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Youth activism and dignity in post-war Mostar – envisioning a shared future through heritage

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ABSTRACT

This paper looks at youth activism in Mostar through a specific action occurring in 2016, when an electric substation was overpainted in the neighbourhood of Rudnik. The project highlighted the rights of the miners to emphasize that other than ethnic identities can be brought forward through cultural heritage. The paper aims to broaden the spectrum of heritage values to encompass the concept of dignity. The monument served to induce a sense of dignity on two levels. Firstly, people were given the agency to influence the monument. Secondly, the monument emphasized workers' identity, which is currently silenced in the public space.

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Introduction

The picture of Mostar as a 'permanently divided' city is gradually being replaced with a much more nuanced understanding of its dynamics (i.e. Carabelli, 2018; Hromadžić, 2015; Palmberger, 2016). Within this emerging approach, the division between Bosnian–Herzegovinian (i.e. Bosnian) Croats and Bosnian Muslims (i.e. Bosniaks), which often plays a central role in academic literature (see for instance Calame & Charlesworth, 2009; Laketa, 2015; Makaš, 2007), is not taken as the starting point for the investigation. Without dismissing the division as a problem, emerging scholarship on Mostar highlights the importance of considering the city of Mostar as *more* than simply divided (Carabelli, 2018). This approach emphasizes Mostar as a city of change and fluidity rather than a city of immobility and stagnation. Through adopting a bottom-up approach, Carabelli (2018, pp. 83–121) has shown that the varied ethnic identities within Mostar, which often tend to be presented as fairly bounded and exclusive, are in fact often negotiated through strategies of individual actors (for a discussion on ethnic identities in Bosnia and Herzegovina see Bringa, 1995; Sorabji, 1995). This resonates well with Brubaker's (2004, p. 11) approach which emphasizes that '(e)thnicity, race, and nation should be conceptualised (...) rather in relational, processual, dynamic, eventful, and disaggregated terms'. Accordingly, it becomes important to investigate how also in Mostar ethnonational identities are negotiated, embodied, and contested in fluid and often

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inconsistent ways. More specifically, we examine these dynamics through one case of youth activism and discuss how this example ties to the issue of personal and collective dignity.

The case of youth activism in question is a specific action that took place in the summer of 2016 when an electric substation was overpainted in the neighbourhood of Rudnik, Mostar. This was the location of a coal mine prior to the 1992–1995 war. The project highlighted the rights of the miners to emphasize that other than simply ethnic identities can be brought forward through cultural heritage. In such a way, the paper reflects on the silencing of workers' voices after the breakup of Yugoslavia (Petrović, 2010; 2013) as well as more broadly on the discourse on Yugo-nostalgia as a way to envision a different future (Carabelli, 2013; Kurtović & Hromadžić, 2017; Maksimović, 2017; Palmberger, 2008; 2016; Petrović, 2007; Wollentz, 2017). This paper draws on participatory observation carried out during the summer of 2016 whilst the monument was created. The paper is enriched by an inside perspective since one of the authors was an active participant in creating the monument. Furthermore, in 2018 we conducted interviews and examined responses and attitudes to the monument with the members of the local community of Rudnik, where the monument still (April 2019) stands, as well as with two main initiators of the project and with local miners. Overall, we conducted nine semi-structured interviews and held a number of informal conversations.

This paper is structured in the following way; firstly we introduce the newly defined theoretical approach to heritage, which we draw upon in the paper. Secondly, we provide a background to the heritage of Mostar to contextualize the case study and place the monument in a larger political and social context. Thirdly, we outline the concept of dignity in order to introduce how we approach and understand the concept. Finally, we present our case study of youth activism and discuss its implications for the city of Mostar.

A new approach to heritage

This study contributes to the expanding field of critical heritage studies. Whereas the traditional view of heritage – the so-called Authorized Heritage Discourse (AHD) (Smith, 2006) – is based on the understanding that heritage is determined by 'inherent' and 'eternal' values to be found and retrieved by the heritage expert, we embrace a more inclusive approach, what Kisić (2016) proposes as the Inclusive Heritage Discourse (IHD). Here, heritage is not a value found within the physical fabric of monuments and sites. Rather, it addresses a dynamic process of negotiation that is constantly producing values, i.e. heritage is *creating* values, it is not a *created* value (cf. Solli, 2011). By engaging with the intervention in the neighbourhood of Rudnik, we aim to analyse how youth activists challenge notions of immobility and stagnation in the city by envisioning a shared future (for discussions on how heritage may be future-oriented see Harrison, 2015; Högberg, Holtorf, May, & Wollentz, 2017; Smith & Campbell, 2017; see also Carabelli & Lyon, 2016).

