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Remaking the Urban: International Actors and the Post-war Reconstruction of Cities

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The postwar reconstruction of cities has become an arena of international actors who mobilize different narratives of power and reshape conflict using other means. This article highlights how international actors use urban reconfigurations as a tool for intervening in the broader postconflict reconstruction of societies. First, it shows that the postwar reconstruction of cities is not only a set of spatial and economic processes of remaking the urban environment, but also a discursive practice of highlighting hegemonies through space. The article argues that reconstruction entanglements in inter-imperial space reflect both the endurance and the emergence of hegemonies of power. Second, urban reconstruction and other spatial interventions in contested urban space often prolong the tensions originating from war. In cities where destruction was caused by a mixture of internal and external actors, and where previous warring factions have to coexist in the postwar arrangements, like in Sarajevo and Beirut, domestic and international agendas reinforce and redirect one another. The article shows that the entanglement of local, national, and international actors in reconstructions play a role in transforming both place and conflict dynamics after peace treaties are signed.

La reconstrucción de las ciudades después de una guerra se ha convertido en un escenario donde los diferentes agentes internacionales movilizan diferentes narrativas de poder y reconfiguran los conflictos utilizando otros medios. Este artículo destaca cómo estos agentes internacionales utilizan las reconfiguraciones urbanas como una herramienta para intervenir en la reconstrucción, de carácter más general, que tiene lugar en las sociedades después de los conflictos. En primer lugar, este artículo demuestra que la reconstrucción de las ciudades durante la posguerra no es sólo un conjunto de procesos espaciales y económicos de recomposición del entorno urbano, sino que también es una práctica discursiva consistente en resaltar las hegemonías a través del espacio. Este artículo argumenta que los enredos que se producen con respecto a la reconstrucción en el espacio interimperial reflejan tanto la resistencia como el surgimiento de hegemonías de poder. En segundo lugar, la reconstrucción urbana, así como otras intervenciones espaciales que tienen lugar en el espacio urbano en disputa, tienden a prolongar, con frecuencia, las tensiones originadas por la guerra. En aquellas ciudades donde la destrucción fue causada por una mezcla de agentes internos y externos, y donde las facciones beligerantes anteriores tienen que coexistir debido los acuerdos de posguerra, como sucedió en Sarajevo y Beirut, las agendas nacionales e internacionales se refuerzan y se reorientan mutuamente. El artículo demuestra que la coexistencia de los agentes locales, nacionales e internacionales en las reconstrucciones juega un papel en la transformación de las dinámicas tanto de lugar como de conflicto después de la firma de los tratados de paz.

La reconstruction de villes après une guerre est désormais une scène où des acteurs internationaux mobilisent différents récits de pouvoir et redessinent les conflits à l'aide d'autres moyens. Cet article met en évidence que les acteurs internationaux utilisent les reconfigurations urbaines comme un outil d'intervention dans la reconstruction de sociétés après un conflit au sens large. D'abord, il montre que la reconstruction de villes après une guerre regroupe des processus spatiaux et économiques de création d'un nouvel environnement urbain, mais qu'elle correspond aussi à une pratique discursive de soulignement des hégémonies dans l'espace. L'article affirme que l'enchevêtrement de la reconstruction dans l'espace interimpérial reflète à la fois l'endurance et l'émergence des hégémonies de pouvoir. Ensuite, la reconstruction urbaine et d'autres interventions spatiales au sein d'un espace urbain contesté prolongent souvent les tensions issues de la guerre. Dans les villes où la destruction a été causée à la fois par des acteurs internes et externes, et où les anciens belligérants doivent coexister au sein d'arrangements d'après-guerre, comme à Sarajevo ou à Beyrouth, les programmes nationaux et internationaux se renforcent et se réorientent mutuellement. L'article montre que l'enchevêtrement d'acteurs locaux, nationaux et internationaux au sein de la reconstruction joue un rôle dans la transformation des dynamiques spatiales et de conflit après la signature des traités de paix.

Introduction

International interventions play a role both in contemporary warfare and in the subsequent processes of postwar reconstruction. Research on postwar reconstruction has traditionally dealt with the political, economic, and social reconfiguration of societies. It has come from fields as diverse as history (particularly with regards to the aftermath of the Second World War), political science, international studies, peace and conflict studies, and economics and development studies. In fact, both the research and practice of reconstruction closely followed the debates surrounding international development (Barakat 2005). As such, research originally focused on institutions and top-down processes, mirroring reconstruction and development practice, with the focus in both research and practice shifting gradually to bottom-up processes (Hilhorst, Christoplos, and Van Der Haar 2010).

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While examined mostly under the guise of social, political, and economic recovery, postwar reconstruction also has a spatial dimension, entailing processes of rebuilding spaces affected by destruction. In cities and territories ravaged by war, postwar reconstruction is a deeply spatial and material process. As such, it is a spatial intervention in the sense given by the architectural discipline, where the understanding of intervention in space is any form of construction which transforms an existing space. Moreover, as this article will discuss, it is a spatialized form of international intervention in remaking postwar societies. Scholars of space have long built on Lefebvre's argument that space is produced by economic processes, with cities being examined as arenas of capital intersections by the writings of David Harvey (2005, 2006) and Neil Brenner (2006, 2008, 2019) and the new economic geography (Fujita, Krugman, and Venables 2001). Following capital flows into cities helps us in the study of postwar reconstruction not only to see how postwar space is coproduced, but also to scrutinize relationships of power and hegemony between actors. I propose that examining urban processes after war is a fruitful way to both engage with the transversality of actors involved in the broader postwar reconstruction, as well as to provide a new angle to the study of international interventions.

I suggest that reconstruction can be understood as an "interventionist practice," beyond traditional legal conceptualizations of intervention, and expressing already routinized international praxes (Olsson 2015, 435). Postwar reconstruction can be seen as a double intervention. First, it is connected to peace-making, one of the expressions of postwar interventions, as one goal of reconstruction is to prevent the relapse into violence (Barakat 2005, 11). Second, it has been approached as a form of development, concept that is the subject of critical reconsiderations through the lens of intervention (Williams 2013, 1213). As David Williams (2013, 1215) argues, development provides tools for an "international ordering in an era when the legitimacy of colonial rule was declining." Moreover, as Bátora et al. (2020) suggest, a spatial inquiry of interventions should move away from a focus on institutional logics of territorial sovereignty to a discussion of development processes that shape sovereignty in practice. As such, urban reconstruction, as an integral part in postwar scenarios of development, can be a fruitful subject of analysis for interventionist practices.

This article examines the spatial, urban scale of international interventions by focusing on processes of postwar reconstruction in cities. It thus focuses on the urban, spatial dimension of the "intervention complex" (Bachmann, Bell, and Holmqvist 2015), which involves not only military actions but also peace- and state-building programs in which the reconstruction of infrastructure and cities are part and parcel of broader processes. As such, the article aims to bridge the recent opening of international studies to urban dimensions with the more established discussions in urban studies and political geography, which will be introduced below. The article interrogates the scales through which urban reconstruction is produced. It analyzes the dynamics of postwar reconstruction through the lens of entanglements of actors functioning at different scales, from the local to the international. It highlights how urban reconstruction involves a variety of actors, among which a wide range of international actors who use the rebuilding of cities as a tool for intervening in the broader postconflict reconstruction of societies.

