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# The Flag as a Symbol and Vision of Peace, Democracy, and Nation-Building

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## Abstract:

<sup>10</sup> The design of the flag of Bosnia and Herzegovina (B&H) illustrates both the objectives and limitations of intention. <sup>10</sup> design's role in national healing and state building following violent conflict. The architecture and design of public buildings, spaces, and symbols can facilitate sociability or reinforce segregation and hostility. This analysis contends that design, especially of public symbols intended to evoke emotions and unity, can facilitate healing. Yet in this case, the flag's design ignores the conflict, assumes a utopia, thus failing to move society to reconciliation.

*Keywords: flag design, design knowledge, human behaviour, conflict transformation*

## Introduction

<sup>8</sup> "Architecture and war are not incompatible. Architecture is war. War is architecture. I am at war with my time, with history, with all authority that resides in fixed and frightened forms" (Woods, 1993) Lebeus Woods, an American architect, contended the design of public spaces could foster peace and reconciliation in war torn environments. War carries economic, social, and emotional costs. War destroys not only bodies and buildings, but also minds and relationships, including home and family. Without home, family becomes displaced or lost. With family lost, one lives in liminal permanence, the past of familiar experience destroyed and the future unknown and insecure. Yet, what is home? Is it just design and architecture; or is it a familiar experience that dwells in buildings we call houses? What does the experience of home and war-time dispossession mean for the social body? Does being home require a return to familiar relationships and designs? Must it be only a point and place of return, which in the post-war is destroyed, and therefore impossible? Or is home and family a construct, perhaps imagination? Can the spiritual and physical place of family dwell as motions and emotions in my mind as I climb creaky wooden stairs, whilst hearing my babushka's velvety voice: "wear socks, you will catch cold."

Summarizing Woods, architecture is not just technology, that is how one builds spaces, but also an art which fuses science and aesthetics to meet human need. Accordingly, an architect or artist designing for peace can ameliorate post-traumatic stress disorder and facilitate peace building. The design of spaces will affect human behavior, sociability, and consequently peace. Yet, the role of a designer in crafting peace oscillates between designing an object as product, and the essence of experiences with that product. Diplomats, technicians, and architects can build structures and laws, but the inhabitants of these post-conflict regions determine in relationship with these designs whether the constructions serve as vehicles to transition to peace. The Versailles Treaty failed to create peace; the Dayton Peace

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