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Imagining the Others – Dynamics of Conflict and Peace in Multiethnic Areas in Croatia

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The paper builds on the premise of the constructivist theory, according to which ethnicity and ethnic identities are not in straightforward connection with the social groups (Brubaker). Viewed from the perspective of the events taking place in the 1990s, the research differentiates between two basic types of multiethnic areas in Croatia: (a) the areas in which the conflicts escalated to the level of disintegration of different forms of community life – the "conflict areas"; and (b) the areas in which radical conflicts were avoided and the multiethnic cohabitation was to a large extent maintained – the "peace areas". A research survey, whose results are presented in this paper, was conducted during October 2008 in the local communities matching the description of the "conflict areas", these being Gospić, Plaški and Pakrac, and of the "peace areas", these being Rovinj, Vrbovsko and Daruvar. Apart from this, some qualitative methods of data collecting have been used. The intention underlying this paper is to provide an answer to several essential questions concerning the processes of identification and maintenance of group boundaries and ethnic distance in multiethnic areas. On the basis of previous research, it may be assumed that these processes are affected by events occurring in the recent and more distant past, as well as by the interplay between the existing system factors and the social actors of peace or conflict. However, the results of the study in a certain way support the constructivist hypothesis on instrumentalization of ethnicity in constructing group boundaries and thereby in the dynamics of ethnic mobilization, ethnic conflict and ethnic peace.

Key words: multiethnic areas, ethnic conflict, ethnic peace, ethnic distance, group closure

Introduction

Different aspects of ethnic conflict have thus far been the subject of abundant literature in which the cultural and structural circumstances possibly

generating ethnic conflict have been discussed in detail.* There are various examples of different communities living next to each other, even though divided by cultural, religious and political symbols connecting them to their recent or not so recent past (Kaufman, 2001: 16). Symbols frequently present barriers to formation of images on a common future because what is considered legitimate in one ethnic community lacks the same legitimacy in the eyes of the other community and vice versa (Wolff, 2006: 67).[1] Symbols, which individual ethnic communities are identified with, may also be understood as historical or cultural "constructs", but their rootedness in collective conceptions is such that their objectivity is considered unquestionable.[2] Structural features may also intensify the risk of ethnic conflict and violence, particularly under circumstances of rapid social and geopolitical changes. Absence of structural restrictions, such as democratic systems of social regulation or clear territorial boundaries between the states, may easily open the path to violence and genocidal massacres (Sekulić, Massey and Hodson, 2006).[3] The third group of factors are those of an ideological and political nature. In contrast to democratic values and political practice as features of an "open" society, nationalistic exclusivism generates institutional solutions and stimulates dissatisfaction and ethnic conflicts. A specific aspect of nationalistic exclusivism is the ethnicisation of the political scene where newly-formed political parties are structured on nearly an

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[1] Examples are: Catholics and Protestants in the Northern Ireland, Jews and Palestinians in Israel, Albanians and Serbs in Kosovo, Serbs and Croatians in Croatia, etc.

[2] For instance, the myth on Kosovo in Serbian ethnic cosmology was relentlessly employed in ethno-political mobilisation of Serbs in all parts of the former Yugoslavia. In Croatia, the newly established government led by F. Tuđman embraced the symbols that inevitably brought to mind the bloody past of the Independent State of Croatia and the Fascist movement present there in the period of the Second World War. This definitively broke the line of communication with the Serbian minority in Croatia at the time.

[3] A typical example is dissolution of the former federal states in the period following the fall of the Berlin Wall. In the areas of the former Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union, the conflict broke out in places where both structural drawbacks were present. Structural disintegration of the Socialist system on the territory of the former Yugoslavia itself generated the conflict because the mechanisms of appeasing cultural, economic and political divergences and interests were no longer there. At the same time, as soon as it was stated that "joint life is impossible", the issue of territorial boundaries was raised. The Memorandum of the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts (often referred to as the SANU Memorandum) was the prominent example.

exclusively ethnic basis.[4] Finally, the fourth category of factors in which ethnic conflicts may be rooted are economic ones. In this sense, it is made impossible or difficult for the minority groups to access material resources in society using mechanisms such as planned weakening of modernisation processes, economic pacification, and establishing different forms of the "cultural division of labour" in specific areas where the concentration of the minority groups is significant.

Despite that, as D. Horowitz stated some time ago, "blood ties do not lead inevitably to rivers of blood" (Horowitz, 1985). In other words, ethnic differences or even divergences and latent conflicts need not necessarily result in an explosion of violence. Ethnic groups may live in communities not defined by ethnic boundaries through relatively long periods of time. And conflicts may be structured and regulated in different manners (Stone and Rizova, 2007: 386). In order to transform these differences and divergences into a spiral of violence, social actors must act with the aim of instigating and directing the conflict.[5]

In contrast to the situations of ethnic conflict, the questions related to the roots of ethnic peace have not as often been a matter of scientific research. Where the issues of ethnic peace are present in the analysis of certain social situations, they are mostly raised in the context of controlling ethnic conflicts and their appeasement (Schneckener, 2004; Wolff, 2004, 2006; Tiryakian, 2004; Guelke, 2004; Olzak, 2006; Horowitz, 2001).

Vjeran Katunarić recognises several categories/forms of peace in multiethnic situations (Katunarić, 2007). Those are primarily peace-building post-conflict processes in which one may differentiate among peace development stages, such as the peace-making, the peace-keeping and the peace-building, and finally, the *democratic peace*, which has to be attributed the normative idea of the *culture of peace* (Katunarić, 2007: 396). The termination of conflict entails realisation of various programs and projects which, in addition to significant material resources, presuppose institutional

[4] This aspect is characteristic to political parties in Croatia (as well as in the other former Yugoslav Republics) under the circumstances of breakdown of a one-party system. Not only were ethnic designations dominant in the names of the majority of the newly-established political parties, but the names of individual parties were also taken from the past eras, which of its own accord triggered associations with the multiethnic conflicts in the past.

[5] The dramatic circumstances under which the independent Croatian state was founded at the beginning of the 1990s paved the way for the activities of national and local elite groups that significantly influenced the ethnic mobilisation processes, particularly in the areas already burdened with the legacy of the more recent and less recent past. Reminiscences from the Second World War have had a special role in mobilisation processes, especially in their first stage.

transparency and responsibility. It is necessary to build up the civil sector under the constrictions in which not even elementary democratic preconditions had existed. These objectives are difficult to realise even for the most influential international organisations. It is precisely on these practical problems that the *democratic peace* is built, based on the idea of the rootedness of lasting peace in the values and institutions of liberal democracy. To be precise, the only way actually to overcome ethnic violence is through the development of the institutions of liberal democracy and a market economy. As Susan Olzak shows, this does not mean that the ethnic differences have to disappear, rather that the demands of ethnic minorities are presented by means of democratic institutions and civil society (Olzak, 2006: 99). Croatian society is still quite distant from such solutions, and this was particularly evident during the escalation of conflict at the beginning of the 1990s. This makes that much more important the research into the dynamics of ethnic conflict and ethnic peace in multiethnic areas of Croatia. Next to theoretical relevance, the answers to the questions formulated initially in this text have a practical purpose, because they could serve as a signpost in the prevention of ethnic conflicts in social situations marked by an undeveloped civil society.

