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## The Invisible Divider: Dayton Peace Agreement and Production of Built Environment in Postwar Bosnia and Herzegovina

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### Abstract

This article explores the role of the Dayton Peace Agreement in the production of built environment and proliferation of “slow violence” (as defined by Robert Nixon) in Bosnia and Herzegovina after the 1990s war. By unpacking a case study located in the vicinity of the capital Sarajevo, the paper investigates spatial and environmental consequences of the country’s division. It scrutinises particular elements of the said peace agreement in order to expose its role as a state-building mechanism and an instrument of finance that is directly implicated in the processes of urbanisation and financialisation, which have emerged as integral parts of the ongoing process of conflict resolution. I argue that, as such, these processes have had an equally active role in facilitating the spread of “slow violence”.

**Keywords:** boundary, financialisation, urban development, post-conflict, Bosnia and Herzegovina

### Résumé

Cet article explore le rôle joué par les accords de Dayton dans la production de l’environnement bâti et la propagation d’une « violence lente » (telle que l’a définie Robert Nixon) en Bosnie-Herzégovine après la guerre des années 1990. Par une étude de cas portant sur les environs de la capitale, Sarajevo, il analyse les conséquences spatiales et environnementales de la division du pays. L’examen attentif de certains points des accords met en évidence l’implication directe que ces derniers ont, en œuvrant comme un mécanisme de construction étatique et un instrument financier, dans des dynamiques d’urbanisation et de financiarisation devenues désormais partie intégrante du processus de résolution

du conflit. Je soutiens que ces facteurs ont, en tant que tel, contribué activement à l'expansion de la « violence lente ».

**Mots-clés** : frontière, financiarisation, aménagement urbain, postconflit, Bosnie-Herzégovine

## Introduction

Since the 20<sup>th</sup> of November 1995, an invisible line has run across Bosnian and Herzegovinian territory, cutting the country into two almost equal portions. The meandering array of joined dots, a final product of the years of spectacular violence of war eventually subdued by political means, gave birth to a new spatial and political order under the watchful eye of the international community. The war of aggression launched upon Bosnia and Herzegovina (B&H) in 1992 quickly escalated into one of the most brutal episodes in the history of then crumbling state of Yugoslavia. The proliferation of violence, which led to a number of feeble international diplomatic attempts at producing peace, finally came to an end with the signing of the General Framework Agreement for Peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina, also known as the Dayton Peace Agreement (DPA).

This article focuses on the new condition engendered by the DPA, which has emerged in relation to the production of the built environment and has accelerated subsequent environmental degradation. Operating as a legal device subtended by deeply embedded structural violence and superimposed onto a complex ethnoreligious substratum, the peace agreement facilitated the creation of a new milieu conducive to the global capital flows, primarily from the Gulf States and Russia.

Religion and identity politics in B&H, as well as the wider region, are almost inextricably linked to the memory and trauma of the 1990s, and often these links extend even further back into the past. As such, they have had a major impact on the lives of the country's citizens and have been repeatedly used as powerful forces in determining current regional, state and inter-entity affairs. Traditionally multi-ethnic and multi-religious, Bosnian and Herzegovinian society has seen a significant reconfiguration of its ethnoreligious demographics in relation to its territory (Hammel, Mason and Stevanović, 2010). Initially generated by extreme violence of war, ethnic and religious polarisation on the ground was further bolstered by the DPA. The convergence of the aforementioned conditions and processes has resulted in the formation of the first layer upon which the infrastructure for the influx of foreign capital has been built. The asymmetry in power between the state of B&H (particularly its entities), and the Gulf and Russian investors can be discerned through Michel Feher's

concept of specific power relations created between the “investors” and the “investees” (Feher, 2017). In line with Feher’s argument, I contend that in the case of B&H, the state/entity, as an “investee”, needs to prove itself worthy and find ways to attract and induce the influx of money, which it does through mobilisation of religion—in this particular case, Islam and Orthodox Christianity respectively. Such relationship between the “investors” and the “investees” has, to a significant degree, become predicated on networks based upon religious affiliations, some of which can be traced back to the war period (ibid.). Therefore, what has become a distinct feature of this postwar development process is the instrumentalisation of religion as an investment bait, which has helped render this new milieu into an opportune setting for real-estate development.

