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The processes of peace-building and democratization in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) were instituted on 14 December 1995 by the Dayton Accords, which brought an end to the Bosnian War. While claiming their objectives to be reconciliation, democracy, and ethnic pluralism, the accords inscribed in law the ethnic partition between Bosnian Serbs, Croats, and Muslims by granting rights to "people" based on their identification as "ethnic collectivities." This powerful tension at the heart of "democratization" efforts has been central to what has transpired over the past 16 years. My account uses ethnographic methods and anthropological analysis to document how the ethnic emphasis of the local nationalist projects and international integration policies is working in practice to flatten the multilayered discourses of nationhood in BiH. As a result of these processes, long-standing notions of trans-ethnic nationhood in BiH lost their political visibility and potency. In this article I explore how trans-ethnic *narod* or nation(hood) – as a space of popular politics, cultural interconnectedness, morality, political critique, and economic victimhood – still lingers in the memories and practices of ordinary Bosnians and Herzegovinians, thus powerfully informing their political subjectivities.

Keywords: narod; trans-ethnic nationhood; consociational democracy; Mostar; Bosnia and Herzegovina

Narod is not to blame

On a cold winter day in 2006, I went skiing with the students from the Croat curriculum[1] at the Mostar Gymnasium[2] at a nearby ski resort called Blidinje. After a whole day of skiing and absorbing the whiteness of the quiet mountain range, our bus brought us back to Mostar, where it stopped at Rondo Circle, in the center of West Mostar. I watched the students as they got off the bus and disappeared into the cold, rainy night. I was the only one who stayed on the bus, besides Nusret,[3] the bus driver. Nusret was a Bosniak who, like me, lived on the east side of the divided city, and he offered to give me a ride home. Temporary solidarity emerged between this man and me "simply" because of the side of town we lived on. In Mostar, the location of one's home represents much more than urban geography; it tells people "who you are." As we were traveling across the boulevard, which currently divides the city, the bus driver told me his war stories. He spent the whole war in Mostar, and at the beginning of the war he fought against the Serb-dominated Jugoslovenska Narodna Armija (JNA, Yugoslav People's Army). Then the war against Hrvatsko Vijeće Obrane (the Croatian Defense Council) started, "so I [Nusret] was right here, at the boulevard, at the first frontline." I asked him how he felt now, 10 years later, driving the Croat youth. He responded: "Come on, *narod* [nationhood, peoplehood, nation, people] is not to blame. Those were abnormal times, and everyone was abnormal. But it is not children's and normal people's responsibility. Politics is to blame." I did not give up: "Which politics?" Nusret paused for a second, and then said: "*I naša i strana* [Both ours and

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foreign] . . . and *narod*, *narod* has to suffer it all." I did not let it go: "Come on, who is that *narod* of yours?" He looked at me, while turning the bus towards Tekija where I lived, and said confidently: "*Narod – to ti je, moja Azra, običan svijet* [Narod – that is, my Azra, common folk]."

Since the early days of my ethnographic fieldwork (2005 to the present) in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH),[4] I have been puzzled by the scope, contextuality, and contradictions that the term *narod* connotes. The scope of *narod* is truly remarkable – as a discourse, it circulates among people of all religious, ethnic, gender, and age backgrounds. It saturates ordinary speech, ethnic and interethnic encounters in streets and markets, in public and private spaces, in rumors and popular critiques, in political campaigns and economic endeavors. The capacity of *narod* as an analytic term to capture both ethnic (exclusionary, homogenizing) belonging and trans-ethnic (inclusionary, heterogeneous) identifications provoked my anthropological curiosity – a very similar productive tension between inclusion and exclusion, similarity and difference, unity and disunity, centripetal and cen-trifugal forces is at the very heart of all anthropological endeavors.

The opening vignette captures some of these complexities of *narod* – an ambiguous, polyvalent category of nationhood[5] and an important dimension of micropolitics in postwar BiH. For example, Nusret uses *narod* to separate "ordinary people"[6] from *politika* and politicians, both "ours and foreign."[7] In Nusret's statements, politicians, regardless of their country of origin, ethnicity, and party affiliation, are all grouped together as a bundle of untrustworthy, compromised, greed-driven and career-oriented people. These unreli-able leaders are sharply opposed, at least in Nusret's discourse,[8] to *narod* – decent people of any ethnic background, who experience similar hardships regardless of their different ethnicities.

Nusret's *narod*-centered words and actions provide a critique of the current political and economic establishment in BiH, without necessarily "talking politics." Furthermore, Nusret's utterances demonstrate how ordinary Bosnians and Herzegovinians[9] create "gaps" in between and beyond dominant, ethnicized political discourses in order to recap-ture their (and others') dignity, sociality, political agency, and a sense of moral order. This discursive and strategic usage of trans-ethnic *narod* to create solidarity and establish bridges across war-divided ethnicities in BiH is only seemingly in a stark opposition to ethnicity-specific employments of *narod*; rather, the two discourses are tangentially inter-twined and mutually constitutive. Furthermore, these multiple connotations of *narod* are not a reflection of the lack of analytic terminology; rather, they mirror the extent to which these meanings and tactics are overlapping, "interwoven and hard to separate, even for people themselves" (Kolind 2007, 137). In conclusion, discourses of trans-ethnic and ethnic nationhood are not exclusive; rather, they coexist – people often use *narod* to capture the areas of overlap between the two meanings of the term.[10] In what follows, however, I primarily focus on the trans-ethnic aspect of *narod*; I am especially interested in those discursive moments in which *narod* is invoked as a category that stands in sharp contrast to the ethno-national meaning of the term.[11]

This trans-ethnic *narod* is not a fully-formed, observable and objective category of belonging in need of academic rescue and rediscovery. Nor is *narod* a simple icon of togetherness, or ethnicity, or an apolitical expression of tangible cultural commonality. Rather, the *narod* that Nusret invokes is best understood as a discursive, transient category without a politically articulated essence. As such, it eludes appropriation into a fixed pol-itical agenda, while simultaneously challenging and reinserting the existing pervasiveness of ethnicity in contemporary BiH. What is more, this persistent yet marginal discourse of trans-ethnic *narod* is being absorbed, flattened, and manipulated by local ethnonationalist

discourses, "multicultural" liberal opportunisms (see Arsenijević 2007; Hajdarpašić 2008; Kurtović 2011) and the internationally inserted consociational model of democracy. Yet, it continues to linger and complexly inform the everyday lives, practices, and political actions of Bosnians and Herzegovinians.

