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YOUNG WOMEN AND (IN)SECURITY OF DAILY LIFE IN THE DIVIDED CITY OF MITROVICA/KOSOVSKA MITROVICA[2]

Abstract: This paper is the result of perennial theoretical and methodological studies and empirical research of impact of social changes on daily life of women in post-conflict environment. Characteristics of daily life of women are described and explained within the Kosovo* postwar divided city of Mitrovica/Kosovska Mitrovica. By using theories of daily life, social conflicts and gender, the author conducted empirical research on daily life of three ethnic groups women (Serbian, Albanian and Bosnian). Having in mind that this paper is part of more extensive field research, this paper concentrates exclusively on young (18 to 30 years old) women's perspective on security aspects of life in an ethnically divided city during and after the ethnic conflicts. The first part of the research was conducted in summer 2011, and the second part in summer 2016, in order to compare young women's perspective on security issues in a post-war divided city. The essential part of the paper are the results and disscusion which, by stressing interviews voices, show how post-conflict daily life has an even deeper and permanently stressful impact on "children of war" lives in the present.

Keywords: young women, daily life, special strategies, security, Mitrovica/Kosovska Mitrovica, Kosovo*.

Introduction

Ethnic conflict in Kosovo*[3] took place in the period from 1997 to 1999. Besides the terrestrial effects of the Yugoslav Army, on one side, and the Kosovo Liberation Army, on the other side, the epilogue of the conflict was the bombing of the then Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and the entry of NATO troops to Kosovo* as of 12 June 1999. From that day on, the post-war transformation of Kosovo* has undergone numerous institutional, and daily life phases.[4] In terms of research in the social sciences, we find published monographs and articles of foreign, Albanian and Serbian authors, which are often not free from the influence of the "competing" historical view on the said territory.[5]

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[3] "This designation is without prejudice to the positions on the status, and is in line with UNSC 1244 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence."

[4] Due to exclusive research scope of everyday life of young women, the paper does not describe in detail the root of the Kosovo conflict and the institutional post-war transformation phase.

[5] Hence, researchers of contemporary Albanian-Serbian relations in Kosovo* have to be very careful in

With this in mind, the goal of this paper is not pointing to the root of the Kosovo* conflict and its manifestations, but exclusively to some manifest and latent consequences that the conflict left on the citizens of that society and - the less "visible" citizens - young women, who were children during the ethnic conflict. More specifically, the study aims to answer the question whether the young women of Mitrovica/Kosovska Mitrovica[6] feel safe living during and after the ethnic conflict in the divided city. In order to understand in more detail the characteristics of their everyday life, in terms of perception of security conditions in the said city, in one segment of the interview, we asked the interviewees to remember the challenging circumstances in terms of security during the ethnic conflict. In this way, "intertwining" the past and the present in the area of everyday life of our interviewees, we could indirectly come to a conclusion regarding the possible types of spatial behavior of these women, and in the near future.

The results are that of a field study, realized using the case method, and the results are the outcome of in-depth interviews with thirty women and girls (ages 18 to 30 years) of Serbian, Albanian and Bosniak ethnicity, who share the daily experience of life in an ethnically divided city, where low-intensity conflicts still occur sporadically and seventeen years later. The survey was conducted on two occasions - during the summer of 2011 and again in the summer of 2016, with the aim of detecting any changes in daily spatial behavior of young women, after the signing of the so-called "Brussels Agreement" in April 2013, with an emphasis on the perception of the security situation.[7] Thus, the divided city of Mitrovica/Kosovska Mitrovica is a kind of "laboratory" in which the post-war transformation is directly manifested in the shaping of everyday life of young women. The theoretical framework[8] for the research consists of the theories of everyday life, ethnic conflict and gender, whose "connectivity" was a necessary condition for the creation of the plan of empirical research, but the concept of social space was equally important, which is perceived as the "objective connection between the spatial framework in which groups live and subjective social space that is determined by the individual experience of their own socio-spatial environment "(Pavlović, 2011: 298). In socio-demographic terms, interviewees are female students (16) and employees (14) – clerks, teachers, activists of the civil and international sector, who live and work in both parts of the divided city, and half of them (15) are married and have started a family.

