The Political Life of Urban Streetscapes

Naming, Politics, and Place

Edited By
Reuben Rose-Redwood, Derek Alderman,

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Reuben dedicates this book to Cindy, Sierra, and Riley

Derek dedicates this book to Donna

Maoz dedicates this book to his parents Yaffa and Pessach

10 Nationalizing the streetscape

The case of street renaming in Mostar, Bosnia and Herzegovina

Monika Palmberger

Introduction

In present-day Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH), the naming of public places is ascribed great importance and is often the cause of disputes between the three constituent peoples—Bosniaks, Croats, and Serbs—some of which have even resulted in legal battles before the courts.[1] Along with public squares, airports, and other cultural institutions, many streets were renamed during, and after, the 1992–1995 war by the national group that dominated each respective territory. In general, the renaming process has a twofold effect on a city's streetscape; first, it eradicates the old name and thereby aims to "de-commemorate" the event, person, or place that was previously remembered, and, second, the act of renaming establishes a new commemorative space (Azaryahu 1997; Rose-Redwood, Alderman, and Azaryahu 2010). Street naming is a state-wide practice in Bosnia and Herzegovina that has been used to establish areas of influence and assign a certain territory exclusively to only one "nation."[2] The nation's claim for exclusive rights of a certain territory is manifested in the new names, which establish a historic link between a certain place and the nation. In the case of West Mostar, which will be the focus of this chapter, the de-commemoration concerns the socialist past while the new commemorative space is dedicated to Croat national history.

Before the war, many streets in Bosnia and Herzegovina (and across Yugoslavia), honored the socialist era. Tito's self-declared aim to unite the Yugoslav people and to enforce a shared identity was inscribed upon the urban streetscape. Building on the image of the brave Yugoslav partisans, many streets were, for example, named in memory of important Partisans who fought against the Nazis during World War II. During the 1992–1995 war, and after the national division of Bosnia and Herzegovina, streets were renamed in order to emphasize the national division of the territory and to erase the socialist past.

With the Dayton Peace Agreement, signed on December 14, 1995, the 43-month-long war in Bosnia and Herzegovina officially ended. From that day on, Bosnia and Herzegovina became a shared state of the three constituent peoples—Bosniaks, Croats, and Serbs—with Sarajevo as its capital. The country was split into two entities (plus the special district of Brčko): the Serb Republic (which forms 49 percent of its territory) and the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina with its 10 cantons (which forms 51 percent). The Washington Agreement that

established the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina envisaged Mostar as a united Bosniak-Croat city and as the capital of the Herzegovina-Neretva Canton (Canton 7). For Bosnia and Herzegovina's Croats who claimed Mostar to be their "capital city" (in contrast to Bosniak-dominated Sarajevo and Serb-dominated Banja Luka), the renaming of streets on the Croat-dominated west side was an act of inscribing this claim upon the urban landscape.

This chapter first describes the process of street renaming in Croat-dominated West Mostar. It shows how by renaming streets and public places, Croat nationalist elites erased the socialist past in favor of a Croat national history that was etched into West Mostar's cityscape. As will be shown, this process runs parallel to the general rewriting of history. Despite the various efforts at such revisions, the chapter questions the immediate effect that the renaming of streets has had on the population and their historical consciousness (e.g., the attempt to erase positive memories of socialist Yugoslavia). A first effort is made to set up a dialogue between recent literature on street naming, urban memory, and generational memory.

The material presented in this chapter is part of a broader ethnographic study on memory discourses in Mostar that combines research on national as well as personal/generational memory (Palmberger 2016). Extensive fieldwork was conducted between 2005 and 2008 (with short revisits in 2010 and 2014), including participant observation, interviews, memory-guided city walks, informal conversations, and media analysis.

Renaming as a political strategy in times of regime change

The renaming of streets is not unique to Bosnia and Herzegovina; rather, it is a common practice when regime change calls for a new historiography. Often one of the first acts of a new political regime is the renaming of the physical environment. The collapse of the communist regimes in eastern and south-eastern Europe offers a wealth of examples for the transformation of cityscapes, including the renaming of streets, squares, and even entire cities themselves (Azaryahu 1997; Ugrešić 1998; Light 2004; Rihtman-Auguštin 2004; Gill 2005; Palonen 2008). But this process is not restricted to post-socialist Europe and can be found in other cases when regime change or significant changes in power relations have taken place (Kliot and Mansfield 1997; Leitner and Kang 1999; Swart 2008). Taking Cyprus as an example, a radical renaming of public space occurred after the Turkish invasion and occupation of northern Cyprus in 1974. In Cyprus' Greek-dominated south, old street names have largely remained, yet the Turkish-dominated north has seen a rigorous renaming of streets and other places in order to "Turkify" the territory. In the course of this venture, even old Ottoman place names were renamed because the administration did not trust their "Turkishness" (Kliot and Mansfield 1997, 512).

