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Narratives, ethnicity and post-conflict divisions in Mostar

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Question

What narratives are prominent in Mostar and what role do narratives of ethnicity play in building, maintaining or challenging post-conflict divisions?

Contents

1. Summary

Often described and nostalgically remembered as one of the most 'mixed' cities of the former-Yugoslavia, Mostar became an ethnically 'divided city' as a result of the 1992-1995 Bosnian war - formally partitioned in order to bring hostilities to an end (Carabelli, 2018). The two largest ethno-national communities, the Croat-Catholic and Bosniak-Muslim communities, resettled in two separate parts of the city (the east and west sides) divided by Bulevar street (Carabelli, 2018). Ethnic identities and ethno-nationalistic divisions endure due to a combination of issues related to political instrumentalism, spatial divisions, the urban landscape, the educational system and continued unease from the war. There is an institutional expectation that individuals adopt ethnic-nationalist identities (Forde, 2018).

This annotated bibliography focuses on literature that examines identities, narratives and experiences in Mostar – in particular how divisions, primarily based in ethnicity, are reinforced, negotiated and challenged. There is a growing body of research and literature from the past five years, presented here, that seeks to move beyond the representation and analysis of Mostar as primarily a city divided along ethno-national lines (see Carabelli et al., 2019; Carabelli, 2018; Forde, 2018; Hromadžić, 2019; Wollentz, 2019). While divisive narratives of ethnicity continue to play a dominant role in Mostar, there is increasing recognition and exploration of the complexities and contradictions in urban dynamics that allow for the formation of alternative narratives. These include border crossing, shared spaces, memories, everyday life, and grassroots politics that challenge the narrative of Mostar as an ethnically divided city (Carabelli et al., 2019).

There is also a recognition in the literature of the need to explore alternative types of identity, and to recognise prior and ongoing conflicts and discrimination based, for example, on gender and class. There is, however, limited discussion of gender and class identities and divides – and how they influence narratives of the city. There is some indication that border crossing in Mostar can be influenced by access to financial resources and gender. Even in areas perceived as peaceful spaces, people may face violence due to intersections of their identity, such as race, sexuality and class (Forde, 2018). A focus on the city as divided along ethnic lines has also obscured other powerful processes and complexities, including the transition from state-led socialism to a neoliberal economy (Carabelli et al., 2019; Djurasovic, 2019).

The divided city

Ethno-nationalistic divisions persist in large part due to political instrumentalism (Forde, 2018). Nationalist politicians continue to dominate Mostar – and Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) at large (Palmberger, 2016). Political elites play a significant role in fostering nationalistic attitudes and antagonism for political support and personal profit, especially around election periods (Djurasovic, 2019). The main Croatian and Bosniak parties continually pursue irreconcilable ethnic policies (D'Alessio, 2013). Narratives and representations of the 'ethnic other' as the ultimate enemy and potential threat are unwavering, contributing to the production of fear (Carabelli, 2018). Politicians draw upon the absence of conflict not as a sign that people in Mostar can live together peacefully, but rather as the result of their invasive campaigns of securitisation and separation (Carabelli, 2018).

Ethnic divisions are engineered throughout the entire schooling process - instrumental in maintaining an electoral pool that will vote along ethnic lines (Forde, 2018). Social actors are from an early age inculcated into divisional thinking (Forde, 2018). Youth have been fed with narratives of exclusion and fear, without any potentially countering memories from pre-war

Mostar (Carabelli, 2018). The landscape of the city and boundaries also contribute to polarisation and produce narratives of spatial divisions (Forde, 2018; D'Alessio, 2013). The nationalist-orientated media regularly gives greater attention to inter-ethnic violence rather than to peaceful gatherings as the former helps to perpetuate divisive narratives (Laketa, 2019). Soccer hooliganism is often portrayed in the media as an indicator of renewed 'ethnic violence' in Mostar, reinforcing fear and division in the city (Palmberger, 2018).

Landscape, built structures and heritage

Different urban landscapes and infrastructures – bridges, rivers and 'sides' are instrumentalised by political elites in Mostar to make division appear natural (Laketa, 2019). Built environments are often manipulated, sometimes even destroyed, to alter narratives (Uluengin and Uluengin, 2015). Building activities after the war cannot be treated as mere reconstruction as identity politics heavily influence what gets built in Mostar and where. The conflict in Mostar has thus continued on the 'architectural front' (Uluengin and Uluengin, 2015).

Many buildings used prior to the war remain derelict spaces of non-use and non-movement, maintained as a 'stage of memory', to remind residents daily of the conflict (Forde, 2018). Although there are no actual signs identifying the exact border between Mostar's two sides, urban reconstruction and heritage projects have filled the landscape with clear markers of 'nationality', primarily religious symbols: Catholic churches on the west side and mosques on the east side – both in growing numbers and size (Carabelli, 2018; Palmberger, 2018 and 2013). One of the most striking religious territorial markers in Mostar is the large cross on the summit of Mount Hum, which overlooks the city (Palmberger, 2018). According to the Croatian perspective, it is considered a counter to the reconstruction of Mostar's historic core, which dates from the Ottoman period, contributing to fears that Mostar is becoming increasingly Islamic (Uluengin and Uluengin, 2015). Other powerful signs of space-claiming along ethnic lines include political and frequently ethno-nationalistic graffiti on public buildings on both sides of the city, new monuments and the renaming of streets in west Mostar (Forde, 2018; Palmberger, 2018 and 2013; Wollentz, 2019).

Heritage in Mostar has become increasingly 'ethnicised', with little attention given to narratives of the socialist period or any other shared heritage (Wollentz, 2019). In direct response to the nationalistic use of heritage, a group of youth in Rudnik transformed an electric substation into a monument dedicated to miners from the socialist period. The focus on miners and the participation of diverse community members allowed for the prominence of identities other than ethnic ones (Wollentz, 2019). The monument also illustrates how *nostalgia* can be a form of resistance to the present day 'ethnically' divided Mostar – a way of envisioning a different future (Wollentz, 2019).

Historical documentation and education

The Bosniak and Croat dominant national narratives deviate starkly when it comes to the interpretation of the 1992–1995 war. Historians on both sides draw on similar discursive strategies when narrating a national meta-narrative: in order to validate the suffering of their own nation, different historical periods are connected into a coherent narrative of victimisation, while demonising the 'other' as the aggressor (Palmberger, 2016). Even if the war is not covered in curriculums in Mostar, one-sided discussions of the war find their way in to the classroom (Palmberger, 2016).

The divided education system (with separate curricula, schools or classrooms for Croat and Bosniak students) not only presents students with specific, divisive historical narratives, but also institutionalises spatial divisions (Palmberger, 2016). Even in situations where there are 'two schools under one roof', segregation and difference is entrenched in the built environment and directs social movement and use of space. This reduces potentially dynamic social life to conceptions of homogenous ethnic territories (Forde, 2018; Laketa, 2018; Hromadžić, 2015).

Movement and border crossing

The spatial narrative of Mostar correlates with the 1992-1995 conflict division, and serves to perpetuate conflict narratives (Forde, 2018). Empirical evidence shows that residents in Mostar associate the 'other side' with danger even if they cannot explain why. This fear of the 'other' has become an unquestioned part of local sense-making practices (Carabelli, 2018).

Urban spaces are, however, inherently social spaces that can be transformed by social actors, incidentally or with the purpose of countering ethno-nationalistic divides, such as through border crossing and the presence of open or shared spaces in the city (Forde, 2018). In a divided urban space, challenging ethnic identities and narratives may be as mundane as going to different shops, bars or cafes in the city (Forde, 2018). Customers of *Kafana Boemi* – an inclusive café, for example, support the view that Mostar's narrative should not be an ethno-nationally classified division between east and west, Bosniak and Croat – but rather, the people who stay on only one side and the people who cross over (Summa, 2019).