The trans-ethnic sensibility that the notion of *narod* embodies has been noted and addressed by several scholars of the region (see for example Bringa 1993; Helms 2007; Lovrenović 2001; Markowitz 2010; Torsti 2003) and it has usually been explained as a "cultural phenomenon" stripped of political significance. In this article, however, I argue that this form of trans-ethnic *narod* is indeed *political*, since it is within this discursive "unsettling in-betweenness" (Pickering 2009, 167) that territorially segregated Bosnians and Herzegovinians "come together and act together" (Jašarević n.d.) in order to appropriate, negotiate, and transform identifications and socialities available to them. In other words, under the discursive banner of *narod*, people of all ethnic groups in BiH complain about the injustices and problems they face in everyday life, including the issues of "health and wealth" (Jašarević n.d.), continuing nationalism, problems of *zajednički život* (life together), uncivility (Neofotistos 2012), indecency (Kolind 2007), disillusionment (Greenberg 2010), poverty, corruption, and political rigidity which shape their postwar lives. Therefore, trans-ethnic *narod* is generative of political agency and social sensibility – people use *narod* as a "counter-discourse" (Kolind 2007, 127). As a result, it is possible to say that *narod*, as a discursive critique of society and politics, as a space of escape and negotiation and "withdrawal" from *politika* (Helms 2007; Kolind 2007), is indeed meta-political.

In order to capture and further examine these complexities, in what follows I descend into the (extra)ordinary lives of Bosnians and Herzegovinians to seek how ordinary people use discourses of *narod* to reflect on and (dis)engage with the larger political formations, processes, and agendas (see also Pickering 2009). I approach this task with some reluctance because these broader, cross-ethnic articulations of *narod* have been dismissed as apolitical, nostalgic, invented, and over-romanticized visions of Bosnianhood and as reflections of "impaired insights" on the side of "subjective" academics (see Hayden 2007). And yet, as an ethnographer, I had to pay attention to and make sense of these asymmetrical and incoherent instances of fragile and surface solidarity around common "Bosnian experiences" that continuously emerged in the everyday discourses of my informants, including discussions about *narod* as a "common mentality," *narod* as an avoidance strategy, *narod* as a site of political skepticism, and *narod* as an expression of economic deprivation among the underprivileged masses.

The pages ahead first introduce the context of this study: the ancient Herzegovinian city of Mostar; the political context of external state-building and peace-making in BiH which marginalizes the trans-ethnic dimension of *narod*; and the existing scholarly analysis of the term *narod*. In the second part of the article, I use and interpret several ethnographic fragments that I collected during my extended fieldwork in BiH (2005–2006) and during subsequent shorter visits to the region, to illuminate the rich and conflicting expressions of trans-ethnic nationhood as a cultural, political, and economic counter-discourse.

Settings: zooming into Mostar

The bulk of the data that informs this study was collected in Mostar between April 2005 and December 2006.[12] Here I also include ethnographic fragments from multiple subsequent visits to BiH, when I engaged in short-term participant-observation and

unstructured conversations with people in Bosanski Petrovac, Banja Luka, Bihać, Sarajevo, Stolac, and Mostar.

Mostar has often been described as a microcosm of the Bosnian state. With over 100,000 inhabitants, it is the largest city in Herzegovina. Many scholars and laypeople describe Mostar as a symbol of ethnic coexistence in the former Yugoslavia. However, its history of heterogeneity and intermarriage ended in 1992, when Mostar became the scene of one of the bloodiest conflicts of the war. The collapse of Yugoslavia was particularly destructive in Mostar. First, the Serb-dominated JNA attacked Mostar from the eastern hills of the city, driving the inhabitants to the western part of town in search of protection and encouraging most Serbs to leave the town (Vetters 2007). Though they had initially jointly defended the city against the JNA forces, fighting then broke out between the Croats and the Bosniaks (Bosnian Muslims),[13] leading to the complete division of the town into a Croat-dominated western part and a Bosniak-dominated eastern side (Vetters 2007). When Croatian nationalists destroyed the sixteenth-century Old Bridge in November 1993, this punctuated the physical and symbolic segregation of the two communities. Even after the opening of the reconstructed Old Bridge on 23 July 2004 – an event framed by the International Community[14] and Bosniak political leadership as a symbol of hope for BiH's reconciliation – the people of Mostar remained sharply divided.

Mostar is a very appealing place when visited for a few days, but everyday life is full of hardships. The difference between the two sides of the city is plainly visible. The east side, populated almost exclusively by Bosniaks, was almost entirely demolished during the war. As a consequence, it is still poorer than the west side, which suffered less destruction. My Croat informants frequently mentioned that the Bosniak side was neglected; sometimes they called it the "Gypsy side" because of the high number of Roma who roam its streets. The Croat side appears richer and more polished, with its wide, clean streets and two well-stocked shopping malls.

The city emerged from the war under the rule of the International Community; the first postwar mayor of Mostar was a German, Hans Koschnick. For much of its postwar life, the city has been under the direct supervision of a European Union envoy, who has had the final say in decision-making, even if these decisions clashed with the local politicians' or popular opinions. This unique history of Mostar, described as a place of coexistence, intermingling, and tolerance, but also home to extreme forms of violence and segregation and a site of intensive international humanitarian intervention, creates a fertile ground for the study of multiple notions of nationhood in contemporary BiH.

