

Youth Rocks?

Youth Leisure and Engagement in Transcending and Reinforcing Urban Ethno-National Divides in Former Yugoslavia

By *Vanni D'Alessio* (Universities of Rijeka and Naples) and *Bert Preiss* (Universities of Vienna and Graz)

Introduction

- **Aim:** to explore the forms and levels of young people's engagement in urban cultural and civic life in Former Yugoslavia after its dissolution.
- **Focus** on ethno-nationally (highly or lowly) contested urban spaces, affected by the Yugoslav wars, development of nationalism, economic crises and crises related to the post-socialist transition.
- **Main goal:** to observe the trends in youth's activities, in schools but particularly in their free time, reinforcing, transcending, eventually opposing, the ethno-national divides boosted by transition, war, and post war.
- **Main case studies: Mostar and Mitrovica:** different but comparable experiences in the war and post-war period regarding degrees of violence, involvement in war and interethnic relations.
- **Added comparison (control case): Rijeka:** example of former highly contested and ethno-nationally divided city between a Slavic and a non-Slavic community, developing a conspicuous number of national minorities variably affected by Post Yugoslav transition. Useful insights on Serbo-Croatian relations.

Materials and Sources

- youth studies, CSO/youth organization (YO) reports, demographic and socio-economic statistics, history, political science, sociology (focus on cases and esp. on youth)

Literature

Anderson (2008) From Empires to Ethno-National Conflicts: A framework for studying 'divided cities' in 'contested states'; Balandina (2010) Music and conflict transformation in the post-Yugoslav era: empowering youth to develop harmonic inter-ethnic relationships in Kumanovo; Calame-Esterworth (2012), Divided Cities: Belfast, Beirut, Jerusalem, Mostar, and Nicosia; Cohen-Evron (2005) Students Living within Violent Conflict: Should Art Educators "Play it Safe" or Face "Difficult Knowledge"? D'Alessio (2013) "Divided and Contested Cities in Modern European History. Divided and Contested Cities in Modern European History"; Franovic (2008) Dealing with the Past in the Context of Ethnonationalism. The Case of Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia and Serbia; Helbig (2008) 'Managing Musical Diversity within Frameworks of Western Development Aid: Views from Ukraine, Georgia, and Bosnia and Herzegovina'; Hepburn (2004), Contested Cities in the Modern West; Kurzio (2006), Civil society, youth and societal mobilization, Communist and Post-Communist Studies. **REPORTS:** Hardten (2014) Një pasqyrë e zhvillimit të Mitrovicës ndër vite. Pregled razvoja – Mitrovica u godinama; FES Friedrich Ebert Stiftung; ICG International Crisis Group; OSCE. **STATISTICS:** Agencija za Statistiku Bosne i Hercegovine; ASK Agencija e Statistikave të Kosovës; Hrvatski Državni zavod za statistiku; OSCE Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, 2014; Bosna i Hercegovina Federacije Bosne i Hercegovine Hercegovačko-Neretvanska županija/kanton Služba za zapošljavanje.

Results

Rijeka

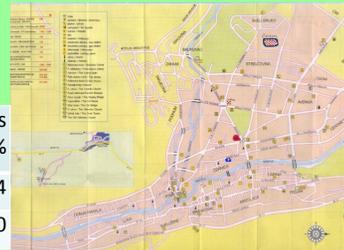
Year	Total	Croats %	Serbs %	Muslims/ Bosniaks %	Italians %	Slovenes %	Yugoslavs %
1991	167,964	69.76	9.05	2.85	1.90	1.61	17.03
2013	128,624	82.52	6.57	2.06	1.90	0.85	-

- 20th century demographic changes due to big flows of population transfers and immigrations, but also to mixed marriages and identity shifting across linguistic boundaries. Youth as a force of change.
- Rock or other forms of youth leisure do not play any significant role in *Reinforcing (R)* or *Transcending (T)* the mental border between the Croatian majority and the other minorities, apart from new generations of football fans (R)

Results

Mostar

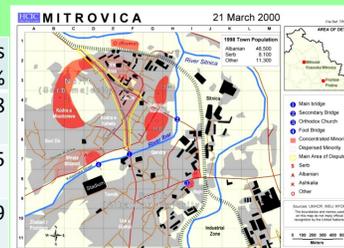
Year	Total	Muslims/ Bosniaks %	Croats %	Serbs %	Yugoslavs %	Others %
1991	75,865	34.17	28.72	18.64	15.23	3.24
2013	105,797	44.10	48.40	4.10	-	3.60



