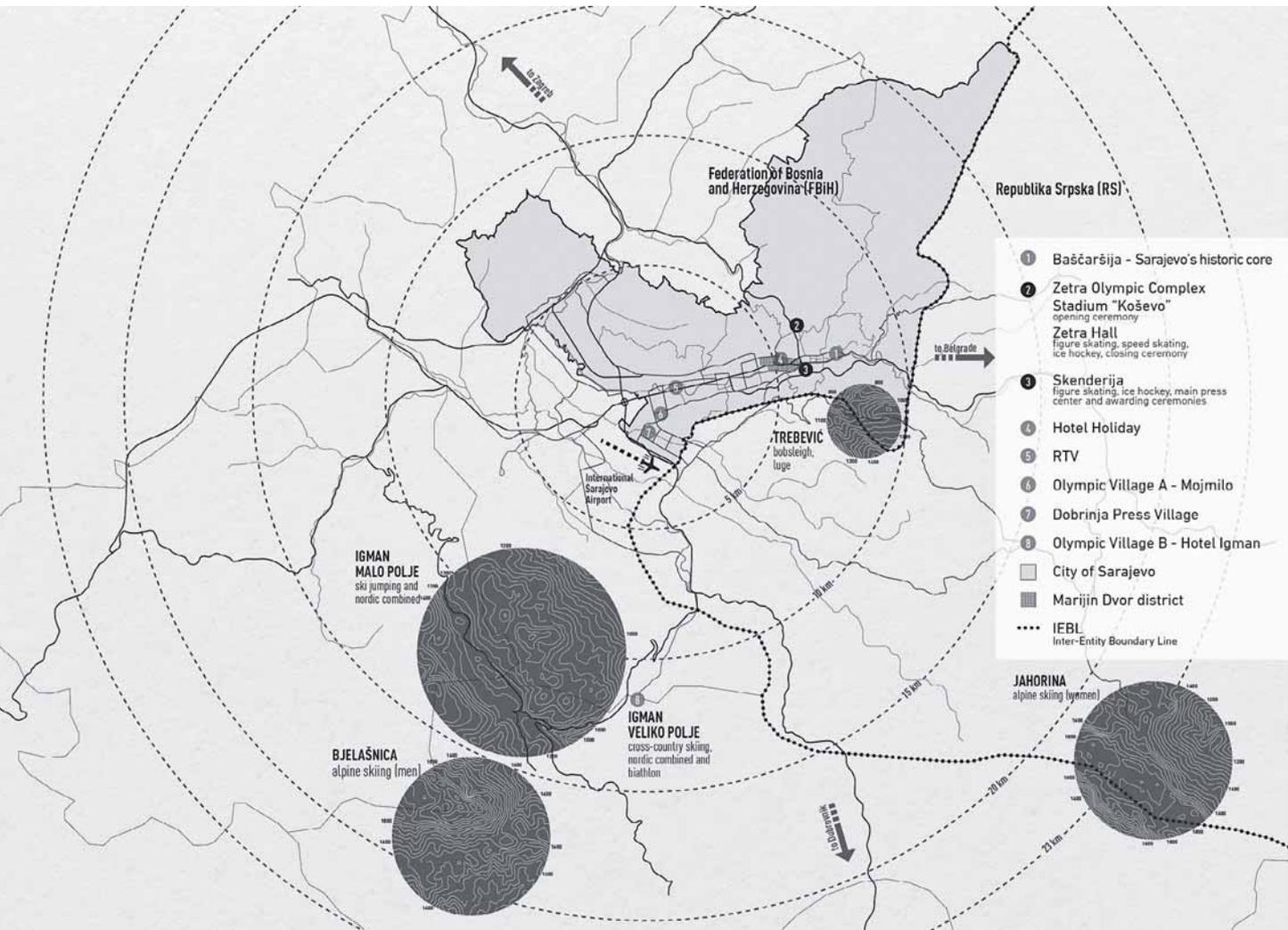


# Analyzing the Contemporary Image of the Olympic City Sarajevo: Modalities, Meanings, and Negotiations

Analýza súčasného obrazu olympijského mesta Sarajevo: modalita, významy a vyjednávanie

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MAP OF SARAJEVO'S OLYMPIC SITES

MAPA OLYMPIJSKÝCH LOKALÍT V SARAJEVE

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Dynamiku transformácií a reprezentácií miest bezpochyby usmerňovali epochálne prechody z industriálnej éry na postindustriálnu a z modernizmu na postmodernizmus. Vzhľadom na význam obrazu mesta a snahu, aby bolo vnímané ako živé a rozvíjajúce sa miesto, sledujú mestá komplexné politické stratégie orientované na spotrebu. Táto snaha zlepšiť obraz mesta a posilniť jeho pozíciu v rámci globálnej dediny sa obzvlášť silne odráža v stratégii megapodujatí. Mnohé mestá, ktoré sa snažia (znovu)vytvoriť si globálny imidž, sa rozhodnú pre masmediálnu udalosť olympijských hier kvôli medzinárodnej značke, globálnemu publiku televíznych prenosov a atraktivnosti pre firemných sponzorov (Burbank, Andranovich, Heying, 2002; Hall, 1993).

Olympijské symboly a rituály sa stávajú súčasťou olympijského divadla s cieľom koncepcne vybudovať a vizuálne komunikovať želanú vizuálnu identitu hostiteľského mesta. Úsilie vytvoriť olympijské mesto ako viditeľnú a autentickú lokalitu vychádza z moderných ideálov zakladateľa moderných olympijských hier baróna Pierra de Coubertina. Svojím interkultúrnym charakterom olympijské hry ako akty ukotvenia priestoru rekonfigurujú urbánnu a sociálnu realitu miest a prinášajú zreteľnú vizuálnu identitu, v ktorej sa odráža identita hostiteľského národa, kultúry a spoločnosti.

Tento článok je príspevkom k rastúcemu objemu literatúry, ktorej cieľom je skúmať vplyv megapodujatí na vytváranie obrazu mesta v rámci rastu globálnej kultúry. Skúma metamorfózu vytvorenej identity olympijského mesta Sarajeva, ktoré v roku 1984 hostilo XIV. zimné olympijské hry a len o osem rokov neskôr sa počas vojny v rokoch 1992 – 1995 stalo dejiskom najdlhšieho obliehania v dejinách moderného vedenia vojny. Prostredníctvom analýzy multimodálnej povahy semiotickej krajiny Sarajeva si príspevok kladie otázky v súvislosti s rolou olympijských znakov a symbolov v súčasnom Sarajeve.

Od terra incognita a mesta, ktorého meno bolo vo svete neoddeliteľne spojené s atentátom na Františka Ferdinanda a začiatkom prvej svetovej vojny, cez hostovanie XIV. zimných olympijských hier v roku 1984 a najdlhšie obliehanie v dejinách moderných vojen len o osem rokov neskôr až po súčasnosť sa obraz Sarajeva drasticky zmenil. Stopy rôznych historických období spolu vytvárajú mozaiku významov, alebo to, čo Jaworski a Thurlow nazývajú skutočným „festivalom znakov“ (Jaworski a Thurlow, 2010).

Myšlienka hostiť olympijské hry v roku 1984 sa objavila vo veľmi špecifických podmienkach. Politicky a štruktúrne motivovaná vlna významných podujatí sa šírila aj v iných juhoslovanských mestách. Medzinárodné podujatia, ako napríklad Stredozemné hry 1979 v Split, Zimné olympijské hry 1984 v Sarajeve a Univerzitné hry 1987 v Záhrebe, nadobudli pre Juhosláviu nový význam. Spomedzi všetkých týchto podujatí to boli práve olympijské hry v Sarajeve, ktoré predstavovali medzinárodné uznanie úspechu Juhoslávie ako národa a ocenenie jej športového rozvoja. Sarajevská olympiáda propagovala Juhosláviu „ako zdravé stelesnenie olympizmu“ (PEDROTTY, 2010. *Yugoslav Unity and Olympic Ideology at the 1984 Sarajevo Winter Olympic Games*. In: Grandits, H. and Taylor, K. (eds.) *Yugoslavia's sunny side: A history of tourism in socialism (1950s–1980s)*. Budapešť: Central European University Press, s. 335 – 363).