While constantly shapeshifting and mutating, it is clear that violence, in its multiple forms, has held its grip on B&H over the last three decades. The spectacular violence of war was superseded by the “structural violence” rooted in the DPA and its apparent immutability (Galtung, 1969). Yet, the memory of the spectacle of war still strongly shapes the country’s present, often masking more invisible, but equally destructive forms of violence, which have come about as a result of conflation of all of the above. By unpacking a case study located in the vicinity of the capital Sarajevo, this article investigates spatial and environmental consequences of the country’s division. It aims to posit the DPA as an “instrument of finance” and highlight its role in facilitating the proliferation of “slow violence” over the course of the last 26 years (Nixon, 2011, p. 2). The concept of slow violence was conceived by Robert Nixon in an attempt to highlight long-term effects of climate change and other man-made natural disasters. “[N]either spectacular nor instantaneous but incremental and active” (ibid.), slow violence sits in contrast to the spectacle of war, and the immediate and visible destruction it causes. Its protracted impact and lack of instant visibility are more akin to structural violence, yet in contrast to its static nature, slow violence is dynamic (ibid., p. 10). Its gradual, cumulative and inconspicuous character renders it a productive framework for critical engagement with B&H’s postwar regeneration process. In this article, I argue that the unbridled real-estate development, veiled by the narrative of economic progress, has become one of the key generators of slow violence, making it an insidious part of the country’s postwar recovery.

In order to obtain material for this article, I conducted an ethnographic research in the form of fieldwork in conjunction with the analysis of past, existing and newly amended plans, regulations and policies in the realm of urban planning and development. The fieldwork consisted of site visits and interviews with professionals in relevant fields, primarily architecture and urban planning. As very little information on post-1990s-war architecture in B&H was available, so the data had to be gathered on

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the ground. This data was later visualised through the creation of maps<sup>1</sup>, some of which are featured in this article.

## **Invisible divider**

Devised in Dayton, Ohio (U.S.), the General Framework Agreement for Peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina was formalised in Paris (France), in December 1995, almost four years into the war. The partitioning process—key to gruelling negotiations—divided the country into two separate political entities and one district: the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (FB&H), Republika Srpska (RS) and the Brčko District (Brčko DC) (figure 1). Furthermore, the FB&H was subdivided into ten cantons, illogically based on a Swiss model of governance. The FB&H was assigned 51.47% and the RS 48.51% of the country's territory. The so-called Inter Entity Boundary Line (IEBL), which implements this division, also encircles Brčko DC, a self-governing administrative unit belonging to both entities. Such artificial splintering of this, thus far, integral territory, without any historical precedents, has created a highly dysfunctional governmental structure in which the overarching state of B&H holds very little power within its borders.

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1. The aesthetics applied to the maps were aimed at distancing the cartographic material produced during the course of the research from the existing material (maps and plans) used to provide some of the baseline information to generate new maps. This approach was taken in order to highlight one of the aims of this project, which was to offer new insights and knowledge in cartographic format, rather than merely reproduce the old maps. The maps featured in this article are a part of the larger body of cartographic material, so the chosen aesthetics are in keeping with the rest of the maps created as a part of the larger research project.



Figure 1: Map illustrating the position of the IEBL (shown in red) and the division of B&H into two entities and one district

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The process of production of the IEBL, this most consequential element of the DPA, began at the Wright-Patterson Air Force Base in early November 1995. In this final attempt at crafting a peace agreement that would actually end the war, it was recognised, very early on, that the mapping process would be of crucial importance. Therefore, the most cutting-edge technology available in the mid-1990s, digital mapping, had been deployed. This seemingly abstract line was given its name and its purpose in Annex II of the Dayton Peace Agreement. A 5 mm thick line, drawn in black ink on a 1:50,000 scale map as an Appendix to Annex II gave it its territorial presence, and Annex IV, better known as the new constitution, gave it life.

