



Urge For

Engagement

Conditions of Social Change



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Negotiating Identity: Micro Politics of Mixing Apples and Pears in the High School of Jajce

Igor Stipić⁵⁹

The very name itself – Bosnia and Herzegovina – seems to contain its own peculiar unity in disparity: it is, and at the same time is not, a unified country. (Benac: 1986)

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Introduction, Organization and Methods

In the early summer of 2016, news unlikely to appear in some “ordinary and untroubled country” took the headlines of all major and minor media outlets in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH). At this instance, the decision of Jajce high school students to oppose the decision of cantonal government to convert their high-school into yet another case of “two schools under one roof” (TSUOR) embodied a stance against politics of successive ethno-national structural reorganization of BiH. Placed in this specific socio-political environment, student opposition became filled with political symbolism that for the standing regime seemed too

59 Igor Stipić works as a researcher at the Institute of Advanced Studies in Köszeg, an institution that financed this study.

reminiscent of Yugoslav times. Throughout more than one year, Jajce teenagers developed a vibrant student movement which, while offering a non-textbook example of BiH, attempted to redraw the lines of the imaginable BiH community, proposing a paradigm inside of which inter-ethnic relations would not be overdetermined by antagonism.

This article, combining insights from political anthropology, identity studies and sociology, attempts to reinterpret symbolism of the student struggle by contextualizing its development inside of Jajce and BiH itself. By investigating views of the state and identity from below, the study applies methods of participant observation, informal talks, semi-structured interviews, analysis of publicly available protest material and ethnographic interpretation, all conducted on site in Jajce and its schools during January and February of 2018⁶⁰. The *problematique* of the article is primarily seen through the eyes of a former student of *Stara Gimnazija*⁶¹ TSUOR located in the still divided city of Mostar.

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This research aims to contribute to still under-represented scholarly work of case studies where official national hegemony fails to work. In this sense, by advancing a representation of BiH that has been silenced by the dominant nationalist project, the study demonstrates how even the most powerful state does not fully monopolize forms of popular identifications. Additionally, while entering into the realm of ‘spontaneous folk sociology’ and analyzing micro-politics of categorization emerging from below, this article contributes empirical material to the study of one of the thorniest problems of social theory: the relationship between structure and agency. Consequently, by accepting

60 All personal names of my interlocutors mentioned in this article are pseudonyms.

61 For a path-breaking ethnographic study of *Stara Gimnazija* High School see Hromadžić 2017.

how change usually comes from the periphery (Jajce in BiH context) we recognize the importance of liminal and marginal groups that, standing on the boundaries of identity and politics, turn central for exploring “the ways in which the categorized appropriate, internalize, subvert, evade or transform categories that are imposed on them” (Dominiguez in Brubaker 2004: 13).

First part of the article offers a view into the theoretical perspective. The ensuing part discusses the macro-institutional organizing principle of BiH state and society propagated by the ethno-national elites that rose to power during political transition of the 1990s. Third and fourth parts explore particularities of Jajce context and genesis of the student movement in this town, trying to transpose organizing principles of community as envisioned by the movement itself, thus specifically dealing with micro politics of (re) naming from below.

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Theoretical Framework

This article, in a very general sense, follows the method that Bourdieu (1989) terms constructivist structuralism or structuralist constructivism. While structuralist component implies the existence of historically established structures influencing general mode of perception and behavior of involved agents⁶², the constructivist part asserts that structural historical results are directed by human agency. Placed into interaction, this perspective establishes that agency itself is perpetrated under historically established constraints – structures, but it is nevertheless perpetrated.

Moreover, historical process of nation creation - performed from the position of the state and connected to its control

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These representing results of *long durée* processes.

– intertwines re-ordering of the state and its structures with the exercise of power resting within this institution. With the arrival of modernity, the state, that central object of modern politics, and an “institution or set of institutions specifically concerned with the enforcement of order” (Gellner 1983: 4), emerges as central depository of ideas, cultures, identities, nationality and “common sense”. Thus, the state acts as “encompassing frame for producing visibility within which symbolic conventions are established and fought over, legitimacies striven for, group relations and the distributions associated with them fixed” (Williams in Verdery 2012: 231). Having monopoly over both legitimate physical (Weber 1965) and symbolic violence (Bourdieu 1989), political programs controlling the state dispose with machinery for imposing “legitimate principles of vision and division of the social world” (Weber 1965: 21), that is, instituting, sanctioning and sanctifying a particular state of things, an established order. Consequently, as control over bureaucratic machinery of the state gives central advantage over the institutionalization of imaginary meanings to those who control it, capturing the state and its “powerful institutional mechanisms” is of central importance for any program if it is to succeed. In this sense, political actors, representing the most organized social agent in the modern world, have played and continue playing crucial historical role in constructing the most pervasive modern entity - “imagined community” (Anderson 1991) known as the nation-state. In this sense, it can be claimed that “study of ethnicity and nationality is in large part study of politically induced cultural change” (Brass 1979: 41).

