

## THE WAR AND AFTER

### On War-Related Anthropological Research in Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina

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*The paper presents the themes and perspectives dealt with by the Croatian ethnologists and folklorists whose ethnographic texts vocalised experiences of victimization and resistance in 1991-92. It also presents some current projects concerning post-war Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina. The author claims that anthropologists are particularly well-equipped to critically explore situations in which people are disempowered and victimized. With regard to post-war recovery processes, ethnographies based on long-term fieldwork are the best way of recognising people's needs and concerns, and thus providing the knowledge needed to support the potential changes coming from within the researched groups and societies.*

*Keywords:* war / ethnography / Croatia / Bosnia-Herzegovina

#### VANTAGE POINTS

Several Croatian ethnologists and folklorists have written about the war that took place in their country during the 1990's.<sup>1</sup> Although there was no formal (institutional) obligation to do so, some colleagues, myself included, felt emotionally compelled to put aside other professional concerns when the war started in 1991. The overwhelming power of violence was made clear to everyone, regardless of the physical proximity of death and destruction, which was unequally shared. For many, experiencing war meant striving for survival. But for the majority, the Zagreb scholars included, it meant striving to keep or regain choice and control in one's everyday life. Importantly, *choice* referred to the emotional, political and practical possibilities of the rejection of ethnicity as the prime

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<sup>1</sup> See Čale Feldman et al. 1993, Jambrešić Kirin and Povrzanović 1996, Povrzanović 1997a, Pettan 1998. For the complete list of articles published in English see Appendix. Scholars working at the Zagreb Institute of Ethnology and Folklore Research have so far carried out most of the research into war-related experiences. In this paper, *anthropology* encompasses what in Croatia is called *ethnology*, as well as interdisciplinary folklore studies as they are conceived at the Zagreb Institute.

category of identification. *Control* was attempted by conquering a voice, trying to find a language that would do justice to the experience of the lack of a context in which our work made sense. In the first instance, the attempt to write came out of an emotional rather than an intellectual impulse. As formulated by the editors of *Fear, Death and Resistance* (Čale Feldman et al., 1993),

*(t)here is a certain haughtiness, ignorance and everyday bluntness in (...) thinking that being alive is something entirely normal. We ourselves had been part of a world to which everything was a bit boring and a long way off. (...) And then, 'revived by death', (...), we had to go back to the virgin path. Somewhere in our late memories we know, (...) what our small and 'insufficient' war could look like: it has simply not been new and interesting enough, it has been incredibly quickly explained, even foreseen. Easily and without much questioning, it has sunk in the known places of old knowledge and texts, only supplementing the empirical support for an arrogantly omniscient intellectualism, for which we ourselves have sensed a part of shame. (...) We justify our decision to try to speak, past such boredom, but also past a bit of childish temper born of the idea that all evil could only happen to someone else, with the modesty we have learned. Because of this we have, after the shock, started to behave scientifically again, in the soft, ethnological way, looking for fragile cobwebs of the symbolic and of sense (...) (Čale Feldman et al., 1993:3).*

It was only later that professional engagement also became a project of "writing one's way into understanding" (Arvastson, 2001) of the broader historical dynamics affecting people due to their ethnic affiliation, or simply due to living in a certain place (cf. Bennett, 1995).

At the end of 1991, the proximity of hundreds of thousands of internal refugees forced scholars from the Zagreb Institute of Ethnology and Folklore Research to face the tension between the *moral* and the *scientific*. Silent compassion, scholarly escapism, or turning distressed people into anonymous storytellers whose transcribed words would serve as "ethnographic material", didn't seem to be the right options. Gradually, a dignified form of communication was found, which turned the contrasting positions of researcher and teller into the "soft", dialogue approach of *personal* narrative. In 1992, a selection of these personal narratives was published in both Croatian and English (Čale Feldman et al., 1993:177-228). They did not attempt to analyse what was said, but rather to recognise "what remains in our mental and emotional aura after having read these powerful statements about tragedy and greatness of the individual human in a large story which we are accustomed to experiencing as *history*" (Prica, 1993a:178). In the years to follow, these narratives became a potential source of knowledge and scientific interpretation.