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choosing secondary materials, in particular to comply with criteria of scientific objectivity.

[6] Mitrovica/Kosovska Mitrovica has the status of a divided city since June 1999, when the population was ethnically grouped in the southern (mostly Albanian) and northern (mostly Serbian) part of the city. In contrast with the southern part of the city, the northern part contains ethnically plural neighbourhoods "Bosniak Mahala", "Mikronaselje" and "Three Skyscrapers", which continue to represent a spatial framework of sporadic interethnic intolerance. Bearing in mind that the name of the city for residents of the southern part is Mitrovica, and for residents of the northern part of the city Kosovska Mitrovica, this text uses both terms.

[7] In July 2011, the Serbs from the northern part of the city tried to resist the efforts of Kosovo's authorities to exercise full control over the northern part of the territory. The most obvious manifestation of this resistance was setting up earthen barricades to the city center bridge, which is a symbol of the division of the city. After a series of consequences of the mentioned "July Crisis", Kosovo and Serbian officials signed the so-called "Brussels Agreement" on 19 April 2013, whose epilogue were parliamentary elections according to Kosovo law for the first time in the north of Kosovo* (November 2013), the formation of local self-governments by the same laws, delegation of Serbian ministers in Kosovo's government ... in August 2016, works on enabling the mentioned bridge for smooth traffic started, which will symbolically mark the termination of institutional and everyday lifestyle division.

[8] The paper focuses solely on a review of empirical indicators of research, which is why the review of theoretical framework of research has not been given.

(In)Security and "Spatial behaviour" of Young Women in Divided City: Disscusion of Results

In the post-war period (from June 1999 and later), everyday life of social actors is deeply subordinated to conflicts that are part of the past, but which, as this study shows, reflect on the present and drive the (un)willingness of actors to live in a multiethnic environment, due to many dominant factors that make it difficult to create a peaceful atmosphere. The most dominant factor in such circumstances is deep political segregation of urban space, to which all segments of the public and private everyday life of citizens are subordinated. This segregation led to the fact that citizens manifestly live "side by side", but also latently "against each other" in a physically very limited urban space. As the focus of this work is to "light up" the voices of young women living in the said divided city, we used the concept of social space as a starting theoretical basis for the analysis of empirical observations of everydaylife of the interviewees. Most of the interviewees were reluctant to answer questions, and many answers were clear manifestations of ethnic stereotypes. However, the questions[9] that we asked the interviewees in this part of the interview were direct. These questions and answers are also the backbone of this work, given the researcher's strong motivation to familiarize the interested public with the perception of security of young women "imprisoned" in the ethnically divided town. First, we asked: "Have you ever been the victim of verbal or physical violence outside the home during and after a conflict?" And "If so, who were the abusers?" The interviewees answered as follows:

K.K. (Albanian): "I was very afraid during the war. But after the war, no one said anything unpleasant to me. In the first years I did not get out of the house much, I went to the south by bus. Now I walk in the northern part of the city more often, but I speak Serbian well, I take care which store I go to and there is no need for anyone to insult me."

A.T. (Bosniak): "I haven't, but I take care which streets I walk, and during the war I never went anywhere without my parents."

D.S. (Serbian): "Albanians in the Bosniak Mahala[10] yelled to me in the street. But it was not horrible. I just ignored them."

F.S. (Albanian): "The first years after the war, we went to school on foot, the school being in the southern part of the city. Twice it happened that we Serbs - boys – stoned us. Once I was hit in the hand. Since we were very afraid, our parents talked with a KFOR representative, and after that they drove us to school with their jeep every day."

The interviewees (members of all ethnic groups) are reluctant to talk about ethnically motivated inconveniences they experienced during and after the ethnic conflict in 1999. However, the characteristic coincidence of both studies (2011 and 2016) are the interviewee's statements that they are victims of gender and ethnically motivated verbal humiliation in the streets (in ethnically pluralistic neighborhoods), which is usually manifested by "bandying"[11] provocative and vulgar sentences to women by men-members of other ethnic groups. The coincidence of the two studies is minimizing the importance of these excesses in the street using statements such as "it was not horrible." Such statements may indicate a kind of

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[9] On both occasions (2011 and 2016), interviewees were asked very similar questions, but the second survey (2016) also included questions on the perception of safety three years after the signing of the so-called "Brussels Agreement".