The IEBL illustrates precisely how political and legal boundaries can manifest themselves spatially. Imposed upon the land as the by-product of an act of violence, despite having no physical presence in the form of a wall or a fence, the Boundary Line has nevertheless made itself legible through its distribution and organisation of the built environment around it. Its organising tools are legal stipulations and restrictions,

which separate the FB&H from RS, and vice versa. It is through these very tools that the line comes into being.

The division line, as a very specific instrument in the production of space and the distribution of territories, is discussed in detail by Alessandro Petti, Sandi Hilal, Eyal Weizman and Nicola Perugini (2013). In the case of Israel and Palestine, the thickness of the line on a map, as a result of the sharpness of the drafting instrument used, ultimately produced a legally ambiguous space on the ground, cutting through people's homes and sometimes encompassing entire neighbourhoods in densely populated areas (ibid.). While the division itself created numerous problems, the legal ambiguity of the territory covered by the thickness of the line created a window of opportunity for subversion and intervention. In the Bosnian and Herzegovinian context, however, the thickness of the line doesn't seem to have the same subversive potential. When applied onto the ground, it produces a 50 m wide belt of no man's land, an administratively opaque buffer zone. Yet, instead of becoming a space for intervention, this belt acts to further affirm the division between the entities. Legal challenges, which have arisen as a result of the division are amplified in the buffer zone, and make it a no-go area in terms of development or collaboration.

Untold violent acts are still contained within this line, as most of its 1,080 km length is a former, now demilitarised frontline, with the exception of some adjustments in the areas around strategically important cities, mostly Sarajevo. The line has become a symbol of war and violence, as it is also a spinal cord, which interconnects a terrifying nexus of minefields left over from the last war. It is estimated that 1.96% of the country's territory is still covered with abandoned ordnance, particularly in the suburban areas of Sarajevo (Centar za uklanjanje mina BiH, 2021<sup>2</sup>). However, the existing records are incomplete. Unrecorded, random and ad hoc planting of mines during the war, further affected by landslides and floods from 2014, found in what is often inaccessible terrain, make it almost impossible to ensure the complete clearing of these areas. The minefields give the IEBL yet another, even more deadly dimension, making it quite literally a lethal instrument of obstruction and division.

The country's division into two entities and one district was the first step towards legitimising violence and towards the creation of the dysfunctional state that B&H would eventually become. The territorial partitioning has inevitably led to the splintering of the country into two separate legal entities with autonomous institutions and various mutual non-correspondent levels of governance. Despite being held together under the umbrella of a single constitution, the entities themselves are given a high degree of freedom which allows them, for instance, to set up "special, parallel

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2. Report on antimine action in 2020.

relationships with neighbouring states consistent with the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Bosnia and Herzegovina” (Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Republic of Croatia, and Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, 1995). Although the emphasis is on respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the state as a whole, the nuances of what this actually means are left open to interpretation by various political actors. Ultimately, it is up to the constitutional court to determine the limits of other states’ meddling in the internal affairs of each entity, which often turns out to be a problematic endeavour.

So despite the fact that the IEBL is not a border (it is even punishable by law to treat it or refer to it as a border), in many ways it acts as one (Ustavni sud Bosne i Hercegovine, 2000).<sup>3</sup> It presents a legal barrier, which prevents a holistic approach to a territory that should, due to its landscape and its social, environmental and socioeconomic characteristics be treated as one entity, as a whole.