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Still, considering the real existence of diverging and conflicting political projects helps us understand that

Social world may be uttered and constructed in different ways according to different principles

of vision and division (Bourdieu 1989: 19). [Thus] there are always, in any society, conflicts between symbolic powers that aim at imposing the vision of legitimate division, that is, at constructing groups (Bourdieu 1989: 22), [as] even the most powerful state does not monopolize production and diffusion of identifications and categories. (Brubaker 2004: 43)

Indeed, official historiographies, even if unquestionable at certain times never fully escape the contestation by alternative projects of the social. Thus, besides understanding official historiographies, it is important that academics consider the role of political groups that appear as “insurgent communities” or submerge into the realm of “spontaneous folk sociology” (Bourdieu 1989: 18). Both of these, while holding potential of contesting and rejecting official historiographies, represent an important reservoir of meaning (Laclau 2005) around the issues related to national construction.

In this sense, nation or an *ethnie*, representing “basic operator in a widespread system of social classification” (Verdery 2012: 226), that is, an “empty signifier” (Laclau 2005), as both a practice and a discourse is oriented towards putative and not real collectivity (Brubaker 1996). Being its defining character “competed over by different groups maneuvering to capture its definition and its legitimate effects” (Verdery 2012: 228), nation and its related imagination becomes a plurality “whose meaning is never stable but shifts with the changing balance of social forces” (Verdery 2012: 230). Thus, defining ‘the national’ and its related principles of the social is “fundamentally about a struggle for control over defining communities – and particularly a struggle for control over the imagination about community” (Beissinger 1998: 175).

While “the very degree of semantic elasticity” and existing “plurality of possible structuring” is usually obscured, presenting the social system as a highly structured reality (Bourdieu 1989: 20), focusing on putative nature of constituencies, and understanding “groupness as a contextually fluctuating conceptual variable” (Brubaker 2004: 11), allows us to study, besides official politics and views from above, also the ‘micro-politics’ of categories from below. While accepting existence of objective structures influencing the perception of reality, by considering “the ways in which the categorized appropriate, internalize, subvert, evade, or transform the categories that are imposed on them” (Dominguez in Brubaker 2004: 13), research returns agency to those involved in (re)structuring, recognizing contingency of historical outcomes and treating constructions in a deconstructed manner. Thus, increased sensitivity to cases where official national hegemony fails to work invites us to investigate “representations that have been silenced or repressed by the dominant nationalist project” (Özkırımlı 2010: 213). Finally, as negotiating contours and specificities of what is supposed to make a ‘national’ society is never complete process, we need to consider culture, identity, and ethnicity as contested and negotiated conceptualizing categories that are constantly in the state of flux.

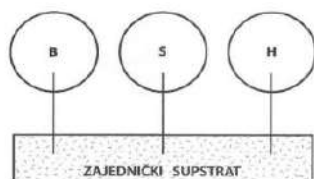


Image 1: Division between common popular-public and diverse religious-civilizational cultures in BiH. | Illustration by Ivan Lovrenović (source: ivan-lovrenovic.com) | Translation: B=Bosniak, S=Serb, H=Croat; Zajednički Supstrat=Common Substrate

Macro Level Analysis – Institutionalizing Dayton State

In order to understand historical structuring of *long durée*⁶³ of BiH we turn to Lovrenović (2014). According to this author, long-term coexistence of several different civilizational-religious and one common popular culture has had a profound impact on this country. “Making of BiH an interesting cultural landscape and an unusual societal structure – composite and integral at the same time”, this simultaneity of one common public (low-culture) and three separate and specific civilizational traditions (high-culture) would determine the faith of any program attempting to construct out of such historical constellation a modern politico-identitarian category (Lovrenović 2014). Depending on the approach and type of imagination exercised by different political options, specific contours, both integrational and inter-relational, of BiH imagined community, would take on different shapes and directions, ranging from harmony and cooperation to conflict and dissidence (Lovrenović 2014). In a way, the uni-multi-intercultural⁶⁴ nature of BiH, besides implying complicated ambivalences, represents historical *long durée* constant of this socio-cultural environment. Thus, even if reshuffled, rearranged and reimagined by various political options that engaged with challenging task of dealing with it, this *identitarian problematique* would never

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63 Implies an approach to the study of history, advanced by French Annales School, which asserts importance of long-term historical structures over what François Simian has called an “evental history”.

64 Type of long *durée* identitarian paradigm of BiH historicity and identity which implies constant process of negotiation between different forms of identification put forward by and ascribed to this country and its people. As such, being a part of discursive continuum, BiH is imaginatively constructed via competing visions as: 1) conflictual or harmonious sum of parts implied in the notion of multi-cultural ambivalence (democracy of constitutive peoples); 2) uniform national project (unicultural Bosnian citizenship), and 3) existing potential of multiple cultural interactions, where common identity is not simply articulated as sum of its parts but as distinct and dynamic cultural artifact constantly shaped and elaborated by all of its historically contributing factors.

be either completely “resolved” or absolved – transposing itself up to the very days of the third millennia.