What we aim to do more concretely through this case study, is to examine how cultural heritage may play a role for individuals to regain and maintain a sense of personal and collective dignity in the city of Mostar. In line with the theory on the IHD, dignity is regarded as a possible value produced and negotiated through heritage. Previous research on 'heritage values' tends to focus on values such as identity-building, achieving a sense of

belonging, economic and social factors, or simply the joy of experiencing and tending to the past (see Gustafsson, Holtorf, & Westergren, 2011; Ashworth, Graham, & Tunbridge, 2007; Avrami, Mason, & de la Torre, 2000; Holtorf, 2011; Jones, 2016; Smith, Messenger, & Soderland, 2010; Wollentz, 2014). These studies signify important contributions to the field since it is essential to examine the various mechanisms that serve to produce the values in heritage, including the ability of heritage to induce emotional values of affect and disaffect (see for example Smith & Campbell, 2015 for a study of different registers of engagement at heritage sites). According to the IHD, values are not inherent in heritage but constantly negotiated through embodied practices (Kisić, 2016; Smith, 2006). However, we argue that dignity is an often-overlooked aspect in regards to the values of heritage and that it may be beneficial to put a larger emphasize on it. This becomes especially essential in a post-war context. In times of war to deprive people of a *sense of agency* may be one goal of the opposite side, i.e. to pacify victims into something less than animals deprived of intentions or will (Jackson, 2013, pp. 99–115). Within this process, heritage is often employed as a tool. Undoubtedly, this also serves to deprive a sense of dignity in individuals, and thus, *reclaiming* a sense of dignity becomes crucial in the aftermath of war. Here, heritage can and should play an important role. Furthermore, we also recognize a benefit in putting attention on the concept of dignity in connection to the heritage of Mostar since it escapes ethnic connotations and instead highlights other much-needed, but rarely mentioned, values of heritage (for other examples on how heritage can avoid cultural particularism and essentialism see Holtorf, 2017; 2018; Högberg, 2016). However, before discussing theoretically the concept of dignity, we provide a brief background to the heritage of Mostar.

The heritage of Mostar

Our discussion needs to be seen in relation to how heritage in Mostar came to be increasingly ‘ethnicized’, primarily as a result of the 1992–1995 war. In other words, heritage came primarily to be understood as a marker of ethnic identity (Makaš, 2007; Walasek, 2015), an attitude present within the international community, among local actors as well as in academia (Halilović, 2013, pp. 98–103; Makaš, 2007; Nikolić, 2012). This can be directly illustrated through tracing where the money to rebuild the heritage often has come from. The financial support provided for rebuilding Ottoman heritage, such as that of damaged or destroyed mosques, has primarily been coming from countries with a majority of Muslims, for instance, Saudi Arabia and Turkey. In addition, support to rebuild Ottoman heritage has come from international actors such as the Aga Khan Trust for Culture and local actors such as the Islamic community in Bosnia and Herzegovina. In contrast, actors predominately connected to the Catholic Church have supported the rebuilding of Catholic churches (Makaš, 2007, pp. 256–337). As argued by Walasek: ‘There is no doubt that the rebuilding of mosques and churches became intensely politicised and exploited by religious leaders and politicians from all of Bosnia’s three main ethno-national groups’ (Walasek, 2015, p. 237). Additionally, on the Bosnian Croat dominated western side of Mostar, the local political parties (especially *Hrvatska Demokratska Zajednica*, HDZ)¹ have supported the renaming of street names to highlight exclusively Croatian history, constructing a national narrative from the Medieval Croat Kingdom up until the recent war (Palmberger, 2012; 2018). Furthermore, all over

Mostar, new monuments have been initiated, which further shape the public space along clear-cut ethnic lines (Makaš, 2007).