While some people feel comfortable crossing sides and do so regularly for work or school or occasionally to go to the mall or other venues, there are others (Bosniaks and Croats) who express a sense of insecurity when on the other side and a feeling of uneasiness, particularly when identified by people there. One Bosniak resident expressed, for example, a feeling of being watched in cafes in the west side (Palmberger, 2016). Those who rarely crossed sides expressed deeper mistrust of the 'other'. (Palmberger, 2016). It is generally found that a lack of encounters and contact is likely to foster prejudices and mistrust (see Palmberger, 2016).

On a micro-level, at the Mostar Gymnasium school, some students also engaged in 'border crossing', seeking out neutral spaces – in this case the bathroom - to socialise with youth from the 'other side' (Hromadžić, 2011). It constituted a unique space that enabled experimentation with ethno-religious identity and re-negotiation of narratives (Hromadžić, 2011).

Temporal narratives – the past and 'real Mostarians': Contemporary acts of border crossing may rely heavily on memories of positive pre-war cross-national relations and the desire to re-establish *normal life* (Palmberger, 2013). Much research finds that Mostaris who lived during the socialist era tend to remember pre-war Mostar as a period with high levels of social cohesion, security, belonging, and diverse spaces for socialisation - in opposition to post-war Mostar (see for example, Carabelli, 2018; D'Alessio, 2013; Summa, 2019; Wollentz, 2019). Spatial practices are thus expressed not only through movement (e.g. crossing the Bulevar or not), but also by evoking the past to counter narratives of homogenisation and segregation (Summa, 2019).

Mostaris who lived during the socialist era also tend to blame the current situation on 'newcomers' who moved into the city during and after the war, often from rural areas. They were/are perceived to be the 'other' – uneducated, uncivilised, and nationalistic, without the same love for the city of Mostar, in contrast to 'real Mostarians' (Summa, 2019; Wollentz, 2019).

This conception also challenges ethnicity as the main divide, focusing instead on rural-urban/ newcomer-original population divides (Summa, 2019; Wollentz, 2019).

The everyday and grassroots activism

Everyday life, spontaneous solidarity and moments of inter-ethnic collaboration can produce an alternative narrative to division (Carabelli, 2018). There are cases in which actions of urbanites are informed by wider and more complex considerations and needs (Carabelli, 2018). Residents of east Mostar may cross over to the 'other side' for practical needs, for example, if they wish to visit a modern shopping mall. It could also be considered as an act of rebellion, aimed at overcoming ethnic divides (Aceska and Heer, 2019). The mall and other such spaces of encounter with the 'other side' can translate into the formation of new social relations and different perspectives of the city and society at large (Aceska and Heer, 2019).

Lived citizenship also cannot be viewed through the limited lens of ethno-nationalism. Rather, in the case of the Mostar Gymnasium teachers' strike for better pay, for example, professional solidarity and shared grievances came to the fore, countering separation based on ethnicity. For many teachers, this led to a fundamental change in their way of thinking about the politics of possibility in an ethnically divided school/state (Hromadžić, 2015).

Grassroots movements or small groups of citizens who seek to create spaces of inclusion can challenge dominant narratives significantly and underscore that ethnic divisions are just one (even if still the strongest) of many features of Mostar (Carabelli et al., 2019). In one example of activism, a young local man, frustrated with media coverage of football-related violence along ethnic lines at the Spanish square, mobilised hundreds of Mostar residents to come together at the square to share chocolate instead (Lakić, 2016). While sharing chocolate can seem insignificant, it can be a powerful start of a process that leads to new forms of relating amongst a specific community, new usages of space and new narratives that go beyond Mostar as an ethnically divided city (Lakić, 2016). Abart, an art production platform, based at the inclusive Youth Cultural Centre Abrašević from 2008 to 2014, led projects that challenged existing representations of a divided Mostar by producing a counter-space to voice the desire for transformational change (Carabelli, 2018). Through walks, performances, and gatherings, people were able to step outside of their daily routine and to experience new ways of inhabiting and using the city that break out of the normalised confinement to two separate sides. These experiences can stimulate a reimagining of the future as more inclusive (Carabelli, 2018).

2. Narrative of the divided city

Divided and contested cities in modern European history. The Example of Mostar, Bosnia-Herzegovina.
D'Alessio, V. (2013). In *Beyond the Balkans. Towards an Inclusive History of Southeastern Europe*. Lit Verlag.

This chapter discusses divided cities in which the tension between different ethnic groups is of a nationalist nature. In the case of Mostar, **the main Croatian and Bosniak parties continue to pursue irreconcilable ethnic policies. The media and the reconstruction of urban infrastructure contribute further to polarisation** and national homogeneity on both sides. Public space in Mostar have become a symbolic battlefield: 'a continuation of the war by other means' – in particular through the urban display of ethnonational symbols.

The former front line, while not comprising a physical barrier, lives on in people's minds and influences political interactions and socialisation. It is hard, for example, to find a coffee bar offering both local newspapers. Without the war, Mostar would not have become so radically divided. Consociational democracy strengthened ethnic boundaries and favoured the ethnicisation of citizenship. It offered political groups opportunities to organise their power in their specific part of the city through institutions and local governmental bodies. Despite the formal unification of the local administration in 2004, most public services are still administered separately, with the exception of the fire department.

Interviewees who lived during socialist Mostar tend to remember the Yugoslav time as a period with high levels of social cohesion across all segments of the local population. While this narrative may be in part a myth, 'it is based on people's memory of authentic, wide open trans-ethnic interactions and socialisation in Mostar between the 1960s and the 1980s.' There are others born in Mostar during the former Yugoslavia who instead consider division to be a normal aspect of Mostar. These **perceptions of fragmentation and cohesion, integration and disunion are competing forces in the history of the city** (and elsewhere in BiH), among local populations and external observers and scholars. Interviewees also consider the town's fragmented society to be due not only to the divisions created by the war, but also to the incomplete assimilation of the large numbers of 'newcomers' who settled in the town during and after the 1990s conflict.

Challenging the representation of ethnically divided cities: perspectives from Mostar
Carabelli, G., Djurasovic, A., & Summa, R. (2019). *Space and Polity,* 23(2), 116-124

The article introduces the scope and topics of an edited volume on Mostar by outlining the position of Mostar within broader academic debates on 'ethnically divided cities'. The aim of the collective research is to **challenge the representation of Mostar and other contested cities as solidified spaces of division and explore the memories, aspects of everyday life and grassroots politics that challenge this narrative**. In particular, it seeks to:

(1.) Challenge the existing representation of Mostar as permanently 'divided' by exploring how existing borders become material or immaterial; how ethnic divides materialise or lose importance according to socio-political contingencies; and how bottom-up processes create networks and improve trust.

(2.) Challenge the dominant method of researching and representing divided cities with the view that ethno-national divisions are their sole feature, but rather engaging with these cities as more than these divisions.

Key findings and conclusions:

- **A normalised representation of the city as divided along ethnic lines and focus on the narrative of ethno-national polarisation, has obscured other - equally powerful – processes**: the transition from state-led socialism to neoliberal economy, the challenges of creating new political infrastructures for the new independent nation state, and the social processing of war-induced personal and collective traumas.
- This portrayal tends to limit exploration beyond ethnic divides and undermines perceptions of the possibility of social change and transformation.
- In response to such critiques, there has been a rise in new researchers and research since the late 2000s that produce different accounts of divided cities, focused on aspects of

everyday life, complex and multi-layered identities, and challenges to ethnic polarisation from the bottom-up.

- **Grassroots movements or small groups of citizens who seek to create spaces of inclusion** are often downplayed because of their size or (lack of) impact on general urban politics. The researchers claim, instead, that including these stories is essential when accounting for divided cities as they **challenge significantly the dominant narratives** and provide insights into how ethnic divisions are just one (even if still the strongest) among many features of these places.