Scholars writing about the war in Croatia became aware of some of the predicaments of anthropological research which they hadn't come across before. Writing about war thus became a process of rethinking some of the fundamental issues in anthropology, such as the epistemological problems "between destruction and

deconstruction" (Prica, 1995), and "insider" and "outsider" dilemmas (cf. Povrzanović, 2000). One of the editors of *Fear, Death and Resistance* (Čale Feldman et al., 1993) summarises it like this:

*In fact, being intellectual (...) became almost an ethically questionable quality. (...) Surrounded by sharp, uncomfortable and semantically shaken, nearly reversible oppositions of past and future, east and west, individual conscience and collective cause, patriotism and nationalism, etc., the authors who decided to react by writing reached for autocathartic devices, treating their own lives as texts that ought to be written against mainstream interpretations, whether they are coming from outside or from inside the jeopardized country. This, naturally, raised the problem of the receptional inertia of the virtual readers ‡ the World with a capital W they appealed to for help on the one hand and the understandably 'jumpy' indigenous audience on the other. To avoid (...) overwhelming mistrust on all sides, Croatian ethnographers tried to find their courage in playing the postmodern game. (...) The profit they made out of this was both meagre and considerable: being far away from the realm of their possible material or professional 'success', they 'acted out', as psychoanalysts would say, in an impossible situation, and saved their intellectual consciences (Čale Feldman, 1995:85-87).*

In 1991-92, adopting appropriate local cultural genres for Croatian war ethnographers meant giving in to the overwhelming urge to somehow resist the war. Inasmuch as they represent a kind of "written answers to the war" (see Prica, 1993b), their ethnographies vocalise a national belonging-based historical experience of being victimized, widely shared in 1991-92.<sup>2</sup>

This important element should not be blurred in the reading of some of these ethnographies as "naive" in the context of political developments in Croatia after 1992. But, as war ethnographies have neither been ordered nor demanded by the Ministry of Sciences, they have not been appropriated for the purpose of presenting the "official version". The fact that they were not intentionally politically provocative, tells us more about the awareness of the textual character of anthropological products and of "the amorphous and multiple realities they are trying to grasp" (Čale Feldman, 1995), than about the political attitudes of their authors.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> As claimed by Kirsten Hastrup and Peter Hervik (1994), while the scope of anthropology lies beyond the retelling of local stories, these and their experiential grounding remain the foundation of anthropological knowledge. Anthropological authority is grounded in fieldwork and expressed by scholarly discourse. But for us as insiders ‡ just as for the people we meet "in the field" ‡ internalization of the knowledge on the war in Croatia was (and is) a holistic personal experience. "Internalization" here points to "the locale of both cognized and embodied knowledge, while also stressing its link to the extrapersonal realm of the public world" (Hastrup and Hervik 1994:7).

<sup>3</sup> It is worth mentioning that what anthropologists saw as distancing in the process of turning tragic events into an "anthropological object" has on some occasions (in 1991 and 1992) been regarded as *morally inappropriate* by some sectors of the general public in Croatia, and therefore met with suspicion. The very choices of particular topics, such as political kitsch, nationalism and the death of soldiers, or the kind of questions one "should" or "should not" pose to displaced people, were recognized as being political acts. Nevertheless, many

## THEMES

Croatian scholars have recognized and admired the creativity involved in the manifold aspects of *symbolic resistance* in 1991-92, and offered ethnographic accounts in which people's authoring of events, acts, and feelings were present. Special attention has been devoted to the fact that some *everyday practices* remained intact despite living under siege or close to the battlefield. Keeping up an everyday routine (including the very writing of ethnographies in the midst of a war) was a way of coping with fear and maintaining one's integrity.

While the discourse of nationalism has constantly been voiced, the *lived experience of war* in 1991-92 was not only neglected in the (national and international) media,<sup>4</sup> but also in the prolific amount of literature that attempted to explain the reasons for the break-up of Yugoslavia.<sup>5</sup> That experience is not only remembered by soldiers and war victims, but also by the "forgotten majority" (Povrzanović, 1997b:153), i.e. all civilians who lived in Croatia in the 1990's. That is why relating war-time identification processes at a national level (the ones adopting nationalist rhetoric) to the perceptions of the *physical spaces* of one's town, region and country as being extremely important *emotional places*, has become another line of research.

The context in which the local and the national constituted each other was one of violence imposed on civilians who remained in their homes in the besieged towns, and endured armed attacks that jeopardized their lives. The spaces in the grip of war were at the same time political spaces and actual locations of struggle in the context of the *violent destruction* of concrete life-worlds which held enormous emotional and practical, material importance as places of people's daily interactions. Thus, the strong sense of belonging to one's town, region and nation, as revealed in the personal narratives on war, has been interpreted as being part of an *imposed* identity formation process based on a cluster of responses to war violence. Staying behind was therefore seen as an act of (practical but also symbolic) resistance.