I discuss the entanglements of these international actors in two inter-imperial localities, scrutinizing how these interventions express different forms of soft power, mired in legacies of empire, perceived solidarities, and multiscalar hierarchies. The inter-imperial approach proposed by Doyle (2014, 2020) allows us to understand cities where reconstruction is happening as spaces of multiple entanglements and fissures between different empires of the past and imperialisms of the present, in their subtle and less subtle forms. By drawing from an analysis of urban situations in the Balkans and the Middle East, I unpack both broader patterns and local specificities. I examine postwar reconstruction as the intersection of political economies and capital flows with foreign policies grounded in imperial duress and contemporary relationships that vary from professed solidarity to patronizing gestures. First, I scrutinize the coproduction of space, tracing which international actors participate in the reshaping of the urban built environment through postwar reconstruction. Second, I discuss the ways in which international actors are embedded in multiscalar processes that reshape postwar space. To do so, I examine the connected histories of interveners and the space of reconstruction, thus reflecting what Fagioli and Malito (2024) call the coformation of intervention.

The article argues that reconstruction entanglements in inter-imperial space reflect both the endurance and the emergence of hegemonies of power. The entanglement of local, national, and international actors in reconstructions play a role in reshaping both space and conflict dynamics even after peace treaties are signed. The article traces how urban postwar reconstruction has become an arena where international actors mobilize different narratives and reshape conflict using other, nonviolent means. These processes coproduce spaces marked by imperial formations and reflecting an interimperial condition. Stoler, Mc Granahan, and Perdue's (2007) concept of "imperial formations" refers to the ongoing processes of dislocation and spatial reconfiguration connected to imperial and hegemonic projects. Interventions of international actors, thus have an impact on the one hand on existing tensions and shape forms of symbolic violence in space, which continue the conflict through other forms. On the other hand, they reflect both imperial duress—the enduring legacies of empire (Stoler 2016)—and the configuration of new imperial relationships and hegemonies. As such, the article reflects how reconstruction is not only a spatial and economic process of remaking the urban environment after war, but also a discursive practice of highlighting hegemonies through space. It examines the reconstructions of Sarajevo after the 1992–1995 war in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) and of Beirut after the Lebanese Civil War (1975–1990) and the July War (2006), which show the interface between internal nation-building/identity politics and an array of international actors and agendas. It analyses architectural and urban infrastructural projects that are part of reconstruction and how they are framed by their initiators. It traces how these projects are rooted in colonizing, hegemonic practices related to enduring imperial formations that lead to the spatial and cultural reshaping of the city. The article thus offers a historical political geography of multiscalar intervention within postwar spaces in Southeastern Europe and the Middle East. Moreover, the article unpacks the scales of reconstruction and intervention and examines how processes of remaking the urban reflect the transversality of actors and entanglements that enhance these continuing tensions.

Scales and Spaces: The Urban Dimension

Cities have been relatively late newcomers in international studies. There is increasing attention to their role in international relations, focusing on well-connected global cities (Amen 2011; Curtis 2014), and even the way they have challenged IR (Curtis 2016). In the wider social sciences, the relationships between cities and international relations have a longer history, as represented by work in sociology, geography, and urban studies. Sociologists and geographers alike explored the role of what they called world cities from a world system perspective (Knox and Taylor 1995). Cities have been the focus of research of how international capital has abolished rigid understandings of scales (Brenner 2006). According to Brenner (2019, 169), the urban is a "medium, mediation, and expression of diverse scaling and rescaling processes through which capitalist formations or territorial organization are produced and creatively destroyed." The importance of cities for international capital as well as international relations is connected to a process of rescaling occuring since the 1980s: it is no longer capital that has to fit the integrated framework of state space, but rather, it is state space and particularly urban space that adapts to the (territorially differentiated) landscape of capital (Brenner 2006). Moreover, an interest in conflict and fragility has brought the "fragile city" category in the attention of both security studies and urban studies (Kruijt and Koonings 2007; Beall, Goodfellow, and Rodgers 2013; Goodfellow, Rodgers, and Beall 2013; Muggah 2015). The urban dimension of conflict has been brought forward in international studies by the debates on "new wars" (Kaldor 2007). Moreover, echoing Didier Fassin's (2010) discussions of humanitarianism, there has been recent attention on the opportunities for international organizations, including humanitarian ones, to function in cities affected by fragility and conflict (Grünewald et al. 2011).

From peace and conflict studies, Annika Bjorkdahl (2013) argued for an urban peacebuilding, specific to cities, that takes into account such multiple agencies, with burgeoning work calling for spatial engagements with peace (Heathershaw and Lambach 2008; Bjorkdahl and Buckley-Zistel 2016; Bjorkdahl and Kappler 2017; Gusic 2019). Moreover, most work on the urban dimension of conflict and the spatial–political bridge has been done in urban geopolitics, and broader political geography and urban studies (Herold 2004; Graham 2010; Kirsch and Flint 2011; Brand and Fregonese 2013; Pullan and Baillie 2013; Rokem and Boano 2017). It is, therefore important to include conceptualizations and approaches from these disciplines into international studies. Geographer Doreen Massey (2005) advocates for the joint conceptualization of the social and the spatial, considering space as open, continuous and relational. In relationship to power, however, space is "something usable, malleable, and therefore capable of domination through human action" (Harvey 1989, 176). As such, space and scale, as the primary foci of geography, have been employed to understand debates about territoriality and sovereignty in cities that have been defined as contested, divided, or belonging to a category of conflict-cities (Herold 2004; Graham 2010; Rokem and Boano 2017). Moreover, the "post" in "post-conflict" has been the object of scrutiny both in critical political geography (McConnell, Megoran, and Williams 2014) and in urban studies of conflict (Pullan and Baillie 2013), with Britt Baillie (2013) suggesting the term "conflict-time" to replace the temporal category of "post-conflict."

In urban planning and architectural studies, studies of contested cities have pointed out that urban planning has been used as a tool to mitigate, enhance or challenge territorial and political contestation (Bollens 2000, 2012; Gaffikin and Morrissey 2011). Moreover, architectural design is not neutral, being not only a mere reflection of context, but having an impact on sociabilities and contestation dynamics (Brand and Fregonese 2013; Pullan and Baillie 2013). Scott Bollens (2006, 100) sees the city as a "microcosm of broader societal fault lines," a laboratory where strategies can be tested and evaluated. Building on this interdisciplinary body of research, this article examines processes of postwar reconstruction of cities as an arena of entanglements, and argues that an urban lens contributes to a better understanding of international interventions as a dialectic process.

Scholars in urban planning, architectural studies, and heritage studies have addressed the connections between architectural/urban reconstruction and conflict transformation (Bollens 2006; Calame and Charlesworth 2011). There is growing awareness that urban reconstruction particularly in contested urban space can continue conflict through highlighting existing divisions, emphasizing structures of power, and alimenting sources of trauma, which lead to further tensions and conflict (Viejo-Rose 2011; Pullan and Baillie 2013; Gusic 2019; Bădescu 2023). Dahlman (2011, 197) argues that reconstruction can become an extension of war by other means, with the polity, which undergoes rebuilding not being able to move beyond the initial violence. More broadly, reconstruction has been seen as an arena of contestation and continued conflict within the state marked itself by a symbolic, cultural violence (Kirsch and Flint 2011; Viejo-Rose 2011). This article traces how the interventions of international actors through reconstruction relate to the existing tensions and embody forms of symbolic violence in space, thus contributing to the continuation of conflict through other forms, as well as to the (re)creation of imperial formations in these interimperial spaces.