This paper consists of three parts. The first part outlines the theoretical framework for research and articulates the hypothesis. The second segment presents some basic results of the empirical research indicating the main differences and some similarities in imagining the Others in the community (ethnic distance, group closure, categories of identification). The third part entails discussion on the "roots of conflict and roots of peace" within which certain fundamental processes are explained on the basis of the data acquired by means of qualitative research methods (i.e. interviews).

1. Theoretical and Hypothetical Research Framework

The theoretical horizon within which the research project is placed is basically constructivist. According to some authors (Sekulić, 2007), the constructivist perspective in explaining ethnicity already had its roots in Weber's social action theory. Yet, the actual turning-point in interpretation of ethnicity, and thus of ethnic conflict, too, was achieved in the Barth's 1969 paper on ethnic boundaries, in which ethnicity was understood as a form of social action aimed at achieving certain objectives (Barth, 1969). Ethnic boundaries are no longer determined by culture. Quite the opposite, the established boundaries become the determining factor of differentiation and selection of cultural identity markers (Sekulić, 2007: 358). This understanding emphasises the dynamic dimension of ethnic identity, which is suscep-

tible to change, control and manipulation. Addressing these issues, Eriksen states that ethnicity is "essentially an aspect of a relationship, not a property of a group" (Eriksen, 1993: 12). The constructivist position was additionally radicalised by Brubaker's thesis on ethnicity without groups. His plea for discarding primordialist and essentialist conceptions of ethnic conflict, as a conflict between the ethnic groups, was primarily motivated by aspiration for conceptual sharpening. At the level of ethnopolitical practice, interethnic conflict is presented to the very protagonists as conflict between the ethnic groups. For an ethnicity student and analyst, it is more efficient to think in the categories of ethnicisation as a political, social, cultural or psychological process in the course of which ethnicity is yet to be connected to "groupism". In Brubaker's view this means that the "group" is not considered a fundamental analytic category, and that groupism is a variable whose changeability depends on the context (Brubaker, 2004: 11).[6] Consequently, ethnicity should not be understood as a substance, thing, entity or collective individual, but should rather be approached from the perspective of relationship, processes, political projects, and contingent events.

Described relativization of the relation between ethnicity and groupness inevitably leads to reviewing the concept of ethnic identity and identity in general. Identity, as a practical category, may have (and frequently has) strategic significance for actions of different social actors, particularly in situations where other forms of social mobilisation, such as class mobilisation, lose their strength. As an analytical category, identity was accepted over the last few decades by various theories, from interactionism to structural functionalism. The notion of identity was embraced by completely opposite theoretical perspectives on ethnicity, race and nation, such as the theories close to primordialism as well as the instrumentalist theories. The notion of identity serves the purpose of explaining the unstable, multiple, fluid and fragmentary nature of the contemporary Self. Analysing the heterogeneity of the concept of identity, Brubaker concludes that, today, the analytical value of the concept is seriously brought into question because the notion, which was originally created to denote sameness, constancy and stability, is acquiring opposite meanings. Instead of hopeless attempts to find a unique substitute for "identity", one should unravel the knot of tangled meanings and divide the notion of "identity" into several less "tangled" notions such as self- and Other-identification, categorisation, self-understanding, social location, connectedness, and groupness (Brubaker, 2004: 41–48).

[6] Brubaker advises of the necessity to differentiate between groups and categories. Category is not a group. It is at best the potential basis for group-formation or "groupness" (Brubaker, 2004: 12).

On the horizon of the constructivist perspective of the kind promoted by Brubaker, a general research hypothesis is formulated according to which *ethnicity within the research field is understood in relationship categories, as a dynamic phenomenon defined with respect to established boundaries between the ethnic groups*. Therefore, we assume that the multiethnic areas significantly differ in the following aspects: how the members of the community perceive themselves, how they perceive others/those different from them, and how they perceive the events they are involved in within the situations of latent and manifest conflicts.

This hypothesis expresses several specific assumptions for a given research project. Social boundaries linking ethnicity to the groups have a powerful impact on the ideas of the community. It has to be assumed that this is a multidimensional process through which the communities are being structured, both at local and other higher levels. Undoubtedly, the differences in establishing ethnic boundaries affect not only the images of the community in multiethnic areas, but also ethnopolitical mobilisation and actions. In this context, paraphrasing B. Anderson, one could say that what is important is not only the way the communities are imagined, but also the way in which they function (Anderson, 1983). A high level of "groupness" in certain social circumstances may cause creation of strong feelings of collective solidarity on ethnic bases, which in turn may result in expansion of ethnic distance, interethnic conflicts and violence. Likewise, "softer" and more porous ethnic boundaries may cause weak connections between ethnicity and "groupness", as well as a lack of ethnopolitical mobilisation in other areas. Where there are ethnic conflicts and violence in its surroundings, the future of a community may heavily depend on the local community members' perception of "Others", their self-identification and dimensions of belonging to which they attribute greater or lesser importance.

2. Imagining the Others and Self-identification in Multiethnic Areas – Some Empirical Data

This paper is founded on the empirical research carried out through October and November 2008, covering a series of multiethnic areas in Croatia. Our previous investigations indicate that the answers to questions concerning multiethnic conflict and, in particular, multiethnic peace, cannot be looked for on the national level exclusively (Banovac, 1998; Katunarić and Banovac, 2004; Boneta and Banovac, 2007). Institutional solutions and actions of active participants at the national, i.e. the state level, are frequently concealed under the veil of higher "national interests", they fail to reach beyond the declaratory statements of political leaders, and they often misrepresent the actual state of the problems at local levels. For these reasons,

the answer to the question as to why ethnic-national mobilisation in certain communities occurs in a radical manner, while in other communities it comes about with some difficulty or not at all, should be sought for at the same place it is posed – at the local levels. For obvious reasons that may be found in the recent past, the research underlying this paper focuses on Croatian and Serbian relations. Nevertheless, the sample includes the communities in which other minority groups make up a considerable portion (Italians in Rovinj, Czechs in Daruvar).

The scope of the research includes questionnaires filled in by 809 persons from six towns/municipalities in Croatia: Gospić, Plaški, Pakrac, Vrbovsko, Rovinj and Daruvar.[7] The first three of the listed towns/municipalities (Gospić, Plaški and Pakrac) have seen events of war and ethnic conflict, not only in the more recent times but also further back into the past. These are the areas where, in the course of the last century and particularly in the early 1990s, radical conflicts fed on the ethnic-national differences, and reintegration processes developed in contradictory ways. The latter three towns (Vrbovsko, Rovinj and Daruvar) represent the multiethnic areas in which either the interethnic peace was preserved throughout the 1990s (Rovinj and Vrbovsko), or, despite the warfare in the immediate vicinity and social disturbances, coexistence was maintained in the local community (Daruvar).[8] The survey was performed in the form of structured interviews by a trained team of students.

