

Tom Gregory
University of Bath

Mostari: Bridge-keepers

This research paper is an investigation of cultural identity in built artefacts and the implications of their destruction. The impact of the rebuilding of *Stari Most*, the Old Bridge in Mostar, as a symbol of reconciliation between two previously warring sides is used for an exploration of this. The bridge was destroyed in 1993 in the Bosnian War, later to be rebuilt in 2004 as part of an international reconstruction programme.

The city of Mostar, named after the *mostari*, the bridge-keepers, developed in the latter half of the fifteenth century as a trading post and crossing point along the Neretva river, with Stari Most the centre-point and fulcrum of the town, both spatially and psychologically. An investigation into the cultural importance of this iconic bridge, its purposeful destruction during the conflict and the impact of its subsequent rebuilding will serve as an exemplar for a wider discussion about the strength of the built environment in shaping our cultural identities. The destruction of this centrepiece during the conflict leads questions as to whether our urban centres have an inherent identity, so whether their spirit can survive conflict and be reconstructed to their former meaning.