Finally, the complexity of the personal narratives of war and exile, that often challenged the official uniqueness of the "prescribed" national narrative have been pointed out.<sup>6</sup>

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intellectuals have welcomed the cultural critique implied by some Croatian war ethnographies as a corrective of the dominant media-promoted national narrative (see Povrzanović 2000).

<sup>4</sup> The Dutch anthropologist, Stef Jansen, who defended his thesis on post-Yugoslav resistance to nationalism (Jansen 2001) at the University of Hull, claims that "even some of the better journalistic accounts (and the worst ethnographic ones) offer a rather homogenous and structured picture which unintentionally replicates some of the pitfalls of the dominant post-Yugoslav nationalism" (Jansen 2002: 17)

<sup>5</sup> For bibliographical data see Maček 2000: 22, and Kolind 2004.

<sup>6</sup> Participating in "The Study and Care of Refugee Families † A Pilot Study of Anthropological and Psychodynamic Aspects" at UNESCO-Participation Programme, Sanja-Marina Špoljar-Vržina and her colleagues from the Zagreb Institute for Anthropological Research (Špoljar-Vržina et al. 1995) analysed the needs of the war refugees lodged at the island of Hvar. Their critique of the practices of humanitarian aid also relied on the recipients' personal narratives.

Croatian war ethnographers have shown that certain symbols and discourses were used to interpret the lived war experience within the national frame, often implying nationalist claims. But they have also pointed out that the (ab)use of the lived experience of violence for the purpose of profit in the field of institutionalised politics (locally and internationally), as well as the possible direct engagement of war victims in nationalist projects, happened only subsequently. The same was shown, in a detailed and systematic manner, by Ivana Maček (2000) who wrote a compelling ethnography of the war as experienced by people living in Sarajevo under siege.<sup>7</sup>

Due to the wars in Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina, collective identities have primarily been influenced by people's urgent and basic need to survive. Their perception of the importance of ethnicity is based on the experience of violence inflicted on them as belonging to ethnic groups; it was not the cause, but the consequence of the war.

Jasna Čapo Žmegač (1999, 2001) analysed the post-war stratification of the narrative of "good" or "true" Croats. Her work is based on research among the Croats native to Voivodina (in northern Serbia) who, due to the war in the 1990's, resettled in Croatia. On the one hand, they do not qualify as being "true" Croats because they have been "contaminated" (linguistically in the first place) by living in Serbia. On the other hand, although newcomers and a sub-ethnic minority, they feel culturally superior (more advanced in terms of modern agricultural production, but also in terms of "civilized" behaviour). Their narrative presentations of mutual perceptions of difference in relation to the local population insist on cultural otherness and impossibility of social contacts. However, their everyday life, as seen by the researcher, defies narration inasmuch as it brings about contacts that lead to gradual integration.

## **PERSPECTIVES**

As new research priorities were "happening to them" in the early 1990's, the Croatian scholars trying to produce texts based on the immediate reality of destruction and suffering felt that questions about *what violence does and what it means to the victims*, were the most urgent, and maybe the only appropriate ones in the midst of war. In an attempt to give voice to, represent and explain the social and cultural consequences of the subjective experiences of violence, they had a deep empathy with James Clifford's

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<sup>7</sup> Presenting the context in which "survival, religiosity and nationality became hard to separate" (Maček (2000: 191), she explores the ways of dealing with everyday threats to life, ways of providing subsistence, changes in social relations, and the role of religion and ethnic traditions in the process of constituting national identities. Maček shows that in the cases of Bosnia and in particular Sarajevo, national identities were newly defined during the war and very much by it. She argues that the rapid and massive establishment of a new sense of national belonging at the grass-roots level would not have been possible without the physical and existential nature of war destruction.

statement about ethnographic truths being "inherently partial, committed and incomplete" (Clifford, 1986:7).<sup>8</sup>

In 1991-92, *Writing culture* (Clifford and Marcus, 1986) and the theoretical discussion it started became central, for it offered comfort and relief ‡ it empowered those Croatian scholars who were writing about war in their moral, emotional, and professional perplexities. In the local perception of the discipline, the so-called postmodern turn in anthropology is practically akin to the texts on war written in the early 1990s, which could be attributed with an "experimental" quality.