Methods

In order to highlight how interventions in space relate to processes of conflict transformation, I employ two main sets of methods, one connected to reconstruction actors, the other one to urban space itself. First, I trace the actors shaping space in reconstruction. I examine the role of both local and international actors functioning in different realms. These are state actors, including local and national authorities, foreign governments and their associated development agencies, as well as international organizations and the EU. I engage also with nonstate actors, including international investors, architects, developers and planners, and local residents, including refugees and internally displaced persons. This is based on research conducted in the field through semistructured interviews, focus groups, as well as participant observation, examining both accounts of reconstruction as well as valuations and perceptions of reconstruction projects.[1] Moreover, I traced local media coverage of specific particular projects, including statements from the relevant actors involved. I map not only their accounts of reconstruction, but also their entanglements, mirroring Andrew Gilbert (2020)'s methodological concept of "intervention encounters." For Gilbert (2020, 7–7), international interventions are encounters between unequally positioned groups, while intervention encounters are

[1] I conducted fieldwork in Beirut in 2009, 2017, 2018, 2019, and 2022, and in Sarajevo in 2008, 2009, 2010, 2013-2014, and 2022.

"engagements across difference and inequality that are set in motion by policies, projects, and programs that aim to accomplish some goal of postwar transformation."

A caveat is that circumscribing actors to local, national, and international scales can be misleading in postconflict spaces, which harbor hybrid polities, where authority often functions across and beyond state spaces, and where there is often no clear dominant group (Heathershaw and Lambach 2008, 278–79). As Heathershaw and Lambach (2008, 270) point out, the influence of international actors is inhibited by the local actors, including informal and official institutions. The framework offered by Heathershaw and Lambach (2008), inspired by Joel Migdal (2001), proposes three kinds of actors activating in postconflict space, connected to corresponding scales. First, local actors as subordinates of various authorities at local and national levels, but who can also function translocally (e.g., seasonal labor migrants, and diasporas). The second type are the elite actors, also corresponding to local, regional, and national scales. The third are the global actors, including the "international community," but also transnational movements. Examining actors involved in urban reconstruction shows, however, that the types from this framework are further blurred by transversal categories: while aid agencies can be circumscribed to global actors and foreign states, city-makers such as developers, architects, planners cut through these scales and categories. There is a global scale of their reach, related to transnational design firms and globalized practice, but they are often functioning at the scale of the city, in between Heathershaw and Lambach's local and elite actors. One key challenge is to avoid the reification of scale in how actors are defined. Here, the concept of scaling developed in geography, where scale is a process rather than a rigid, static category, is useful to understand how these actors function between different state and city spaces (Brenner 2019).

The second dimension is the research on urban space and the impact of spatial reconfigurations on the city. Complementing the data obtained on perceptions on reconstruction projects from the interviews, I use architectural hermeneutics, an approach used in architectural studies to interpret the meaning of architecture, to explore how these reconstructed spaces communicate meaning associated with conflict and tensions. According to Dalibor Vesely (2004), architecture has a latent ability to embody not only the achievements of modern technology, but also abstract ideas and concepts, and a concern for the human condition and the natural world. Using a spatial reading derived from architectural methodologies and triangulating with interview data, I examine how reconstruction projects express meaning connected to conflict, victimhood, reconciliation, as well as practices of imperial duress and new imperial formations.

Urban Contexts and Inter-imperiality

To ground the discussion of reconstruction as intervention, I examine two urban contexts, connected to an inter-imperial condition and corresponding to different types of war and distinctive arrangements of international presence in a postwar space. I trace reconstruction efforts in Sarajevo, after the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina (1992–1995) –named by Mary Kaldor as a paradigmatic example of "new wars"—and in Beirut, after the Lebanese Civil War (1975–1990)—a war featuring a number of foreign state invasions—and the July War (2006), a short war waged by Israel against Hezbollah in Lebanon. The two cases are not chosen in order to be compared, but to provide examples of specific constellations of actors in the reconstruction of cities after different types of warfare and in distinctive postwar settlement contexts. Although Beirut and Sarajevo witnessed different forms of international interventions,[2] destruction mostly occurred from domestic factions, while the July War consisted of destruction by the Israeli forces. Urban reconstruction in Sarajevo featured a wide array of international actors, while an international Higher Representative oversaw the broader political reconstruction of the country. In contrast, in a Lebanon occupied by Syria (until 2005), there was a rather insignificant international presence from other foreign states and organizations in the process of reconstruction. However, after the July War, an array of international actors stepped in for the reconstruction of South Beirut and South Lebanon.[3] Looking at the reconstruction in these two cities offers us enough temporal distance to evaluate the impact of urban reconstruction of the 1990s and 2000s, while reconstructions in Iraq, Afghanistan, and Syria, Libya, Cameroon, Ethiopia, South Sudan contexts, and in Ukraine—just to name a few more recent conflicts—are still ongoing and there has not yet been an end of direct violence.

Beirut and Sarajevo are cities that illustrate very well the inter-imperial condition. Laura Doyle (2014, 160) defined inter-imperiality as a set of conditions engendered by the interaction of histories of multiple empires in one space, with people "moving between and against empires." For Doyle (2020, 13), inter-imperiality is "not only the materialities of empires that have accrued over millenia but also the forms of relation through which communities have struggled amid empires." It is a condition "lived all at once in the neighbourhood, at the imperial court, on the road, in the body, and amid the invasive stream of political events and news."(Doyle 2020, 13). While Sarajevo's creation was connected with Ottoman control over Bosnia and the construction of a new capital, Beirut's Ottoman belonging followed an array of empires that controlled the Levant since ancient times. The Ottoman rule was followed for both cities by European empires taking over: Sarajevo became the window of Habsburg Austria to the Balkans, while Beirut was the capital of the French Mandate Lebanon. All throughout, the two cities were the home of populations belonging to a variety of Christian, Muslim, and Jewish faiths. Just from this historical perspective, Sarajevo and Beirut, as many other cities in the world, illustrate their inter-imperial condition.

BiH and Sarajevo witnessed a higher degree of participation of international actors in reconstruction. For this reason, we shall discuss the processes in Sarajevo first. We shall then proceed to discuss Beirut, where international actors were less involved after the Civil War, yet witnessed an increased presence later (e.g., Iran after the 2006 Lebanese–Israeli war).

Reconstructing Sarajevo after Dayton

In 1995, Sarajevo laid in ruins. More than 60 percent of the building stock was damaged and almost 15 percent of housing units were fully destroyed (Bollens 2012). The postwar reconstruction of Sarajevo occurred in the context of a city divided between the two post-Dayton entities of Bosnia and

[2]In Sarajevo, international intervention came in the form of peacekeeping but also the short, decisive NATO intervention in 1995; in Beirut, a Syrian invasion started in 1976, with an Israeli invasion in 1982. Particularly the latter contributed to destruction of urban areas (as did the 2006 Israeli bombing of South Beirut).

[3]Following the capture by Hezbollah of two Israeli soldiers, the war lasted 33 days but was considered to be more destructive than previous Israeli incursions with 1200 dead, almost a million displaced and estimated 4 billion dollars in damage (Mac Ginty 2007, 459–61).