Contours of state-building and people-making in postwar BiH

After more than three years of failed negotiations, bloody conflict (1992–95), over 100,000 deaths, and the displacement of 1.5 million people as refugees, on 14 December 1995, the Dayton peace agreement – brokered by the United States – brought an end to the Bosnian War and imposed a consociational model of democracy in BiH.[15] Though it claimed reconciliation, democracy, and ethnic pluralism as its objectives, in the eyes of its critics the agreement inscribed into law the ethnic partitioning of Bosnian Serbs, Bosnian Croats, and Bosniaks (Chandler 1999). The agreement divided BiH into two entities: the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (FBiH), with a 51% share of the territory and inhabited by mostly Bosniaks and Bosnian Croats, and the Republika Srpska (RS), with 49% of the territory and populated almost exclusively by Bosnian Serbs. Further,

the agreement separated the FBiH into 10 cantons, with little intermixing between the ethnic groups.[16]

The institutionalization of ethnicity is not new to BiH; historically, ethnoreligious background was one of the main organizing principles of social and political life (Bardos 2010; Bougarel 1996; Hayden 2007). What is historically novel here is the overwhelming territorialization of ethnic groups, which was crafted through "ethnic cleansing" during the war and solidified and legitimized in Dayton. The fact that the Dayton agreement reinforced and cemented an ethno-nationalist (di)vision of BiH is crucial, since this generated a particular "spatial governmentality" – an ideological, political, and social mechanism of territorial segregation and disciplining of ethnically conceived peoples in BiH.[17] This spatial governmentality approaches the BiH state as an assemblage of three distinct "ethnic collectivities" (Verdery 1994) deeply rooted in ethnically homogeneous territories (also see Campbell 1999; Chandler 1999; Gagnon n.d.; Jansen 2005). Campbell calls this form of plurality "enclave multi-ethnicity," where "the aggregation of predominantly homogeneous entities within a thin veneer of external unity substitutes for a more thorough complexity" (1999, 422). This vision of "good enough plurality" has been criticized by numerous scholars, especially those native to the region or with a long-term commitment to it, who argue that this form of plurality is a mechanical sum of segregated ethnicities "based on the crudest calculation of ethnic majorities" (Klemenčić 1994, 41; see also Jansen 2005).

This mapping of ethnoreligious identity onto territory causes the flattening and suffocation of trans-ethnic sensibilities, including trans-ethnic articulations of *narod*, as several of my informants mentioned. For example, a self-proclaimed Yugo-nostalgic, Tito-loving and BiH-longing Sanja describes this territorial vacuum vividly, using the spatial metaphor of a house to talk about the former Yugoslavia and BiH, which she calls *Jugoslavija u malom* (miniature Yugoslavia):

> Let me tell you how it is … it is like you had one big house, where you moved around freely. In that house you had your own room, but you spent much time in the living room, visiting with other people. Or you [would] go and see them in their own rooms, which always stayed unlocked. You loved that house … now, there is no living room … the space where it used to be is destroyed and neglected, covered in shit and dirt. No one goes there anymore. And people … they do not leave their rooms, which are locked at all times.… But we all remember how once we had a house.

The war-orchestrated annihilation of the "common house" was reified through the state-building model, creating a sanitized and fragile political context in BiH. This firm installation of socio-political segregation under the banners of multiculturalism, coexistence, and "tolerance," works in practice to cement, naturalize, and culturalize[18] ethnic animosity and to emphasize territorial segregation at the expense of historically negotiated multiculturality[19] and, by extension, the possibility of lived interconnectedness and pan-ethnic politics in BiH.

As a consequence of these critical transformations of peoplehood and territory, BiH is today "overcome by nationhood," to use the moving phrase by the Croatian writer Slavenka Drakulić.[20] This excess, institutionalization, and territorialization of ethnic nationalism led to the ethnicization of ordinary life, of "narrative and interpretive frames, of perception and devaluation, of thinking and feeling" (Brubaker 1996, 21). Furthermore, this powerful transformation of ethnoreligious background into ethnonationalist political ideology led to the calcification of ethnicity and to the silencing of alternative, supraethnic dispositions, politics and language. This is especially visible in the techniques of governmentality, such as the production of census categories in BiH. For example, the

1991 prewar census listed 25 possible categories of either *narod* (nation) or *narodnosti* (nationalities). This is in stark contrast to the only four ethno-national categories available to BiH citizens today (Bosniaks, Croats, Serbs and Others), where all *narodnosti* have been lumped into an ambiguous and othering category of *Ostali* (Others) (Markowitz 2007; see also Pickering 2009). The political vacuum of supra-ethnic national identity causes continuous frustration, especially among those Bosnians who are in so-called "mixed marriages" or who were born to these marriages – these individuals have been transformed from former Yugoslav citizens into an ambiguous category, *Ostali* (see Hromadžić 2012). Igor, a young teacher from a small town in northwestern BiH, explains his frustration:

> What can I say when someone asks me who I am? I cannot say that I am *Ostali* since it sounds like I am Bulgarian, Eskimo, or something . . . hmm . . . like I am not from here, like I am some foreigner, *k'o da sam zalut'o* [as if I lost my way]. . . . As you know, my dad is Muslim and my mom is Croat. I grew up in Croatia and I know more about Christmas than about Ramadan, because my dad did not care about it [Islam], to teach me and my sister. When people ask me who I am, I cannot say that I am *Musliman* [male for Muslim] because I know less about Islam than about other religions. But what else can I say.. . . If that fucking Bosnian nation existed, it would be so much easier.

The irritation articulated by Igor and Sanja, who found themselves boxed into the category of unmappable and politically irrelevant Others, points at the rigid techniques of governmentality in BiH, which emphasize ethnic and nationalist identities while spatially excluding and rendering irrelevant trans-ethnic socio-political identifications and sociability (Hromadžić 2012), including the meanings of the term *narod* that escape ethnic designation. To the multivalent and contextual nature of the notion of *narod* we now turn.

