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Claske Dijkema, Ayla Korajac

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Working Paper

Urban peace, a spatial approach

In search for peacescapes in the post-war city
of Brčko

Dr. Claske Dijkema
Ayla Korajac

Abstract

This paper presents research in developing spatial approaches to peacebuilding in post-conflict cities. While studies of post-war cities usually focus on past violence and continuous divisions, we in addition look at spaces where the coming together of people from different ethnonational groups is unproblematic. To understand the different dynamics in these spaces we draw on Björkdahl's distinction between war- and peacescapes and Bollen and Brand's distinction between socio-fugal and socio-petal spaces. In the Bosnian city of Brčko, war monuments commemorating the (para)military formations of each of the three ethnic groups mark central space in an exclusive fashion through the use of mutually exclusive symbols. These symbols serve the different nation-building projects in this divided city and reinforce ethnic divisions. While presented as popular will, ethnonationalist narratives of nation-building are elitist, masculinist and militaristic and do not speak for all people. In particular younger people, born after the war, seek for everyday (spatial) experiences beyond the war. This paper seeks therefore to go beyond the elite narrative of ethnonational identities and the marking of territory accordingly in post-war Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH). Our research is interested in spaces that escape the ethnonationalist logic and that can tell a counter-narrative of post-war cities. In Brčko, the leisure area Ficibajr along the Sava river is such a space.

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Keywords

Brčko, Bosnia and Herzegovina, ethnonationalism, peace, post-conflict city

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swisspeace
Kasernenhof 7
CH-4057 Basel
Switzerland
www.swisspeace.ch
info@swisspeace.ch
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List of acronyms

BIH – Bosnia and Herzegovina

FBIH – Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina

RS – Republic Srpska

ARBIH – Army of the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina

HVO – Croatian Security Council (Hrvatsko vijeće sigurnosti)

VRS - Army of the Republic Srpska

OHR – Office of the High Representative

1 Introduction¹

Many post-war situations are still qualified several decades after war ended as post-conflict, as is the case of Bosnia and Herzegovina, where the war came to an end but peace was never really attained. The prefix 'post' of the post-conflict city is a problematic because until when does a city remain post? This is a question Bonte (2017) addresses for Beirut and Houssay-Holzschuch (2021) for post-apartheid Cape Town. In this paper, we break with the rather linear approach to peace still common in political science: as a political process or transition from war to peace. According to the latter approach, peace is a matter of time. More geographical approaches to peace that focus on its spatial aspects call this linear representation of peace as time into question, pointing out that during war peace is being made in certain spaces through e.g. care practices (Vaitinen 2019) and that after war certain spaces continue to operate according to the war logic of separation, militarization and hyper-masculinity (Edenborg 2021). For this reason we do not approach peace and violence as binary or exclusionary categories - where if one is present, the other absent - but as being present at the same time and as being close in space. Typically, people create space for peace in contexts of violence, and the two exist side-by-side both in periods of war and afterwards. While most studies have focused on the perpetuation of conflict dynamics in the post-war period, we focus on spaces that are symbolic for peace dynamics. We propose two ways of reading the post-war divided city: one that looks at contested monuments as entry points for understanding struggles over identity, memory, place and power; and the other that looks at spaces, which these elite ethnonationalist narratives leave out of sight.

Many post-conflict cities are characterized by ongoing ethnonationalist divisions, which lead to divided cities both in a political and spatial sense. Belfast, Beirut and Mostar are evident examples of the ways that ethnonationalist divisions continue to shape the city spatially. These divisions are also very tangible in Brčko in east Bosnia and Herzegovina (BIH), a city rarely mentioned in literature on post-conflict cities (exceptions are Dahlman and Ó Tuathail 2006, Peres 2018). Also here, segregation along ethnonationalist lines has been a major challenge of the post-war period, as the former Brčko municipality broke up into three parts during the war: the Serb municipality Brčko (ruled by Serbs), the municipality Brčko of the Republic of BIH (ruled by Bosniaks), and the municipality Ravne Brčko (ruled by Croats). After the war it was difficult to find an agreement about the political entity that Brčko should be part of, the Federation of BIH or the Republika Srpska. When the Dayton Agreement was signed in 1995, no agreement could be found over the status of Brčko as its position close to the Serb and Croat border was politically and strategically important for both entities. A special arbitration process for Brčko District resulted in the creation of a self-governing administrative unit, which formally belongs to both the Republic Srpska and the Federation of Bosnia. Its local administration has been under international supervision since the beginning.² The majority of the residents in the city identify as Bosniaks, while Serbs are the second largest group, followed by Croats.³ Different groups are concentrated in specific neighborhoods in the city and in villages throughout the District. The multi-ethnic nature of the city makes the creation of the District a unique co-existence experiment (Geoghegan, 2014). A spatial approach to post-war cities has drawn our attention to two specific sites in

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- 1 A first version of this paper was written as a contribution to the Call for Proposals for the session "Alternative Urban Imaginaries: Storying Radically Interdependent Counter-Cities" that was organized by Ashraf Alam, Donna Houston and Michele Lobo as part of the IAG-NZGS Conference 2021 at the University of Sydney, 6-9 July 2021.
 - 2 Supervision is carried out by the Deputy High Representative of Bosnia-Herzegovina, representing the international community in Brčko District. Since 2012, the legal powers of the Supervisor have been frozen (brckosupervizija, 2012).
 - 3 According to the 2013 census, 42,4% of the population in Brčko District identify as Bosniaks, 34,9 % identify as Serbs and 20,7% as Croats (Jajčević, 2020).

the city of Brčko. The first site encompasses three war monuments in the city centre with a focus on the politics around the contested Serbian war monument. The second site is a nature and leisure area along the Sava River which traverses the city and where the co-existence of different groups does not seem to be problematic. To directly oppose these two spaces is however too simplistic, hence our understanding of cities as counterpunctal ensembles. The term derives from the work of Edward Said (1935–2003) in reference to a metaphor used in music. The counterpoint in Western classical music points to the various themes that are played simultaneously, with a slight privilege that is given to a particular one. In reference to geographies, a counterpunctal reading refers to the need to read a phenomenon in the city “from multiple sites and points of view: not only from the point of view of the dominant discourse but also from the perspective of subaltern knowledges” (Gregory et al., 2009, 114). The sites of the war monuments and the leisure area are separate tunes in the same city that teach us different aspects of post-war life.