Divided cities as complex cities: transition and complexity in city of Mostar
Djurasovic, A. (2019). *Space and Polity,* 23(2), 125-139

This article analyses the meaning of complexity in the city of Mostar to offer insights into various urban processes during the late phase of multifaceted transition – post-war, post-socialist and neoliberal – in BiH.

Research methods: The article is written in the form of a narrative, informed by a comprehensive literature review and 15 semi-structured interviews with a range of subject experts (e.g. NGO staff, academics, urban planners) primarily from Mostar, but also from Sarajevo over a three-year period (2011-2013). The main analytical framework is the concept of transition, which is observed as multifaceted and taking place simultaneously.

Key findings and conclusions:

- The key argument is that **studying Mostar as a divided city is no longer a valid point of analysis**. The city has in the past almost been exclusively analysed as a divided city by local and international scholars, political elites, international actors and NGOs.
- Identification along ethnonational lines is predominant in the post-war context. There is also a recognition, however, of the significant role of political elite in fostering nationalistic attitudes and antagonism for political support and personal profit, especially around election periods.
- Interviews reveal that while part of the population choose not to interact with people living on the 'other' side of the city, Mostarians are able to reach consensus on various issues relevant to their everyday lives.
- In order to offer a more comprehensive account of the city, it is necessary to consider various issues that impede transition and create obstacles to sustainable urban processes in the post-war context. **While division along ethnonational line remains present in BiH, it should be approached as *one* of the complexities** affecting these processes, rather than the only complexity.
- Some interviewees expressed frustration with the topic of division, finding other issues, such as unemployment, political manipulations and corruption, trauma etc., to be more pertinent to contemporary BiH.
- **Some interviewees challenge the dominant discourse by creating alternative narratives through co-working, activism and everyday interactions**.
- Further, interviewees expressed identities in various ways that challenge the attention to ethnic division. **Some interviewees identify more on the basis of their urban and rural origin** (commonly referred to as native urbanites vs. newcomers, who came to the city during or after the war. While this type of identification can challenge the embedded ethno-national relations among people, it can also cause further segregation and prejudice.
- Others choose to identify with local subcultures (e.g. general worldview, lifestyle, artistic proclivities, etc.) and with like-minded reactionaries to dire post-war surroundings. Others spoke about their Mediterranean identity and showed pride in their Herzegovinian heritage.

Distancing Personal Experiences from the Collective. Discursive Tactics Among Youth in Post-war Mostar.
Palmberger, M. (2010). *L'Europe en Formation* 357: 107–124.

Mostar's cityscape has during and since the war been marked not only by bullet holes and ruins but also by symbols – often religious - that clearly mark territory as exclusively belonging to one group. This is supported with commemorations and memorials, which remember only the victims belonging to one's own nation, and with new street names based on war 'heroes' and 'victims'. Commemoration ceremonies tend to draw much media attention, in order to ensure that populations do not 'forget'.

Research method: This article focuses on the generation who were children when the war broke out and have now lived more years in post-wartime than in pre-wartime. Many spent at least part of the war as refugees. Data is drawn from semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions, informal interviews, and participant observations conducted between 2005 and 2008. Interlocuters comprise populations that identified as either Bosniak or Croat and that were old and new citizens of Mostar.

Key findings and conclusions:

- **Unless Bosniaks and Croats actively seek to interact and exchange, they share little time with one another**: Bosniak and Croat children visit different schools, youths study at different universities, adults have separate workplaces and leisure time is pre-dominantly spent on 'one's own' side of the city.
- **Only a minority of Mostaris feels at home on both sides of the city**. Another minority (almost) never crosses the line between East and West, while the majority does so only under particular circumstances (e.g. to shop in the bigger and fancier shopping malls in West Mostar, or visit a new, modern beauty salon in East Mostar).
- Young Mostaris have a story to tell that includes fear, insecurity and hardship connected to the war. Yet, **youth tend to remove their personal memories and experiences from the narrative of group victimisation**, which is a strong element of the dominant Bosniak and Croat public discourses as well as of the older generations' narratives, whereby each ethnic group blames the 'other' for past actions and current predicaments.
- **Young informants also speak at times of youth as a 'we'-group**, even though the lives of young Bosniaks and Croats are largely separate.

3. Landscape, built structures and heritage

The politics of landscape as ways of life in the 'divided' city: reflections from Mostar, Bosnia–Herzegovina
Laketa, S. (2019). *Space and Polity*, 23(2), 168-181

Urban infrastructures are a crucial medium through which social division and cohesion are performed, enacted and rearticulated on the ground. This article investigates how the landscape of Mostar influences daily life and how it embodies ideas of division and unity.

Research Method:

This article is based on a larger research project, conducted in Mostar between 2010 and 2014, involving nine months of participant observation and ethnographic interviews. The results

presented here focus on two elements of the divisive urban infrastructure: schools and the bridge, drawing primarily from the open-ended interviews with young Mostarians attending ethnically segregated high schools in the city.

Key findings and conclusions:

- **While different urban landscapes and infrastructures – bridges, rivers and 'sides' are instrumentalised by political elites in Mostar to make division appear natural, they can also be re-appropriated** as catalysts for everyday peace and political transformation on the ground.
- **Youth are frequently portrayed in the media as primary perpetrators of violence**, often in relation to football matches between the two rival clubs representing the two main ethno-nationalist groups in the city. At the same time, youth are sometimes imagined as agents of progressive change, embodying the ideals of multiculturalism.
- Federal (or Bosniak) curriculum schools are confined to the eastern bank of the river Neretva and Croat curriculum schools are situated along the western bank. **Youth negotiate this segregated school landscape in complex ways**, going beyond the 'us' and 'them' cartography. There are cases, for example, of youth attending school on the 'other side.
- High school students in 2013 organised a gathering that called for 'bridging the divide'. Some 300 students marched from east and west Mostar toward Musala Bridge in order to greet and spend time with young people from 'the other side'. Such events can prompt different social relations and produce counter-narratives.
- This **meeting among students across the divide failed to receive the media attention given to violent clashes, however, as it did not perpetuate divisive myths** about mutually incommensurable ethnic groups.

Between 'this' side and 'that' side: On performativity, youth identities and 'sticky' spaces.
Laketa, S. (2018). *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, *36*(1), 178-196

Ethno-national polarisation at the institutional level and in everyday life in Mostar are reproduced constantly by spaces deemed Bosniak or Muslim and those designated as Croatian or Catholic. This article investigates the performativity of everyday practices – doings and sayings – that influence youth identities and spaces, in particular schools in order to explore the degree to which daily experiences (re)create and (re)articulate ethnic categories.

Key findings and conclusions:

- The 'two schools under one roof' model often involves one school building that caters to two separate curricula, with students attending the school in shifts.
- There is little communication between the teachers and personnel of the two schools and students are usually not acquainted with peers from the other shift.
- **In addition to distinct school names and separate curricula, difference is further entrenched in the built environment of the school**. The two schools' administrations are located on different floors of the building, for example.
- These institutional and everyday effects of schools tend to (re)materialise and reinforce ethnic difference.

Youth activism and dignity in post-war Mostar – envisioning a shared future through heritage

Wollentz, G. et al. (2019). *Space and Polity*, 23:2,197-215.

This article investigate how ethno-national identities in Mostar are negotiated, embodied and contested in fluid and often inconsistent ways, focusing on a case of youth activism when an electric substation was overpainted to honour miners in Rudnik.

Research Method: This article draws on participatory observation carried out during the summer of 2016 whilst the monument was created; nine semi-structured interviews conducted in 2018 with the two main initiators of the project, local miners, and members of the local community of Rudnik on attitudes to the monument; and informal conversations.

