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Monika Palmberger, *How Generations Remember. Conflicting Histories and Shared Memories in Post-War Bosnia and Herzegovina*

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The role of remembering and the struggle over memory politics in postconflict Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) is of high importance because memories are still being (mis)used to justify and promote exclusive ethnonational identities. In many works on postwar Yugoslavia, history has been presented as an independent variable, leaving the picture of a society clearly divided along lines of national and ethnic affiliation. Much of the research focuses on official memory politics and leaves little room for individual, personal memories and the way how people themselves negotiate memories to reflect their past and envisage the future. Monika Palmberger follows Bjelakovic and Strazzari (1999), who claim that the war in BiH was not a single war but a "collection of local wars" (p. 71), which makes the diversity of local conflicts in the country visible and is also reflected in markedly different postwar contexts. The book offers the in-depth analysis as the "anatomy of the local," (Jansen 2007) which makes Palmberger's approach an insightful read for those interested in memory studies in postconflict societies. Based on ethnographic research in Mostar, the city often called "the worst case" of partition between Bosniaks and Croats in postwar BiH, Palmberger prompts us to take off the ethnic lens when conceptualising memory studies in postconflict societies. She introduces the concept of "generational positioning," thus giving specific importance to reflecting the "past from the present" at different "stages of life." Generations are perceived as an intermediary between individual and collective memories, highlighting the interplay between the personal memories and the institutionalised memory politics, and their complex relationships.

The strongest arguments are elaborated in the ethnographic chapters where Palmberger discusses different generations and their discursive tactics when remembering the past. She insists that awareness of the tensions between the experiences of everyday life and the political rhetoric are essential to understanding the complexities of ethnic groups' coexistence in the country. The use of narrative approach, which sees memory as a social practice, is a fruitful methodological tool to analyse the role remembering plays in the interpretation of the past from the vantage point of the present and in shaping the visions of the future. Palmberger relies on long-term fieldwork and in doing so identifies three generations, differently positioned in regard to the recent political, economic, and social changes in BiH: The First Yugoslavs, who were born before the socialist Yugoslavia and who experienced World War Two; the Last Yugoslavs, who were born during the socialist Yugoslav era; and, finally, the post-Yugoslavs, who were born shortly before or during the war in the 1990s.

These generations also reflect three different historical periods described in the book. The First Yugoslavs tend to reinterpret the war of the 1990s within the interpretative template of World War Two, seeing themselves also as "builders of Yugoslavia" and thus being both reluctant to embrace the nationalistic rhetoric and more optimistic about the future. For them, the identification as "pravi Mostarac" (real Mostarian) is more important than the national or religious one; this implies a shared generational past crossing ethnonational borders. Their narratives are less influenced by the dominant public discourses compared with those of the Last Yugoslavs. For the Last Yugoslavs, the breakup of Yugoslavia marks a clear disruption to their lives. Their central discursive tactic is characterized by an ambivalent attitude toward Yugoslavia, oscillating between the positive investment with the Yugoslav past and the defence of the more recent nation-centered social narratives. The bifurcation of Last Yugoslavs' memory highlights that the multinational coexistence was seen as progressive in the past, yet in the shift toward the contemporary primordial essentialisation of identities the division within the city and the state are seen less critically. Their narratives show clear temporal frictions when dividing their lives in before, during, and after the war. The period before the war is remembered mostly positively as "normalan zivot" (normal life), whereas the war period is silenced but not forgotten. The life after the war is perceived as an "abnormal state, a state of disorder" (p. 178). In that way, the rupture caused by the war still exists today, characterizing their lives by a "double rupture" (p. 192). In contrast to other two generations, the narratives of the young Mostarians are more future oriented; by doing so, the youngest ones avoid stigmatization as a "lost generation" (p. 212). To lead the "normal life," the post-Yugoslavs depoliticize their personal life, at least discursively, and thus dissociate themselves and their personal experiences from the collective ones. When analysing the positioning of the Last Yugoslavs Palmberger claims that if the transmission of past experiences is a "communicative practice," where memories are not directly transmitted (p. 225), then the younger Mostarians renarrate and reinterpret it in line with their personal experiences, existing in the discursive space. Past is not an "unlimited resource" (p. 230) and, therefore, she suggests, it makes sense to focus on "generational and personal meaning making" (p. 225) when working on questions of memory and generations.

Palmberger's book is an ethnographically rich and theoretically sound contribution to studies of remembering across generations. Although it is limited to only one postconflict city, where memories are perceived as a source of negotiation and conflict with a strong emotional dynamic, it usefully focuses on generations to challenge the dichotomy between history and memory. Three distinct generational positions frame the discursive tactics of people living in Mostar, and yet the analysis reveals common tactics used across ethnonational communities in this divided place. As such the book highlights the entanglement and complex relationship between private and

public memories that are difficult to negotiate in deeply divided postconflict societies, suggesting pathways out of a simplistic account of remembering in postwar Bosnia and Herzegovina.

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