A new political era is often heralded by naming and renaming "captured territory," as has been the case in many modern nation-states:

> For nationalism naming and re-naming—the continuing transformation of the supposedly eternal physical environment—is one of its most powerful and

> contentious tools, as well as one of power's most explicit attempts to rewrite the past, literally reinscribing the surface of the world, and changing the name on the map—often while laying claim to something more ancient and authentic than the "old" one.
>
> (Hodgkin and Radstone 2006, 12)

In many parts of the world, street names have served to evince an official version of the national past by commemorating historical figures and events. This is why street names are prone to a process of renaming in times of political change.

Street signs are mundane objects. Accordingly, it may appear that the impact of commemorative street names on the production of a sense of shared past, and in evincing official versions of history, is significantly less than that of historical monuments, historical museums, or memorial ceremonies. However, commemorative street names (like other place names) conflate history and geography and merge the past that they commemorate into ordinary settings of human life. It is precisely due to its mundane character that the act of street naming acquires its ideological force by presenting history as the "natural order of things" (Azaryahu 1997, 481).

The aim of nationalizing territory in Yugoslavia started long before the war in the 1990s. A good example is Belgrade at the end of the nineteenth century, which underwent a process of the renaming of public space (Stojanović 2007). At that time, an elite commission—including well-respected politicians and intellectuals—was authorized to rename Belgrade's streets. Up to that point, streets had been named after trades and professions, important buildings, or simply their outward appearance. In the late-nineteenth century, many streets were renamed after geographical places important in Serbia's national history and major cities in the Slav world. If a virtual map were drawn connecting the places "remembered" in the new street names, the borders of medieval Serbia would come to the forefront. With this project, the nationally conscious intellectuals of the commission hoped to bring Belgrade's population to identify itself with the places remembered in the new street names so that they would accept them as "their own" (Stojanović 2007, 76). As Dubravka Stojanović (2007) vividly shows in her analysis of this process, the new names stood in sharp contrast to those chosen by Belgrade's business owners for their restaurants and inns, which were much more internationally oriented, with businesses preferring names of distant places such as "America," "New York," "Bosporus," "Little-Paris," "Little-Istanbul," and "Monaco." Stojanović's observations on the renaming of Belgrade's public spaces thereby support the interpretation that those behind the official renaming of streets did not necessarily act according to the understanding of the wider society, as will be discussed later in this chapter.

While the marking of public space is a common practice in the nation-building process, what does the renaming of streets tell us other than revealing the wish of new power-holders to promote certain events while neglecting others? What does it tell us about the people who walk and live in those streets? Should we think of historical consciousness as being initiated from the top (by political elites) and passively received by the population? This view has often directed the analysis of transient regimes. As Keith Brown argues:

> Yet in a region of transient regimes, what is emphasized about the inhabitants is their supposed willingness to adopt another national affiliation quickly. In parallel fashion, the new state is presumed to be ready and able to accept them as *tabulae rasae* and to inscribe national identity on them anew. … What one might term "experienced" history drops out of sight as the rhythm of every aspect of life is taken to be determined by the continuities or disjunctures in "top-down" history.
>
> (2003, 129)

Rather than accepting such a top-down approach to history, this chapter builds on the premise that individuals are shaped by the experiences of the different historico-political periods through which they live (Schuman and Scott 1989; Borneman 1992; Rosenthal 2006). These experiences may show continuities and discontinuities and may agree or conflict with each other, but they have an impact on people's perceptions of their society and its past (Palmberger 2016). Although political changes may come about abruptly and radically, it would be inaccurate to assume that a society fully adapts to all of these changes, and even more inaccurate to imagine that such societal changes take place at the same speed at which political elites change. This does not mean that individuals are unaffected by existing canonical national historiographies when orienting themselves anew in society and that they do not take part in reaffirming them. But autobiographical memories, which do not necessarily fit into the official historiography promoted by the ruling elites, need to find a place in the analysis as well (Palmberger 2013a, 2016).