Hry boli potvrdením olympijského hnutia, „ktorého humánne ideály sú totožné s mierovou politikou Titovej nezúčastnenej Juhoslávie“ (Organizačný výbor XIV. zimných olympijských hier 1984 v Sarajeve. *ZÁVEREČNÁ SPRÁVA*, 1984. Sarajevo: Oslobođenje, s. 190). Obraz, ktorý sa vysielal do sveta, bol obrazom hlavného mesta Socialistickej republiky Bosna a Hercegovina (SRBiH), krajiny, ktorá sa počas juhoslovanského socializmu bežne označovala ako „Juhoslávia v menšom“, pretože v rámci Juhoslávie mala centrálnu geografickú polohu a hoci bola miestom multietnickej rozmanitosti, žiadna národnosť v nej nedominovala.

Vo vykonštruovanej identite mesta bola kľúčová úloha olympijských znakov a symbolov a najmä areálov a športovísk. Olympijský projekt pre Sarajevo mal jasné urbanistické zámery, najmä pokiaľ ide o konsolidáciu všetkých prvkov olympijského programu v rámci už existujúcich strategických plánov rozvoja mesta, ktoré mali prispieť k zimnému turizmu a komunitnej vybavenosti po skončení hier. Na využitie doposiaľ nevyužitého prírodného potenciálu, vybudovanie nových športovísk, obytných a pohostinských zariadení a infraštruktúry boli vynaložené značné investície. Mesto expandovalo fyzicky aj technologicky a ikonická architektúra vytvorila silné mestské emblémy a miesta pamäti. Vďaka blízkosti hôr sa všetky olympijské zariadenia a športoviská mohli naplánovať a zorganizovať v maximálnom okruhu len 22,5 km, pričom mnohé z nich boli priamo v meste. Medzi najvýznamnejšie zariadenia vytvorené pre potreby olympijských hier 1984 patrili súťažné areály a lokality a ďalšie sprievodné zariadenia na štyroch pahorkoch obklopujúcich mesto (Bjelašnica, Igman, Jahorina a Trebević) a v samotnom meste.

Prezentovanie Sarajeva ako olympijského mesta bolo záležitosťou značne dlhého časového obdobia. Už v 70. a 80. rokoch 20. storočia sa olympijské hry používali ako nástroj urbanizácie a modernizácie mesta. Dnes, 38 rokov po olympijských hrách, je obraz Sarajeva ako olympijského mesta fragmentárny a pri najmenšom zložitý. Chronológia dvoch po sebe nasledujúcich udalostí, olympijských hier a vojny, viedla k mnohým nezlúčiteľnostiam, rozporom a rozkolom. Paralelné čítanie súčasného obrazu olympijského mesta a súvisiacich znakov a symbolov je striedavo reinterpretované cez prizmu olympijských hier a vojny a vznikajú tak obrazy mesta, ktoré odhaľujú mnohé nejednoznačnosti. Mestské obrazy eufórie a spektaklu sa neustále prelínajú s obrazmi traumy a utrpenia, čím vzniká určitý odpor voči spomínaniu a potreba pevne sa držať najslávnejšieho obdobia vývoja mesta.

Olympijská architektúra v Sarajeve je považovaná za osobitú vrstvu mesta – symbol olympijských hier a uznávaný pamätník hodný úcty. Napriek metamorfóze, ktorou všetky olympijské objekty a areály prešli po olympiáde v roku 1984, navzdory ich zmenenej úlohe počas vojny v 90. rokoch a v období po nej – ich „druhému životu“ (keďže väčšina olympijských objektov a areálov bola čiastočne alebo úplne zničená), napriek slabej údržbe a veľkým problémom s funkčnosťou, zostávajú vlajkové projekty postavené pre olympiádu 1984 najdôležitejšími pamiatkami v meste a najväčšími sarajevskými projektmi. Je však pravda, že prívlastok olympijský neznamenal, že olympijské objekty

a areály boli imúnne voči rôznym procesom transformácie, ktoré nastali po vojne v 90. rokoch.

Sarajevo sme v tomto príspevku analyzovali ako fenomén komunikácie, čo nám umožňuje širšie pochopenie toho, prečo veci fungujú tak, ako fungujú. V krehkom prostredí súčasného Sarajeva je otázka reprezentácie veľmi problematická. Je príkladom praktík, ktoré sa vyvinuli z rôznych stratégií ovplyvnených spoločensko-politickými podmienkami. Existujú rôzne systémy posolstiev, ktoré sú úzko prepojené, znaky a posolstvá sú sprostredkované fasádami budov. Kompozícia jednotlivých odkazov roztrúsených po meste spolu vytvára koncert mnohých posolstiev. Symboly olympijských hier sú vnorené medzi ďalšími znakmi a symbolmi. Symboly zimnej olympiády 1984 sú roztrúsené bez veľkého ohlasu a podobne ako prírodná

krajina sa strácajú v neustále sa meniacej, no všadeprítomnej krajine.

Táto práca rozpletá zložitú sieť interakcií medzi formou a materialitou súkromných a vládnych znakov, priestorovú pozíciu a predovšetkým vzťah olympijských znakov k iným znakom, ako aj ich viditeľnosť a význam. Súčasný prístup k miestam pamäti v Sarajeve je pomerne zjednodušený a banálny. Realizuje sa prostredníctvom interpretačných znakov a symbolov umiestnených na verejných priestranstvách a budovách. Zoči-voči prerušovaným pokusom Sarajeva uchovať si obraz olympijského mesta v tradičnom zmysle sa môžeme zamyslieť nad tým, či sa naše tendencie neobmedzujú len na obnovovanie toho, čím bolo mesto kedysi, a na nástojenie na jasnosti tvárou v tvár niečomu oveľa spornejšiemu a náročnejšiemu.

## Introduction

"The city itself can be read as text, as a festival of signs – 'iconosphere', in which tensions between globalizing and localizing displays of words and images manifest the aggressive ideology and dominance of global capitalism and often struggling, local identities of communities rooted in 'real' or 'imagined' places. As the competing voices of overlapping communities contend for visibility and for economic and political survival, the mosaic of different texts becomes commodified and objectified in creating a dazzling spectacle and an icon of modern city scrutinized and consumed by the gaze of the international tourists."<sup>1</sup>

Cities are evocative places where people are lured into many proximate interactions, often by happenstance, often fleetingly, and often on an unequal basis.<sup>2</sup> All cities convey messages; the desirable one are practical, symbolic, and persuasive to people as they move about. Bakshi notes that along with physical experience of the daily praxis, images and representations define understandings of the city.<sup>3</sup> The superimposed images, signs, and symbols craft and determine the city and its meaning.

Beyond any doubt, it was the epochal transitions from the industrial to the post-industrial period and from modernism to postmodernism that have guided the dynamics of transformations and representations of cities. In following the growth of global culture (notions of place and market and expanding information technologies), one can say that representation of the cities developed from the late nineteenth century occurred in parallel indeed in a kind of symbiotic interaction, with the development of different forms of mass media.

In the book *The Society of the Spectacle*, Guy Debord criticizes consumer culture and the fetishism of the commodity, highlighting the omnipresent affirmation of the mass media, and production of space that gives rise to class alienation and cultural homogenization.<sup>4</sup> Following the ideas of Debord, contemporary society is impregnated by manifestations such as advertising, displaying, consuming, and commercializing.

David Harvey cogently argues that it was neoliberal economic policies which influenced the importance attached to the image or appearance of a certain kind of urban environment.<sup>5</sup> The idea of a pure imaginability, oblivious to the real needs and traditions of those who inhabit a place, has been criticized as an approach to the development strategy of the city. This concern with the potency of the image to redefine the civitas and experience of the city makes it clear that the image or representation is not an innocent player in the background but rather a major force in defining the urban environment.

