The 1992-95 Bosnian war was characterized by a sustained assault on the civilian population of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and their urban and rural environment, throughout the conflict. The international community, in particular, was slow to intervene, as the emergence of national identities as a means of defining and defending territory was viewed as an impediment to the war's resolution.

Despite the politically motivated nature of the definitions of territory and identity, the destruction of civilian property and infrastructure was evident. The destruction of cultural heritage sites, such as mosques and churches, was also significant. The conflict ended with a Dayton Peace Agreement in 1995, which established a federal structure for Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The legacy of the war continues to shape the region, with issues such as war crimes, ethnic cleansing, and the treatment of refugees and internally displaced persons still being addressed. The International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY) played a crucial role in bringing war criminals to justice, but the process has been slow and fraught with political interference.

The war in Bosnia and Herzegovina serves as a reminder of the destructive power of nationalism and the importance of promoting peace and reconciliation. It is crucial to learn from the past to prevent such conflicts from occurring in the future.
Croat/Muslim. It was also represented in the material cultures within which everyday lives were lived.

That this is the case can be seen in the manner in which ethnonationalists targeted the cultural symbols of Bosnia. These symbols were not merely symbols of specific ethnic groups, but also of a heterogeneous Bosnian culture: a culture that spoke not just of the presence of a specific ethnic group, but of historical coexistence (pluralism/heterogeneity) being the norm in Bosnia. This destruction of culture can be seen in a number of events, including (though not restricted to) the destruction of the National Library (plate 8.1) and Oriental Institute in Sarajevo, the shelling of the National Museum in Sarajevo, the destruction of the Stari Most (or Old Bridge) in Mostar (plate 8.2), and the widespread destruction of mosques and churches across Bosnia (Reidmayer, 1994, 10-19; Coward, 2002: 29-33). Insofar as these symbolic buildings remained standing, they echoed the ethnonationalist notion that ethnonational groups could not (and thus should not) live together. This destruction was, therefore, an integral part of the dynamic of political violence in the 1992-5 Bosnian war.

However, it is not only symbolic buildings or significant elements of Bosnian cultural heritage that were targeted for destruction. The urban fabric of Bosnia came under a relentless assault. As Nicholas Adams (1993) notes, along with "mosques, churches [and] synagogues," "markets, museums, libraries, cafes, in short, the places where people gather to live out their collective life, have been the focus of...attacks."

Early in the conflict a number of architects had noted the widespread, and yet intentional, destruction of the urban environment. They referred to this destruction as "urbicide" (see Warchizew, 1993; Mostar '92 - Urbicide, 1992). It appeared to these writers that a phenomenon was emerging that was not properly accounted for in the prevalent modes of analysis of the 1992-5 Bosnian war. Insofar as the violent logics of genocide/ethnic cleansing dominated the political imaginaries of those who sought to intervene or understand the conflict, the problems that shaped both understandings of the war itself and concomitant attempts to provide humanitarian assistance or negotiate settlements were predicated upon images and events concerning the destruction of human life, the displacement of individuals or groups, or the misery that human hatred can bring about. In short, understandings of, and interventions into, the Bosnian war were refracted through an anthropocentric political imaginary that concentrated on the death of civilians and the destruction of the symbols they held dear (mosques, monuments, cultural heritage).
Urban Destruction and Interpreters

Given the scope of the destruction of urban fabric in Bosnia and Herzegovina, it is possible to identify three common (though not self-evidently defined) interpretive frameworks: (a) the destruction of cultural heritage, or the destruction of cultural identity; (b) the destruction of civil society, or the destruction of the social fabric; and (c) the destruction of human beings, or the destruction of human dignity. Each framework reflects a different level of abstraction and a different set of concerns and political logic of the interpreter. On the notion of a "political logic," see Corwin, 2003: 35-7.

The ruble of the Bosnian urban environment has been similarly seen through the lens of anthropology. The destruction of the urban fabric has been described as a "cultural" destruction, or as a "social" destruction, or as a "humanitarian" destruction. However, this is a simplification of the complexity of the situation. The urban environment is a complex web of social, cultural, and political forces. The destruction of the urban fabric is a reflection of these forces, and it is impossible to understand the destruction of the urban fabric without understanding the forces that led to it.

The urban environment in Bosnia was a dynamic space, a shared space, and a lived space. It was a space where people interacted, where they shared experiences, and where they lived their daily lives. The destruction of the urban fabric is a reflection of the destruction of this space. It is a destruction of a way of life, of a social fabric, and of a cultural heritage.