Much research on the renaming of public space leaves the question as to how the wider population receives this process unanswered. In avoiding this question, such studies do not adequately account for the active role that urban residents play in shaping their own historical consciousness as part of their everyday encounters with the city's commemorative streetscape. Light and Young (2014, 683) have made a plea that we need "further investigation into how place names (and place name changes) are embraced, negotiated, or rejected within the everyday lives of the inhabitants of the city." In order to answer this call, this chapter builds on the work of urban scholars who critically investigate place-making as a relational practice that has social dissonance and contestation as an integral part of it (Massey 1994; Alderman 2000; Muzaini and Yeoh 2005; Till 2005; Rose-Redwood 2008) and on works of memory scholars who understand memory as an active process as well as personal and collective-national memories as utterly intertwined (Tonkin 1992; Ricoeur 2006; Passerini 2007).

Remaining divisions manifested in Mostar's cityscape

The Herzegovinian city of Mostar became a fiercely contested territory during the 1992–1995 war and has thereafter remained a divided city, with a

Bosniak-dominated east and a Croat-dominated west. Mostar represents a special post-war situation, as it is the only city of its size in Bosnia and Herzegovina that has been left divided among two national groups almost equal in size. The composition of Mostar's population has changed drastically as a consequence of the war. Before the war, the population was made up of 35 percent Muslims (Bosniaks), 34 percent Croats, 19 percent Serbs, and 12 percent others (including those who identified themselves as Yugoslavs); presently, Mostar is split in half between Croats and Bosniaks, who make up the vast majority of the population.[3] Today, most Mostarci (Mostarians) define themselves as Bošnjaci/Muslimani (Bosniaks/Muslims), Hrvati (Croats), or Srbi (Serbs), unless they are members of one of the minorities or are among the few who continue to call themselves Jugosloveni (Yugoslavs). Although the main line of identification is religion (most Bosniaks are Muslims, most Croats are Catholics, and most Serbs are Orthodox), the divisions are more of a national than a religious kind (Palmberger 2006). Still, the claim of national suppression during Tito's socialist Yugoslavia went hand in hand with the claim of religious suppression.

The lives of most Bosniaks and Croats are widely separated. If they do not actively seek to interact with one another, Bosniaks and Croats actually share little time with their national counterparts: Bosniak and Croat children attend different schools, teenagers go to different universities, adults have separate workplaces, and leisure time is predominantly spent on "one's own" side of the city (Palmberger 2010, 2013b; Hromadžić 2015). Only a small number of people still maintain friendships with pre-war friends of a different nationality and even for them the nature of their relationships has often changed.

Although there are indeed no clear signs marking the exact border between Bosniak- and Croat-dominated Mostar, markers giving hints of the "nationality" of the city's two sections exist. Apart from street names, which will be discussed in more detail later in this chapter, these are primarily religious symbols: Catholic churches on the west side and mosques on the east side.[4] As found throughout Bosnia and Herzegovina, also in and around Mostar these places of worship have significantly grown in number. Many mosques and churches (often foreign-funded) have been built in recent years, and they attempt not only to outnumber one another but also compete in size. Since religion is the main marker of national identity in the country, religious symbols are the most straightforward territorial markers. This does not necessarily mean, however, that Bosnians welcome the massive investment in churches and mosques. Quite to the contrary, many of my interlocutors expressed great displeasure at what they regarded as a waste of money, money they thought would have been better invested in public amenities like schools and hospitals.

One of the most striking religious territorial markers in Mostar is a huge cross overlooking the city, which was erected in 2000 on the summit of Mount Hum. The cross, around 30 meters high, stands out in the landscape and is one of the first things visitors see when driving into the city. The installation of this cross greatly provoked the Bosniak population, especially considering the fact that a great part of the heavy damage to the city was caused by artillery that was positioned on this

mountain. The Croat population, on the other hand, presented the cross as a symbol of peace and the Bosniak request to remove it was seen as a sign of Islamic intolerance against Croats and their Catholic religion. After several years, however, the cross has become, if not an accepted part of life, then at least a popular subject for jokes among the Bosniak population. For example, they joke that the cross, if not good for anything else, at least provides much-needed shade during hot summer days. On another mountain on the east side of the city, there is a huge sign laid out in white stones stating in capital letters, "BiH volimo te" (BiH we love you). Peculiarly, before the war it read "Tito volimo te" (Tito we love you) but had to be revised after Tito's death and the breakup of Yugoslavia.

Most supporters of the new state of Bosnia and Herzegovina can be found among Bosniaks, while Croats generally show more patriotic sentiments for Croatia. The Bosnia and Herzegovina flag serves to illustrate this. On public holidays, in West Mostar the flag is only displayed on official governmental buildings (a new practice fostered by the international community) and on the buildings of international organizations, while on the Bosniak-dominated east side the flag can be seen on many buildings, even on small shops. The nationalization of history is promoted through a plurality of channels in Bosnia and Herzegovina (Torsti 2004; Donia 2010). In addition to political speeches and media reports, the nationalization of history is also very actively supported by a considerable number of academic scholars and through public commemorations, the divided education system, and the memorial culture that also manifests itself in new street names. Let us now turn to the political practice of renaming streets in Mostar.