- Divided and highly segregated city after 1990s war.
- Flee of Serbs to nearby Republika Srpska villages. Outflow of Mostarians, Inflow of Croats and Bosniaks.
- 1995-2004: Two separated cities.
- 2004-2016: Unification with problems. Political impasses. Improvements in circulation and space sharing.
- Unemployment (2016): Total 49.8%, Youth ~ 57%
- *Youth involvement in local episodes Reinforcing (R) Transcending (T) or Questioning (Q) the physical and mental ethnic border:*
 - Inauguration New Old Bridge (destroyed in 1993 by Croatian army), 2004 R
 - Bruce Lee Monument Inauguration 2005 T; Vandalized & removed R; reinstated in the renovated shared park & playground T
 - Cultural manifestations organized by city or main cultural organizations R
 - Apart from New Year's concerts in Spanish square (Last in 2008/2009) T
 - Up to 2010: Clubs R (OKC Abrašević Q), Café bars R (Some as Coco loco T); Most media R (Minority T, Exceptions (Radio studio 88, Radio Abrašević Q).
 - Up to 2010: Growing T tendencies among local based media (Croatian newspaper *Dnevni List* and web portal *Bljesak* perceived more than before as local and T)
 - Mostar Rock School T/Q, Little Bridge Sports Academy T/Q

Mitrovica

Year	Total	Albanians %	Serbs %	Bosniaks %	Others %
1991	75,865	79.63	10.28	5.01	5.08
Mitrovica	71,909	96.65	0.02	0.58	2.75
Mitrovica South	29,460	16.63	76.48	3.40	3.49
Mitrovica North					



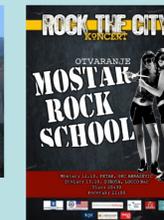
- Completely divided city after the Kosovo war - with two separate municipalities (since 2013: Kosovo Albanian dominated Mitrovica South ('Mitrovicë'/'Kosovska Mitrovica') and Kosovo Serb dominated Mitrovica North (Kosovska Mitrovica/'Mitrovica e Veriut').
- 1999-2008: High levels of inter-ethnic violence. Many IDPs. Strong international presence (UNMIK, KFOR, OSCE).
- 2009-2016: Inter-ethnic situation improved. More circulation and contact. (EULEX)
- High socio-economic deprivation and poverty, unemployment rate around 60% - youth particularly affected with unemployment about 70% (est. 2014).
- *Youth involvement in local episodes Reinforcing (R) Transcending (T) or Questioning (Q) the physical and mental ethnic border:*
 - Fatal ethnic clashes between Albanians and Serbs in March 2004 and March 2008 R
 - Language barrier through segregated, monolingual education R
 - CSOs/youth organizations: Community Building Mitrovica (CBM, since 2003), Mitrovica Rock School (since 2008) and Diakonie Youth Center Mitrovica (since 2010) helped to ease inter-ethnic tensions among youth through leisure and educational activities – new contacts and friendships .T/Q

Theory and Methods

- **Theory:** Reconciliation and Ethnic conflict (Franovic 2008), Youth activism and participation (Kurzio 2006), Art and music as tools of engagement and socialization (Balandina 2010, Cohen-Evron 2005, Helbig 2008), Post-war historical contexts, Ethno-national contested and divided cities (Anderson 2008, Calame & Esterworth 2012, D'Alessio 2013, Hepburn 2004)
- **Methods:** comparative case study approach, (non-)participant observation, semi-structured narrative interviews, and informal talks, literature review

Conclusions

- Mostar: Unified spirit not reached; Growing tendency to settle across the physical border (T); Growth of neighbourhood based civic actions and engagement (T)



- Mitrovica: City remains still deeply divided; Increasing mobility and contact between North and South youth (T); Increasing CSO and YO activities facilitated by de-escalation of inter-ethnic tensions (T)



- Post-war development allowing circulation and interactions.
- IC supportive and facilitating inter-ethnic initiatives by local CSOs and YOs.
- Cultural and political trends push even further social segregation, though locally based CSO and YO initiatives (and in Mostar consumerism) create occasions of transnational relationships and space for peaceful coexistence and sharing.
- Mostar and Mitrovica examples show how internationally sponsored initiatives of CSOs and YOs are crucial but it is the local community which has to be involved in political and leisure activities not questioning but transcending the divisive ethnic reality and logics.
- In general, youth is a force of change!

Acknowledgments

Aferdita Sylja / CBM, Dafina Kosova / Mitrovica Rock School, Mostar Rock School, UWC Mostar.