Key findings and conclusion:

- **Heritage in Mostar has become increasingly 'ethnicised' – understood as a marker of ethnic identity** - primarily as a result of the 1992–1995 war. Financial support provided for rebuilding Ottoman heritage, such as that of damaged or destroyed mosques, has primarily been coming from countries with a majority of Muslims (e.g. Saudi Arabia and Turkey). Support to rebuild Ottoman heritage has also come from international actors such as the Aga Khan Trust for Culture and local actors such as the Islamic community in BiH. In contrast, actors predominately connected to the Catholic Church have supported the rebuilding of Catholic churches.
- **In addition to the politicised rebuilding of mosques and churches, new monuments have also been initiated that further shape the public space along ethnic lines**.
- International organisations have given **little attention to the socialist period, focusing instead on what is deemed to be 'ethnic' heritage**.
- Relying on divisions as an unquestioned starting point and focusing on separate built structures representing the three main ethnic groups, however, **obscures any notion of a shared heritage.**

The monument to the miners and to the mine (Rudnik), from the youth of Mostar

- Rudnik is a neighbourhood which, during the period of socialist Yugoslavia, had an important economic and historic importance for Mostar, due to its association with the coal mine. Two monuments dedicated to miners were damaged during the 1992-1995 war and subsequently destroyed or removed during the post-war period. One monument was removed to make way for another monument, commemorating fallen Croatian defenders (HVO).
- **In direct response to this nationalistic use of heritage, a group of youth activities sought to transform an electric substation into the monument dedicated to the miners**, with the support of the local community. The group interviewed the older generations of Rudnik to assemble the history of the neighbourhood.
- The electric substation was overpainted resembling a shelf popular in Yugoslav households during the 1970s and 1980s, drawn from personal stories. People in the neighbourhood of all ages and of different ethnicities joined in the process. It was a monument created by and for the community that challenged static or frozen ideas of heritage.
- The monument in Rudnik illustrates how *nostalgia* **can be a form of resistance to the present day 'ethnically' divided Mostar – a way of envisioning a different future**, rather than being viewed as backward looking.
- **The focus on miners and involvement of diverse community members allowed for the prominence of categories and identities other than ethnic ones** and for the narrative of the worker to be visible again. This has the potential to unmake ethnic narratives.

Divisions in Mostar are expressed through the physical environment – through tangible heritage; and through habits and ceremonies – intangible heritage - within this built environment. Approaching Mostar as 'divided' can, however, 'hide as much as it illuminates'. It implies non-movement – a singular relation between two categories of people frozen in eternal antagonisation. Reconstruction, similar to destruction, is an act that creates new memories. **If heritage workers approach heritage in Mostar as ethnically divided, this runs the risk of replicating such divisions.** This paper addresses the issue of 'creating a home' after war, and the role that heritage plays, emphasising the need to consider temporal dimensions in order to foster a sense of belonging.

Research method: The paper adopts a narrational role of heritage. Presenting a local perspective on heritage, it focuses specifically on the temporalities (space and time) of belonging that relate to Mostar. Twenty qualitative interviews were carried out within the city in 2015, among the three national ethnic groups, Bosnian Jews, those who identified as Yugoslav and heritage workers to build a bottom-up understanding of the relationship to heritage; as well as several informal conversations on the topic if heritage. There was an equal proportion of men and women. Additional fieldwork was carried out in 2016.

Key findings and conclusions:

- **The destruction and reconstruction of heritage creates new meanings and values associated to the built structure.** Even though the reconstruction process of Stari Most has been criticised, the vast majority of people interviewed were very happy that the 'new' old bridge was reconstructed.
- **By altering the landscape, certain values and ideas – and certain time periods - can be highlighted at the expense of others**. Partial memories do not necessarily erase the 'other' memory, however, but can introduce an element of confrontation. In Mostar, there is an attempt to highlight Catholic values through the heritage of the western side (e.g. the large cross which overlooks the city from Hum Hill) and Muslim values through the heritage of the eastern side (e.g. the (re)construction of mosques, including those destroyed during WWII).
- Interviews demonstrate that **an approach that entails a clear-cut division of heritage along ethnic lines is challenged by many people in the city**. Such a focus on division may perpetuate a narrative of a heritage and consequently a past, which is not shared.
- A sense of **disassociation with the current city of Mostar and its narratives of ethnic separation have led to the construction of counter-narratives of home involving a different time period (pre-war Mostar),** and an often-expressed discontent in the role of heritage in the present and future.
- There was a strong need and impulse to remember among the interviewees, who grew up in pre-war Mostar. **Pre-war Mostar becomes a narrative, representing positive attributes, security and belonging, produced in opposition to post-war Mostar**.
- It is not an inherent problem to have multiple Mostars present in the physical environment. Rather the problem is that these two Mostars are superimposed on each other without a proper narrative to connect them.
- Half of the people interviewed who grew up in Mostar also blamed the current situation on the 'newcomers' who came during and after the war. They were perceived to be the 'other' – uneducated, uncivilised, and nationalistic, without the same love for the city of Mostar.
- Many interviewees think that heritage should play a positive role in Mostar. One stated that heritage in the form of cultural programming (e.g. cinemas, theatres, concerts, poetry nights)

could bring all people together, rather than the focus on ethno-religious heritage. Similarly, the monument to miners in Rudnik drew on a shared narrative of Mostar of the 70s and 80s.

- The potential of heritage to create narratives, which are fundamentally future-oriented, is part of a growing realisation that **heritage is concerned with imagining futures rather than representing pasts**.
- **There is a need to work towards uniting not only Bosnian Croats and Bosniaks within Mostar through heritage but also try to bridge the distance between 'newcomers' and the 'original' population** through a focus on what is shared. There is an absence of initiatives working to address this problem, with all of the focus placed on ethnic divisions.
- **There is also a need to bridge the two radically different Mostars (pre-war and post-war) that are being narrated through the physical environment**. The focus should be on transferring the elusive 'spirit of Mostar' from pre-war to post-war Mostar that encompasses all of its residents and fosters a sense of belonging and home.

A New Layer in a World Heritage Site: The Post-War Reconstruction of Mostar's Historic Core
Uluengin, M. B. and Uluengin, O. (2015). MEGARON,10(3), 332-342

Built environments are often manipulated, sometimes even destroyed, to alter the narratives they tell. This paper focuses on the historic core of Mostar, and the Old Bridge in particular, and attempts to trace the city's experience to rebuild and revitalize itself after the war.

Research method:

The study takes a panoptic view of numerous local and international institutions' efforts, and evaluates them based on the expectations and exigencies of local residents.

Key findings and conclusions:

- Common to all Balkan nations is the self-perception of being at the crossroads of civilisation – a bridge between cultures.
- While the destruction of the city's Old Bridge was the most symbolic act of violence, the city's division along the Bulevar affected the lives of Mostarians most acutely. It became a symbol of seemingly irreconcilable ethnic differences.
- **The nature of building activities after the war cannot be treated as mere reconstruction**. Post-war construction activities on either side of the Bulevar coincide with a period when the newly established states try to establish their identity and to distance themselves from their recent enemies. Such **identity politics heavily influence what gets built in Mostar and where. The conflict in Mostar has thus continued on the 'architectural front'.**
- **Attention to the reconstruction of Mostar's historic core, which dates from the Ottoman period, has produced tensions** between the city's factions – with the argument that the Muslims are trying to dominate Bosnia and project the image of an Islamic country.
- Controversial projects such as the Franciscan Church and the Jubilee Cross can be interpreted differently if the Croat perspective is considered: in a setting where Mostar is becoming increasingly Islamic (according to Croat perception), these symbols reflect Croat fears that their identity is being lost in the city.