The politics of exclusion: street renaming in Mostar

In terms of street names in Mostar, which will be the focus of the remainder of the chapter, it is necessary to distinguish between East and West Mostar. While in the former, street names for the most part remained the same as they had been before 1992, the streetscape in the latter witnessed considerable renaming. This process started when West Mostar was declared the capital of Herceg-Bosna during the war in the 1990s. Herzegovina with Mostar as its main city has been central to the Croats' drive toward independence, for the Ustasha movement during World War II, and for the HVO (Hrvatsko vijeće obrane, Croat Defense Council) during the war in the early-1990s. Today, street names, newly erected memorials, and religious symbols mark the public space of West Mostar as part of the Croat nation. The claim of Mostar being the city of Bosnia and Herzegovina's Croats leads, in its extreme interpretation, to a denial of Bosniak (and Serb) existence or to a denial of the Bosniak-dominated part of the city. The claim that Mostar is an exclusively Croat city goes so far that the Bosniak east side of the city is simply ignored (e.g., in books on or maps of Mostar, see Augustinović 1999). Interestingly, Pilvi Torsti (2004) shows how Bosniak tourist guides in Mostar continue to present the entire city similarly to before the war, while Croat guides concentrate only on West Mostar and leave the Ottoman heritage, such as the Old Town, unmentioned.

The new street names emphasize a shared history with the motherland of Croatia by recalling Croat historic personalities and important Croat cities. The former include names of members of the Catholic Church and politically influential persons from the medieval Croat Kingdom as well as the so-called "Independent State of Croatia" (Nezavisna Država Hrvatska, NDH).[5] The new street names invoke the national meta-narrative by recalling the past glory of the medieval Croat Kingdom as well as the long period of victimization of Croats on the way to national liberation from the Nazis. This meta-narrative is also common in history textbooks (Torsti 2004) and was taken up in history lectures I attended at the Croat-dominated university in West Mostar. Among local historians, a central discursive strategy was the linking of the recent with the more distant past, even if the latter was not officially the object of study. Numerous connections to the distant past were made in order to reinforce the ancient history of the Croat nation and to point out the animosity that Croats have faced throughout time (Palmberger 2016).

Like the advocates of Croatia's war of independence (1991–1995), nationalist Croats in Bosnia and Herzegovina defined their "true" national identity in sharp contrast to the Yugoslav identity and the socialist past: heroes of Yugoslavia were called criminals and any reminders of them had to be erased from everyday life. Most monuments from the socialist past in West Mostar were razed during and after the war with the exception of an immense Partisan memorial cemetery that is still located there, even if seemingly neglected and heavily contested by the majority of Mostar's Croats. In the case of street names, the socialist past was erased by "Croatianizing" them. For example, the street once called Omladinska (Street of the Youth) was renamed Hrvatske mladeži (Croat Youth). The simple message behind this was that Croats should no longer be reminded of the Union of Pioneers of Yugoslavia (Savez pionira Jugoslavije). Instead of bringing up fond memories of being a member of the multi-ethnic Yugoslav Pioneers, the new street name aims to direct feelings and affection exclusively toward the Croat youth.

A similar example is Trg Rondo, a central roundabout and square in West Mostar that was renamed Trg Hrvatskih Velikana—Trg Mate Bobana (Croat Nobles Square—Mate Boban Square) after the president of Herceg-Bosna, the Croat quasi-republic during the 1992–1995 war. Rondo is also the location of a cultural center formally called Dom kulture (House of Culture). Today, big letters on the top of the building proclaim its new name: Hrvatski dom herceg Stjepan Kosača (Croat House—Duke Stjepan Kosač) (Figure 10.1).

In West Mostar, streets recalling the socialist period and those named after people known for their role in Serb or Bosniak national history were replaced by the names of Croat rulers, such as kings and dukes, or religious leaders, including cardinals and bishops (Figure 10.2). Others were renamed in memory of recent national heroes and victims, or after Croat cities in order to emphasize their affiliation with the mother-country Croatia. In this spirit, JNA (the Jugoslovenska narodna armija, Yugoslav People's Army) street became Kneza Branimira (Duke of Dalmatian Croatia in the ninth century), and Bulevar Narodne Revolucije (Boulevard of the People's Revolution) became Bulevar Hrvatskih Branitelja (Boulevard of the Croat Defenders). Thus the boulevard once named after the

Figure 10.1 The newly renamed House of Culture, *Croat House—Duke Stjepan Kosač*

People's Revolution was renamed in honor of the Croat defenders who half a century later fought for Croat national independence.

