Cultural Trauma Set in Stone?
The Case of Shelling of Dubrovnik

ANA LJUBOJEVIĆ, MIA JERMAN, KOSTA BOVAN

University of Zagreb

Summary

During the war in former Yugoslavia, city of Dubrovnik was shelled in 1991. Even though these experiences were traumatic for all those involved, the goal of this paper was to explore if these events resulted in a cultural trauma, i.e. a breakage of cultural patterns and of collective identity. We expected that the process of trauma-claiming, which is central to cultural trauma, was amplified because of the role, both physical and symbolic, that the Old Town played for the collective identity of Dubrovnik. In the paper, we give an outline of the war in Dubrovnik. To assess the way that the war in Dubrovnik affected the collective identity, as well as to find out the relation between personal and collective historical narratives, we conducted interviews with 13 informants. We observed that all the phases of trauma-claiming were successful, or in other words, that there indeed was a cultural trauma in Dubrovnik as a consequence of the shelling. Additionally, we were able not only to observe expressions of cultural trauma experienced by our informants, but also to trace further changes and developments spanning to the present day.

Keywords: Cultural Trauma, Trauma-Claiming, Collective Identity, Narratives, Shelling

> "Who would be so crazy to shell Dubrovnik? Dubrovnik isn't being shelled."
>
> Slobodan Milošević;
> according to the ICTY testimony of Ante Marković[1]

Introduction

On 6th of December 1991 the city of Dubrovnik was shelled by Yugoslav People's Army (YPA), resulting in 19 deaths, 60 wounded, and massive damage to the Old

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[1] http://d2d71hfj198g28.cloudfront.net/02-dubrovnik/sg-2-10-ante-markovic-en.mp4 [accessed on 15 November 2016].

Town.[2] The shelling came as a major shock to the local community, and was felt on the national and international level as well because Dubrovnik was a part of UNESCO's World Heritage List, for its "cultural heritage [that] encompasses archives, which Ferdinand Braudel considered the most important source of Mediterranean history, intact monastic libraries and a Ragusan school of painting".[3] The shelling, as well as the siege which lasted for 240 days, were traumatic experiences for Dubrovnik's residents. In this research, we employ the concept of cultural trauma, a relatively new approach to studying this kind of experiences. If horrific events result in a crisis of the collective's identity and/or its cultural practices, we can say that a cultural trauma emerged. Thus, the goal of this research is to try to establish if the process of cultural trauma, especially trauma related to objects[4], occurred in Dubrovnik during the Yugoslav wars in the 1991-1992 period. We further analyse how cultural trauma affects dynamics of the relationship between private memories and official narratives of the wars of the 1990s in Dubrovnik. Hence, we distinguish three levels of trauma: individual, which is intensified by the collective context, collective, affecting determined social groups, and cultural. They are all manifested in various arenas of memory such as history, political and official discourse, commemorations, popular culture. We conducted several interviews with residents from Dubrovnik with the goal of establishing if the processes of cultural trauma occurred, as well as the relationship between their individual and collective memories. The outline of the paper is as follows. First, we present the theoretical framework of the paper. Second, we outline the context of the war in the former Yugoslavia with the specific focus on the area of Dubrovnik. Finally, we present the data from the interviews that were conducted with members of the local population.

[3] From UNESCO's Report on the Status of the Cultural Heritage in the Old Town of Dubrovnik Following the Bombardments of October, November and December 1991 – http://www.heritage.sense-agency.com/assets/dubrovnik-old-city/sg-2-05-unesco-report-en.pdf

[4] When mentioning objects, we follow Debs' (2012) choice of wording "for its open-ended meaning beyond an artistic context". For a comprehensive discussion on terms used in material culture literature, see Woodward (2007, cited in Debs, 2012).

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework that we used in this paper comes from two connected strands of thought dealing with traumatic experiences. First, we use the idea of cultural trauma to explain why the collective identity broke down in Dubrovnik in the 1991-1992 period. Second, by focusing on the way physical objects are related to collective memory and identity, we explain why the shelling of Dubrovnik's Old Town had such a strong impact on its identity.

Cultural Trauma

Since the end of the Second World War, the concept of trauma has been used to explain the violence, conflict, destruction, killings, as well as the aftermath of these events. Even though the term trauma originated from medicine/psychology/psychiatry, all of which have focused mostly on the post-traumatic stress disorder, it soon gained traction, and today it "can be seen at once as a socio-political event, a psychophysiological process, a physical and emotional experience, and a narrative theme in explanations of individual and social suffering" (Kirmayer, Lemelson, Barad, 2007: 1). In other words, the concept of trauma has left its original meaning as a psychical and psychological injury, and has been used in research as a metaphor in a range of different approaches. One approach, which came from the Center for Cultural Sociology of Yale University, uses the concept of cultural trauma. This approach focuses on the trauma of the collective or the trauma of the social identity. In that sense "a cultural trauma occurs when members of a collectivity feel they have been subjected to a horrendous event that leaves indelible marks upon their group consciousness, marking their memories forever and changing their future identity in fundamental and irrevocable ways" (Alexander, 2004: 1). Thus, the main point is that a trauma does not exist in a vacuum, and is not a direct result of an individual or a collective experiencing pain or loss. If the pain, loss or destruction is perceived as being disintegrating for the collective's identity and forces the group to reinvent its own identity, then we can say that the group has experienced a cultural trauma. The group should culturally interpret the situation as a wound to the cultural tissue, i.e. it needs to ascribe a traumatic meaning to the situation (Sztompka, 2000).