Until when does a city remain “post-war” is a relevant question in Brčko almost 30 years after the end of the war (1992-1995). Muamer, a young man who participated in our focus group, said for example: “when the shooting ended it did not mean that the war stopped, war still goes on but with other means” (14.05.2021, focus group). As mentioned before, we turn our attention not to the means with which war is perpetuated but to the spaces in which war logics continue or are interrupted and have made place for more peaceful relations. The first section of the paper provides a theoretical framework discussing space in post-war peace processes. The second part discusses the methods used during this exploratory fieldwork (April-May 2021). The third section looks at the site of the three war monuments as an ethnoscape, as the monuments are the material outcome of the three separate but simultaneous nation-building projects that are ongoing in BiH. They are not only an illustration of division though: the building of the Bosniak and the Croat war monuments is the outcome of a long negotiation process to find a solution for the contested Serb monument that was built earlier. In the fourth section we argue that the leisure area Ficibajr can be understood as a peacescape, as a space where ethnonationalist identities have become less relevant. We discuss whether the unproblematic coming together of different groups is enough to qualify the area as a peacescape. We adopt a phenomenological approach to peace, understanding peace as an experience.

1 Understanding divided cities simultaneously as peace and ethnoscap

In order to understand the tension that we pointed out between the two sites of the monuments and the leisure area in Brčko, we draw on the distinction Björkdahl (2013) makes between ethnoscap

Cities that are spatially organized according to ethnonationalist identities can also be called “ethnoscap”, a term for ethnified cityscapes. Björkdahl came up with “the concept of ‘peacescape’ as an opposite to ethnoscape in order to theorize the dynamic relationship between peace and place” (2013, 215). She associates peacescapes with the development of values of tolerance and acceptance; as spaces where urban dwellers can experience the benefits of diversity; where difference can be negotiated and transcended. Her concept of peacescape is close to the cosmopolitan city: “peacescapes comprise cosmopolitan spaces where a shared civic identity can be developed” (Björkdahl 2013, 216). Where our approach differs from that of Björkdahl is that our analysis is not located at the level of an entire city but focuses on different areas in the city. We think in terms of socio-petal spaces, which should be understood in relation to socio-fugal spaces, terms we borrow from Brand (2009) and Bollens (2012). Socio-petal spaces function as shared spaces that encourage interaction and are free of undesirable, intimidating, and single group identifying artefacts. This description corresponds to social life in the leisure area of Ficibajr. Socio-fugal spaces share the characteristic that they cater to one specific group in particular that has an antagonistic relationship to others. This is the case of the three monuments that each speak exclusively to one ethnonationalist group. In the next paragraph we conceptualise in more detail the role monuments play in divided cities and their socio-fugal character in Brčko.

Ethnonationally divided cities are characterized by spatial segregation according to ethnic lines, by exclusionary group memories and by competing ethnonational discourses. In these cities ethnonationalist actors perpetuate conflict dynamics through “processes of territorializing, regulating and symbolizing place in order to sustain polarized communities, power-relations and war gains” (Björkdahl 2013, 216). War monuments are one way of demarcating territories, as they claim a specific space for commemorating a particular narrative of the war, and therefore they also have the function of displaying power (Dragičević Šešić 2011, in Sokol 2014). The construction of monuments that highlight mutually exclusive memories that are part of ethnonational identities play a significant role in nation-building (Sokol 2014). The building of ethnonationalist narratives of identity is therefore a space-based procedure (Bjorkdahl and Gušić 2013). The divided city is maintained through symbols presented in urban settings that intentionally reshape space and (re)create identities (Bjorkdahl and Gušić, 2013). For example, following the Bosnian War, streets and squares were renamed after Serb war heroes, such as the square named after Dragoljub Draža Mihailović. A statue was built in his honor and a memorial in the form of an Orthodox Christian cross was placed in front of the current municipality building. These symbols only speak to the Serb population of Brčko. Due to its ethnic diversity, Brčko is the only city in BiH that has three war monuments in the city centre commemorating three different (para)military formations, which fought against each other during the 1990s war. Each monument displays specific symbols tied to one of the three ethnic groups. These symbols either have a political or religious meaning as

ethnic identities in BiH are closely tied to religious affiliations: Bosniaks are mostly identifying as Muslim, Serbs mostly as Orthodox Christian, and Croats typically identify as Catholic. Political symbols, as we will see in the next section, are e.g. the golden lily in case of the Bosniaks, the Serbian cross with the four Cyrillic letters for the Serbs and the checkerboard for the Croats. Each of these symbols refer to specific political and territorial entities and territorial claims, they are part of three distinct nation-building processes. For example, the Serbian cross is associated with the Republic Srpska, which is viewed as a separate country rather than an entity in BiH. The Croat checkerboard is generally associated with Herzeg-Bosnia (Croatian Republic of Herzeg-Bosnia) and its nation-building process and the demands of the Croat elite to create a separate third entity in the country (Sokol, 2014). The function of such symbols is to forge clear and, in most cases, exclusive and immutable group membership (Lustick, 1979 in Nagle, 2016). What the three groups have in common is that they adopt exclusive approaches to nation-building, which also operate through national narratives based on victimhood related to the latest war and previous conflicts (Sokol, 2014). As we will explain in further detail in the next section, the three ethnonationalist groups in Brčko all present themselves as a victim of the war, which leads to an official narrative of a war in which there were only victims and no aggressors. The plaques on the war monuments in Brčko are a good example of this cult of victimhood, presenting all armies as defenders. Each of the three monuments is focused on remembering the victims of one group, hence dismissing any accountability for the crimes committed by the respective armies. The different and mutually exclusive narratives of the past war get materialised in war memorials and they resurface at moments of commemoration. Assmann and Short remind us that “every act of remembrance is simultaneously an act of forgetting, because it is both selective and partial” (2011, 5 in McGrattan and Hopkins 2017, 492). Because of the importance of these mutually exclusive symbols for forging a coherent, immutable, and oppositional group identity, the President of the Croat war invalid association explained why he thinks that they are counter-productive in the search for peace.

Maybe it's better to emphasize the symbols less. The less a person thinks about it, the more they go about their own way and try to be a normal person. They will also be less drawn to do something bad because of being bothered by a symbol. In my opinion, we should emphasize nations and nationalities less (Mirko Zečević Tadić, interview, 11.05.2021).

Adopting a critical stance to ethnonationalist narratives also makes space for more personal narratives and lived experiences as sources of information and identification. We draw on a critical geography approach that always asks the question which points of view are not represented in a particular perspective (Said 1979, Gregory 1998, Gregory 2004). Feminist approaches to peace research point to other possible angles from which to look at the monuments and the kind of peace they stand for in BiH (Väyrynen, Parashar, and Féron 2021). The type of peace that high level political processes under international supervision have led to in BiH is, according to Deiana, patriarchal and elitist, and these forms of politics have little resonance with women in their everyday

lives (2018, in Väyrynen et al 2021). The Dayton peace accord is a power-sharing agreement, which is an inherently masculinist approach to peacebuilding (Hozic 2021). A sole focus on political processes at this level leaves out of sight the ways in which people excluded from these processes (women, youth, non-elite) are engaged in more everyday forms of peacebuilding (Mac Ginty 2021). Rather than peace as a high-level political process, we approach peace as an experience. If war can be analysed as an experience, as Sylvester (2012) suggest, which is partly physical in the sense of injuries to bodies (Scarry 1985) and partly affective and emotional (Berlant 2004), can peace then also be understood as an experience? According to McConnell, Gregory and Williams peace is multiple, positive, and always in the making; it is made of the (re)production of positive social relations (2014). Since peacebuilding and conflict dynamics are productive of spaces, in a material and symbolic sense (Björkdahl and Buckley-Zistel 2016), we may look for the sites that are conducive for the reproduction of social relations, which may be close to Björkdahl's concept of peacescapes and Brand and Bollen's idea of socio-fugal spaces. In Ficibajr we look into the spatial aspects of peace as an experience.