In this sense, current Daytonian⁶⁵ organizational principle of vision and division is certainly not the first to offer its solution for the BiH problematique. That is, even if the divisions in BiH certainly do not lack historical roots, it has to be affirmed how the new organizing principle is defined by a particularly novel historical character. Considering importance of agency driven by political actors, we can underline how radicalization of ethnic narratives, far from representing a spontaneous action of imagined collectives, was essentially perpetrated by small, well-organized and financially sound political groups (Malešević 2006) that, while engaging in the struggle over the control of the state and its simultaneous constructivist destruction, have abused BiH historical ambiguity for political goals. Rising from the ashes of the civil war, the new nationalist project structurally metamorphosed BiH from significantly heterogeneous society into a country of three almost completely segregated and homogenous nations (Bieber 2005; Hayden 1996).

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The very success of such organized intervention was the expansion of the hegemonic narrative of “eternal hatreds” which, besides implying impossibility of shared life in a common state, reinterpreted the war in collective memory as just another episode in a thousand years long battle between three religious groups (by now turned into ethno-nationalities). While annihilating official connection of these ethnicities with wider notion of common BiH state,

65 Dayton Peace Agreement (DPA), signed by the warring sides at the end of the BiH war in 1995, represents the constitution of the newly established state. Dividing BiH into two entities: Republika Srpska (RS) and Federation of BiH (FBiH), and the latter entity into ten cantons, the DPA itself represented the transitional point of the new regime and its particular genesis. Representing a product agreed upon by representatives of military factions, DPA symbolizes the most official act of legitimization of a certain social and political order, constitutionally sanctifying radical ethno-national principle of (di)vision.

the DPA has, as basic institutional principle, isolated them from each other, denied them right to common BiH political nation and made political affiliation with BiH state both obsolete and irrelevant. Put in other words, specificity of ethno-politics and the hegemony of the ethnic, as encoded in the DPA itself, was to superimpose the notion of particularism of cultural-religious community bound together by origin and fate over the notion of BiH historic commonality, thus effectively impeding emergence of supra, inter, or non-ethnic sphere.



Image 2: A view of Jajce and its waterfall, a place where river Pliva meets river Vrbas.

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Context of Jajce

The so called “divided towns”⁶⁶, existing in certain cantons of FBiH, even if under particular supervision of administrative apparatuses that promote ethno-national fear of other, still produce “unique sites for interethnic intimacy” (Kurtović 2012: 54). Jajce, being non-homogenous territory with high potential for cross-ethnic *miješanje* (meaning mixing or intermingling), becomes an interesting place for investigating cases when ethno-national hegemony is neither complete nor unchallenged. It seems that here, the ambig-

66 It is important to note how the adjective *divided* is a direct (arbitrary) product of predominant form through which *the problematic* itself is considered. It could as well be heterogenous, shared, multi-cultural, *Jajački* etc.

uous *long-durée* structuring principles of BiH reality, that interplay of one with three, still looms over the notion of fluidity of inter-relational BiH identity.

By all means Jajce occupies a special place in BiH history. This small Bosnian town is believed to have been established in the 14th century by the count Hrvoje Vukčić Hrvatinić (Lovrenović et al. 2008). Already by the 15th century Jajce became the seat of medieval Bosnian Kingdom and its church of St. Luke the place of coronation of the last king of Bosnia – Stjepan Tomašević. While Jajce would be changing hands in struggle between Ottomans and Hungarians over the control of its territory during 15th and 16th century, it would finally fall under the Ottoman control in 1527. The Ottoman period would finish in 1878 when Jajce, together with the whole territory of BiH, would be annexed by the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Even if the town would change its political owner once again by the coming of First Yugoslavia in 1918, its fame and long lost “royal like” status would only be renewed during the turmoil of the WWII. That is, in 1943 Jajce hosted the II AVNOJ (Anti-Fascist Council for the National Liberation of Yugoslavia) Congress which proclaimed the creation of Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. In this sense, Jajce would not only become the official birthplace of Socialist Yugoslavia, but would also become the place where BiH would acquire its modern form of political sovereignty. Today, Jajce is situated in the Central-Bosnian Canton (SBK), which belongs to FBiH. Despite being embedded in the wider political project that has as its main ideal creation of ethnically pure and homogenous territories, SBK remains among two cantons of FBiH that remain ethnically mixed, the other being the Canton of Herzegovina-Neretva (HNK).⁶⁷ Jajce is also quite specific as it is situated right on the bor-

67 Both of these cantons have mixed Bosniak (BiH Muslim) and Croat (BiH Catholic) majorities with presence of Serb (BiH Orthodox) minority.

der with entity of *Republika Srpska* (RS), being only an hour away from its *de facto* capital Banja Luka.

Moreover, Jajce itself is a particular “divided town”. That is, strict ethno-national “territorial management” (Merry 2001) that destroyed common inter-ethnic geography in many other multi-ethnic towns did not take place here⁶⁸. In other words, the infamous line of ethno-national geographic separation (notorious in towns like Mostar⁶⁹ and Gornji Vakuf-Uskoplje), producing both real and imagined effects among the population, does not exist in Jajce. In this sense, by offering different modes of interactional paradigm in post-war BiH, Jajce truly emerges as the big crack or “no man’s land” inside of a country where ethno-national lines of belonging and codes of sociability are strictly enforced. Thus, Jajce represents an interesting laboratory of an unusual experiment of post-war reintegration inside of a divided BiH.