4. Historical documentation and education

How Generations Remember. Conflicting Histories and Shared Memories in Post-war Bosnia and Herzegovina.
Palmberger, M. (2016). Open Access. Global Diversities

While professionals involved in the process of (re)writing history (political elites and their intermediaries – e.g. historians, teachers, journalists) adopt 'discursive strategies', individuals not involved in these processes adopt 'discursive tactics'. The latter's narratives of the past are more flexible and situational, drawing on personal memories and experiences; on the wider social framework in which memories are held; and on official histories and 'historical facts'. Narratives simultaneously derive from experiences and structure experience. They are a product of past experiences, present needs and future aspirations. This book explores memories across generations in post-war Mostar, treating memory as a social practice.

Research method: The research is based on fieldwork conducted in Mostar between October 2005 and August 2008, with additional return visits in 2010 and in 2014. The fieldwork combined a mixture of qualitative methods, including participant observation, semi-structured narrative interviews, informal conversations and memory-guided city tours. Tours provided a way to engage interlocutors in an unstructured reflection on personal and local history.

Key findings and conclusions:

- **There is a difference between Bosniak- and Croat-dominant public discourses, on the one hand, and people's personal narratives, on the other**.
- In both the Bosniak and Croat official narratives, the past is presented in such a way that it serves to legitimise the respective national aspirations.
- The Bosniak and Croat dominant national narratives deviate starkly when it comes to the interpretation of the 1992–1995 war. Although there is agreement that the Serb-dominated Yugoslav National Army (YNA) presented the primary threat to Mostar, they disagree about the reasons for the war that broke out among them after they had successfully pushed back the YNA, placing the blame on the 'other'.
- **Nationalist politicians and the nationalist-orientated media, who often portray hatred between ethnic groups, continue to dominate BiH**, fuelling distrust among people. The media and literature often portray hatred between Bosniaks, Croats and Serbs.
- This research finds feelings of hatred only among a small number of people. For most, **what remains between Bosniaks and Croats is a combination of mistrust, a feeling of uneasiness and a desire for conformity rather than outright hatred.**
- While Bosniaks and Croats expressed a sense of insecurity when on the other side and when identified by people there (one Bosniak respondent expressed a feeling of being watched in cafes in the west side), there are also people from both sides who did not (or no longer) feel insecure when crossing sides, particularly those who crossed over regularly for work or school. **Those who rarely crossed sides expressed deeper mistrust.**
- In some cases, the reluctance to cross sides is based on the painful experience of loss of one's pre-war home that was located on the other side, rather than an issue of conformity or a political consideration.

The nationalisation of history and divided education

- **The nationalisation of history is promoted not only by political elites and the media, but also through public commemorations, memorials and the education system(s)**.

- Historians in BiH are the spokespeople not of the state, but rather of their respective nations. **Historians on both sides draw on similar discursive strategies when narrating a national meta-narrative**. In order to validate the suffering of their own nation, **different historical periods are connected into a coherent narrative of victimisation and suppression**.
- **The division of education along national lines institutionalises the division of Mostar.**
- Even if the war in the 1990s is not covered in school curriculums, discussions of the war find their way in to the classroom. As observed by the researcher, teachers or lecturers would often bring a whole class to a commemoration ceremony, which involves a particular view of the past, typically profiling one group as the 'victim' and the other as the 'perpetrator'.
- **The national narratives and interpretations of the past dominant in this public discourse serve as reference points for individuals**. However, students do not necessarily succumb to the national discourses presented in schools and textbooks.
- Voices of dissent can be heard next to the dominant public discourses. **Even though counter-voices are less powerful, they are significant among civil society**. There are dissenting voices among politicians themselves.
- Further, despite the continued separation of pupils in BiH in separated classes using different curricula, **there are isolated cases of mixing among pupils**, such as in Stara gimnazija (the Old Grammar School).
- Although the two universities are divided along national lines, there are a group of minority students from the 'other' side, who have made an academically strategic choice rather than one based on political considerations.

5. Movement and border-crossing

Movement as conflict transformation: Rescripting Mostar, Bosnia-Herzegovina.
Forde, S. (2018). Springer

In post-conflict divided spaces, **institutional narratives of division and fearmongering can limit social movement**. **Alongside narratives that maintain ethno-national divisions for political purposes, borders and boundaries (physical, conceptual or temporal) produce narratives of spatial divisions**. The movements of social actors within the urban space can involve the (re)negotiation of different identities.

Research method:

This research is based on maps that are used to spatialise movement in order to explore the extent to which institutional narratives of divisions direct social movement in Mostar. The first round of data collection is drawn from individual interviews with participants in which they drew and narrated a map of their social movement. Subsequently, a workshop was held in 2015 at Abrašević, involving a group interview and production of a group map. Individuals were approached to participate through different channels, including through emails, visits to the university student unions and talks with residents.

Key findings and conclusions:

- **The ethno-nationalistic divisions in the city of Mostar persist in large part due to political instrumentalism. Political narratives are then translated physically into the maintenance of a spatially realised discourse of division** at social and personal levels, for example, through the divided education system.
- A key aspect of conflict transformation is facilitating movement and use of space, which involves the restoration or renovation of properties damaged or destroyed during the conflict.

In Mostar, however, **many buildings used prior to the war remain derelict – maintained as a 'stage of memory' of the 1992-1995 conflict**, whereby a specific institutional narrative is set out. They become spaces of non-use and non-movement.

- Social movement across institutional divisions in post-conflict spaces – through everyday life and everyday use of space, or through purposeful activism – has the potential to counter and transform institutional narratives of divisions through new experiences with other social actors in space. An individual can build peace in their everyday lives, for example, in the shops they frequent and the streets on which they choose to walk.
- Thus, **movements that run counter to institutional divisions have the potential not only to rescript experiences of space, but importantly, relations with other social actors** in the spaces. Movement has the potential to transform divisive space into shared space that can in turn inform expected future interactions.

Visual signifiers

- As the division in Mostar is not materialised by walls, **informal signs of division are evident in the use of space. Graffiti is frequently ethno-nationalistically divisional or fascist** (e.g. from extreme football fans), **and is sometimes countered by anti-fascist graffiti.** The Street Arts Festival produces art that does not represent ethno-nationalistic divisions.
- These and other visual signifiers demonstrate that social scripting can correlate with institutional divisions or can present a social narrative of public space that transgress them.
- Together, shared spaces and social counter-narratives comprise an informal peace network.

Divided education

- The divided political system is replicated in the education system in BiH, maintaining ethno-nationalistic divides through separation of youth and differing history lessons taught to respective ethnic groups.
- **Divisions engineered throughout the entire schooling process are instrumental in maintaining an electoral pool**. Social actors are from an early age inculcated into divisional thinking.
- This institutional staging of schools leaves the responsibility for inter-ethnic interaction with individuals who must find an alternative location (outside of formal education settings) to rescript divisional narratives.
- **The Mostar Gymnasium, one of the first integrated schools in BiH, has contributed to improved levels of inter-ethnic interaction among youth**. While still functioning under the 'two schools under one roof' principle with separate curricula and classes, internal borders have been deconstructed to some extent.
- The opening of the UWC in the same space, with an international and nationally mixed student body also means that students attending either institution can meet and mix.
- **For many other youth in Mostar, however, there are limited opportunities for interaction** as most students continue to face politicised spaces of education in primary and secondary schooling, and in higher education.
- The two main universities in the city are on either side of the city and are representative of the city's divide. Student Union presidents of the two universities have attempted within this ethno-nationalistically divided system to bring students together through shared activities, such as concerts and friendly football matches.
- The influence of the higher education system does not operate in isolation, however, and is facilitated by earlier schooling, which in many cases also does not allow for meetings and interactions across the conflict divide.