Prior to distributing questionnaires, several interviews were made with the representatives of the "expert groups", i.e. the individuals belonging to political and intellectual circles who were immediate protagonists of the dramatic circumstances in which the Croatian state was established in the early 1990s, as well as one of the key factors in the reconstruction of ethnic peace and reintegration in the post-conflict period. These dialogues had a two-fold purpose. Firstly, they served as the bases for outlining the hypothesis of the research and directing the research to the actual living conditions in the local communities. Secondly, the interviews were planned as a supporting source, i.e. a kind of "oral history" of the interethnic relations, thus facilitating the interpretation of the collected data. To this purpose the structure of the interviews was basically homologous to the structure of the questionnaire.

[7] See the appendix to this paper.

[8] The sample design included three steps. In the first step, the six localities/municipalities have been chosen on the basis of their demography and peace/conflict records in the first half of the 1990s. In the second step, the quotas of examinees were established on the basis of the demographic structure (including gender and age) of the areas. In the third step, a random choice was made out of quotas of examinees.

Different indicators were used in the study, aimed at finding the answer to the question as to how the people see life in their community. Due to the limited volume of this paper, only some of the main indicators related to the assumptions mentioned in the introduction will be presented here. These are: ethnic distance, opinions of the "Others", and self-identification processes. In accordance with the assumptions referred to in the introductory part of this paper, the analysis of the data focuses on the differences between conflict areas and peace areas.

2.1. Interethnic Relations, Ethnic Distance and Perception of the "Others"

Ethnic distance is measured by means of a modified Bogardus social distance scale.[9] The acceptability of relations towards the ethnic groups was examined, it being assumed that they enter into everyday interaction in the selected towns/municipalities. These groups are: Albanians, Bosniacs, Croatians, Roma, Slovenians, Serbs, and Italians. Table 1 shows the basic distributions of answers for the peace area and the conflict area. For the purpose of easy reference, Table 1 shows only the affirmative answers to the question: "If you were to decide on the relation towards the mentioned groups, which groups would you accept as …?" The basic distribution of answers to the posed questions indicates several general tendencies. There are huge differences in all categories of relations between the "conflict areas" and the "peace enclaves" when it comes to accepting different ethnic groups. The answers distribution rather clearly shows that the ethnic boundaries are more clearly and "sharply" drawn in the conflict areas than in the peace areas.

Not surprisingly, the more formal the relations and the lesser the "emotional tension", the more porous the social boundaries. The exception is with regard to the question of acceptance of members of the minority groups in "leading functions in economic and political life". In these relations, the ethnic distance is slightly less than in the case of "entering a marital relation" (accepting one of them as a potential spouse). Although social ostracism, which is recognisable in the data contained in the last column,[10] is relatively low, it has to be pointed out that one of ten persons questioned

[9] The most significant change in relation to the original Bogardus scale is in an additional "element", which concerns the acceptability of representatives of individual ethnic groups holding the leading functions in the political and economic sphere.

[10] The element was phrased in the following manner: "*they have to be forbidden to stay in Croatia*". As opposed to other questions and answers, the affirmative answer in this case, meant the negative attitude of the persons answering the question.

in the conflict areas believes that members of the Serbian ethnic national group should be forbidden to stay in Croatia. Interestingly, Slovenians are positioned in the second place and Roma in the third, with more than twice as less frequency of affirmative answers than in case of Serbians. Although frequency of such answers is not high, it indicates two possible criteria for intolerance towards the "Others". The first is of a political nature, and the other is based on cultural distance. Finally, it has to be borne in mind that the sample consisted of 76% persons who declared themselves as ethnic Croatians, meaning that they set the general "tenor" of the distribution as a whole, as shown in Table 1.

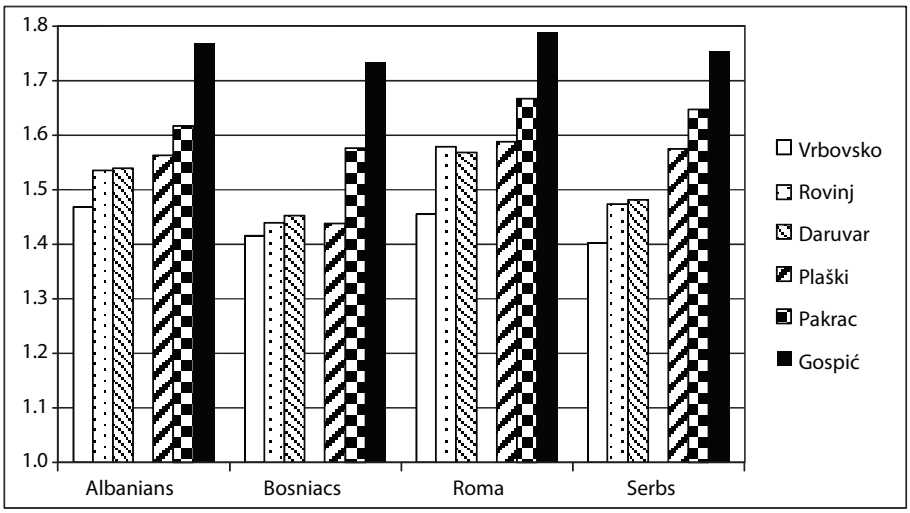
Table 1. Acceptability of relations to members of different ethnic groups (in %)

		Close Neighbours	Friends	Acquaintancies	Co-workers	Leaders in politics and economics	Spouse	Visitors	Banning them entry into Croatia
Albanians	Peace	72.3	71.8	77.3	76.3	61.8	52.8	92.9	1.4
	Conflict	55.3	54.8	62.5	57.9	46.0	40.3	76.0	3.9
Bosniacs	Peace	81.8	82.2	84.6	84.4	68.0	61.6	94.1	0.7
	Conflict	62.8	65.1	71.3	65.9	51.7	45.7	79.8	2.6
Croats	Peace	98.6	98.1	98.3	98.3	97.9	96.7	97.9	0.5
	Conflict	95.3	96.4	95.6	94.8	93.5	94.8	92.8	1.3
Roma	Peace	70.9	71.3	76.5	75.8	61.1	51.4	92.4	1.2
	Conflict	51.7	51.9	59.9	56.3	44.4	37.2	74.9	4.4
Slovenians	Peace	79.6	79.9	82.5	82.7	68.2	63.7	93.8	0.7
	Conflict	56.8	55.6	64.6	61.5	51.9	42.1	78.6	4.7
Serbs	Peace	77.0	77.0	81.5	79.9	65.9	62.3	93.1	2.4
	Conflict	54.3	54.8	64.1	58.9	48.3	41.3	76.0	10.6
Italians	Peace	88.9	87.4	88.4	87.7	75.6	72.7	96.0	0.5
	Conflict	67.4	66.1	71.1	68.7	54.0	48.8	86.6	1.6

When speaking of ethnic distance in the studied areas, it has to be pointed out that *the peace areas* and *the conflict areas* should not be understood as fully homogenous categories. This is best illustrated by the following graphical representation of the results of the analysis of variances in ethnic distance for Croatians regarding the "entering a marital relation" variable, distributed by towns/municipalities. For the purpose of easy reference, only the data for four ethnic groups are mentioned, these being Serbs,

Albanians, Bosniacs and Roma. A higher index value shows higher distance from individual ethnic groups.