In subsequent years, when the recovery of peacetime academic life became possible, not only documentation but also an analysis of certain aspects of the complex relationships between experiences, social practices, ideologies and cultural ideas was attempted. In the aftermath of war, questions concerning political standpoints and ethnographic representation gained new importance. Writing against stereotypes, such as that of "civil war" as an outcome of historical ethnic animosities within former Yugoslavia, or of a bellicose "Balkan mentality", was important in relation to international audiences. At home, the perception of tensions between an overriding national(ist) narrative and individual and local experiences, concerns and priorities, was the main motivator of professional efforts, especially with regard to writing about refugees.

Anthropological literature explaining *why* violence happens, and *how* it happens, was thus far less interesting than literature that focussed on the actual *experience* of violence.

Explanatory writings about violence as a strategic instrument or source of social power cannot provide knowledge about the consequence of violence as experienced by the people who have suffered it. Furthermore, an instrumentalist perspective sees violence as something that is consciously implemented in order to reach a certain goal, but rarely notices that wars are not only carefully orchestrated from above and systematically carried out. Violence can actually establish its own logic, and bring about new identifications or an escalation of old conflicts. It should therefore be studied in its own right, as shown in Mart Bax's multi-faceted ethnographic study "from below", of the dynamics and the developmental logic of the processes of "ethnic cleansing" in Bosnia-Herzegovina (see Bax, 1997 and 2000).<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> The ways ethnographies can be over determined by forces ultimately beyond the control of either an author or an interpretive community, became clearer when they started to be published in English (cf. Povrzanović 2000).

<sup>9</sup> Mart Bax (2000: 317) pointed out that the interpretation of the war as orchestrated from above necessarily lacks the means of interpretation of any aberration of the systematic, regulated warfare in the form of an eruption of violence (spectacular violence). Thus, in regard to Bosnia-Herzegovina, there was so much talk about "primitive Balkanism", "banditism" and "mental aberrations". Adopting a long-term historical perspective, Bax shows how violence served the process of ethnic homogenisation that was significantly informed by the history of local faction fighting.

An interest in the expressive quality of violence, i.e. for the meaning communicated by war-related violent acts, has been employed with regard to the war rapes in Bosnia-Herzegovina (see, e.g., Olujić, 1998). Individual bodies are thus seen as metaphors of social bodies, and the symbolic destruction of communities through irreparable shame comes into focus, rather than individual experiences of terror.

From the Croatian war ethnographers' point of view, *ethnographic perspective* became an appropriate way of assessing the experiences of people whose lives had been disrupted by violence, and were therefore locked into the constant effort of making sense of their situation. As in Nordstrom and Martin 1992, Nordstrom and Robben 1995, Nordstrom 1997 and Maček 2000, the idea of "unmaking of the world" through torture (Scarry, 1985) has been expanded to include general war situations experienced by civilians themselves. At the same time, the creative potentials of resistance to oppression and terror have been identified, a co-existence of extreme destruction and creativity. In writing in opposition to the stereotypical media image of victims of war as passive non-reflective sufferers (cf. Kleinman and Kleinman, 1997), experience-oriented anthropology is not only necessary, but also of fundamental theoretical importance. It connects biography with history and with lived social experience.

### **SOME CURRENT PROJECTS**

It has been shown by virtually all ethnographers of wartime everyday-life that political violence ‡ both mobilized and targeted ‡ "works on lives and interconnections to break communities. (...) And yet in the midst of the worst horrors, people continue to live, to survive and to cope" (Das and Kleinman, 2001:1). While Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina are in focus, it is also worth mentioning some of the anthropological projects that are currently in progress, which address everyday life not as an arena of resistance in the midst of violence, but as an arena of re-building a dignified life, and of the establishment of post-war "normality".

One such project is planned within *The Living Beyond Conflict Seminar* (LBC), recently established as part of the Uppsala Anthropology Department.<sup>10</sup> Ivana Maček's project, "The processes of reconciliation in postwar Bosnia", focuses on the problems of reconciliation, repatriation, and individual and collective ways of dealing with war-traumas. It is part of a comparative cross-disciplinary project entitled "The legacy of war and violence: Reconstruction and reconciliation in Cambodia, Bosnia-Herzegovina and 'Palestine'", financed by ÖCB (The Swedish Agency for Civil Emergency Planning). A comparative and interdisciplinary approach which combines peace and conflict studies with anthropological perspectives is intended, in order to contribute towards developing

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<sup>10</sup> It is funded by the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency ‡ Sida, with the purpose that research done in the frames of the seminar strengthens the local initiatives for societal reconstruction and the preservation of peace.