Herzegovina, as well as territorial reforms that gave planning rights from the City of Sarajevo to a variety of bodies (e.g., kantons, several municipalities).[4] Consequently, there was no single masterplan for the reconstruction of the urban area, divided between different municipalities and two cities—the City of Sarajevo under the jurisdiction of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, inhabited after the war by a Bosniak (Bosnian Muslim) majority, and East Sarajevo in the Republika Srpska, BiH's other entity, with a postwar majority of Bosnian Serbs. Moreover, there was very little cooperation between the municipalities on the two sides of the new interentity border. Cash-strapped and lacking planning capacity, postwar local authorities and planners depended on international funding and involvement. The City of Sarajevo relied on the EU for funding and expertise to conduct the reconstruction. The EU Commission brought another level of bureaucracy which slowed down the process even more (Yarwood 1999).

Broadly, the process of reconstruction generally meant a matching by public authorities of funding from largely international donors to particular urban sites. Aside from the European Union, funds came from a variety of donors, ranging from international organizations such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, states and their development agencies, like for instance the Japanese government or the Turkish Cooperation and Development Agency (TIKA), to cities abroad, like Barcelona or Amsterdam.[5] We shall examine some of these actors in turn.

International Involvement in Rebuilding Sarajevo

Interventions of Regret: Sustaining Spatial Coexistence and Common Heritage

Sarajevo witnessed a comparatively high international involvement in the stewardship of reconstruction. This is connected to a sense of international failure to intervene during the conflict,[6] not only in the broad sense of letting the conflict escalate, but also with regards to the lack of action regarding the destruction of urban space and the protection of heritage during the war.[7] There has been an increasing acknowledgement of the specific role of urban heritage destruction during the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina. On the one hand, religious buildings were destroyed in relationship to the identities with which they were associated (Riedlmayer 2008; Walasek et al. 2015). On the other hand, Bosnian Serb paramilitaries targeted spaces of common life, including libraries, museums, and squares, as an expression of living together and space-sharing (Coward 2009). A symbol of the destruction of common heritage was the burning of the *Vijećnica* (National Library). Belgrade-based architect Bogdan Bogdanović associated this destruction with a violence against spaces of coexistence, namely urbicide, which was later theorized as a specific form of violence (Association of Architects DAS-SABIH 1994; Coward 2009).

Heritage reconstruction focusing on these spaces of coexistence became one of the main areas of international assistance, particularly from the EU, mirroring the general EU line on supporting cosmopolitan memory and heritage, the aspects of the European past that underline coexistence and diversity (Assmann and Conrad 2010; Macdonald 2013). Sarajevo's cosmopolitan past was celebrated, and heritage reconstruction became a way to support this imaginary, despite the demographic changes that changed the previously heterogeneous and mixed city into a majority Bosniak city, with a Bosnian Serb town on the other side of the entity border. Peter Sorensen, EU Special Representative in BiH (2011–2014), highlighted how "overcoming the wounds of the past, cultural heritage protection and promotion has the potential to be of real support and a catalyst for better interethnic and intercultural understanding in the future." (Walasek et al. 2015, 219).

As a response to the destruction of heritage in war, the internationally brokered Dayton agreement created in a special annex the Commission for the Preservation of National Heritage. Moreover, central to reconstructions and restorations was significant international funding. Much of the historic fabric of the old Ottoman-era quarter, the Baščaršija, and many Habsburg-era institutional buildings were restored, including landmarks such as the Central Post Office, or the old Austro-Hungarian City Hall (Vijećnica), later the National Library, seen as the symbol of the city (figure 1). The discursive underlying of the importance of structures like the Vijećnica did not account though to a fast reconstruction process. Its rebuilding took a comparatively long time, with waves of funding coming from the European Commission, as well as the Austrian and Spanish governments, and particularly from the Austrian Development Agency. After the building was completed, it hosted some exhibits and events, but there was criticism of the lack of use of the space for the community and a confuse vision for its future. From a symbol of spatial coexistence, the reconstruction of Vijećnica mirrored a sense of general hopelessness in the divided country about a vision for the future.

Soft Power and Imperial Duress

Austria, through its Development Agency, was one of the main funders of the reconstruction of the City Hall, built during Austro-Hungarian rule at the end of nineteenth century. The Austrian support can be attributed to a form of soft diplomacy in the eve of the first state visit of an Austrian leader to BiH in 1996 (Walasek et al. 2015, 211). According to a report by the Austrian Development Agency (2007, 3), "the Vijećnica support was neither seen as cultural heritage nor cultural cooperation but rather as part of the reconstruction of Bosnia and Herzegovina," with reconstruction defined in its traditional political–economic sense connected to stabilization and development. Moreover, the sustained support from Austria, as well as the privileged role of Austrians at the building's final inauguration in 2014, also reflected a postimperial interest in former provinces, with Vienna ruling Sarajevo from 1878 to 1918.[8]

Echoing Gilbert's intervention encounters, the inauguration of the reconstructed Vjecnica on May 9, 2014 featured a

[4]For a discussion of the challenges to reconstruction related to the transformation of the planning system in BiH after Dayton, see (Bollens 2007, 2012; 015,2017).

[5]Interviews, urban planning offices, Novi Grad, and Novo Sarajevo municipalities, Kanton Sarajevo.

[6]In the words of Zlatko Dizdarevic, journalist at Oslobođenje during the war, "the international community rushed to reconstruct Sarajevo the city and buildings just to eliminate the bad memory and what we survived," allegedly expressing a sense of guilt for nonintervention (El Chamaa 2005).

[7]International organizations, which deal with heritage were slow to act. For instance, UNESCO, released various statements, including a 1993 UNESCO resolution calling for reconstruction of heritage, and a 1994 appeal from the UNESCO director general. However, it refused to send a mission to Sarajevo during the war and was marginally involved in the subsequent reconstruction (Walasek et al. 2015, 108).

[8]The report of the Austrian Development Agency highlights the special role of Austria, as close neighbour and former ruling power, Austria has special strategic, political–historical, economic, and humanitarian interests in the Balkans and Bosnia and Herzegovina."(Austrian Development Agency 2007, ii).

Figure 1. The rebuilt Vijećnica (City Hall/National Library), boasting its EU funder (*source*: photo by author).

privileged role of Austrian guests at the ceremony inside the building, while outside, the people watching it on a screen, had to listen to long speeches in German, without translation. In the crowd, comments were uttered about the old empire speaking over the subjects.[9] Austria's reconstruction gesture and its role at the inauguration became triggers for the memory of imperial rule, and a manifestation of imperial duress in this interimperial space.

Religious Solidarity and (re)building Spaces of Identity

While the EU and member states financed such projects related to spaces of coexistence, heritage reconstruction and spatial reconfiguration connected with particular groups were supported by a variety of states. The involvement that attracted most local debates is that of Saudi Arabia. The perception in the Islamic world that the Bosnian Muslims were abandoned by the West to genocide led to significant solidarity from many Muslim-majority countries both during and after the war. Consequently, Saudi Arabia established in 1993 the Saudi High Committee for Assistance to Bosnia and Herzegovina, which contributed with humanitarian assistance during the war, and in the subsequent reconstruction, with an estimated $600 million spent on rebuilding projects, as well as the construction of new mosques and cultural centers (Karčić 2010).