Alexander et al. (2004) oppose this approach to the enlightenment and psychoanalytic approaches to traumas. The former approach conceptualizes trauma as an obvious, rational response to abrupt change, such as shock, depression or even PTSD (e.g. Yadin and Foa, 2007). The latter points to the double trauma, the first coming from the event itself, and the second coming from the anxiety of the repression of the original experience (e.g. Caruth, 1996). However, both approaches suffer from the naturalistic fallacy, as they both conceptualise trauma as a normal, au-

tomatic response to terrifying events.[5] However, from the point of view of cultural trauma, the event in itself does not create trauma. It is the socially mediated attribution of a wounded collective identity that creates the trauma (Alexander, 2012).

For a cultural trauma to emerge, a process of "trauma-claiming" must be successful. This process is a claim to "a fundamental injury, an exclamation of the terrifying profanation of some sacred value, a narrative of some horribly destructive social process, and a demand for emotional, institutional, and symbolic reparation and reconstitution" (Alexander, 2004: 2). This process is intentional, i.e. it is the result of human agency, and it includes speech elements, since it is basically a creation of a new dominant narrative. We can identify two important agents – trauma carrier groups (who act as speakers) and the public (who act as the audience). Within carrier groups, leaders use persuasive symbols and rhetoric to project the traumatic claim to other members of the carrier group. If they are successful, i.e. if members of the carrier group accept the claim that they are traumatized, they can later spread it to the whole public. Trauma-claiming is a spiral of significance in which four critical representations must be elaborated by the carrier group – nature of the pain (what did actually happen to the group), nature of the victim (who was affected), relation of the victim to the wider audience (is the identity shared among them), and the attribution of responsibility (who is the perpetrator) (*ibid.*). This process is pursued within different institutional arenas, such as religious, aesthetic, legal, scientific, mass media, and state bureaucracy (Alexander, 2012). If trauma-claiming is successful, the collective will be forced to revise its identity, which includes searching and reinterpreting the collective memories in a way that fit with the new established identity (Bell, 2006). This period is (or should be) followed by a period of routinization of the trauma, at the end of which the trauma should no longer preoccupy the collective. Relief, both for the public and the carrier groups, should emerge.

This approach has been used in different contexts to explain diverse phenomena, such as the Partition of India and Pakistan (Alexander, 2012), the formation of African American identity in USA (Eyerman, 2001), the symbolic boundaries of the Holocaust (Lazar and Litvak-Hirsch, 2009), the deaths of supporters of a football club (Hughson and Spaaij, 2011) etc. More recently, it has been argued that this approach could be used in explaining the feelings and reactions to destructions of important objects. Using Durkheim's theory of totems, Debs (2012) points out that the destruction of a material object that fits the archetype of a sacred thing could be interpreted as a destruction of the collectivity itself. Using a discourse analysis of media reports, she shows that a cultural trauma of objects occurred in Italy in 1997 after an earthquake destroyed the Basilica of Saint Francis of Assisi. The de-

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[5] For other critiques, see Kansteiner (2004).

struction was interpreted as the destruction of Italy's soul, its spirit, and its national body. Even though a counter-narrative that focused on human loss was present, it was trumped by the narrative of the cultural trauma related to the Basilica. Debs (*ibid.*) concludes that this type of trauma is not uncommon, and that it is, in fact, a global cultural phenomenon. In the next section, we analyse in more detail the role of physical objects and places in the community.

Place, Memory, and Identity

The process of trauma-claiming, by definition, is a memory-creating process. This is in concordance with ideas of Maurice Halbwachs, who points out that all memory is a social construct, whether it is institutionalized or individual (Halbwachs, 1992). He argues that it is impossible for individuals to remember in a coherent way outside their group contexts. In this sense, memories are "as much products of the symbols and narratives available publicly (...) as they are the possessions of individuals" (Olick, 1999). What is collective memory is presented, embodied, and reproduced at various *lieux de mémoire* (Nora, 1989): in museums and monuments, through commemorations and public holidays, through media and cultural production.

The main foci of our research are the dynamics of memories and symbols linked to the notions of cultural heritage, monuments and aesthetic values of the town of Dubrovnik, i.e. how the place becomes a subject of cultural trauma and collective memory. A classical notion of public space, defined by Jürgen Habermas (1989), sees it as a physical manifestation of the public sphere, or the social site where meanings are collectively articulated and negotiated. Public sphere refers to the space "between civil society and the state, in which critical public discussion of matters of general interest was institutionally guaranteed" (Thomas McCarthy, introduction to Habermas, 1989), i.e. location within which reasoned discourse could be rationally debated. It is a "sphere of people [coming together] as a public" to discuss matters of shared interest and to engage in debates. Habermas' definition of the public sphere is thus based on three major concepts: the individual, the debate and the public space. Cultural trauma, representing a consequence of a tear in the social fabric, generates change in public sphere and assigns new meanings to public space. Finally, what matters for Habermas is not the physical space where the deliberations are taking place, but rather the presence of shared social spaces.

Lefebvre argues in similar vein that an existing space "may outlive its original purpose and *raison d'être* which determines its forms, functions and structures; it may thus in a sense become vacant, and susceptible of being diverted, reappropriated and put to a use quite different from its initial one". Therefore, any space, and public space in particular, is socially produced (Lefebvre, 1991: 167). Space is

produced by dynamic interrelations between representations of space (maps, plans, models and designs), representational space (ideas, imagination, theory and visions) and practice over time (*ibid*.: 41). Lefebvre claims the analysis of space must examine "spatial practice", because it "embodies a close association, within perceived space, between daily reality (daily routine) and urban reality (the routes and networks that link up the spaces set aside for work, 'private' life and leisure" (*ibid*.: 38). Moreover, these perceived spatial practices must acknowledge the "representations of space", which are the dominant order of society and production, because here is where one finds "conceptualized space, the space of scientists, planners, urbanists, technocratic subdividers and social engineers... all of whom identify what is lived and what is perceived with what is conceived" (*ibid*.). Finally, Lefebvre also suggests spatiality must delve into "representational spaces", or "space as directly lived through its associated images and symbols, and hence the space of 'inhabitants' and users... this is the dominated – and hence passively experienced – space which the imagination seeks to change and appropriate" (*ibid*.: 39). This last dimension – representational space – is the subject of interest for this paper. We analyse how cultural trauma affects actors in the society and changes symbolic(s) of the public space.