2 Methods

This paper is the outcome of a collaboration between Claske Dijkema, senior researcher at swisspeace interested in contested monuments and exclusive nation-building projects in Europe and Ayla Korajac, student in International Development Studies, intern at swisspeace and originally from Brčko. The project took shape through a continuous dialogue between the two authors. The field research Ayla Korajac carried out for this project focused on two sites in Brčko; the space surrounding the three war monuments (site one) and the space along the Sava River at Ficibajr (site two). Used methods are semi-structured interviews, street interviews, a focus group discussion and ethnographic observation.

Five semi-structured in-depth interviews with local politicians and representatives of associations involved in the construction of the monuments are the main sources that provide information about the tensions and negotiation process with regard to the monuments. Three local politicians participated in the in-depth interviews, one from each ethnonational group as well as two representatives of associations (one Bosniak and one Croat) who were involved in the negotiation process regarding the war monuments.

- Mirsad Đapo (Bosniak, 68 yrs) occupied various functions in local politics (1992-2010)
- Siniša Milić (Serb, 50 yrs), speaker at the Assembly of Brčko District, involved in local politics for over ten years
- Anto Domić (Croat, 54 yrs), Deputy Mayor, has been active in local politics since 2000
- Sead Golić, secretary of the Bosniak association of Families of Missing, Forcibly Abducted and Killed Bosniaks
- Mirko Zečević Tadić, President of the Croat association of War Invalids Hvidra Ravne Brčko

Interviews were carried out in Bosnian, Serbian, or Croatian. The in-depth interviews were audio recorded, manually transcribed and relevant passages were translated in English for a joint analysis by the co-authors. Reflections from street interviews and observations were collected in field notes.

Although Siniša Milić was not directly involved in the negotiation process following the contestation of the Serb monument, his contribution provides at least one Serb perspective on the war monuments. Neither the Serb politicians, nor the Serb War Veterans Association involved in the negotiation process, were willing to grant an interview, despite repeated invitations. One possible reason for this refusal is that they did not trust that Ayla as a non-Serb was able or willing to fairly represent their views.

Street interviews (25) with people who were in the vicinity of the war monuments or who participated in one of the commemorations organized at the monuments provided an additional perspective on the relation that the public in the city has with the monuments and on what the monuments represented for them. The questions of the street interviews can be found in annex 1. Street interviews were carried out with people (10 women and 15 men) who passed by the monuments or sat in their vicinity. People were not very comfortable

Methods

speaking about the monuments in this public space, so most street interviews were short (approximately 3 minutes) and many interviewees framed their answers very carefully in order not to hurt or provoke any ethnic group. The information street interviews provided about silences and discomfort in this space have been more informative than the content of the interviews themselves. The street interviews (23) conducted with users of the leisure area show that people are much more willing to engage in discussion in this space and interviews lasted longer (approximately 7 minutes). They provide information about the reasons why people go to Ficibajr.

Ayla further carried out a focus group discussion with six young adults (18-26 yrs), who carry out volunteering work in Ficibajr. Ficibajr is an intergenerational site where associations that speak to different age groups are active. We have chosen to focus on associations run by and for younger people because the latter are born after the war but inherit this past-present in many ways, and because their voices are generally absent in formal politics. Two participants in the focus group are from the NGO Proni Center for Youth Development that operates in various cities in BiH and focuses on promoting activism and peace among the youth. They were involved in the EcoFic project (until 2020), which was an internationally funded project that includes repairing multiple benches and tables in Ficibajr and painting concrete paths in the area. The main goals of this project were to inform youth and the wider community about the importance of environmental preservation and of public goods in the local community, and to undertake restoration activities in Ficibajr. The project involved tens of volunteering children, adolescents and young adults. Four participants in the focus group are from Nema Labavo, which is an informal group that is not formally registered as an NGO. This group aims to beautify Ficibajr and to promote ecological behavior among the population in Brčko.

We used two forms of observation: passive observation, conducted without verbal communication, which entailed observing people's behaviour in the vicinity of the war monuments, and active observation, which included 9 short interviews with people attending one of the commemorations organized at the sites of the war monuments. During the period of field research, the 29th anniversary of the foundation of all warring factions in the war in Brčko were celebrated (see table 1). We further triangulated our data with archival data and social media. A search on Facebook was informative for the dates of various commemorations that took place at the monuments, the main actors involved and what other activities the site was used for and was helpful to identify actors participating in the shaping of Ficibajr, their projects and aims. The local archive of Brčko District did not have any information on Ficibajr or on the monuments. However, the director of the archive suggested Ayla to contact Atah Mahić, an independent chronicler and collector of archival material with regard to the history of Brčko. He provided a letter on the history of Ficibajr. Data provided in this letter is used as information that needs further exploration.

As Ayla grew up in Brčko, this study also builds on her lived experience as a citizen of Brčko District, which is especially informative about the urban

atmospheres and about the ways the two sites are used and by whom. However, being a local also has important limitations. As a local in a divided post-war city, one is assigned a position and Ayla's name signals to other locals that she is Bosniak. As mentioned, this may have played a role in getting access to the Serb point of view in in-depth and street interviews on site one. Ayla has the impression that interviewees quoted in other studies on BIH, carried out by researchers from other countries (e.g. Peres 2018, Jouhanneau 2016) were more vocal and honest in their answers.

Unsurprisingly, women are underrepresented in in-depth interviews as they did not occupy the political functions important for understanding the negotiation process with regards to the monuments. They are also underrepresented in the focus group (2F and 4M) and in the street interviews (19 F and 29 M). The latter can be partially attributed to a selection bias: it soon turned out that in street interviews women were less vocal than men, regardless of whether they were in the company of men, which led to privileging the latter. In order to include women's experiences and points of view and the gendered uses of the two sites, it is necessary to adapt the interview protocol in follow-up research.