Moreover, the IEBL has acted as one of the key generators for reconfiguration of the ethnoreligious landscape of the country. Starting in the early and mid-1990s with shifts and movements of the population following the ethnic cleansing and genocide, this ongoing reshuffling has increasingly become affected by internal migrations and migrations abroad in the postwar period. In addition to a considerable decrease in the overall population in comparison to the last pre-war census (1991), what is even more alarming is that the most recent census (2013) has shown that the previously mixed communities made up of different ethnoreligious groups have now been polarised across the two entities (Al Jazeera Balkans, 2016). Consequently, around 70% of the population currently living in the FB&H is Bosniak-Muslim, and over 80% of the population of RS is Serb-Orthodox Christian (ibid.). The majority of Croats—Roman Catholics live in the FB&H, and although proportionally the smallest ethnic group, majority live in south-western cantons along the border with Croatia.

The overview of various socioeconomic, ethnoreligious, legal and environmental trends since 1995 points to the IEBL as one of the main containers and disseminators of the various forms of violence. Furthermore, the relatively recent influx of foreign investment has mobilised other violent processes, such as dispossession and commodification of land. As I will show in further text through the analysis of a specific case study, these issues are all inextricably linked via the IEBL, as the line embodies the

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3. In a lawsuit against RS in relation to the use of the word “border” in place of “IEBL” in the Constitution of RS, the Constitutional Court of B&H ruled that the use of the word “border” as a replacement of the words “IEBL” is unacceptable and not in accordance with the Constitution of B&H. The DPA makes a distinction between the “boundary” that denotes delimitation between the two entities in the Annex II and “borders” which describe interstate borders in the Article X (Ustavni sud Bosne i Hercegovine, 2000).

spectacle of war, institutes structural violence and, simultaneously, instigates the proliferation of slow violence.

### Buroj Ozone and mechanism of deferral

In B&H today, 48 out of 109 municipalities are divided by the IEBL. Most major municipalities in the country are caught in this division, including Trnovo (FB&H) and Trnovo (RS), located on the outskirts of the capital Sarajevo.

