

The 7 Most Endangered Programme

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the European Voice of Civil Society Committed to Cultural Heritage,
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Partisan Memorial Cemetery: Past, Present, Future

Mostar, Bosnia and Herzegovina



May 2026

Foreword

This report is published as a contribution to the **60th anniversary of the inauguration of the Partisan Memorial Cemetery in Mostar**, and on the occasion of the **20th anniversary of the designation of this heritage place as a National Monument of Bosnia and Herzegovina**. The Partisan Memorial Cemetery had been listed among the 7 Most Endangered heritage sites in Europe for 2023 by Europa Nostra in the framework of its **7 Most Endangered Programme** run with the support of the European Investment Bank Institute (thereafter EIB Institute) and the Creative Europe programme of the European Union.

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(**N.B.** Relevant essays written by Dr Vujović and Dr Markovina are included as annexes to this document).

IN MEMORIAM - We dedicate this document to [the memory of John Sell](#), eminent architect from the UK and leading figure of Europa Nostra for a period of three decades. John Sell was for many years the Chair of the Advisory Panel of the 7 Most Endangered Programme. He had a special interest in the (endangered) heritage in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and in the wider region of the Western Balkans and was scheduled to participate in our mission to Mostar and Sarajevo. His unexpected departure left a profound void. We will gratefully remember his dedication and contributions. We learnt so much from him. His immense legacy lives on.

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Technical Report - Partisan Memorial Cemetery, Mostar - 7 Most Endangered Programme

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- Websites: www.spomenikdatabase.org/mostar
www.partizansko.info/en; <https://partizansko.info/en/foto-profil>

1. Introduction

The Partisan Memorial Cemetery, built in the town of Mostar (Bosnia and Herzegovina), is one of the largest memorials of similar characteristics in the Balkans, with its 300-metre-long paved ceremonial pathway rising more than 20 meters up a hill. The cemetery, which features some 720 individual tombstones as grave markers of members from the Yugoslav Partisans movement or other members of underground resistance, is part of a series of anti-fascist monuments and sites built in the region after World War II.

It was designed by the renowned Yugoslav architect Professor Bogdan Bogdanović. Skilled stonemasons built the monument over several years, using over 12,000 carved limestone pieces, rubble from the town's destruction during the war, and traditional stone roof tiles recycled from Mostar houses. The monument was inaugurated on 25 September 1965, on the occasion of the 20th anniversary of the liberation of Mostar.

After the damage during the 1992-1995 war, the Memorial Cemetery was restored, partly with the support of the Governments of Norway and the Netherlands, before being exposed to vandalism in post-war time. The worst act of vandalism so far happened in June 2022 when most of the engraved stone memorial markers of the Partisan Memorial Cemetery were smashed in just one night.

The repeated attacks, which occurred both before and after the site's inclusion - in 2023 - among the 7 Most Endangered Heritage Sites in Europe and which continued even during the preparation of this Report, pose a serious risk of irreversible loss of the site's cultural, historical, architectural and commemorative values.

Up until the present day, the serious damage to the Partisan Memorial Cemetery has not yet been restored and this heritage site, which is protected by law as a national monument, continues to be exposed to further deterioration and to serious risks of repeated acts of vandalism.

2. Location and Appearance

Name:	Partisan Memorial Cemetery in Mostar (Partizansko Groblje u Mostaru)
Categories:	monument, memorial, cemetery, architecture, complex, landscape design
Location:	Mostar, Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bosnia and Herzegovina
Coordinates:	43.341573, 17.796827
Area:	outline 5,276 m ² ; monument 15,150 m ² ; forest park 20,000 m ²



The Partisan Memorial Cemetery in Mostar is in a locality marked with the toponym "Biskupova glavica" (former Bakamovića glavica) on Bijeli Brijeg (White Hill), next to Kralja Petra Krešimir IV Street (former Blagoja Parovića street), where is the main entrance to the complex. The memorial cemetery complex is located on the northern slope of the Bijeli brijeg (White Hill) (an artificial forest park), reforested in the 1960s, on the top of which is the protective zone of the gravity water supply reservoir. In the immediate vicinity of the complex there are also: the city trim trail, the complex of the Bishop's Ordinariate built in 1906, the complex of the so-called "Tobacco Institute", and the Faculty of Agriculture. Although the monument is in a devastated state, access to it is still possible from Kralja Petra Krešimira IV Street.

The entrance to the monument has been mostly clogged with *ad hoc* parked vehicles, but it is possible to access the monument. The green areas have not been maintained for a long time, and the highest part of the monument has been the most devastated. However, access to the very top of the heritage place is possible.

The Partisan Memorial Cemetery was designed by Professor Bogdan Bogdanović, one of the most famous and successful builders of memorial architecture in the region of Southeast Europe (see below, section 4.1). It represents a unique memorial complex in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and a remarkable example of an anti-fascist memorial. **This memorial heritage site has exceptional historical, artistic, documentary, symbolic, and social value.** The Memorial is also an important formative element of the **historic urban landscape of Mostar**. As a unique heritage site in the urban setting of Mostar it contains all the attributes of an impressive architectural, aesthetic and landscape ensemble, with environmental values. **As such, it enjoys the highest level of statutory protection in Bosnia and Herzegovina as a National Monument.** Today, the heritage place still has the same significance, expressed by the high level of authenticity of its tangible and intangible attributes, including form and design, materials and substance, location and setting, function, spirit and feelings, while the management system is not functional and the use of the place is compromised. Despite its current state of devastation and neglect, it figures on the list of “must see” sites for the ever-growing number of tourists who come to Mostar.

3. Context

3.1 Characteristics, Location and Access

The Partisan Memorial Cemetery is a heritage site located in Mostar, Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bosnia and Herzegovina. It was designed by the Architect Bogdan Bogdanović and built in the memory of the Yugoslav Partisans and other anti-fascist underground resistance activists and their supporters from Mostar who lost their lives during World War II.

It is one of the largest heritage places of this kind and style in the region of the Balkans. It is one of more than 1.130 memorial parks or more than 800 official partizan cemeteries in former Yugoslavia. The Memorial is located on the northern slope of the Bijeli brijeg (White Hill), "Biskupova glavica" (former Bakamovića glavica), an artificial forest park reforested in the 1960s, together with the works, next to Kralja Petra Krešimira IV Street, where is situated the main entrance of the complex, from which a 300-metre-long paved ceremonial pathway is rising up a hill. It is located one and a half kilometres walking away from the Old Bridge (inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List in 2005, <https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/946>).

All parts of the heritage place are accessible, although major damage and risks occur at its upper parts. The green areas have not been maintained since longer, the elements of horticultural arrangements have been lost, especially floral basins, while the complex hydraulic network, composed of fountains, channels, pool and a water cascading "organ" acoustic element, has been severely damaged and out of function. The entrance to the monument is usually clogged with illegally parked vehicles, but this does not hamper access to the monument for visitors.

3.2 Historical Background

The heritage site commemorates members of the Partisan National Liberation Army, resistance activists, and their supporters from Mostar, who lost their lives during World War II.

After the invasion of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia by Axis forces in April 1941, Mostar found itself part of the newly created Independent State of Croatia (NDH), which collaborated with Italian and German fascists. In the city were stationed NDH's Ustaše Croatian nationalist militia alongside Italian and German troops. By August 1941 an armed popular resistance started to get organised all over former Yugoslavia led by the Yugoslav Partisan movement. Mostar was a stronghold for resistance during the war with participation of people belonging to all ethnic and religious groups. Nearly 6,000 people from Mostar, approximately one in three residents, actively participated in antifascist resistance. The city was finally liberated from the NDH rule and German Nazi forces by the 8th Dalmatian Partisan Brigade on 14 February 1945, during the so-called "Operation Mostar". After liberating the city, Partisans reportedly engaged in reprisal extrajudicial killings of those who they saw as local collaborators with the Ustaša regime and Axis forces, which included seven Franciscan monks.

Because of the importance of Mostar as a resistance stronghold, its municipality and the leadership of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia decided that building an anti-fascist memorial would be appropriate for this city.

In 1959, young but already notable Yugoslav architect Bogdan Bogdanović was entrusted to design this memorial complex, asking him to situate it on Bijeli Brijeg, just south of the city's southern outskirts.

In 1960, the Municipal Assembly of Mostar took the decision to implement Bogdanović's proposed design. It was carried out by Mostar's Parks and Plantations Agency. The funding for the project was provided mainly by the City of Mostar, along with donations given by local workers' organisations and by families of the victims.

In 1965, the official unveiling ceremony for the monument was held on 25 September, a date which also marked the 20th anniversary of the final withdrawal of Partisan troops from liberated Mostar after the end of the war. Upon completing this monument, the then Mayor of Mostar, declared that Bogdan Bogdanović was to be recognized as an 'honorary citizen' of the town. In addition, he was bestowed with the annual award known as the "14 February Prize", which is given to a person who through the year achieved exceptional work in service to the city of Mostar.

The precise number of individuals commemorated and/or buried at the memorial is subject to in-depth research on the site's history and documentation. The most recent documentation has been established by Minja Pješčić (an analyst and researcher from Mostar currently based in Toronto) and designed by Maya Ombašić (<https://partizansko.info/en>). Minja Pješčić conducted extensive research in archives and libraries and interviewed dozens of individuals who possess personal memories, family documents, or indirect recollections related to the site. Together with her collaborators, she identified 722 individuals who are either buried in the cemetery or ossuary, or whose names are inscribed on the memorial plaques. They created an impressive database containing detailed biographical information, testimonials, photographs, and images of tombstones (<https://partizansko.info/en/foto-profil>).

There are four categories of burial:

1. A number of remains were buried beneath the grave markers ("stone flowers" or "stone birds"). These were the individuals who had originally been buried in their own graves or those who could be identified. Their remains were placed in concrete chambers, measuring 60x40x50 cm, beneath the grave markers.
2. A large number of remains, those of individuals who could not be identified, were buried in the ossuary. These were people who had been killed on the battlefield and had originally been buried in mass graves.
3. Fighters who were killed in distant locations were not transferred to the cemetery, but a plaque was installed in their honour, even though their graves remain at the places of their original burial.
4. The group of individuals - who were killed in concentration camps, as well as individual cases where the burial site was never found - have their names inscribed on the memorial plaques, which serve as the only place where their names are commemorated.

The team also gathered valuable information about the stonemasons who worked on the site, including one who is still alive at the time this report is published. The website presents this data alongside photographs of the tombstones that were replicated in 2018. The statistical overview provided here may also be of interest: <https://partizansko.info/en/statistika>.

Until the 1990s, the place was a place of remembrance and popular visitors' attraction, with people from the city and from across Yugoslavia coming to visit and hold large events. This memorial site was specially visited during the time of the 1984 Olympics in Sarajevo, which brought huge amounts of tourism to the region.

During the wars of the 1990s, which marked the breakup of Yugoslavia, this memorial site fell into extremely bad condition, due to the fact that it was shelled, set on fire, looted, attacked and vandalized. Dr Dragan Markovina, historian, author and intellectual, asserts that the Partisan Cemetery Memorial was the first landmark targeted in Mostar when bombs began firing in 1992.

After the wars of the 1990s, this heritage place was left in ruins, with the vast majority of its elements destroyed, stolen or abandoned. The Mostar's Partisan Cemetery Memorial became a target for on-going vandalism.

In 2003, city administration authorities created a committee in support of restoring the memorial composed of Bogdan Bogdanović, among others. By the end of 2004 an operational programme of restoration works was agreed. In 2005, works were undertaken, partly with support from the Netherlands and Norway, and various parts of the complex and greenery were restored. On 9 May 2005, the Europe Day which is also the Victory Day in this part of Europe, the Partisan Memorial Cemetery was formally re-opened. **Soon after that, in January 2006, the Partisan Memorial Cemetery in Mostar was designated as a National Monument of Bosnia and Herzegovina, which is the highest level of statutory protection based on its outstanding national significance.**

During the night of 14 June 2022, most of the more than 700 tombstones were smashed by a group of individuals equipped with destruction tools. Soon after this act of vandalism, informal

groups and individuals started leaving flowers and reassembling the remaining stone pieces in a symbolic manner. At the time of publication of this report, the perpetrators of these acts were not identified and no criminal procedure was initiated by competent judicial bodies.

In April 2023, Europa Nostra [declared](#) Mostar's Partisan Memorial Cemetery to be one of the 7 Most Endangered heritage sites in Europe, on the basis of the nomination made by the local NGO, IDEAA led by Dr Senada Demirović.

3.3 National Monument Protection



The "National Monument" designation represents the highest level of legal protection in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Such designations are decided by the [Commission to Preserve National Monuments in Bosnia and Herzegovina](#). The Commission's decisions are final and binding, including any related protection measures.

Between 2001-2016, the Commission prioritized actions for endangered national monuments based on risk levels. A list of the most endangered national monuments was used to guide two entity governments in setting priorities and implementing legal, administrative, technical, scientific, financial, and other measures in accordance with the decisions of the Commission to Preserve National Monuments. [The excellent quality of the Commission's work was recognised by a 2010 Europa Nostra Award](#).

Since 2016, the criteria for prioritization shifted from the level of risk to the significance of national monuments, with those of "outstanding importance" receiving priority. The Partisan

Memorial Cemetery has consistently been listed as a high-priority national monument which provides the highest level of legal protection. **Under the Dayton Peace Agreement, the Government of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina has both the authority and the responsibility to provide all necessary technical, administrative, legal, financial, and other measures required for the implementation of the decisions of the Commission. These decisions, however, bind all levels of authorities, including the local ones, to undertake all measures needed to prevent risks of damage, mismanagement and deterioration of the National Monument.**

The Commission to Preserve National Monuments, established by the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina on the basis of regulations contained in the Dayton Peace Agreement (Annex 8), was composed of five independent experts in the fields related to heritage protection (three experts from Bosnia and Herzegovina as well as two international experts). The research and the documents needed for the decisions of the Commission were prepared by the support of the Technical Secretariat composed of experts in different heritage-related disciplines.

Since February 2016, the Commission has been operating in its incomplete composition, namely with 3 members representing the three main ethnic groups in Bosnia and Herzegovina but without 2 international members.

On 2 February 2026, the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina adopted a decision which, inter alia, defines that the Commission ought to be composed of five members: two from the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, one from Republika Srpska, and two international members who are nominated by the Director-General of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and appointed by the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina. This decision restores the Commission to its full composition of five members, in accordance with Annex 8 of the Dayton Peace Accord, thereby enabling it to resume its work in line with the original institutional framework. **We urge the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina to give every priority to ensuring the proper and timely implementation of this decision, thus re-establishing the Commission's lawful and effective functioning.**

4. Description

4.1 The Architect

[Bogdan Bogdanović](#) (20 August 1922 – 18 June 2010) was a renowned Serbian and Yugoslav architect, urbanist and essayist. He taught architecture at the University of Belgrade Faculty of Architecture, where he also served as Dean. Professor Bogdanović wrote numerous articles about urbanism, especially about its mythic and symbolic aspects.

Born in Belgrade in a family of engaged intellectuals, in his youth he took part in the Yugoslav partisan movement. From 1982 – 1986, he served as Mayor of Belgrade. He then became a vocal opponent of the nationalist politics in former Yugoslavia, especially in Serbia.

Bogdanović is best known for designing monuments and memorials commemorating victims and resistance fighters of World War II built all over Yugoslavia from the early 1950s to the 1980s. In 1951, Bogdan Bogdanović won a competition for the design of a memorial to the Jewish victims of fascism, which was built and still can be visited on the Sephardic cemetery in Belgrade. From then on until 1981, he has designed 19 monuments of remembrance of the struggle against fascism, all built in various Republics of the Yugoslav Federation. His aim was always to enable their perception as cenotaphs for all victims of fascism, regardless of nationality and religion. Therefore, the monuments designed by Bogdanović do not display symbols of communism or other ideologies. Instead, they rely on archaic, mythological forms, sharply contrasting with the principles of Socialist realism.

4.2 Architecture

The Partisan Memorial Cemetery exhibits complex architectural and landscape structures and aesthetics. The term "complex," among other meanings, highlights its dual nature as both an architectural work and a sculptural piece. While architecture often inherently incorporates sculptural elements, this aspect is particularly emphasized in this memorial. It integrates elements of both disciplines and can be interpreted through either lens, but most effectively as a unified whole.

- As an architectural construction, it is primarily defined by the promenade - a path that is both physical and visual. Movement is a key structural element, with different points along the path offering distinct experiences incorporating elements of surprise, discovery, and choice.

- Equally, the monument can be interpreted as a succession of surfaces rather than volumes, lacking enclosed spaces. In this sense, it can be likened to a sculptural form, observed as a single entity, where the plasticity and dynamism of the shapes are its defining characteristics. Different vantage points offer varied perspectives of the entire structure. Furthermore, within the monument, smaller figures (symbolic stones) create a "sculpture within a sculpture."