Making sense of *Narod*

Narod is a common discursive referent among ordinary people in BiH. The majority of works that address groupness in BiH focus on *narod* as an ethnic category of belonging. This is understandable, given that during and after the war, ethnic cleavages were politicized and ethnonationally conceptualized; homogeneous *narod* rooted in ethnic territories emerged as the most powerful form of identity and politics that structures perception, informs thought and experience, and organizes discourse and political action. Regardless of this prevalent meaning of *narod* in the context of postwar BiH, the ethnic dimension of *narod* does not capture all meanings of the term because it "does not exhaust the various layers of selfhood of a person" (Chattarjee 1998, 280). Rather, in this wider, beyond, in-between and below ethnicity sense, *narod* continues to lurk and shape discourses of identification among ordinary Bosnians and Herzegovinians.

As a result of this multidimensionality, *narod* emerged as a popular icon in academic literature focusing on the former Yugoslavia. Regardless of its popularity, it escapes an easy definition, since it connotes multiple, conflicting, and context-dependent meanings at once. For example, *narod* does not make the distinction between people and nation (Woodward 1995, 30). This array of meanings that escape easy translation has been addressed by several anthropologists and other scholars of the Balkans, who warned against seeing collective identity in prewar BiH through the prism of the Western idioms of group identity. According to these scholars, transplanting "Western" terminology to the Balkan context tends to flatten and assimilate different forms of local collective identity into the Western models of nation and ethnicity. For example, Sorabji warns against the common practice of translating the Bosnian/Croat/Serbian term *narod* into

the English word "nation," since this leads to the simplification and misapprehension of local identity politics (1995, 87).

Furthermore, in the former Yugoslavia, especially during the early years of its post-WWII existence, *narod* formed a part of official state doctrine. In that context, it had two different meanings. First, it referred to all Yugoslavs as a type of collectivity, where *narods* were different but their difference became meaningful only in the context of their interconnectedness (see Sorabji 1995), thus including people of all nations, nationalities, and ethnic groups who fought for the liberation of the country from German and Italian occupation (Torsti 2003). In this way, *narod* included the popular motto "Brotherhood and Unity" and it was often associated with the *Narodno-oslobodilačka borba* (People's Liberation Movement) during WWII. As a consequence of this understanding and promotion of *narod* as a collectivity of all Yugoslavs, during the early years of the Yugoslav regime there was support for the creation of a unified Yugoslav nation (Ramet 1992, 51). After 1964, however, Tito started to promote a different idea of Yugoslavism – an organic unity where multiple and different groups would coexist in harmony (Burić 2011; Ramet 1992). Understood as a synchronization of many different parts, this Yugoslav *narod* is not a concept easily translatable into the Western idea of a nation.

In addition to indexing the Yugoslav unity of diverse groups, the category *narod* was used during the Titoist regime to index six institutionalized nations (*narodi*) living side by side in Yugoslavia: Serbs, Croats, Muslims, Macedonians, Slovenians, and Montenegrins. Some scholars suggest that the success of communist leadership after 1943 stemmed from their willingness to recognize the separate existence of Yugoslav nations (Woodward 1995, 30). These nations were different, in the official discourse, from *narodnosti* (pl.) meaning "nationalities" or "people," which included Hungarians, Albanians, Italians, and others. The main reason for the official distinction between *narod* and *narodnost* was that *narodnosti* did not live "wholly or mainly within the borders of Yugoslavia – most Albanians live in Albania, and most Hungarians in Hungary, and so forth" (Sorabji 1995, 88).

Other than *narodi* and *narodnosti*, there was a third term in circulation, *etničke grupe* or "ethnic groups." This label was reserved for those groups which lacked their own kin-based states, such as Roma (Bieber 2006, 17). This understanding of ethnicity was quite different from the official discourse today, where *etničke grupe* (in the Bosnian and Serbian languages) and *etničke skupine* (in Croatian) have largely replaced the idiom *narod* (especially in BiH). This "replacement" was also stimulated by outsiders who were trying to make sense of the "Balkan crisis": Western media, politicians, policy-makers, and academics framed the wars of the Yugoslav secession as *ethnic wars* between *ethnic groups*. For example, Gagnon (n.d.) shows how from the very beginning of the Bosnian war, every peace plan put forward by the International Community rested on the "territorialization of ethnicity and ethnicization of territory" (see also Campbell 1999). This vision of ethnic groups was also readily embraced by the regional and local conservative political elites, who used the protection of ethnic-group discourse to monopolize the political field and demobilize the opposition (Gagnon 2004; Gordy 1999). This understanding of an ethnic group linguistically remodeled and flattened the multiple connotations of *narodi* into singular, territorially separated, and homogeneous ethnic groups at the expense of the heterogeneity of life projects, political subjectivities, and social relationships.

The meanings of *narod* are even more numerous and complicated; the Yugoslav state presented a view of all Yugoslav Serbs, regardless of where they lived within Yugoslavia, as one *narod*, all its Croats as one *narod*, all its Muslims as one *narod*, and so forth

(Sorabji 1995, 89). At the same time, however, the Serbs in Serbia and the Croats in Croatia experienced and viewed themselves as different from Bosnian Serbs and Bosnian Croats respectively, whom they frequently described as *Bosanci* or Bosnians, meaning culturally primitive and backward, but also hospitable, easy-going, temperamental and warm (89). Bosnian Muslims, while employing the same pattern of differentiation, saw themselves as separate and different, meaning more advanced and developed, compared to Muslims living in the region of Sandžak, a territory carved out of the intersection between Serbia, Montenegro, and BiH and mostly populated by Muslims (89). Therefore, Bosnian Serbs, Bosnian Croats, and Bosnian Muslims perceived themselves and were perceived by others as Bosnian, in addition to being members of other nations within Yugoslavia. The shared notion of *Bosanac* was thus understood as a republic-wide, *territorial* identity. This term was used by Bosnians themselves and others in Yugoslavia when talking about the residents of BiH (Bringa 1993, 34). The interconnectedness among different groups within BiH that the term *Bosanac* encapsulates emerged mainly from shared history and geography, and from the fact that in "prewar Bosnia the settlement patterns of the three groups were mixed in large parts of the country … and that Bosniaks, Serbs, [and] Croats of Bosnia speak the same language and have largely similar traditions and cultural habits" (Bieber 2006, 2). The territorial overlap thus generated shared cultural practices and intimacies, regardless of the three groups' different memberships and identifications with larger, trans-republic ethno-national groups within Yugoslavia.