Shared spaces – and border crossing

- **The narrative of Mostar as an ethno-nationalistic divided city, with borders and divisions reflecting the 1992-1995 conflict, is accurate but also reductive.**
- While there are political and social divisions in the city, **the location of spaces on either side of the city does not necessarily define the identity of the spaces** – and thus, who uses the spaces.
- There are notably more commercial premises in the west of the city. **The Mepas mall has wide appeal** – as a place to meet, eat, be entertained, and to shop. Fundamentally, the mall **exists as a space, free of ethno-religious narratives and symbolism**, providing a neutral ground for interacting with 'the other'; though the mall itself exists in a Croat city area.
- For participants of the research, locations that operated without ethno-nationalistic signifiers or divisions were most appealing. The Youth Cultural Centre Abrašević., which is located on a former frontline of the conflict, was frequently cited. It is one example of **a space which was staged in one function, derelict from the conflict, but has been socially transformed to operate in a different function**. One of the current purposes of the centre is searching for alternative visions and models of society.
- The centre is seen as a fun space in the city of Mostar. This highlights the **dual use of the space that enacts one purpose (cafe, concert venue, socialising) and conceptually performs another function as a space of peace**, traversing divides of conflict.
- Other shared spaces in the city include, the United World College (an international college), the Pavarotti Music School, the Mostar Rock School, and the Street Arts Festival.
- At the same time, there are spaces that can be interpreted as divisive, when established with a narrative or symbolic association with the identities partitioned by the conflict – such as the 'Kosača cultural centre', the Croatian cultural centre which is on the Croat side of Mostar.
- While there are some residents whose movement is not restricted by ethnic divisions, they are aware that many people do not cross the city. In addition, some residents who engaged with shared spaces felt unease - like they were from the 'other side', hindering transformation of their experience of the city.
- Thus, for some, division is an obstacle to normal life, while for others it is normalised, consistent with the political perpetuation of conflict division.
- **Movement to shared spaces is not a panacea for a city divided by ethno-nationalistic narratives, perpetuated in education, politics, and everyday lives**. These spaces and movements, **nonetheless, have the potential to transform social relations and re-script social narratives**, not only in relation to specific spaces but in the wider city scape.

Practices of border crossing in post-war Bosnia and Herzegovina: The case of Mostar.
Palmberger, M. (2013). Identities: Global Studies in Culture and Power, 20(5), 544–560.

Although there are no actual signs identifying the exact border between Mostar's two sides, there are **clear markers of the 'nationality' of the two city parts, primarily religious symbols**: Catholic churches on the west side and mosques on the east side – both in growing numbers and size. Other powerful signs of boundary making and space-claiming are political graffiti on public buildings on both sides and the renaming of streets in west Mostar during and after war.

Contemporary acts of border crossing rely heavily on memories of positive pre-war cross-national relations. While for part of the population, a border between Bosniak- and Croat-dominated Mostar is welcomed as a protection of national 'rights,' for others it is an obstacle in the way of a normal life. This article focuses on the latter group, on those who engage in border crossing in order to overcome Mostar's division. **Border crossing implies the re-conquest of**

the city and the reintegration of 'the other side' into one's everyday life, in order to re-establish *normal life* in an urban space where nationality does not dominate social interactions.

Research Methods:

This article is based on data collected during long-term ethnographic fieldwork in Mostar between 2005 and 2008. Methods were qualitative, including: participant observation (including at commemorations and university lectures), life history interviews and memory-guided city tours. The majority of informants crossed sides only under special circumstances, with only a minority who crossed sides on a regular basis. The selection of border crossers discussed in the article vary in age, gender, nationality and faith.

Key findings and conclusions:

- A large majority of the informants do not feel equally safe or at home on both sides of the city. This was not necessarily connected to nationalist orientation.
- Some engaged in a popular local discourse in which people differentiated between politics and ordinary people, recognising that it is political actors who are responsible for the war and the difficult post-war situation.
- Children of mixed marriages or spouses in mixed marriages often felt free to cross sides, as they had no choice but to deal with border issues and border crossing.
- Despite their differences, the **border crossers presented here show that experiences of war and violence, even if they created distrust, do not prevent them from searching for communalities** and re-establishing neighbourliness.
- **Re-enacting a shared common ground – most often found in the past** rather than in the present – **has an integrative potential** that deserves more attention in post-conflict settings. These individual counter-memories represent alternative collective memories of the local past, in contrast to the homogenised accounts of official national history.
- This does not mean that everyone preserving positive memories of national coexistence during Yugoslav times is keen to re-establish cross-national relationships. However, a shift in focus towards what has worked in the past – and towards a narrative of cooperation, commonalities and tolerance that cuts across ethnic and regional lines - can have a reassuring, trust-building effect.

Inventing places: disrupting the 'divided city'
Summa, R. (2019). Space and Polity, 23(2), 140-153.

This article explores encounters in Mostar in everyday places to investigate how boundaries are created, enacted, embodied and displaced by its residents. Despite the common portrayal in scholarly literature and in the media since the 1990s of Mostar as a 'divided' or 'partitioned city', **a closer look at everyday life reveals a far more complex account in which ethnonational divisions are not the only possible grid of analysis**.

Research method:

This research draws on participant observation, particularly in two cafes opened after the war and in the Spanish square, during 2015 to 2017 and in January 2017. It is also based on a series of semi-structured interviews with the owners and customers of these cafes and with people who passed by or used the square. These places were selected as they are shared public spaces that reflect opposition to the division of the city – and because having a coffee with someone is a cherished intimate social activity in BiH.

Key findings and conclusions:

- Spatial practices in Mostar do not occur exclusively along and through ethno-national lines, as the dominant narrative of Mostar as a divided city would suggest.
- **Mostar is not a frozen, divided city. Rather, its everyday places and practices are in dispute** and acquire different meanings through time.
- Taking into consideration cafés and squares – places that provide for the basis of the urban social life – this article uncovers **multiple spatial practices within the city, from people who 'do not cross' to those who navigate the city as if it was one**.
- While boundaries have entailed a massive geographical displacement of Mostar's population and promoted a widespread feeling of spatiotemporal non-belonging, **many residents try to be placed again exactly by displacing the invisible boundary(ies).**
- This is achieved by creating different categories of 'us' and 'them' – and, thus, by re-shifting the narrative of the divided city along ethno-national lines – and by inventing places in which and through which they defy the prevalent socio-political order of post-war Mostar.
- The lost idyllic past, in which pre-war Mostar, along with Sarajevo, were taken as one of the most multicultural cities in Yugoslavia, is often drawn upon as a productive force to counter the narrative and practices aiming to consolidating Mostar as a divided city.
- Thus, **spatial practices are expressed not only through movement (e.g. crossing the Bulevar or not), but also by evoking the past** to dispute and to redirect meanings of places away from homogenization and segregation.
- Urban spaces, such as particular cafes and the Spanish Square – discussed below, are used as much needed meeting places that counter the narratives of the divided city among ethnonational lines.

Kafana Boemi

- Kafana Boemi: this café is a meeting place directed to pensioniers and created 'to preserve Mostar's soul or spirit - defined by its customers as not taking into account other people's ethonationality or religion. They are proud of saying they celebrate all kinds of religious and non-religious holidays.
- **Many of the customers are from 'mixed families' or have married outside of their ethnonational group – rendering them spacially unmappable in the post-war divided context**. Mixed marriage families and children do not have a place generally in the post-war, post-Dayton spatiopolitical ethnonational architecture. The café provides them with such a space in the city.
- The **customers challenge ethnicity as the main category to organise the sociopolitcal space, while introducing other forms of distinctions, such as 'those who cross' and those who 'do not dare to cross' and 'the real Mostarian' and the 'newcomers'.**
- *Spatial narratives*: The customers of the café, who live on both sides of the Bulevar and have no issue with crossing to 'the other side', support the view that Mostar's narrative should not be the division between East and West, Bosniak and Croat – but rather, the people who stay on only one side and the people who cross over. This **moves away from a stark ethnonational political classification toward a recognition of alternative spatial practices that are enacted regardless of – or, sometimes purposely in opposition to – the narrative of the divided city.**
- *Temporal narratives*: In addition to claiming that they are 'people who cross', men at Boemi employ another distinction in order to reclaim their city. They identify themselves as 'true Mostarians', or 'native Mostarians', in contrast to 'newcomers' who moved to Mostar (often after fleeing their villages and towns) during or after the war (temporal identities). In Mostar, as in BiH in general, civility has been associated with the urban space, in contrast to 'the rural order', which is deemed 'backwards' and 'uncivilised'.