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Still, despite its particularities, Jajce also shares many characteristics of socio-political organization with other parts of Dayton BiH. In this sense, most Jajce residents emulate dominant political behavior and vote for main nationalist parties that developed from warring factions, namely the Croat HDZ (Croat Democratic Community) and Bosniak SDA (Party of Democratic Action).⁷⁰ Likewise, being inseparable

68 Jajce particularity is also that, unlike it was the case in many other towns located in current FBiH, HVO (Croat Army) and ARBiH (Bosniak Army) never clashed directly here, as this town was occupied by the army of RS throughout the war.

69 For example, the city of Mostar, located on the turquoise river Neretva, turned during and after the civil war into the most infamous example of, “divided towns” in BiH. Thus, by remaining divided by the Boulevard of Peoples Revolution, Mostar is *de facto* separated into the East (Bosniak) and West (Croat) Mostar, where avenues once connecting peoples of two sides remain impassible for many of its citizens.

70 As of 2016 elections, municipal government is formed by the large coalition between Croat parties grouped around HDZ and Bosniak parties grouped around SDA.



Image 3 and 4: Main town square – “Croat” and “Bosniak” parts. (3) Christian cross - monument to fallen soldiers of HVO - with flags of BiH, EU, and the internationally unrecognized Herceg-Bosna. (4) The mosque and a monument to shehids of ARBiH, with flags of ARBiH and BiH.

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arable from the general political project, Jajce is affected by the destruction and construction of memory and its toponyms in the post-war structuring process. Revealing the changing norms of statehood and community in Dayton BiH, the main square of Jajce is dominated by monuments emanating ethno-national memories of the recent war.⁷¹ Both of these monuments, besides marking ethno-national territory with flags of imagined para-states, also embody symbiosis of religious and national identity in post-Dayton BiH (see images 3 and 4).

Moreover, the case in point of destroying and forgetting the common is best exemplified with the destiny of Museum of II. AVNOJ Congress. During the war ravaged and robbed of its heritage, this museum dedicated to modern statehood of BiH and antifascist struggle in many regards shares destiny of a country whose creation it once symbolized. Inability of

71 While on one side of the main square one finds monument built to soldiers who died fighting for the HVO (Croatian Defence Council), on the other side of the square there is a monument dedicated to shehids (religious martyrs) who died fighting for ARBiH (Army of the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina).



Image 5: Inside of the AVNOJ Museum.

this monument to finds its place inside of conceptualizing paradigm of Dayton BiH is epitomizing position that ideas of Yugoslavia occupy in imaginary constellation of new state, which is essentially of antagonistically constructive character. In this regard, words directed to me by the museum employee, stating how “in this country we do not belong to anyone. They (the political elites) would be happiest if the museum didn’t even exist” are self-explanatory. Similarly, considering reordering of the street names as important geographic markers of identity, one can note that even the famous Mariscal Tito, who obtained his title precisely in Jajce, is symbolically exiled from the city. Thus, the street that once carried his name is today replaced by ‘*Trg Branitelja*’ - the symbolic moral pillar of the new regime (eng. ‘Square of Croat Defenders’). Likewise, embodying classical regime turnover, the local elementary school, during the Yugoslav period named “Brotherhood and Unity”, was turned into a “Croat” elementary school and renamed as “13. Rujan”.⁷²

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Eng. 13th of September (1995) - the day that according to official Croat narrative marks the arrival of victorious Croat forces into the city.



Image 6: Grave of a person who passed away in 2014, containing a socialist red star as its marker (one among many located at what used to be Partisan Memorial Cemetery).

Notwithstanding, the hegemonic constructing mechanism of the new state, identity and territory is not unchallenged. In this sense, ethno-nationalism is still disputed with counter-discourses reminiscent of Yugoslav era and its spirit of “brotherhood and unity”. Thus, for example, the ousted Mariscal Tito still looms over Jajce and, besides filling the social space with tales of , “better times when no one asked for nationality”, remains an illusory citizen for those people who have refused to remove , “his” plaque from the buildings they inhabit. Likewise, similar type of resistance is found at funeral services. Thus, the site that served as Partisan Memorial during Yugoslavia was converted into an atheist graveyard where people (mostly but not exclusively coming from mixed marriages) find resting place that remains out of reach of ethnic-hegemony.

Similarly, overwhelming saturation of public space with symbolic violence of ethno-nationalism and its associated discourses seems too aggressive for many. This type of feeling is well exemplified in a comment made by Adnan who, while being a devout Muslim himself, says how placing war-time monuments in the city center is probably not the best idea because “we are not Srebrenica and thus should not try to make the whole town into a memorial center.” Rather, Adnan believes how it would be a good idea to make one common monument to all fallen soldiers, regardless of the side for which they fought.