In everyday vernacular, *narod* also refers to "people" or "a people" (the French, the Germans, etc.) (Bringa 1993). Understood as "people," *narod* implies a certain level of collective identity and shared sentiment (Sorabji 1995, 88), visible in the popular phrases such as "people are disappointed" or "Bosnians are very hospitable." Here *narod* designates a group's experiences of shared sentiment and popular politics. This notion of *narod* is different from the notion *ob--čan svijet* ("ordinary world" or "ordinary people") and *obi--čani ljudi* ("ordinary men" or "ordinary people"), which designate individuals who feel a certain way, but do not imply cohesiveness or group-like characteristics (88). Where I depart from Sorabji's otherwise brilliant discussion of *narod* is in the interpretation of *narod* as *obi--čan svijet*. Unlike Sorabji, I understand *obi--čan svijet* as a site of an intricate political work and negotiation. As we saw in the opening vignette, Nusret utilized and emphasized precisely this unsettled, non-threatening and apparently apolitical notion of *narod* to provide a space for solidarity and "popular politics" – to emphasize the common suffering of all "normal people and children" regardless of their ethnicity. As a result, *narod* functions as a discursive mechanism to separate oneself from *politika* (and by extension from injustice, indecency, greed, dirtiness, and corruption) and to project a glimpse of a socio-political and economic vision of the future which is "rid of the immoral force of *politika*" (Kolind 2007, 127).

Enacting trans-ethnic *narod*: culture/politics/economics

Trans-ethnic *narod*, as I understand it here, is a malleable discursive space of interconnectedness between, above, and beyond the ethnically divided citizenry in BiH. This *narod* is not a group or a fixed category, and it has not been included in the postwar Bosnian political mosaic. And yet, people regularly "do things" with this non-cohesive discourse; it is revealed in social, political, and economic practices such as talk about "common mentality," strategic avoidance of sensitive topics, expressions of political discontent, and complaints about economic hardships.

For example, numerous informants told me that people in BiH have one *zajednički mentalitet* or "common mentality." When asked what this common mentality meant, Zora summarized it for me: *Ma sve ti je to u suštini isti narod, samo što se neki mole Isusu a neki Alahu* ("These are, in essence, all the same people; it is just that some pray to Jesus and some to Allah"). When probed, Zora explained that this cohesion emerged from a common ethno-cultural and biological origin; in other words, all Bosnians and Herzegovinian are ethnic Slavs who have inhabited the mountainous parts of the Balkan Peninsula for centuries and who share the same "blood." Later, however, these people converted to different religions, Zora explained. She emphasized this shared blood at the expense of more recent ethno-religious transformations, which were glossed over, minimized, and trivialized.

Similarly to Zora, Harun, a student at the Mostar Gymnasium, stressed the common language and mentality of all Bosnians and Herzegovinians. Unlike Zora, however, he framed his comment about common origins as a critique of those Mostarians who, for reasons of ethnic divisions and nationalism, refuse to see and endorse this shared "essence." One cold October night in 2006, in a semi-magical setting in Mostar's Old City, Harun engaged in a monologue in order to explain this "essence" to me. He concluded: "For example, I do not understand some people around here ... how can you like better someone from the other side of the Drina [the river that separates BiH from Serbia], who has a different mentality, who speaks differently?" While this statement could be read as a testimony of the ubiquity of ethnic separateness, Harun's ideas are more complex. Harun believes that all Mostarians, and by extension, all Bosnians and Herzegovinians, have a common mentality and that they used to share the same way of speaking before the war. This unique and historically shaped commonality unites all Mostarians despite their different ethno-national signatures and recent attempts to separate the three official languages in BiH: Bosnian, Serbian, and Croatian.[21] Harun stressed that even today, after several decades of language segregation and manipulation, Mostarians speak with the same accent, even if their vocabulary differs, and that "anyone anywhere in the country can tell the unique Mostar way of speaking, regardless of which side the person comes from." For Harun, those Mostarians who prefer to emphasize what he sees as a "shallow" ethnonational belonging to Serb, Croat, or Bosniak groups and languages, over a joint (understood as deeper and truer, thus more authentic) overarching and underlying Bosnian "common mentality" and way of speaking, are traitors and weak individuals.[22]

To complicate things further, *narod* can be used as a way to circumvent difficult subjects when people who have different war experiences and understandings of recent history come in contact.[23] The use of *narod* as an "avoidance" strategy is political, in an anthropological, thus broad and contextual, sense of politics: it is an effective tool for people to negotiate present-day power relations and differences, to deal with the poorly healed wounds from the recent past, and to demand dignity and respect in complicated everyday encounters. Therefore, this "avoidance" is in itself a reflection of careful social work and political sensibility. This became especially clear to me when Nuna, a teacher at the Mostar Gymnasium, explained the relationships between Croat and Bosniak faculty members at the recently reunified Mostar Gymnasium:

> With them [Croat teachers at the school] I can talk about a lamp, how nice it is, or about cosmetics, and stuff like that ... but about politics and the war you cannot talk to them, because our opinions differ. *Narod je napaćen i zasićen od politike. Narodu treba da malo prodiše.* [Ordinary people are exhausted and saturated with politics. *Narod* needs a little bit of a breathing room.] And that [not to talk politics] is OK for now, because we all want to be *civilizirani* [civilized].