Traumatic war events and "violence imposed on a place bears not only the implicit challenge to the identities associated with it, but also [...] provokes responses intimately related to a well-developed sense of place" (Povrzanović Frykman, 2004: 69-70). Moreover, we follow Casey's argument underlying the power of the place "to direct and stabilise us, to memorialise and identify us, to tell us who and what we are in terms of *where we are* (as well as where we are not)" (Casey, 1993: xv).

War in Dubrovnik

To analyse and compare personal memories and official historical narratives, and understand the role physical objects and places have/had in Dubrovnik, we will briefly present the historical, social and media context of the war in Dubrovnik. Before we do so, it is important to emphasize the earlier context of Dubrovnik in its historical and political forms, namely the status of independence of Dubrovnik through the centuries. During the 14th and 15th centuries Dubrovnik became one of the most important maritime trading centre on the Adriatic, along with Venice and Ancona, and that was also the time when legal status of the Republic of Dubrovnik was completely built, securing the independence of Dubrovnik in many political, legal and economic aspects. That independence was stable during the "golden time" of the Republic of Dubrovnik in the 16th century and throughout the 17th and 18th centuries. However, in 1815, Dubrovnik region was annexed by the Habsburg

Empire and became a part of the crown land of Dalmatia. Nevertheless, it seems that the discourse of differentiation of Dubrovnik in comparison with the rest of Croatia can be felt even today. These are the reasons why a historical context is important, but also why the war in Dubrovnik in 1991 came as a complete shock. Furthermore, Dubrovnik was torn between two streams which tended to usurp the cultural dimension of the city, one stemming from the Illyrian Movement and the other one led by Vuk Karadžić (Banac, 1992). These tensions over cultural monopoly of Dubrovnik had a strong ideological background which remained vivid in a somewhat different shape throughout the war and postwar period, which will be presented below.

The siege of Dubrovnik was a military engagement fought between forces of YPA under the command of Pavle Strugar, Miodrag Jokić, Milan Zec and Vladimir Kovačević, and Croatian forces during the Homeland War[6] in Croatia. The aim of the attack was to secure control of this area in Croatia, to detach it from Croatia and "to annex it to Serbia/Montenegro and other areas intended for Serb control in Croatia and Bosnia".[7] The most dramatic moments for Dubrovnik were those in the period between October and December 1991. Considering the fact there was no significant Serb minority in Dubrovnik, the war was not expected to take place in Dubrovnik. Another important fact is that Dubrovnik is a "UNESCO-listed 'masterpiece of human creative genius'" (Pearson, 1991: 198), which made the siege more shocking, especially in the context of destruction of monuments. War in Dubrovnik happened in two separate periods, from 1st to 24th October and from 30th October to 6th December 1991, whereas 6th December is considered to be the day when the largest damage was made in this area. Srđ, a fortress placed in Dubrovnik, was a strategic point which had to be defended to defend Dubrovnik itself and for that reason local defense corps of young men was established to fight YPA soldiers (*ibid.*). It is alleged that YPA forces killed and wounded numerous civilians in and around the city of Dubrovnik, and they "systematically destroyed public, commercial and religious buildings, as well as private dwellings",[8] whereby 68.33% of the buildings in the Old Town had been hit by projectiles in 1991 and 1992. Although the damage was enormous, especially that of cultural heritage, total occupation of Dubrovnik was successfully avoided by defending Srđ.

Official narrative about the war is well documented in media-reporting of the 1990s. Moreover, media coverage is one of the spheres within which the trauma-

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[6] The 1991-1995 war in Croatia is known as "Homeland War". This label is widely used by the local population, political elites, and is also mentioned by that name in the Croatian Constitution.

[7] http://www.icty.org/en/press/full-contents-dubrovnik-indictment-made-public [accessed on 12 November 2016].

[8] The same source as in previous footnote.

claiming process occurs. Therefore, we have outlined main topics brought by Croatian media reports from the war period, and also included Montenegrin media since, in the local context, that was the most discussed example of war propaganda.[9]

During the war period, local newspapers *Dubrovački vjesnik* put an emphasis on defining the attackers as the enemies, aggressors, insensitive actors who came to Dubrovnik to destroy the town, together with its population and cultural inheritance, whereas Dubrovnik and its citizens were defined as victims. In the same time, a lot of space was given to Croats in Dubrovnik and military forces defending Dubrovnik, who were described as heroes who won't give up on their town. Those motives are visible in reporting about civilians who got hurt, but also in reporting on the destruction of monuments. Such examples can be found just by looking at the titles in the issues of *Dubrovački vjesnik*: "Brgat will never fall",[10] "The heart of the city had been hit",[11] "The City, the Proud City will not surrender".[12] Another such case was the report on destruction of Arboretum: "(...) it was resistant of any evil for five centuries. Any evil, except the evil of Yugo-army, which interferes with school, relics, monuments of history and culture and natural beauty of our homeland."[13]