In a world dominated by media and marketing, architecture holds a key position in the growth of the image industry. More than ever, architectural environments rely on the production of signs and images where the liability of certain consumer markets depends on pairing stylistic variety with instant recognizability.<sup>6</sup> Venturi refers to this architecture of styles and signs as antispatial, affirming that "it is an architecture of communication over space; communication dominates space as an element in the architecture and in the landscape. But it is for a new scale of landscape."<sup>7</sup>

Jencks acknowledges how the self-important buildings that characterize our time were created as a result of modernization, constant upheavals of the marketplace and even spiritual inflation.<sup>8</sup>

In an effort to surpass the previous one, each new design aspires to be more extraordinary and shocking. Each new design must be instantly recognizable and even more iconic to fulfill society's appetite for excitement. Branding and architecture have developed an intimate relationship where architecture is used progressively as a central part of an 'image making' and a large marketing strategy.

Notwithstanding its pervasive influence on architecture and urbanism, branding has a controversial reputation. Today's brandscapes, as exemplified by corporate franchises, signature buildings, shopping centers, expositions, and planned residential development, have resulted in a culture of the copy, imitating one another in their offerings and aesthetics. The relatively stable aesthetic of Fordist modernism has given way to all the ferment, instability, and fleeting qualities of a postmodernist aesthetic that celebrates difference, ephemerality, spectacle, fashion, and the commodification of cultural forms.<sup>9</sup>

Given the significance of a city's image and the aspirations for it to be seen as a vibrant place and stage for further development, cities pursue ever more complex consumption-oriented policy strategies. It is no coincidence, therefore, that despite the intangibility of an image, it continues to be critical to local economic development.<sup>10</sup> This desire to enhance the city's image and elevate its position in the global village is particularly amplified in the mega-event strategy. Much attention has been paid to the importance of image, ephemera and spectacle that have given a new impetus to events, as the creators and carriers of meaning and wealth in cities. Event images have become so important that they "are starting to dominate the natural or physical features in the identification of cities"<sup>11</sup> In such a context of intercity competition, urban policies promote cities as commodities where the efforts of the cities for the characteristic 'physiognomy' and place identity in the global urban system, epitomize key morphological means for city 'branding'. The Olympic Games as mass-media events have emerged as the event of choice for many cities looking to (re)create a global image due to the international brand name, global reception audience, and attractiveness to corporate sponsors.<sup>12,13</sup>

The present work contributes to an emerging body of literature that aims to explore the impact of mega-events on city image making in the growth of global culture. It examines the metamorphosis of the created identity of the Olympic city in the context of the city of Sarajevo both as host to the XIV Winter Olympics in 1984 and, only eight years later during the war (1992 – 1995), as the site of the longest siege in the history of modern warfare. Moreover, by analyzing the multimodal nature of the semiotic landscape of Sarajevo, it questions the role of the Olympic signs and symbols in contemporary Sarajevo.

Drawing on the work of Jaworski and Thurlow, the semiotic landscape is here considered in the most general sense, as any (public) space with a visible inscription made through deliberate human intervention and capable of generating meaning.<sup>14</sup> Applying the central contention that all signs and symbols have a potential to make certain meanings available and rule out others, this work identified the set of factors that determine Sarajevo's image. The conclusion addresses the vastly extended imaginary of the city open to interpretation in the period after the Games.

## **Olympic City as Constructed Identity: Past and Present**

MacAloon examines the contemporary Olympic Games as a complex cultural form of 'performance' or 'communication' where four analytically distinct genres are simultaneously engaged, namely 'festival', 'ritual', 'spectacle', and 'game' (or 'play' and 'sport').<sup>15</sup>

The symbolism expressively used in the modern Olympic tradition during the years of preparation and especially during the games themselves, is bound up with the theatrical-religious stage or framework of the Olympic city itself. Roche observed that the supernationalist trend in world politics and the influence of supernationalism on mega-events in general during this time influenced the urge to build special trans-national symbols and rituals in the Olympics during the inter-war years.<sup>16</sup>

For the conceptual construction and visual communication of the desired visual identity of the host city, the Olympic symbols and rituals effectively become part of the Olympic theatre. The Olympic symbols (motto, five-ring flag, flame, torch relay and mascot) and rituals (ceremonies - the opening and closing ceremonies, and the victory ceremonies) were developed gradually, mostly during the inter-war period, from a general vision of the Olympic movement and under the influence of various circumstances. These symbols and rituals bring together a variety of metaphors and

embody cosmic meanings in the docile spaces of an Olympic host landscape. As such, all official signage for the Olympics resonates with symbolic and ceremonial displays as part of creating an aestheticized and exotic landscape for the purpose of forming a space of spectacle.

Not only do signs, symbols, and rituals embody the image of the event but also the creation of the sites and buildings. Thus, important markers include the buildings and venues themselves as symbolic settings, a de facto 'sacred site' for the duration of the Games. These are the places where the visibility and salience of the Olympic signs and symbols most forcefully demand attention. The effort to create the Olympic city as a visible and authentic place stems from the modern ideals of the founder of the modern Olympic Games, Baron Pierre de Coubertin. These acts of anchoring space with the cross-cultural character of the Games reconfigure the urban and social realities of the cities and bring a distinct visual identity where the identity of the host nation, culture, and society is reflected. These represented realities are often criticized in terms of the polished image of the cities, showing the city in a utopian image different from its actual reality. However, as Banks points out "the key point, in the case of visual representation, is that the thing seen - the representation - is a thing in its own right, not merely a substitute for the thing unseen, the thing represented".<sup>17</sup>

Although Coubertin invested much time in defining the character of the Olympic setting as a solid foundation, in terms of Olympic infrastructure, size, and general concept at the same time encouraging trial and error design to reconcile the emerging Olympic needs, over-lavishing settings and excessive costs are common attributes of the Olympics projects. The same objections are also seen in the context of making an Olympic city, where architecture very often fails to establish sensitive connections to immediate contexts by imposing standardized forms and formulas by severing their identity from the complexity of the social fabric. In the same manner, Olympic architecture has been largely equated with icon-making and signature architecture. From 1908 when the first Olympic architecture, the White City Stadium, was designed for the fourth Games in London, towards the 1960s growth in the economy and technological progress that marked the start of a move towards gigantism as seen in the Rome 1960 and Tokyo 1964, until today, design and development for the Olympics is fueled with a certain type of grand gestures.

Tzanoudaki identified two distinct periods in the growth of the Olympic city as a visual representation with prevailing characteristics, meanings, and values.<sup>18</sup> The first is the modern period, during which design and architecture serve to express the goals of the host country and city for modern growth. As such, the representation of the Olympic city was influenced by the modernist ideologies proclaimed by Le Corbusier and the CIAM. Monumental forms and national symbols became associated with the architecture and design of the Olympic city to leave a lasting impression. The second is the postmodern period in which host cities and nations exploited the events' alluring power as a canvas for political imagineering and as preferred routes to enhanced place branding strategy. It is in this period that the aspirations of a nation or a city begin to seek a temporarily displayed, fashionable image of the host city. In such a setting, the visual identity of the Olympic city is "not necessarily connected with the new, but with the different, based on design elements and a created aesthetic atmosphere."<sup>19</sup>

In the past, the representation of the Olympic city was characterized as a live experience, with the number of visitors acting as the primary barometer of the event's scale. The image of the Olympic city was strengthened by the public rituals and festivities associated with the Games that gave an important role in the Olympic competition's facilities but also in the city life. However, to experience an Olympic event today, it is no longer necessary to travel and watch it in situ. In fact, the widespread broadcasting of sporting competitions since the 1980s has meant that the vast majority of those who watch an event do so on TV or other media.<sup>20</sup> This growth underscores the extent to which large events are mediated rather than directly experienced. And by extension, their design focus has expanded to branding and communication design, merchandising, and sponsorship, rather than the physical architecture of the facilities and site itself.<sup>21</sup> The emphasis given to the Olympic Games as a broadcasted experience in the postmodern era has changed the priorities given to the visual identity of the Olympic city, from an urban experience relying on street rituals and festivities to "a rush of images from different spaces almost simultaneously, collapsing the world's spaces into a series of images on a television screen."<sup>22</sup>

Clearly, from the inception of the first modern Olympic Games in 1896 until today, the Olympic movement in parallel with the development of the Olympic project was exposed to various

historical momentums and other events that directly or indirectly affected the Olympics' realization but also their visual representation. Among others, this change is evident in the example of the Berlin 1936 Olympics, known as the Nazi Olympics, where the representation of the city was directed by Adolf Hitler. The Games promoted an image of a new, strong, and united Germany while they camouflaged the fact that the Games were used as a show for regime's propaganda. Against the visual representation of the city influenced by a representative of the political regime, the image of Barcelona's 1992 Olympics is the exemplar of cities looking for global reach by mediating a fashionable and contemporary image of the city.