"an urgently needed, systematic knowledge, grounded in indigenous concerns and understandings of these processes" (*LBC Newsletter* 1, 2001:8).<sup>11</sup>

From 2004 to 2007, Ivana Maček will be focusing on the project "Between War and Peace ‡ A Qualitative Study of Swedish Experiences of Work in War-Zones", financed by the Swedish Council for Working Life and Social Research. The aim of that project is to study the consequences that traveling between war and peace has on professionals who work in war situations, but have their homes in a country without war, in this case Sweden. The research will consist of documenting and analysing a number of individual war-stories: the reasons behind the choice of working in war, the ways of dealing with experiences of war and with the incompatibility of these experiences with life in peace circumstances. The qualitative analysis of deep interviews will focus on the socio-cultural forms of expressing individual experience, ways of dealing with them, and their consequences for repatriation process. The aim is also to provide the practitioners working in war situations with a handbook that would make them aware of the potential problems they could experience in their work, and perhaps with a possibility to start addressing these issues within their organisations.

Ivana Maček is a member of the multidisciplinary *Working Group for the Studies of Balkans and Southern Europe* situated at the Centre for Multiethnic Studies and the Programme for Holocaust Research at Uppsala University (see <http://www.multietn.uu.se> and <http://www.multietn.uu.se/uppsalaprograme.html>). Their other current research projects are "Language and Ethnicity. Standard Language Differentiation and Attitudes towards Language in Bosnia-Herzegovina" (Jasenka Trtak) and "The conflicts and conflict resolution in the Southeast Europe, coexistence and reconciliation" (Roland Kostić), with end results planned for 2007, as well as "The Politics of Nationalism: Ethnic and Religious Mobilisation in the Former Yugoslavia" (Kjell Magnusson), ending in 2004.<sup>12</sup>

Torsten Kolind, an anthropologist from the University of Aarhus, conducted fieldwork in Stolac, Bosnia-Herzegovina, to which Muslims returned after having been

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<sup>11</sup> Connected to this purpose of anthropologists' engagement, it is worth quoting Ivana Maček's observation from the meeting "The Future of European Crisis Management" (organised by ÖCB and Uppsala University in 2001), attended by approximately 200 researchers and practitioners from the EU and a line of "observer" countries: "As anthropologists we are not used to the high technological and costume levels such as those displayed at the meeting. On the other hand, a lot of participants seemed to be unaware of the world outside the confines of their institutional organisations, aims and concepts. One of the workshops titled 'European Security in National and International Perspective' concluded that with the lack of conflicts within Europe, and of any potential threats to European security, we could look forward to future exports of 'Nordic peace models' to other parts of the world. Accompanied with worn-out phrases such as 'democracies do not make war with each other', it gave a surreal feeling of the event" (*LBC Newsletter* 1, 2001: 8).

<sup>12</sup> The aim of this project is to study ethnic mobilisation in the former Yugoslavia: to analyse ideas and major symbolic structures of national ideologies; to study the social, cultural and political contexts of nationalism; and to investigate social and political movements with ethnic and religious profiles. The geographical focus is on Serbia, Croatia, and Bosnia and Herzegovina. The project is carried out in co-operation with scholars in the former Yugoslavia and based on qualitative analyses of texts, methods of contemporary history, as well as secondary analyses of sociological surveys.



expelled by the Croats (see Kolind, 2002, Kolind, 2004, Kolind, in press). In collecting and investigating their narratives on the war and post-war situation, he found that war-related violence and the post-war ethnic policy had penetrated nearly all aspects of people's "lifeworlds". Yet, he also found that people create and mould other, *non-ethnic categories* that can be used for moral evaluation. People continuously blur ethnic categories, both as part of a more deliberate ideology of anti-nationalism and co-existence, as well as the logic of sharing the place of everyday life, in which meetings occur on bases other than the ideological. Not only does Kolind focus on discursive practices, but his research also shows that the experience of living in a certain place features as a prominent ground of identification that avoids political juxtapositions along ethnic lines.<sup>13</sup>

Torsten Kolind's (forthcoming) article on resisting the ethnification of everyday life in post-war Stolac is going to be published in the book *Bosnia revisited: Social identities, collective memories and moral hierarchies in a post-war protectorate* (Bougarel, Duijzings and Helms, forthcoming). That book will most probably bring the results of some other anthropological projects relevant for this overview.