On the other hand, media outlets with national coverage such as *Večernji list* and *Jutarnji list*, two of the most popular daily newspapers in Croatia, also dedicated great attention to the attacks on Dubrovnik. During the war-time period, content in *Večernji list* was mostly based on defining the enemy as aggressors and criminals,[14] who came to destroy the Town and who were violating the truce. In addition, Dubrovnik was represented as a whole by personalization of the Town, as a hero who is ready for defense against the attackers and who must be saved.[15] War in Dubrovnik was described as a genocide against Croats.[16] Furthermore, reporting was directed towards representation of the damage done in the area of Dubrovnik, namely destruction of monuments, as well as to the number of war victims. After the war, reporting was mostly connected to the trial of Pavle Strugar. In *Jutarnji list*, which started publishing later (the first issue was published in 1998), reporting

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[9] Most of our informants gave references to Montenegrin media outlets. We have not included, although they are valuable resources for an extensive research on media, any Serbian, Bosnian or foreign media reports, as the sole scope of our media analysis was to describe the general context of the war in Dubrovnik.

[10] *Dubrovački vjesnik*, 10/19/1991.

[11] *Dubrovački vjesnik*, 10/26/1991.

[12] *Dubrovački vjesnik*, 10/26/1991.

[13] *Dubrovački vjesnik*, 10/23/1991.

[14] *Večernji list*, 11/22/1991.

[15] *Večernji list*, 11/18/1991.

[16] *Večernji list*, 11/17/1991.

was mostly based on political relations with the neighbouring countries, namely the apology of Montenegrin president Milo Đukanović for aggression against Croats and reactions that followed,[17] as well as the Strugar case. Ultimately, it is interesting to mention *Dubrovački vjesnik*'s critique of Radio Montenegro titled "The Stupidity of Montenegro",[18] about alleged thousands of Serbian hostages held captive in Dubrovnik by Ustasha.[19] Following the description of this radio story, the last sentence in *Dubrovački vjesnik*'s article was: "We hope that the listeners of the Radio of Montenegro will eventually hear the real truth".[20]

Pobjeda, the only printed media outlet in Montenegro, played an important role in war-mongering propaganda, which was particularly poignant during the attacks on Dubrovnik (Morrison, 2009: 92). Media campaign prior to YPA's shelling of the wider Dubrovnik area supported the option of military action and suggested subsequently that such attack was legitimate and just (Vojičić, 2006: 11). The most prominent example of this campaign is *Pobjeda*'s special issue titled "War for Peace", which was published from October to December 1991. Such title justifies possible armed conflict and reveals the frame according to which Montenegro is forced to perform violence in order to prevent a greater catastrophe.

Pobjeda often used blatant lies to describe the destruction of Dubrovnik: "thick clouds of smoke are a result of tyres set on fire in order to give the impression that the Army [YPA] is not sparing the Old Town's ramparts" (*ibid*.: 10). Members of Croatian forces defending Dubrovnik were often called "Ustasha", and there was a constant cry for help to defend the homeland: "A plus in patriotism", "When homeland calls". Finally, cultural heritage is not considered an excuse to avoid shelling: "Ramparts as Ustashas shelter", "The Town must go down" (Vojičić, 2006).

Methodology

To assess the way that the war in Dubrovnik affected the collective identity, whether it resulted in cultural trauma, as well as to explore the relation between personal and collective historical narratives, we conducted 13 interviews. Our informants were all residents of Dubrovnik, 8 males and 5 females. Two of them were soldiers during the war and are currently members of Croatian association of war veterans with disabilities (HVIDRA); four of them were retirees; one was a member of Serbian minority council. We used a gatekeeper from the University of Dubrovnik to find most of the informants, while some were found via *snowballing* or direct contact.

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[17] *Jutarnji list*, 06/25/2000.

[18] "Biseri Crne Gore", for which the literal translation would be "Pearls of Montenegro".

[19] Members of WWII fascist army in Croatia.

[20] *Dubrovački vjesnik*, 10/23/1991.

Even though we had a diverse sample of informants, it is important to note that we did not strive for a representative sample in an attempt to make general conclusions. This is because this type of research is qualitative in nature and is concerned with delving deeper into experiences that our informants went through as well as their interpretations of those experiences.

The interview was semi-structured, with topics ranging from life in Dubrovnik before the war, the events of the war themselves and personal stories, to questions regarding justice, reconciliation, attribution of responsibility for the attacks, the role of the ICTY, and the role Dubrovnik played on the Croatian road to independence. Interviews were conducted in Dubrovnik, lasted from 30 minutes to 2 hours, and were done either by one or two interviewers. Interviews were conducted with help of research assistants who participated in the SpeCTReSS Summer Institute on Cultural Trauma – "Double face of Cultural Trauma: Victim's and Perpetrator's side". After the interviews were over, they were transcribed, after which we conducted a content analysis.

Results and Discussion

The main subject of this paper is cultural trauma related to space and place in the town of Dubrovnik. We distinguish two main perspectives for this analysis: 1) symbolic value(s) of *the Town* perceived, explained and performed locally, and 2) relationship between local-micro and national-macro levels of cultural trauma ascribed to the town.

In order to assess the impact of public space and public sphere on the narrative of cultural trauma in Dubrovnik, this paper analyses social production of memory, related to personal pre-war, war and postwar experience. Our aim is to connect and question the symbolical meaning of the town with the notions of identity and belonging. Finally, this paper tries to establish if and how war-time symbols are changing their meanings and whether new postwar identities are being introduced. We explore these ideas through four topics which were present in our respondents' responses – cultural trauma and Dubrovnik's particularity, changes in social identity, the "bigger picture", and question of responsibility.