The renamed streets clearly show that the heroes of today are no longer the Partisans who established Tito's Yugoslavia but those who fought, both to defend the Croat nation and for its liberation. However, streets are not only dedicated to national heroes but also to victims. For example, one street in West Mostar has

been renamed ulica Bleiburskih žrtava (Victims of Bleiburg Street). When the Partisans met the British troops in Bleiburg, an Austrian town, in April 1945, the British handed over more than 18,000 captured members of various anti-Partisan forces (including Croat Ustasha soldiers) who had sought refuge in Allied-controlled Austria. But most of them were massacred when they reached Yugoslavia (Malcolm 2002).

Another street, previously called ulica Jakova Baruha Španca, after a Spanish communist revolutionary, is today called ulica Žrtava komunizma (Victims of Communism Street). Ulica Petra Drapsina, named after a leading Partisan in the liberation of Mostar on February 14, 1945, was renamed ulica Franjevačka (Franciscan Street). The day of Mostar's liberation by the Partisans (still remembered positively by Mostar's elderly population, particularly, although not solely, among Bosniaks) is perceived as a day of mourning by ruling Croats, who remember the execution of several clerics by the Partisans, after each of whom a street has been named. Since the official Croat commemoration of February 14, 1945, is not a day of celebration but one of mourning, the street formerly known as Avenija 14. Februar (Avenue of 14 February) was renamed Avenija Kralja Tomislava.[6] Interestingly, the street in memory of this Croat ruler of the Middle Ages was renamed in Bosniak-dominated Sarajevo.

The renaming of Mostar's streets, however, did not remain unchallenged. When Mostar was under the interim EUAM (European Union Administration)[7] from

Figure 10.2 A street in West Mostar newly named after a Catholic priest born in 1871 and "replacing" a street name honoring the Yugoslav Partisans

July 1994 until January 1997, the goal was to restore it as a multinational city. In this respect, the renamed streets were seen as an obstacle. When, in 2004, the High Representative, Paddy Ashdown, issued a new city statute for Mostar prescribing a unified city council and administration, he also established a commission for revising the names of streets, squares, and other public places.[8] The commission consisted of seven members, of whom three were of Croat, three of Bosniak, and one of Serb national background. The commission's task was to advise the city council, which in turn had been put in charge of changing the names of two-thirds of all streets and institutions. The commission's existence did not become widely known among Mostar's population and only attracted limited media attention. Between 2004 and 2007, there were a number of media reports on the commission's work, mainly criticizing its inefficiency and slowness. While the Bosniak-dominated press expressed interest in a faster and more satisfactory process of changing to the new names, the Croat-dominated press tended to downplay the importance of the commission. In the newspaper Dnevni List (a Croat-leaning daily published in Mostar), for example, the activities of the commission were criticized for diverting attention from Mostar's more pressing problems such as high unemployment, the illegal construction of buildings, and the lack of residential housing.[9]

The preliminary results of the commission were presented to the city council at its session on May 5, 2006.[10] The commission's task was presented as an effort to rename all streets and institutions that had names associated with fascism and totalitarianism. The commission was forced to admit that its members had had difficulties in compromising on the changes and therefore had only been able to agree on the renaming of a very small number of streets, such as those named after ministers of the NDH, including the streets ulica Mile Budaka, ulica Jure Francetića, and ulica Vokića-Lorkovića. After the commission had presented its results and the municipal councilors of the HDZ (Hrvatske demokratska zajednica, Croat Democratic Union, the Croat nationalist party) had suggested that streets associated with Tito's socialism should also be renamed, a fierce debate arose. The argument that the HDZ brought forward was that Tito's Yugoslavia had been a repressive and totalitarian regime just like that of the NDH. Members of the SDA (Stranka demokratska akcije, Party of Democratic Action, the Bosniak nationalist party) as well as the SDP (Socijaldemokratska partija, Social Democratic Party, the successor of the Communist Party) opposed this and denounced the HDZ's claim as being purely tactically motivated in order to divert attention from this uncomfortable subject. Their argument was that communism could not be equated with fascism. Members of the HDZ disagreed and claimed that it was clear who had been oppressed under Tito's rule—namely Croats, as Croats had not been permitted to use their language and practice their culture in Yugoslavia. Finally, the councilor and representative of the Jewish community intervened by saying that his family had also suffered during Tito's rule but that nevertheless one should not lump all the injustices of past regimes together as if they were equal.