Unfortunately, very little attention has been given to forms of employing heritage in Mostar to emphasize notions of 'hybridity' and 'in-betweenness', i.e. an employment which challenges notions of heritage as a bounded and separated between ethnicities (see for example Green, 2005; Holtorf, 2017; 2018; Högberg, 2016). Following the IHD approach, we understand all forms of heritage as inherently dissonant and intangible, meaning that the specific values which identities are being built upon, such as the identity of being 'Bosnian Muslim' or 'Bosnian Croat', are created through meaning-making engagements with heritage. Therefore, they are not 'inherent' within the physical fabric of sites, but rather, they are constantly negotiated through incorporated practices (Conner-ton, 1989). Being such fluid constructions, they are in constant transformation. Such an approach to heritage and identity becomes especially important when analysing a post-war city like Mostar since identity formation and heritage (re)construction are closely intertwined (see for example Viejo-Rose, 2011; 2013). Ashworth et al, (2007, p. 1) have stated that 'contemporary society use heritage in the creation and management of collective identities, most especially as expressed through the shaping of senses of belonging defined and transmitted through the representations of place'. However, the follow-up question has to be to what extent and in which ways the usage of heritage is inclusive/exclusive, because: 'the original meaning of an inheritance implies the existence of disinheritance and by extension any creation of heritage from the past disinherits someone completely or partially, actively or potentially'. (Tunbridge & Ashworth, 1996, p. 21)

In Mostar, the international community has focused greatly on the reconstruction of the Old Bridge (i.e. Stari Most), which was destroyed the 9th November 1993 by the Croatian Defense Council (HVO). The reconstruction was supported by UNESCO, the World Bank, and other international and local actors and completed in 2004. The aim of the reconstruction was to project the idea of 'peaceful coexistence' into the bridge and transform it into a monument with universal values that would heal a divided city (Forde, 2016). However, the Serbian population, which before the war comprised around 19% of Mostar's inhabitants (Walasek, 2015, p. 213), did not fit within this binary pairing of a divided city. Another problematic issue was that the bridge did not cross the actual (i.e. physical) division of the city. Instead, the frontline during the second part of the war went along the main boulevard in the city, the Boulevard of the National Revolution (i.e. *Bulevar Narodne Revolucije*), located west of the river Neretva. These aspects led to criticism of the project for not considering local aspects of the city sufficiently, while instead being focused on the great symbolic value reaching beyond Mostar itself (Calame & Pašić, 2009; Makaš, 2007; Nikolić, 2012). Even though this paper does not intend to criticize the reconstruction of the Old Bridge, it is important to highlight that there may be problems in projecting top-down notions of 'universal value' within physical sites, so often emphasized within international (and arguably primarily Western) organizations such as UNESCO and projects supported by the European Union. Indeed, these notions also need to be thoroughly grounded in everyday practices and attitudes within the local environment (see for instance Harrison, 2012; Labadi, 2012; Meskell & Brumann, 2015, p. 30; Meskell, 2018).

In Mostar, and beyond, the socialist heritage tends to pose an uncomfortable dilemma both for the political elites in power, which are often driven by a nationalistic agenda, as

well as for international organizations, which are often regarding liberal values as the norm (Kisić, 2016, pp. 173–187, 266–269).² Parallel to contesting the socialist past, Yugo-nostalgia continues to shape people's perceptions. Contrary to traditional views on nostalgia and in line with the seminal work of Boym (2001), we regard nostalgia as a potentially future-oriented basis for action (see also Smith & Campbell, 2017 for more explicit links between heritage and nostalgia as future-oriented). In fact, recent research on the role of Yugo-nostalgia in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and former Yugoslavia more broadly, tend to emphasize its forward-oriented, as well progressive, dimensions (Carabelli, 2013; Kurtović & Hromadžić, 2017; Maksimović, 2017; Palmberger, 2008; 2016; Petrović, 2007; Wollentz, 2017). This realization poses considerable questions concerning the implications of the socialist heritage (Armakolas, 2015; Sahovic & Zulumovic, 2012, 2015), such as the Partisan Memorial Cemetery (i.e. *Partizansko groblje*) in Mostar (Barišić et al, 2017; Murtić & Barišić, 2019), and challenges the process of silencing it within the public sphere. Furthermore, the argument raises an important concern related to our specific case study, which builds upon memories from the socialist period during which the area of Rudnik in Mostar was the location of a coal mine. In other words, the monument connects to the industrial and ideological heritage of former Yugoslavia,³ and especially to how the identity of being a worker fundamentally transformed in the process of moving from an industrial to a post-industrial society. This process silenced the workers' identity within the public space. Therefore, the industrial heritage of socialism evokes 'potential for negotiation of identities that would offer an alternative to divisions along ethnic and religious lines that currently dominate the post-Yugoslav spaces' (Petrović, 2013, p. 96).