Chart 1. Social distance of Croatians by the locations – refusal to enter marital relations



Wilks lambda = .90460, F (20,2014,1) = 3.0910, p = .00000

Difference between peace areas (Vrbovsko, Rovinj and Daruvar) and conflict areas (Plaški, Pakrac, Gospić) are evident and considerable in the statistical sense. The presented distribution suggests several important aspects. Differences in ethnic distance are the most overt in relations between Croatians and Serbs. Differences between peace areas and conflict areas are lesser when it comes to groups such as Albanians and Roma, who differ from the majority group even more in some cultural aspects (language, religion). The most tolerant of all studied areas is the town of Vrbovsko in the Gorski Kotar region. This is the environment in which members of Serbian ethnic groups make up one third of the population, according to the 1991 census.[11] To date, there have been almost no changes in the structure of the population. By far the most intolerant environment is in Gospić, the centre of the Lika region.[12]

[11] According to the data in the 2001 census, 6,047 persons lived in the area of Vrbovsko, 57.25% of whom being Croatian and 36.23% Serbs.

[12] Prior to the war conflict in the early 1990s, the Gospić Serbian minority in the area was somewhat smaller than a third of the total population. Today, their share is lower than 5%.

Despite quite clear differences in the ethnic distance between the peace areas and the conflict areas, it would be erroneous to conclude that this is the only variable to which the establishment of social boundaries is connected. A statistical technique of regression analysis was used for the purpose of determining the predictors of individual ethnic distance variables. Ethnic distance variables are used as dependant variables, while the social attributes (gender, age, marital status, education) and peace/conflict area, political orientation (left, centre, right) and religiosity were used as independent variables. The results for the "entering a marital relation" variable are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Predictor variables for "Entering a marital relation"

Spouse – Serbs	*Beta*	*Sig.*	*Spouse – Roma*	*Beta*	*Sig.*
Political orientation	.191543	.000	Political orientation	.121786	.002
Religiosity	–.145101	.000	Religiosity	–.105669	.007
Peace/Conflict	.133978	.000	Peace/Conflict	.086897	.025
R square	.139		R square	.083	
Spouse – Bosniacs	*Beta*	*Sig.*	*Spouse – Albanians*	*Beta*	*Sig.*
Political orientation	.151884	.000	Religiosity	–.136413	.000
Sex	.112790	.002	Political orientation	.113437	.004
Religiosity	–.101835	.001	Age	–.107063	.000
Peace/Conflict	.098394	.010	Peace/Conflict	.069906	–.088
R square	.098		R square	.085	

The variables which appear in addition to the differentiation between the peace and conflict areas, and which serve as the main predictors of ethnic distance are *political orientation* and *religiosity*. Relatedness between the political orientations[13] and ethnic distance is confirmed in other studies carried out in Croatia (Šiber, 1997; Banovac and Boneta, 2006). Although the division to the left, central and right political orientation are questionable to some extent nowadays, the right, i.e. conservative political option is linked to traditionalist values, ethnocentrism and more xenophobic viewpoints. During the conflicts in the 1990s, such points of view were often publicly promoted not only by some of the leaders of the right-wing

[13] Political orientations were examined on the basis of the so-called semantic differential scale where the persons questioned may defined their conceptual-political position in the sense of belonging to the left or right political wing or centre. Examined persons positioned themselves on the left-right continuum of political orientation with seven degrees. For the reason of statistical correctness, three categories left and three categories right of centre were classified as left and right, respectively.

political parties, but also by those holding positions in the Croatian government.

The other predictor variable of ethnic distance is religiosity. The negative value of the *beta* coefficient means that in certain cases, a higher level of religiosity is related to a lower level of *acceptance* of ethnic diversity. This phenomenon has also been identified in the earlier studies conducted in Croatia and other countries (Sekulić, 2004; Norris and Inglehart, 2004). In multiethnic areas in Croatia, this sort of relatedness has specific weight given the frequent overlap of ethnic and religious boundaries among social groups.[14] In two of the mentioned cases, age and gender are predictor variables. When it comes to establishing marital bonds with the Bosniac group, it seems that women are less susceptible to prejudices than men. On the other hand, older rather than younger persons included in the sample tend to demonstrate somewhat deeper prejudices in relation to Albanians.

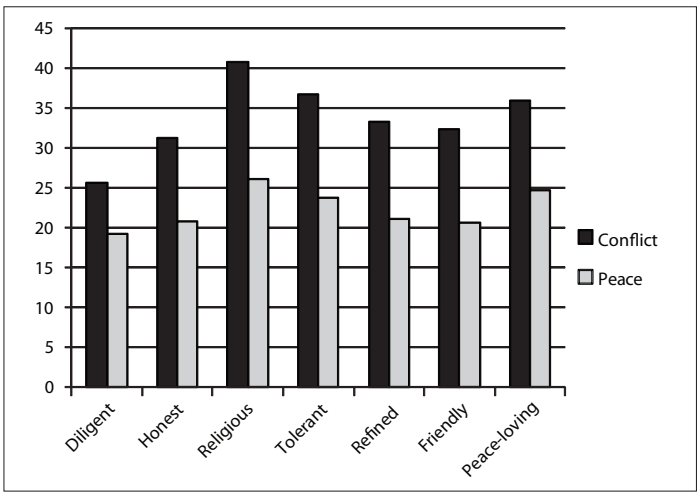
2.2. Moral Opinions on Others – Questions of the Group Openness/Closure

Besides ethnic distance, the degree of closeness towards the other groups has been measured using an additional instrument. As opposed to the categories of ethnic distance which contain different presupposed relations, another instrument measuring social boundaries contains seven categories for which we have assumed that they have certain moral-value significance for the examinees. The question was phrased as follows: "Would you agree with the statement that persons belonging to different ethnic groups are equally *diligent*, *honest*, *religious*, *tolerant*, *refined*, *friendly*, and *peace-loving*?". The replies "I do not agree" are shown in the graph below.

The chart clearly shows the differences in the level of social closure in the areas of peace and the areas of conflict. The highest degree of social closure for the members of other groups is present for the categories of "religiousness", "tolerance" and "peacefulness". Such distribution of replies leads to the conclusion that in the monitored areas, and particularly in those where the conflict relations are prevailing, religion is one of the main factors of ethnic closure.

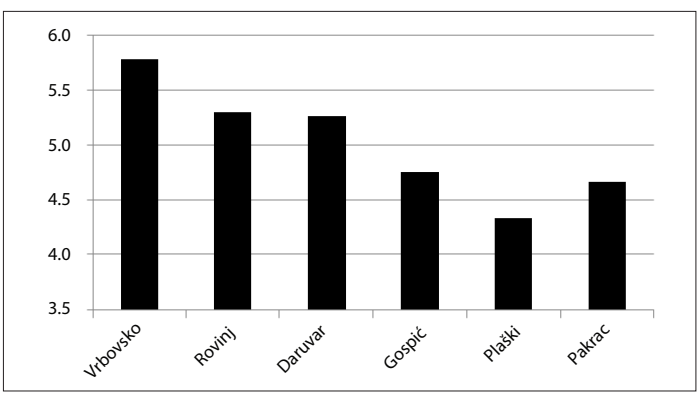
[14] This is particularly true when it comes to Croatians, Serbs and Bosniacs who are traditionally identified as Catholics, Orthodox and Muslims, respectively.