Stef Jansen and Andrew Dawson from the University of Hull are currently engaged in research on the experiences of displaced Bosnians. They are looking at the ways in which people experience and imagine their *past, present and future "home"*, and how this is related to the context in which they currently reside. Four sites of study have been selected: an area in Bosnia as a context of internal displacement, Serbia as a context of a people who have fled to their supposed ethnic mother-state,<sup>14</sup> the Netherlands as a context of refuge in a Western-European state with a strong tradition of recent immigration, and Australia as a context of refuge in a country with a history of mass immigration and already established ethnic communities of migrants from former Yugoslavia.

My own project, "Seeds of war: Narrative construction of identities in diaspora and exile", explores manifold intra-ethnic meetings between long-settled Croatian labour migrants and the Croats from Bosnia who arrived in Sweden in the 1990's.<sup>15</sup> Differences in their narratives concerning home, homeland and ethnic belonging, are crucially informed by their different perceptions of the war in the 1990's. Although not focusing on strategies of social recovery in the local communities in Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina, this research revealed a relevant aspect of local post-war recovery processes: *the transnational paths of recovery* facilitated by refugees who most often (through family connections and ownership) continue to be a vital part of the places they

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<sup>13</sup> For a discussion of a phenomenological approach to the meanings of place in relation to the lived war experience, see Povrzanović Frykman 2002.

<sup>14</sup> In relation to this part of the project, the book by Čapo Žmegač (2001) offers comparative perspectives, since it also deals with "home-making" in a post-Yugoslav "ethnic mother-state".

<sup>15</sup> The project "Seeds of War: Narrative Construction of Identities in Diaspora and Exile" was financed by the Swedish Council for Research in the Humanities and Social Sciences (HSFR) in 2000 and 2001.

have left behind. The potential benefactory influences of people who left as refugees and have come back as Swedish citizens, deserve attention. When it is systematic and massive, their financial support, their (altered?) everyday priorities and political attitudes, and the new venues of social contacts and identifications they embody, may influence local recovery processes in significant ways.

At the Zagreb Institute of Ethnology and Folklore Research, a new project has been designed concerning the war in Croatia in the 1990 and war victims in the 20th century.<sup>16</sup> Personal narratives on war experiences and related discourses affecting the ongoing identification processes within Croatian society are collected from displaced persons, soldiers and civilians. Special attention is paid to the social loci of support of patriotic, patriarchal and liberal-democratic values. The project attempts to contribute to an understanding of the dynamics of historical memory and assess the aspects of historical experience that are missing in sources usually reflected upon by the historical sciences. By focusing on *individual experiences*, it aims to provide knowledge about unknown events or of unknown aspects of well-known events. It also aims to show to what extent *transgenerational memory* and dominant culture affect the discrepancy between individual testimonies about the same time/event.<sup>17</sup>

## CONCLUSIONS

Many anthropologists writing on violence, war, and social suffering, have reaffirmed ‡ in remarkable ways ‡ the capacity of the discipline in addressing the significant events and circumstances that define the current human condition. My own insight might be partial due to my own professional and emotional engagement in the field, but it seems to me that some of the best anthropological works in the last decade have emerged from researching difficult matters such as fear, death, destruction, suffering, resistance, and recovery. They bring together theory and pathos (cf. Das and Kleinman, 2001:18), analytical insights and evocative writing. The underlying motivation is the authors' humanism, and the belief in anthropology's ability to contribute to social change and peace.

For example, the scholars who contributed to *Social Suffering* (Kleinman et al., 1997), *Violence and Subjectivity* (Das et al., 2000) and *Remaking a World* (Das et al., 2001), force urgent problems into the spheres of public attention. In these contributions as well as in the books they authored, they are doing so through basic, long-term

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<sup>16</sup> "Homeland War and War Victims in the 20th Century: Ethnological Aspects" is financed by the Ministry of Science and Technology of the Republic of Croatia from 2002 to 2005.

<sup>17</sup> "Studies of violence are in their infancy in many ways", claims Carolyn Nordstrom (s.a.: 7). "(W)e have no certain idea to what extent war time brutalities can undermine peace time health, or how the impetus to violence in one arena configures the other. (...) *War teaches violence* which thereupon permeates civil society and domestic life" (ibid., emphasis added). Therefore, "peace accords alone will leave dangerous patterns of violence within society unchecked" (ibid.). The 20th century history of former and post-Yugoslav countries corroborates Nordstrom's claims with a number of tragic examples.

ethnographic research, which is indispensable in dealing with the experiences and consequences of violence.