[10] Ethnically pluralistic neighborhood.

[11] "Bandying" is the word used by the interviewees to describe statements of unpleasant tone and character, to which they are exposed by men. This term is used by all interviewees who have experienced this kind of verbal harassment by men in the streets of Kosovska Mitrovica.

familiarity of women with verbal humiliation in ethnically pluralistic neighborhoods, through which it is risky to pass seventeen years after the end of conflict, but also (in the case of the youngest interviewee) insufficiently developed awareness about what constitutes harassment and violence.[12] In addition, men do not "bandy" words at girls and women when they are in the presence of men, but only when they are alone or in the company of women, which shows not only disrespect for women - members of the antagonistic ethnic group – but also a strong (quasi) traditional and patriarchal heritage, which implies 'respect' of men and disrespect of women of different ethnicities (Milovanović, 2016: 221).[13] Such security circumstances require (young) women to develop "spatial behavior" or "strategy of movement" through the ethnically plural parts of the city, whose primary manifestation is the avoidance of movement through the mentioned neighborhoods or movement in the company of men (mostly brothers or emotional partners). This finding indicates deep roots of fear for their safety while performing everyday obligations (such as going to college, work, to the store), although interviewees do not use the terms "fear" and "discomfort", but preventive "protection" from every potential inconvenience. At the same time, the answers show the extent to which insecurity is a dominant feature of everyday life for all citizens, but also the additional vulnerability and exposure of (young) women to ethnically and gender-motivated violence. Furthermore, the position of young women is also hindered by overall cumulative effects of post-communist crisis, poverty and unemployment, which are the basis for the process of retraditionalization and familization, the traditional mechanisms that lead to the production of well-being. Such complex security processes in the post-conflict period suggest that the security risks were present also during the ethnic conflict, which is why we asked the interviewees the following question: "Did any of your family members experience unpleasant situations during the war and later?" The interviewees' answers to this question were more open:

L.A. (Bosniak): "Albanians in the south broke into my grandmother and grandfather's apartment. My father was stopped and asked why he was going to the northern part of the city. They threatened to beat him up, because he returned to the north, but did not. My grandmother and uncle were beaten up in the Bosniak Mahala after the war, but we do not know who did it. Our house in the northern part of the city was burnt down by Serbs. At the time, we were staying with relatives in Montenegro. When mom and dad came back, they slept with some relatives in a skyscraper. One night, while having dinner, they overheard an army taking away men who were not Serbs from neighboring apartments. From that day these people have been lost without a trace. In 2000 some people, most probably Serbs, broke into our house and threatened us, but we insisted that we were Serbs, so nothing happened to us. Now the plot where our burnt down house used to be is occupied. Our lot has become the parking lot of a well-known hotel. The owner of the hotel is not even thinking of buying the plot from us. During that time, we are subtenants."

D.S. (Serbian): "A few years ago an Albanian entered our apartment through the balcony, because we live on a high groundfloor, and the building is at the entrance to the Bosniak Mahala. He shot my brother, wounding him in the leg. He shot the whole cartridge clip into our apartment."

K.K. (Albanian): "Nothing happened to us during the war. God and the neighborhood saved us. We did not even leave *Mikronaselje.*"

H.T. (Albanian): "We continued living in the northern part of the city after the war. Serbs

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pressured my mother to leave the apartment and move out, but she would not. One night in February 2000, after an explosion in a café when many Serbs were killed, a group of Serbs expelled some Albanian families from the northern part. We were one of those families. It was the biggest inconvenience."