3 The site of the war monuments, a socio-fugal space

Two years after the war ended, the Veterans Organisation of Republika Srpska built the “Monument to the Serb Liberators of Brčko” (later to be renamed the Serb Defenders of Brčko), for which it received financial support from the municipality (kulturasjecanja.org, 2015). The war monument commemorates the living and deceased soldiers of the Army of the Republic Srpska (VRS) during the 1992-1995 war. The Serb war monument was soon contested by members of the government and the public: the term “liberators” put salt on still open wounds, and the Bosniak and Croat population criticized the monument for promoting Serbian ethnonationalism in the shared space in the city centre. After a long negotiation process the solution that all parties could agree on was that two additional monuments would be built, one Croat and one Bosniak war monument. In this section we will see that in the case of Brčko the power-sharing arrangements in the post-war politics around monuments have been central in dealing with tensions, leading to the unsatisfying solution of the co-existence of three war monuments next to each other, which only recognize the suffering and loss of each ethnonational group separately. This section starts with a presentation of the three war monuments in Brčko and an explanation of which exclusive and divisive symbols were used. In the second sub-section we discuss how memories are forged and kept alive through regular acts of commemoration. In the third sub-section we explain the negotiation process that took place in reaction to the resentment, complaints and contestation expressed after the Serb monument was erected.

3.1 Use of mutually exclusive symbols in war monuments

In this sub-section we subsequently present the Serb monument (1997), the Bosniak (2012) and then the Croat monument (2012). For each we describe what they look like, whom they commemorate, what mutually exclusive symbols are part of their design and through what kind of commemorations the war memory gets reinscribed in political agendas.



Figure 1: Monument “to the Serb Liberators/Defenders of Brčko”. Photograph by A. Korajac, 03.05.2021.

The Serb monument is five meters high and includes four male soldiers at the top. It is located on the Peace Boulevard (Bulevar mira) in the city centre, right in front of the Assembly building. In the centre of the black monument figure in gold: an orthodox Cross surrounded by four Cyrillic letters “S” (see fig. 1), which stand for the slogan “only unity saves the Serb” (Samo sloga Srbina spašava). The cross represents an ethnic and religious symbol for Serbs within and outside of BiH (Sokol, 2014). The cross can be found, for example, on the Serbian national flag and the flag of the Serbian Orthodox church. The slogan can be seen as a reminder to all Serbs to remain united during times of need. The majority of Bosnian Serbs associate these ethnic symbols with national symbols of Serbia (IPSOS, 2011 in Sokol, 2014). Dedicating the monument to “the Serb Liberators of Brčko” is typical for an exclusive narrative that only acknowledges the losses and sacrifices of the Army of the Republic Srpska.



4 The Association of Families of Missing and Forcibly Abducted and Killed Bosniaks in the Brčko District

Figure 2: Monument to the "Martyrs and fallen fighters of ARBiH; erected in the city center. Photograph by A. Korajac, 02.05.2021.

The Bosniak monument was erected 15 years later (2012) not far from the Serb monument in the central square of Brčko. The monument is 4.5-5 meters high and made out of white marble (fig. 2). The white marble can be interpreted as a religious reference as it is typically used for tombstones in Muslim cemeteries in BiH (at least since the Ottoman rule). The plaque fixed on the monument states that it commemorates the fallen soldiers: the "Martyrs and Fallen Fighters of the Army of the Republic of BiH" (ARBiH), who were described as the "guardians of Bosnia". It is the only monument that was erected by a civilian organization,⁴ rather than associations of war veterans. The monument encompasses a circular entrance to the centre of the monument which represents the continuation of the Bosnian and Herzegovinian state and Brčko District as a multinational area (kulturasjecanja.org, 2015). Another element of the monument are the five upstanding stones in the middle that represent five battalions of the army in Brčko (kulturasjecanja.org, 2015). The most prominent symbol on this monument is the fleur-de-lis or golden lily. The golden lily apparently dates back to the medieval Bosnian Kingdom. The symbol disappeared during the Ottoman occupation of Bosnia and was reintroduced when Bosnia declared its independence from Yugoslavia in 1992 and has been part of the Bosnian nation-building process since the 1990s (Sokol, 2014), see e.g. the former flag of the Republic of BiH (R BiH) and the coat of arms of the ARBiH. According to the official narrative, the lily represents BiH as a whole, including all ethnic groups, but, according to a survey, most Serbs (88%) and Croats (73%) do not consider it represents them (IPSOS, 2011 in Sokol, 2014).

5 HVO, paramilitary formation funded by Croatia



Figure 3: Monument to the "108th HVO Infantry Brigade"; erected in the city center. Photograph by A. Korajac, 03.05.2021.

The Croat monument was also erected in 2012 and has similar dimensions as the other two monuments. It is located behind the Bosniak monument and in front of the City Hall (fig. 3). It commemorates the “Defenders of the Croatian Military Organization”,⁵ in particular the 108th Infantry Brigade, stationed in Brčko during the war. The plaque states “Our sacrifice is a signpost for you”. The monument includes traditional Croatian and Catholic symbols such as the Catholic cross (see the empty space between the four parts of the ‘ball’ symbol of the cross) and the checkerboard, which can also be found on the Croatian national flag and coat of arms. The black stone is also used for tombstones in Croat/Catholic cemeteries. There are two more inclusive elements; the triangular plateau symbolises tolerance of the three major ethnic groups in BiH and the vaguely formulated text on the plaque leaves room for individual interpretation.

3.2 Forging memories through active commemoration

Monuments, as such, do not automatically keep memory alive, nor do they strengthen ethnonational group identities. In addition to the material object, it is through their active use that they gain political importance. Group memory requires symbols and acts in the form of celebrations and commemorative events or rituals (Assmann 2011). Repeated commemorations play a crucial role in creating a shared narrative of the war, despite people’s individual experiences of this period (Halbwachs 1992 in Mitchell 2003). We have identified four different types of active use of the monuments: commemorations,

maintenance, taking photos and protests; and we have identified three types of actors involved in this active use: institutional actors, members of the consenting public, and members of the contesting public. We develop each of the types of use in more detail, starting with maintenance activities. Members of the major conservative political parties in Brčko undertake collective maintenance activities at the monuments, despite the annual allocation of substantial public funds for the maintenance of the monuments. Mobilizing the members of political parties and advertising maintenance actions in these sites is a form of political appropriation. Moreover, active commemoration takes place through the active use and appropriation of the monument by the public, e.g. by taking photos at the site of the monuments. The monuments are also used as sites for oppositional political address, as sites to organise political contestation or protest. Finally, institutional actors organize events, rituals and commemorations at the monuments to actively create a sense of community through commemoration and the celebration of events that have specific relevance for each group. Dates chosen for these commemorations are for example dates related to the war in Brčko. Table 1 lists the commemorations in which Ayla participated during the fieldwork: they all commemorate the 29th anniversary of the creation of different armed factions. They are a good illustration of parallel war narratives.