Moreover, Saudi institutions such as the Saudi Development Fund also got involved. The assistance to reconstruction was, however, criticized locally as an intervention to bring a different form of Islam than that practiced by local Bosniaks. For instance, the reconstruction of the Gazi Husrev mosque was criticized as a whitewashing of the previously colourfully decorated mosque, in a style that speaks more to the purity visions of the Wahhabi Saudis rather than Balkan Islam (Bevan 2007, 180). Moreover, the towering presence of the King Fahd Mosque and the associated Islamic Cultural Center has been the subject of critiques: architecturally, as it is a monumental structure with two minarets, thus different from the comparatively smaller Bosnian mosques with one minaret; spatially, as it dominates the socialist-era neighbourhood with its scale; and culturally, as it allegedly brings a more conservative, Salafi version of Islam than the reformist form of Islam in Bosnia, influenced by the *ijtihad* (self-reasoning) tradition (Aksamija 2010; Karčić 2010).

The spatial domination of new mosques, also sponsored by other majority Muslim countries such as Indonesia, is mirrored by the centrality of new Serbian Orthodox churches in East Sarajevo. The presence of such religious markers in urban space underlines an appropriation of space by dominant groups, corresponding to a postwar segregation, and in contrast to prewar coexistence. As such, these new spatialities correspond to the war aims of some of the fighters of creating ethnically separated space. Reconstruction, thus continues the war through other means. Through these architectural interventions in a postconflict urban space, the presence of such cultural markers can be seen not just as mere cultural expressions, but also as vectors of

[9] Participant observation, May 9, 2014.

territorialization, proclaiming spatial control over a space. Through the destruction of religious buildings during the war, as well as their reconstruction, forms of symbolic violence prolong the direct violence of war. As international actors support or advance particular urban projects supporting identity-building, they contribute to spatial remakings that enhance such tensions and mark in space the territorial divisions emerged through war and the Dayton Agreement.

Postcolonial Interconnections and Imperial Formations? International Actors, Local Urban Regimes, and the Remaking of Postwar Space

Aside from the religious buildings, the Saudi presence is dominant in other urban makeover projects, including large shopping centers that appeared in postsocialist Sarajevo. From the rebuilt Hotel Bristol, to the BBI Centar, a makeover of a socialist department store and the Sarajevo City Center complex, Saudi developers had an impact on reshaping the cityscape. Moreover, they had an impact in restricting social behavior, as in the buildings administered by them, alcohol is banned, in a Sarajevo where the consumption of local spirits has been popular across religious groups. Interviews with practicing architects and planners in Sarajevo, as well as media coverage in Bosnian daily Dnevni Avaz, suggested that the presence of Saudi developers in the city is attributed to a configuration of specific actors and networks. One key actor is Bakir Izetbegović, Bosniak member of the BiH Presidency (2010–2018), son of independent BiH's first president Alija Izetbegović. Trained as an architect, he has supported the Saudi developers based on contacts made in the 1990s and employed a particular set of local architects, close contacts, thus shaping an urban regime of city-making. Urban regimes are constellations of actors from state and nonstate sectors who shape urban policies through influencing each other in decision making (Lauria 1997). Based on perceived cultural affinity by key elite actors, a privileged relationship with a foreign state led to the reshaping of urban space and a transformation of permitted social practices in space. The entanglement between a key political figure, international developers, and local architects created an urban regime that became central in the coproduction of urban space.

The facilitation of international reshaping of space by ruling local elites is not only connected by cultural affinity, but also by power relations, as exemplified by the case of the American Embassy in Sarajevo. The Unites States was essential in shaping the peace framework in Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as in decisions taken in the country after the war (Haller 2007). Nevertheless, their impact on the built environment has been less visible. Less than a decade after the end of war, the construction of the US Embassy in the center of Sarajevo, between the train station and the city's main avenue, illustrates the relationship between power at different scales. The Unites States was discussing for their embassy with the Canton of Sarajevo a number of sites in the periphery of the city, echoing the practice of US embassy relocation in the last two decades, motivated by security concerns. However, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of BiH intervened in 2003 and made the Canton offer a central plot instead.[10] Nevertheless, that plot was already the subject of a masterplan designed by a Turkish–American consortium for a new university campus. The Council of Ministers and the Parliamentary Assembly of BiH sanctioned the sale, despite public protest over the lack of legality, as BiH did not have yet in place a law about selling public land. Nevertheless, the Office of the Attorney General invoked a Yugoslav law in 1978 and sold the land for a price well behind the market price (OIABiH 2005). Key here was the act of offering from the central government of a site that was not an expressed subject of interest by the Unites States. This situation in which local elites appease important external actors can be seen as an illustration of a postcolonial relationship between these elites and imperial powers (Bush 2006). The action of local actors who sacrifice a plan for public interest in their intention to placate an international power is key. This central location faced a challenge for the Unites States, who invested to build much of the embassy complex underground. It also created a spatial challenge for the city: the long and high wall of the embassy now visually scars the main access to the train station. From a spatial point of view, instead of a dynamic campus, the central place has become a fortified, isolated compound. Local agency here has created a coproduction of space by this entaglement of international and domestic actors that reveals a postcolonial gaze of local elites.

While the Saudis and the Americans were new players in Sarajevo's city-making, Turkey, like Austria, was a former imperial power who ruled BiH in the past. Turkey participated in the reconstruction of a wide array of buildings, from markers of religion and Ottoman heritage to state institutions. It funded the reconstruction of a *tekke,* a building used for various Sufi activities, which is now adorned by Turkish and Bosnian flags. The General Directorate of Charitable Foundations in Turkey supported the rebuilding of Ottoman heritage, as for instance the Isa-Begova Hamam. The TIKA funded the renovation of public buildings in Sarajevo, including university buildings. Moreover, two international private universities were funded in Sarajevo by Turkish entrepreneurs, which also brought an influx of Turkish students. This not only led to the construction of new campuses in the outskirts of Sarajevo, but also to a more visible presence of headscarves in public space. Many female Turkish students came to these universities as they are allowed to wear a headscarf, which before 2017 was not permitted in secular Turkey's universities. The attention to Bosnia and Herzegovina from Turkey is very much connected to Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's neo-Ottomanist policy. For instance, after one of his election victories, he suggested that his victory was significant not only for Ankara and Istanbul, but also for Sarajevo and Beirut, both cities once belonging to the Ottoman Empire. This was the marker of a neo-Ottoman foreign policy materialized through reconstruction funds, and examined at times under a (post)colonial lens (Türbedar 2011; Bădescu 2016). While parts of the local population in BiH sympathized with Turkey, there were also oppositions to this involvement, seen under the long shadow of imperial rule (Henig 2012). Nevertheless, Turkish donations and investments in BiH were dwarfed by investment in non-Muslim Balkan countries like Bulgaria, Romania, and even Serbia (Karčić 2010), which left neo-Ottoman policy more at the discursive level.[11]

Such discursive interventions are not necessarily connected with investments and flows of money. For instance, in September 2009, in East Sarajevo, the prime minister of Republika Srpska (RS), Milorad Dodik, and Boris Tadić, president of Serbia, inaugurated a school called Srbija (transl. "Serbia") built from RS funds. Through the unambiguous name of the school, the identification of RS flags with the

[10] For more on the US Embassy in Sarajevo, see Bădescu (2016, 327–28).

[11] For a discussion of the involvement of Turkish and Middle Eastern actors in reshaping cities in Southeastern Europe as an arena of competing interests, see Bădescu (2023).

Figure 2. Benches in Careva Mosque yard carry the inscription of the municipality of Bursa (*source*: photo by author).

Serbian flags, and the presence of president Tadić, this is just one instance of a discursive and materialized presence of a different country in postwar BiH. Serbian presence in RS is ubiquitous, but this is connected with the mobilization of the Serb identity by RS elites (Björkdahl 2018).