Spanish Square

- The Spanish Square, where people gathered before the war became a front during the war, and was completely destroyed. It was renovated in 2012 and mayor Ljubo Bešlić stated that it would be 'a meeting place and a place to connect all citizens of Mostar'.
- The renovation of the Old Gymnasium at the Square contributed to this conception. It also housed the Street Arts Festival in Mostar, which represents an attempt to occupy that public space and give new meanings to the area.
- At the same time, the Square is sometimes a place where nationalists and football fans go to fight. Physical violence or risk/fear /threat of physical violence have continued to render this place as a (violent) boundary in Mostar.
- Everyday places should thus be understand as sites within which disputes occur. The **Spanish Square is a place in dispute between those who wish to reconvert it into the pre-war meeting place that it once was, and those who keep using it to enact ethnonational and spatial boundaries within the city.**

Bathroom mixing: Youth negotiate democratization in post-conflict Bosnia and Herzegovina.
Hromadžić, A. (2011). *PoLAR: Political and Legal Anthropology Review*, *34*(2), 268-289

This article explores processes of space and interaction at the Mostar Gymnasium, one of the first unified schools in the country. The implementation of a top-down cartography of peacebuilding, involving segregation of classroom spaces and instruction of students along ethnic lines, led, however, to the destruction of common spaces for students to interact.

Research method:

This article is based on nine months of ethnographic research in the Mostar Gymnasium. It explores the practices of bathroom smoking and mixing at the school that unfolded alongside the consociational model of democracy and the history of mixing as an interethnic social order.

Key findings and conclusions:

- The spatial ethnicisation of the school, through separate classrooms and curriculum, also influences movement during short breaks, whereby most students in between classes typically stand in ethnically homogenous groups in the hallway in front of their classroom.
- In order to avoid total segregation, Croat and Federal classrooms are alternated and there are several spaces that are 'open to all' and 'shared', including: the library, the computer lab, the student council room, the teachers' room, and the student duty room. Even within these spaces, however, the ethnic distribution is preserved.
- Some students at the school do not accept this ethnic spatial governmentality passively, however. **There are 'border crossers' who challenge the limitations of 'ethnic geography' at the school, despite the set up of the school rendering every interaction across ethnic boundaries risky and exaggerated**.
- In the bathrooms, which emerged at the fringes of the spatially regulated school, the ethnic equilibrium was temporarily suspended. **More than a space for hanging out, the bathroom, and the illicit smoking pursued therein, constituted a unique space that enabled experimentation with ethno-religious identity and re-negotiation of narratives.**
- Several students who wanted to mix went to the bathroom even though they did not smoke, only to hang out with students from the 'other side'.

- While these bathroom interactions open up new spaces for communication and relationships across ethnic divides, **for some, they can also bring about anxiety and memories of violence and unresolved wrongdoings in the recent past**.
- **Bringing students in proximity to each other, without any school policies to engage students in meaningful cross-ethnic activities or interactions can fuel mistrust and fear** among youth who continue to carry emotional wounds from the recent war.
- Bathroom mixing is a continuation of the traditional practices of mixing across ethnic lines, which can give rise to competing memories and to narratives of victimhood and fear, on the one hand, and hope for some form of shared future, on the other.

6. The everyday and grassroots activism

The divided city and the grassroots: the (un) making of ethnic divisions in Mostar.
Carabelli, G. (2018). Springer.

Differences based on ethnicity have always been present in Mostar and the rest of BiH and were not produced by the 1992-1995 war. As such, **one should be wary of romanticising pre-war Mostar as the city of peace and tolerance in contrast to the post-war city of hatred and division**. Rather, what has changed is the articulation of these differences as motives for outright segregation and intolerance. The consociational system allows elites to keep people in a state of fear by continually highlighting discrimination of ethnic groups in the spaces of the 'other' and threats to their territorial-political autonomy.

This book reflects upon how approaching the study of deeply divided societies entails engaging with deeply divided narratives that are never settled. Its primary aim is to provide an understanding of social and political dynamics that maintain the city's polarisation; and of how **everyday life, spontaneous solidarity and moments of inter-ethnic collaboration can produce an alternative narrative to division**. By drawing attention to 'planned' and 'unplanned' moments of disruption of normalised narratives, it **challenges the representation of the city as merely a site of ethnic hatred and divisions.**

Research Method: Based on participatory research in Mostar, this book draws on interview extracts, maps, photographs, vignettes, anecdotes, and personal memories that immerse the reader into the everyday of Mostar. The material presented was collected primarily during a year-long ethnographic project in Mostar (November 2009–October 2010), with some material also collected during 2005-2006 and 2011-2014.

Key findings and conclusions:

- Empirical evidence shows that **people from both sides associate the 'other side' with danger even if they cannot explain why. This fear of the 'other' has become an unquestioned part of local sense-making practices**.
- Such sentiments are usually constructed not on personal experience, but rather on a static representation of the 'ethnic other' as the ultimate enemy, and the potential threat they pose.
- Youth, in particular have been fed with narratives of exclusion and fear, without any potentially countering memories from the pre-war Mostar.
- The production of fear can also be traced to political projects of domination, evident in the frequency with which politicians draw upon the absence of conflict not as a sign that people in Mostar can live together peacefully, but rather due to their invasive campaigns of securitisation. Through such strategies, the city's public spaces have become controlled and are less able to act as social connectors.

- Findings in this book suggests that the division of Mostar, while present and real, is unstable, unsolved and changing. **There are counters to division in everyday life and spaces in which ethno-national logics have been significantly challenged**.
- **The older generations interviewed here associate pre-war Mostar with their youth and with a time when the space of socialisation was very diverse**, with places for young people to interact. Differences among the population were negotiated, rather than causing outright special fragmentation. Membership to an ethnic group was not forced, rather groups formed based on cultural preferences, social classes and tastes.
- **Post-war infrastructures and practices of socialisation tell a different story**, with the key change happening in the central area. The area expanding towards east and west from the Spanish Square is no longer the place in which social life takes place, but instead a void now that demarcates the two sides of the city.
- **Citizens of Mostar tend to reproduce divisions in and through their spatial practices now**, socialising in large part within the two clearly separate halves of the city. Mapping exercises reveal that youth generally do not feel 'safe, 'secure' or welcome on the other side.
- **Still, the sense of belonging to one of the ethno-national categories - and to a section of the city - are constantly (re)negotiated in everyday life**. Despite many individuals defining themselves according to ethno-nationality, there are cases in which their actions are informed by **wider and more complex considerations that depend on life contingencies and needs.**
- There are others that do not identify with ethno-national categories, whose urban imaginaries (or ways of envisioning the potential of the city) differ markedly from that of an ethnically divided city. These people **purposefully engage in grassroots activism to produce counter-narratives** and a transformation of social space.
- The Youth Cultural Centre Abrašević, for example, is the only cultural centre in Mostar that vocally refuses to be identified along ethno-national lines, providing a safe social space for young people from mixed marriages and from across 'divides' to gather.
- Abart was an art production platform active within the centre in the period from 2008 to 2014. **Abart's art-led research and projects have challenged the existing representations of a divided Mostar by producing a counter-space to voice the desire for transformational change** – to move away from ethno-national narratives and spaces.
- The Festival of Arts in Divided Cities in 2009/2010, run by Abart, sought to engage with artists and researchers from other divided cities in a space that supports their refusal of ethno-nationalism.
- False stories from Mostar's history is an alternative walking tour, also designed by Abart, that stops not at the usual key monuments (e.g. the Old Bridge, the Catholic Church and Cathedral, the Orthodox Church, the Bulevar, the Partisan cemetery, etc.). Rather, it stops at sites that represent difficulties encountered in the multi-transition phase: shelled structures, sites under construction etc. They are chosen to tell another story of Mostar through allegory, which does not delve into pre- and post-war or ethno-national dynamics. The aim is to **reflect on the selective nature of storytelling in mainstream representations of Mostar that tends to exclude discussion of the post-war economic transition and problems that bring the city together**. The fantasy level in which stories took shape also allowed the authors to raise the issue of who has the authority and right to document and validate history.
- Abart's 4-day festival to reanimate the city (the ephemeral) also sought to look at the relationship between the use of/neglect of public space and public memories. In particular, it reflected on how along with the silencing of stories about pre-war shared social life in the city, there is also a **neglect of spaces that facilitated and supported socialisation practices**. The project sought to revitalise the memories of these key areas (e.g. the Bulevar, Spanish Square) as a major public space.
- **Through the organisation's walks, performances, and gatherings, people were able to step outside of their daily routine and to experience new ways of inhabiting and using**