The memorial's construction along a mountainside, with a 20-meter elevation change over a 200-meter length (a 10% grade), is significant: this placement creates a sense of unity from any vantage point, both within and outside the pathway. Had it been built on flat terrain, the visual

impact would have been drastically different. Thus, it functions both as a monument to be observed from afar and as a "watchtower" overlooking the city.

The materials used are primarily concrete and stone, employed in a brutalist-expressionist style characterized by plasticity and curved designs. Several walls, particularly those on the terraces, are constructed with concrete bricks of varying designs, contributing to the plasticity and "movement" of the surfaces.

The Partisan Memorial Cemetery is also a landscape monument. The natural setting, consisting of native trees and shrubs, along with cypresses and alpine pines, creates a Mediterranean landscape and reinforces the sense of unity between the monument and its surrounding nature.

4.3 Symbolism

Symbolic interpretations of artistic forms must always be approached with extreme caution. On the one hand, we have the artist's original ideas and motivations, which are sometimes only accessible through indirect sources. These are often conveyed through academic interpretations, where scholars and professionals publish their views in academic papers or magazines that are then disseminated through various media (books, the internet, etc.). On the other hand, we have our own personal interpretations, which are inevitably influenced by our individual experiences, values, and education.

In general, it is clear to most observers that the monument is highly symbolic, referring to various aspects of culture, civilization, and tradition on multiple levels. There is an immediate connection between the observer and the monument, often evoking a sense of *déjà vu* with the shapes encountered along the pathways.

The architectural promenade - the directed walk from the monument's entrance to its highest point - is a strong and intentionally designed feature. There is a palpable sense of pathway, transition, and evolution along the route, with different elements evoking various responses from the observer. The inclusion of smaller sculptural elements along the path allows observers to connect with other cultures and artistic expressions, imbuing the place with a sense of universality and timelessness.

4.4 Value of the Monument

Several inherent characteristics reflect its importance and multiple value on various levels, making it an invaluable heritage site:

- **As historical inheritance of Mostar, and by extension of Bosnia and Herzegovina:** the monument's location within the city - with its own complex history - gives it a significant role. As a historical monument, it is key to understanding the past and present of both the city and the country, and its multi-layered history offers insight into their development over the last century.

- **As an element of the city landscape:** the memorial incorporates elements of an architectural complex with a potential to be integrated into the urban fabric. It represents a

unique monument within Mostar, possessing significant environmental value, enhanced by the green areas created as part of the monument's surroundings. Its integration into the city is particularly important, as its easy accessibility - within walking distance from any point in the city - makes it part of the daily lives of its citizens.

- **As a memorial:** the monument was commissioned to commemorate the anti-fascist struggle of World War II. The participation of Mostar's citizens in its construction and its inauguration by high representatives of the B&H and Yugoslav governments, gave it national significance. In this way, as a city/country/wider region site of remembrance, it reflects the collective memory of the population.

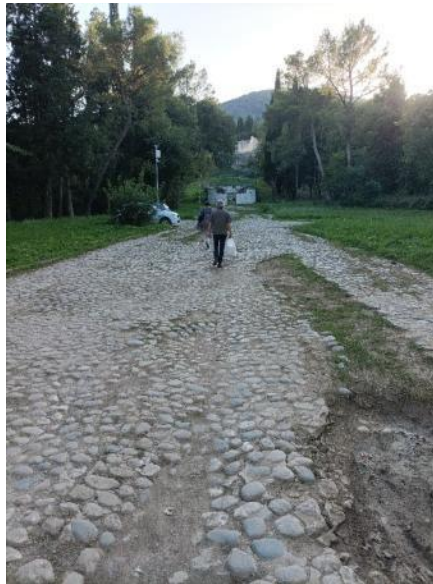
- **As an artistic expression:** this memorial is an important piece of art, created by Bogdan Bogdanović, one of the most significant architects of former Yugoslavia. It is related to several similar anti-fascist monuments across the region, forming part of a broader network of such structures. Regarding its artistic value, it is important to remember that the architect designed not only the built complex but also the entire landscape, shaping the hill to express and implement his conceptual vision.

- **As a potential tourist attraction:** like this was the case in the past, once revitalised, the monument could again be added to the list of frequently visited areas in Mostar. While the Old Bridge Area (inscribed on the UNESCO World heritage list) and the rest of the Old City of Mostar are major tourist destinations, this monument definitely offers an additional point of interest for those interested in history, architecture, memorial sculpture, and landscape design.

5. Structural Aspects

The memorial comprises **four main sections**:

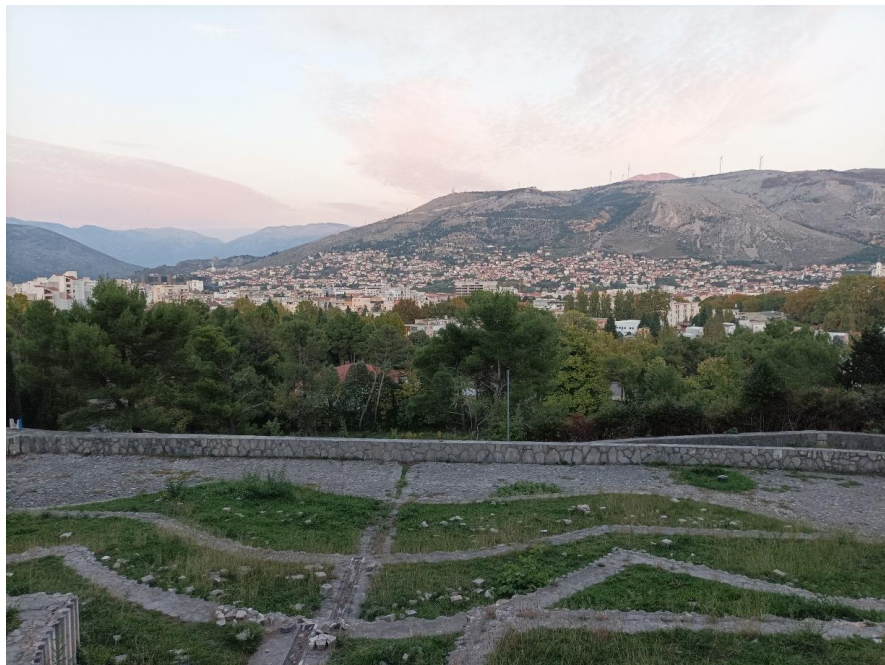
Entrance/Access Area: Currently used as a parking lot and significantly damaged.



Central Area: Characterized by amorphous shapes, flowing water features and paths, a “sound-garden” (a concept resembling Japanese *suikinkutsu*, or Nasreed echo chambers), which Bogdan Bogdanović called "organ" designed as a violin box-shaped depression where water stream cascades over the system of perforated tubes and channels, producing "music", a circular fountain with stagnant water, and a central, elevated space with terraces and an access ramp. Organic forms permeate the monument's wall structures, interwoven with greenery and water as key expressive elements.



Cemetery Terraces: Gently curved forms guide visitors to the central area, featuring a memorial ossuary and individual tombstones (for details on the remains and burials, see Annex IV). These abstract markers, engraved with the names of fallen soldiers, are arranged in a series of terraces that follow the natural slope of the terrain.



Upper Terrace: The highest terrace features a central fountain offering a panoramic view of the entire complex and the city. At its centre is a large, gear-shaped fountain that originally channelled water down the terraces in a narrow groove, continuing down the hillside to a large pool at its base.



Preparation for the cemetery began in October 1960, works started on 1 December 1960, and were completed in 1965. The project was put on hold for roughly a year during 1963/64, as concrete meant for the monument was re-directed towards Skopje to support relief efforts after the massive earthquake that destroyed 80% of the city.

Massive amounts of material were used and removed in the construction to fill in and sculpt the hillside (left over rubble from the city's devastation during WWII was used), while huge chunks of the hillside were blasted away to make room for the monument's terraced features. Ahmet Ribica, a civil engineer, oversaw drilling and dynamiting works on the hill and constructing the monument. The stone carving for the site was done by skilled masons from the Croatian island of Korčula, who used over 12,000 pieces of carved limestone. Meanwhile, a great deal of work at the site was also done by Youth Work Action (an organised voluntary labour activity of young people in the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, to build public infrastructures such as roads, railways, and public buildings, as well as industrial infrastructure).

6. Current Condition

The first conservation and restoration works on the Partisan Memorial Cemetery after the war were done in 2005 with donor funds from the Government of the Netherlands and the Kingdom of Norway, co-financed by the City of Mostar and the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The partial restoration of the monument consisted of the reconstruction of several elements of the complex itself (for example grave markers), cleaning of green areas, rehabilitation of the water supply and sewerage network, and the installation of new lighting. The subsequent cleaning interventions were carried out in 2018 with the funds of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the City of Mostar. Walls were cleaned of graffiti, the well was restored, cobblestones were laid, the security house, at the entrance of the complex, was renovated and put into operation. Video surveillance was also introduced.

The cleaning interventions of 2018 and 2020 were carried out with the intention to prepare longer term maintenance. However, they involved the use of acid solutions without prior condition assessment and material analysis and have possibly not been supervised by specific stone conservators. The application of acrylic paints to cover graffiti may in fact have exacerbated the deterioration risks.

In June 2022, the most severe act of vandalism occurred when all engraved stone memorial markers were smashed in just one night. This criminal act caused quite some attention, also internationally, cf. e.g. articles by “Aljazeera” on 16.6.2022 and the “Guardian” on 22.6.2023. They speak about a “*vandal attack*” by “*organised neofascists*”. Regretfully, no one was held responsible for this crime. Since then, no restoration works were done on the Partisan Memorial Cemetery.

When the European experts’ team visited the site in October 2024, the complex was in poor condition, but not irreparably so. While the monument’s overall integrity remains, closer inspection reveals the damage previously described.

The original access area, an integral part of the monument extending from the street to the main entrance, is the most severely damaged. This space, primarily defined by its paving, has completely lost its original form and structure, particularly when compared to the project’s original drawings and construction. Furthermore, constant intrusion by vehicles – which use the green area leading to the entrance to the memorial as a parking lot, especially in the mornings - makes it difficult to perceive this area as being part of the monument. Although concrete barriers are in place, vehicles have found a way to circumvent them.

Upon approaching the main gate, smaller-scale damage becomes apparent in the walls, decorative elements, and flooring. This, compounded by lack of maintenance (particularly concerning vegetation), is a recurring issue along the pathway.

The site is currently facing a severe water-related problem, particularly affecting the north-eastern walls, where moisture infiltration has led to extensive fungal growth, salt crystallization, spalling, flaking, and surface cracking.

The destruction and alteration of the original horticultural and hydrological features of the complex have had a significant negative impact on its authenticity and integrity.

And yet, the monument can still be appreciated and understood as a unified whole, with all elements and parts readily identifiable, making it a meaningful and worthwhile experience.

Damage is evident in nearly all parts of the monument, including walls, floors, decorative elements, and terraced vegetation. The primary causes are as follows:

- Any remaining war damage
- Vandalism, particularly the 2022 attack. (This was not an isolated incident; other memorials in Bosnia and Herzegovina, such as the Partisan cemetery in Livno, memorial Šušnjar in Sanski Most, and the Vraca Memorial Park, have all been victim of similar attacks during and after the 1990s war.)
- Lack of maintenance
- Inappropriate use (e.g. access as a parking lot)
- Identifiable damage at the monument includes deformations in the cobblestones, pavements, and bordering elements
- Superficial damage to the walls and stone cladding, with water penetration affecting the inner concrete structure
- Damage to the water supply and drainage systems
- Damage and altered condition of the green spaces.

Despite the above-mentioned damage, the monument has preserved its authenticity of the attributes of the values expressed primarily through shape and design, material and structure, use and function, location and spatial context. Still today, the Partisan Memorial Cemetery has preserved its continuity of use, undamaged condition, as well as its physical, visual and social-functional integrity.



The severe acts of vandalism at the Partisan Memorial Cemetery in Mostar have occurred both before and after the site's inclusion - in 2023 - among the 7 Most Endangered Heritage Sites in Europe, and have continued even during the finalisation of this Report. The cumulative impact of these attacks poses a serious risk of irreversible devaluation, including the loss of attributes that convey the site's cultural, historical, memorial, and architectural significance. Beyond physical damage, these acts undermine the dignity of the site and its commemorative role.

The repeated acts of vandalism - including the destruction of graves and memorial elements and the use of graffiti containing hate speech and fascist signs - clearly falls within the scope of several offences defined by the Criminal Code of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina. These include the damage or destruction of a protected cultural monument of special value (Article 321), the destruction or desecration of graves and memorials to the deceased (Article 379), and public acts inciting hatred or intolerance through the desecration of monuments or memorials (Article 163), for which penalties of up to eight years' imprisonment are prescribed.

The persistence of such acts of vandalism can be explained by the deplorable lack of effective institutional response. Failure to identify and punish perpetrators of such criminal offences has contributed to a climate of impunity, which in practice serves as a shield for repeated acts of vandalism. In these circumstances, **every priority must be given to due enforcement of law. This must be understood as a shared obligation of all levels of authority.** Continued shortcomings are difficult to reconcile with domestic and international legal responsibilities as well as with European principles relating to cultural heritage protection and to the rule of law.



7. Contribution to the Urban Landscape

The Partisan Memorial cemetery is an essential component to the city landscape. **It is part of a larger urban green area** which is characterised by so far strictly separated and mutually inaccessible components: a public area with playground and walking alleys, private gardens, the park of the Catholic bishop and the park of the Partisan Memorial Cemetery. It extends towards the stadium and the surrounding training areas. The Partisan Memorial Cemetery is the most visible and the most publicly accessible component of this larger green zone. This broader green zone covers a north-south oriented hill. The southern side of the hill can be accessed through a residents' street (Šetalište Bare) towards a somewhat outdated park and playground, which seems nevertheless to be quite heavily frequented on summer days. Access to the top of the hill is possible but shrubs, trees, trenches and some karstic rocks make it difficult to get to the Partisan



Memorial Cemetery on the northern side of the hill. A path through private gardens can be detected which allows adventurous visitors to make it to the northern side of the hill.

The recreational value of the broader green area can be strongly improved by creating walkable connections between its components. It seems to be possible to establish a physical connection between the Partisan Memorial Cemetery and the urban area on the other side of the hill. For security purposes, the memorial site might need to be surrounded by a fence, and one or two entrance gates may have to be established, which would allow access to the memorial not only from below but also from above. This would have to be carefully examined and incorporated in the future managerial concept of the memorial site.

The current spontaneous and unregulated parking at the entrance of the monument (towards Kralja Petra Krešimira IV street) gives the impression of negligence of the area which is unsuitable to the solemn character of the memorial cemetery and may indicate a deliberate lack of care. **This impression of negligence and certain lack of safety also impedes the appropriation of the monument for recreational purposes and makes it therefore less publicly available.**

Apart from its substantial recreational potential, the site represents an ideal contemplation area, located at the border of the city's urban core. **Educational value is based on the universal message of the fight against fascism, which is at the core of European values and is one of the**

foundations of the contemporary European Union, of which Bosnia and Herzegovina is a candidate country.

Short-term strategy should be aimed at raising awareness of the abovementioned multiple values of the site in order to avoid misinterpretations, and any destruction that could come out of them. **Therefore, important priority and focus should be given to educational activities on all levels (from primary to faculty) and to developing a respectful attitude towards the monument by all public bodies, all political parties and all communities and citizens in Mostar.**

The restoration/revitalisation project of the Partisan Memorial Cemetery could be a part of broader urban development plan for Mostar, as it was already shown in the 2018 exhibition on Yugoslavia's architecture 1948-1980 at the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) in New York City [“Toward a Concrete Utopia”](#).

8. Economic potential

The sustainable tourist potential of the Partisan Memorial Cemetery seems to be largely untapped. An online search of the touristic values and points of interests of Mostar may, after long search, suggest a visit of the Partisan Memorial Cemetery, for example under the evocative title: “The Death of Yugoslavia Tour in Mostar”. But apart from those very specific offers for politically focused and dedicated visitors, the Memorial remains an untapped touristic potential.