Table 1: Commemoration of 29th anniversary of warring factions

Croat war monument	12 May 2021	the 29th anniversary of the founding of the 108th Infantry Brigade of the HVO Ravne Brčko (see fig. 6)
Bosniak monument	17 May 2021	The 29th anniversary of the formation of the Brčko Brigade of the ARBiH
Serb monument	20 June 2021	29 years since the formation of the First Posavina Brigade

Other days of commemorations at the war monument were Brigade Day (fig. 4) Independence Day 1st of March (celebrated by Bosniaks and Croats) and the Day of the Republic Srpska on the 9th of January (celebrated by Serbs) (fig. 5), as well as religious celebrations such as Christmas and Eid. When people participate in celebrations, they become part of a certain narrative and reinforce it. For example, when Bosnian Serbs celebrate the Day of the Republic and do not celebrate Independence Day, they reinforce the narrative that the Republic Srpska is the relevant territory for them rather than BiH.



Figure 4: Commemoration at the Bosniak monument on Brigade Day. Photograph by Ayla Korajac, 17.05.2019



Figure 5: Commemoration at the Serb monument on the Day of the Republic. Photograph by Ayla Korajac, 09.01.2019.



Figure 6: Commemoration at the Croat monuments at the occasion of the 28th anniversary of HVO. Photograph by Ayla Korajac, 11.05.2020.

3.3 Political process around the monuments

Out of the three war monuments, the Serb war monument was the first to be built, only two years after the end of the war. The current Deputy Mayor of Brčko District chose his words carefully when he said: “among the Bosniak and Croat population, the [Serb] monument provoked a feeling of... I will use the word disagreement although there were also other feelings towards the monuments” (Anto Domić, 14.05.2021). The other feelings he alluded to were stronger emotions such as anger, contempt, and deep sadness of the non-Serb population towards the monument. Following its construction, Bosniak and Croat members of the multi-ethnic transitional government of Brčko District, appointed in 1999, demanded the Assembly and the International Supervisor for Brčko to remove this monument. In addition to being offended by the exclusive nation-building project that the monument stands for and its one-sided war narrative, it was the monument’s position in the city centre, right in front of the Assembly, that they considered problematic. Moreover, there were authorization issues: the monument was built without a construction permit on private land without authorization from the owner. The contestation was the start of a negotiation process that lasted almost ten years in search for a solution that was acceptable to all ethnic groups. The solution that all parties finally agreed on was to add two monuments: one commemorating the soldiers of the Bosniak army and the other commemorating the Croatian paramilitary organization HVO. In 2003 the multi-ethnic transitional government and the Office of the High Representative (OHR) drafted the Law on Monuments and Symbols in Brčko District. This law foresaw that the monument to

6 Article 14 and 15 stipulated Law on Monuments and Symbols of Brčko District BIH, 2003.

the Serb liberators of Brčko could stay and that: "in order to achieve full equality of all the constituent peoples of the District, monuments to Bosniaks and Croats will be erected in the city centre of Brčko", although their location remained undecided.⁶ The law moreover instructed the creation of a commission for the implementation of this law. This commission consists of three Assembly officials, each representing one of the major ethnic groups. Its task is to determine whether monuments and the symbols they display are indeed politically and ethnically neutral. However, negotiations between war and victim associations, local religious leaders, the Assembly and the International Supervisor continued throughout 2003-2009 about the exact location of the three monuments. In 2009 the Commission decided that the three ethnic groups could each have a war monument in the city centre. Consequently, the International Supervisor wrote an order in which he identified the exact locations for the Bosniak and Croat monuments and allocated public funds for erecting the two new monuments and for landscaping the space around the Serb monument. The local government also allocated 800.000BAM to buy the private property on which the Serb monument was erected. The commission for the implementation of the law on monuments and symbols ruled that the name of the "Monument to the Serb liberators of Brčko" needed to be changed. Consequently, it became the "Monument to the Serb defenders of Brčko". The interviewed Bosniak and Croat politicians and representatives of associations stated that the agreement regarding the monuments was not the most desirable outcome, but they all agreed that this negotiation process had its positive sides as well. As the President of the Croat association of War Invalids said:

We showed that we found the strength to sit with each other some years after the war and shake each other's hands. Despite the fact that we were fighting against each other on various sides and were ready to kill each other to save our own lives, we sat and decided to negotiate these monuments. We have to admit that we were able to move on to a degree and aimed to just continue with our lives. Is that the right path? Who knows a better one should speak out. All ideas that diminish conflicts are welcome (Mirko Zečević-Tadić, 11.05.2021).

Some of the interviewees expressed that a positive aspect of the monuments is that they foster "tolerance". Nagle (2014) and proponents of the agonistic approach to peace argue that mere tolerance is not enough to ensure peaceful co-existence in divided societies. In agonistic peace, peace does not rely on consensus, but on the availability of symbolic and material spaces where people can confront each other as political subjects and not as enemies that one seeks to eliminate. This space of the monuments stands for negative peace, as the absence of violence, but where stories of violence are told in very different and contradicting ways. The former Mayor admitted that the law is a compromise and not a form of reconciliation or dialogue:

A negative is that the monuments tell the story of a civil war in which three peoples were killing each other, which is not true. However, we could not agree on a different solution at the given moment (Mirsad Đapo, 07.05.2021).

The three monuments are clearly a product of power-sharing efforts to deal with the continued post-war tensions around the use of urban space. Overall, the stakeholders in the negotiation process expressed to be proud that they could agree on a solution. As Mitterhofer (2013) argues, the establishment of spaces for negotiation and dialogue is more crucial than crafting a solution. Although creating a space for dialogue was indeed important for the newly established District, the outcome of this dialogue, i.e. the three monuments in the city, reinforces exclusionary ethnonational narratives rather than creating a shared narrative and spaces in common. It is a clear indication that the nature of the 1990s war is contested (civil war vs. act of aggression). That is why in public and multi-ethnic gatherings in Brčko, people are usually hesitant to speak about this disagreement. During street interviews, the majority of the participants expressed some degree of discomfort when discussing the monuments by giving short answers, and consciously avoided the words “Bosniaks”, “Serbs” or “Croats”, and instead referred to “groups of people”. They chose their words carefully to avoid offending any ethnic group. This caution is similar to the formulation on the plaques on the three monuments that do not mention any perpetrators, only victims. The President of the Croat war invalid association said: “we are just not ready to name perpetrators” (As Mirko Zečević Tadić, 11.05.2021). According to Sokol (2014), explicitly naming perpetrators upkeeps the ethnic discourses and perpetuates conflicts. However, this case shows that not naming perpetrators does not hinder ethnonationalist narratives, but rather creates an atmosphere in which conflicts get frozen: disagreements cannot be addressed publicly and are limited to private circles. One of the participants of the focus group then indeed said that this silence is not peace:

To me, peace is not the situation in which we do not quarrel on ethnic issues and are totally silent. It usually goes like this here: we will not mention the war, don't you either, and let them not mention it either. Peace for me is if we can honestly discuss these topics. (Adnan, 14.05.2021)

Adnan's idea of peace is that of agonism: it is “attentive to the social and cultural interdependence of identities” (Shinko 2008, 478) and “acknowledges identity conflicts as inevitable but transformable to agonistic relations” (Çelik 2021, 1). Adnan is a coordinator at the Proni Youth Centre, which is active in the Ficibajr area. Young people are largely absent in the space of the monuments and the debates around it. The narrative that is proposed through the monuments speaks to an older, majority male, population directly marked by the war. A younger population seeks to live a life beyond the war and to build a new future. This is not only true for youth but also for a wider civilian population that seeks to go beyond, to transcend or to transform the war experience. Our question is which spaces are associated with this desire? Where can people go for experiences that break with the war logic and where ethnonationalist identities matter less?