This avoidance of talking about politics in face-to-face interethnic encounters is cautious, strategic, and calculated; it requires much social and political knowledge and savvy. People like Nuna, who spend much of their work time in a "mixed" context such as the Mostar Gymnasium, constantly assess their fragile and heterogeneous living environment in order to insert and guard their and others' security, civility, and dignity (also see Kolind 2007; Neofotistos 2012).

In addition to being a way to avoid potential conflict in ethnically "mixed," face-to-face situations, discourses of trans-ethnic *narod* emerge as a space where ordinary Bosnians and Herzegovinians, regardless of their ethnic signature, jointly express their political cynicism and critique. The skepticism and discontent with which ordinary Bosnians and Herzegovinians approach politics is nicely captured in the popular statement *Politika je kurva* (Politics is a whore). This phrase is commonly used to emphasize the immoral, fickle, gendered, and corrupt nature of political deal-making (Helms 2007, 236).[24] *Narod* is depicted as being on the margins of this immoral political universe, but deeply influenced by international and local political actions. In this way, articulations of trans-ethnic peoplehood offer a space for Bosnians to discursively distance themselves from the dirtiness of *politika*, while also being able to engage in counter-discourses. In the words of Edina, an employee at the Pedagogical Institute in East Mostar: "Those political parties only divide *narod*. What *narod*, you ask? All of those from whose backs the politicians, *naši i strani* [ours and foreign], live. *Narod* are Serbs, and Croats, and Muslims, all of us who suffer and whose children do not know what to do about their lives." Zemka, another employee adds: "Yes, *narod* is all of us."

Similarly to Nusret's remarks, Edina and Zemka's comments provide much insight into ordinary people's frustration with politicians, both domestic and international. These individuals intentionally suspend differences between the two groups, while blaming all elites for exploiting *narod* for political gains. Thus, Edina, Zemka, and Nusret are not "blaming the Croat or Serb other, but the politicians" (Kolind 2007, 126). *Narod* here is constituted of members of all ethnic groups – Serbs, Croats, Bosniaks, and Others – who are responding to the political maneuvering by becoming followers and victims of the corrupt regime. *Narod* is thus excluded from the benefits of the war and financial gains, which renders it "clean" of dirty political agendas, yet marginal and victimized, and contributing to its own oppression. Thus, by carving out a space "outside" of politics, ordinary people create a counter-discourse, a meta-discursive space of political solidarity and critique, and a search for dignity.

While "on the ground" in BiH, one often hears that there are the poor, *napaćen narod* (*narod* exhausted by suffering) on the one side, and the rich ethnonational criminal elites on the other. In this context, the political elites are all the same, regardless of their ethnic mark, since they use the existing ethnic divisions to mask their economic maneuvering and hegemony. Lana, an employee at the Mostar Gymnasium, explains: "and when they say it is all about nationalism, it is not – it is about who is rich, who has relatives, connections, not about nationalism. It is about money, but they [the rich, the mafia, the politicians] … mask our eyes with the talk of nationalism." Similarly to Lana, some youth distinguished between the rich on the one side and the poor of all ethnic groups on the other. Filip, a student at the Mostar Gymnasium, explains:

> When I started coming to Mostar, since you know I am from the village nearby, I only came to this [Croat/west] side, because it is warmer to me, I mean closer to my heart. I was angry before, when I would hear that some Croat lost his close relatives, I would be blaming those from the other side. But then I met some of them [Bosniaks] from the

other side when they came to school. That was new to me – I did not know any Muslims before, and now I am friends with Harun [Bosniak student], as you know. I realized they are people like me, that he is just like me. I realized that it is not his fault that some Croat lost his family member, and that it is not my fault that someone from the other side lost their relatives. You know.... At the end stays only poor *narod.*

Author: Who is the poor *narod*?

Filip: Poor *narod* are Croats, Serbs, and Muslims, you and me, and kids who will be born tomorrow. I am the first one ... I am not guilty for who I am, or my friend Harun ... we are not guilty for the war that happened.

Author: Who is doing injustice to *narod?*

Filip: Politicians, the people who are in power now. They are just looking for where they can steal something, and they only want to start fights among *narod*, and then to reconcile *narod* again, as if nothing happened.[25]

The words of Filip, the bus driver, the librarian, and the employees at the Pedagogical Institute encapsulate the meanings of *narod* where ethnic identity becomes only one of its many components. For example, in its broader, economic sense, *narod* is explained in a Marxist way: *narod* are all the people who were tricked by the war, regardless of which side they come from, and who suffer economic and political injustices orchestrated by the elites above, including the International Community. Marijana, a teacher at the Mostar Gymnasium, explained this to me during my recent visit to Mostar in June 2012: "*Narod* cannot be the politicians ... well, *narod* are all normal people in this Bosnia and Herzegovina of ours." When I asked her what "normal" meant in this context, Gordana, Marijana's co-worker, interrupted: "Normal *narod* is the middle class which does not exist [any more]!" *Narod* is cynical and disenchanted, impatient and unrepresented, moral, victimized, and resilient. It is a mass of economically deprived and politically marginal people, "including you and me," who inertly, exhausted by war, blinded by the ethnic ideology and unscrupulous behavior of those in power, complain and await a better future.

Interestingly, Filip, Nusret, and Edina also linguistically group together "*narod* and children." This construction allows *narod* to be equated with children, and thus to take on child-like characteristics. This positions *narod* away from "adult" politics, into a morally, economically, and politically better future, free of any responsibility for the recent war. This "escape" from accountability and engagement is usually deepened by ordinary people's tendency to invoke and blame some vague *Oni* (They) for *narod*'s and children's collective misfortune – my informants continually stressed that "It was not *narod* and children's fault" but that *Oni su krivi za sve* ("They are guilty for everything"). When I asked who "they" were, people would either shrug their shoulders or simply say: "Politicians." This conclusion is in agreement with Kolind's findings in the war-devastated town of Stolac,[26] where the Muslim returnees stressed that society is not functioning because of the lack of political will, and that if politicians would only sit down and get their act together, many problems would be resolved (Kolind 2007, 126–127).