Urban Solidarities

States, their development agencies, and the European Commission were not the only actors who took part in funding reconstruction projects. The multiscalarity of intervention is illustrated by the fact that other actors such as cities abroad took part in supporting Sarajevo's rebuilding. Some cities reflected national policy and blended the scales of coproduction. For instance, Turkish municipalities participated in the rebuilding of heritage and the rehabilitation of public spaces in Sarajevo. As an example, the city of Bursa rebuilt the Careva Džamija (the Emperor's Mosque) and a nearby public space, which acknowledges the Turkish city through various inscriptions, including on public benches (figure 2).

Other cities created connections, which were not related to national policy. One key player in reconstruction was the City of Barcelona. The assistance started in 1992, as Barcelona was hosting the Olympics. The shock of war in BiH led to a statement of solidarity with Sarajevo, another Olympic City.[12] Ignited by citizen solidarity, Barcelona eventually signed a cooperation agreement in 1994, during the war, to announce support for the reconstruction of the city. The City of Barcelona supported the rehabilitation of the neighbourhood, which was used as the 1984 Olympic Village, as well as other neighbourhoods (Barcelona Ciutat Global 2022). It also supported the Sarajevo municipality with technical expertise, as well as activities of an NGO, the Embassy of Local Democracy Barcelona–Sarajevo, which implemented over 300 projects aimed at both spatial and social reconstruction (European Observatory on Memories 2022). In November 2000, Barcelona and the Canton Sarajevo signed a twinning agreement. The Sarajevo–Barcelona connection and support highlights the transnational urban cooperation bypassing national scale. The two cities share not only an Olympic experience, but also the experience of war and siege in the twentieth century. Moreover, the sympathy in Catalonia over the declaration of independence of Bosnia and Herzegovina is another factor to consider this urban constellation. This reflects how interventions from the exterior can come from a variety of scales, but also that the involvement in reconstruction of international actors is embedded in a complex assemblage of reasonings, including domestic concerns in the country of origin of the international actors, as well as domestic concerns in the reconstructed space and broader discourses of solidarity.

Local Resistance: Syncretic Place-Making

While architects in Sarajevo are embedded in these networks and regimes of multiscalar interventions, not all merely participate in the different platforms of nationalist parties and international agendas. In my survey of

[12] Sarajevo hosted the Winter Olympics in 1984.

architecture produced in Sarajevo, I encountered architects who, in their practice, highlight a desire to move beyond the existing spatial segregation and to embrace Balkan complexity, seen as a puzzling place of diversity and cohabitation in space. As such, they emerge as examples of local resistance to a regime of city-making that is dominated by agendas of different ethnoreligious groups or by mere lucrative business interests. The program of Sarajevo-based architects like Amir Vuk Zec and Studio Non Stop to highlight coexistence through the convergence of multiple traditions create what I call "syncretic place-making," the architectural practices of producing designs, which celebrate togetherness by drawing from a variety of cultural influences in a place (Bădescu 2022). Amir Vuk Zec compares this architecture to the local Bosnian dish in which various ingredients are mixed together, like Bosnia reflects a mixture of religions, ethnicities, and influences, from the Ottomans to the Habsburgs to twentieth century modernity. Here, the inter-imperial condition is acknowledged as a creative catalyst, working through the layers of the past and the spatial strata they produced. Inter-imperiality becomes a fertile ground of local appropriation and experimentation by local actors. While not entangled in regimes and ensembles of transnational actors, they evoke nonetheless the layers of inter-imperiality, twisting it for local empowerment.

The goal of these architects is to create urban spaces that bring together all the layers, somehow resisting the main narratives about separation and the realities of post-Dayton BiH. This local reaction to these international and local elite assemblages creates a practice that Amir Vuk Zec declared heterotopic, therefore resistant. This place-making practice shapes a local form of resistance to the constellations of power, spanning across scales, that reshape urban space. It is, thus a spatialized practice of place-making that responds to forms of territorialization and segregation of peace agreements and nationalist politics by concentrating on commonalities through a spatial expression. They transgress the platforms of local political elites and the urban regimes they shape with international actors. They express a hope in spatial coexistence in a country where reconstruction reinforced divisions forged in war.

Beirut's Reconstruction After the Civil War: Neoliberal Urban Restructuring and Business Entanglements

The reconstruction of Beirut after the Lebanese Civil War had a very different alignment of international actors as the one in Sarajevo, as well as a different spatial dimension (figure 3). First, as opposed to BiH, which the Dayton Peace Agreement divided in two entities, Lebanon's 1989 Taif accord focused on national reintegration. Nevertheless, administrative units were not updated, thus just a small section of metropolitan Beirut was administered by the City Hall of Beirut, with the rest divided in other territorial units. At different times, the mayor and the governor of the city had tense relationships with the acting prime minister (Balanche 2012). Consequently, there was no overall management and planning structure for the metropolitan area, which implied also a piecemeal reconstruction, with one big exception: the city center, the reconstruction of which also showcases entanglements of international actors.

Beirut received less intense international attention than Sarajevo in terms of reconstruction by foreign state actors. As Syrian troops continued to occupy Lebanon until 2005, international donors were reluctant to get involved in reconstruction efforts. However, still 95 percent of funds used for reconstruction between 1992 and 1997 came from foreign aid (Dibeh 2007, 4). The World Bank was the largest donor, followed by the Arab Fund and the European Investment Fund. Countries with a more significant presence were Italy, France, and particularly Saudi Arabia, which was also involved in the peacemaking process (Dibeh 2007).

The city witnessed a significant international presence in terms of private reconstruction investments and development projects, capital flows, and professional practitioners such as foreign architects and planners in connection to the reconstruction of its center. This had to do with the figure of Prime Minister Rafic Hariri, his international entanglements, and the neoliberalization of Beirut's city-making. The PM created a special company, The Lebanese Company for the Development and Reconstruction of the Beirut Central District (Solidere). Hariri wanted to reestablish Beirut as the hub of the Middle East, as it had been before the war, an interface of East and West, a tourist destination, a tax haven, and a significant port. While the reconstruction did lead to a temporary boost in tourism arrivals, the city had lost its role as hub and port (Balanche 2012). The rebuilding of the center was meant to spatialize this recovery of Beirut's centrality for the Middle East. It was also meant to erase the scars of war in a country where the memory of the conflict has been a taboo from the side of official actors, which performed a politics of amnesia about the war (Larkin 2012). National Law 117 of 1991 was drafted ad hoc for the creation of Solidere, giving it prerogatives of planner, developer as well as manager of the central district (Gavin and Maluf 1996).

Through professional and political actors, the project was linked with both the West and Gulf countries. Angus Gavin, who led the planning team which developed the Masterplan, was previously development manager at the Docklands Corporation in London. The neoliberal city model developed in London came to Beirut. Moreover, some authors see the roots of the Solidere model in the urban rehabilitation process of central Mecca in Saudi Arabia (Baumann 2017, 68). The Board of Solidere consisted of a network of Lebanese businessmen connected to Hariri, some with a role in Saudi banks and companies, as well as some members of Lebanon's prewar bourgeoisie (Baumann 2017, 65). Solidere's international branch featured Saudi businessmen prominently. In fact, Hariri's past during the war as a contractor in Saudi Arabia created a reputation among some Lebanese that he was an agent of Saudi Arabia. His neoliberal remaking of the country, is thus linked to a perception of foreign dependency.