Compared to 126 years earlier, the nature and magnitude of the Olympic Games had dramatically changed, "from small-scale events of modest influence, into colossal scale, high-profile global celebration."<sup>23</sup> Consequently, a change occurred in the priorities given to the visual identity of the Olympic city, criteria and means used for the city image construction, as well as the role of the design and architecture for the Olympic city.

All the Olympics icons simultaneously signal their function and importance during the Games. Undoubtedly, they convey the spirit of Olympism as they are both useful and memorable. Evidently, a powerful mechanism is employed to (re)create the image of the city worth worshipping, but the remaining question is: how much of the Olympic symbolism remains in the city after the Games? Certainly, the built environment and rich legacy is a measure of what was left after the Games. But how are the Olympic signs and symbols to be understood in the period after the Games? What is the role of the Olympic design and architecture in reading the city?

### **The Constructed Identity of Sarajevo as an Olympic City**

The portrait of the city of Sarajevo reflects its history in a spatial manifestation through distinct city episodes. The narrative of the city develops along the Miljacka River, stretching approximately ten kilometers from the historical precinct established by the Ottomans in the 15th century in the east to the western suburb of Ilidža. This transition from the eastern end of the city, from the Ottoman core and Austro-Hungarian center to the socialist and post-socialist extensions towards the west, reveals a city of intimate diversity where there a rich variety of architectural styles exist in close proximity, and where every sequence of the city possesses its own inscription carved by time and destiny.<sup>24</sup>

From terra incognita and a city whose name was globally inextricably linked with the assassination of Franz Ferdinand and the start of World War I, up to the city that hosted the XIV Winter Olympic Games 1984 and only eight years later was home to the longest siege in the history of the modern warfare during the war in the 1990s, and the situation today, the image of the city of Sarajevo has changed drastically. Together, these traces of different historical periods produce a mosaic of meanings, or what Jaworski and Thurlow term a true 'festival of signs'.<sup>25</sup>

The idea to host the Olympics in 1984 emerged out of a very specific set of conditions. Indeed, Sarajevo was not the first Yugoslav city that sought to reposition the city in the world of global inter-city comparisons and economic competitions. Before Sarajevo, it was Belgrade, as the capital city of Yugoslavia, that looked toward the chance of becoming an Olympic city. The first idea of Belgrade to host the Summer 1948 Olympics was forged by Yugoslav politicians impressed by the 1936 Berlin Olympics. Even though Belgrade did not submit its first candidacy, the city submitted other two formal bids for the Summer Olympics in 1992 and 1996. A politically and structurally motivated wave of hallmark events was also instigated in other Yugoslav cities. International events, such as the 1979 Mediterranean Games in Split, the 1984 Winter Olympics in Sarajevo, and the 1987 University Games in Zagreb, provided a new significance for Yugoslavia. Among all those events, it is the Sarajevo Olympics that came as an international recognition of Yugoslavia's success as a nation and an award for its sports development. The 1984 Olympics repositioned the stereotype of Balkans, Yugoslavia, and Sarajevo as a "powder keg" and zone of conflict<sup>26</sup> as the Balkans have been the site for geographical and religious conflict for at least 700 years.<sup>27</sup> The host country took the opportunity to show the world a new kind of socialism different from the Soviet model. The Sarajevo Olympics promoted Yugoslavia "as the healthy embodiment of Olympism".<sup>28</sup> Indeed, the event was regarded as affirmation of the Olympic movement "whose humane ideals are identical with the peace policy of Tito's non-aligned Yugoslavia".<sup>29</sup>

The image that was projected to the world was the image of Sarajevo as the capital of the SRBiH, which during the Yugoslav socialist period was commonly referred to as 'Yugoslavia



**ZETRA OLYMPIC COMPLEX WITH THE NEWLY BUILT ZETRA OLYMPIC HALL, THE SPEED-SKATING STADIUM, THE RECONSTRUCTED KOŠEVO STADIUM AND ACCOMPANYING FACILITIES, CROWNING THE NORTHERN REACHES OF THE CITY OF SARAJEVO**

OLYMPIJSKÝ KOMPLEX ZETRA S NOVOPOSTAVENOU OLYMPIJSKOU HALOU ZETRA, RÝCHLOKORČULIARSKYM ŠTADIÓNOM, ZREKONŠTRUOVANÝM ŠTADIÓNOM KOŠEVO A SPRIEVODNÝMI ZARIADENIAMÍ KORUNUJE SEVERNÝ CÍP MESTA SARAJEVO

Source Zdroj: Sarajevo Historical Archives

on a smaller scale' because of its central geographic position in the state and its multiethnic diversity not dominated by any single nationality. As argued by Zejnilović and Husukić, a strong narrative was erected around the Yugoslav dimension of the games and Sarajevo as its demonstrative symbol.<sup>30</sup>

According to Bairner, sport and national identity are inextricably linked, regardless of the complexity of the specific relationships.<sup>31</sup> In its more 'mature' form, national identity can permit the blurring of differences and serve to unite a multi-ethnic people behind a single national ideal, as was encapsulated in the notion of Tito's dream about Yugoslavia.

The Olympic project for Sarajevo had clear urban intentions, particularly regarding the consolidation of all the elements of the Olympic programme within the extant strategic development plans of the city to contribute to winter tourism and community amenities after the Games. Substantial investments have been incurred to use unexploited natural potential, to build new sports venues, residential and hospitality facilities, and infrastructure. The city expanded both physically and technologically, and the iconic architecture created powerful urban emblems and markers of memory.

Due to Sarajevo's proximity to the surrounding mountains, all Olympic facilities and venues could be planned and organized within a maximum radius of just 22.5 km, with many of them taking place in the city itself.

The most significant facilities created for the needs of the Olympics 1984 included competition facilities and venues, along with other accompanying facilities, on the four mountain 'temples' surrounding the city (Bjelašnica, Igman, Jahorina and Trebević) and in the city itself. The largest intervention carried out during the preparatory phase of the event in the city center was the construction of the Zetra Olympic Complex, the place where the opening and closing ceremonies took place. Earlier marked as a sports and recreational area, it was augmented for the Olympics with the newly built Zetra Olympic Hall, the speed-skating stadium, and the reconstructed Koševo stadium. Constructed in 1982, the Zetra Olympic Hall, designed by architects Lidumil Alikalfić and Dušan Dapa and engineered by Osman Morankić, represents a true masterpiece.