This discourse of lazy and greed-driven, dirty and criminal politics provides a way to distance *narod*, and by extension oneself, from a direct responsibility and political

engagement. In a sense, the four everyday discourses employed by ordinary Bosnians and Herzegovinians that were analyzed in this section are meta-political, since they engage in a discursive critique of the core issues at the heart of political, social, and economic problems in BiH.

Conclusion

In this article I have explored interwoven and incongruent discourses of trans-ethnic nationhood in the context of consociationalism and the ethnicization of life and politics in postwar BiH. These trans-ethnic discourses are signifiers without a congealed signified. In other words, these intertwined discourses of common mentality, strategic avoidance of sensitive topics, and political and economic suffering are not reflections of some tangible category of Bosnianhood. Rather, they are numerous instances when ordinary people discursively and spontaneously "come together and act together" in order to critique and (dis)engage with their complicated political and social postwar realities, besieged by the tyranny of ethnicity.

During and after the war, ethnic cleavages were politicized and ethnonationally conceptualized; homogeneous *narod* rooted in ethnic territories emerged as the most powerful form of identity that structures perception, informs thought and experience, and organizes discourse and political action. The notion of *narod* in BiH was thus flattened by ethnic nationalism and the consociational model of democracy, during and after the war. And yet, while the ideology of ethnonational purity and the contours of consociational democracy debilitate official discourses of trans-ethnic *narod*, the vernacular expressions of these historically, geographically, and economically informed identifications saturate the everyday lives of ordinary Bosnians and Herzegovinians. *Narod* in this sense implies a vague cultural, social, and political sensibility and defies appropriation into fixed political schemas. At the same time, in this broader and anthropological sense of the "political," *narod* is generative of political awareness and critical approaches to society.

The trans-ethnic *narod*, when used in its broadest sense, beyond ideologies that inspire homogenization and ethnicization, reveals continuous relatedness and a sense of discursive and political solidarity among ethnically divided peoples. Regardless of the past two decades of segregated spaces in social and political life, many ordinary people feel constrained by "Dayton nationalism" (Ćurak 2004). The inclination of these individuals to publicly express their dissatisfaction is partial, fearful, interrupted, and limited by the persistent politicization of ethnic nationhood.

The cross-ethnic experience that *narod* captures and the victimhood that it claims should not be glamorized. Trans-ethnic *narod* is not separable from the ethnic tensions from which it materialized, to which it eventually refers, and with which it stays intertwined. Therefore, one has to avoid an inclination to celebrate forms of sociality that are potential rather than actual, indeterminate and fleeting rather than routinized and reliable (Jašarević n.d.).

And yet, paying attention to discourses of trans-ethnic *narod* is vital; trans-ethnic *narod* does not suppress the ethnic meaning of *narod*, but it questions it and at times "renders it less important" (Kolind 2007, 131). It reveals a strategic positioning against ethnic nationalism and it indexes commonalities across, above, and below ethnic identifications. These ordinary people's maneuverings bring into sharp relief complex political subjectivities, uneasy relationships, resistances to classification and relation, and enactment of political agency in contemporary BiH.

Acknowledgements

Notes

1. There are two curricula used in the Hercegovačko-Neretvanski Canton where I conducted my fieldwork: the Federal curriculum and the Croat curriculum. The former was envisioned by the Federal Ministry of Education to be followed by all schools in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina. However, it is used almost exclusively by the Bosniaks. The latter, which used to be identical to and still resembles the curriculum of the Republic of Croatia, is used in all Croat-dominated cantons in BiH.
2. The Mostar Gymnasium was my primary research site during my dissertation research. This famous school and national monument is the first among 54 "two schools under one roof" to be reunified in BiH since the war.
3. The names of all informants have been changed to protect their privacy.
4. The name of the country in local languages is Bosna i Hercegovina, thus the abbreviation BiH. When stylistically more appropriate, I use Bosnia instead of BiH.
5. Following Brubaker (1996, 7), I opt not to use "nation" but "nationhood," where this is understood as a "category of practice, institutionalized form, and contingent event."
6. I use "ordinary people" with much caution in this work. As Veena Das (2007) has pointed out, "everyday" is where much of deeply political work happens.
7. Here "ours" stands for "local," domestic, regional, and former-Yugoslav political elites, and "foreign" denotes the international peace-makers and democracy-builders who have been shaping Bosnian political, social, and military realities since at least the end of the war in 1995.
8. Of course, when I asked people about specific politicians, they distinguished among different individuals and political parties – they emphasized that there were some good and honest politicians. However, skepticism about *politika* remained – some people said that with time, everyone who enters official politics would become *zaražen* (contaminated) by "dirty politics."
9. In most instances, I use the full name "Bosnians and Herzegovinians" to refer to the inhabitants of the country. I use the shorter version "Bosnians" where stylistically more appropriate, however.
10. I am thankful to an anonymous reviewer for this comment.
11. I am grateful to an anonymous reviewer for this comment.
12. In my study I utilized three ethnographic methods: multi-sited participant observation, interviews, and text analysis. I employed the participant-observation method in four research sites: a school (the Mostar Gymnasium during, between, and after classes); international non-governmental organizations (INGOs); the students and teachers' homes; and leisure-time activities, such as hanging out at the local bars, hiking, and skiing. In addition, I conducted semi-structured interviews with selected students and their parents, and with other informants: teachers, principals, INGO workers, ministers of education, educational experts, and political leaders. The sample in Mostar included an approximately equal number of Croats (39) and Bosniaks (39), and males (43) and females (41). I also had numerous unstructured conversations with people at markets, cultural centers, graveyards, parks, shopping malls, and coffee shops.
13. At the congress of Muslim intellectuals in 1993, the terms Bosniak or Bosniac (Bošnjak) officially replaced the term Muslim when denoting nationhood. In everyday speech, however, Muslim and Bošnjak are often used synonymously.
14. The International Community in BiH is best described as a "loose coalition of international governmental institutions, national governments and non-governmental organizations that has bound itself to Bosnia and Herzegovina by the Dayton Accords and the period of reconstruction" (World Bank and Council of Europe 1999, 2). It refers equally to military and civilian international organizations working in BiH and their staff.