Chart 2. Non-agreement with the statement that the members of different ethnic groups are equally diligent, honest, religious, tolerant, refined, friendly, and peace-loving (in %)



In the analysis that followed, a composite variable (index) of group openness/closure was defined in such a way that each affirmative answer to an individual element was assigned points. Consequently, the higher values in the further analysis stand for a higher degree of group openness. Relatedness of the composite variable of group openness was tested by analysis of variance as a statistical procedure. Similarly as in the case of ethnic distance, statistically significant relatedness was established with the variables: "town/municipality", "religiosity" and "political orientation".

Chart 3. Group openness and town/municipality

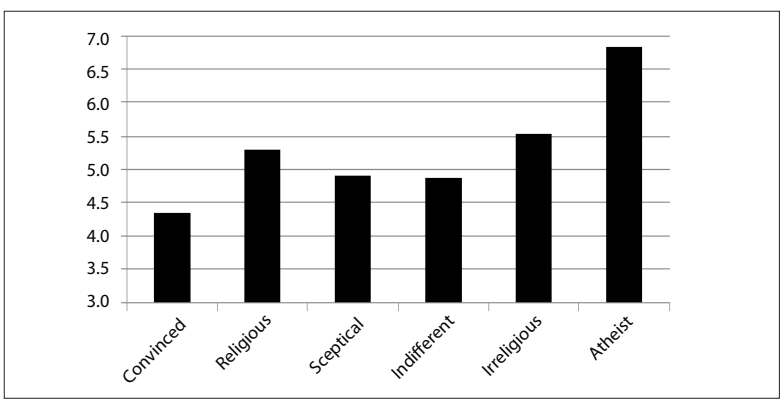


Current effect: F (5,803) = 4.6788, p = .00032

"Group openness" as distributed by the location reflects in more details the division into the conflict areas and the peace enclaves. In this case too, Vrbovsko is confirmed to be the most open environment in terms of interethnic relations. Plaški is the "most closed" of all the examined social environments. We may presume that one of the reasons for the latter results is the fact that the wider municipal area of Plaški was completely demographically devastated during 1990s. Out of 2,271 inhabitants who were living in that local community in 1991, no more than 92 remained there following the decisive Croatian military actions in 1995. In the subsequent period, predominantly Croatian refugees from Bosnia-Herzegovina have settled there, and part of the refugee Serbs returned. The traditional community was practically "erased" which is certainly the source of problems in communication between the groups and individuals who live in this area at present; they often perceive each other as strangers.

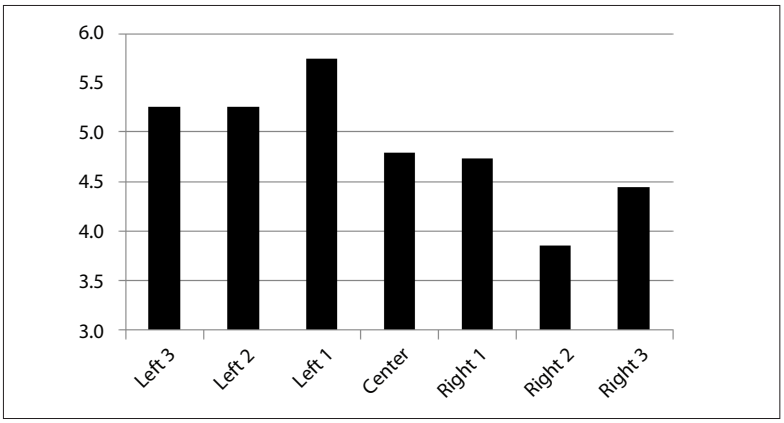
The variables "religiosity" and "political orientation" are related to the composite variable of group openness in a similar way as in the case of ethnic distance. The most closed group is composed of "convinced worshippers", i.e. those who are the most radical religious believers. The other extreme belongs to the most radical opponents to religion. The remaining groups are relatively equally distributed between these extremes.

Chart 4. Group openness and religiosity



Current effect: F(5,800) = 4.5738, p = .00040

Chart 5. Group openness and political orientations



Current effect: F(6,702) = 3.2093, p = .00408

The relation between the "group openness" and political orientation of respondents confirms that those persons who declare themselves as belonging to the left orientation are more open to the "Others" than those who declare themselves as members of the right-wing or political centre. Nevertheless, on the radical positions on both the left and right wing, the tendency is towards lessening of moral tolerance for the "Others".

2.3. Identification Processes

Life in a community inevitably involves the individual's feeling of affiliation with the social group that is understood as such community. The image of the community in that sense presupposes relatedness and interaction between individuals, as well as identification with the different structural elements of the group. In this context, the identification process is realised through the activity of an individual within certain social structures, which can be understood as the structures of common life with the Others (Cifrić and Nikodem, 2006: 175). For these reasons, the answers to the question on imagining different communities are inconceivable without studying the identification processes. Starting from the constructivist assumption on multidimensionality and fluidity of identification processes in contemporary societies, identification processes have been studied through different dimensions.

The study is based on the assumption on relatedness of identification processes and ethnic conflict or ethnic peace. To be precise, we sought the answer to the question as to whether it is possible to establish the differ-

ences in certain dimensions of identification processes in the conflict areas and peace enclaves. The instrument was used in the survey, which contained 15 categories for which we have assumed that, taken together, they include the most important aspects of identification processes. The results of the analysis of variance using the predictor variable peace/conflict are shown in the table below.

Table 3. Identification categories (How much significance do you attribute to the following forms of belonging and affiliation?)[15]

	Peace		*Conflict*	
	Mean	Std. Err.	Mean	Std. Err.
Family	3.66	.033	3.62	.034
Homeland	3.23	.042	3.26	.044
Croatia	3.10	.041	3.22	.043
Region	3.06	.046	2.97	.048
Town	3.02	.047	2.89	.049
Culture	2.88	.042	2.95	.044
District	2.88	.049	2.84	.052
Language	2.69	.050	2.81	.052
Nation	2.57	.049	2.98	.051
Profession	2.42	.050	2.29	.052
Gender	2.38	.053	2.46	.055
Church	2.37	.049	2.86	.052
Generation	2.30	.050	2.35	.053
Europe	2.27	.047	2.30	.049
Political party	1.61	.041	1.86	.043
N	413		378	

Although there is a statistically significant correlation between the identification categories on one side and the peace/conflict variable on the other, more careful analysis of the mentioned data demonstrates that differences in most of the categories are actually minimal. In fact, there are only two categories in which the identification processes in the conflict areas and the peace areas differ to a great extent. These are belonging to a nation and belonging to a church (i.e. religion). The question that may be posed in this context is: Is it possible to explain the dynamics of ethnic conflict and ethnic peace in the relevant areas solely on the basis of these

[15] The surveyed persons were requested to assign points from 1 (completely unimportant) to 4 (very important) to rate the significance they attributed to each of the selected categories.

differences? This is all the more so, since even the examined persons residing in the conflict areas tend to attribute greater importance to some other identification categories (family, homeland, national and regional/local territorial affiliation) instead of religious and ethnic affiliation. Attempting to find the answer to the posed question, we have carried out additional data processing that consisted of two stages. Firstly, factor analysis was applied to the identification categories, and secondly, the obtained factors (composite variables) were included in the regression analysis. Factor analysis of the main components generated 4 factors, explaining somewhat less than 64% of the total variance.