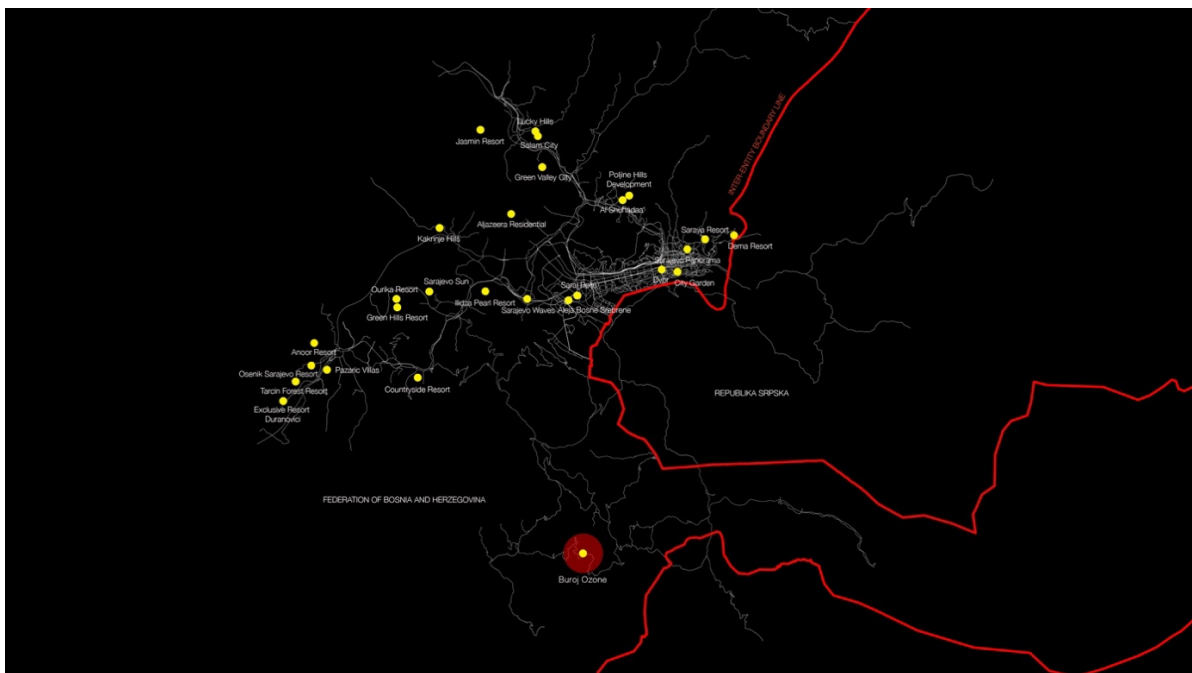


Figure 2: Map of residential developments funded by investors from the Gulf States in Sarajevo Canton, 2011-2018

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Despite the fact that, according to the zoning and regulatory plans adopted in the early 1980s for the period between 1986 and 2015, large parts of Sarajevo’s immediate surroundings were designated for sports and leisure purposes, with very limited construction activities allowed, the surge of foreign interest and the potential for profit-making has shifted the attitude of the local authorities from conservation to entrepreneurship.

Initially the land in the area was mostly in agricultural use and privately owned. Yet, the influx of foreign capital acted as a catalyst for the process of commodification of land. The potential for turning it into residential developments and construction



sites was relatively quickly recognised, and the necessary mechanisms were put into place to facilitate this process.

I contend that certain elements of the DPA have been used as effective mechanisms in the process of accumulation by dispossession, with commodification of land emerging as one of its main features (Harvey, 2003). In the case of Buroj Ozone, a new tourist town planned in the Trnovo Municipality, which will be discussed in more detail further in the text, one of the main instruments which helped the process of acquiring land for building purposes was the IEBL. Besides spatially organising the country into two separate entities, the IEBL is also a boundary, which separates two systems of governance that deal with the questions of planning, spatial organisation and environmental protection in two very different ways. The area to be occupied by the Buroj Ozone development was, for many years, part of a territory, which was to be declared a national park. The fact that this territory could not be legally considered in its entirety played a key part in a failure of the authorities to protect the area in question, thus leaving it vulnerable to exploitation and legal machinations.

David Harvey argues that the support of the state in the process of accumulation by dispossession is a crucial one (2003, p. 145). In the context of B&H, while the state itself does little to actively stimulate it, its overall weakness helps create an environment that enables this process. The power of the overarching state is not only bifurcated and transferred onto its entities, but it trickles further down to the local authorities (cantonal and municipal). In such context, the state's "definitions of legality" across the four tiers of governance and between the two entities are not always synced, so their occasional contradictory character can be misdirected and instrumentalised (ibid., p. 145). Similar can be said about the governmental institutions across both horizontal and vertical divisions of power that often fail to coordinate their actions, or are in a position to deliberately delay them. The IEBL, as an immutable spatial element of the DPA, becomes a cartographic force that works in conjunction with the peace agreement's more ambiguous legal elements to create a milieu that allows for commodification of land to be carried out. Such milieu, or an "official landscape", to use Nixon's term, created by the implementation of the DPA has all but erased the "vernacular one", which is "[...] shaped by the affective, historically textured maps that communities have devised over generations [...]" (Nixon, 2011, p. 17). While "neither monolithic nor undisputed", the value of the "vernacular landscape" lies in its intrinsic ties to the local community and its "socio-environmental dynamics" (ibid.). By instituting the IEBL, the Dayton-generated "official landscape" has ripped apart the "vernacular" one and enabled proliferation of slow violence through its extractive, externalising character, effectuated by a complex bureaucratic apparatus.