15. The consociational power-sharing model presumes cooperation of political elites across ethnic divides in order to manage conflicts. Fears of ethnic domination are reduced by extending self-rule and segmental autonomy as far as possible to each community (Palmer 2005). However, this model of power-sharing, initially developed by Arend Lijphart (1977), has been exposed to multiple criticisms. Its most vocal opponent, Donald L. Horowitz, argues that consociationalism is inherently unstable and can lead to the reification of ethnic divisions since "grand coalitions are unlikely, because of the dynamic of interethnic competition" (1985, 575).

16. The 10 cantons in FBiH fall into 3 groups: 5 in which Bosniaks are the majority population, 3 Croatian-majority cantons, and 2 "mixed" cantons.

17. Here I expand on Sally Engle Merry's (2001) notion of spatial governmentality, which she understands as gendered mechanisms of spatial segregation, discipline, and punishment found in postmodern cities.

18. For an analysis of "tolerance" as a discourse and practice of de-politicization of inequality in the contemporary US, see Wendy Brown's *Regulating Aversion* (2008).

19. Here I distinguish between *multiculturalism* as the ideology, political philosophy, and regime of peace-building that has been used by the international and local elites to establish the postwar state in BiH (see Gagnon n.d.), and *multiculturality* as the lived, constantly negotiated differences, interconnectedness, and heterogeneity that have been constitutive of Bosnia and Herzegovinian society. The former position approaches and envisions heterogeneity in a mechanical way – as a mosaic of three different, coexistent ethno-religions (see Hajdarpašić 2008) – and views diversity as the mathematical antithesis of monoculturalism and homogeneity. This rigid approach overlooks contingency, malleability, and polyvocality of identities and identifications, whose "content lies in permanent cultural interaction ..." (Lovrenović 2001, 227).

20. In her explanation of nationalism as constraining and overwhelming, Drakulić (1993, 50–52) writes:

> [B]eing Croat has become my destiny [...] I am defined by my nationality, and by it alone [?]. Along with millions of other Croats, I was pinned to the wall of nationhood – not only by outside pressure from Serbia and the Federal Army but by national homogenization within Croatia itself. That is what the war is doing to us, reducing us to one dimension: the Nation. The trouble with this nationhood, however, is that whereas before, I was defined by my education, my job, my ideas, my character – and, yes, my nationality too, now I feel stripped of all that. I am nobody, because I am not a person anymore, I am one of 4.5 million Croats [...]. But I am not in a position to choose any longer. Nor, I think, is anyone else. {...} What has happened is that something people cherished as part of their cultural identity – an alternative to the all-embracing communism, a means to survive has become their political identity and turned into something like an ill-fitting shirt. You may feel the sleeves are too short, the collar too tight. You might not like the color, and the cloth might itch. But there is no escape; there is nothing else to wear.

21. During Yugoslav times, Serbo-Croatian was the official language spoken in Serbia, Croatia, Montenegro, and BiH. The language had many local variants, and it used two alphabets, Latin and Cyrillic. The Latin alphabet was more frequently used in Slovenia, Croatia, and most of BiH; Cyrillic was dominant in Serbia, Montenegro, Macedonia, and eastern parts of BiH. Regardless of these regional differences, people whose first language was Serbo-Croatian understand each other easily. At the same time, they could immediately recognize which region of the country a person is from based on the way he or she speaks. Since the start of the wars in the region, however, political leaders and many laypeople on all sides have insisted they speak three different languages, a claim constitutionally acknowledged in Dayton, when the partition of Serbo-Croatian into Serbian, Croatian, and Bosnian was legitimized and institutionalized (Farrell 2001, 5). Many local and foreign linguists, however, still argue that the three new languages are variants of one language, Serbo-Croatian, since they share a common set of grammar rules. Regardless of the massive production of new vocabulary in all three languages, which was an attempt to further distance the "new" languages and people who spoke them, the language communities in the region still understand each others' languages without much difficulty.

22. This attitude is problematic for several reasons – just like (ethno)nationalism, it romanticizes, compartmentalizes, reduces, and essentializes its object, in this case the common "Bosnian mentality."
23. I am thankful to an anonymous reviewer for this comment.
24. The complicated and powerful gendering and de-gendering of politics in postwar BiH is beyond the scope of this article. See, however, Helms (2010) for an insightful discussion of these processes.
25. This political maneuvering around nationalism that the elites perform in order to remain in power causes much frustration among those individuals who say that they do not understand why people, who might even understand these "dirty political schemas," continue to vote for nationalists. An answer was provided to me by a US-born, Bosnian-language-fluent and Mostar-based field officer working for the Organization for Co-operation and Security in Europe (OSCE), who commented: "When I first came here [to Mostar], I thought it would be all about nationalism. That is how it seemed at first, and that is what I learned about during my graduate-school training in the United States. But now I understand … it is not about nationalism, it is about nepotism." Later, over lunch, he added: "People vote for those who promise to give them jobs, and right now, the nationalists have that power." This analysis demonstrates a more complicated political behavior than studies of nationalism and ethnic politics can alone provide – instead of blindly following nationalists, many ordinary people calculate their best choices, creating complicated overlaps and compromises between morality, ethics, ethnic belonging, security, and everyday survival.
26. Stolac is a small town in southwest Bosnia and Herzegovina, not far from Mostar.

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