4 The site of Ficibajr and the Sava river as a socio-petal space

“Ficibajr is simply a place that tells the story of companionship and love.”
(Zorana, focus group, 14.05.2021)

When looking for socio-petal spaces that work according to peace logics, we turned to Ficibajr, a leisure area along the Sava river, yet close to the city centre (fig. 7). Ficibajr includes a promenade stretching along the river, sports fields, fitness amenities, benches, tables and a piece of forest. One goes to Ficibajr in order to do physical exercise, to celebrate friendship and love, to find some time for reflection and to connect with nature. Specific days to go to Ficibajr are not determined by war commemorations but by other celebrations, in particular Labor Day (1st of May). The users of the area are diverse in terms of ethnonationalist identities, class, gender and age. These observations lead us to arguing that Ficibajr is a socio-petal space that could be said to function as a peacescape on a very local level. More data is required to answer all the questions that we set out with and new ones that arose, but our initial results confirm our intuition that social life in Ficibajr provides an alternative narrative to ethnonationalist peacebuilding in post-war divided cities.



Figure 7: "Ljeto na Savi", Edin Osmanbasic, 2021, accessed 28.06.2021.

4.1 When the history of Brčko merged with the river again

Ficibajr has a long history as a leisure area. According to the independent chronicler and collector of archival material of the local history in Brčko, Atah Mahić, Ficibajr was already a popular space for gathering when Bosnia and Herzegovina was part of the Ottoman Empire (letter, 20.05.2021). When Bosnia and Herzegovina fell under Austro-Hungarian rule in 1878, the area was

made into a leisure and picnic area. Reportedly, the area was mainly used by Austro-Hungarian Officers of the Brčko garrison and their families. After the Austro-Hungarian period in BiH, Ficibajr was used as a leisure area by the wider population of Brčko. Mahić did not specifically mention the socialist influence on the use of the area under Tito but did mention that after World War II, Ficibajr got its volleyball fields, a kayak and canoe club, the Sava Swimming and Water Polo Club, etc. Water sports became very popular in that period and are generally seen as traditions of Brčko.⁷ We assume that during the Tito period the area lost its elite character and became an area for ordinary people and those interested in sports. During a street interview, an older man said that Ficibajr peaked in the 1960s and 1970s because at that time Yugoslavia got economically to a point where people could afford to buy some drinks and food when they went out and that Ficibajr also became a popular destination for daytrips for people outside of Brčko. Other older people concurred that during the Yugoslav period more people, meaning more people from different ethnic and religious backgrounds, than now used Ficibajr. During the 1992-95 war Ficibajr was under control of the Serb Army and a no-go area for non-Serbs. As an open space, the area was not safe for Serbs either, with the Croat border on one side and territory under the control of the Bosniak army on the other side. Older people remember that, after the war, Ficibajr was heavily neglected, run down, and used as a dumpster. In a street interview an older man attributed the lack of care for the area to “the people who recently arrived in the city”. Without specifically naming them, he referred to Serbs, as during the war many non-Serbs had fled the city and Serbs had moved into the city. During these challenging times, the heritage of Brčko and the river did no longer have the same meaning. During a street interview another older man said that the citizens who arrived in Brčko during the war were not aware of the importance of the river to the people. This neglect changed in 2004, when “the displaced people” started moving back to Brčko. Ficibajr became a topic for conversation and restoration, people regained the appreciation for the river and Ficibajr in general. One man captured the relationship between Ficibajr and the river in the following terms “[after the war] Ficibajr started merging with the river once again”.⁸ Young people grow up with the stories of older generations about Ficibajr and these oral histories function like affective archives: parents and grandparents share positive anecdotes from their youth spent at Ficibajr. Adnan (18, M) for example said that “for my parents as well, it was a place of gathering and socializing, and my grandfather flirted there with my grandmother” (focus group, 14.05.2021). The memories of his older relatives are a reason for him to go to Ficibajr: “it has remained a dear place for me to hang out with my friends”. We argue that going to Ficibajr is a way to connect, to retrieve, to participate in a history that was interrupted. Anecdotes from the older generations who grew up in Yugoslavia mention words like “brotherhood” and “unity” in line with the socialist discourse at the time, a time when ethnic and religious differences mattered much less in people’s use of space. Attachment to this area may be mixed with nostalgia about a specific period that is transmitted to post-war children and grandchildren.

7 Interview with Mirsad Đapo, 07.05.2021.

8 Street interview 23, 10.05.2021

As we will demonstrate, time, energy, care and money was invested in the area to make it thrive after the war: people met again to fish, the kayak and canoe club was restored, the sports fields were brought back in shape and benches reappeared. The actors who play a role in shaping Ficibajr include the local government (i.e. the Brčko District Assembly and its urban planning department), a number of formal and informal associations such as PRONI Center for Youth Development, Nema Labavo, the Beach volleyball club and Raja sa Ficibajra, as well as a wider public that uses the area. The government is responsible for bigger infrastructural projects at Ficibajr such as repairing and maintaining the promenade, as well as sports amenities. Its involvement is practical and formal. The mentioned associations and informal groups undertake smaller projects in Ficibajr that aim to embellish the area and maintain or repair existent infrastructures. Our focus in this section is on the non-governmental actors that work with younger people, born after the war. Their appropriation of this space is partly possible because it is not invested by political actors for political purposes. The observations discussed in the next sub-section mostly draw on the focus group discussion that took place on 14.05.2021, see annex 2 for a list of participants.

4.2 Ficibajr and a spatial approach to peace

During the focus group discussion the young people (18-26) involved in Ecofic and Nama Labavo projects explained their use of the Ficibajr area, their motivations to do voluntary work there in particular, and what peace meant to them in this post-war context. The spatial aspect of peace as experience did not really come up in the discussion, instead a lively debate arose about what peace means in post-war Brčko. Participants described peace as the reproduction of positive social relations; as a personal experience; as political organisation; as room for agonism; and as having economic rights.

