

“How does it feel when the town you live in is destroyed by war?”

Towns and cities derive their identity from structures both historical and modern. In a war, the attackers often plan exactly which structures to destroy in order to weaken morale. Hence their preference for places of cultural relevance, for museums, libraries, squares, and bridges. A city is bereft of its soul and thus changed almost beyond recognition for its erstwhile inhabitants. People, when their cities are destroyed, lose their physical point of reference.

Arna Mačkić’s book *Mortal Cities & Forgotten Monuments* is an eye-opening inquiry into this seldom-considered impact of war on the citizens of a town. The Bosnian-Dutch architect, who together with her family had to flee her native city during the Bosnian civil war of the 1990s, proposes an approach to rebuilding her country’s cultural heritage.

The task of rebuilding collective and inclusive identities through architecture is not to cities affected by war. Building inclusivity and overcoming exaggerated concepts of national heritage is a universal challenge. Mačkić’s proposed interventions in the public space are rooted in local tradition but designed to look toward the future, free of any political or religious associations. *Mortal Cities & Forgotten Monuments* offers a sound starting point to explore how architecture can contribute to building an inclusive society.