The destruction of the urban fabric in Bosnia is a reflection of the broader conflict in the region. The conflict was a conflict between different groups, each with their own cultural heritage and social fabric. The destruction of the urban fabric is a reflection of the struggle between these groups, and it is a reflection of the broader conflict in the region.

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The destruction of cultural heritage

The second of the three interpretations of the destruction of urban fabric is that the retention of the city's historic core of Tbilisi, with its significant array of historic buildings, could not be understood as anything other than a failure of urban planning and development. The city's historic core, with its rich architectural heritage, was systematically destroyed during the Soviet period, with the construction of modern buildings and the demolition of historic structures. The loss of this cultural heritage has had a significant impact on the city's identity and its ability to attract tourists and investors. The destruction of cultural heritage is a complex issue, with political, economic, and social factors all playing a role in its occurrence.
understandings concerning the protection of cultural heritage. Reidmayer argues that although our attention focuses on the people of Bosnia, "we should also take a look at the rubble," he argues, "significantly more than the ordinary atrocities of war...Rubble in Bosnia and Herzegovina signifies nationalist extremists hard at work to eliminate not only the human beings and living cities, but also the memory of the past" (Reidmayer, 1994: 16). This elimination of the past, argues Reidmayer, is an integral element of ethnic cleansing. Reidmayer argues that "we are...told that 'ancient hatreds' are what fuel the destruction...this is not true": the museums, libraries, mosques, churches, and monuments "speak eloquently of centuries of pluralism...in Bosnia...It is this evidence of a successfully shared past that the nationalists seek to destroy" (Reidmayer, 1994: 16). It is the nature of the ethnonationalist project, the project that gave birth to ethnic cleansing, that drives this destruction.

Ethnonationalism seeks to naturalize the idea that the so-called "ethnic" groups in Bosnia are fated to live separate existences. The myth of "ancient hatreds" installs the idea that ethnic groups were always distinct and in antagonistic relationships. Ethnonationalist ideas of separation and ethnic purity are the logical outcome of the acceptance of this idea. However, such ideas are simply the myths on which the ethnonationalist edifice is built. Indeed, as I have noted, Bosnia has a long history of pluralism and coexistence between these supposedly distinct and incompatible ethnic groups (Hayden, 1996: 788-90). The urban environment in cities such as Sarajevo and Mostar are testament to the pluralism/heterogeneity of Bosnia. The coexistence of Ottoman, Austro-Hungarian, and vernacular buildings is a constant reminder that the nationalist project of ethnic separateness is a present-day fiction belied by the past. Thus, to paraphrase Reidmayer, ethnonationalists sought to destroy evidence of a successfully shared past in order to legitimate a contemporary goal of ethnic separateness.

This account seems to get closer to the theme of the destruction of the shared spaces of Bosnia-Herzegovina than the interpretation of destruction as the result of either collateral damage or military necessity. Indeed, this account understands the destruction of certain buildings as part of the logic of ethnonationalism that has at its heart the destruction of the conditions of possibility of pluralism, key among which is the evidence of coexistence provided by the built environment of Bosnia.

However, this account suffers from its focus upon the symbolic cultural heritage of Bosnia. In other words it focuses only upon the buildings whose loss is judged to be a cultural loss. This means that the buildings for which concern is shown are those that were striking examples of a particular cultural influence upon the pluralist history of Bosnia. Ancient mosques, National Library buildings, and 400-year-old bridges are the subject of this account, as it is these that are the symbolic reminders of the pluralist culture of Bosnia. However, the destruction of the urban environment is more widespread than these symbolic buildings. Indeed, it encompasses buildings that have no distinctive cultural value, or are of indistinct cultural provenance (the bland modernism of the Unis Co. tower blocks in Sarajevo are an example; see plate 8.3). * These buildings could not really be said to represent the cultural heritage of Bosnia. And thus the interpretation of urban destruction as an attack on cultural heritage provides only a partial (though striking) account of the destruction of the urban environment in Bosnia.
The third and final interpretation of urban destruction that I want to examine does not treat the ruins in demesmes as material symbols of a collective trauma and place identity, but rather as signs酿酒 and value (concepts). This interpretive tradition focuses on the destruction of symbolic landscapes and architectural remains as representative of a historical process. A radical example of this is the idea of the "ruins". This interpretation draws on the work of philosophers and historians who argue that ruins are not just material remains of a past culture but also contain the memories and values of that culture. The ruins are seen as a means of understanding the past and as a way of reflecting on the present.

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as part of the logic of genocide that we do not simply see the killing of each individual as a means to the end of extermination. In fact it is not extermination — however incomplete this may be — which defines genocide. 10 Rather, what we understand to be the meaning of "genocide" is played out in each and every death, each and every time. Since genocide is enacted in each and every death it expresses a relation between what is destroyed and the meaning of destruction that is other than the simple death of the individual. It is integral to our understanding of "genocide" that we recognize what "it" is that is destroyed, and the meaning of the destruction. In genocide "it" is a member of a national or ethnic group and the destruction has the meaning of the eradication of this group.