Featured answers indicate, on the one hand, the need of the interviewees to share their negative (post) war experiences with someone, because no one speaks on those topics on a daily basis so "many" years after the ethnic conflict. Although they were only girls then, they all very clearly remember the experienced incoveniences and discreetly indicate the trauma that these events left on them as persons. Unwillingness to describe these unpleasant experiences in more detail, on the other hand, shows that ethnic conflict has been present for so long in everyday life activities and preoccupations of the interviewees that traumas "are implied" and and the interlocutor (the researcher) "should" already know how it feels to face fears caused by ethnic conflict. It was obvious when we asked the question: "Is life in Mitrovica safe for you and your family?" We got even more concrete answers to this question from our interviewees:

H.T. (Albanian): "This is a safe city now, but it is divided. Therefore, we as citizens do not feel that we are quite safe."

D.G. (Bosniak): "The city is not safe, but no place in Kosovo is safe."

A.K. (Bosniak): "Until recently, I thought that the city was safe. But lately there has been a lot of fighting and confrontations among youth. And there are many mentally disturbed people in the streets."

R.S. (Albanian): "We have no more Serbs and Serbs can't do anything. But Albanian farmers have moved into the city. These newcomers bought jobs, they are rude and aggressive. I'm afraid of them."

From the answers above, it can be concluded that members of all ethnic groups feel fear or discomfort because of living in their city. Albanians living in ethnically pluralistic neighborhoods feel fear because they live surrounded by Serbs, and in the case of major inconveniences they have no way to safely move to the southern part of the city. Albanians living in the southern part of the city do not see the tension inherent to residents of the northern part of the city, but they talk very bitterly of Albanians from rural areas who have "brought" entirely new customs and style of behavior to the city, which the residents of urban origin find foreign and undesirable (Milovanović, 2016: 227). However, during the interviewing, the ethnic component was the most frequently cited reason for personal sense of (in) security. The reason for this is the fact that life in Mitrovica/Kosovska Mitrovica is reduced to ethnically motivated attacks, bridge on the river Ibar - as a line of demarcation and place of conflicts between two antagonistic ethnic groups. These responses were also the basis for the question: "How do you see the *Brussels Agreement* and the safety situation in your city after the signing of the agreement in 2013?":

K.K. (Albanian): "Well... It feels like it's a little better. When I go to the south, I'm less afraid..."
D.S. (Serbian): "The first months after signing I felt great fear. None of us knew exactly what to expect. Now I do not feel as scared as I was then, but I am very disappointed in the Serbian government that they signed the agreement and gave us over to the state of Kosovo."
VA (Bosniak): "I do not see a change when it comes to safety, but I really hope that the agreement will finally bring a shift and calming of the situation."
A.I. (Serbian): "We are not afraid of anything officially. Serbs are still in power in the city. But everything will be done in accordance with the laws of Kosovo very soon. This does not bring peace

and security to us as a nation."

E.Z. (Albanian): "I do not like the agreement. Many Serbs will get rights. This is the state of Kosovo. They have to come to terms with reality."

The interviewees' answers are directly related to their ethnicity. While the Serbian women are extremely frustrated with the agreement itself, which they see as a form of recognition of independence of the R. of Kosovo* by the R. of Serbia, whereby they will be members of ethnic minorities "in their own country", the Albanian and Bosniak women talk about everyday positive effects of the agreement in terms of less obvious security tensions in the northern part of the city. There are, however, answers that indicate discontent by the agreement by the interviewees who were Albanian women. Dissatisfaction is manifested through words that "the Serbs will get a lot" and, vice versa, that "Albanians will get a lot", depending on which ethnic group they belong to. Such statements clearly demonstrate the unwillingness for multiculturalism, tolerance and equality, because, from the perspective of the two antagonistic ethnic groups, it is "implied" that the other ones should get "fewer" rights in all spheres of life in that society. If we recall the writing of feminist-oriented authors who insist that in case of truce after a conflict, there are no women at the negotiating table, because the "political and social structures may prevent women's participation in peace processes, safety of women is especially vulnerable in post-conflict situations, women have no funds to effectively organize themselves and finally women have less access to political decision-making than men" (Vayrynen, 2010: 143-144), this study confirms these claims. However, in post-conflict reality of our study, the dominant apparent identification of young women with their ethnic, not native origin, is obvious. So our interviewees confirm feminist discourse in terms of institutional non-fulfillment of conditions for women to be represented in decision-making positions, participation in "peace building", but also challenge the present claims in literature that women are "more peaceful" than men. This further shows how strong media pressure of daily political rhetoric is in the specified socio-cultural context, which continuously requires a vision of the world "through ethnic glasses" and from the maturing generations.