Moreover, acts of corruption and criminality, emanating despise towards ethno-national leaders, challenge their monopoly on questions of morality. In this regard, the words of Adem, a local small-entrepreneur, who says how “every state has its mafia, and only our mafia has its state”, are very indicative. Resembling post-war criminal privatization process that hardly missed any BiH town, the biggest transitional privatization story in Jajce is that of ElectroBosna.⁷³ This ferrosilicon alloy producing heavy industry complex, employing 3,000 during Yugoslavia, was sold to UK based New East (CIR 2006). At such instance, Ivo Šimunović, then serving as a president of the board and today local HDZ leader, played a major role. While Šimunović and his associates decided quickly on the New East due its “impressive record and credibility”, recent research demonstrated how the company was actually established only six days prior to the purchase (CIR 2006). Currently, only around 200 workers remain employed in this company (renamed Metalleghe). In this wain, the story of Hrvoje, one of my informants in Jajce, becomes very telling. This local NGO worker, while directly questioning HDZ narrative

73 ElectroBosna is said to have been so important that some believe it served as an inspiration for BiH's coat of arms during Yugoslavia.

that accuses “Bosniak majoritarianism” as the main reason for high Croat emigration, declares that it was actually the politics of HDZ that, through another privatization of electricity producing company HZHB (Croatian Community Herceg Bosna)⁷⁴ has caused the biggest exodus of Croats in Jajce.

Similarly, *Jajčani/Jajčanke* have a particularly imaginative way of naming those who are staunch regime supporters, have accepted fenced ethno-national identities, refuse to mingle with others, or are in some way closely connected to political parties in power. This specific group of people is termed respectively as either Hrvatine (Great Croats) or Bošnjakuše (Great Bosniaks)⁷⁵. In this way, by categorizing various types of ethno-belonging, people of Jajce distinguish between different types of Croats and Bosniaks, while at the same time identify acceptable and unacceptable types of ethnic others.

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Also, conversation I had with Mehmed, a local owner of a small grocery store, represents sociological folk contestation of ethno-national ordering principle that attempts to

control contours of accepted sociability. At this instance Mehmed, while introducing me to his friend Ivica with whom he was sharing a cup of coffee right outside of his store, with a certain dose of anger and dissatisfaction pointed out to me: “You see Igor, they [the politicians] say that Ivica and I cannot have coffee together!” Using this “central ritual of sociability in this part of Europe” (Jansen 2002: 87), Mehmed, besides rejecting the type of fenced identities dominating BiH macro establishment, defiantly steps

74 The company name, HZHB (Croatian Community Herceg-Bosna), is the same as that of BiH Croat political wartime organization.

75 Means great not in terms of glory but in terms of nationalistic fervor.

over the macro ideological walls and demonstrates desire for different kind of inter-ethnic sociability in BiH.

Likewise, inside of this ethno-national scale of belonging, there are even those who do not feel any primordial attachments to their supposed proto-national communities. For example, Luka, a local high school student and a nominal Croat, during our discussion made sure to clarify to me that when he says 'naši'⁷⁶ he does not think of Croats but of Bosnians and Herzegovinians. By demonstrating strategy of a system subversives or reimagining BiH meaning through acts of spontaneous folk sociology various *Jajčani* escape spaces of ethno-national hegemony. These people, by searching for universal human values, make rigid ethno-national perspective more flexible, submerging into the inter-ethnic and non-ethnic spaces of common morality where character of a person is not prescribed by his or her ethnic belonging.

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Imagined Community and BiH Education

Being the most potent mechanism of cultural standardization (Gellner 1964) or legal codification, education, as the central mechanism of Ideological State Apparatuses (ISAs) (Althusser 1984) represents an act of “sustained and fairly prolonged initiation” into the national culture (Gellner 1983: 101). As “exceptionally powerful mechanism of collective influence” (Malešević 2006: 120), official education, through its institutional control over symbolic violence, ensures easier implementation of official master narrative and appropriate ethno-national socialization of future citizens. Thus, in BiH education is probably the most powerful tool

⁷⁶ In current BiH 'naši', meaning 'our people', usually refers to one's ethnic group.

used for negation of common state, history, citizenship or identity. Being highly decentralized on entity and cantonal levels, BiH education rests in the hands of ethno-national elites and is separated into Croat, Bosniak and Serb version. Special care is taken around the so-called “national group of subjects” (religion, geography, history and language) which, as key markers of both individual and group identity, ensure maintenance of cultural divisions through promotion of three parallel and conflicting meanings of BiH and its associated historical identity.

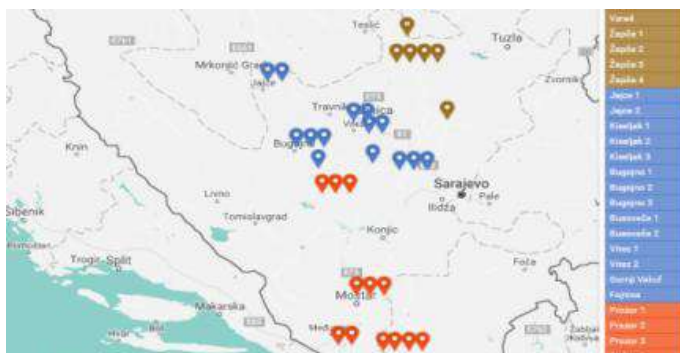


Image 7: Map of TSUOR in FBiH (source diskriminacija.ba)