the city that break out of the normalised confinement to two, separate, sides. These experiences are conducive to reimagining the future as more inclusive. Abart sought not to write the history of Mostar, but to create a space where conflicting stories could be confronted. The goal was to show how different memories can co-exist. Producing one official history for the city would neglect the existence of many counter-histories.

- **It is unclear, however, how these projects and experiences can translate into longer-term involvement of participants and moreover, how to address the political modalities** required to achieve change at the city-level.

From Mostar with Love: New urban imaginaries of a divided city.
Lakić, S. (2016). ICUP Proceedings, November

This paper focuses on specific civil society actors who have employed different forms of art in public places all over the city of Mostar in order to overcome divisions – and explores how these practices have contributed to Mostar being other than divided.

Key findings and conclusions:

- The unveiling of the world's first ever statue of Bruce Lee in local Zrinjevac Park in November 2005 was a significant event. Bruce Lee was chosen as he was not affiliated with any one of the three ethnic groups. Instead, he was a childhood hero who was loved by people from different ethnic backgrounds, with the **statue serving as an indicator of common memories.**
- Abart, one of the subdivisions of the Youth Cultural Centre Abrasevic, established in 2009, had a clear political strategy to organise cultural events with the aim of contributing to processes of social change. These events offered residents of Mostar the possibility to participate in the (re)making of a different Mostar – and they did manage to produce a temporary sense of community in the city (see also Carabelli, 2018).
- In the same year, Ivan Rozic, a young local man, got frustrated after another series of riots related to a football match that took place in centrally located Spanish square. He posted a status on Facebook, inviting all the counterparts who were tired of what he believed to be 'the wrong image of Mostar' gaining significant media attention again, to share something instead – chocolate. Hundreds of Mostar residents came together at the Spanish square, which provided a space for unity and a more positive media headline. It helped to resurrect, for a couple of hours, an integrated experience. There have been subsequent annual chocolate events, evolving from its initial local anti-hooliganism protest to that of a humanitarian nature, contributing to various local causes, such as helping children with special needs.
- **While sharing chocolate in a square – and other such events - can seem insignificant, it can be a powerful start of a process that leads to new forms of communication, new forms of relating amongst a specific community, new usages of space and new narratives** that go beyond Mostar as an ethnically divided city.
- Such events and practices of Mostar's civil society, unlike local urban planning practice, contribute to a unified every day, contributing to the possibility of an altered urban reality of a shared city.

Everyday Encounters in the Shopping Mall:(Un) Making Boundaries in the Divided Cities of Johannesburg and Mostar
Aceska, A., & Heer, B. (2019), *Anthropological Forum,* 29(1), 47-61.

This article focuses on the micro-level of shopping malls and engages with the ways in which marginalised groups in divided cities make sense of practices associated with malling. It looks at the mall Rondo in West Mostar, which is associated as a place of the Bosnian Croats.

Research method:

Ethnographic research was conducted in the period 2010–2017 in one of the first malls that was built in post-war West Mostar, the Rondo mall. At the start of this research, Rondo was a very popular mall, with many new shops, bars and restaurants, but by 2017, the mall had lost its popularity due to the rising number of new malls on that side of the city.

Key findings and conclusions:

- Due to the complex and uneven economic development on both sides of the city, most new malls were built on the West side of the city.
- **Residents of East Mostar may cross over to the 'other side' for practical needs - if they need something specific and wish to visit a modern mall. It could also be considered as an act of rebellion** to go to malls on the other side, aimed at overcoming ethnic divides and building a different city.
- While shopping malls can be viewed as materialisations of the globalised economy and places of exclusion, for these city dwellers, they are **spaces of encounters with the city dwellers from 'the other side'**, which could contribute to the formation of new relations.
- Mall users **may link these physical encounters with larger imaginations of the city and the society at large** – constructing new relationships to place and new definitions and narratives of what is 'our', 'their' places.
- In terms of fashion and shopping, Maja used **'we' to refer to the women in the same city of the same fashion taste**, regardless of their place of residence or ethnic belonging.
- Shopping solidarity can emerge among women looking for bargains, based on perceived commonality of caring for others and saving money.
- This focus on such micro-level everyday encounters demonstrates that the people in Mostar – much like in any other city – have 'ordinary' lives that are often unconnected to the 'big' arguments about identity and belonging.

Dissatisfied citizens: Ethnonational governance, teachers' strike and professional solidarity in Mostar, Bosnia–Herzegovina.
Hromadžić, A. (2015). *European Politics and Society*, *16*(3), 429-446.

An ethno-national understanding of citizenship in BiH is notably evident in the domain of educational governance. This article demonstrates, however, that lived citizenship cannot be viewed through the limited lens of ethno-nationalism. Rather, in the case of the Mostar Gymnasium teachers' strike, professional solidarity came to the fore.

Key findings and conclusions:

- The process of integration of the Mostar Gymnasium followed the **standard international and local governance view that the country has an ethnic problem that requires a particular spatial solution**.
- Ironically, as in many other cases, 'the integration policies often exacerbated and cemented the problem they allegedly tried to alleviate – the perpetual ethnicisation of politics and everyday life'.
- **This plays out in the ethnic conceptualisation of the 'integrated' school's geography**, with precise ethnic symmetry in the geography of the school. For example: Croat classrooms are marked with Roman (grade) numbers and lowercase English-alphabet letters whereas the Federal curriculum (predominantly Bosniak) classrooms are marked with Arabic numbers and with Roman (grade) numbers. During the short breaks between classes, students typically stand in ethnically homogenous groups in the hallway in front of their classroom. In

order to avoid complete segregation, however, the OSCE and the management of the school decided to alternate Croat and Federal classrooms.

- This process of spatial governmentality **reduces potentially dynamic social life to conceptions of homogenous ethnic territories within the school**.
- By 2006, teachers' strikes had become a regular phenomenon –with the main reason in this case being a request for base salary equal to those employed in the city and cantonal administration that was rejected by the government.
- **Although teachers in the school often sat separately based on ethnicity and curricula, exchanges concerning pay and the strike led to an awareness of shared grievances**, the possibility of acting together – and to physical movements closer to one another during discussions.
- This example of lived citizenship shows that **different categories of belonging were negotiated to temporarily include or exclude ethnic others**. While the strike did not achieve its intended aim of a pay rise, many teachers remarked that the strike did bring about a fundamental **change in their way of thinking about the politics of possibility** and horizons of hope in an ethnically divided school/state.
- This form of citizen practice and experience with professional solidarity, **while weak in comparison to the top down powers that entrench ethnonational order, is still powerful in its transformative potential** – in recognising the potential for solidarity across ethnic difference in a divided country.

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