Participants most often thought of Ficibajr as a space for the reproduction of positive social relations. Ficibajr typically is a place to meet friends and family, it is also a place where new friendships are made and where lovers meet on their first dates. Zorana (26, F) for example said that “Ficibajr definitely tells a story about growing up, about socializing and love.” Similarly, Omar (25, M) mentioned: “Each of us has met someone at Ficibajr with whom we have continued to hang out: birthdays, the first of May [Labour Day], and afterparties were all celebrated here.” It is also the place where young people go on the last day of high-school. We bring these stories in connection with the geographies of peace approach of McConnell et al. that peace is multiple, positive, and always in the making and partly exists of the (re)production of positive social relations (2014).

With regard to peace as a personal experience, Muamar (26, M) described peace as “spiritual fulfilment” and Zorana said that:

As for peace, (...) first of all you have to make it for yourself. Peace is not something that someone gives you, you make it possible for yourself. Something that gives you the opportunity to think calmly about what's

going on around you. From the little things, from nature, from interpersonal relationships. It means that you are undisturbed in your thoughts about everything (Focus group, 14.05.2021).

9 1 out of 3 politicians, 4 out of 6 focus group participants and 12 out of 23 street interviewees

Ficibajr is such a place where people can reflect and find inner peace. The river running through the landscape is one of the main elements of Ficibajr and positive feelings about this area are to an important extent linked to the appreciation of the river. During the focus group discussion and street interviews participants spoke about their habit to sit in Ficibajr and observe the river in order to reflect on their problems. Omar said for example that when he was a teenager and he had a problem he just went to the river: “Earphones and I would get okay again”. Researchers in public health also found that walks in nature and around water bodies positively affect attention and reflection on life issues (Kondo et. al, 2018). Reflection and an overall feeling of coherence between oneself and one’s environment is fostered by the tranquil ambience of natural spaces (Cheisura 2004) and in particular water possesses great aesthetic value and triggers positive feelings such as tranquility (Ryback and Yaw 1976, in Roger 1981). Roughly half of the participants mentioned that they come to Ficibajr to find some “mental rest”.⁹ This shared attachment to the river is not specific for Brčko. In her search for values and symbols that bind people in a city, Mackic also got interested in the role the river plays in Mostar, where the practice of diving from the bridge is deeply connected to the history of the city and values around it commonly shared (2016).

With regard to peace as room for agonism, Tamara (24, F) says that peace is “a kind of feeling that you can experience when you accept differences, it is not a thing but your view of the world”. How to deal with ethnonational and religious differences in relation to national identities unsurprisingly was an important topic of discussion in the focus group. Adnan’s point of view was influential, he stated that “peace can be experienced when the national identity finds itself in the last place”. He found that this would never happen as long as “the three national identities are even in the constitution”, i.e. are at the foundation of the organization of political life. What he missed most in achieving peace - and many participants agreed - was that there was no space for agonism. The example Adnan gave of what peace meant in Brčko was that his best friend and he are from different “national groups”, and that they will never agree on who began the war, but he finds it beautiful that they can discuss this constructively. He stresses that conflicting opinions are normal:

I wish to be able to have a conflict, because conflict is not necessarily negative. New experiences and new knowledge arise from it. Only then will I have the feeling that I am living in peace.

Although research participants did not literally use the term peace when they described what Ficibajr meant to them, and what kind of experiences they had there, we associate the area with the idea of peacescape because it is a space where different ethnic groups can meet in a constructive setting. Here factors that bind people, like attachment to a place, to leisure, to sport activities counterbalance factors of division, like ethnic identities. Sports clubs are an important binding factor. Siniša Milić, the Serb local politician, explained for

10 In 2020, 33,7% of Bosnians and Herzegovians were formally unemployed (Agency for work and employment BIH, 2021).

example that he participated in athletic events in Ficibajr in which teams from different ethnic groups (in which one group would be in the majority) would meet and for him this contributes to “socializing, building trust, and a shared perspective in the District” (interview, 21.05.2021). At school Omar observed a difference between children who were used to meeting children from other ethnic groups in e.g. sports clubs, and those that did not.

I as a kid trained basketball, and I went to 5th elementary school where 100% of the students are Bosniaks and I noticed that the kids who went with me to class, they had some conflicts in high school, some fights and intolerance. Purely because it was in high school that they first met someone who was not “the same”, whatever that means. While all the kids who practiced something before and met with “different” people, whatever that means, they behaved normally and had no problems. I think that it is very important to connect children, whatever it is, whether they do some sports, attend painting classes, anything. Any activities that can connect kids, that goes a long way.

Thinking about agonism in spatial terms, could mean to make space for civil(ian) society and could refer to spaces that can be appropriated by many different publics, spaces in which people can be political, and can confront each other non-violently. In these spaces people can be in an agonistic relationship, which is to be distinguished from antagonistic; spaces in which one can claim the right to be present while granting others simultaneously the same right. From peace as social relations, as a state of mind and room for agonism, others took the discussion to the level of the city and to political and financial considerations, saying that it was hard to be at peace in a situation of financial hardship, political tensions and a feeling of being abandoned by political actors and government. According to Zorana peace indeed means to be fine with one’s thoughts, as others have stated, but she adds that:

Certain situations in this city make you not feel mentally fine. A lot of people simply find themselves in a situation where they are not financially supported by the government, so that creates a certain problem with peace. [...] How do we talk about peace when people have nothing to eat?

Zorana feels that the focus of the local and national government on ethnonational identities and inter-ethnic conflict instead of on poverty alleviation and employment is an obstacle to peace.¹⁰ She believes that one cannot find oneself in a positive mindset, meaning cannot experience individual peace, if a person and their immediate social circle and family struggle financially. Adnan commented that “We in Brčko District do not have the freedom to say anything against our local community President, let alone against a bigger fish”, by which he meant more powerful political actors. Frustration with government was an important motivation for getting involved as a volunteer in one of the associations in Ficibajr, as it provided opportunities for local ownership and agency. Most of the smaller projects run by associations and informal groups avoid public funding because application procedures are “slow” and “bureaucratic”: polite terms to say that the procedure of allocating annual

public grants to NGOs and foundations is corrupt and functions along ethnonational lines. The reason why they avoid money from political parties is that that this would endanger the “neutral” character of the space. This also means that, in opposition to the area around the monuments, elected officials of the Assembly do not use the area of Ficibajr to make political statements. According to Muamer the projects of Nema Labavo are a means to “restore confidence”. The organization wants to show people what they can achieve without asking for help from politicians and that they use the acquired finances solely for the realization of the projects and not for their personal gain. Their projects are to a large extent self-funded or funded by individuals and businesses from Brčko District but some are also funded by international donors. Muamar explains:

For our project we did not involve politics and public funding because we wanted to activate the citizens themselves. We wanted to give them the confidence that when they invest in something, the project will be done and they can participate in it as well. To create some positive energy, to see that the money is used to get something done. Simply to create that security, to create that positive energy.