As explained by S. K. (2016), an architect who works at the Institute for Protection of National and Historic Monuments and the Heritage of Sarajevo Canton, in 1999 a feasibility study was commissioned by the Federal Ministry of Agriculture, Water and Forestry. The aim was to discover whether the area encompassing the mountains of Igman, Bjelašnica, Treskavica and the canyon of Rakitnica River was sufficiently biodiverse for it to be declared a national park. This area had initially included a large percentage of the land belonging to Trnovo Municipality. The study indeed showed that due to the area's exceptional biodiversity and cultural value, as well as its potential for the development of ecotourism, a territory of 117,000 ha should be declared as a national park (BRL Ingénierie, 2007<sup>4</sup>). The scope that was taken into consideration in this study was selected in accordance with environmental principles and spatial logic, without adherence to the position of the IEBL. Yet, the invisible line ran through a portion of it, so that out of the total suggested area, 75% belonged to the FB&H, and 25% to the RS.

The study took almost two years to complete and by 2001 the documentation had been forwarded to the Parliament of the FB&H. Nonetheless, the whole process stalled even before it had properly begun. The issue was just blatantly ignored. After waiting in vain for several years for Parliament to start a discussion about this subject, the decision was made that the Federal Ministry of Agriculture, Water and Forestry should declare the region to be a special protected area. The levels of protection afforded to wildlife by this category would not have been as high as the ones afforded by the national park category, nevertheless, as had become increasingly apparent, the battle for the national park would either be lost or at best turn into a protracted legal battle. Therefore, the need to establish some form of control over this particular area was recognised as a matter of urgency. However, this decision caused a very negative reaction among the local authorities, specifically in the municipality of Trnovo (FB&H). There, the mayor complained that the fact that a considerable portion of the Trnovo municipality's territory was being co-opted for new use (with restrictions in terms of agricultural activities, animal husbandry, construction, etc.) would be detrimental to its economic growth. To further add to the problem, it is believed that, at the time, almost 30 km<sup>2</sup>, or 5.11% of the total municipal, area was still covered in mines, so the risks from the land mines were almost twice as high as in the rest of the country. Clearing the land of the land mines is a painstakingly slow, arduous and very expensive process, so very small areas actually get cleared per year, which impedes the economic growth even further. Moreover, since the municipality mayor holds a "discretionary right" he

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4. Feasibility study for the area of unique characteristics of significance for the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina—Igman, Bjelašnica, Treskavica and the kanyon of Rakitnica river (Visočica)

was able to revoke this decision, leaving this large area of precious land vulnerable to reckless construction and real-estate development in the years to come.

Yet, another attempt was made in 2006 to revise and update the feasibility study from 2001, with both documents clearly stating the need for this area to be protected and declared a national park. As was stated in the summary to the 2006 version, the need for an amended version was due to the fact that when the first study was carried out: “the legal and institutional context was changing so rapidly that the laws and regulations pertaining to environment and urban planning were subject to revision in the FB&H. This has resulted in the rejection of the feasibility study in 2001, so in 2006 the need to provide a revised version was recognised, in order to address the new legal context” (BRL Ingénierie, 2007). Another excuse given by Parliament for not addressing the issue of the national park was the fact that the territory under consideration included areas on both sides of the IEBL, in two different entities, and Parliament only had jurisdiction over the area that belonged to the FB&H. Even though the revised study only covered the Federal Territory—just 75% of the originally proposed area—the whole thing led to yet another dead end.

In 2007 there was an attempt to produce a new zoning plan for this area, which also failed. Back in April 2016 documentation was once again being assembled in order to make yet another attempt to protect this area. This time it was suggested that the area should be categorised as a nature park. The third level of protection offered by this category would not be as rigorous as the categorisation of national park would grant. The upside, however, is that the area would fall solely under the jurisdiction of the Sarajevo Canton, so there was a glimpse of hope that the Assembly of Sarajevo Canton might eventually decide to pass a law and secure at least some level of protection (S. K., 2016). Unfortunately, since many construction works have either already been completed or are currently underway, the real question is whether such actions would make any difference at this point in time. The relevance of this example, which is but one of many similar projects taking place, is in the way in which it illustrates how the IEBL is being used as an alibi to justify governmental methods of avoidance and deferral to ensure that an area remains outside of legal protection. The line itself became another expression of the complex process of postwar “normalisation”. It helped solidify and mobilise the residues of spectacular violence, such as unexploded ordnance and demographic reconfiguration, themselves, in effect, forms of slow violence. The commodification of land that followed opened avenues for various forms of environmental degradation, an example of which will be discussed in the following section.