The difference between the emergence of Solidere and the lack of a coordinated unit in Sarajevo does not imply that the state had a bigger role in the reconstruction of Beirut. In fact, the reconstruction of Beirut fits very well the neoliberal model. The country did not return to its laissez-faire liberalism of prewar, but witnessed the intervention of the state to shape the market, with Solidere as a prime example of neoliberal urban development. The neoliberal approach also shifted the production of space, evoking the emergence of what Brenner (2006) called "new state spaces," and connected through capital flows and new ownership structures Beirut with the Gulf countries.

By expropriating the owners, who received shares in the company, Solidere produced and implemented a masterplan as a sole developer. This led to a spatial coherence of the center, but also a disconnect with the rest of the city, and criticism from the local civil society about the manner of compulsory purchase of property and conversion into shares. Interviews in Beirut pointed out a dissatisfaction with

Figure 3. Beirut's reconstruction was centered on both recovering its Belle Epoque glamour and contemporary flair (*source*: photo by author).

the fact that much residential property has been bought by Gulf Arabs, who do not use the spaces, leading to a glitzy center that is empty. The rebuilt center never achieved the dynamism of its prewar self, and the space remained one full of contestation and exclusion.

Beyond the area managed by Solidere, Beirut's reconstruction after the Lebanese Civil War was piecemeal and featured limited state participation. The Hariri government planned in fact a similar process to the BCD reconstruction for Beirut's Southwestern suburbs, inhabited by impoverished Shia and Palestinians in camps. The Elyssar project was designed by Hariri's private office, composed by an international team of engineers and planners who worked with Hariri previously in France and Saudi Arabia (Harb 2001). However, the two political forces of the Shia, Amal, and Iran-supported Hezbollah, contested a Solidere-style process. The government created the Public Agency for the Planning and Development of the Southwestern suburbs of Beirut, in order to implement the Elyssar project. While the living conditions of the residents were not improved, the legacy of the project is the construction of the highway that connects the Beirut airport to the BCD (Harb el-Kak 2000). The high-speed connection reshaped the city for elites, investors, and visitors, reflecting the emergence of what Brenner (2019) calls new urban spaces, marked by the reorganization of space, entanglements of capital, and rescaling processes of the city and the state.

Rebuilding South Beirut After the 2006 July War: Geopolitical Entanglements

Reconstruction after the 2006 July War waged by Israel against Hezbollah became an arena of international actors with different agendas. The state's role remained limited, consisting in the provision of financial compensation for people who lost homes, while the actual reconstruction was left to homeowners and contractors (Fawaz 2007). Aware of the international donors presence even in the sensible situation after the Civil War when Syrian troops were still in the country, the Lebanese state was comfortable in taking a passive approach—what Mac Ginty and Hamieh (2010) call "learned helplessness." In this vacuum, a plethora of states and organizations from the West and the Arab world got involved, but it was Iran-backed Hezbollah, which took leadership in this later reconstruction. Immediately after the end of bombings, Hezbollah distributed over $100 million in cash (Hamieh and Mac Ginty 2010). Leveraging its strong local presence in South Beirut—area attacked exactly because it was a Hezbollah stronghold—Hezbollah spearheaded an ambitious project to rebuild the Haret Hreik neighbourhood. Project Waad (promise), led by the construction organization of Hezbollah, Jihad al-Bina, provided modernized homes to those who were affected by the blasts. Hezbollah's-led reconstruction emphasized its narrative of control, self-organization, and efficiency effectively, in opposition with the perceived inefficiency of the Lebanese state in previous reconstruction endeavors (Harb 2008; Fawaz 2014). The party's ability to rapidly respond to the needs of the affected population garnered praise and solidified its position as a formidable force in Lebanon's political landscape.

Yet in this reconstruction, an international actor was key: Iran. According to the Secretary General of Hezbollah, Hassan Nasrallah, Iran paid for half of the reconstruction (BBC 2013).[13] Iran provided $12,000 in cash to each family, as

[13] https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-22878198.

well as funded the Waad project (Mac Ginty and Hamieh 2010). But it was not only money that came from Iran. Similarly to other Hezbollah-affiliated NGOs, Jihad al-Bina was actually a branch of its Iranian mother organization, Jahad–i Sazandigi (Construction Jihad), which was created in 1979 (Lob 2018). Its expertise was built on the experience of the Jahad–i Sazandigi, which was the leading development organization of the centralized Iranian state. The Iranian organization was involved in the 1980s in development work in the Middle East and Africa, including in the Shia regions of Lebanon, where it established its branch in 1988. Iran's motivation was its self-perception as a defender of Muslims globally, particularly the Shia. Iranian development aid went to both Sunni and Shia groups. However, the belief that Sunnis had other donors while the Shia in Iraq and Lebanon were on their own motivated Iran, a majority Shia country, to intervene, especially in Shia regions (Taremi 2015). Iran funded the reconstruction efforts of Hezbollah and Jihad al-Bina in the 1990s from its Damascus embassy. Iranian Jahad-i Sazandigi also got involved in projects independently of Jihad al-Bina, situation which was not popular with Hezbollah. Nevertheless, in 2002, Iran decided to ask Jahad-i Sazandigi to return and preferred instead to fund Hezbollah and Jihad al-Bina directly (Taremi 2015). Consequently, while not led by the Iranian organization, the reconstruction of Haret Hreik was still connected to Iran through funding and the entanglement of Hezbollah, its construction organization and Iran and its Jahad–i Sazandigi.

Both organizations shared a model that combined aspects of top-down and participatory development, which are usually seen as incompatible: a faith-based, top-down model that was distributive, decentralized, and consultative. As Lob (2018) points out, this seemingly incongruous dimensions came from the strenuous cooperation between the two organizations and the international and Western organizations that promoted participatory development, including UNDP and USAID. As such, through contact with external actors, it contributed to a rescaling of spatial coproduction, connecting the Iranian government, Hezbollah as a political organization, and communities.

The promise was that Haret Hreik would be "more beautiful that it was" (Saliba 2016, 52). However, the neighbourhood was rebuilt similarly to how it was before. Jihad al-Bina focused the reconstruction efforts on the rebuilding in prewar form of 200 private owners, allegedly Hezbollah supporters, as well as maintaining the status quo by keeping the population profile similar and density levels high. This contrasted calls from professional communities and members of the public for increased livability, such as reduced population density and increased privacy, less traffic congestion and improved pedestrian circulation, increased public space, access to light and ventilation. Jihad al-Bina sidelined these wishes and their various stakeholders, including municipal officials, public authorities (even those aligned with the party), architects, academics, and members of the public. Through their reconstruction involvement, Hezbollah reinforced their legitimacy within the community and established spatial hegemony for both Hezbollah and Iran. The reconstruction process lacked elements of public debate, accountability and actual participation and consultation, with the exception of minor decisions, such as colour schemes and tile choices. (Fawaz 2007, 2014; Harb and Fawaz 2010; Lob 2018)

This financial backing from Iran was not merely a local spatial intervention; it had broader geopolitical implications. Iran's ambassador to Lebanon stated that Iran saw the reconstruction projects as "instrumental to our support to the resistance against Israel in Lebanon (ibid.)." [14] Iran launched reconstruction projects for South Lebanon, a Shia area affected by Israeli attacks, but also in other parts of the country, with its ambassador stating that Iran aims to help all communities of Lebanon (BBC 2013). Reconstruction and development are here illustrations of interventionist practices in the sense of Olsson (2015) and Williams (2013) to bolster the role of Iran in Lebanon. Reconstruction of a hard-hit area became then both a geopolitical response to Israeli action. It was even justified as part of a war of resistance against Israel (Hamieh and Mac Ginty 2010), a transparent situation of reconstruction being war with other means. The reconstruction of heavily affected areas became symbolic of regional power involvement, reshaping not only neighbourhoods but also the dynamics at the state level. Consequently, Iran's involvement and entanglement through local actor Hezbollah was motivated by both a feeling of Shia solidarity but also by geopolitical concerns.