Cultural Trauma of Objects: the Town

We have already stressed that the cultural trauma produces reconstruction and (re)negotiation of the social identity. In the case of Dubrovnik, the attacks of YPA and particularly the shelling of the Old Town generated strong cultural trauma of objects. In other words, the shelling of Dubrovnik is an event which has all relevant aspects of being able to create a cultural trauma (Smelser, 2004) – the event could be described as indelible, once and for all destroying Dubrovnik's collective iden-

tity and its "fundamental cultural presuppositions", while at the same time being laden with negative affect (as one informant put into words – "what kind of feelings can you have towards them [attackers]? Of course we hated them"[21]).

Let's delve further into the importance of destruction of objects for Dubrovnik's cultural trauma. According to Mira Debs (2012: 487), "the most significant factors for the development of a cultural trauma of objects are the relative loss of human life, the totemic importance to the collective and the duration of the damage". Debs (*ibid.*) further argues that there is a tension between mourning objects and the number of victims, "therefore the clearest cases of objects being narrated as cultural traumas occur when the death toll is minimal". During the siege of Dubrovnik and in the surrounding area, 116 civilians and 430 Croatian soldiers were killed or died in the course of war. Moreover, 443 persons were imprisoned in Morinje and Bileća camps and around 33 thousand persons were expelled from their homes.[22] We would not go into debate what *number* can count as a minimal death toll, instead we argue that the strong cultural trauma was present in Dubrovnik because the human losses were *perceived* to be minimal in comparison to the war in other parts of Croatia or Bosnia and Herzegovina. For example, one of our informants, while comparing Vukovar and Dubrovnik, stated:

> I really believe their [suffering] was bigger, but on the other hand, our importance for Croatia was still dominant (...) Not because of the people, unfortunately, but because of the stone. And that is the whole tragedy, you know, because they protected the stone far more than the people and talked about destruction more than about those human lives, those who got killed.[23]

Furthermore, one of our informants compared the war situation in Dubrovnik with Vukovar stating that "I was sorry for them, but I was happy [Dubrovnik] was not like that".[24] Another interviewee claimed that "when I think of the war in Bosnia, it all went well for us [citizens of Dubrovnik] in the end".[25]

Totemic importance of objects follows Durkheim's definition of a totem as something that is "before all a symbol, a material expression of something else" (Durkheim, 1995 [1912]: 206) which "serves to designate the clan collectively" (*ibid.*: 100). In approaching the questions of social identity and collectiveness and their relation to the space, we analyse in which way our informants express their

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[21]　Personal interview DU3.

[22]　http://www.osobnasjecanja.hr/novosti/osobna-sjecanja-na-rat-dubrovnik-javna-tribina/ [accessed on 15 November 2016].

[23]　Personal interview DU11.

[24]　Personal interview DU4.

[25]　Personal interview DU5.

identities and sense of belonging and how they perceive boundaries and borders. In doing so this research follows Brubaker's approach in opposing the taken for granted "groupist" constructivist paradigm (Brubaker, 2006) in the study of identity. The avoidance of the pre-constructed, static categories allows us to incorporate everyday contexts in which people "create their meanings of social context, and adjust their actions accordingly" (Koska, 2009: 197).

While collecting interviews about the personal memories before, during and after the war in Dubrovnik, we had our attention immediately drawn to the importance of place and space in negotiating individual and social identities of this town's inhabitants. However, the attachment to territory should not "be understood as an issue of (ethno)nationality" (Jansen, 2005, quoted in Kockel, Craith, Frykman, 2012), nor should it follow the sedentarist logic which presumes a naturalised link between people and place (Jansen and Löfving, 2009).

We have asked our interviewees when the war started for them, in order to capture the perspective of this traumatic event and to understand the context of their own war experience. Their answers mostly coincided with the beginning of the attacks on Dubrovnik (1st October 1991) and outlined 6th December 1991 as the worst shelling which made serious damages to the Old Town's buildings and monuments.

What stood out, however, was an almost unconditional disbelief that Dubrovnik could be subject to war destructions and shelling until the very beginning of the attacks. One informant, who was 17 when the war started, recalled that the 1st October was actually the first day of school. "I remember that we were packing bags for school and I listened to some music on the cassette player when the electricity was cut off and the *party* began" (emphasis added).[26]

The choice of wording aiming to describe a traumatic event such as mortar attack or shelling was often downgraded with the use of euphemisms: "I lived in Mokošica[27] but later moved to the town, to Gruž[28], when *the plot begun to thicken*[29]; and then, there was a *circus* in Gruž so we moved to Montovjerna[30]" (emphasis added).[31] Euphemisms seem to be used to ease the talking about, and relating to, past traumatic events; they "imply the complexity of trauma and the insufficiency of language to put it into words" (Fuchs, 2015: 54; see also Kunt, 2014). Moreover,

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[26] Personal interview DU5.

[27] Modern part of Dubrovnik, on a hill and thus exposed to the attacks.

[28] Neighborhood in Dubrovnik.

[29] In the original version "kad je vrag odnio šalu", literally meaning "when devil took away the joke".

[30] Neighborhood in Dubrovnik.