## Self-integrated tourist town

It should come as no surprise that by approximately 2012 this zone was already very much on the radar of developers from the Gulf in search of attractive locations in B&H. Eventually it was the Buroj Property Developers who came to an agreement with the local authorities in Trnovo to get a concession for 137 ha of land close to Dejčići village, and develop a so-called self-integrated tourist town, set to be the largest of its kind in South-Eastern Europe so far. Buroj Property Development was established in 2007 and describes itself as one of the “leading international property development companies in the United Arab Emirate Dubai” (Buroj International Group, 2021). Looking at the brief it is clear that this is an exceptionally ambitious undertaking. The proposal consists of 824 villas, 128 hotel/apartments, 36 buildings dedicated to different types of services, health centres and a hospital, a children’s ski centre, a zip-line, etc. It’s a new town that prides itself on being an “environmentally-conscious community with focus on sustainability and living in harmony with nature” (ibid.) (figure 3). This is rather ironic, considering the issues elaborated in the paragraphs above and in those to follow.



Figure 3: Buroj Ozone construction site opening in 2016

© Sanja Vrzić

Buroj Ozone development is regulated by Phase I “Prečko polje” of the “Sports and Leisure Centre: Bjelašnica Donja Grkarica–Prečko polje–Kolijevka” regulatory plan (figure 4). Major flaws regarding the production of this new plan have been pointed



out in the “Environmental Protection Plan for Sarajevo Canton 2016-2021”, an official document commissioned by Sarajevo Canton and published in 2017. Although mandatory, no Environmental Impact Assessment study had been produced or submitted to the Federal Ministry for Environment and Tourism prior to producing or adopting the regulatory plan. The plan was adopted in December 2015. However, the public discussion, aimed at incorporating input from citizens and non-governmental bodies, was only held in January 2016, rendering the concept of citizen participation almost redundant. Regardless of the fact that it was being held post festum, the discussion generated much heat. The substantiated critique was directed at various issues, mostly to do with the inevitable adverse effects on the sanitary safeguard zones flanking the development site. However, no comments or suggestions from that meeting seem to have been taken on board, as the plan was not subjected to any further revisions or amendments.



Figure 4: Prečko polje, Trnovo municipality in Sarajevo Canton, 2018

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The question of sanitary safeguard zones would, in fact, become another critical environmental issue tied to this project. The location intended for Buroj Ozone development is part of the Sarajevsko polje basin, the key assemblage of water sources used for supplying the capital with drinking water. Once again, political games and ploys insured that the land initially secured to protect the health and safety of the citizens of Sarajevo and their drinking water supplies would eventually enter the real estate market (Pedalo, 2020). Although these troubling decisions caused public outrage, the controversy surrounding this development failed to produce any significant impact on stopping the project from going ahead. As a result, gradual loss of drinking water reserves through contamination is to become one of the key manifestations of slow violence that the citizens of Sarajevo will be affected by for generations to come.

According to Hana Kevilj and Merdžana Mujkanović, architects from Sarajevo, the lack of concern about the environment is, to a great extent, also due to the attitude of the locals who either work for or closely with the investors themselves (Kevilj and Vrzić, 2016; Mujkanović, 2016). A dire economic situation has produced conditions under which, “survival economies”, as Saskia Sassen calls them, have been instrumental in providing sustenance for the majority of B&H’s population (Sassen, 2016). In the Bosnian context, alongside Sassen’s listed survival-economic categories of subsistence food production, informal work, emigration, etc., I would include the category of uncertain working conditions, whereby the fear of losing one’s job or potential client becomes a driving force, shaping the way in which business is conducted (ibid.). It is as a result of their uncertain working conditions that the locals who work with foreign investors wilfully disregard the serious repercussions which proposed developments might have on their local natural or socioeconomic environment, simply in order to keep the project going and to earn a living. This level of precarity is yet another by-product of the DPA-generated “official landscape”, which has helped further detach the “vernacular landscape” from the “socio-environmental dynamics” of the local community (Nixon, 2011, p. 17).