Positioned in the center of Sarajevo, on the left bank of the Miljacka river, the Skenderija Cultural and Sports Center, built in 1969 to the design of architects Živorad Janković and Halid Muhasilović, and engineer Ognjen Malkin, was expanded in 1983 for the Olympics. With its unique program and exceptional microuban form, this impressive monument of late modernism in

**THE EXPANDED CULTURAL AND SPORTS CENTER SKENDERIJA WITH THE ICE HALL NEWLY BUILT FOR THE OLYMPICS**

ROZŠÍŘENÉ KULTURNÉ A ŠPORTOVÉ CENTRUM SKENDERIJA S NOVOPOSTAVENOU LADOVOU HALOU PRE OLYMPIJSKÉ HRÝ

Source Zdroj: Personal archive of authors



**SARAJEVO'S 'OLYMPIC HOTEL', A HOLIDAY INN DESIGNED BY ARCHITECT IVAN ŠTRAUS AND BUILT IN 1983 EXCLUSIVELY FOR THE OLYMPICS, BECAME A SYMBOL OF MODERN SARAJEVO**

SARAJEVSKÝ „OLYMPIJSKÝ HOTEL“ HOLIDAY INN NAVRHNUŤ ARCHITEKTOM IVANOM ŠTRAUSOM A POSTAVENÝ V ROKU 1983 VÝLUČNE PRE OLYMPIJSKÉ HRÝ SA STAL SYMBOLOM MODERNÉHO SARAJEVA

Source Zdroj: Ivan Štraus

Yugoslav architecture served the Olympics fully as a venue for figure skating and ice hockey, the main press center, and as the location for winner announcements.

To accommodate members of the Olympic Family, in 1983 the Holiday Inn hotel was built in the city center of Sarajevo in the area of Marijin Dvor, designed by architect Ivan Štraus. According to Kenneth Morrison upon its completion, the Holiday Inn became ‘the benchmark of modernity and luxury’ in Sarajevo.<sup>32</sup> Indeed, in the local media, the hotel was a personification of the city’s modernity even before its formal opening, with the local newspaper *Oslobođenje*, on 4 September 1983, praising it as “one of the most modern hotels in Yugoslavia.”<sup>33</sup>

Additionally, the Games helped crystalize earlier aspirations and needs of the city to augment its existing housing stock with new residential areas in the western outskirts of Sarajevo. The residential area Mojmiló, under conception since 1981 by architect Milan Medić, was built for the Olympics as the main Olympic Village A-Mojmiló. Moreover, located south of the Mojmiló Olympic Village and close to the Sarajevo International Airport, the Press Village Dobrinja planned by Milan Medić was built in 1983. Conceptually, both residential areas were envisioned as self-contained units, a ‘city-within-a-city’ that supported the vision of the Olympic movement for a celebration of unity in diversity.

In addition to the three distinct nodes in the city built exclusively for the Olympics (Zetra Olympic Complex, Skenderija, and the residential areas of Mojmiló and Dobrinja), the city centre operated as a picturesque backdrop for the programme of cultural events. The massive development hastened the completion various projects, such as the construction and equipping RTV building and telecommunications, the reconstruction of the PTT building, the National Theatre, the railway station, and the airport.<sup>34</sup> Furthermore, beautification efforts took place in the whole city beyond the Olympic sites. Yet evidently, the city was inscribed with the signs and symbols of the 1984 Olympics, of which the official mascot Vučko<sup>35</sup> and emblem of the XIV Winter Olympic Games<sup>36</sup> were the most recognizable.

The construction work on the Olympic sites, which began in the summer of 1979<sup>37</sup>, came to an end with the completion of the 163 major projects<sup>38</sup>, more than a year before the Games. Altogether, the mentioned spatial interventions improved the city, which became the ideal architectural and urban scene for the Olympics described by MacAloon as “an immense playground,



**ACCOMMODATION FOR ATHLETES,  
THE OLYMPIC VILLAGE A-MOJMILO**

UBYTOVANIE PRE ŠPORTOVCOV –  
OLYMPIJSKÁ DEDINA A-MOJMILO

Source Zdroj: Sarajevo Historical  
Archives



**DOBRINJA PRESS VILLAGE**

NOVINÁRSKA DEDINA DOBRINJA

Source Zdroj: Sarajevo Historical  
Archives

marketplace, theater, battlefield, church, arena, festival, and Broadway of cultural images, symbols, and meanings.”<sup>39</sup>

The 1984 Winter Olympics in Sarajevo were organized with a 10-million-dollar surplus, enhancing the reputation of the host nation and city, and demonstrating the favorable effects of sound financial management on the long-term stability of the Olympic legacy. The fact that most of the Olympic facilities were finished over a year before the games without having suffered any delays resulted in the establishment of a positive case of Olympic development.<sup>40</sup> As Jason Vuic points out, the Olympic success contributed greatly to producing a favorable image of Socialist Yugoslavia in the eyes of the world.<sup>41</sup> The Olympics influenced the (self)-representations and (self)-perception of Sarajevans by boosting their pride in being Yugoslavs. Moreover, crafting the city’s global image paradoxically made Sarajevans more aware of their city’s distinctiveness.<sup>42</sup> Zlatko Jovanovic argues that “the Olympics meant the beginning of a new, qualitatively different, post-Olympics future.”<sup>43</sup>

During the 12 days of the Olympic spectacle, the city of Sarajevo offered a ‘real’ experience in parallel with the more widely mediated one. Never had Yugoslavia, let alone Sarajevo, been exposed to the rest of the world on such a large scale as through the media coverage of the Games. Sarajevo witnessed the rise of the Olympics as a major media event. More journalists and other media representatives gathered in Sarajevo than ever before at an Olympic Winter Games.<sup>44</sup>

The role of the Olympic signs and symbols, and in particular, facilities and sites, was crucial in the constructed identity of the city. The Olympics 1984 influenced the multimodal nature of the landscape. Lasting for five years, the city transformation resulted in new spaces imprinted with the Olympic ideology. With the name of the city associated with the most prestigious sporting event in the world, one hosted nearly exclusively in the world’s largest cities, this circumstance may have had the greatest impact on the city. Then merely a provincial capital of the Socialist Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina (SRBiH), whose economic position in Yugoslav context was precarious and in a republic still ‘underdeveloped’ and dependent on federal funds for help in capital investments<sup>45</sup>, indeed a city that was a nonentity in the world of winter sports<sup>46</sup>, Sarajevo nonetheless gained the attribute of an Olympic city. In the immediate report after the Olympics, the *Christian Science Monitor* correspondent Ross Atkin wrote that “Sarajevo may not become the ‘unavoidable tourist destination’ organizers hope, the city, by daring to host the Games, has definitely leaped years ahead with new roads, buildings, and sports facilities, and a fresh new identity.”<sup>47</sup>

### **The Multimodal Nature of the Contemporary Image of the City of Sarajevo: the Area of Marijin Dvor as a Barometer of Change**

In the fragile environment of Sarajevo today, the issue of representation is highly problematic, if at the same time exemplary of the practices that evolved out of various strategies influenced by socio-political realities. Different message systems exist and closely interrelated, even in the signs

and the messages given by the exterior of the buildings. These relationships, and combinations between signs and buildings, between architecture and symbolism, between form and meaning, between driver, stroller, and the roadside, are poignantly forceful in the district Marijin Dvor. If we analyze the semiotic landscapes of Sarajevo with visible inscriptions, the site of Marijin Dvor perhaps best exemplifies deliberate human intervention and meaning making in a contemporary setting. It is on this site that neoliberal capitalist icons of consumption are the most vocal in the context of the city. Marijin Dvor is considered a linchpin between two parts of the city, the historical center of the city and new part of the city. As Ugljen Ademović and Turkušić stated, “it is precisely in this location that the city comes out of its natural amphitheater of Sarajevo valley and extends towards the broad plain in a linear form, as a city planned according to the principles of modernist urbanism.”<sup>48</sup>

