

TELLING TIMES: MEMORIES OF CULTURE, CULTURES OF MEMORY

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**MAXIMILIAN HARTMUTH**  
(Universität Wien)

“Furnishing a foreign home: Habsburg Sarajevo’s Ottoman heritage coped with, appropriated, and displayed”



When Austria-Hungary made Sarajevo the administrative centre of the Ottoman province it occupied in 1878, it adopted a city that – unlike Sofia or Thessaloniki – had no pre-Ottoman history to reminisce to. Looking thoroughly foreign to the first generation of soldiers and clerks dispatched from the Habsburgs’ core provinces, later observers already panned that Sarajevo was coming to look like any other provincial centre in Central Europe. What had initially been perceived as an unsettling otherness, associated with centuries of antagonistic hostilities, was converted into a competitive advantage. It came to be understood as an asset not only in terms of attracting tourists, but also in demonstrating successful conciliation. For a quasi-colonial administration resolved to convince its subjects, including those of Muslim creed, that the conditions for its welfare had actually improved in comparison with Ottoman rule. Architecture was not instrumentalized to celebrate military triumph but, rather, the triumph of reason.

My paper discusses how these considerations impacted policy-makers’ decisions relating to Sarajevo’s built environ-

ment. Moving away from approaches that sought to detect grand schemes directing its transformation, I have claimed elsewhere that the significant contribution of local entrepreneurs of all confessions to the making of ‘Habsburg Sarajevo’ has been underappreciated. They operated within a framework of regulations that did not forecast a make-over in accordance with a specific aesthetic. Rather, they advanced a development in accordance with an essentially capitalist logic.

Only in specific cases, and places, careful deliberations about the message broadcast by new or appropriated buildings appear to have taken place. I propose that they are best retraced not by focusing on the cityscape as a whole or individual buildings in which, but by concentrating on clusters of buildings associated with each other spatially and semantically. In three case studies I will examine how, and to which effect, an imperialist cultural policy was implemented in practice. This, as I aim to demonstrate, promises to significantly increase our understanding of the logic underlying Austro-Hungarian schemes relating to Bosnia-Herzegovina’s taxing Ottoman heritage.

**Maximilian Hartmuth** is principal investigator in the ERC project “Islamic Architecture and Orientalizing Style in Habsburg Bosnia, 1878-1918” (ERC#758099, 2018-2023). He has studied in Vienna, Belgrade, and Istanbul, where Sabancı University awarded his PhD in 2011. Hartmuth has published widely on the architectural and urban history of Southeast and Central Europe between the middle ages to the present. He is the editor or co-editor of the volumes *Christian art under Muslim rule* (2016), *Ottoman Metalwork in the Balkans and in Hungary* (2015), *Centres and peripheries in Ottoman architecture* (2011), *Images of imperial legacy* (2011), and *Monuments, patrons, contexts: papers on Ottoman Europe presented to Machiel Kiel* (2010).



Max Planck Institute for the Study of Religious and Ethnic Diversity

Hermann-Föge-Weg 11  
37073 Göttingen

[www.mmg.mpg.de](http://www.mmg.mpg.de)

Contact:

Marina Cziesielsky

Tel: +49 (551) 4956 - 201

[cziesielsky@mmg.mpg.de](mailto:cziesielsky@mmg.mpg.de)