It is precisely here that the simultaneous kinship and difference between urbicide and genocide can be noted. Like genocide, urbicide derives its meaning from the relationship between the destruction and what "it" is that is destroyed. However, what "it" is that is destroyed is distinct from that which is destroyed in genocide.

If we draw on the previous definition of urbicide, it is possible to outline the relationship of destruction to that which is destroyed that gives urbicide its specific conceptual logic. Put simply, urbicide entails the destruction of buildings and urban fabric as elements of urbanity. Buildings are destroyed because they are the condition of possibility of urbanity. Since urbanity is constituted by heterogeneity, urbicide comprises the destruction of the conditions of possibility of heterogeneity. Moreover, this destruction is, like genocide a two-phase affair. First, the conditions of possibility of heterogeneity are destroyed, followed by the imposion of homogeneity.

Having thus outlined the conceptual contours of urbicide, namely that it comprises a destruction of the buildings as the conditions of possibility of heterogeneity in order to establish homogeneity, it is necessary to set out the political consequences of my argument.

From Agonism to Antagonism: The Politics of Urbicide

In order to understand the politics of urbicide in Bosnia it is necessary to understand what is at stake in this destruction. If the above outline of urbicide is correct, buildings were destroyed in the 1992-5 Bosnian war insofar as they were elements of urbanity. Insofar as heterogeneity is the defining feature of urbanity, urbicide comprises the destruction of buildings as the conditions of possibility for such heterogeneity. It is possible, therefore, to say that it is heterogeneity that is at stake in urbicide, in the destruction of each and every building. I would like, therefore, to turn my attention to the stakes of urbicide: heterogeneity.
The heterogeneity at stake in Uhrich's might better be described as an instance of the concept of agonistic democracy, which, in the discussion of the "agonistic" in the context of identity, is defined as the absence of identity. The concept of agonistic democracy is further developed and described in the context of identity and difference. In Uhrich's case, the concept of agonistic democracy is defined as the absence of identity in the context of difference (many different identities in one and the same context). The concept of agonistic democracy is further developed and described in the context of identity and difference. In Uhrich's case, the concept of agonistic democracy is defined as the absence of identity in the context of difference (many different identities in one and the same context).
destroying the conditions of possibility of urbanity, denies such heterogeneity. This denial is accomplished by retransforming agonism into antagonism and thus giving the impression of having dissipated the relationship of identity to difference. Only in this way can the ethnonationalists who practice uribicide create the fiction of ethnic separateness/purity on which their statetells are founded.

Notes

1 “Bosnian” is more adequate in describing those who were the victims of the genocidal violence of the Bosnian Serb Army and not just the somewhat mistaken designation of “Muslim.” “Bosnian” can be defined, following Sells, as “all residents of the internationally recognized sovereign nation of Bosnia-Herzegovina, regardless of their religious affiliation, who consider themselves Bosnian, that is, who remain loyal to a Bosnian state built on the principles of civic society and religious pluralism” (Sells, 1996:40). Just as the Jews were not the only victims of the Holocaust, so those who could be identified as Muslim were not the only victims of the Bosnian Serbs. Indeed, in most discourses “Muslim” is deployed as a catch-all category for all those who found themselves to be opposed to, victims of, or excluded from, the Bosnian-Serb ethnonationalist program. See also in this regard Bringa’s comments on the evolution of Bosnian identity (Bringa, 1993: 34–6).

2 The destruction of the Stari Most was one of the most prominent images of the 1992–5 Bosnian war. This Ottoman bridge was deliberately shelled until it collapsed on November 8, 1993 (see Coward, 2002: 29–33).


4 See Winkelman (1993) for further examples of the modernist/vernacular/everyday buildings destroyed in the shelling of Sarajevo.

5 For an account of semiotics – the scholarly study that defines the semiotic – see Culler (1986: 90–106).

6 Regarding the manner in which “Balkan” stereotypes define perceptions of the character of various Slavs, see Bakic-Hayden and Hayden (1992) and Todorova (1997).

7 This view can be seen in the words of a spokesperson for the American Republican leadership, who stated: “I see no reason to send young men over there to lose their lives over something we can do nothing about. These people have been fighting for centuries.” (“The Silent Opposition”, New York Times, November 27, 1995; quoted in Campbell, 1998a: 52).

8 Extracts of this publication were published as “Mostar ‘92 – Uribicide” (1993).