For curious and open-minded visitors already in Mostar, it is almost impossible to detect the monument by coincidence. **There are no signs or directional markers anywhere in the city leading visitors to the site. In addition, there are no interpretive signs at the memorial site to inform visitors about its cultural, historical and artistic importance.**

The site's “invisibility” - online, in broader marketing terms and physically on the spot - is detrimental to its potential for the local economy. This potential may consist of direct revenues from visitors. Revenues may be based on the sale of souvenirs in the “visitors' centre” to be located in the existing building at the entrance of the monument, and/or possibly on payments of entrance fee to the monument. Beyond this potential non-negligible contribution to the city budget (part of which needs to be spent for the maintenance and the management of the memorial), the monument may also be of broader economic value. **If properly presented, guided and marketed, it may increase the overall touristic value of Mostar and therefore make a tangible contribution to increase the number of visitors and, in general, to raise public attention and visibility of Mostar, throughout Europe and beyond.**

The value is not too narrowly related to the specific heritage context but also to its unique architecture, to its recreational value and to the stunning views from the top of the memorial towards the old town district, all of Mostar and its scenic landscape.

This potential value can be developed through strong intensification of tourist information about the monument, both before travel and at local level (Stari Most, Musea, hotels, restaurants, etc). **During the meeting with our experts' team, the head of the local tourist board confirmed that with appropriate advertisement of the monument, the current number of one million visitors per year in Mostar can be substantially increased.**

9. Governance and Management Structure

The site of the Partisan Memorial Cemetery is now owned by the municipality of Mostar. Its management has been entrusted to the [Old Town Agency](#). The agency is relatively small (a nine-person body) and its core task consists of ensuring the physical maintenance of the Old Town district around the Old Bridge as well as the management and funding of the Old Town area maintenance and development. The management/maintenance of the Partisan Memorial Cemetery is a substantial task of partially similar, and partially different nature. In the past, before 1990, up to 15 people were working permanently for landscaping and other maintenance works only at the Partisan Memorial Cemetery. Those numbers indicate the potential dimension of the physical maintenance of the memorial site as one aspect of a broader set of tasks.

While the Old Town Agency was charged with ensuring better protection of the memorial site, the allocated budget was very limited so far. More recently, 38,000 Euros were attributed to building up surveillance camera poles. Physical conditions have been established for a surveillance centre in the entrance building. On top of the security camera funding, the Ministry of Culture and Sports of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina has attributed 200,000 BAM (about 100,000 EUR) for a future tourist shop in the entrance building, lighting as well as for cleaning graffiti, cutting greenery and restoring the fencing.

Future sustained governance and management of the site should be part of a feasible, value-based and objectives-oriented management plan, which will provide management tools, methods, and systems. It should entail:

- **careful stakeholders mapping and definition of the principles of inclusive management approach**
- **definition of general objectives** based on Historic Urban Landscape policies of Mostar development, values of the heritage place
- **detailed survey** of as-built vs. as-found condition, attentive to all tangible and intangible attributes
- **risk assessment**, including obsolescence, vandalism, mismanagement, uncontrolled tourism, uncontrolled development, climate change
- **test of authenticity and integrity**, which will follow damage and change assessment
- **management assessment**
- **accessibility assessment** for persons with disabilities
- **tourism capacity assessment**
- **planning based on defined priorities, including imminent necessities**, short-term, mid-term and long-term actions, legal mechanisms for all elements of the plan, detailed monitoring and control mechanisms, all including precise responsibilities with clearly defined actions, actors, time-frameworks, budgetary frameworks, resilience building and adaptation to change mechanisms.

The management plan should contribute to several interrelated tasks with the following main objectives:

- 1. To provide physical restoration of the site based on full documentation listed above, with holistic, scientifically proved approaches and methods** implemented by competent and legally authorized experts, craftspersons, and companies, and steered by an expert steering committee.
- 2. To revitalise the heritage place as a site of memory, contemplation, inclusiveness and encounters among people, celebrating life and peace**, in line with the words of Bogdan Bogdanović that the Partisan Memorial Cemetery complex should be: "bright and cheery, placed in the urban area and landscape with the plantations of low-growing Mediterranean evergreen - rosemary; lavender; green and gray santolina and sage; as if it reflected the whole of Hercegovina, the canyon of a restless turquoise-coloured mountain river, the steep cliffs, therefore, stone and water, greenery and light, everything characteristic of Mostar."
- 3. To organise its efficient future management, digitalisation, interpretation and maintenance**, established and/or authorised as a public body by the Government of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina.
- 4. To set up security monitoring and protection systems, including access control and visitors' service point.**

10. Heritage Grant funded by the EIB Institute

Europa Nostra's extensive team of experts stands ready to provide advisory support in developing comprehensive plans for the conservation and revitalisation, urban integration, sustainable tourism development and overall management of the Partisan Memorial Cemetery. In this framework, a Heritage Grant, of a maximum of 10 000 EUR, can be provided by the EIB Institute, founding supporter of the 7 Most Endangered programme. This grant may be attributed to a public body or a civil society organisation, designated in agreement with the European Experts' team.

To achieve maximum grant impact, the European experts team recommends supporting activities which would help integrate, upscale and accelerate existing initiatives related to the monument. To effectively utilise the available grant, Europa Nostra could – for example – facilitate the organisation of an inclusive platform which would bring together all relevant local, national, regional, European, and wider international stakeholders as well as initiatives in support of the revitalisation of the Partisan Memorial Cemetery.

Any future activities should draw inspiration and build upon important initiatives, such as the **First Regional Conservation Conference - and its Conclusions - dedicated to the architectural opus of Bogdan Bogdanović**, which was organised in Mostar on 25-28 September 2025, marking the 60th anniversary of the Partisan Memorial Cemetery, with the participation of eminent experts from four countries where the masterpieces of Bogdan Bogdanović are located (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, North-Macedonia and Serbia).

On this occasion, **a thematic exhibition was dedicated to the 60th anniversary of the Partisan Memorial Cemetery in Mostar, under the symbolic motto “The Right to the Beauty of Dreams”**. This exhibition was organised in the framework of a comprehensive research and exhibition project entitled **“VEČITO/ETERNAL - Bogdan Bogdanović”** which was coordinated by Mare Janakova Grujić (art historian and *“Bogdanologist”* from the Center for Research and Valorization of Architectural Heritage [VAM](#) in Belgrade) which resulted in two book volumes printed with the support of the European Union.

In line with the above, the proposed further institutional and expert mobilisation would aim at identifying activities in the following areas:

- **Improved (digital) documentation:**
 - Establish a publicly and digitally accessible architectural documentation of the complex and a comprehensive technical survey of the site.
- **Mapping and assessing stakeholders, and harmonisation of their interests and responsibilities**
- **Defining fields of action and the detailed aims per each field of action**
- **Prioritisation of actions and development of project pitches for emergency actions, short term actions and long-term actions**
- **Increased Public Visibility:**
 - Develop targeted information actions to raise awareness of the monument's significance among residents and tourists. These actions should provide accurate interpretation of the monument's inherent value, for civic and public benefit.
- **Sustainable Tourism Development:**
 - Implement strategies to attract tourists and generate revenue for ongoing monument maintenance, management and security. This should ensure long-term financial viability and support local economic growth.

- **Integration of the site into an urban park and recreational system:**
 - Consultation of local citizens and local organisations on recreational patterns and needs, establishment of demand and urgency.

- **Educational Integration:**
 - Incorporate the monument's history and significance into local and regional educational programmes. It would especially be important to involve interested students who are keen to propose creative and innovative solutions for ensuring a lasting future for the Partisan Memorial Cemetery. This will foster civic understanding and appreciation for the monument as a core part of the city's multilayered identity and of the multiperspectiveness of its complex history.

The grant could also be used to support any preparatory activities as well as any subsequent publication, which would serve as guidance for the elaboration and implementation of a future management plan.

11. Recommendations

The deplorable vandalism of the Partisan Memorial Cemetery in 2022, and any subsequent minor acts of vandalism which the city continues to witness even today, are causing moral, reputational, financial, economic, environmental and educational damage not only to the monument but also to the city of Mostar and its inhabitants, and to Bosnia and Herzegovina as a whole.

The size and the beauty of this memorial site, combined with its historical, documentary, architectural, artistic, recreational, environmental, economic, symbolic, contemplative and commemorative values, are unique. It is easily accessible from Mostar's Old Town and it establishes a point of strong touristic interest close to the end of the core pedestrian axis on the western side of Neretva River. It is essential for Mostar's development and identity. **Therefore, it is high time to re-integrate the monument into the urban fabric of Mostar of which it is an integral part.**

For this to happen, all levels of governance – from local to European – should support a renewed and broadened appropriation of this heritage site by the inhabitants of Mostar and a renewed perception of its role for the future of Mostar, of Bosnia and Herzegovina and of the wider region, in the context of the Western Balkans integration into the EU.

Once a broader understanding of the monument's positive potential is established, the foundation for **re-appropriation of the site as a common public good and collective memory** may be laid, and awareness about the memorial hill as a tangible contribution to Mostar's uniqueness may be generated.

It is therefore proposed to develop a broader understanding of this heritage site when planning and implementing its revitalisation, restoration, interpretation, protection and longer-term management. Such a **holistic understanding** should include both its heritage significance, and its potential to be an agent of touristic and wider economic development. It should furthermore include all the other values referred to above.

Europa Nostra, as the European Voice of civil society committed to cultural heritage, with close relations with EU Institutions including the European Investment Bank, stands ready to contribute to facilitating and stimulating such a process. It may among others support organising an inclusive and constructive expert and public discussion on the future of the Partisan Memorial Cemetery in Mostar, with due participation of all relevant stakeholders, who should be encouraged to bring in their different voices and perspectives.

The outcomes of this discussion should serve as guidance for the elaboration of next steps which should include the following elements and outputs:

1. **Management Plan** - The preparation of the Management Plan and the accompanying documents, projects, and programmes should be entrusted to public bodies with experience in developing and coordinating such activities.

The management planning and physical restoration and conservation of this heritage site should not be overly difficult to realise, but it must be done in accordance with the highest quality standards. A sustainable management body and structure must be established by competent authorities. This future management body should be responsible for overseeing the conservation works; for developing a plan for the maintenance and sustainable use of the site, as well as for supporting and/or coordinating the interpretation, educational and public relations activities related to the site.

An advantage lies in the fact that Mostar is home to the Old Bridge and the Old City, inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List (*Old Bridge Area of the Old City of Mostar*). Despite many challenges, the city of Mostar has gained valuable experience in managing and maintaining cultural assets of outstanding universal value, and this approach should also be applied to the management of the Partisan Memorial Cemetery. If the Management Plan for the Old Bridge were expanded to include the Partisan Memorial Cemetery and the space connecting them, it would provide added value on multiple levels.

2. **Technical Survey and Impact Assessments on the National Monument** – a Heritage Impact Assessment (HIA) and an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) for each planned intervention within the national monument and its protective zone.

In spite of the number of reports and descriptions of the Partisan Memorial Cemetery, no original blueprints or architectural documentation of the complex have been preserved. Prior to physical refurbishment it is therefore considered important to establish a comprehensive technical survey of the site. To make the survey least intrusive and as rapid as possible and conducted by skilled specialists, making the use of advanced recording technologies. may include photogrammetry, drone-based LiDAR scanning, and ground-penetrating radar. This documentation should cover not only the architectural and sculptural elements but also the infrastructure and substructure, including graves and hydrological systems. This represents a fundamental prerequisite for any subsequent condition assessment, planning, and prioritization of conservation actions.

3. **Action Plan** with clearly defined stakeholders for programme implementation, a phased timetable with financial indicators, and a monitoring plan.

The Action Plan represents a helpful and practical tool to clearly schedule all expected outputs and interventions in a structured and transparent manner, ensuring that roles and responsibilities are clearly defined and that coordination among stakeholders is effectively organised. By establishing a realistic timetable, identifying financial requirements, and setting measurable indicators, the Action Plan will facilitate coherent implementation and accountability.

Europa Nostra with its wide network of experts and partners stands ready to provide any advice or assistance which national/local experts might need to obtain. Of course, this can be done only if the public safety of the site has been ensured and guaranteed, and if the necessary funding is made available locally and possibly by the European Union Institutions and Member States and/or other European and international donors.

4. **Plan for Routine Maintenance** of the built complex and natural environment, pathways, inscriptions and stone slabs, cleanliness, and communal order.

Routine works do not include reconstruction, restoration, conservation, upgrading, extensions, interpolations, works that affect the structure and/or purpose of the building, or any other similar works that would alter the size of the structure, the slope and form of roofs, exterior facades, etc.

5. **Programme of Conservation-Restoration Interventions** on the national monument, with special attention to preserving authenticity, integrity, and values.

Concrete conservation works are now urgently required to ensure the physical preservation and integrity of the complex. The conservation action should be complemented by an expert-led collection of all available archival material to safeguard fragments of destroyed stone plaques, which are currently being removed from the site. These should be gathered and deposited in a secure location to prevent further loss of material and should be under the control of an authorised institution.

6. **Plan and Programme of Interpretation, Presentation, and Promotion**, including the management of space usage, particularly in relation to tourist visits, which should ensure an inclusive narrative while respecting the approved purpose.

It is encouraging that numerous initiatives, mostly by local or international civil society actors, are already in place — including websites, publications, exhibitions, films, workshops, concerts at the site, etc. These efforts should certainly continue and should be supported by various levels of governance, ranging from local to European.

7. **Tourism Promotion and Use** of the national monument must be aligned with the interpretation plan.

Elements of interpretation and presentation should be integrated into interpolated structures (entrance area and souvenir shop).

8. **Implementation of protective measures** to establish a comprehensive safety and security concept for both the monument and its visitors.

This crucial aspect is set out in the Management Plan by the obligation to prepare a Routine Maintenance Plan and a Programme of Conservation-Restoration Interventions. The 2019 Decision states: *“The owner or other user of the national monument is obliged to care for the monument with the diligence of a good steward.”*

Protective measures should not conflict with the concept of "freedom," and a proper balance between the two is necessary: since this monument is an inseparable part of the city, it must not be detached from it. Such priority investments must be accompanied by adequate measures to effectively protect the site from any future vandalization attempts. This requires political will and close cooperation between local, regional and national governments. It also requires the Partisan Memorial Cemetery to be better known, understood and appreciated among the authorities and the inhabitants of the city of Mostar.

In conclusion, this heritage site should also be used as a vector to achieve fundamental objectives for the benefit of the citizens of Mostar and, by extension, for the benefit of the whole country and also for the wider region, within the context of the region’s full integration into the EU, in order to:

- promote peace based on mutual trust and dialogue across heritage communities,
- enhance the well-being of citizens and their heritage communities,
- protect and improve the quality of the living environment,
- combat social exclusion and discrimination,
- promote equality, and
- foster respect of cultural and religious plurality.

The Partisan Memorial Cemetery is not only a heritage site whose outstanding documentary, historical, artistic, landscape, cityscape, environmental, social, symbolic, memorial, and environmental values are embodied in a number of tangible and intangible attributes, which still hold a high level of authenticity and integrity. All these values are reflected in its composition:

- **from a tangible point of view**, it is a timeless and universal piece of art, yet not isolated as it relates to other similar monuments and artistic manifestations in the wider area, rich both in symbolism and experiences. The visitor receives a multitude of stimuli, focused on all senses: sight, touch, smell and hear. A place to experience and reflect.
- **from an intangible point of view**, the monument's relationship with the citizens is extremely important, both for its history and its meaning. Now, the wealth of sensations it produces, as described in the previous point, is transferable to the mind: each person perceives the complex and its surroundings differently. For a child, it will be a place of recreation; for an adult, a place of contemplation. For a local citizen, a place of memory; for a foreigner, a history lesson. For the wise, a place of reflection and learning, and for most of us, an open door to knowledge and an invitation to life.

This exceptional monument, which is protected by the law of Bosnia and Herzegovina, needs now to be restored and given back to the city of Mostar and Bosnia and Herzegovina, their inhabitants, visitors, and to the rich European heritage tapestry of most remarkable cultural landscapes of modern time. This goal can be achieved, with the combined efforts of all levels of governance and with the support of the European Union Institutions and/or Member States.

12. Closing remarks at the occasion of the 20th anniversary of the designation of the Partisan Memorial Cemetery in Mostar as National Monument

Through the publication of the report on the Partisan Memorial Cemetery in Mostar, we mark two deeply symbolic milestones: the 60th anniversary of its inaugural ceremony on 25 September 1965 and the 20th anniversary of its designation as a National Monument of Bosnia and Herzegovina by the Commission to Preserve National Monuments on 21 January 2006.

At the same time, this moment affirms **a forward-looking European perspective**. European standards of harnessing culture - and especially cultural heritage - as a compass for future societal pathways are fully achievable in Bosnia and Herzegovina, provided that institutions, educational programmes and civil society are strengthened, supported and enabled to operate in line with European principles of inclusiveness, democratic governance, professionalism and public accountability.

In this context, a key role ought to be played by the Commission to Preserve National Monuments of Bosnia and Herzegovina, a central public institution established under Annex 8 of the Dayton Peace Agreement. At the same time, the Government of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina has a decisive role, authority and responsibility, as defined within the Dayton Peace Agreement

framework, to ensure the technical, administrative, legal, financial and other necessary measures required for the effective implementation of the Commission's decisions.