It is interesting that Muamer speaks of “security” in the sense of getting things done, and creating positive energy, which we also interpret as generating hope. Zorana, also involved in Nama Labavo, explains that, for her, volunteering work is important because it is a means to bring people in motion and use one’s talents. For her it is important “to do something for your environment and the local community”. It is a means “to see that not everything is so black and white in the city, that there is little color”. Seeing the city in multiple colors rather than only black and white is a great metaphor of what agonism looks like in the city. We can also understand color in the city literally as the pictures below of the ECOFIC project show. The project embellished the area e.g. with street paintings and shows that there are different ways of marking the city than ethnonationalist expressions.

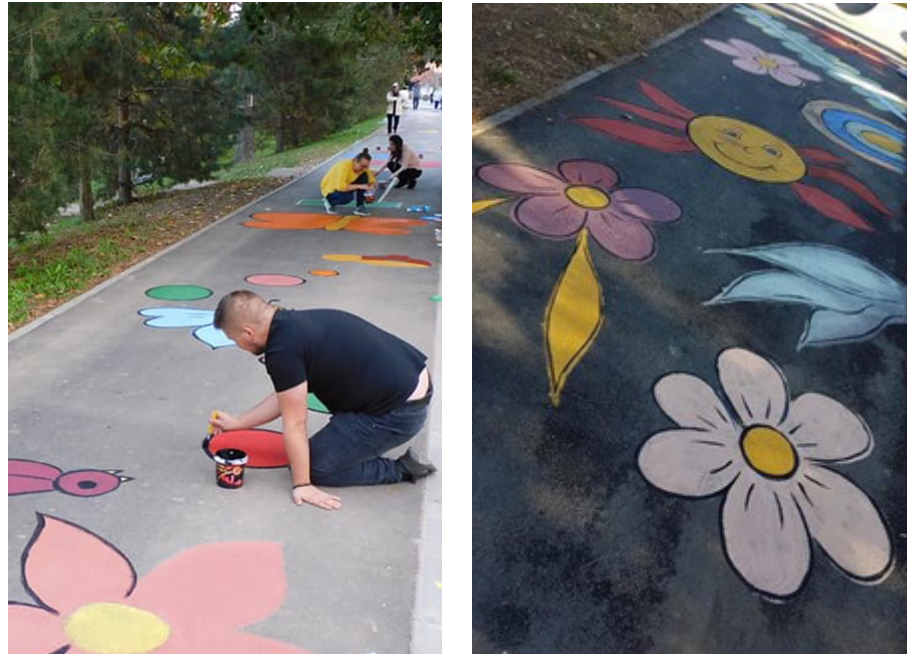


Figure 8: Street painting in the Ecofic project, <https://www.infoBrčko.com/vijesti/item/27174-Brčko-projekat-eko-fic-je-napokon-realizovan-foto.html>, 19/10/2020, accessed 7/9/2021

In this section there are ample arguments why Ficibajr could be understood as a peacescape and a space with a socio-petal function as values of tolerance and acceptance are developed here; urban dwellers can experience here the benefits of diversity; difference can be negotiated and transcended. The appreciation of the river that so many of the participants share can be interpreted as contributing to a shared civic identity. As is typical for socio-petal spaces the area is free of single group identifying artefacts, in opposition to the space of the monuments.

Conclusion

One could argue that the diversity present in Ficibajr is some form of transgression of what the norm in other spaces is and is a 'space of an alternative ordering' (Hetherington 1997). Ficibajr is not so much a site of resistance in a direct and contested way but may have the effect of undermining dominant forces by the disinvestment of the spaces of power and investing other spaces, through investing time, money, and care in a space neglected by politicians, which therefore can be given values associated with peace like love, friendship, tolerance etc. It is also caring for a space that was wounded by war and may be part of a collective healing process. According to Mitchell (2003)

Collective projects of resistance to normative memory production include those which refuse to accede to the scripting of history in the format of the dominant power. These are memories that evade the regulatory practices of the state and/or the market, with individuals and groups either forming "counter" practices associated with dominant monuments, or creating their own places of mourning or celebration. (Mitchell, 2003, 451)

It is exactly these counter practices in the sense of "place-based ethics of care" (Till 2012) that make the stories of Ficibajr worthwhile to tell, parallel to stories about the three war monuments in Brčko, in an inquiry into what peace looks like in the post-war city. As mentioned, Ficibajr presents a counter narrative of the post-war city as the logics that prevail here contradict the logics that prevail in other sites. We do not make a normative claim about the existence of the monuments. As many things in post-war societies, they are what they are, but they are not the only reality available. In the case of Brčko, young adults who feel not represented by politicians, draw attention to a site that is important to them for socializing. Looking for counternarratives is a way to include the voices that are often left out in political science research that privileges elite narratives. We believe in the power of counter-narratives, which complexify our understanding of what life is like in post-war societies, where we cannot only find the afterlives of war but also the shaping of peace. The role of human-nature relations in shared and non-exclusionary attachments to place merits further exploration in academic explorations of peacescapes.

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Annex

Annex 1 Questions street interviews

Questions at the site of the monuments:

1. Is any of these monuments speaking to you? (Why/why not)
2. What does this symbol represent to you (showing the symbol of the nearest monument) and what do you think of the symbols of the other two monuments?
3. Do you visit any of them? For what purpose?
4. What do you think of the location of the monuments?

Questions at the site of leisure (Ficibajr):

5. How often do you come here?
6. Why do you come here, or what do you usually do here?
7. Why do you come to Ficibajr and not other parks in the city?

Annex 2: Participants in the focus group

Name	Age	Sex	Position	Ethno-national group
Adnan Karamujić	18	Male	Proni Youth Center, coordinator	Bosniak
Tamara Rašić	24	Female	Proni Youth Center, coordinator	Serb
Omar Tursić	25	Male	Nema labavo, member	Bosniak
Ramiz Dedaković	25	Male	Nema labavo, member	Bosniak
Muamer Mešić	26	Male	Nema labavo, founder	Bosniak
Zorana Stakić	26	Female	Nema labavo, volunteer	Serb

About the authors

As a Marie Skłodowska-Curie fellow Claske Dijkema carries out research on Urban Peacebuilding at swisspeace. She works with a geographies of peace approach to European cities that deal with the aftermaths of paroxysmal violence and racism. As visiting lecturer at Critical Urbanisms program at the University of Basel she is responsible for a collaborative learning project on Decolonising the Swiss urban landscape. Her PhD research at the University of Grenoble Alpes consisted of developing a decolonial approach to marginalized-social housing neighbourhoods in France that deal with different forms of violence.

Ayla Korajac holds a Master's degree in international development studies at the Institute of Urban Planning and Geography at the University Grenoble Alps as well as a research intern at the Swisspeace foundation. Prior to that, Ayla gained an undergraduate degree in political science and international relations from the University Sarajevo School of Science and Technology and the University of Buckingham in her home country Bosnia-Herzegovina.

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