With regard to the post-war conditions in Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina, the volume on violence, social suffering and recovery, *Remaking a World* (Das et al., 2001), is thus of special interest. It offers anthropological understandings of the dilemmas in the processes of re-creating "normality" of worlds that have been exposed to violent destruction. It brings examples of choices and strategies concerning the connection, or reconciliation, between individual and collective memory.

The war in Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina happened in the midst of a wider shift of social paradigms † the reconstitution of social values in the context of the decay of communism, and the building of new states in a context of violence from one era being "grafted into memories of another" (Das and Kleinman, 2001:7). The war-torn 1990's offered a pivotal opportunity for all kinds of collective and individual projects based on exposing, remodelling and reassessing memories of past violence (most importantly after WWII). They have been marked by a transgenerational conveyance of traumatic experiences (though family and local hidden histories) which have remained unrepresented and unrepresentable within the ideological, cultural and cognitive frameworks of former Yugoslavia.<sup>18</sup>

Most of the titles quoted in this paper also include passages about the problems of ethnographic fieldwork during and after violent conflicts, at a practical and an epistemological level. Some of them acknowledge the weakness one feels when trying to mediate or communicate "some part of the experience and of the passion and the pain of violence in its brutal immediacy" (Daniel, 1996:4). But the knowledge they produce does not only leave us with an insight into the powerlessness of ethnography (or any *writing*) to stop violence and help the victims. On the contrary, it helps us to understand anthropology's strengths in addressing

***a violence born of inequality † pervasive, constant, resentful, and quotidian † a violence that fails to make international news headlines, first, because it is so ubiquitous and banal, second, because it calls into question our discursive habit of***

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<sup>18</sup> Renata Jambrešić Kirin (2002) captured some of these shifts in her research into the popular memory of the † until recently "untouchable" † topic of partisan crimes in WWII. The Croatian book market is saturated with editions of popular memory whereas their compilers and memoirists attempt to interpret "violent episodes" not as a major rupture or leap of personal histories, but as part of the continuity of martyrdom for the national idea of independence. Jambrešić Kirin shows that interethnic violence is still the main impetus that brings men and women into being as particular, dignified personalities within a national memory and gives them "permission" to narrate and write. The great international appeal and local interest in the violence against women in the wars in former Yugoslavia in the 1990's posed a new challenge for testimonial and academic literature in that field. However, it still reflects a dominant impulse for narrating personal "wounded attachments" to the body of contentious national histories.

*exoticizing the third world as a place of tribalism, primitivism, and radical otherness* (Jackson, 2002:135).<sup>19</sup>

Anthropologists, who see these levels and listen to the people who are invisible to producers and consumers of media images and essentializing and patronizing discourses (cf. Kleinman and Kleinman, 1997), are particularly well-equipped to critically explore situations in which people are disempowered and victimized. They bring forward professional and personal sensibilities and self-reflective scrutiny as well as a choice of textual genres in which their original scientific products can be translated in order to reach different audiences.<sup>20</sup>

Ethnographic method, used "against the judicial or media-oriented confessional models of truth-telling" (Das and Kleinman, 2001:26), along with the oral history method of recording individual perceptions of local, national and global history, participate equally in formulating unorthodox, comparative, inductive and narrative cognitions pertaining to a new interdisciplinary sphere to studies of war, peace and the situation of refugees.

With regard to post-war recovery processes, ethnographies based on long-term fieldwork are the best way of recognising people's needs and concerns, and thus providing the knowledge needed to support the potential changes coming from within the researched groups and societies. Comprehending and disclosing the complexity of the experiences of "the members of (ethnic) groups in conflict" who keep making sense of their lives within or against the imposed identities (or negotiating contradictions of having to do both),<sup>21</sup> can make a difference. Anthropology can strengthen local initiatives for societal reconstruction and the preservation of peace.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Motivated by the basic question of how much luck and happenstance can be humanly accepted, and how much agency and choice can be expected (cf. Jackson 2002: 14), Michael Jackson seeks to demonstrate the strengths of Hannah Arendt's argument that storytelling "transforms our lives by enabling us to reshape diffuse, diverse and difficult personal experiences in ways that can be shared" (Jackson 2002: 267). In several chapters (on violence and reciprocity, privacy and publicity in the lives of refugees, phenomenology and narratives of flight, "thinking ourselves beyond the nation", storytelling in the processes of retaliation and reconciliation, the relations between the tragic and the comic, etc.) Jackson explores, *inter alia*, the narratives of political violence and social suffering as presented in ethnographic writing, including several works quoted in this paper.