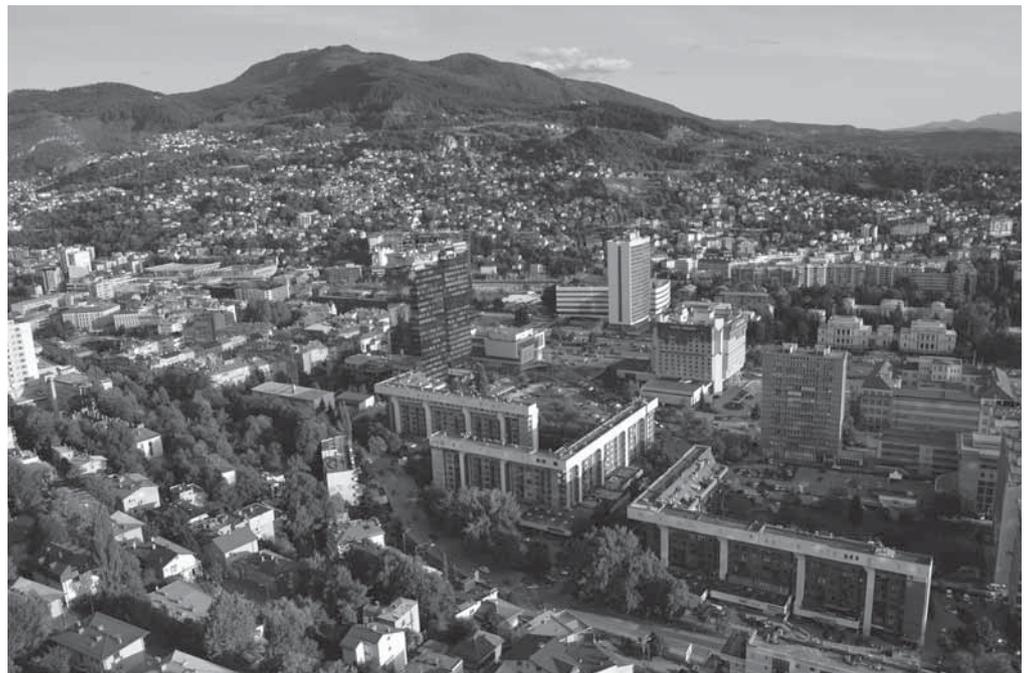
Historically, the question of development of this zone was considered extremely complex for its collisions with ideological and socio-political questions but equally in its mirroring urbanistic, architectural, and economic problems. The environment has drastically evolved over a period of a single century, from its status as an industrial area and urban periphery in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, to a district that is characterized as an urban center with various features (administrative, cultural, commercial) and the most dynamic phases of urban transformations. Dressed in historical styles, the buildings of Marijin Dvor district evoke explicit associations and mental allusions to the past that convey various symbolisms. Over the course of time, it became a locus for a broad range of public institutions but also experimental architecture, including the Historical Museum of Bosnia and Herzegovina (former Museum of the Revolution, designed by Boris Magaš, Edo Šmidih and Radovan Horvat and built in 1963), the National Museum of Bosnia and Herzegovina (established in 1888, and expanded in 1913 by the Czech architect Karel Pařík), Parliament Building (preparations for construction commenced in 1954 from the design by architect Juraj Neidhardt but only completed in 1982), UNIS skyscrapers (architect Ivan Štraus, built in 1986) or Holiday Inn Hotel (now Hotel Holiday, architect Ivan Štraus, built in 1983 for the Olympics 1984).

Starting after WWII when the conceptualization of this area started to gain attention, around forty competitions were organized for the future appearance of this new administrative city center, yet no final solution in terms of architecture and urban planning has ever been accepted.<sup>49</sup> For about thirty years, Sarajevo’s prophet of modernism, Juraj Neidhardt, has been trying to make practical and theoretical sense of Marijin Dvor’s transformation. In his seminal texts on Sarajevo and Bosnian architecture, he recognized this area as a counterweight to the cultural center located in the eastern end of the city - Charshiya, and the location that was gradually emerging to the

**THE AREA OF MARIJIN DVOR WITH ITS ARCHITECTURE REVEALS A NUMBER OF STRATEGIES AND BREAKTHROUGHS THAT GIVE LOGIC AND PATTERN TO THE CITY’S PAST AND PRESENT PERFORMANCE**

OBLASTĚ MARIJINHO DVORA SO SVOJOU ARCHITEKTÚROU ODHAĽUJE NIEKOLKO STRATÉGÍ A PRELOMOVÝCH ROZHODNUTÍ, KTORÉ UDÁVAJÚ LOGIKU A VZOR MINULÉMU A SÚČASNÉMU PÔSOBIENIU MESTA

Source Zdroj: Erna Husukić, Emina Zejnilović



**HOLIDAY INN (NOW HOTEL HOLIDAY) SERVED DURING THE 1984 OLYMPICS FOR THE ACCOMMODATION OF THE OLYMPIC PARTICIPANTS**

HOTEL HOLIDAY INN (DNES HOTEL HOLIDAY) SLUŽIL POČAS OLYMPIJSKÝCH HIER 1984 NA UBYTOVANIE OLYMPIJSKEJ RODINY

Source Zdroj: Erna Husukić, Emina Zejnilović, 2022



political, social, and cultural center of the town. As a reaction to Sarajevo's loss of its historical continuity in the capitalist era, he advocated for a new understanding of urban space with continuity as a main feature. In this context, he saw Marijin Dvor as a kind of 'respite' or pause – a green oasis within the city's formation. Opposing Neidhardt's vision of Marijin Dvor, the new order established has nothing to do with the autochthonous values he advocated for, such as a landscaped city, human scale, the right to an unobstructed view, and an accentuated horizontal architectural tendency that is close to the authentic doxat architecture of Sarajevo.<sup>50</sup>

Having enormous figurative power in the continuity of urban development in terms of programme, function, and even social ideology, this area continues today to generate new buildings. Against Umberto Eco's concept of the city as an open work whose "dialectical logic allows it to remain inconclusive and inexhaustible but at the same guarantees that it will always be perceived as a work"<sup>51</sup> the area of Marijin Dvor looks like a conglomeration of random components. The architectural and urban visions of the Marijin Dvor by Juraj Neidhart are entirely obscured by the visual clutter of the new landscape, where new trends in architecture have changed nearly as rapidly as those in the fashion industry. In fact, architecture in this landscape becomes a symbol in space rather than form. Marijin Dvor, after all, is "a collection of blocks whose proximity and juxtaposition reinforce their separate meanings."<sup>52</sup> 'A piece of global city' or 'Sarajevo's Manhattan' would be the best description of the contemporary image of the Marijin Dvor area. Not surprisingly, commercial advertisement on the buildings and at the roadsides provokes a bold impact in the vast and complex setting of the new Marijin Dvor landscape.

Sarajevo's iconic Olympic hotel, the Holiday Inn (after 2016 the Hotel Holiday - Hotel Europe Group), a structure built for the Olympics, found its place within this ensemble, if only as yet another artifact in Marijin Dvor's collection of buildings. Situated along the main traffic artery of the city, in the attractive position with its already eye-catching yellow color of the façade, the exterior envelope of the hotel built for the Olympics in 1983, became attractive for displaying commercial signs.

Even though the hotel itself is a bearer of several controversial meanings<sup>53</sup> and symbolism, being not only the architectural personification of the 'Games of Joy' but also Sarajevo's most enduring landmark - the hotel of both the Olympics and the war - this did not bring it immunity to stay intact and to be preserved. Like other buildings, the hotel became a 'victim', and its architecture was subjected to various changes. Words and symbols added are used here for commercial persuasion. In actual fact, the new advertising and commercial imagery on the façade of the hotel detracts from the significance of the Olympic symbols. The emblem of the XIV Winter Olympic Games (a snowflake and the Olympic rings) embedded into one of the concrete pillars near the entrance to the hotel now stands hand in hand with symbols of consumerism.