[31] Personal interview DU6.

there seems to be a dissociation between Dubrovnik and the rest of Croatia, as if the war was happening somewhere else:

> We didn't believe that someone would throw bombs on us, it was something that was considered impossible – not in whole Croatia, but mostly in Dubrovnik, first because of cultural heritage [...], second because the Serbs that were coming were always amazed by the town and because we grew up in sort of a unity.[32]
> Something is going on there, but it won't come to Dubrovnik... in Vukovar everything is politicized and orchestrated, while here it's not.[33]

In addition, Dubrovnik was presented as a special place, whose particularities and uniqueness exceeded regional and national context, and thus believed to be immune to the attacks. A woman living in the Old Town stated that "the last summer [before the attacks] was perfectly normal [...] but we have heard of Vukovar. We were not as involved emotionally, we had a feeling that nobody would touch Dubrovnik, we were too *infisani*[34] about the town",[35] while another informant talked about voluntary ignorance: "we acted as if everything was going to be solved in some way".[36] Cultural heritage of Dubrovnik and its historical UNESCO recognition was considered a guarantee of safety: "It would have been different if Knin was bombed instead of Dubrovnik – primarily in the eyes of international powers. It is enough to say that the town was under UNESCO protection, old historical town with large tradition, and unfortunately Europe only realised on 6th December what was going on." Another informant mentioned Dubrovnik's position on the global cultural landscape saying: "Dubrovnik was a name, a brand, that was known all around the world, meaning that when you hear that someone is destroying it, [you think] it cannot be true... Dubrovnik is everyone's Mecca."[37] The extent of cultural trauma of objects, and in this case particular attachment to the Old Town, can be deduced from the fact that many citizens went to Stradun[38] in the morning of 7th December 1991, just one day after the worst shelling, without knowing if the attacks were going to continue:

> I went there and the houses were still in flames, it was creepy. We were young and crazy, so the first thing in the morning, we went to see it. It provoked even bigger revolt, feelings one did not even dream existed. Those were the days of pride and glory, when we were all together.[39]

[32] Personal interview DU7.

[33] Personal interview DU3.

[34] Meaning "to care about" in local slang.

[35] Personal interview DU8.

[36] Personal interview DU5.

[37] Personal interview DU1.

[38] Largest/main street in the Old Town.

[39] Personal interview DU6.

Those Who Leave and Those Who Stay: Changes in Social Identity

The feeling of belonging to a certain place, be it physical or *representational*, was expressed in different ways by our informants. It is important to outline the fluidity of the concept of belonging to Dubrovnik as well as the changes caused by the war dynamics and trauma. Belonging implies collectiveness, it answers to the question of "who we are" and what defines "us" and includes affective aspects in addition to the cognitive ones (Kovačević Bielicki, 2016). While talking about the life before the war, our informants talked about Dubrovnik in a sort of idealized way, as being an inclusive place, where everyone was "a person from Dubrovnik". One informant pointed out that the reason for Dubrovnik's inclusivity and openness came from its position – "Dubrovnik was whole; it was a place where different influences from the East, meaning Byzantium, and from the West met".[40] Informants mentioned that there were no divisions, that "no one looked at anyone else like an enemy",[41] and "no one said to anyone 'I won't sit with you, you are a *Vlah*[42]', nothing. We lived an easy-going life".[43] As was mentioned before, the reason for that was perceived to come from Dubrovnik's specificity, its "geographical [location], culture, and historical [role]".[44] The sense of belonging was greatly affected by the war:

> We observe everything related to the town as life before and after the war, the same way as history [sic!] before and after Christ. We cannot believe that 25 years have passed, it is like living in a vacuum – as if life stopped, but years just flew by.[45]

According to the 1991 census, in the town of Dubrovnik 77.46 percent of the population declared themselves as Croats, 8.73 percent as Serbs, and around 2 percent as Yugoslavs.[46] One informant distinguished differences along religious (Catholic, Orthodox and Muslim) and not ethnic lines, "because if they [non ethnical Croats] lived here they are Croats, unless (s)he declared herself specifically as a Serb. For me those who came from Serbia are Serbs and those from Bosnia are Bosnians."[47]

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[40] Personal interview DU2.

[41] Personal interview DU1.

[42] A derogative term for people from Dubrovnik who came from outer villages.

[43] Personal interview DU9.

[44] Personal interview DU2.

[45] Personal interview DU8.

[46] The matching percentage falls into the category of "others".

[47] Personal interview DU8.

It seems that ethnic belonging was overshadowed by the local identity of being a citizen of Dubrovnik. However, as members of Serb minority, reportedly, left the town just a week before the attacks on Dubrovnik, most of our informants felt it as a betrayal that injured the town and its ethnic composition/equilibrium. One interviewee remembers that "when the school started we noticed that all our classmates that were Serbs were gone, and the teachers. Then after a week or two the bombs started falling on us."[48] "It just did not feel right that people of Serb ethnicity did not tell us there was going to be an attack; yet they knew about it", said one war veteran. "It is easier to think about it from a time distance, but in those early days we were all angry."[49] Even though ethnicity did play an important role in this evident rupture in the definition of what represents "us", i.e., the citizens of Dubrovnik, those Serbs who stayed were considered as part of the group: "There was a tremendous sense of solidarity, I remember one Serb neighbour joking from the shelter 'Oh, look what my people are doing to *us*'" (emphasis added).[50]

The Bigger Picture

We asked our informants to describe the importance of Dubrovnik for Croatia and for the country's struggle to gain independence from the SFRY. In doing so, we wanted to analyse whether hegemonic discourse regarding attacks on Dubrovnik was echoed in the personal stories of the local population and possible (co)existence of counter narratives. Between 8th October 1991, when Croatia's declaration of independence from Yugoslavia was effected, and 15th January 1992, when the country was internationally recognised, the town of Vukovar fell and was almost completely destroyed and Dubrovnik was attacked by YPA and experienced major damages in the 6th December shelling.

Major print media with national coverage, and especially international outlets were appalled because of the attacks on Dubrovnik. Former Croatian president Stjepan Mesić (2004) wrote in his memoirs that he "had never before seen the world react with such shock and emotion over the destruction of Croatia" and that "the tragic state of Dubrovnik was never overlooked in our discussions with respectable people, whether we spoke in Croatia or abroad". The media described in detail the information about the shelling and (diplomatic) consequences which led to international recognition of Croatia and exposure of the aggressor. For example, headlines

[48] Personal interview DU7.

