation lab represented a further point of strength for my final research because I was involved in a team of international students coming from both Architecture and Landscape Architecture tracks.

The site analysis has been developed through different scales, and different approaches and methods have been applied.

5.WHAT I HAVE LEARNT FROM MY OWN WORK

Despite the careful elaboration of a research approach and the choice of an innovative method (urban acupuncture) to propose solutions able to restore the axis, I realized that my work was incomplete due to the lack of interaction with the final users of the project. In other words, the design should take into account - and, indeed, draw its inspiration from - the general perception and feelings of the Mostari themselves. As the end users, they should be at the heart of the project. For this reason, going back to Mostar proves necessary in order to give more relevance to my design theories.

As the Mostari will be the final users of my design, everyday, informal conversations with them about future possibilities for the Axis Rondo-Old HIT Square-Musala Square are the most effective way to gain better insights into the city, and into possible solutions.

However, this may prove difficult, and less natural and free flowing as we don't speak the same language.

One of the things I am learning as a part of my creative studies is that there are different ways of communicating ideas and perceptions, and sometimes the use of words is not the best - or only - strategy.

The use of graphic materials such as photographs, postcards, journals, symbols is an effective way to make locals more collaborative because these items are able to awake lost memories (particularly in the older generations), and at the same time to awaken different feelings in young people.

Obviously one possible limitation of this approach is that due to the nature of the attending people (mainly students), the results may not be generalisable to the whole Mostar's population

6.SCIENTIFIC RELEVANCE

The concept of streetscape that I acquired through the vision of Gordon Cullen's sketches has undoubtedly influenced the theoretical framework of the problem as well as the reading of "Streetscapes" by Colin Davis. This theoretical basis was useful to understand the situation of the East-West axis of Mostar during my site visit and posed the preliminary foundations for the design proposals. The specific methodology I adopted for streetscape solutions owes much to the concept of "urban acupuncture". Urban acupuncture is a small-scale interventional approach aimed to revitalized urban void spaces or city's places without energy or with negative energy. This approach is feasible and successful particularly in healing urban wounds that man has inflicted; in the case of Mostar, these urban wounds produced discontinued streetscapes, clearly visible in the West-East axis connecting West Mostar to East Mostar.

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Revitalizing these urban voids is the starting point, for example, by adding elements that may be missing but the final goal is to renovate the lost urban function. In this way, the previously unfrequented district becomes attractive not only because it provides a service or a function but also because the new visitors attract people. Good acupuncture is when people are stimulated to go out to the streets through the creation of meeting places. What is really intriguing of this strategy is that the achievement of the final objective is reached with sustainable means that combine the ecological approach with the social one.

The organisation of a workshop in Mostar has been crucial for the development of my thesis in order to understand the real and immediate needs of Mostar.

Very often, as external observer, we are tempted to propose huge and extreme designs, while the real needs of a city like Mostar are met by simple interventions with a high impact on the citizens well being. For example, during the workshop, the main proposals coming from the locals - especially students - regarded the creation of public study areas, green spaces, outdoor gathering points.

For this reason, I strongly believe that communication with locals should be an indispensable methodological element to develop a coherent design thesis.

GLOSSARY

Streetscape: the visual elements of one or more streets able to form the street's character

Axis: streets' system connecting two or more parts of a city

No man's land: an indefinite or ambiguous area which none wants to belong to

Urban acupuncture: a landscape architecture approach adopting small-scale interventions to impact on larger urban context.

Fountain: an ornamental structure, usually located in public spaces with different functions: refreshment, recreational, aesthetic

Phytoremediation: a process of decontaminating soil or water by using plants and trees.

Reconnection: landscape architecture capacity to join or be joined with something else again after becoming separated

Memory: to retain, revive and share past facts, events, sensations, feelings, experiences

Shared symbol: animated or inanimated item representing and favouring unity

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