The “issue” of common classrooms in FBiH, that allow *miješanje* of primarily young Bosniaks and Croats (but also Serbs), is essentially “resolved” through the particular BiH invention named “Two Schools under One Roof”. This educational policy of disciplining identity is implemented in places that have, even despite terrible results of the war, remained multi-ethnic in character. In such areas, more than 30 previously unified educational institutions were turned into segregated schools. Here, pupils attending the same facility are divided according to their ethnic belonging. In most cases students are segregated in different classrooms, attend different shifts, and sometimes use different floors

of and entrances to the school. In worst examples, different parts of the school are fenced off from one another. Regardless of any small particularities existing between different cases, all embody practices of ethno-national (di)vision, territorial management, and institutionalization of ethnicity form above, thus exemplifying in micro setting the idea of irreconcilable identities lying at the heart of the Dayton state.

TSUOR idea came from two strongest ethno-national parties in FBiH, namely, Bosniak SDA and Croat HDZ, who in this aspect showed complete congruence of interests. While practice of pupil segregation is a historic novelty in BiH education, continuously unified ever since its establishment during the Austro-Hungarian rule in the 19th century, its particular purpose in the current regime was clarified by the minister of education of SBK – Katica Čerkez (HDZ) – who, upon defending the system of TSUOR during the student uprisings declared:

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When Austro-Hungarians arrived to Bosnia they established Bosnian language as a method of easier control of local people. Yugoslavia did the same: it implemented Serbo-Croatian to construct new society and govern it. Now, since 1995 we have Dayton that affirms the idea of three different peoples and three different languages. Therefore, politics establishes model of society and creates system over which to preside. The purpose of school is to educate citizens according to design of the system (Ruiz 2017).

Micro Politics of Mixing Apples and Pears in Srednja Strukovna Škola

High schools in Jajce remain in the company of few where children of different ethnic groups attend program together, follow the same curricula and sit in the same classrooms. While at the level of elementary education pupils in this town are segregated inside of the same building where they do not even share bathrooms, both high schools in Jajce follow unified (Croat) curriculum. However, since 2007 there have been plans to resolve the “Jajce issue” by either creating another TSUOR or by forming a completely new Bosniak High School. The sanctifying principle of the established ethno-national (di)vision was openly exemplified in remark made in 2007 by Greta Kuna (then minister of education in SBK) who, while commenting on the decision made by cantonal government (formed through HDZ and SDA coalition) to continue policy of segregated education, stated: “System of ‘two schools under one roof’ is good because it prevents pears and apples from mixing” (Blagovčanin 2015).

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Image 8: Graffiti “We Construct Together” in front of the Srednja Strukovna Škola.

Recent push for the new school came from the local SDA party and was accepted by the cantonal government during summer of 2016. In this sense, my informants made sure to explain to me how the new school would not be Bosniak but rather an SDA school, as, besides envisioning the SDA conceptualization of BiH, all positions in this institution, ranging from that of professor to janitor, would be directly appointed by the party in power.

Still, coming as surprise to everyone knowing BiH society and its dynamics, where political contestation is almost in-existent, Jajce students quickly rose in protest, representing an anomaly of this polis in more than one aspect. The contestation, starting few days after governmental decision has been made, developed into unified movement that involved students from both Jajce high schools – *Srednja Strukovna Škola* (SSS) and *Nikola Šop* (NS). Thus, appearing as insurgent community, Jajce students challenged monopoly of symbolic violence pertaining to the realm of the state. While questioning the logic of established structures, students demonstrated how even in seemingly well-established ethno-national order alternative ways to utter the social world still exist, thus reminding us of an alternative notion of belonging implied in the meta-physical notion of BiH still unoccupied by ethno-national project of the social and unspoiled by its semiotics.

One of the letters sent to a wider public during the peak of the student struggle clearly demonstrates principles of (di)vision this group of students stands for:

As Bosnians and Herzegovinians, citizens of Jajce and representatives of Student Council of Jajce Technical High School (SSS)... we use this opportunity to declare how our struggle continues and

thus we ask for your help! Timeless Jajce politicians ... never really quit their idea of deepening segregation among us, the youth of Jajce, the very future of this town and country. With this letter we declare ourselves strictly against such plans...With this protest we are fighting for both our future and the future of our society!