In the days following the city council session, press releases by Bosniak-dominated parties such as the SBIH (Stranka za BiH, Party for Bosnia and

Herzegovina) and the SDA, as well as the SDP, printed in local newspapers demanded all changes of street names to be reversed. To them, changing only a few street names would merely be a cosmetic solution. This point of view presented clear opposition to that voiced in the Croat newspaper, Dnevni List, which argued that the public was not interested in street names but rather wanted the city council to focus on more pressing problems.

Bosniak and Croat representatives (or those who claim to represent the Bosniak or Croat nation) clearly follow different interests and hold different opinions about the process of reversing Mostar's new street names, as initiated by the commission. Still, as mentioned above, the new street names did not become a pressing issue discussed by the local media nor was the commission's work much debated among Mostar's citizens. The remainder of this chapter considers the ways in which Mostarians engage with the past and shows how personal memories are not as easily overwritten as street names.

Memory, nostalgia, and everyday urban encounters

In the introduction to the volume, *The Art of Forgetting*, one of the editors suggests: "We cannot take it for granted that artefacts act as the agents of collective memory, nor can they be relied upon to prolong it" (Forty 1999, 7). Memorials and commemoration sites need people to read them, which means first of all they have to notice and pay attention to them. This is also true for street names. During my fieldwork, I observed that Croats in West Mostar were often unaware of the new street names and other urban toponyms. For instance, the majority of urban residents still call the newly named central square, Trg Hrvatskih Velikana—Trg Mate Bobana, by its former and simpler name, Trg Rondo, and many of those who grew up in pre-war Mostar continue to refer to streets by their old names. Generally, the location of public buildings and other sights were described to me in terms of proximity to other known places rather than by providing the street names. Similarly, my informants were often unaware of memorials (or at least their meaning).

Light and Young (2014), who made a similar observation in post-socialist Bucharest, relate this reluctance among the population to switch to the new name to habit (rather than resistance). I would not overstress the point of resistance in the case of West Mostar either, as much points to the fact that the reluctance to change to the new names is grounded in habit. But the lack of knowledge about the new street names at least shows that the majority of Mostar's Croats did not actively engage with the process of renaming streets. The situation was different for the non-Croat population, especially for Bosniak and Serb returnees. For them these territorial markers were a painful reminder of the fact that what they once used to call home had been taken away from them. This suggests that the act of Croatianizing West Mostar's street names first and foremost signals to non-Croats that West Mostar is no longer their home. One of my Bosniak informants who grew up in West Mostar described the feeling of being a stranger in her former home when she said, "I just don't feel at home there [West Mostar] anymore, even

if I lived there for almost 30 years [before the war]. Everything has changed there, the people, the buildings and even the street names!

It is important, however, to acknowledge that:

> national places of memory are not simply imposed onto an empty landscape. … Although elites have had more control over the establishment of places of memory in public settings, they cannot control how they are perceived, understood, and interpreted by individuals and various social groups.
>
> (Till 2003, 295 and 297)

This becomes apparent when citizens actively protest against replacing an old name with a new one, as was the case in Sarajevo when a similar commission to that in Mostar suggested renaming Sarajevo's main artery, ulica Maršala Tita (after the Yugoslav statesman Josip Broz Tito), in honor of Alija Izetbegović (a Bosniak activist and first president of Bosnia and Herzegovina). Here it became evident that the decisions of the cultural, academic, and political elites about what should be publicly remembered and what should be silenced did not resonate with the views of a good part of Sarajevo's citizens (Robinson, Engelstoft, and Pobric 2001). People took to the streets in protest because they did not want to erase the memory of their former president. It is likely that even the relocating of street names, inspired by the Partisan movement, from the center to the periphery after the war in the 1990s, was a compromise for Sarajevo's citizens who did not want to see their (former) heroes leaving the city altogether. But it is not only in Sarajevo that nostalgic discourses of Tito's Yugoslavia persist; they are also still vivid in Mostar, not only among Bosniaks but also among Croats.

Nostalgia among Mostarian Croats may be subtler and not articulated in protests. Nevertheless, it is clearly present in personal narratives, thereby indirectly countering the official historical representations of Yugoslavia. I encountered great admiration for Tito not only among Bosniaks, but also among Croats, as, for example, with one of my interlocutors, Danica, born 1926. For Danica, Mostar is closely linked with Tito, whom she will never stop admiring for what he achieved for Yugoslavia. For her, as for several others of her generation, Tito is more like a saint than an ordinary mortal. When I once asked Danica what Tito meant for Mostar, she gave me the following answer:

> Everything, just everything! He was an extraordinary man, everyone thought that! Everyone liked him, everyone! … He did not care who was who but just cared for everyone, helped everyone as much as he could. He really was a great man! And as long as he was alive we lived, how do you say, "ko bubreg u loju" ["like a kidney in lard," meaning they had plenty of everything, similar to the English expression "like a bee in clover"].