**SIGN OF CONSUMERISM ALONG WITH THE EMBLEM OF THE XIV WINTER OLYMPIC GAMES AT THE ZETRA OLYMPIC COMPLEX (NOW THE JUAN ANTONIO SAMARANCH OLYMPIC HALL)**

ZNAK KONZUMU SPOLU S EMBLÉMOM XIV. ZIMNÝCH OLYMPIJSKÝCH HIER V OLYMPIJSKOM KOMPLEXE ZETRA (TERAZ OLYMPIJSKÁ HALA JUANA ANTONIA SAMARANCHI)

Source Zdroj: Erna Husukić, Emina Zejnilović, 2022



Once the personification of modernity in Sarajevo, the hotel experienced transformation of its pure architectural form with expansions. In 2020, a cinema complex was attached to the east elevation of the hotel, and in August 2022, the structure was additionally increased with the construction of the gastro-food market. Consequently, not only do these contemporary additions harm the visual language of the hotel but also its façade, which is gradually being invaded with superficial icons and images. Yet, it still persists as an important icon, despite its alienated identity. The hotel is no exception to the changing decorum of the buildings. The facade imagery displayed in some of the most central and representative buildings works toward their incorporation into the process of globalization, the commodification of heritage, and aestheticization of social life and commercial activities.

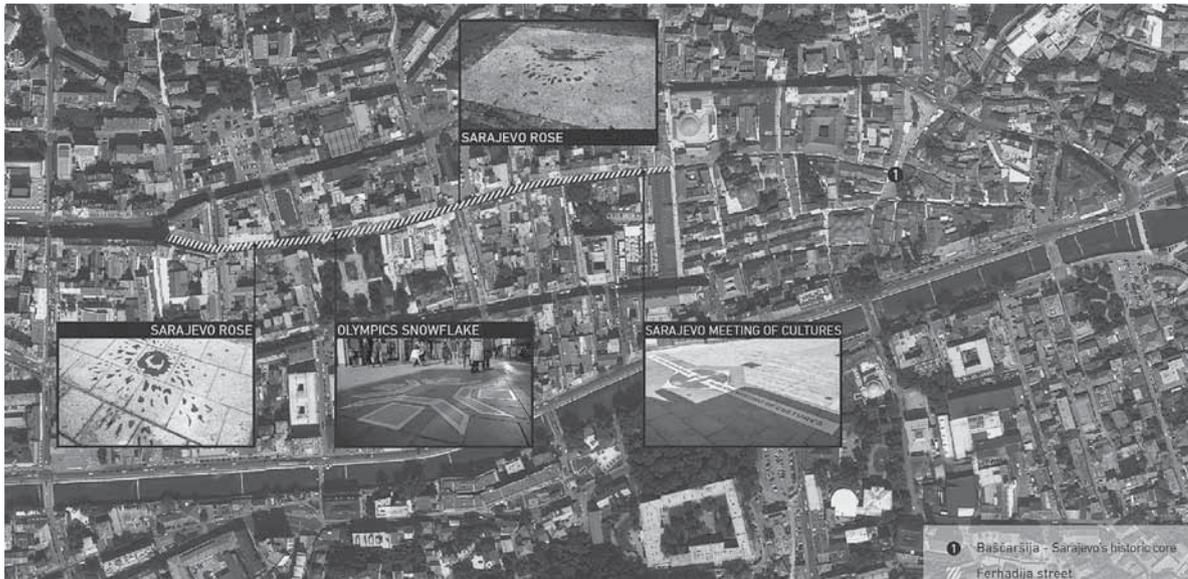
Historically, signs have been used to maintain a sense of orientation in space. Today, words and symbols are utilized for different kinds of messaging or promotional actions. As is now universal, in Sarajevo as well, the decision regarding the signing of the city and its buildings is usually the decision of the government or owners but not the will of the general public. What is projected as the city image and architecture in Sarajevo is very often a reflection of the individual sensibilities of decision-makers (very often politicians or investors) and less the will of the relevant professionals or the general public. Thus, the compilation of signs and symbols in one city is more a reflection of a volatile and competitive market than of human consciousness or class sensibilities. Additionally, Ledrut<sup>54</sup> argues that the meaning of the built environment is partial because it is produced by an elite. For most people, he claims, the city is a pseudo-text rather than a text and its 'reading' should consider linguistic and societal categories. It is therefore no coincidence that different groups may have different views of the same city and that the image changes over time. The role of signs and symbols in reading the city represents something else in some respect or capacity to an individual.<sup>55</sup>

All signs and symbols have the potential to make some meanings available and rule out others. As Eyles points out, signs and their symbolic worlds are not necessarily straightforward, and their codes are not necessarily directly apprehended in experience.<sup>56</sup> How is it that despite 'noise' from competing signs and symbols, we find what are dominant forces in reading the city?

### **The Role of Olympic Signs and Symbols in the Visual Identity of Contemporary Sarajevo**

Taken together, the composition of single messages scattered around the city creates a concert of many messages. Among the other signs and symbols are the nested symbols of the Olympic Games. Yet the symbols of the 1984 Olympics remain hidden, attracting little attention, and much like the natural backdrop are likely to fade into the ever-changing yet ubiquitous landscape.

The 'Welcome to Sarajevo' signposts immediately catch the eye at the entrances of the city. The decision to inscribe the Olympic rings came in early 2018 from the Cantonal Ministry of Traffic,



**MAP OF THE SYMBOLS ON THE PAVEMENT ON FERHADIJIA STREET IN THE CITY CENTER**

MAPA SYMBOLOV NA CHODNÍKU ULICE FERHADIJIA V CENTRE MESTA. ZDROJ: AUTORKY

Source Zdroj: Erna Husukić, Emina Zejnilović

motivated by the 2019 European Youth Winter Festival (EYOF) that was held in Sarajevo. Organized by two administratively divided municipalities, Sarajevo and East Sarajevo, the EYOF 2019 was envisaged as part of the revival of Sarajevo's Olympic spirit.<sup>57</sup> Simultaneously, the official signage invokes the symbol of the Olympic Movement, the Olympic rings, along with the number of days the city spent under siege. The superimposed symbolism of two events, the Olympics and the war, restructures and defines the understanding of the city. Hence, the complexity of the site is communicated through the official narrative before you enter the city as deliberate intervention and meaning making. The official signing of the city sought to preserve at the same time the memory of the Olympics and the war, evident not only in the welcome to the city signposts but also within the city itself.

Along Ferhadija street, the most prominent pedestrian street in Sarajevo, three signs conjure up images of a Sarajevo identity: Sarajevo as a meeting of cultures<sup>58</sup>, the Olympics snowflake<sup>59</sup>, and the tragic commemoration of the Sarajevo roses<sup>60</sup>. They make symbolic connections through public space, communicating the complexity of Sarajevo's identity through hundreds of associations in a few seconds from far away. These signs arrive unexpectedly, engraved on the pavement, viscerally grabbing the attention of passersby. These acts of anchoring space mark and symbolically enact memories of the most significant specificities of the city as recognized by the government.

It is widely believed that government signs could exert the most systematic impact on the linguistic landscape of the territory under jurisdiction. However, the government may exert less control over the private signs as both content and the language of private signs are often seen as part of an individual's freedom. Although unauthorized and unjustified use of the symbols for advertising, commercial or profitable purposes is strictly prohibited, commercialization of the Olympic signs and symbols in Sarajevo is ever-present. Using the golden age to rebuild national memories and restructure urban imaginaries seems to be a profitable strategy for the local economy.

The Olympic architecture in Sarajevo is recognized as a distinct layer in the city – a symbol of the Olympics and a venerable monument worthy of respect. Despite the metamorphosis that all the Olympic objects and sites experienced after the Olympics 1984, their changed role during and after the 1990s war – their 'second life' (as most of the Olympic objects and sites were partially or fully destroyed) – poor maintenance, and great difficulties in functioning, the flagship projects built for the 1984 Olympics remain the most important landmarks in the city and Sarajevo's largest undertakings. However, it is a question of whether it elicits relevant emotional experiences at different points of contact with its users, creating an architectural presence that is felt as well as seen.