Faced to the Iran–Hezbollah strong reconstruction reaction, Western and Arab countries and organizations responded. While few Arab and Western actors acknowledged publicly their reconstruction involvement as a response to the Iranian presence, the reconstruction process became a site of competition and influence, where various actors sought to demonstrate their solidarity with Lebanon and vie for political and strategic advantages.[15] Western donors and international organizations, from UN agencies and INGOs to the aid bodies of Western governments such as the Swedish Development Cooperation Agency Assistance, played a significant role in the reconstruction process. Western donors had a specific emphasis on governance reforms, conditioning funds with improved governance and reduced corruption (Hamieh and Mac Ginty 2010). However, some Lebanese observers found this approach as insensitive, failing to resonate with the immediate needs of Lebanese citizens who were eager to see their homes rebuilt.

In contrast, donors from Arab states focused, like Iran, on the immediate needs for reconstruction of homes and infrastructure, often providing unconditional grants or in-kind assistance. Lebanese observers attributed this assistance to guilt over the silence and non- intervention during the July war, thus mirroring the situation in post-war Bosnia and Herzegovina.[16] The reconstruction involvement of Kuwait, Qatar, and Saudi Arabia, just as Iran's, was thus more visible than the Western concerns with governance reform. Moreover, they navigated the intricate political landscape of Lebanon, working around the tensions between the government and the Hezbollah-led opposition. Arab countries generally signed protocols with the Lebanese government and opened accounts at the Lebanese Central Bank or, in case of the Saudis, the prime minister's office. The Saudi–Sunni PM connection favoured during Rafic Hariri was still active. In contrast, Iran bypassed the government by working directly with municipalities, many of which were of Shia majority, and the Council for Development and Reconstruction (Hamieh and Mac Ginty 2010).

The competition between donors was expressed in urban space through thank you banners—in Beirut's southern suburbs it was Iranian flags which dominated, while gratitude to the Saudis was expressed elsewhere (Hamieh and Mac

[14] Ibid.

[15] For instance, US President George W Bush pledged $230 million for reconstruction just a week after Nasrallah's compensation. (Hamieh and Mac Ginty 2010).

[16] Saudi Arabia's involvement in reconstruction was for instance described as "washing its hands of Arab blood" (Hamieh and Mac Ginty 2010, 114).

Ginty 2010). As such, the rivalry between Iran and Saudi Arabia in the Middle East was expressed through both reconstruction assistance and display of allegiance in urban space. While not a place of longer durée imperial duress, the streets of Beirut became then an arena of two different hegemonic projects in the Middle East, sidelining Western imperial ghosts.

Conclusion

This article discussed the scales of reconstruction and intervention in urban situations that reflect different balances of international and local actors in the aftermath of war. It highlighted how international actors who take part in the rebuilding of cities use urban reconfigurations as a tool for intervening in the broader postconflict reconstruction of societies. The processes of remaking the urban reflect the transversality of actors, as well as entanglements. In cities where destruction was caused by a mixture of internal and external actors, and where previous warring factions have to coexist in the postwar arrangements, like in Sarajevo and Beirut, urban reconstruction and other spatial interventions in contested urban space often prolong the tensions originating from war. War violence is followed by symbolic forms of violence expressed in the urban landscape, which not only illustrate local tensions but also what Stoler calls imperial formations, manifestations of interference, and hegemonies. Consequently, examining urban processes after war is a fruitful way to engage with the transversality of actors involved in broader processes of reconstruction, as well as to provide new angles to the study of international interventions. Echoing Heathershaw and Lambach (2008, 271), the internal and external are constantly renegotiated, and what emerges are transnational regimes that reshape space and power dynamics at the same time.

The article shows how the entanglement of local and international actors in reconstructions play a role in reshaping conflict dynamics even after peace treaties are signed. First, reconstruction is not only a process of spatial reconfiguration, but also one of symbolic narration through space. The urban reconfiguration of cities after war has become an arena for international actors who mobilize different narratives of power and reshape conflict using other means. In Sarajevo, some international actors favoured reconstruction projects focusing on common heritage and spatial existence (e.g., the EU), while others focus on particular identity pillars, including religion (e.g., Saudi Arabia and Turkey) and ethnicity (e.g., Serbia), corresponding to a post-Dayton spatial separation. In Beirut, the glamorous new old center was marked to communicate a reemergence of Lebanon in the international sphere and a hope for renewed dominance in the Middle East. After 2006, the entanglement between Iran and Hezbollah in the reconstruction of Haret Hreik brings forward both religious solidarities and geopolitical concerns. The Arab reactions reflect both guilt, as fear of losing hegemony, as in the case of Saudi Arabia. Drawing from these cities, we see that reconstruction interventions can be connected with political emotions, such as guilt for nonaction during conflict, solidarity, as they can be the expression of power dynamics and geopolitical calculations.

Second, if we pay attention to temporalities of intervention that go beyond the presentism of more recent operations we can also acknowledge continuities of former imperial presence through interventions from successor states of empires that once dominated the country and who intervene in name of a "special relationship." This is mostly present in the case of BiH. Third, an attention to the scalar relations of intervention allows us to see how local elites favour international presence from particular actors through facilitating not only urban projects—thus creating urban regimes that connect local and international actors in reshaping space locally—but also geopolitical connections through creating transnational networks. Such international actors are "preferred" due to cultural affinity and perception of power—in both BiH (e.g., the EU, the United States, Saudi Arabia, and Turkey) and Lebanon (e.g., the role of Iran). Fourth, involvement in reconstruction of international actors can be illuminated also through domestic political reasonings, such as for instance Barcelona's solidarity with Sarajevo. Finally, forms of resistance to such processes of city making can occur through place making practice (e.g., syncretic place-making in Sarajevo) that can subvert interimperiality.

International actors are motivated by different factors in place-making practices. Business interests inform many of the actions described above. Political strategies often concern the strengthening of regional impact (Saudis in Sarajevo and Beirut; Iran in Beirut). Perceived cultural affinity motivates pan-Islamic aid, as the memory of empire and privileged links bring Austria and Turkey to Bosnia, and France to Lebanon. Similarly, local responses to these initiatives illustrate a continuum of positions from accommodation and instrumentalization to resistance and transgression. Local elites accommodate the presence of international power, as the example of the US Embassy in Sarajevo suggests. They instrumentalize investments either to mirror political platforms or to gloat from a renewed role in the world. What emerges is a form of entanglements that are based on hierarchies and a form of postcolonial gaze even in relationships which are not based on the historical presence of empire. As highlighted above, other local actors showcase resistance and transgression through spatial practices. In conclusion, this article's focus on the spatial dimensions of postwar reconstruction advances a dialectic understanding of intervention, where the remaking of the postconflict and conflict-time inter-imperial urban space reflects a transversality of actors involved, as well as their multiple entanglements.

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