[49] Personal interview DU6.

[50] Personal interview DU7.

like: "Dubrovnik in flames",[51] "Wounded town",[52] "To be or not to be Croatian",[53] "Stop the barbarians!",[54] "How long will the world just watch?",[55] "Town monument in ruins"[56] framed the attack mostly as destruction of cultural heritage and monuments and only seldom mentioned the victims and the inhabitants in general. In addition, the emphasis on cultural devastation was broadened to include Croatia's urge to become independent from SFRY. Similar statements can be found among our informants in the context of destruction of cultural heritage, whereas many of them termed the attackers as vandals, barbarians and the destruction itself as "crime against civilization".

Nevertheless, the local population was interested more in *causes* of the attacks and struggled to understand the rationale of the assaults as the town was not a military target.[57] "Army power that led the attacks belonged to YPA, which was supposed to protect all the citizens of Yugoslavia. In SFRY there was a contribution [to pay] for the army, so we joked about receiving bombs which we paid from our salary",[58] recalled one informant. The "combination of YPA, paramilitary groups from Montenegro, Trebinje[59] and some parts of Serbia coming here and attacking you"[60] provoked the same outrage as the sudden departure of a large part of the Serbian population. The attacks were performed by someone who crossed not only geographical borders, but who also changed socially constructed boundaries: "there was a general attitude that *we* did not enter on *their* ground and we did not attack them" (emphasis added).[61] Most of our informants remember the feeling of anger and deception because Croatia had a constitutional right to become independent and suffered an aggression instead.[62] Similar feelings are still echoed nowadays:

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[51] *Večernji list*, 7/12/1991.

[52] *Večernji list*, 8/12/1991.

[53] *Večernji list*, 2/11/1991.

[54] *Večernji list*, 11/11/1991.

[55] *Večernji list*, 14/11/1991.

[56] *Vjesnik*, 8/12/1991.

[57] Dubrovnik was demilitarized in 1979 when it was declared UNESCO world heritage site.

[58] Personal interview DU7.

[59] The town of Trebinje, in Republika Srpska entity of Bosnia and Herzegovina, is just 30 km away from Dubrovnik. We assume that its proximity and past ties with Dubrovnik motivated our informant to use the toponym Trebinje and not entire Bosnia and Herzegovina or its predominantly Serbian entity Republika Srpska.

[60] Personal interview DU7.

[61] Personal interview DU8.

[62] Aggression is by far the most commonly used word when describing Serbian attacks on Croatia during the 1990s war.

> We still did not face the past [...] Đukanović[63] said it [the attack] was unnecessary, we know it was not necessary, but when you see the zeal with which they flew in [...] Some go on and relativize, "you too went on us", of course we did! You knock me on the head with a bludgeon, and I am going to write you – what – a letter of complaint?! As soon as I get a bludgeon, I am going to kick you too. Just, at the beginning, we did not have any bludgeon.[64]

Such feelings are also mapped to the present day in the refusal to visit places in Montenegro or Serbia, which are perceived as enemy places. For example, to the question about the feelings today towards the perceived enemy side, one of our interviewees replied: "I never went to Trebinje. That says enough."[65]

While analysing cultural trauma in previous sections, we have already stressed the importance of the Town for our informants, however there was also a counter narrative which outlined the importance of Srđ[66] for the resistance of the town. The territorial defence (TO) and local population volunteers positioned on Srđ prevented the attacking army from entering the town, hence the number of victims in Dubrovnik is rather low. In the words of most of our interviewees Srđ was seen as a symbol of wartime Dubrovnik. "If it was not for volunteers[67], if on 6th December Srđ fell, the outcome would have been a lot different",[68] stated one informant. Another mentioned that "Srđ is definitely by itself a symbol of defending the town".[69] Even though the attachment to the town is generally very strong, members of the local population do not forget to mention victims and human losses. To some of them it is the first thing they outline while talking about the war, because "it is easy to deal with cultural heritage, it can be restored, but the human life cannot be restored. I mean, there was a lot of damage, but the roofs can be rebuilt. You can hardly see signs of war nowadays."[70]

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[63] Montenegrin President Milo Djukanović publically apologised in June 2000 for the attacks on Dubrovnik.

[64] Personal interview DU5.

[65] Personal interview DU10.

[66] Hill above Dubrovnik, from which the town was defended during the attacks. Since 2010 its hilltop fortress hosts an exhibition on Homeland war.

[67] Meaning armed units who defended Dubrovnik, mostly local population who once was in TO.

[68] Personal interview DU6.

[69] Personal interview DU1.

[70] Personal interview DU5.

The Question of Responsibility

The destruction of cultural property in Yugoslav conflicts, where "perpetrators sought not only to clear territories of other ethnic and religious groups, but their cultural heritage as well", triggered the development of legal mechanisms vis-à-vis protection of cultural heritage in conflicts (Brammertz et al., 2016). The International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) included crimes relating to cultural and religious property in its Statute under Article 3(d), confirming jurisdiction to prosecute criminal violations of the laws or customs of war: "seizure of, destruction or wilful damage to institutions dedicated to religion, charity and education, the arts and sciences, historic monuments and works of art and science".[71] The ICTY rendered several judgements which "have established that the destruction of structures that symbolised a group's identity during campaigns of ethnic cleansing were a manifestation of persecution and crimes against humanity" (Walasek, 2015).