Nostalgia, as became clear during the interviews I conducted with Mostarians of different generations, concerns first and foremost memories of socio-economic security and well-being but also the pre-war good-neighborliness (komšiluk)

among the different nations. Nostalgic discourses can even be found among those who welcome what is often referred to as "national liberation" and even among those who are today clearly behind the national division of Mostar (Palmberger 2008, 2013a). Even among young Croats who were educated during and after the war, nostalgia for Yugoslavia was not uncommon. Although most young Croats I met supported the "national liberation" of Croats and their language, they still held positive memories of Yugoslavia, personal memories as well as those passed on to them by their parents and grandparents. This was, for example, the case with Sanja, born in 1981. Sanja at times expressed nostalgia for Yugoslavia, such as when recalling childhood memories of her excitement at the prospect of becoming one of Tito's Pioniri (Pioneers), or of the apartment complex where she grew up, which housed families of all national backgrounds:

> I remember we lived at my grandparents', my mother's parents. We lived here and other Croats there and a Serb family over there and next to them another Croat family and downstairs Muslims and one mixed couple—she was Serb and he Muslim. They were all married couples of similar age like my parents, and they all had kids. We used to play together, hanging out, chatting. My parents used to drink coffee each day with our Serbian neighbors and they visited us for Christmas.

Sanja's nostalgia is mainly directed toward the multi-ethnic coexistence she experienced as a child in the apartment complex she grew up in. She recalls this place and its tenants as one big family despite the families' different nationalities. But Sanja is also "remembering" Yugoslavia as a place where people had jobs, compared to the great unemployment people face today. Even if she studied the Croat language (a subject only offered at university after the war) and stressed several times that she appreciated the Croat "national liberation," she was still critical of contemporary developments, such as when she said, "Now we have our own language but no job. What do we need our own language for if we do not have a job!"

Individuals are not only exposed to changing political contexts but are also confronted with their personal past experiences, which is reflected in the ethnographic examples provided above. My findings suggest that individuals' reconstructions of the past remain more flexible and situational than those of "memory makers" (Kansteiner 2002), namely the elites who decide on renaming streets or historians teaching in schools and at universities. While the latter's narrative is strategic and goal-oriented, the former's is characterized by target-seeking tactics. This distinction relates but does not fully correspond to Michel de Certeau's distinction between strategy and tactic. For de Certeau, strategy is linked to institutions and structures of power: "I call a strategy the calculation (or manipulation) of power relationships that becomes possible as soon as a subject with will and power (a business, an army, a city, a scientific institution) can be isolated" (de Certeau 1984, 35–36). Discursive strategies employed by those who claim to represent the nation are used to narrate independent, coherent national histories, to legitimize and objectify them. A tactic, in de Certeau's sense, is utilized by individuals to create space for themselves in a field of power. A tactic is influenced, but not determined, by rules and structures (de Certeau 1980). In positioning themselves in relation to the past, Mostarians are confronted with the political ruptures manifested in their personal lives and in the history of the wider society. Discursive tactics present in their narratives are utilized to deal with these ruptures (Palmberger 2016).[11]

Conclusion

As I have shown in this chapter, West Mostar underwent a severe process of renaming streets and thereby nationalizing the territory. Despite attempts to counteract and reverse some of the new names, most of them remain. While streets can simply be renamed, thereby eradicating certain aspects of a shared past, this does not seem to be possible for the wider population, at least not in the same radical manner. This does not change the fact that Croatianizing streets in West Mostar is a policy of exclusion that unequivocally signals to the non-Croat population that this part of the city is no longer their home.

In this chapter, I have pointed to the importance of taking into account that depending on their age Mostarians have been exposed to different nationality politics (often in conflict with one another) and have experienced in the past different forms of coexistence. I thus have argued that autobiographical memories, which do not necessarily fit into the official historiography promoted by the ruling elites, need to find a place in the analysis of urban memory scholars. Moreover, I have suggested two different kinds of stratagems in the narratives between those who are professionally involved in writing history and those who are not.

In summary, it can be said that no direct link can be simply assumed between a national historiography inscribed in the cityscape by cultural, academic, and political elites and the way people face these national markers in everyday life and relate to the past. It is therefore important to stress the fact that the process of renaming streets tells us first of all about the changes in the dominant public discourse and political orientation and not necessarily about people's understandings of, and positions toward, the past. This does not mean, however, that they do not join in (and thereby also strengthen) nationalist discourses, but it suggests that perceptions and representations of the past are more manifold and overlapping than depicted in the topography of street names.