The first factor (territorial identification) consists of five variables and includes: *belonging to a town, to a region, to a quarter/village, Croatia and homeland*.

The second factor (primordial identification) consists also of five variables and involves the feelings of *belonging to a national group, to a church (religion), to a national culture, a feeling of affiliation to mother tongue and family*.

The third factor (socio-professional identification) entails three variables: *generational affiliation, gender, and a feeling of professional affiliation*. The "tenor" to this factor is given by the first two elements, which have the highest factor saturation.

The fourth factor (political identification) includes two variables: *political party affiliation* and *belonging to the European social space*.

The obtained factors were included in the regression analysis as dependent variables, while the variables from the previous analysis (peace/conflict, gender, age, education, political orientation, religiosity) were used as predictor variables. The results of the regression analysis are shown in the table below.

Table 4. Factors of identification – regression analysis results

F1 – Territorial id.	*Beta*	*Sig.*
Age	.188	0
Education	–.097	.011
R square = .068		
F2 – Primordial id.	*Beta*	*Sig.*
Religiosity	–.33	0
Pol. orientation	.136	0
Peace/Conflict	.091	.013
R square = .192		

F3 – Socio-professional id.	*Beta*	*Sig.*
Age	–.102	.042
Gender	–.038	.039
R square = .017		
F4 – Political id.	*Beta*	*Sig.*
Education	.105	.008
Peace/Conflict	.102	.012
R square = .027		

Results of the regression analysis demonstrate that identification processes are barely related to the division into the peace areas and the conflict areas. In two cases (territorial and socio-professional identification) there is no statistically significant correlation to the peace/conflict variable. In the other two cases there is relatedness to the peace/conflict variable, but it is considerably weaker in the former case (primordial identification) than the correlation to the latter two predictors (religiosity and political orientation), and in the other case (political identification) the multiple correlation coefficient (R square) is low and explains less than 3% of variance.

We may conclude that the multiple regression analysis confirms the formerly stated hypothesis on the questionable relatedness between the peace/conflict variable on the one hand, and identification processes on the other. This is fully evident in the case of identification processes which the surveyed persons consider highly important, being those contained in the territorial identification factor. In this context, the following question may be posed: what determines the dynamic processes of ethnic conflict and peace if they are not clearly related to processes of identification? This is even more so, given that the examination of ethnic distance suggests fairly clear division between conflict areas and those in which ethnic peace was preserved. In order to be able to explain at least partially the dynamics and roots of peace and conflict in multiethnic communities, one should use qualitative methods and the "oral" history of the respective communities, because an official and more objective one has not yet been written.

3. Roots of Conflict and Roots of Peace in Multiethnic Areas in Croatia

Dilemmas and divergences suggested by the results of the empirical research may to some extent be explained on the basis of information obtained through the "oral history" method used in the study. These are the previously mentioned interviews whose analysis sheds a somewhat different light on the results obtained on the basis of quantitative methods. Thus far, the work within the research project has included structured interviews with two targeted groups. The first group was made of persons who can be defined as the expert group on the national level. This group consisted of individuals who, in addition to having knowledge of the general problems related to interethnic relations in Croatia, were the immediate partakers in the events occurring in the early 1990s and played key roles in different areas of social life, both in the course of the most violent conflict and

during the reconstruction of ethnic peace.[16] All interviewed persons had practical experience related to multiethnic relationships, while the majority of them also had direct biographical relations to the areas included in the study. The second group of interviewed persons consisted of members of the local communities. These persons were selected for interviews within the two communities in which the questionnaires were also distributed. These are Vrbovsko, as a typical peaceful area, and Plaški, as a conflict area that was fully demographically devastated in the 1990s. The final section of this paper offers some of the indications obtained on the basis of interviews, which further explain the results of the study using the questionnaires. Similar questions were posed, both to the expert groups and to the local inhabitants.

The question as to why peace was preserved in some areas, while this did not happen in other areas, was answered in a way that indicates the complexity of conflict dynamics and especially, of the dynamics and the roots of ethnic peace. One interviewed person, who lived in the area which saw no conflicts, explained that the ethnic distances in the territory of Vrbovsko were nonexistent prior to the 1990s. In his own words, the members of the local community were unaware of "who was who". Under such circumstances, ethnic mobilisation was quite difficult, but it was possible from the very beginning clearly to tell apart the actors of conflict from the actors of peace. In his view, the main player of conflict in this area was the former Yugoslav Army which, following the short war episode in Slovenia, withdrew to the borders of the so-called "truncated Yugoslavia". Given that mobilisation of the local Serbs and initiation of the conflict "from the inside" were not possible, the "methodology of rebellion" was used similarly as in other multiethnic areas with a greater number of Serbs inhabitants. The basic strategy was sending external instructors (usually retired members of the former Yugoslav Army and secret services) with the task to spread fear and panic among the Serbs, and win them over to the rebels' side.[17] Subsequently, they organised mass gatherings with explicit Serbian

[16] In sum, six national interlocutors were selected for the interviews: an expert on Croatian-Serbian history; a highly positioned advisor of the President of Croatia; the former head of a major NGO for human rights and a scholar; a political leader of the Croatian Serbs, also a scholar; another political leader of the Croatian Serbs (belonging to an opposite political camp in the Serbian community), who runs a broad network of Serbian organizations in Croatia; and, finally, a former Croatian Minister of the Interior in the early 1990s, who played a key role in successful peace-talks with local Serbs in an ethnically mixed area in the Gorski Kotar region.

[17] The interlocutor stated that in the first stage only a few individuals joined the rebellions (a local innkeeper and some retailers), motivated by the promised material benefit rather

nationalistic and Chetnik symbolics.[18] It was not before these events took place that the change happened in the minds of the targeted people and they began to take part in the rebellion. This was followed by denying legitimacy to the democratically elected local governments under pressure of organised demonstrations in some places, as well as by militarising the newly-founded institutions and turning them into "crisis headquarters". The final mobilisation stage in preparing the rebellion was distribution of weapons to the local Serbian inhabitants, which was done by the former Yugoslav Army.[19] This was "the point of no return" because it was followed by the reaction of the newly-established Croatian government, what in turn brought about the escalation of the conflict in most of these cases. The wider area of Vrbovsko and some neighbouring municipalities in Gorski Kotar were actually the isolated cases of the described arming of local people with peaceful epilogues.[20]

According to the opinion of all the interviewed persons (both the national experts and the local people), ethnic peace in that area was kept due exclusively to the mediating activities of individuals who knew well these communities, had grown up there, or enjoyed the trust of the local people for other reasons.[21] The importance of the role of such actors, as well as the risk they were exposed to, are best illustrated by the examples of the places where individuals who took the role of ethnic peace mediators were physically liquidated (i.e. the chief of police in Osijek, and mayor in Vrginmost, the Kordun region). It was only upon their removal that the

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than the extreme ethnic and nationalist identification. He pointed out that people who were sent from outside were not concerned with the fact that these local Serbs might be injured or killed in the conflicts.