It is true that the identification with the Olympics failed to make the Olympic objects and sites immune to the various processes of transition that occurred in the aftermath of the 1990s war. Moreover, the Olympic legacy has not been protected. The *Law on the Protection of Cultural Heritage* from February 18, 2000, does not recognize intangible heritage, nor the 'place of events'. Therefore,



**'WELCOME TO SARAJEVO' SIGNPOSTS PLACED AT THE ENTRANCES OF THE CITY**

TABULE „VITA JTE V SARAJEVE“ UMIESTNENÉ PRI VSTUPOCH DO MESTA

Source Zdroj: Erna Husukić, Emina Zejnilović, 2022



**A COMPLETELY NEGLECTED YET AUTHENTIC 'WELCOME TO SARAJEVO' BOARD IN FRONT OF THE MAIN RAILWAY STATION IN SARAJEVO – THE POCKMARKS FROM SNIPER FIRE STILL EVIDENT**

ÚPLNE ZANEDBANÁ PŮVODNÁ TABUĽA „VITAJTE V SARAJEVE“ PRED HLAVNOU ŽELEZNIČNOU STANICOU V SARAJEVE – EŠTE STÁLE SÚ NA NEJ VIDITELNÉ STOPY PO OSTRELOVANÍ

Source Zdroj: Erna Husukić, Emina Zejnilović, 2022



**WHILE SOME OF THE OLYMPIC SIGNS IN THE CITY HAVE BEEN NEGLECTED, OTHERS ARE BEING REVIVED. OLYMPICS SYMBOLS PROVIDE THE MOTIFS FOR GRAFFITI AND STREET ART ALL AROUND THE CITY.**

ZATIAĽ ČO NIEKTORÉ OLYMPIJSKÉ ZNAKY V MESTE BOLI ZANEDBANÉ, INÉ SA VRACAJÚ. OLYMPIJSKÉ SYMBOLY SA STALI MOTÍVMI PRE GRAFFITI A STREETART PO CELOM MESTE.

Source Zdroj: Erna Husukić, Emina Zejnilović, 2022

creating a legal framework for the protection and recognition of the Sarajevo 1984 Olympic legacy (tangible and intangible) is seen as the first step towards keeping their values.<sup>61</sup>

Each Olympic city is a living memorial and hence more than just a static display of signs, symbols, buildings, venues, or landmarks. The way of reading the environment is not to be confined only to real objects or mediated representation. Conceived space corresponds to its metaphoric and symbolic content, mental or represented images of space: indeed, a much broader concept of how we read and interpret the urban text in ways contingent on geographical, social, economic, legal, cultural, and emotional circumstances, as well as our practical uses of the physical environment as nature and territory, aesthetic judgment, memory, and myths.<sup>62</sup>

The post-Olympics era of the city affords a longer-term view of how the constructed identity of an Olympic city has been distorted and the circumstances under which this distortion happened. Since there has been a significant shift in the ways how city images are being represented today, we are faced not only with real and mediated images but with an interactive dataspace that forms its own multi-layered, searchable, manipulable, and digitally transmittable database. The fast-emerging virtual space introduces a new dimension of displays, open to all. As a result, technology has started to play a major role in the growing attention to city image representations, given the variety of facilities for documentation. By analyzing bottom-up and top-down ways of constructing meanings whether posted by the private sector or introduced by the government, new ways of manipulating semiotic landscapes are discovered as different patterns emerged and interact. There is evidence of a vastly extended imaginary of a city open to interpretation.

## Conclusion

It is clear that the representation of Sarajevo as an Olympic city has been, and still is, unfolding over a considerable period of time. Back in the 1970s and 1980s the Olympics were used as an instrument of city urbanization and modernization. Today, thirty-eight years after the Games, the image of the Olympic city is fading. This result is not surprising because much discussion has focused on how to foster Olympic spirit in the years following the Games, depending on the unique circumstances of each host city. Similar to other cities where the Games were overshadowed by a terrorist attack (Munich 1972) or financial crisis (Athens 2004), Sarajevo's 1984 reputation as an Olympic host city from 1984 still lies in the shadow of the war. The portrayal of Sarajevo as an Olympic city is refracted, and at the very least, complex.

The chronology of the two consecutive events – the Olympics, and the war - resulted in many incompatibilities, contradictions, and disruptions. Parallel reading of the current image of the



**AFTER HEAVY WAR DEVASTATION, THE OLYMPIC VILLAGE A-MOJMILO WAS RENOVATED IN TWO PHASES FROM 1996 TO 1999 WITH THE SUPPORT OF THE CITY OF BARCELONA**

OLYMPIJSKÁ DEDINA A-MOJMILO BOLA PO ŤAŽKEJ DEVAŠTÁCII VOJNOU OBNOVENÁ V DVOCH ETAPÁCH V ROKOCH 1996 AŽ 1999 S PODPOROU MESTA BARCELONA

**Source** Zdroj: Erna Husukić, Emina Zejnilović, 2022



**PART OF THE SKENDERIJA EXTENSION FOR THE OLYMPICS INCLUDES THE ICE HALL, WHICH TODAY STANDS DILAPIDATED AND FORLORN. SINCE 2012, WHEN THE ROOF COLLAPSED UNDER A HEAVY LOAD OF SNOW, THIS SIGNIFICANT OLYMPIC RELIC HAS BEEN NON-FUNCTIONAL.**

SÚČASŤOU ROZŠÍRENIA SKENDERIJE PRE OLYMPIJSKÉ HRÝ BOLA AJ LADOVÁ HALA, KTORÁ DNES CHÁTRA A PUSTNE. OD ROKU 2012, KEĎ SA STRECHA ZRÚTILA POD VÁHOU SNEHU, JE TENTO VÝZNAMNÝ POZOSTATOK OLYMPIÁDY NEFUNKČNÝ.

**Source** Zdroj: Erna Husukić, Emina Zejnilović, 2022

Olympic city and related signs and symbols is reinterpreted alternately through the Olympics and the war as separate lenses, shaping urban imaginaries that reveal ambiguities. City images of euphoria and spectacle continuously overlap with the images of trauma and suffering, creating some sort of resistance to reminisce, holding firmly to the most glorious period in the city's development.

No matter how strong are the influences of mass media and inscriptions in the environment for imagining cities, as Lefebvre contends, "the city and the urban cannot be recomposed from the signs of the city, the semantemes of the urban, although the city is a signifying whole. The city is not only a language but also a practice."<sup>63</sup> Given this understanding of the social and the spatial as indissoluble, it is not surprising that the Olympic signs and symbols in Sarajevo itself do not have the potential to enshrine permanent memories of the Olympics. Sarajevo might creatively employ re-branding of the city as a one-time Olympic venue to promote cultural values that respect the heterogeneity of places and that align city-marketing activities with broader, inclusive objectives of urban development. Unlike the short-lived images of dazzling signature projects, the concept of rethinking the Olympic city can affect lasting and meaningful changes that draw upon the dormant or explicit potential of cultures and places. And doing so may well enable the government to embark on the most significant developmental project in the history of the city.

The ambiguity and plurality of meanings represented through signs and symbols in Sarajevo has already been remarked upon. Sarajevo was analyzed here as a phenomenon of communication that gives us a broad understanding of why things operate as they are. This work unravels the complex web of interaction between the form and materiality of private and government signs, spatial position, and in particular, the relation of Olympic signs to other signs as well as their visibility and salience.

Currently, the dominant approach to sites of memories in Sarajevo is rather simplistic and banal, executed through interpretative signs and symbols sited on public spaces and buildings. Despite the sporadic intentions of various would-be reformers - government, politicians, architects, and planners - the approaches to sites of memories remain mired in diverging approaches and techniques. When faced with a city's intermittent attempts to maintain the image of the Olympic city in the traditional sense, we can consider whether our tendencies are restricted to merely restoring what the city once was and insisting on clarity in the face of something far more contentious and demanding. Furthermore, there is no reason why the methods for commercial persuasion and the skyline of signs examined here could not serve the purpose of civic and cultural enhancement. Certainly, cities are mediums of communication. Signs and symbols should enhance and clarify this communication, but also make the city classifiable, intelligible, and meaningful.

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