The Commission represents a rare and exemplary case of a heritage-protection body created directly by an international peace agreement, with a mandate not only to safeguard cultural heritage, but also to contribute to reconciliation, trust-building and long-term peace through the protection of shared cultural memory and attributes of universal values.

In its initial composition, the Commission brought together distinguished international experts in cultural heritage protection, including Dr Zeynep Ahunbay (Türkiye), Ms Tina Wik (Sweden), later succeeded by Dr Martin Cherry (United Kingdom), working together with the following three national experts: Dr Amra Hadžimuhamedović (Sarajevo), Dr Dubravko Lovrenović (Sarajevo), and Dr Ljiljana Ševo (Banja Luka). Supported by a highly professional Technical Secretariat, it achieved exceptional standards of excellence and a profound impact in integrating heritage into post-conflict recovery, trust-building and peace-sustaining processes.

This outstanding contribution was internationally recognised in 2010, when the Commission received the Europa Nostra Award for Dedicated Service, a distinction that underlined its exemplary role as a peace-anchored heritage institution and a model of professional integrity, inclusiveness and public responsibility.

It is regrettable that from February 2016 until February 2026, the Commission operated for an entire decade in an incomplete composition, with three members appointed under an ethno-political representation model corresponding to the three constituent peoples of Bosnia and Herzegovina but without the two international members explicitly foreseen under Annex 8 of the Dayton Peace Agreement.

This prolonged deviation from the Dayton institutional framework fundamentally undermined the Commission's original design, which was intended to guarantee professional pluralism, international participation, and academic independence. The absence of internationally nominated members did not merely reduce numerical composition; it substantially weakened the Commission's comparative expertise, technical authority, and its capacity to act as an independent, standards-based decision-making body insulated from domestic political pressures.

Over time, this structural imbalance resulted in a tangible erosion of expert capacity and institutional credibility. The Technical Secretariat, whose performance depends on rigorous research, continuity of expertise, and strong professional leadership, was significantly affected. The sustained lack of institutional stability and strategic direction contributed to reduced analytical depth, loss of experienced professionals, and exposure to ongoing brain drain within the heritage protection sector. This weakening of institutional capacity has been increasingly reflected in governance gaps, inconsistent decision-making, and a reduced ability to respond effectively to urgent conservation challenges - among them the alarming condition of the Partisan Memorial Cemetery in Mostar. Indeed, the roots of heritage endangerment do not only lie in physical decay,

but also in weakened institutions, insufficient professional capacities and inadequate legal and governance frameworks. These structural vulnerabilities undermine the long-term protection of cultural heritage and its potential to serve as a driver of reconciliation, trust-renewal and sustainable development.

For all these reasons, we applaud the decision adopted by the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina on 2 February 2026, reaffirming that the Commission shall be composed of five members, including two international names to be nominated by the Director-General of UNESCO and appointed by the Presidency. This constitutes a necessary corrective step toward restoring the governance model established by Annex 8 of the Dayton Peace Agreement. It reopens the possibility of re-establishing institutional balance, international oversight, and professional independence. For all the above reasons, we urge the **Presidency to give every priority to ensuring the implementation of this decision.**

However, formal restoration of the five-member structure alone will not be sufficient. The effectiveness and credibility of the Commission will depend decisively on the appointment of politically independent, internationally respected experts and researchers with demonstrable competence in heritage management, heritage conservation, peace-sustaining recovery, and conservation science. Only through such appointments can the Commission regain its full technical authority and fulfil its mandate to safeguard heritage of national significance in accordance with the highest universal standards.

We therefore use this opportunity to call for renewed recognition of the strategic importance of capacity-building and institutional strengthening in the heritage sector in Bosnia and Herzegovina. This must encompass not only this central national institution, but also a coherent and professionally grounded network of entity-level, regional and local institutions, universities, research centres and civil-society organisations. In this regard, **the particular case of the Partisan Memorial Cemetery in Mostar provides the Government of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina with an excellent opportunity to demonstrate its full commitment to ensuring, in an effective and systematic way, the necessary institutional capacity, as well as the adequate safeguard, enhancement and management of heritage sites of national importance which are protected by law.**

Such a systemic approach is indispensable if Bosnia and Herzegovina is to harness the openness, strategic orientation, and financial instruments of the European Union, particularly in light of the [Culture Compass for Europe](#), the strategic document released by the European Commission on 12 November 2025 to strengthen the EU policy framework for culture. The *Culture Compass for Europe* guides EU cultural policy in four strategic directions, including its third core direction: “An EU that draws on culture and cultural heritage to become more competitive, resilient and cohesive”, as well as the clear emphasis on the vital role of culture and cultural heritage in the context of the EU enlargement agenda (cf. fourth core direction).

This clear policy direction speaks directly to the situation addressed in this Report. **The *Cultural Compass for Europe* recognises cultural heritage not as a passive legacy of the past, but as a strategic resource for democratic resilience, social cohesion, sustainable development and European competitiveness.** In this spirit, heritage, when anchored in strong institutions, professional standards and inclusive governance, can become a powerful lever for European integration, reconciliation, education, sustainable tourism and local development in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The Partisan Memorial Cemetery in Mostar stands as a **paradigmatic case.** Its safeguarding and revitalisation would not only restore a masterpiece of 20th century memorial architecture and a place of European remembrance of anti-fascist heroism. It would also restore the rule of law and the institutional framework necessary for the proper protection of heritage sites. Finally, it would demonstrate how heritage can serve as a vehicle for inclusive dialogue, civic participation and shared responsibility, fully aligned with the objectives and flagship actions of the *Culture Compass for Europe*. **The publication of this Report is therefore not merely an alarm bell. It is also an invitation: to recommit to European values, to defend the rule of law, to invest in institutional resilience and professional knowledge, and to place cultural heritage at the heart of democratic renewal and of a shared European future for citizens and communities in Bosnia and Herzegovina.**

In this spirit, we respectfully call upon the EU Institutions (mainly the European Commission, the European Parliament and the European Investment Bank) as well as the Council of Europe, and, first and foremost, the relevant authorities of Bosnia and Herzegovina to recognise the safeguarding of the Partisan Memorial Cemetery in Mostar as a priority action aligned with the vision, the spirit and the core principles of the *Culture Compass for Europe*.

Targeted technical assistance, capacity-building programmes, and access to EU pre-accession funding instruments related to culture and social cohesion would enable this emblematic case to become a European success story: an exemplary demonstrator of how the safeguard and enhancement of heritage protection can operationalise European values, democratic governance and social cohesion in practice. Such support would send a powerful signal that Europe's commitment to culture and cultural heritage as strategic resources for resilience and cohesion extends fully to Bosnia and Herzegovina, in support of its European future as an EU candidate state.

We trust that this Report will help catalyse constructive dialogue, coordinated action and renewed partnerships - at local, entity, national, and European levels - towards safeguarding the Partisan Memorial Cemetery in Mostar and, more generally, towards strengthening the foundations and impact of heritage protection in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

ANNEX I
Summary of the European Experts' Mission to Mostar and Sarajevo,
26–30 October 2024

Acknowledgements

The European Experts Team visited Mostar and Sarajevo in Bosnia and Herzegovina from 27 to 30 October 2024, also holding some meetings with relevant stakeholders already on 26 October, in Dubrovnik, Croatia.

The European experts' team was composed of Sneška Quaedvlieg-Mihailović, David Castrillo, Joachim Schneider and Guy Clausse. They were accompanied by Slavica Vujovic, president of Europa Nostra Serbia, Senada Demirović, who nominated the Partisan Memorial Cemetery for the 7 Most endangered programme, on behalf of the local NGO IDEAA. In Sarajevo, Amra Hadžimuhamedović also joined some meetings.

The team is deeply indebted to the people they met and the time they dedicated, thanks to whom, it gained a solid understanding of the challenges facing the situation in the area. Moreover, the team developed insights into the concerns, attitudes and actions of civil society and the public authorities they met. Annex I provides the programme and the complete list of people encountered.

Special thanks to Dr. Senada Demirović, architect and nominator of the Partisan Memorial Cemetery for our 7 Most Endangered Programme, Dr. Amra Hadžimuhamedović, President of HIDR- Centre for Peace and Heritage, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and member of the 7 Most Endangered programme Advisory Panel; and Dr. Dragan Markovina, Croatian historian and publicist, born and raised in Mostar, for their insights and careful analysis of the heritage place and social situation.

Many thanks also to Danko Vujović, as well as to all the staff at Muslibegović House for their assistance, hospitality, guidance and help. Finally, we are grateful to all citizens of Mostar with whom we had the opportunity to talk about their concerns and hopes for the future of their city.

During some meetings members of our delegation were translating into English from the Bosnian/Croatian/Serbian language.

Day 0 – Saturday 26/10/2024 (Dubrovnik) Meeting with Siniša Sešum

Discussion with **Siniša Sešum**, Head of the Sarajevo Antenna of the UNESCO Regional Bureau for Science and Culture in Europe.

Siniša referred to the very high importance of cultural heritage in the context of the complex institutional setting of Bosnia and Herzegovina. He confirmed the specific relevance of the Partisan Memorial Cemetery in Mostar. In view of local and national sensitivities he recommended

that the European experts team keeps an impartial approach to avoid an impression of proximity to a specific national/ethnic group.

He explained his perception of the interests of the main players involved, at local and at national level.

Day 1, Sunday, 27/10/2024 (Dubrovnik - Stolac - Mostar)

Morning - Visit of Stolac, a small town in southern Bosnia and Herzegovina, ravaged in 1993, including historic houses, public structures, mosques and orthodox church, partially reconstructed in the meantime. Strong visibility of signs of that war (destroyed buildings and bullet-damaged facades etc) and impression of very fresh memory when speaking to residents. Visit of Radimlja Necropolis (14/15th century) outside Stolac.



Afternoon - Visit of the Partisan Memorial Cemetery with **Dr Dragan Markovina**, historian and publicist from Croatia, born in Mostar, and **Dr Senada Demirović**, Head of IDEEA, a local NGO involved in heritage protection and architecture and initiator/nominator of the 7ME candidacy. Physical appearance as in the report of **Guy Clause** who made a brief preliminary visit to the site in May 2024, except for several new high and visible camera poles with cameras. Closure of the memorial cemetery area to the surrounding parks/green areas/playgrounds, composed of the park

of the residence of the Roman catholic bishop, private garden-land and public park/playground.

Evening - Discussion about the team's impartial approach and language.



Day 2 - Monday, 28/10/2024, Meetings with local stakeholders in Mostar

President of the City Council Mr Salem Marić and the Director of the Old Town Agency, Mr Miralem Fajić.

Decision of how to go forward with the cemetery will be taken at local level, in consultation with local council and mayor. But the overall decision structure is more complicated, see below also the role of Federal Government Ministries.

80-90 percent of the population is unhappy with the acts of vandalization against this heritage place.

One of the biggest challenges in restoring and managing the cemetery is its governance.

The Director of the Old Town Agency has been in office since 2007. Already by then the former mayor (passed away) had determined the safeguard and maintenance of the cemetery as a task for the agency.

In June 2005, the restoration of the cemetery, devastated during the war in the 1990s, was enabled partly through donations from funds in Norway and Netherlands, mainly aiming at restoring the memorial “flower” stones. These restoration works were personally approved by Bogdan Bogdanović. Additional restoration and illumination in 2009/10 and in 2018 through funds from the Ministry of Culture and Sports of Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Those funds targeted the water supply system, the restoration of the building at the entrance of the cemetery. Physical surveillance was funded only for one year (until 2019). Sources of permanent funding of physical surveillance should in principle be available through a proper management of the site, including the sale of souvenirs in a potential shop at the entrance building.

After the systematic vandalization of the cemetery in 2022 (destruction of all “flower” stones, etc), criminal prosecution against unknown perpetrators was launched under the responsibility of the cantonal police. No success until today.

The Agency was charged with better protection, but the budget was very limited so far. The 38,000 Euros attributed were used to build the camera poles. A private security agency could establish an operational surveillance command system in the entrance building. Legislation is in place for a 15 min reaction time after alarm.

The Ministry of culture and sports of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina has attributed 200,000 KM (about 100,000 EUR) for:

- A tourist shop in the entrance building
- Lighting
- Cleaning graffiti and cutting greenery and restoration of the fencing.

One of the essential questions remains the governance of the site (see above). This relates to the responsibility for the tender to restore the memorial and to its future management. The project and works may be carried out by a private company selected through a tendering procedure in accordance with the Law on Public Procurement. Eligible contractors must be licensed by the Federal Ministry of Spatial Planning and Environment to perform works on national monuments. Management, however, can only be entrusted to a public body designated by the Federal Government. This public body could potentially be the Old Town Agency.

Sources of future funding are unknown, both for restoration works and for sustained management. EU funds would therefore be very welcome. They may in fact catalyse decision making.

The European Experts Team suggests establishing a management plan as an essential tool in preparing the search and attribution of funds. All of this – management plan, responsibility for restoration works and sustained management - may potentially be provided by the Old Town Agency but this Agency is relatively small (a nine-person body dealing with the current historical old town core tasks of the agency). In the past, before 1990, up to 15 people were working permanently for landscaping and other works only at the Partisan Memorial cemetery. Those

numbers indicate the potential dimension of the physical maintenance of the memorial as one aspect of the management plan.

Additional remark by the director of the Old Town Agency: The cameras installed at the monument reveal serious interest from foreign visitors. So financial potential which could complement the municipal budget (70 000 + 35 000 + 60 000 KM) seems to be untapped.



Mayor Mario Kordić:

We received a support message but couldn't meet him since he was absent during our stay in Mostar.

European Commission – Office in Mostar, Mr. Petar Kraljević:

Address: Nikole Subica Zrinjskog 4, 88000, Mostar Bosnia and Herzegovina,
Tel: +387 36 333 607

Petar is advisor of the political department of the EU Delegation to Bosnia and Herzegovina, and a lawyer by education. He is heading the local office of the delegation in Mostar. Petar was born in Mostar and has already visited the memorial as a child several times, with his parents.

EC had repeatedly planned in a budget for the restoration of the partisan memorial. Firstly in 2014 (IPA II). By then, the earmarked funds had to be re-attributed at national level because of insufficient local and national level commitment and due to technical deficiencies of the proposed restoration plan. In 2021, the EC has then again approved a subsidy for the restoration of cultural projects in Mostar (0,5 Mio, IPA III). Upon request from the city of Mostar this subsidy was later

reallocated to the renovation of the former house of the mayor, a project which was supported by good quality documentation.

Generally, Petar affirms that insufficient local funds cannot be the reason for the omission to restore the heritage place since the city benefits from gradually increasing revenues, also from tourism. Furthermore, operational costs could be covered by an entrance fee or similar from visitors and the investment costs could be carried by the city itself. City has had 1 Mio visitors before COVID but the cemetery was never advertised, even though it could generate both tourists and revenue (see above and below – meeting with the tourist board). He is therefore convinced that not lack of budget but lack of political will has so far prevented the decision to restore this monument. Yet since the relationship between party officials at local level is often characterised by least resistance solutions, an EU-funded restoration would serve as a catalyst for unlocking the necessary political decisions.

Problem is: Very limited EU budget for investments in Bosnia and Herzegovina, primarily based on IPA III. Sneška referred to a meeting in 2024 between herself and the Director General of DG Near Gert-Jan Koopman, who mentioned other EU funding sources to be tapped on, including the programme Creative Europe.

Petar suggests that any request for EU funding should be channelled through the relevant institutions, including the Commission to Preserve National Monuments or the Institute for Protection of Cultural and Natural Heritage inside the Ministry of Culture and Sports of Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Petar suggests that it may help to develop an additional reasoning in favour of restoring and preserving the monument: It may be presented as a contribution to a larger green area which the city residents, especially on the western side of the Neretva River, urgently need. He also suggests that the spontaneous and unregulated parking at the entrance of the monument (towards Kralja Petra Kresimira IV street) gives the impression of negligence of the area which is unsuitable to the solemn character of the cemetery and may indicate a lack of attention. A potential fence around the monument may only be helpful if it is based on thoroughly planned and consulted design.

Restoring civic trust within the City could be the right angle to justify the attribution of EU funds in favour of the restoration of the monument.

**Director of the Tourist board of the City of Mostar, President of the Touristic Community,
Ms Elvira Dilberović.**

Address: Bulevar Narodne Revolucije 15, 88000 Mostar, info@exploremostar.ba
Tel: + 387 62 942 457, +387 36 844 568, +387 36 844 569

Elvira is strongly convinced of the touristic value of the partisan monument, is a second major local attraction for tourists from all over Europe and beyond. She is in favour of generating revenue from the sale of souvenirs in the building at the entrance of the monument, possibly from an

entrance fee to the monument and for strong intensification of tourist information about the monument, both before travel and at local level (Stary Most, hotels etc). With appropriate advertisement of the monument, the current number of 1 mio visitors to Mostar can be further increased.