<sup>20</sup> For the very partial and fragmentary nature of personal war experiences and the obvious limitations of projects carried out by *one* researcher, different forms of team-work can be valuable. So too are the comparative frames for projects dealing with similar issues in different locations. In post-war situations of ethnic clefs and insecurities, teams should ideally include scholars who are both native and non-native to the groups/places/national contexts under scrutiny.

<sup>21</sup> People sometimes adopt and sometimes defy the dominant public discourses on war. As shown by Torsten Kolind (2002 and 2003) in relation to the coexistence of victims and perpetrators in a Bosnian town ‡ they sometimes have to live with ambiguities and contradictions, and try different narrative strategies to incorporate these contradictions into a new, post-war reality.

<sup>22</sup> Although publishing entails probable professional gains, the anthropologists' obligation to communicate knowledge gained in research is also a moral obligation towards the people who participated in *our* fieldwork: informants, acquaintances and friends in the field. Informants are neither necessarily able to read ethnographies, nor interested in the anthropologists' interpretations of their experiences. (Sometimes they *do not want* to read them for they are emotionally too upsetting.) Yet, the imperative of "making public" must not only be defined

The leads to be followed in this task may only have been formulated by a few, but I believe that most scholars dealing with war-related social suffering and recovery have considered them. Valentine E. Daniel's advocacy of antiessentialism that is "not directed at what is essentially human † a debatable and refinable list that should include, besides language, a sense of dignity, a need to love and be loved, the capacity to reason, the ability to laugh and to cry, be sad and be happy" (Daniel, 1996:198) has underlined most of the work referred to in this paper. Clearly, there is a moral reason for writing on conditions and consequences of political violence and social suffering, notwithstanding all the professional appropriations and benefits it may imply. It is an effort to help the victims through giving attention to, documenting, communicating, and juxtaposing anthropological understandings of suffering and recovery to ethnic or national master-narratives on the one hand, and to the ideas of essential differences between and among cultures on the other.

Daniel argues that any ethnography that limits and attributes violence to a particular people and place is also an "anthropography", of violence. Violence is not peculiar to some peoples or cultures; it is "far more ubiquitous and universally human, a dark wellspring of signs which, to be true to ourselves, we must communicate, and also as a force we must hold at bay" (Daniel, 1996:9).

Anthropology is thus entitled to reveal the manifold realities hidden in the notorious othering phrase "*they* are killing each other *again*", also repeatedly applied to the wars in Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina † a phrase that easily slips into the terminal distancing of a "*let them* kill each other" kind. There is no other "logic" of a recurrent use of and exposure to violence happening to people living "on the wrong side of History" (Kundera), than that defined by historical conditions.

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in an academic context. Since much of the research into social suffering and recovery is done in places/countries where people's native language is other than English, publications in the local language are essential if there is a serious intention to make any aspect of the situation *better*. Not only are shortened media versions in the local language needed, but also full translations that thus become "facts" that cannot be neglected in local academic and wider intellectual contexts. They can provide knowledge from different perspective than that of the native anthropologists, or they can induce new knowledge by provoking the disagreement and critique of local scholars.

Also, the experience of publishing the "same" text in English and in the language of the people one writes about is bound to be insightful: communicating anthropological knowledge is highly context-bound. It is significantly defined by the intended audience. And being aware of the audience makes us aware of moral and political contexts in which we necessarily engage.

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#### U RATU I NAKON RATA:

O antropološkim istraživanjima u Hrvatskoj i Bosni i Hercegovini

##### Sažetak

Članak donosi pregled tema i perspektiva zastupljenih u radovima hrvatskih etnologa i folklorista koji su pisali o iskustvima viktimizacije i otpora u ratu 1991.-1992. Prikazuje zatim antropološke (uključujući i etnološke i folklorističke) projekte u poslijeratnoj Hrvatskoj i Bosni i Hercegovini, one u tijeku i one netom započete. Autorica obrazlaže svoju tvrdnju da su antropolozi, etnolozi i folkloristi posebno kompetentni za kritičko istraživanje obespravljenosti i viktimizacije. Smatra da su etnografije temeljene na dugotrajnom terenskom radu najbolji put ka razumijevanju potreba i preokupacija ljudi uključenih u poslijeratne procese oporavka.

Ključne riječi: rat / etnografija / Hrvatska / Bosna i Hercegovina