[18] The impact of mobilisation in the neighbouring area of Vrbovsko was spread by means of the gathering organised on 4 March 1990 on the mountain called Petrova Gora. The protests were organised under the name of "gatherings of truth", and the majority of the participants were brought in by busses from Serbia, Bosnia and other parts of Croatia in which the insurgency had already spread its roots.

[19] The persons interviewed state that Serbs living in the wider areas of Vrbovsko were distributed some 3,000 pieces of weaponry.

[20] These peace enclaves located immediately along the areas involved in warfare, should not be confused with other areas which were further from the hostilities and in which interethnic peace was preserved, such as those in Istria.

[21] Two interviewed persons belonging to the group of national experts were born in these areas and were directly involved in prevention of conflict. They both lived in Zagreb in the 1990s and had connections to the structures in the newly-established government. One of them declared his ethnicity to be Croatian and was minister of internal affairs in the first Croatian government at that time. The other is an ethnic Serb, also indirectly related to the structures of Croatian government to the present day.

engineers of ethnic violence could have succeeded in fulfilling their mission in these areas.

The second element affecting strengthening of ethnic boundaries was the dissolution of patriarchal cultural patterns. An interviewed person, a former activist of the Croatian Helsinki Committee, specifically emphasised the significance of neighbourhood relations as an important integration mechanism at the local level. He pointed out that the war in the 1990s was the first war in these territories in which "one was fighting one's neighbour". This did not occur in the former wars, at least not as systematically and as principally as in the first half of the 1990s. In the light of this circumstance, the activities of the peace mediators were merely focused on preserving the trust and common values within the multiethnic communities, despite external pressures.

The third element mentioned by the majority of interviewed persons to be an important basis for explaining the conflict and the peace were the events in the Second World War.[22] Nearly all agreed that both positive and negative reminiscences from that period played an important role in the 1990s conflict and in the subsequent attempts to reconstruct the communities. Particularly important was the symbolic meaning the Second World War had for the relations between Croatians and Serbs in the 1990s. It is a well-known fact that in that period, both Croatian and Serbian nationalists excessively used the Ustashi and Chetnik iconography from the Second World War. At the level of everyday life, this was a very efficient method of drawing ethnic boundaries and partitions. Avoiding such iconography could lead to the opposite, peaceful outcome. One interviewed person from Vrbovsko told us that from the time that the first provocations came from outside the local communities, ethnically mixed police squads, made up of local Croatians and Serbs, and patrolled the streets. They wore old Yugoslav uniforms without any national or other symbols.[23]

There was a somewhat different situation in Istria (including the town of Rovinj) where the regionalist alternative played an important role in keeping the interethnic peace. This regional alternative stood firmly against the nationalistic politics of the central government in the most critical pe-

[22] One interviewed person belonging to the expert group said that the situation was much better in the multiethnic areas populated by Serbs who joined the Partisan movement in the Second World War, than in those where they joined Chetnik paramilitary forces in larger numbers.

[23] A similar story was told by our partners in the course of researching the Bosnian town of Tuzla in 2003. For the same reasons, the police force in Tuzla wore the Tuzla coat-of-arms on their uniforms instead of any national symbols.

riod.[24] Along with other specificities, such as the relative remoteness from the areas of war operations, regionalism was an important stability factor in the functioning of the institutional aspects of social life, in keeping cross-border co-operation, and in maintaining relations with certain European Union bodies.[25]

Despite the serious attempts made, peace mediators' tactics failed in the neighbouring areas. Under the circumstances of war, Plaški, similarly to some other places populated by Serbs, remains demographically devastated after the Croatian military actions that put down the Serbian rebellion in 1995. Under these circumstances, in Plaški as well as in other areas, the demographic "filling in" was organised, by encouraging the settling of ethnic Croatians expatriated from the areas of former Yugoslavia, predominantly from Bosnia-Herzegovina.[26] We were told by the persons we interviewed at the local and national levels that, following the Croatian military operations, there were no multiethnic conflicts in Plaški. As opposed to some other conflict areas,[27] Plaški is going through a relatively peaceful reintegration process, although it is affected by many social and economic problems (e.g. lack of investments, high unemployment rate). The interviewed local interlocutor of Serbian ethnic affiliation pointed out that multiethnic conflicts cannot be resolved merely by economic reconstruction. One of the main problems related to reintegration is demographic structure. In the case of ethnic Serbs particularly, the share of elderly people in the population is increasingly growing. As in the other conflict areas, people returning to Plaški are mainly of advanced age. He also pointed out that Serbs are still deprived of certain fundamental rights; for instance, Serbian children are facing continuous impediment to education in their mother tongue, while members of the Serbian ethnic group cannot access the key positions in the local self-government. The inhabitants of Plaški who were interviewed, irrespective of their ethnic affiliation, still claim that there is tolerance at the level of everyday life and no visible segregation between the ethnic groups. In spite of that, Plaški fits the conventional pattern of disintegrated com-

[24] The Istrian Democratic Assembly was founded as a regional political party in 1990. As of 1991 to the present day, the IDA (the Croatian acronym is IDS) enjoys majority support in Istria in all elections.

[25] Already in 1995, Istria was included in the organisations bringing together the European regions.

[26] Today, the share of ethnic Serbs and ethnic Croatians in Plaški is approximately the same. The wider areas surrounding Plaški are also interesting because some of the nearby villages have been populated by a group of fifty or so members of the Hare Krishna cult. One of the interviewed persons belonged to that cult.

[27] These are primarily the areas of northern Dalmatia.

munities, which is both recognisable in the comments of the interviewed persons and confirmed by other studies. This pattern is reintegration which is, in the best case, an "endurable process" (Mesić and Bagić, 2007). According to the prevailing opinion, the reconstruction of communities that existed in the conflict areas before the war is simply not viable. In the light of this conclusion, one should view the data of the survey study, which show a high degree of group closure in places such as Plaški, despite the perceived tolerance present in the interviews.

Concluding Remarks

The results of the study carried out in the multiethnic areas in Croatia confirm the hypothesis on the dynamic character of ethnicity, which was formulated in the introduction to this paper. Comparative analysis between the peace areas and the conflict areas shows considerable differences in ethnic distance between the former and the latter. Significantly larger ethnic distance is measured in the areas in which the conflicts escalated in the 1990s, than in the areas where there were no multiethnic conflicts (Vrbovsko and Rovinj) or where these conflicts had limited impact (Daruvar). In this context, one should bear in mind the quite clear difference between the places in both sub-samples. Vrbovsko has been revealed as the most tolerant place within the peace area, whereas Gospić is the place with the largest ethnic distance towards all groups included in the study. Nevertheless, it is important to note that the issues of ethnic distance are related to two predictor variables, being religiosity (more religious people have a larger distance towards the "Others") and political orientation (the right-wing oriented have a larger distance towards the "Others"). In analysing identification processes, not even the approximate differentiation between the peace areas and the conflict areas can be determined. Testing different aspects of social affiliation reveals certain differences only in respect to the importance of religious and ethnic affiliations. However, the majority of persons included in the study, equally in the peace areas and in the conflict areas, do not attribute the highest importance to these identification dimensions. In that sense, the results of the study support in a certain way the constructivist hypothesis on instrumentalization of ethnicity in constructing group boundaries and indicate that the differences in ethnic distance and reasons for group closure have truly complex roots.