Day 3 - Tuesday, 29/10/2024, Meetings in Sarajevo

7:30 AM Drive to Sarajevo

10:30 Arrival in Sarajevo

Luigi SORECA, Head of the Delegation of the European Union to Bosnia and Herzegovina, Ambassador and Stephano Ellero, Head of Cooperation (11h00)

Luigi.Soreca@eeas.europa.eu Address: Skenderija 3^a, 71000 Sarajevo

delegation-bih@eeas.europa.eu; delegation-bih-interviews@eeas.europa.eu (Media enquiries)

Tel +387 (0)33 25 47 00; +387 (0)33 560 800; +387 (0)33 560 800, +387 33 254 711

Luigi Soreca has only been in office since 10-2024 and was before EU ambassador in Albania. So he is still phasing into his new role. Sneška knows him from meetings in Albania.

Stephano Ellero is head of cooperation for many years and was already involved in the previous EU attempts to restore and save the partisan monument.

5 Mio Euros have been dedicated to culture during the ongoing period of financial perspectives (IPA III). 300 000 of that were attributed to Mostar. No positioning from the federal government on the preference for the restoration of the monument though.

A potential supplementary funding source may be the “EU 4 Culture” programme.



Federal Minister of Education, Prof. Jasna Duraković (12h30)

kabinet@fmon.gov.ba, Address: Obala Maka Dizdara 2, 71000 Sarajevo, Tel: +387 36 355-700

Jasna Duraković (JD) is very much in favour of restoration, security and usage intensification of the monument.

She proposes a) to join forces with the ministry of culture (convinced as well), EU delegation, EN and others and b) to organise a joint conference including painters, photographers, musicians etc on the occasion of the 60th anniversary of the inauguration of the monument. It will then be important to send info and invitations to schools at local level and beyond. Substance can only be determined at cantonal level though. One of the complications in B&H consists of the many levels

of decision making, including several levels for heritage protection - national, cantonal, local¹. Education falls under the responsibility of the cantonal level. Communication with schools should be directed through the cantonal Ministry of Education. However, the Federal Ministry of Education and Science typically coordinates activities among the cantons. The cantonal administration as well as all potentially relevant cultural, sport, tourism etc. institutions should be invited.

The proposed events could be planned and organised in collaboration with EN. This will not jeopardise future financial and administrative participation of the B&H government.

On the departure we met the **Minister for Culture and Sports of the Federation of B&H, Ms. Sanja Vlasisavljević**. She shares in principle the conclusions and proposals of the meeting with her colleague Jasna Duraković.

Mayor of the City of Sarajevo - Benjamina Karić (14h00) City Municipality – Town Hall

Sarajevo is of increasing touristic interest, starting from a relatively low level. In just one year the number of visitors has increased by 30 %. As an example of increased attention: The day before our meeting the first direct flight between Rome and Sarajevo was opened.

In the past two years of her office, the city of Sarajevo restored facades of many historic buildings in the central area from the city's own budget. Since the apartments in the buildings are primarily privately owned, and the owners were often unable or unwilling to restore the facades themselves, achieving consensus among city council members was not always straightforward.

In specific cases, support was also provided from prominent Europeans, including Maestro Jordi Savall who gave [three concerts in 2016 in favour of heritage protection](#), organised upon the initiative of Europa Nostra, on the occasion of the celebration of the European Heritage Award/Europa Nostra Award given to the [Employees and Activists of the National Museum of Bosnia and Herzegovina](#). Sarajevo has been part of the UNESCO Creative Cities Network as a UNESCO City of Film since 1997. This designation reflects the city's 30-year-old Sarajevo Film Festival—the most significant festival in Southeast Europe—along with its rich film heritage and thriving film industry.

The mayor recommends taking a guided tour of the town hall and the exhibition of the 1992-1995 war in Bosnia (which Guy Clausse and Jochen Schneider have benefitted from the next day).

Sneška has proposed that Sarajevo become an associate member of Europa Nostra (as many other cities) paying a symbolic fee. The mayor will swiftly verify in how far this can still be decided during her short remaining time in office (before taking the role of mayor of the municipality of Novo-Sarajevo)

¹ See institutional framework scheme in the annex



Robert Stergar, Director of the Institute for Cultural Heritage in the Federal Ministry of Culture and Sports, Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina

Gajev Trg 4, +387 33 254 180, zavod@fmks.gov.ba; Robert.Stergar@fmks.gov.ba

Meeting took place in the office of **the Institute for Artificial Intelligence** which is part of a private software and product development company and jointly with Admir Kulin, head of the InAUH (admir@kulin.world).

Robert anticipates challenges in restoring and maintaining the Partisan Monument in Mostar due to the lack of clarity about which organisation would oversee its proper restoration and ensure its sustained management. While the Institute for Cultural Heritage within the Federal Ministry of Culture and Sports is formally responsible, it is incapable of undertaking such tasks. The Institute is understaffed, and its existing personnel are gradually retiring, further exacerbating the issue. The Institute is in strong need of fresh young architects/experts (the staff body included 38 in the past, this is now reduced to just five!). Nevertheless, if requested so, the Institute could in his view take the role of PIU (project implementation unit), supported by consultants to be procured on the basis of the Law on public procurement, which is harmonised with the EU procurement rules. The PIU should then also be supported by a steering group composed of political representatives, science etc.

Admir Kulin suggests that any PIU should be supported by AI. The idea is: Make Bogdan Bogdanovich speak as a virtual persona. Admir expressed his company's interest in working on the project.



EIB Representation to Bosnia and Herzegovina - EIB representative, Mr Miha SVENT
sarajevo@eib.org , Tel: +387 33254792

Miha has only recently started his post as EIB representative to Bosnia and Herzegovina and didn't read any message before the meetings. He was absent during the week of our mission. He has reacted after the mission. He suggested to support further activities to the extent possible.

Day 4 - Wednesday, 30/10/2024

Prime Minister of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Nermin Nikšić and Federal Minister for Refugees and Displaced Persons, Nerin Dizdar (9h00)

Nermin Nikšić and Nerin Dizdar are both strongly in favour of the restoration of the partisan cemetery.

They consider the key issue not to be the restoration/reconstruction, but the monument's sustained management. An appropriate organisational structure must be found, not just a security company procured.

The perpetrators should be effectively prosecuted, yet so far there was no serious investigation of the acts of vandalism in 2022 so that there is a risk that criminals may be encouraged to repeat similar crimes. The PM assumes that the unanimous verbal declarations in favour of protection are theoretical. The formal responsibility for the criminal prosecution is at cantonal level.

The Federal government is ready to contribute funding to ensure continuous protection and maintenance after the restoration of the monument if it gets the assurance of clear local and cantonal commitment to the preservation of the monument, to be demonstrated also by the actual prosecution of the perpetrators of acts of vandalism in 2022.

The Government of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina will support the EN cause. PM hopes furthermore that the outcome of past local elections (October 2024) may have encouraged positions of the Federal government and parties which compose the cabinet, and therefore indirectly facilitated (among others) the preservation of and respect for the partisan monument in Mostar. The support of international and European organisations is considered important and helpful.

Protection of national monuments is a task concretely defined in the Constitution of B&H. The composition of the Commission to Preserve National Monuments, established under Annex 8 of Dayton Peace Agreement, which determines the heritage value and relevance of tangible and intangible heritage is equally defined by Acts of Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina and reflected in relevant entities' laws. The Commission should include five members, three nationals and two from internationally recognised organisations. The two international members of the Commission have been excluded since 2016. Annex 8 stipulates that the Technical Secretariat of the Commission should, as much as possible, reflect the ethnic structure of Bosnia and Herzegovina's citizens according to the 1991 census. Nerin Dizdar claims that this exclusion conflicts with the Annex 8 of Dayton Peace Agreement of 1995. The intention behind this composition was to ensure consensus decisions (at least three out of the five members had to take the respective decision).

The Commission to Preserve National Monuments is headquartered in Sarajevo, with two branch offices - one in Banja Luka and one in Mostar. Communication among the three current members of the Commission, who are not politically independent, is strained by ongoing disagreements, resulting in inefficiency and negligence in the preservation of heritage. While, according to Nerin Dizdar, the Dayton Agreement has in fact reinforced and perpetuated the perception of B&H as a country composed of ethnic groups, the Commission to Preserve National Monuments is considered a positive achievement in that it aimed at taking decisions in the broader interest of the heritage of Bosnia and Herzegovina at large. The Commission decision taken in 2019, at the time without the two international members, to make the categorisation of already designated national monuments - attributing value of 'exceptional' to Partisan cemetery - may therefore be potentially

legally challenged because taken by an incomplete Commission, although it does not affect its status of a monument of the highest significance for Bosnia and Herzegovina and its status of officially designated one of the most endangered national monuments in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

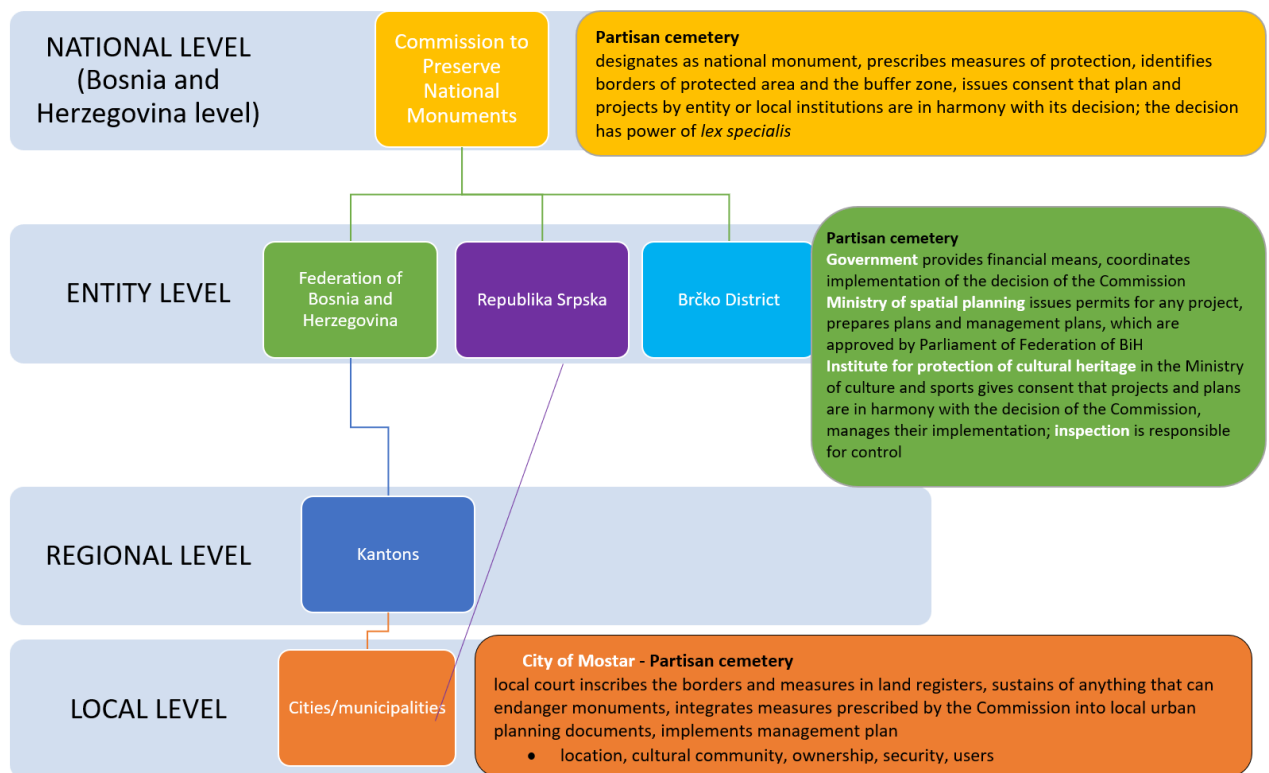


Illustration: Institutional Framework in Bosnia and Herzegovina with relevance for the future of the Partisan Memorial Cemetery

AGENTS AND PEOPLE MET OR CONTACTED ALONG THE MISSION

European Experts team

Guy Clause, Vice President of Europa Nostra

Sneška Quaedvlieg-Mihailović, Secretary General of Europa Nostra

Joachim Schneider, Expert, Advisor to the EIBI

David Castrillo, Architect, Advisor to the EIBI

Independent experts from Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia and Serbia

Senada Demirović, head of IDEEA, an NGO based in Mostar involved in heritage protection and architecture and initiator/nominator of the 7 ME candidacy

Amra Hadžmuhamedović, President of HIDR - Centre for Peace and Heritage, based in Sarajevo

Dragan Markovina, historian and publicist from Croatia (born and raised in Mostar)

Slavica Vujović, President of Europa Nostra Serbia (born and raised in Mostar)

Local authorities

Mario Kordić, Mayor of the City of Mostar

Djani Rahimić, President of the City Council

Miralem Fajić, Director of the Old Town Agency

Dr. Elvira Dilberović, Director of the Tourist Board of the City of Mostar

Federal authorities

Nermin Nikšić, Prime Minister of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina

Nerin Dizdar, Federal Minister for Displaced Persons and Refugees

Jasna Duraković, Federal Minister of Education

Sanja Vlasisavljević, Federal Minister for Culture and Sports

Robert Stergar, Director of the Institute for Cultural Heritage in the Federal Ministry of Culture and Sports

European and International authorities

Luigi Soreca, Head of the Delegation of the EU to Bosnia and Herzegovina, Ambassador

Stephano Ellero, Head of Cooperation at the EU Delegation

Petar Kraljević, EU Delegation Office in Mostar

Siniša Sešum, Head of the Sarajevo Antenna of the UNESCO Regional Bureau

Other contacts made during or after the Mission

InAUH—the Institute for Architecture, Urbanism, and Heritage (integration of artificial intelligence in architecture, urbanism, and heritage preservation)

Chris Leslei, Film maker, Author of the Documentary “The Partisan Necropolis”

Peter Lorenz, Stage Director & Performance Maker

Potential funders

EU Programmes - Creative Europe, EU4Culture, IPA III

EIB (Institute) / EU Member States

ANNEX II

The Memorial as a Universal Symbol

The monument offers a journey through time, showcasing references to diverse eras and cultural movements. These influences are evident not only in the overall architectural style but also in the symbolic meanings embedded within the structure. Some references are apparent in the monument's grand design, while others are discovered through closer examination of individual elements along the pathway. In this sense, the monument transcends specific time periods, achieving a timeless and universal quality.

On the left are reference photos, and on the right are actual pictures of the Memorial site.

Ancient Greece / Minoan culture

At the base of the terraces, a trio of sculptures bears a striking resemblance to the 'Horns of Consecration' characteristic of Minoan civilization. Furthermore, the triangular doorways evoke ancient cultures where the arch had not yet been developed. Notably, these doorways are the only 'covered' spaces within the monument. This design draws a direct parallel to the Treasury of Atreus in Greece, where a similar triangular doorway leads into the tomb chamber.



Horns of Consecration, Crete, cca. 1100 BC



Treasury of Atreus, Mycenae, ca. 1200 BC



Pre-Columbian American cultures

The most striking resemblance to Pre-Columbian cultures is evident throughout the monument. While these cultures exhibit significant diversity, encompassing civilizations like the Maya, Inca, Olmec, and Aztec, commonalities are readily apparent. The monument's verticality, terraced construction, extensive use of stone, and intricate decorative elements all strongly evoke the architectural and artistic styles of these ancient societies.

Entrance – Gate



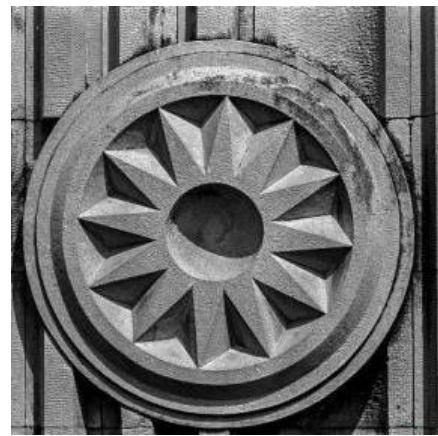
Toltec-maya pyramid of Chichén Itzá

Walls



“Mascarones del dios Chaac” Kabah, Yucatán

Decorative and utilitarian



“Piedra del Sol”, National Museum of Anthropology, Mexico City



Ring Mayan ball game in the ancient city of Uxmal. Mexico

Terraced structure and hydraulic systems.