Ethnically segregated high school will only deepen social divisions, and will rise nationalism in Jajce, a fact that will only benefit nationalistic parties, especially HDZ and SDA... We, the students of Jajce, demand complete cancellation of system known as “two schools under one roof”...We advocate implementation of unified curriculum... Finally, we require support from all citizens of Jajce and BiH to join our struggle against those that live in the past and do not let us build the future that we desire. (Tačno 2017)

Moreover, even if at first none of the professors openly supported the students, mostly out of the fear to lose workplace controlled by the parties in power, as the time went by some professors from the SSS decided to join the protest. Forming an informal citizen group called “Bolja Škola” (Better School) professors delivered draft proposal for implementation of experimental curriculum to both municipal and cantonal governments. Plans of a unified curriculum was supported by a survey conducted at school as most of the students, professors and parents declared it more desirable than either creation of the new Bosniak school or maintenance of the status-quo. Proposal intended to advance an experimental project stopping the process of segregation in Jajce and posteriorly, in case that it proved successful, in entire BiH. By following the idea which contends how “in culturally complex societies, it is only the principle of

inter-culturality that leads to affirmation of everyone's difference and of identity of non-dominant social groups" (Spajić-Vrkaš in Inicijativa Bolja Škola 2017) "Bolja Škola" offered a unified curriculum based on the idea of multicultural and multi-identitarian education. In a notch, project envisioned: replacement of current Croat with a common BiH curriculum made on the basis of BHS language⁷⁷; implementation of multinational board in high-school; substitution of current diploma coat of arms of *Herceg-Bosna* with that of the city of Jajce; permitting students to either not declare nationally or to declare as minority; initiation of a process that would lead towards formation of common BiH textbooks (Inicijativa Bolja Škola 2017).

Demonstrating how the ruling regime considers any type of *miješanje* as subversive and potentially dangerous, implementation of TSUOR represents nothing but an attempt of regulating possibilities of interaction. According to Anita, a language professor at a local high-school:

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Image 9: Cover of the pro-Bosniak political magazine and a spokesperson of SDA party stating how B/H/S (common Bosnian-Croatian-Serbian) language is, just like smoking cigarettes, seriously damaging to you and those around you. Issue of language is central in debates over unified/segregated education in BiH (source: stav.ba).

77 B/H/S language (B/H/S= Bosnian, Croatian, Serbian) represents an idea, supported by various linguists and intellectuals in Balkans and outside, that affirms how Bosnian, Serbian, Montenegrin and Croatian are different versions of the same polycentric language.

Jajce high schools are important factor for integration of local community as it is here where youth can meet those ethnically and religiously different. That is, the youth does not simply meet each other in schools, but, as they see that there is no danger coming from the “Other”, they also become friends. Thus, implementation of divisions would bring this opportunity for knowing the “Other” to a minimum and it could signify beginning of segregated lives in Jajce as people would, following examples of other divided towns in BiH, begin to lead parallel lives.

Similarly, Emina, professor and member of “Bolja Škola”, explained how segregated and homogenizing education anywhere, but especially in BiH, is a very unfruitful idea. By bringing up the story of some of her colleagues that felt brainwashed while studying in ethnically homogenous University of Mostar, Emina asserted how:

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For any kind of education it is bad if none of the participants can represent another perspective (in this case another ethnic group). That is why in Jajce it is so important that students continue sitting together in the same classroom, regardless of what kind of curricula they follow. Because, you are still in a classroom where someone will react or will question one-sided narrative...potentially changing the dominant or purist perspective.

Likewise, Emina noted how:

School is utterly important not only because it is a place of education, but primarily because it is a place of socialization. In schools young people make identity by establishing contact with others

and defining themselves through others. If you somehow homogenize possibilities of interaction, you will inevitably create homogenous societies. On the contrary, by creating an integrative and multi-perspective environment, as we try with “Bolja Škola”, you create more opportunity for contact between differences, and this is so important for students living in a country that is anything but homogenous...

While explaining Daytonian organizing principles, Emina notes how at the same time as BiH youth is moving massively to Germany, where it learns the language of the nation and tries to acculturate quickly, current BiH politics makes us not accept the people with whom we share not only territory but also history and culture. This notion of shared history and culture clearly points to the base level of common popular experience and its associated forms of identification and sociability permeating alternative narratives of BiH social world.

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Furthermore, when it comes to the burning issue of language, students note how an example given by professors of Croatian and Bosnian is one to follow⁷⁸. In this sense, Dženita affirms how “these two professors are indeed great friends, wherever you see one the other must be somewhere next to her.” While explaining her view about language problematique, Emina explains:

I am not *čistunica* (puritan) when it comes to language. This should not be seen as something un-

78 Two female professors, one teaching Croatian language and other Bosnian, became some kind of heroes after promoting a different approach to the language issue. There has been an idea, perpetrated by some Mostar activists, to make them a mural in this Herzegovinian town.

acceptable. We live together and we exchange our language richness. I sometimes feel like saying *tisuća* and sometimes *biljada* (different words for thousand in Croatian and Bosnian). The real problem is that you try to prohibit the exchange, when you try to purify the language and culture. Sometimes it feels as if we were horses who need to be kept racially (breed) pure.