Notes

1 When the issue of renaming towns in the Serb Republic (Republika Srpska) was brought before the Constitutional Court of Bosnia and Herzegovina, it was decided that this violated the rights of the other two constituent peoples (Croats and Bosniaks) to collective equality and to freedom from discrimination (Feldman 2005).
2 In this chapter I refer to "nation" instead of "ethnicity." In Bosnia and Herzegovina, people employ the terms narod/nacija (people/nation) to describe group identities. Moreover, the term "ethnic" has often been used in a selective and hierarchical way and has been ascribed only to some groups and not to others (Baumann 1996).

3 In 2007, the Federalni Zavod za Statistiku estimated the population of Mostar to be 111,198.
4 Another identity marker, though not visible in the cityscape, is language, even if the languages on the Bosniak-dominated east and the Croat-dominated west side of Mostar are only minimally distinguishable.
5 The NDH was a quasi-puppet state and had been established with the support of Germany and Italy in April 1941.
6 See Slobodna Dalmacija, February 24, 1995.
7 The EUAM was envisaged in the Washington Agreement and was supposed to enforce "a unified police force (led by the West European Union); freedom of movement across the front line and public security for all; the establishment of conditions suitable for the return of refugees and displaced persons to their original homes; the establishment of a democratically elected council for a single unified city; and the reconstruction of the buildings and infrastructure as well as the reactivation of public services" (Yarwood 1999, 7).
8 A similar commission was set up in Sarajevo as one of the post-war cantonal government's first actions (Robinson, Engelstoft, and Pobric 2001). Advised by the commission, streets carrying the names of historic personalities of Serb (and also, but to a lesser degree, Croat) origin in particular were renamed, while signs in Cyrillic script (used by Serbs) were removed. Streets recalling the Serb and Croat presence in the city were renamed.
9 See Slobodna Dalmacija, February 24, 1995.
10 Special thanks to Larissa Vetters, a fellow anthropologist and friend, for sharing her field notes on this with me.
11 Tactic as de Certeau describes it, however, is more closely linked to resistance than the way tactic is used here. Relating tactics closely to resistance would suggest that the narratives of my interlocutors represent "counter-memories" or "alternative histories" and that we can draw a clear line between "official" and "popular" representations of the past, between history and memory. But this is not the case.

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11 The politics of toponymic continuity

The limits of change and the ongoing lives of street names

Duncan Light and Craig Young

Introduction

One of the tenets of critical place name studies is that urban toponyms are embedded within broader structures of power, authority, and ideology (Vuolteenaho and Berg 2009). Place naming is thus one component of broader political projects concerned with governmentality, state formation, and nation-building (Rose-Redwood, Alderman, and Azaryahu 2010). Urban toponyms act to reify a particular set of political values in the urban landscape and in this way they "are instrumental in substantiating the ruling socio-political order and its particular 'theory of the world' in the cityscape" (Azaryahu 1996, 312). Furthermore, since urban place names are produced in particular political contexts, they are vulnerable to changes in the political order (Azaryahu 1996, 2009), which bring to power new regimes with different sets of political values and aspirations, with the result that names attributed by the former order may become discordant with the new agenda. For this reason, renaming the urban landscape is one of the most familiar acts (or rituals) accompanying revolutionary political change.

This process of "toponymic cleansing" (Rose-Redwood, Alderman, and Azaryahu 2010, 460) constitutes an unambiguous and public statement about the demise of the former regime (Azaryahu 2009, 2012a). Renaming streets is part of broader processes of "landscape cleansing" (Czepczyński 2008) through which the "official public landscape" (Bell 1999, 183) of the old regime is unmade through acts of "symbolic retribution" (Azaryahu 2011, 29), such as pulling down statues. Since shifts in political order produce a reconfiguring of the "known past" (Kligman and Verdery 2011, 9), the new names attributed to streets and landmarks introduce a new political agenda into the cityscape and, in theory, into the practices of everyday life (Azaryahu 2009; Rose-Redwood, Alderman, and Azaryahu 2010). Such renaming draws a clear boundary between a particular past and aspirations for a new future (Marin 2012). The renamings that accompany political change have been a central focus of critical toponymic scholarship (Azaryahu 2012a), particularly in contexts such as post-socialism (Azaryahu 1997, 2012a; Light 2004; Gill 2005; Palonen 2008; Marin 2012; Drozdzewski 2014), the post-colonial (Yeoh 1996; Nash 1999; Whelan 2003), and post-Apartheid South Africa (Guyot and Seethal 2007; Swart 2008).