A powerful element of the heritage place is its integration of terraces and water, skillfully utilizing the natural contours of the hill. This includes sophisticated systems of aqueducts, cisterns, and canals. While a common practice in many ancient civilizations, the Incan civilization, renowned for its remarkable water management in challenging terrain, provides a particularly compelling reference for the intricate water systems found within the Cemetery.



Water channelization and terrace systems, Tipón, Cuzco, Perú



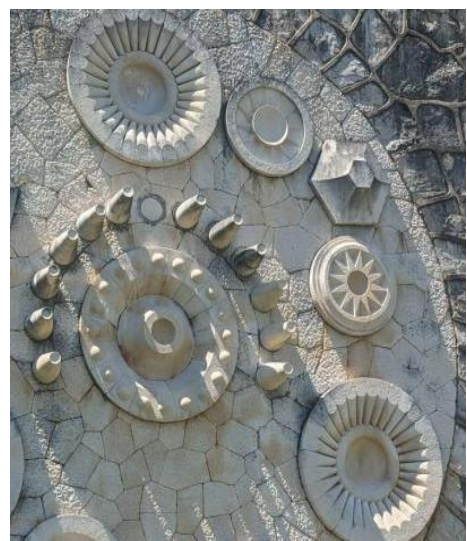
Aqueducts in Nazca, Perú



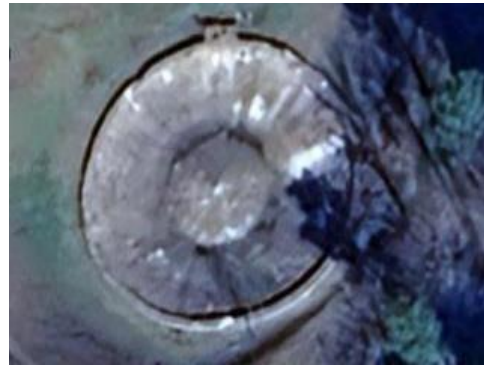
“Cochas” – water storage pools, Nazca, Perú

Medieval local cultures

The Stećak culture of monumental medieval tombstones, scattered across Bosnia and Herzegovina, and the border parts of Croatia, Montenegro and Serbia, is a clear reference in decorative elements but not only, as can be identified in other structures.



Stecak from Donja Zgošća



Water storage (water well) Neveš by the side of the necropolis Boljuni (world heritage site), with the folk name "Greek well" (copyright: Derviš Hadžimuhamedović2)

Classic architecture

The symmetrical entrance, featuring a double staircase, reflects Palladian architectural principles. However, this design transcends mere aesthetics, inviting visitors to make choices – a recurring theme throughout the heritage place, both in ascending and descending paths. The double staircase, a prominent feature in Renaissance and Baroque architecture, subtly encourages exploration and individual journeys within the complex.

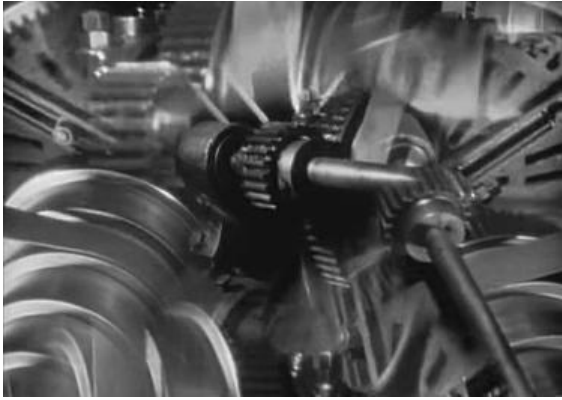


Moore Close Gardens, Binfield, England

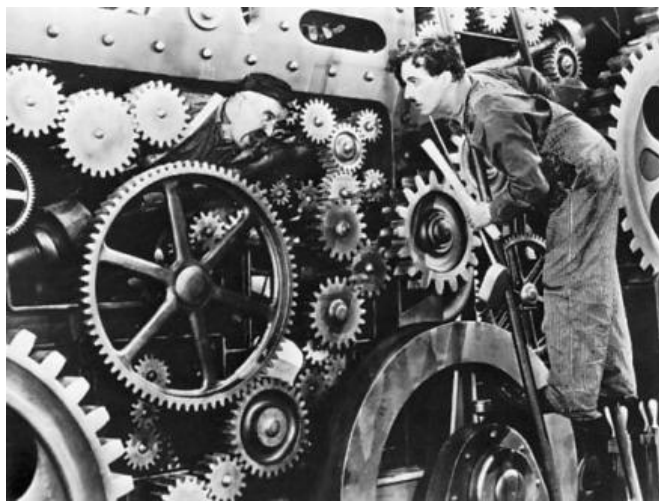
Modernism

The late 19th and early 20th centuries witnessed an explosion of modern art movements across Europe, challenging classical conventions and embracing new ideas. This era coincided with the Industrial Revolution, marked by rapid advancements in technology like automobiles and airplanes.

Art movements like Expressionism and Futurism reflected this societal shift, celebrating the machine and exploring the evolving relationship between humans and technology in a rapidly changing world. These movements often depicted the dynamism and energy of modern life, embracing industrial progress and its impact on human experience.



Fritz Lang, *Metrópolis* 1929

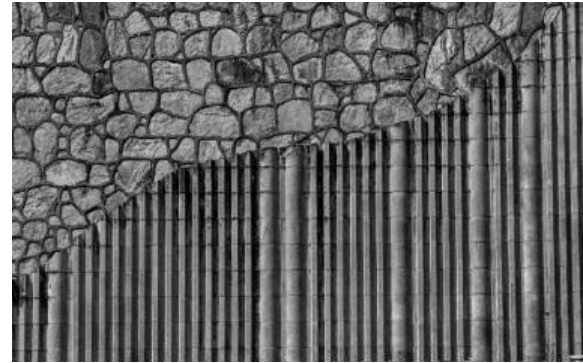


Charlie Chaplin, *Modern times* 1936



Brutalism

The heritage place's design also exhibits a connection to the Brutalist architectural style prevalent in post-war Yugoslavia. It's noteworthy that construction was halted for approximately a year between 1963 and 1964. During this period, concrete intended for the heritage place was diverted to Skopje to aid in relief efforts following a devastating earthquake that struck the city in 1963.



Post office in Skopje, North Macedonia, 1974.

Modern architecture: Le Corbusier

The most defining characteristic of the heritage place may be the promenade itself. Existing independently of the structure's physical form, the experience of the promenade remains unaffected by any damage. This unique aspect fosters a deeply personal and individual connection with the heritage place for each visitor.

The promenade encourages a contemplative and introspective journey, inviting each person to engage with the heritage place on their own terms. The ever-changing perspectives and shifting light play on the senses, creating a dynamic and ever-evolving experience that is uniquely personal.

“The *Promenade architecturale* is a concept developed by Swiss-French architect Le Corbusier that refers to the implied "itinerary" of a built environment. In the study of architecture there is a longstanding tradition of walking to achieve spatial perception, of for example, a street, building or any spatial premises designed or otherwise. Throughout history the perception of space through movement, mainly by means of walking through or along them, has always been a recurring, yet often overlooked concept. *Promenade architecturale* refers literally to such a walk of perception, or in other words, an "Architectural walk".” (source: Wikipedia)



Villa Savoye, 1931, Poissy, France

“In this house, we have a true *promenade architecturale*, constantly offering varied, unexpected, and sometimes surprising aspects. It is through movement that man perceives the orders of architecture unfolding in space.” - Le Corbusier.



ANNEX III
Partisan Memorial Cemetery — Reflections on the Culture of
Remembrance

**What, Why and How Do We Remember?
by Dr. Slavica Vujović, President of Europa Nostra Serbia**

So, let us begin with the facts. The Partisan Memorial Cemetery in Mostar is a national monument of Bosnia and Herzegovina.² It was first placed under legal protection in 2006 as a built ensemble (Decision No. 07.1-2-924/03-4 of 21 January 2006). A new decision from 2019 introduced certain amendments, whereby it became a memorial area, categorized as being of exceptional importance for Bosnia and Herzegovina (Decision No. 07.2-2.5-43/19-14 of 26 June 2019).

These decisions prescribe everything necessary for this national monument of exceptional importance to be preserved for future generations, maintained, and presented to the public as a public good, carrying historical value (a monument to the victims of fascist terror 1941–1945), artistic and aesthetic value, legibility (a masterpiece by Bogdan Bogdanović – architect, landscape architect, artist, writer, university professor, urban planner, and politician), as well as symbolic and environmental value. It possesses authenticity, uniqueness, representativeness, and integrity. Unfortunately, the condition of the Partisan Cemetery is poor, with scattered and broken stone slabs where the names of those who gave their lives for the freedom of their beloved city were once engraved. And in 2025, Mostar marks two anniversaries: eight decades since the liberation of the city in the Second World War (14 February 1945) and six decades since the opening of the memorial (25 September 1965).

It is indeed inevitable to ask what is missing or what prevents the Partisan Cemetery from being revitalized and equally integrated among the cultural-historical values and treasures of Mostar. The Old Bridge, now world-renowned, also went through an extremely difficult period during the 1990s. After extensive reconstruction work on the destroyed bridge and surrounding buildings, the Old Bridge area of the Old Town of Mostar was inscribed on the World Cultural and Natural Heritage List in 2005. The justification concluded with the following:

"With the 'renaissance' of the Old Bridge and its surroundings, the symbolic power and meaning of the city of Mostar – as an exceptional and universal symbol of the coexistence of communities of different cultural, ethnic, and religious origins – has been reinforced and strengthened, with an emphasis on the unlimited efforts of human solidarity for peace and the power of cooperation in the face of severe catastrophes."³

In searching for the renaissance of the Partisan Memorial Cemetery, that witness of Mostar's cultural diversity and unity, I pause in reflection – am I asking myself the right questions, and is this the path toward finding answers and opening dialogue?

Is the Partisan Memorial Cemetery predominantly a representation of communist ideology, as is often suggested by part of the public and some representatives of the authorities inclined toward revising the past?

Most visitors come to this memorial fully aware that it is a site of remembrance for members of the Yugoslav Partisan movement and resistance fighters who perished in the Second World War (driven by the ideological principles of communism). Casual visitors, however, in the absence of any information boards – and unless they turn to artificial intelligence sources – cannot detect any explicit ideological symbols here, such as the insignia of the Communist Party to which the

² <http://aplikacija.kons.gov.ba/kons/public/nacionalnispomenici?page=20>

³ <https://unesco.bih.mcp.gov.ba/spomenici/default.aspx?id=14253>

majority of the fallen belonged. Today, it is no longer possible to read the names and biographical data of the Partisans, which once testified to the cultural diversity and belonging to different nations. The author of the memorial represented this diversity guided by the principle of the universal equality of all people, which stands among the most important pillars of communist ideology.

The stone memorial plaques were arranged across terraces: those with surnames beginning with the earliest letters of the alphabet were placed on the lowest terrace, proceeding alphabetically upward through the higher levels. On the final terrace with the fountain, the names of 13 national heroes were inscribed – the only form of distinction within this “City of the Dead.” The plaques bore no religious symbols, pointing instead to atheism, also a central ideological principle.

Josip Broz Tito, head of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia, visited the Partisan Memorial Cemetery in Mostar only once, in 1969. It was recorded that he said: *“In many countries I have visited, I have seen numerous monuments where I laid wreaths. But I have never seen such a beautiful and magnificent monument as this one here. This is truly a masterpiece of our architecture, of our artists. If only those who gave their lives in the struggle could know with what pain and reverence the people remember their death, and with what joy they look upon all that has been achieved thanks to those sacrifices!”*⁴

When considering whether this memorial is predominantly a representation of communist ideology, it is important to remember that the project is tied to two free-thinking intellectuals: its author Bogdan Bogdanović (1922–2010), and Avdo Humo (1914–1984), a Mostar native, Partisan fighter, politician, and avant-garde figure, who delivered an inspiring speech at the memorial’s opening on 25 September 1965. Both men eventually became dissidents. Bogdanović, because of his views and opposition to Slobodan Milošević’s policies, was forced to leave Serbia in the 1990s and resettled in Vienna, Austria. Avdo Humo, on the other hand, was rejected by his fellow communists in Bosnia and Herzegovina in 1974 because of his advocacy for the modernization of the one-party system against morally empty bureaucracies.

Thus, various narratives could be told here – not only about the role of ideology in shaping places of remembrance, but also about the struggle against dogmatism and the pursuit of progress, which inevitably emerges through confronting real challenges and understanding the historical moment.

Is the anti-fascist narrative in which the monument was created (through the National Liberation Struggle in Yugoslavia) still relevant, and to what extent?

The monument was built in honor of the fallen members of the anti-fascist Yugoslav Partisan movement – citizens of Mostar and the municipality of Mostar, belonging to all nations and ethnic groups. Among the fallen were 59% Bosniaks, 31% Serbs, 8% Croats, 2% Jews, and smaller percentages of Czechs, Hungarians, Slovenes, Italians, and Roma. Their sacrifice laid the foundations for the formation of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY). As long as this state existed, with its anti-fascist heritage as a fundamental value, the Mostar memorial was respected and served as a place of remembrance and gathering for all generations.

However, circumstances changed significantly on both the national and international level after the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 and the ensuing geopolitical shifts, which also led to the dissolution of the SFRY (1991–92). One of the first explosions in Bosnia and Herzegovina took place at the Partisan Cemetery (11 March 1992), precisely because it was a symbol of the anti-fascist struggle and a shared identity – thus signalling the onset of the civil war in BiH.

In the years that followed, the system of values on which Yugoslav identity had rested was increasingly denied. Unresolved issues were reactivated, such as the nationalization of the land on

⁴ Borba, 9.4.1969.

which the memorial was built, alongside the rehabilitation of certain individuals (collaborators). Unfortunately, the fate of heritage is often determined by its association with the Yugoslav period and the purpose for which it was built. This new reading of history most often unfolds without dialogue and in a polarised context.

The Association of Anti-Fascists and Fighters of the National Liberation War (UABNOR) Mostar persistently continued, after peace was established, to commemorate the Day of the Liberation of Mostar (14 February) by laying wreaths at the Partisan Memorial Cemetery. This association also initiated and submitted the request in 2003 for the designation of the cemetery as a national monument. In 2015, it organised the commemoration of the 50th anniversary of the memorial's opening – in a degraded setting.

Unlike the culture of remembrance advocated by UABNOR, in the local community (particularly in the western part of the city) there exists a tendency to follow the path of (non)culture of forgetting and the repurposing of this space. The anti-fascist character of the memorial was nearly erased by a local initiative proposing the removal of all stone plaques and freeing up the area for concerts and performing arts. Although this idea was never realised, it has remained alive among part of Mostar's population.

In this context, one cannot help but wonder whether the destruction and smashing of all the stone plaques in the night between 14 and 15 June 2022 was perhaps a response to the elevation of the site's status to that of a national monument of exceptional significance and the explicit prohibition of changing its primary purpose – as a memorial complex and its surroundings (Amendments Decision, 2019, Article 4, d/7).

Whatever the perpetrators' intentions – who, unfortunately, remain unknown – the memorial is currently stripped of the identities of the fallen anti-fascists. Their names and records are, however, well documented, and the struggle against forgetting continues.

What was the focus of the complex's values before the 1990s, and what is it today?

The passage of time and the changes in socio-political circumstances have inevitably been reflected in the perception of the values of the Partisan Memorial Cemetery in Mostar. Therefore, engaging with this aspect is worthy of attention and requires research.

The period before the 1990s can be followed through documentation, beginning with the design phase, construction, inauguration, and the two and a half decades of life with the memorial. This material is accessible to the public thanks to the excellent website <https://partizansko.info> Here, among other things, one can find the long-forgotten admiration of Jean-Paul Sartre, French philosopher and Nobel laureate, for Bogdanović's original idea at a time when the memorial existed only on paper and as a model.⁵

Most of the sources stem from the period preceding the inauguration of the complex, when the main actors gave interviews, leaving behind valuable observations about this unique endeavor. In the later period, the visits of officials, state delegations, and renowned figures from the world of politics and art were documented. By following the focus of the articles, one can conclude that, alongside its primary function as a site of remembrance, there was regular discourse on the beauty of the memorial complex and on the values of the “new city” – the small Mostar – which entered public discourse.

Over time, the memorial's primary function as a place of remembrance gave more space to an appreciation of its artistic and aesthetic values (composition, forms, urban concept, symbolism), as well as social values, to which the author's articles and interviews contributed. Bogdanović

⁵ Sloboda

spoke of the values of the Partisan Cemetery as an “**acropolis-necropolis**” – a structure that occupies a vast spatial surface, urbanistic in character, architecturally conceived so as to also possess sculptural value.⁶ People recognised and loved precisely that unity of the memorial’s purpose and its beauty, carved in stone in honour of young lives cut short.