Nevertheless, the movement, situated in Dayton BiH, naturally encountered various difficulties on its path. In this

aspect, the bureaucratic-patrimonial whip, controlling the lives and incomes of many citizens, makes any kind of political activism almost impossible. Thus, barely a few citizens of Jajce got actively involved and openly stood on the side of students throughout the duration of the protests. By being mere bystanders of political process, many followed the simple rule of ethno-patrimonial regime that dislikes any appearance of dissent. Irena, a professor at local high school, while commenting on the fact that professors generally stayed away from the uprisings, explains how in Jajce “every rebellion represents an existential risk, especially in education sector where jobs are rather scarce”. In this sense, policy of bureaucratic whip was really utilized during Jajce protests as mother of one of the main organizers and vociferous opponents of educational divisions was, once her daughter appeared in the media, promptly fired from a public company. Similarly, situation turned particularly acute in NS as its pupils, initially very much involved in the demonstrations against the plans of segregation, were prohibited from protesting. Such order came from the high-school director Hrvoje Jurina who, embodying more some autocrat than a person of educational interest, even prohibited

students from SSS from entering premises of “his” high-school. As a result, professors of NS never spoke publicly in support of the student movement and all NS students had to quit the protests as director (described by some as typical ‘*brvatina*’) even started attending meetings of the student council in order to maintain absolute control.

Moreover, and besides the bureaucratic-patrimonial machinery, students also had to confront hegemonic ethno-national worldviews that questions legitimacy and historical relevance of BiH common popular substrate and its organizing principles. In this sense, Luka told me how many people in his (purely Croat) village, declared him as “traitor of his people” and a communist. Likewise, Amar recounted the story of his visit to a Friday Muslim prayer where the local imam (a person believed to be close to the SDA) gave a sermon in which, while directing a look towards him, stated how “among those present at the prayer there are certain traitors of the Bosniak people”. Amar emphasized how much discomfort he was in, especially considering the authority imam holds in the local community.

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Movement Results and Conclusions

Finalization of what became a very prolonged period of mobilization came to its peak on the 12th of June 2017. On this day, organized under the country-wide high school association called “Naša Škola” (Our School), students from Jajce and other parts of country demonstrated in front of the cantonal government in Travnik requesting to meet with the minister of education rejecting such invitation throughout the duration of the movement. While demanding an end to segregation in BiH education and cancellation of a phe-

nomenon known as “Two Schools under One Roof”, pupils marched through Travnik wearing the masks of Nikola Šop, the BiH poet whose name NS high-school carries. In this way, the students present in Travnik symbolically declared that NS students are with them in spirit. Also, banners covering the spaces in front of the government building, trying to capture identarian definitions and its legitimate affects stated how “apples and pears can go together”, rejected “embargo for common life” and “segregation as bad investment”, and declared “to be here to construct the future and not to repeat the past” (Mreža Mira 2017). The minister herself, even if accusing students of representing a mechanism of foreign intervention in BiH, finally gave in and cantonal government of SBK renounced previously made decision. However, the victory was still only partial as proposal of “Bolja Škola” was never even properly considered by the ruling parties. Rather, students were partially segregated in the existing schools as Bosniak children were introduced a national group of subjects.

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Finally, the article demonstrates how the process of (violent) politically induced cultural change, embodied in the project of Dayton BiH, still didn't completely annihilate alternative conceptualizations of belonging among the ordinary citizens of this country. In this sense, the nationalist project, perpetrating one vision of common sense, specific form of belonging and accepted sociability, attempts to reorder and redraw the borders of imaginable community, restricting plurality found in both historical and actual BiH mosaic into a singularity of ethno-nationality. Still, projects of cultural fundamentalism (Povinelli 2004: 4), upon encountering Bosnian “spontaneous folk sociology” of everyday life and the “insurgent community” of Jajce students, face difficulties to handle these “counter-discourses” (Ko-

lind 2007: 127). That is, the dominant narrative is forced to stand alongside alternative imaginations of reality that, even if less prevalent, make the process of its consolidation incomplete.

Consequently, placed inside of ethno-national structures of BiH, Jajce emerges as both unwanted and unusual experiment of post-war reintegration, a big crack or a “no man’s land” that, inside of the “map of space” and overall Dayton infrastructure, offers a vision of BiH flexibilized of voices of ethnopolitics. In other words, Jajce in general and the movement centered around Srednja Strukovna Škola in particular, emerge as a metaphor and a vision of non-institutionalized mode of belonging associated with BiH that in official narratives ceased to exist. While redrawing the lines of community and rearticulating the type of inter-relational and integrational modus operandi in BiH, students offer a silent but persisting vision of BiH that, even if mainly left forgotten in the reservoir of meaning, still offers alternative modes of imagining, exposing the very *long durée* ambiguity and structural complexity of BiH identity(es). However, being not-inscribable in the officially reimagined Bosnian mosaic that produces its invisibility, Jajce and its youth also represent those

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Fluid moments of commonality...*that*...stay invisible because these voices, sentiments, and experiences have no place, no boundary, no language/name, no institutional space to claim or that would claim them. They cannot materialize into meaningful acts under the current system when the meaning itself has been hijacked by ethnopolitics. (Hromadzic 2017: 269)

In conclusion, it seems appropriate to suggest that BiH could, in order to resolve questions that have been troubling it in various forms during times of political modernity, intend to reaffirm and reassert its very reality which, based on its specific plurality, should construct unity by welcoming difference, accepting this as inevitable and enriching part of ones most personal surrounding. In this sense, and even if not resulting in the most desirable outcome, the movement of Jajce students and the message it embodies carries important lessons for anyone thinking about paradoxes in the macro-institutional processes of state and identity creation.

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