With that in mind, we asked the following question: "How do you see life of your family in the near future in the place of your current residence?" And we got the following characteristic answers:

J.B. (Serbian): "I do not see a future, unfortunately. I do not see my children in this city."

K.K. (Albanian): "Either the same or better than now. There will be freedom of movement. Albanians will be free to come to the north, and the Serbs will go south."

AK (Bosniak): "I do not see myself here and this is definite. I'd either go abroad or to Montenegro. As an art historian, I have a greater chance to find a job in Montenegro. Serbia is economically a very weak state. I would not even go there."

The interviewees' answers are directly related to their ethnicity. The Serbian women "don't see their future" in Kosovo*. The other interviewees, particularly those of Albanian ethnic origin, "fantasize about employment and independent living without their extended family or family of their (future) husband when they get married one day" (Milovanović, 2016: 233). The answers of the Albanian women are, in terms of security conditions, optimistic in the future, of Serbian women pessimistic and of Bosniak interviewees uneven because they are directly related to the part of the city in which they live. The essence of the difference in the responses of interviewees is based on ethnicity because Serbian women only fear for safety, while other interviewees see economic independence as a priority.

Instead of Conclusion

This paper is a supplement to the sociological study of everyday life of (young) women in the post-conflict social conditions. Having in mind the results of the several years of field studiesconducted by the use of in-depth interviews with women of Serbian, Albanian and Bosniak ethnic groups, done twice (in 2011 and 2016) in ethnically divided city of Mitrovica/Kosovska Mitrovica, this text indirectly illustrates that the developments of survived war experience does not cease to exist not even twenty years after the war. Having that in mind, the task of the paper was not to point out the root and the manifest forms of the ethnic conflict in Kosovo in the late XX century, but to point out the perception of safety in the environment after the war, from the perspective of young women, who were children when the mentioned conflict took place.

It turns out that the everyday life, not only of our interviewees but their family members in the ethnically divided city, is still determined by the ethnic conflict, so the spatial framework of the research is actually a deeply politically segregated urban space. The segregation made the citizens live manifestly "one next to the other", but secretly "one against the other" in physically very limited urban space, which was directly related to the (un)readiness of the interviewees to openly reply to the questions made in our in-depth interview. Namely, the majority of our interviewees were unwilling to reply to the questions, and many replies were a manifestation of ethnic stereotypes. The most dominant replies in the conversation with the interviewees-female members of the ethnic groups were marked by the feeling of fear and uneasiness of life in their own city. The fear is primarily conditioned by the life in ethnically plural quarters where it was still unsafe for young women to walk unaccompanied by a male. However, it was also conditioned by the arrival of a certain number of members of their own ethnic group, coming from rural parts to the city, which caused a revolt by the city population, having in mind that those compatriots "brought" completely new customs and mode of behaviour, inadequate to the urban life style. Such an urban identity seems to be equally important as the most important one – ethnic, where the gender identity, as shown by this research, is negligible.

It is also evident that social subjects of a cramped spatial framework (a bit more than 2 км²) are forced to live their everyday life developing the entire movement strategies (through ethnically plural quarters), social relations with the female members of other ethnic groups, and the public rhetoric which, since the signing of the "Brussels Agreement", has become manifestly more conciliatory in the speeches of political leaders, which directly mirrors the narrative of our interviewees, since the media impact was dominantly manifested in both our field studies.

A common feature of all answers is the interweevs desire for continuity of everyday life, which implies the absence of security challenges, but not true life in a multicultural environment. In this connection, profound roots of interethnic antagonism are manifest, which is not to be ended in the near future. This is how, after the open ethnic conflict, generation of girls matured who do not know much about "that other" ethnic group, besides stereotypes built in the family and the local community, further entrenched by effects of daily media reports. Hence the conclusion that everyday life in a multiethnic environment should be the overarching objective of the everyday lives of members of all ethnic groups, but in the near future it is necessary to achieve that social actors do not live "against each other", which was the case in the moment of realization of this field research.

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