However, the civil war of the 1990s brought changes, including different perspectives on the values of the memorial, while the structure itself continued to bear witness in silence, without people, in profound darkness. The wounded cemetery was visited in 1997 by Bogdan Bogdanović, when he also encountered the destroyed Hajrudin’s bridge. Devastated by the sight, he wrote: “*And all that remains of my initial promise is that the former city of the dead and the former city of the living still gaze at each other, but they gaze with empty, black, burnt-out eyes.*”⁷

On his next visit to Mostar in 2000, he felt that the monument would survive, which was then transformed into a restoration initiative, led by Bogdanović himself and the renowned Slovenian-Italian architect and academic Boris Podrecca. In the same year that the Old Bridge was inscribed on the World Heritage List, the Partisan Cemetery also marked the opening of a partially restored monument. Unfortunately, acts of devastation continued.

At the same time, efforts were underway to have the memorial declared a national monument of Bosnia and Herzegovina. On the international level, this period also saw growing interest in the architecture of the second half of the 20th century. The valuable opus of memorial architecture built on the territory of the former Yugoslavia has been gradually gaining admirers and followers.⁸

One of the key moments in its (re)valorization was the inclusion of this work of Bogdanović in the exhibition “**Toward a Concrete Utopia – Yugoslavia’s Architecture 1948–1980**” at MoMA in New York City (July 15, 2018 – January 13, 2019). The caption accompanying the Partisan Cemetery in Mostar stated, among other things: “*The visitor follows a winding path, ascending a series of terraces and passing behind tall labyrinthine walls to reach an ornamental circular fountain at the very top, with a variety of contours, textures, and embellishments adding to the intensity of the experience.*”

During the (re)valorization of the Partisan Cemetery in 2019, carried out by the Commission to Preserve National Monuments of Bosnia and Herzegovina, it was granted the highest national category – of **exceptional significance** – bringing the question of its values once again into focus.

In addition to the many values highlighted in the decisions and explanations, there remains significant room for continued research on a number of themes.

The Constructive Solution (Technical Value)

is tied to the construction of a complex terraced and fragmented concrete structure, as

⁶ Borba, <https://partizansko.info/tako-je-govorilo-bogdan-intervju-refika-hamzica-sa-bogdanom-bogdanovicem-uoci-otvaranja-partizanskog-spomen-groblja-u-mostaru-septembra-1965-godine/>

⁷ <https://arhiva.tacno.net/kultura/bogdan-bogdanovic-mostarski-grad-mrtvih>

⁸ Donald Niebyl is the author of the book *Spomenik monument database* and the website www.spomenikdatabase.org, the most comprehensive overview of this obscure and fascinating architectural phenomenon in the SFRY

well as the fact that all the works were carried out by the local company “*Parkovi i nasadi*”, which far surpassed its previous construction experience. During the earthworks phase, the hill (Biskupova Glavica) was shaped in order to create six terraces for the alleys, a feat achieved, among other things, thanks to the selfless dedication of Ahmet Ribica, the construction site manager. Particularly demanding was the execution of the high retaining wall with the symbol of the Cosmos, above which stands the city’s gravitational water reservoir.

The Quality of Craftsmanship – Intangible Cultural Heritage, and Above All the Stonemasonry Skills.

It was the stonemasons who transformed Bogdanović’s drawings and models into stone sculpture. The names and nicknames of the masters from the island of Korčula (Croatia) have been recorded, from Lumbarda: Ante Jurjević, Nikola Lipanović, Stjepan Jurjević, Ilija and Stjepan Šestanović, Ante Krilietić, Ive Lozica, Ante Milina, Stanko and Ante Mušić; from Žrnovo: Berislav, Jure and Jakov Curać, Ante Brčić; and from the small islet of Vrnik: Jure Kurčija, Mauro and Vinko Fabris.⁹ Bogdan. Bogdanović spoke of these stonemasons on several occasions, almost with fascination:

“They were brought sometime at the end of the 1950s or the very beginning of the 1960s. They were modest, kind, and pleasant, and they carried out their work devoutly, almost liturgically: their ringing, choral liturgy of chiselling lasted, with minor interruptions, for a full five years.”¹⁰

He recorded certain rituals of the Korčula stonemasons, such as singing a melody without words, handed down from time immemorial, from generation to generation of masters. He spoke of the qualities of different kinds of stone – that each resonates like a musical instrument – and of the sounds they produce while being worked, among which limestone stood out in particular. The master builder explained how the stone itself chose its own shapes:

“Finally, if into this silent and ringing texture of stone and ornament one had to carve some signs, they would be, without doubt, the signs of the sun, the moon, and the stars. Cosmic symbols open before us strange expanses toward which humanity has always striven, searched for itself within them, constantly moving the boundaries of its enthusiasms and knowledge toward them.”¹¹

From oblivion have also been saved the names of stonemasons and builders from Eastern Herzegovina, from Posušje: Filip, Ivan, Milan, and Slavo Kovač, Milan and Ivan Jukić, Branko and Čipe Penava; and Mijo Mandurić (site foreman). A special place belonged to Ivo Biočina, the sculptor from Dubrovnik, with whom Bogdanović worked on several monuments across Yugoslavia, as well as throughout Europe. Biočina once said:

“A man would never work on something difficult unless he loved it. This is a traditional craft. My people have been doing it for generations and generations – father, grandfather, great-grandfather. On the island of Brač, we even had our own quarry a hundred, two hundred years ago.” Of his collaboration with Bogdanović, he said: “He loved me very much and said that after his death, only I could repair his monuments.”¹²

⁹ zapisao prof.dr.sc. Roko Markovina po sjećanju kamenoklesara Ante Mušića “Tucija”, u Lumbardi 14. 9. 2023. <https://partizansko.info/majstori/>

¹⁰ Bogdanovićevo pismo iz 1997. <https://partizansko.info/#imena>

¹¹ <https://arhiva.tacno.net/kultura/bogdan-bogdanovic-mostarski-grad-mrtvih/>

¹² <https://partizansko.info/intervju-ante-music-tuci-klesar-iz-lumbarde-radio-sam-na-izgradnji-partizanskog-spomen-groblja-u-mostaru>

The vast majority of stone slabs used for cladding the concrete walls were taken from the roofs of old houses. Of this, the great master builder also spoke:

“The hill opened up, encircled by stone interlaces and old slabs removed from worn-out roofs. The soot-darkened slabs from the houses of Mostar, which had covered so many hardships and joys, became sanctified, gaining the right of symbol, the right to eternity.”

Alongside the stonemasons, one must also mention the cobblestone workers who paved the walking paths and ramps. They used river pebbles extracted from the Neretva, mostly brought by local residents as their contribution to this unique construction endeavor. It is said that more than 87,000 pebbles were taken from the riverbed of the Neretva and used to cover 871 m² of paths, which contained islands for ornamental plants and flowers.

A Specific Criterion of Value lies in the application of the concept of the *urban landscape*. Already at the end of the 1950s, when designing the solution for the Partisan Memorial Cemetery, Bogdanović applied the concept of the urban landscape and cultivated specific respect for the environment at a time when environmental sciences were just beginning to prove their essence. Sonja Leboš, the author of the Haunted Builder exhibition gave the following assessment „Generating landscapes as actors of urban civilization, Bogdanović left us a huge transnational heritage throughout the then sovereign political entity, today the region of the South East. Legacy that European societies have yet to learn to know and appreciate.”¹³

In the case of the Mostar memorial site, the author succeeded in telling, through architectural, urban, and landscape language, the story of Mostar – the city, the man, and the poet – of the spiritual and physical beauty that inspired him to translate it all into a unique urban concept. In creating a “new city” (the small Mostar), he also created a natural setting – terraced, rocky hills, the canyon of the Neretva, the murmur of the Radobolja, surrounded by proud cypresses and speckled with Herzegovinian flora. Thus, he created a landscape that sincerely and authentically testifies to the harmony between man and nature.

To what extent were the Partisan Cemetery and its values part of the local identity of the people of Mostar between 1960 and 1992, and what is happening in this regard today?

The story of the construction of the Partisan Memorial Cemetery is predominantly a local one. The fact that every third resident of Mostar was involved in some form of resistance and that every eighth lost their life for freedom (65% in combat, while the others were underground fighters, activists, and sympathisers – civilians) was experienced as something unique. The majority of the fallen fighters buried at the Partisan Cemetery – about 55% – were young people between 18 and 25 years of age!

Immediately after the war there was talk of commissioning the famous sculptor Ivan Meštrović to design the memorial. However, at the initiative of SUBNOR, supported by Mostar politician Džemal Bijedić, the task was entrusted to the Belgrade architect Bogdan Bogdanović, to whom the citizens of Mostar showed great trust and with whom they remained closely bound until the completion of the project. That trust and closeness inspired Bogdanović’s search for the very

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¹³ <https://www.scribd.com/document/181148239/Bogdan-Bogdanovi%C4%87-Ukleti-neimar>

essence of the city of Mostar and of the people of Mostar and Herzegovina. He occasionally even voiced fears of failing to capture the spirit of Mostar and of breaking the promise he had made to the families of the fallen – that he would create “something unseen before.” Because of his selfless work (he was not paid for the project or for supervision), Bogdanović was awarded honorary citizenship of Mostar in 1968.

The construction project was carried out largely with the resources of the city of Mostar. According to a 1962 article, the monument was estimated to cost around 100 million dinars, which amounted to a little over 14 million German marks of the time. This sum did not include voluntary labour, the donation of stone, or the planting of the memorial forest. At the opening ceremony, the most important guests were citizens of Mostar themselves – Avdo Humo, then president of the Executive Council of the Socialist Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina (equivalent to prime minister)¹⁴, and Džemal Bijedić, vice president of the Assembly of SR BiH.¹⁵

In his opening address, Avdo Humo reflected on the continuity of people’s struggles in this region for freedom, against injustice and hardship, stressing:

“The self-sacrifice and readiness of the wartime generation to make the ultimate sacrifice for humanity gave rise to new inspirations and strengthened the will for the struggle that was the culmination of all that came before. Regardless of how conscious our people were of the bright and burdensome continuity of history and of its deposits in character and in consciousness, that heritage lived on inalienably and found fulfillment in every new social and political context – sometimes as pure values that elevated people, setting them apart as leaders of the people’s aspirations, and sometimes as distortions that debased and confused them.”

At the end of his speech, Humo elevated the lives of the fallen young people beyond ideology, saying: “These people – heroes and revolutionaries – were truly real human beings, both in their extraordinary and in their ordinary lives. Their lives and their deaths were as imagined by the poet, the bard, the people, and the Party; they were that condensed drop of the most beautiful feelings and the strongest thoughts that the people’s vision had produced throughout history.”¹⁶

One remains to wonder whether today’s reality has contradicted Humo’s vision expressed at the end of his speech – that those who gave their lives had become symbols of “moral values eternal, for as long as humanity exists on this planet.”

When it comes to the relation of Mostar’s citizens to the Partisan Cemetery as a factor of identity today, it is difficult to speak without research. On the ground, the city is divided, with different curricula taught to young citizens and with cultural life split into western and eastern parts of the city. It is the civil sector that opens up dissonant themes and persists in nurturing the culture of remembrance. Particularly valuable are the efforts of individuals, among whom stand out Dr. Senada Demirović, architect, president of the association Urban House IDEAA Mostar, and Dr.

¹⁴ <https://www.oslobodjenje.ba/dosjei/teme/kratka-politicka-istorija-avde-i-olge-819350/>

¹⁵ Husnija Kamberović. Džemal Bijedić politička biografija, drugo dopunjeno izdanje, UMHS, Sarajevo, 2017 www.academia.edu/75204737/Dzemal_Bijedic_Politicka_biografija;

¹⁶ <https://partizansko.info/bili-su-pravi-ljudi-govor-avde-hume-prilikom-otvaranja-partizanskog-spomen-groblja-25-9-1965-godine/>

Dragan Markovina, historian, publicist, and writer – a native of Mostar who contributes greatly to the culture of memory and the culture of forgetting.¹⁷

The Partisan Memorial Cemetery even has a local nickname – *Partiza* – which speaks to the sense of closeness to this site. At this point, one should also consider the diaspora, scattered across the world, which could (or already does) form a key network for cultural development. It is also necessary to acknowledge the importance of foreigners who help popularise the values of *Partiza* and launch various initiatives, and to give this greater visibility in the public sphere.

Still, this complex historical and cultural issue will not, nor can it, be resolved by foreigners. This is a task for the people of Mostar themselves, through local initiatives and actions. Too much, both material and immaterial, has already been given locally, and for a long time this complex and unique whole has been (and still is, to some degree) an element of identity for the citizens of Mostar and their widespread diaspora. Surely, times are coming (or perhaps it is already high time) when this local story must be extended to new generations, so that they may grow culturally without divisive narratives, and economically, by drawing upon the legacy of their forebears.

To what extent do the values of the Partisan Memorial Cemetery connect it to Europe and its efforts to nurture and encourage a culture of remembrance?

Ever since Bogdan Bogdanović found his dissident refuge in one of Europe's major capitals—Vienna—the impression has been that the theme of saving the Partisan Memorial Cemetery also expanded into a European perspective. Bogdan became a refugee, as did many of the families he had known while building the Mostar memorial. The honour once bestowed upon him as a citizen of Mostar lost its historical and social context, but not the profound bond between the master builder, the city, and its memorial. The aforementioned partial restoration of the Partisan Cemetery in the period 2003–2005, led by Bogdanović himself, and the marking of the project's completion on 2005 Europe Day—unambiguously underscored Europe's involvement in this story of a culture of remembrance.¹⁸ Europe Day was also marked at the cemetery in 2013 with a performance intended, among other things, to highlight the neglect of the monument.

In the following period, a special place belongs to **Mostar's candidacy for European Capital of Culture 2024**, under the slogan *Is Everything Bridgeable?* Work on the bid book began in 2017 on the initiative of cultural workers and creative actors in Mostar.¹⁹ The aim was for Mostar—a city with a complex political and ethnic past—to demonstrate that culture can be a driver of change and dialogue among different communities. This was also at the heart of the nomination of the Old Bridge and the old town of Mostar for UNESCO World Heritage status. The Partisan Memorial Cemetery, as a national monument bearing multiple layers of value, was included in the application as a venue for thematic performances and educational programs. Unfortunately, this opportunity for a stronger positioning of European values did not result in Mostar being granted the status of European Capital of Culture.

¹⁷ Among others, he is the author of books: *Split i Mostar u kulturi sjećanja* (2014), *Tišina poraženog grada. Eseji, priče, kolumne* (2015), *Povijest poraženih* (2015), *Libanon na Neretvi. Kultura sjećanja, kultura zaborava* (2019/2023), *14 februar 1945* (2023), *Programirani zaborav. Podijeljeni gradovi i neželjena sjećanja* (2024)

¹⁸ Funds for the works were provided by the Government of the Netherlands and the Kingdom of Norway and the budget of Bosnia and Herzegovina

¹⁹ About 100 individuals from various segments of the cultural scene (cultural institutions, NGOs, independent cultural workers) gathered to work on the candidacy. Organised public debates, surveys among citizens through the domain mostar2024.ba, formed focus groups through Forum 2024.

The evaluation acknowledged that Mostar offered a powerful and emotional narrative rooted in its history and the complex fabric of its society. However, although the bid highlighted important European issues and emphasised the potential of *komšiluk* (neighborhood traditions) as a model for Europe, it was concluded that the proposal did not sufficiently elaborate the practical mechanisms and partnerships that would ensure the implementation of these ideas at the European level. The shortcomings noted included: planning documentation, political support within the city council, administrative efficiency, clear coordination, and professional capacity in cultural institutions. It was emphasised that the cultural sector in Mostar is fragmented, with weak cooperation between different actors, and that much of the proposed activity would have to be developed almost from scratch.²⁰

Since 2023, multiple activities have been undertaken by Europa Nostra, the pan-European network for civil society, aimed at finding a path to move the Partisan Memorial Cemetery out of the zone of endangered heritage and into the zone of revitalization. This began with the project/workshop *SPOMENIKS / Environment for Youth Activism, Spaces for Rethinking Heritage*, funded by the RYCO WB Cultural Fund, which explored: heritage as a living practice of remembrance, antifascist heritage in popular culture, the evaluation of antifascist heritage, and the role of youth in preserving and using heritage. Participants included young professionals, students, and activists from Belgrade and Mostar.

In 2023, the Partisan Memorial Cemetery was listed among the *7 Most Endangered Cultural Heritage Sites in Europe* thanks to the efforts of the civil sector, led by the Urban House IDEAA Mostar association, which submitted the nomination for its inclusion on this European list, announced by Europa Nostra in cooperation with the European Investment Bank Institute.²¹ This sent a strong message to the international public that the Partisan Cemetery is gravely endangered, urgently calling for organised rescue efforts, regular care, and proper public presentation.