Qualitative analysis of the interviews carried out within the study points to several factors that can be understood as roots of ethnic conflict and ethnic peace in the studied areas. First and foremost is the activity of the peace actors on the one side, and the conflict actors on

the other. Here, the relations, coalitions, and conflicts between political elites have proven to be particularly important on the local level and in the political centres. Additionally, initiatives and individual actions have huge importance, especially under the circumstances of insufficient institutionalisation of social life. The second group of factors is composed of cultural patterns and traditional integration mechanisms in local communities (e.g. neighbour relations). Their disruption opens the disintegration process in the local community. The third category of factors is made up of historical and symbolic aspects. In this context, historical memories and "debts" from the past (such as those from the time of the Second World War) can encourage conflicts in certain cases, or lead to peace in other situations.

In the end, we may reiterate that the studies conducted until now have analysed the mentioned factors mainly within the attempt to explain ethnic conflicts, whilst hardly ever with the aim to explain ethnic peace and absence of conflict. This is not surprising given that the areas in which the multiethnic peace is preserved usually do not pose problems to anyone, save of course to the conflict actors. Is it not time to raise more frequently, besides the question: "What is the cause of multiethnic conflict?" the question of: "Why is multiethnic peace preserved in some areas?"

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APPENDIX – The Research Areas

Rovinj is a city situated on the north Adriatic Sea. It is located on the western coast of the Istrian Peninsula and is a popular tourist resort and active fishing port. A Romance language was once widely spoken in this part of Istria and is still spoken today by part of the residents. Rovinj is a bilingual town: the official name is Rovinj/Rovigno. There are 13,562 people living in Rovinj. 76.31% are Croats. Ethnic minorities include 16% Italians, 3.51% Serbs, 2.37% Albanians and 1.81% Bosniacs.

Vrbovsko is a town and a municipality in western Croatia, situated at the far east of the mountainous region of Gorski Kotar in the Primorje-Gorski Kotar County. On its 280 square kilometers area, Vrbovsko features 60 settlements and 6,047 inhabitants. The town population consists mostly of Croats (55.8% in 1991, and 57.2 in 2001) and Serbs (34% in 1991, and 36.2% in 2001). There was no change in the demographic composition here in the critical period of time; both populations have even increased slightly.

Daruvar is a town located in the western part of the Croatian plains (Moslavina). According to the census of 2001, the population of the Daruvar municipality (township) was 13,243. In ethnic terms, 58.36% were Croats, 18.91% Czechs, 14.07% Serbs and 1.05% Hungarians. As for religion, 74.5% are Catholics, 12.7% Orthodox, 10.5% agnostics and atheist, while the rest belong to the Baptist Church, Islam, Calvinism, and other. The entire area is actually bilingual with Czech being the second official language. Daruvar was briefly captured by militants from the Serbian Autonomous Oblast of Western Slavonia during the war.

Gospić is a town in the mountainous and sparsely populated region of Lika. According to the census in 1991, the population of the Gospić municipality was 28,010. Ethnically speaking, about 63% were Croats, and some 32% were Serbs. In 2001 the area of Gospić was populated by 12,980 inhabitants. Nowadays the ethnic structure has changed essentially, now being 93% Croats and only 4.85% Serbs. In the 1990s, during the course of war in Croatia, the town was held by Croatian government forces, while the rebel Serb forces of the Republic of Serbian Krajina occupied positions directly to the east and often bombarded the town from there. Control of the area finally devolved to the Croatian government after the Croatian military operations in August 1995.

Plaški is situated in the lower part of the Ogulin-Plaški Valley. Together with Gorski Kotar and Lika, the Ogulin-Plaški Valley forms Mountainous Croatia. Before the war in Croatia, Plaški was a municipality with a majority of Serb population (about 93%). In the census in 2001, Plaški had a municipality population of 2,292, of which 48.4% were Croats, and 46.1% Serbs. The Croat population were mostly those colonized from Bosnia in 1995 after many Serbian civilians had to leave during the Croatian military operations in 1995. Today, the municipality of Plaški again has a Serb majority due to the return of Serb refugees to their homeland. The Serbs constitute 67.69% and Croats 28.95% of the population. In the last local elections in 2005, the Serb candidates won an overwhelming majority.

Pakrac is a town in western Slavonia, Croatia, with a population of 4,772. The municipality population used to be 8,855 (census 2001). The Pakrac area is nationally mixed, which is a heritage of the Austria-Hungarian Empire when members of different groups from various parts of the Monarchy settled there: Czechs,

Hungarians, Germans and Italians. The Serbs were settled mostly after 1945 and they were the major group before 1990. The majority of the Serbs had to leave the area after the Croatian military operation coded "Flash". Nowadays Croatians represent the absolute majority of the population (68.3%), while the members of ethnic minorities consist of 30% in ethnic structure (Serbs 17.1%, Italians 6.3%, and Czechs 3.0%).

Zamišljanje drugih – dinamika sukoba i mira u višeetničkim područjima Hrvatske

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U radu se polazi od konstruktivističkih teorijskih pretpostavki prema kojima etničnost i etnički identiteti nisu na jednoznačni način povezani s društvenim skupinama (Brubaker). Promatrano u perspektivi događaja iz devedesetih godina 20. stoljeća, u istraživanju se razlikuju dvije osnovne vrste multietničkih područja u Hrvatskoj: (a) područja u kojima su eskalirali sukobi do razine raspada svih oblika zajedničkog života – »zone sukoba«; (b) područja u kojima su radikalni sukobi izbjegnuti, a međuetnički suživot u najvećoj mjeri sačuvan – »područja mira«. Anketno istraživanje čiji su rezultati obuhvaćeni ovim radom provedeno je tijekom listopada 2008. godine u lokalnim zajednicama koje se uklapaju u koncept »područja sukoba« (Gospić, Plaški, Pakrac) te u »enklavama mira«: Rovinj, Vrbovsko i Daruvar. Osim toga, korištene su i kvalitativne metode prikupljanja podataka i analize. Glavni cilj rada je u nastojanju da se pruže odgovori na bitna pitanja koja se tiču procesa identifikacije, održavanja grupnih granica i etničke distance u višeetničkim sredinama. Na temelju dosad provedenih istraživanja treba pretpostaviti da na ove procese utječu kako događaji iz bliže i dalje prošlosti, tako i »međuigra« aktualnih sistemskih čimbenika i aktera mira i sukoba. Unatoč tomu, rezultati provedenog istraživanja upućuju na ključnu ulogu instrumentalizacije etničnosti u procesima konstrukcije grupnih granica, a time i u dinamici etničke mobilizacije, sukoba te etničkog mira.

Ključne riječi: višeetnička područja, etnički sukob, etnički mir, etnička distanca, grupna zatvorenost