On 17th July 2008, YPA Lt. General Pavle Strugar was convicted to seven and a half years imprisonment, under Article 7(3) command responsibility and already cited Article 3(d) for the damage of "buildings of historic and cultural significance in the Old Town, including institutions dedicated to, inter alia, religion, and the arts and sciences". Trial judgement reported that "in any event the shelling by YPA forces was of a nature, extent and duration to exclude that it was merely targeting alleged Croatian military targets in the Old Town or elsewhere" (Brammertz et al., 2016).

Even though the Strugar case "sets a historic precedent as it is the first time since the judgements of the Nuremberg and Tokyo tribunals that a crime against cultural property has been sanctioned by an international tribunal" (UNESCO Director General Koichiro Matsuura quoted in Brammertz et al., 2016), the local population in Dubrovnik expressed an overwhelmingly negative attitude towards the ICTY:

> I remember the general feeling after the ICTY judgment that it was not enough, you destroy Dubrovnik and get only seven and a half years. [...] I think we need to find peace in different things; we will not find it in courts. The Court's verdicts need to be there in order to find basis for the education of society, not by dividing, but on stating the facts and learning what happened and how it happened.[72]

Most of our informants described the ICTY as a political court, saying that "it's sort of clouding the big picture"[73] or that it's "just politics to create a balance

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[71] http://www.icty.org/en/documents/statute-tribunal [accessed on 16 November 2016].

[72] Personal interview DU7.

[73] Personal interview DU1.

in blame between Serbs, Croats and Muslims".[74] This feeling goes in line with the previously conducted large scale surveys in Croatia, Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina.[75] Some went as far as to point directly at the tribunal as "bringing back the dispute in the entire region"[76] with controversial judgments like the one in Šešelj case.[77] Moreover, there is a distinction between what is just and what is justice:

> If you have lost someone, it cannot be brought back, that family's trauma remains, there is no satisfaction in punishing the perpetrators. [...] I want to leave it behind and run away from it and continue to live. I am not saying that one should forget, but to dissect and analyse is poisonous and there is no way forward.[78]

However, the ICTY was seen by some informants as a positive institution in the sense that "it created a timeline of events and pointed to those responsible [for attacks]"[79] and that "it played a big and important role".[80]

Conclusion

The 1991 war in Dubrovnik resulted in massive shelling of the Old Town, a months-long siege, almost 600 people dead, 443 imprisoned, and around 33 thousand removed from their home. The goal of this paper was to identify if these events resulted in a cultural trauma; specifically, a cultural trauma related to the shelling of physical objects. Although this traumatic event happened twenty-five years ago, we were still able to observe not only expressions of cultural trauma experienced by our informants, but also to trace further changes and developments spanning to the present day.

The trauma-claiming process was successful, in the sense that all the critical representations were elaborated and formed a basis for the rewriting of the collective identity. First, regarding the nature of the pain, or the establishing of what happened, we saw that the pain came primarily from the destruction of physical space. Second, the process of representing the nature of the victim, or answering

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[74] Personal interview DU1.

[75] Belgrade Centre for Human Rights conducted several surveys on attitudes of the general population towards the ICTY. The results can be found on the following link: http://www.bg-centar.org.rs/istrazivanje-javnog-mnenja/stavovi-gradana-hrvatske-bosne-hercegovine-prema-mksj-sudenjima-za-ratne-zlocine-pred-nacionalnim-sudovima-2011/ [accessed on 16 November 2016].

[76] Personal interview DU6.

[77] http://www.icty.org/x/cases/seselj/cis/en/cis_seselj_en.pdf [accessed on 15 November 2016].

[78] Personal interview DU8.

[79] Personal interview DU9.

[80] Personal interview DU2.

the question who was affected, pointed to the people living within the Old Town, as well as the Old Town itself. In addition, we have shown how the social identity was re-negotiated and what were the major driving forces determining categories of identity, belonging and boundaries. The process of relating the victim to the greater collective was implemented since the attacks on Dubrovnik were represented as attacks on Dubrovnik's collective identity. This process was put in practice, to a large extent, because of the symbolic/totemic value that the Old Town has for the collective identity; but even more, it was amplified due to Dubrovnik's cultural heritage, especially UNESCO's protection, which seemed to form a symbolical shield around the town.

Likewise, the attribution of responsibility was clearly made and it was the Montenegrins and YPA that were identified as perpetrators of the killings and shelling. There doesn't seem to be a doubt about it with our informants, as one informant said "it is clear who attacked Dubrovnik, and where it was attacked from". However, we have questioned how the local population accepted the ICTY's judgment in the case of the shelling of Dubrovnik, i.e. judicial interpretation of the responsibility for the attacks.

The reconstruction of Dubrovnik's Old Town was finished more than a decade ago and there are hardly any visible traces of the siege and shelling so "a cultural trauma of objects has a clear end-point goal, and thus the duration of time" (West and Smith, 1997, quoted in Debs, 2012). Unfortunately, this is not the case in Dubrovnik, where the cultural trauma still persists and whose "younger generations are less tolerant than their parents".[81] Consequently, we can argue that the end-point goal can be achieved only with the use of systematic, persistent and long-lasting confrontation with the past.

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[81] Personal interview DU6.

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Mailing Addresses:

Ana Ljubojević, CEDIM, Faculty of Political Sciences, University of Zagreb, Lepušićeva 6, 10000 Zagreb, Croatia. *E-mail*: ljubo.ana@gmail.com

Mia Jerman, CEDIM, Faculty of Political Sciences, University of Zagreb, Lepušićeva 6, 10000 Zagreb, Croatia. *E-mail*: jerman.mia@gmail.com

Kosta Bovan, Faculty of Political Sciences, University of Zagreb, Lepušićeva 6, 10000 Zagreb, Croatia. *E-mail*: kbovan@fpzg.hr