On the eve of marking six decades since the construction of the Partisan Memorial Cemetery, new initiatives emerged from the EU and the region. A performance titled *Dreaming for Future with Bogdanović*, directed by Austrian artist Peter Lorenz, co-founder of the Street Arts Festival Mostar, was staged.²² A documentary film, *The Partisan Necropolis*, directed by Chris Leslie from Scotland, was produced.²³ The First Regional Conservators' Conference on the work of Bogdan Bogdanović, initiated and organised by Mare Jankova Grujić, was also planned.²⁴

In the search for a renaissance of the Partisan Memorial Cemetery and for meaningful answers, dialogue must be opened. It would therefore be desirable for Europa Nostra, in the role of moderator, to initiate conversations in which all stakeholders could voice their views—including divergent and dissonant ones. Without such dialogue, there is a danger that everyone will remain entrenched in their own positions, while the city of the dead—conceived to celebrate life in a city whose inhabitants have always belonged to diverse cultures and faiths—will gaze with sorrow and disappointment as Mostar continues to develop as a divided city, at odds with its rich history, and thus contrary to the essential interests of its citizens. And far from European values...

²⁰ Besides Mostar, Banja Luka also failed to qualify, see: <https://culturenext.eu/wp-content/uploads/2024-Candidates-EEA-Final-Selection-Report-1.pdf>

²¹ This nomination was supported by Europa Nostra Serbia as well as the project *SPOMENIKS*

²² "Street Arts Festival Mostar" ended with this performance and was remembered as a magical evening, filled with light, sound and collective imagination, as a unique blend of the past and the future, filled with the energy of all participants <https://www.instagram.com/p/DOEfxktiA9/>

²³ <https://www.chrisleslie.com/portfolio/partisan-necropolis/> The world premiere of the film took place on August 17th at the SARAJEVO FILM FESTIVAL.

²⁴ Jankova Grujić is the author of the large retrospective exhibition "Forever", dedicated to the centenary of the birth of the great Serbian and Yugoslav architect Bogdan Bogdanović, which is traveling throughout the former Yugoslavia.

How to Successfully and Sustainably Manage the Partisan Memorial Cemetery?

The issue of maintaining and managing the memorial complex of the Partisan Cemetery in Mostar is largely defined by the aforementioned decisions from 2006, and especially from 2019, which was based on the *Principles and Guidelines for the Preservation of National Monuments* of the same year.²⁵ However, in order to implement these decisions, several projects and programs need to be developed, and above all, a Management Plan must be prepared as a platform ensuring sustainable use, the implementation of protective measures, and the interpretation of values.

The question of the owner or user and their obligations has not been resolved in a comprehensive way since as far back as 1965, when the municipal enterprise *Parkovi i nasadi* in Mostar was in charge of maintaining the Partisan Cemetery (greenery – park areas, alleys, pruning, planting, and cleaning) in accordance with a city decision. In an article published at the beginning of the following year, the issue was raised that building the complex was easier than maintaining it.²⁶ At that time, several proposals for the executor (manager) of the memorial were made, with the most realistic being *Parkovi i nasadi* and the Museum of Herzegovina, which would have had to establish a special department for this purpose. That episode ended without a comprehensive solution for the care of the Partisan Cemetery. Nearly six decades later, the same two proposals have resurfaced to resolve the issue of management and maintenance. Considerable uncertainty still surrounds the question of when this problem will be addressed and who will assume these substantial obligations.

Unfortunately, the implementation of that Plan has been followed by numerous challenges: political and institutional divisions (Mostar remains a city with a complex administration and limited institutional functionality; competences are divided between multiple levels of government—city, canton, Federation of BiH, state), often resulting in delays in decision-making. It is evident that there is no unified and strong management body. Other problems include issues related to tourism and economic exploitation, financial limitations, lack of professional staff and long-term planning, as well as physical threats and degradation of historic structures.

Nevertheless, despite these challenges, the city of Mostar has gained valuable experience in managing and maintaining cultural assets of outstanding universal value, and this approach should also be applied to the management of the Partisan Cemetery. Although the governance scheme is complex, any step forward in this direction represents a small victory. Moreover, if the Management Plan for the Old Bridge were expanded to include the Partisan Cemetery and the space connecting them, it would provide added value on multiple levels.

Among the necessary tasks are:

- restoring water to the fountain, channels, water organ, and pond, as key elements of Bogdanović's concept,
- resolving the issue of nationalization of the land on which the Partisan Cemetery was built, which was exempted from the Diocese of Mostar but has unresolved property-legal matters,
- raising awareness of the value and uniqueness of the Partisan Cemetery,
- developing strategies that would enable citizens to become co-creators of programs, not just an audience—through workshops, open calls, cooperation with schools, universities, associations, and smaller cultural initiatives, as well as the use of digital platforms for participation,
- developing a holistic approach to the preservation and use of cultural and natural heritage,
- engaging with the symbolic dimension of the site as a *locus memoriae par excellence*,

²⁵ http://kons.gov.ba/data/Novi%20dokumenti/Publikacije/smjernice_bos_Gz.pdf

²⁶ “Lakše je izgraditi“. *Borba*, 4.2.1966.

- implementing educational and informational programs, especially through scientific research, technical studies, and training in the field of conservation,
- narrating stories about the stonemasonry skills of masters from Korčula and sculptors from Dubrovnik, about the stone itself,
- following the visions of Bogdan Bogdanović, who believed that the best world would be one where there was no need for monuments at all—but if they must be built, then let them be monuments to life, not monuments of suffering or monuments to suffering,
- aligning with European initiatives such as the *New European Bauhaus*.

And finally, a few words about - and from - the builder...

Four years after the completion of the Partisan Memorial Cemetery, Bogdan Bogdanović asked in an interview: “*How will future generations interpret this edifice? What will they see in it, what will they experience? Will it say anything to them? Will there be a dialogue between visitors and the structure, as there seems to be already, in a way, today?*”²⁷ ... *Many associations are possible, many reflections. Will the children of our children see in this monument the image of a strange, proud, and humane city, lifted like a mirage somewhere between heaven and earth? And will they recognise their city in a distant, proud, and difficult time when the hardest thing of all was to be and remain human? Not without some fear, but not without determination either, the builder would briefly answer: yes—the city and man will be recognised, and they will meet as long as both city and man exist.*”

At that time, the builder could not have imagined that this dialogue—once begun and established—would fall silent before the clamor of weapons, and that the Partisan Cemetery would be desecrated many times in an effort to erase the messages carried by this powerful and beautiful edifice. Bogdanović managed to visit wounded Mostar in 1997 and 2000, and he also led the restoration between 2003 and 2005, when cleaning, repair, and reconstruction works were carried out on elements of the complex and its greenery.²⁸ A total of 630 tombstones were installed at the cemetery, which, with the author’s consent, were replaced with new ones made of *tenelija* stone, with identical shapes and inscriptions. The partially restored monument was ceremonially reopened on May 9, 2005, marking six decades since the end of the Second World War and Europe Day.

It is fortunate that Bogdanović did not live to see the new devastation of the complex in 2022, when all the stone slabs were smashed. Or perhaps he would have once again gathered his thoughts and concluded that Mostar will prevail, for he knew the city’s soul. I believe he would have remembered that the names and texts of each person still exist, preserved from oblivion, somewhere in the virtual world, which increasingly occupies human space and provides new opportunities for action.

Perhaps it is precisely there that a virtual battle is being waged today—for full respect of this cultural achievement, which lifted Mostar’s youth of freedom into dreams of a better place (*Terrae lucidae*) where Bogdanović himself would have wished to be. Yes, the city and man will be recognised again, as envisioned by both the builder and Humo in their legacies. It is almost certain that a new reading of values is emerging, and with it, their use for the benefit sought by all those

²⁷ Sloboda, 1969, “Most” br. 3, 1975. and “Partizanski spomenik u Mostaru”, IKRO Prva književna komuna, Mostar 1980, str 36-38.

²⁸ By the decision of the Mayor of the City of Mostar no. 02-02-185/03, dated January 31, 2003, the Committee for Support for the Reconstruction of the Partisan Memorial Cemetery Complex in Mostar was formed, consisting of: Academician Bogdan Bogdanović, Boris Podreka, Amir Pašić, Darko Minarik, Ekrem Krpo, Zdravko Gutić, Tihomir Rozić, Alija Bijavica, Milica Dogan, Florijan Micković, Milivoj Gagro, Radmilo Andrić, Mumin Isić and Mustafa Selimović. who proposed measures for the development of a study of the restoration of the complex and an operational program of measures for the restoration of the Monument

who, together with Bogdanović, created this modern yet archaic work—transcending both its time and place, while remaining deeply rooted in them.

Post Scriptum

When the Partisan Memorial Cemetery was inaugurated, I had not even started school yet. In the fifth grade, we moved to Blagoje Parović Street, where the Cemetery was located. I often went there, usually with my brother, drawn by the mystique of this labyrinth-like space, and especially by the place with the memorial plaque of our uncle, Milorad Skiba, who had died in the People's Liberation Struggle as a high school student, at the age of 18. That patch of earth with grass was our connection to my father's brother, about whom there were occasional, sorrowful stories. His name also appeared on the monument at the Orthodox cemetery near the Cathedral Church, aligned with the graves of his mother and father. There, too, was his photograph, showing a smiling face. Later, when I attended the "Aleksa Šantić" Gymnasium, I passed every day by the memorial plaque with the names of students who had given their lives for freedom. I felt proud of that!

My parents and my brother with his family left their beloved Mostar forever in April 1992, less than a month after the first explosion at the nearby Partisan Cemetery. My father was a refugee for only twelve days in Serbia. Much later I realised that he simply did not wish to live outside of Mostar. Soon after, the memorial plaque from the Gymnasium disappeared as well, and to this day even a copy has not been returned to its place. The Serbian Orthodox Cathedral was destroyed, the cemetery damaged. My brother, who bore our uncle's name, did not live to grow old, and he never knew how to be happy without his Mostar friends... without the Neretva River... From time to time came news of new devastations of the Partisan Cemetery. And yet, the most painful news came in 2022: that all the stone slabs with engraved names had been smashed. Since then, I can no longer find *our/my* stone, nor do I have anyone with whom to seek it and summon it back into memory...

And although far from my native city, I cannot help but think of the sounds that once sang while the work was being born under the stonemasons' tools, and of the cries of the slabs as they shattered into fragments, carrying Bogdanović's unusual letters. The synchronicities are strange—Bogdanović once said that the stonemasons, because of the heat, worked at night, and that the songs of the skilled men from Korčula resembled a kind of ritual. And it was also destroyed at night, in the hot Mostar summer. It is unknown whether there was any ritual in all that, but it is surreal that what the masters had carved for months was desecrated in a single night.

The names of these destroyers ought to be known.

The names of the builders are recorded... as are the names of those who inhabit this city... among them my brave—and, they say, kind—uncle, Milorad.

ANNEX IV
60th Anniversary of Bogdanović's 'City of the Dead' in Mostar

by Dr Dragan Markovina

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There are not many monuments—or even places in the world—that, immediately after being built, came to life with their surroundings and the city itself, as if they had been there since the very foundation of the urban setting. One such place is the Partisan Cemetery in Mostar, a masterpiece of Bogdan Bogdanović, which, even among his striking monuments, stands out for its monumental execution and the fact that it truly lived—and still, in some peculiar way, continues to live—with the city in which it was erected.

This is not only because Bogdanović reached his artistic and architectural creative peak in the 1960s, but also because the Partisan Cemetery is not just a monument, nor merely an ossuary, which the official city authorities deceitfully claim does not exist. It is, in fact, a city within a city, Bogdanović's vision of Mostar's Old Town and of the very idea of the city on the Neretva. A vision full of magical realism, in dialogue with ancient architectural heritage but also with the cosmos, with pagan customs and the culture of medieval *stećci*. His vision intertwined life and death, freezing in stone the almost childlike playfulness of nearly seven hundred fallen Mostar partisans, lives cut short at their prime.

The Partisan Cemetery was born from the metaphorical encounter between anti-fascist Mostar and the artistic genius of Bogdan Bogdanović. And since such encounters are exceedingly rare, what emerged is a unique work and space radiating unrepeatable energy.

This is clear to anyone who has ever climbed that hill on the city's western side, even to those who cannot ideologically stand the partisans or the anti-fascist heritage of the city in which they live. I remember my first childhood encounter with that place, located at the start of the avenue where I grew up: it seemed like entering a magical, fairy-tale castle full of flowers, pools, fountains, water disappearing into stone waves, wondrous shapes carved from stone, pines, and cypresses. As a child, of course, you know almost nothing, nor can you understand stories about the past or about symbolism and visual messages. But as a child, you sense the energy of a place above all else. And that space felt like play and joy—even though it was, in truth, a cemetery.

I can't say with certainty, but I am fairly sure there is no other author, nor cemetery, that has combined such seemingly irreconcilable messages. It is all the more astonishing given that it was built in a time of rigid ideology, in a deeply "red" city, at the height of the socialist regime, which nevertheless allowed its central monument, dedicated to the founding event and the people who made it possible, to be completely free of any socialist or state-Yugoslav symbolism.

This year, on September 25, exactly sixty years will have passed since the ceremonial opening of the Partisan Cemetery, inaugurated by Tito himself and Mostar native Džemal Bijedić. The anniversary will be marked by various events organised by artistic and civic activists and associations of anti-fascists. But the official City of Mostar will remain entirely silent, just as it distances itself from any responsibility for the brutal devastation of the Cemetery or for its restoration. This “washing of hands” by the HDZ is a cynical step beyond even the Catholic Church, which demands the cemetery’s complete removal—even though it has, logically, been declared a national monument. Legally, however, the state cannot care for it, since institutions in Bosnia and Herzegovina barely function and lack real authority, while the city refuses to take action, shifting responsibility onto the entity and the state—knowing full well that without the city’s own involvement, restoration is impossible.

It would take us too far—and likely tire readers—to recount the history of relations between the Partisan movement, the socialist authorities, and the Catholic Church in Mostar and Herzegovina, as well as those authorities’ treatment of all of western Herzegovina. Yet it is no coincidence that attitudes toward the region’s Croats began to shift after the 1966 Mostar Conference, held shortly after the Cemetery’s opening. Nor would it be brief to list how, later on, Croatian nationalist right-wing forces ideologically retaliated after they effectively seized control of western Mostar, the very area where the Cemetery is located.

The truth is, without understanding these two stories, an uninformed observer will struggle to grasp why this magical city within a city lies in such a devastated state today, and why the city authorities do nothing to change it. Put simply, it is due to the complete exclusivity and ideological intolerance of today’s victors toward anything related to the Partisan and Yugoslav legacy. The unfortunate thing is that, in the case of Mostar, this intolerance also targets the city’s authentic and majority heritage of the 20th century. Yet all this leads us away from the site’s magic and from the fact that—even in its current condition—it remains a marvel that continues to inspire.

For those who do not believe in coincidences and who put faith in destiny, it is hard to think it accidental that Bogdanović built Partisan monuments in precisely four cities that, in the last war, were internally divided and barely survived the conflict: Mostar, Vukovar, Novi Travnik, and Kosovska Mitrovica. By the same token, it can hardly be a coincidence that Bogdanović himself chose exile from his beloved Belgrade, the city he never stopped thinking about and where, in the end, he chose to be buried—next to his very first monument, in the Jewish Cemetery. In doing so, he clearly wished to emphasise his marginal, even persecuted, position in his native city, where he had once served as mayor. It is no surprise, then, that his most emotionally powerful book, written in the 1990s, bore the title *The Accursed Builder* (*Ukleti neimar*), and was published by the Split-based Feral Tribune library.

From all this, it is evident that the fate of Mostar itself, and of the Partisan Cemetery, became deeply intertwined with Bogdanović’s own destiny. Yet places, monuments, artistic visions, and even cultures of memory—no matter how systematically suppressed or destroyed—last much longer than a human lifespan. Just as every city ultimately survives even the worst cataclysm that befalls it. True, the city is dramatically altered—demographically, ideologically, urbanistically,

symbolically, architecturally. But beneath all those new layers, the foundation upon which the new city rests always endures. And every city rests upon some foundation, no matter how much it may appear as the avant-garde of revolutionary change that seeks to demolish that foundation. What remains at the base is mentality, way of life, language, and above all, the memory of the city.

And it is in that memory of the city that the People's Liberation Struggle remains deeply present, with the Partisan Cemetery standing as its greatest symbolic expression.

Moreover, its present condition reflects, in every sense, the contemporary reality of Mostar, but also the city's authentic energy of resistance against the spirit of today's political and aesthetic age. That energy of resistance may be marginalized and more individual than collective, but it is still there—present, inventive, and magical. Just like Bogdan's imagined city.