It was probably the representatives of the local authorities who were the first to understand the position of power they held and their ability to push the profit-making margin even further in relation to both the investors and the communities, which they represented. This brings us to the concept of a beneficiary, the term I borrowed from Robert Meister (2011) and developed in response to the Bosnian and Herzegovinian condition. Whilst primarily referring to previous war profiteers turned entrepreneurs and financial intermediaries, I would now expand this notion to include those in positions of influence (local authorities or officials in different levels of government) to argue that these individuals have understood the personal benefits of maintaining the political status quo, particularly in terms of maintaining the Dayton model, rather than moving towards a post-Dayton model of governance for B&H (Ćurak, 2016).<sup>5</sup> Thriving in the complex and convoluted structure of a Dayton-imposed bureaucratic context, which has helped to create a lockdown on other forms of economic growth, these individuals have seized the opportunity to profit from ad hoc deregulated urban development of the country at the expense of environmental protection, sustainability and feasible economic development. The infamous “discretionary right” of municipal mayors puts them in a position of final authority with regards to any urban or zoning

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5. In his book *Treatise on Peace and Violence: (Geo)Politics of War—(Geo)Politics of Peace—Peace Studies*, Nerzuk Ćurak argues that the current condition B&H finds itself in is still very much rooted in the war and, therefore, shaped by the war. He advocates for the gradual release from the bonds of war through the implementation of, what he refers to as a post-Dayton model, which would be based on “politics of the peace process” and not the war itself (Ćurak, 2016, p. 78).

plan, regardless of what any professional in the field might have to say.<sup>6</sup> This has inevitably led to numerous cases in which this right has been abused, such as previously discussed Buroj Ozone project.

Despite sometimes turning a blind eye to the sociopolitical and environmental context, the developers are nonetheless very well aware of the economic context within which they operate. Bosnians are mostly seen as providers of different types of services, with only a small fraction being seen as having any purchasing power. They are also, in most cases, the owners of the land that is eventually acquired or co-opted for such projects. Ultimately, it is precisely the local population that is the subject to manifold forms of violence due to the compounding of precarity, dispossession, extractive labour and protracted, yet cumulative environmental degradation.

## Conclusion

In this article I have shown how the IEBL has emerged as one of the main tools of spatial organisation in the hand of capital. Reinforced by various processes and structures such as corruption, networks of beneficiaries and allegiances, it easily lends itself as means of manipulation. Moreover, its existence has produced a condition where the overarching state of B&H bears no economic allure or significance, and the focus remains on the entities. The complex ethno-national and religious structure of the country very much adds to this equation. It steers the flow of capital by exerting its influence on a production of special “investors/investees” relationships based on religious affiliations (Feher, 2017). Such relationships have been instrumental in attracting and directing the money into specific parts of the country. The map of investments, which has surfaced as a result of the conflation of the above, therefore, does not necessarily respond to the demands of the condition on the ground but rather reflects the troubling political context in which it is embedded. Furthermore, the existence of the IEBL has helped create a milieu conducive to the influx of investment capital that has gradually enabled the process of “slow violence” to intensify and unravel across the country’s territory (Nixon, 2011, p. 2).

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6. Some of the main problems raised in the majority of the interviews which I conducted with practising architects in Sarajevo working on urban development projects with Gulf investors were, precisely, the local authorities’ lack of professionalism and ethics, and their prevailing corruption.

## To quote this article

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