As previously mentioned, the socialist period has received little attention by international organizations, which instead have focused on what is deemed to be 'ethnic' heritage. One illustrative example is a World Bank project completed in the period between 2005 and 2006, which initiated the reconstruction of three sites connected to each of the 'three people' in Bosnia and Herzegovina, here being defined as Bosnian Serb, Bosnian Muslim and Bosnian Croat, chosen from a tentative list of 21 buildings provided by the Aga Khan Trust for Culture and the World Monuments Fund (The Aga Khan Trust for Culture, 2004, p. 51). The World Bank chose to designate the Orthodox bishop's residence as Serbian Heritage, the Napredak Cultural Centre as Croatian Heritage, and the Vakuf Palace as Bosniak heritage. As stated within the official document (World Bank, 2005, p. 3): 'During implementation, three monuments representing each ethnic community in Mostar were selected for their potential to attract important neighbourhood and community activities'. Even though an increase of co-operation and rehabilitation between the communities was intended, the project attempted to achieve this through focusing on buildings (i.e. individual objects), which were regarded as bounded and separated by the communities, insinuating that there is no such thing as a shared heritage (Makaš, 2007, pp. 324–329; Walasek, 2015, p. 224, 225).

The primary risk in using the division as an unquestioned starting point for post-war interventions is that it may neglect instances of contesting such a binary understanding of heritage. One post-war initiative, which is using that which is shared in the past as a starting point, would be the Bruce Lee statue initiated in 2004 by Nino Raspudić and Veselin Gatalo through the NGO 'Mostar Urban Movement'. According to Raspudić, the idea behind the monument was to represent the shared love amongst all of the communities

in Mostar for Bruce Lee and his fight for justice (Raspudić, 2004). Importantly, on a grass-roots-level, there have been several initiatives aiming towards non-exclusive employment of heritage, most strongly associated with OKC Abrašević (Youth Cultural Center Abrašević). Abrašević is an important youth centre in Mostar gathering socially aware youth from all ethnic communities, who together strive for a change in Mostar through activism, art and documentation/research (see especially Carabelli, 2018, pp. 123–169 for an excellent inside-perspective of the art-platform ‘Abart’, which was based at Abrašević and active between 2008 and 2014). Hereafter, we will illustrate how people in Mostar do in fact challenge the notion of heritage as permanently divided by also discussing how this case ties to the issue of personal dignity.

Dignity as a concept

Whereas recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world (The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Preamble))

Lee (2008), who has been tracing the history of ‘dignity’ as a concept from ancient times up until its present usage within the recent human rights system such as in conventions, argues that the meaning of dignity today is often regarded as self-explanatory, which means that it is seldom being clearly defined. This makes it a highly challenging concept to adopt. However, Lee (2008, p. 5) notices that its current usage ‘is associated with the state of being treated with respect or honour, with a sense of self-worthiness and self-esteem resulting therefrom’. It is possible to trace the historical narrative of dignity both as a concept and a term, from Ancient Greek all the way to the present, to find that there are commonalities between ancient usages and the *meaning* that is currently used within human rights doctrines (Noonan, 2011). Moreover, the intrinsic value of dignity is a central concept in non-Western historical narratives, for instance in the East Asian region (Lee, 2008; Satofuka, 2007). Furthermore, in the Arab language and Islamic Religion, the word dignity has been related to meanings of honour and of treating each other well. For example, within the Qur’an, the word is correlated to glorification, decency and loyalty (Sweif, 2005, p. 35). Nowadays human dignity is embedded in many universal rights manifestations, such as in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which in turn was influenced by Immanuel Kant, building upon Stoic philosophy where each and every human being is regarded as born free, rational and with dignity (Lee, 2008, p. 5). As expressed by Kant (2002, p. 52):

In the realm of ends everything has either a **price** or a **dignity**. What has a price is such that something else can also be put in its place as its *equivalent*; by contrast, that which is elevated above all price, and admits of no equivalent, has a dignity.⁴

The most well-known and influential argument Kant (2002, p. 45) made regarding dignity was that each human being should always treat himself/herself and others as an end in itself and never as a means to an end. Importantly, this does not only emphasize dignity as an inherent quality within individuals but rather as a way of *treating* others and oneself, i.e. dignity as a way of doings and beings (Nussbaum, 2011; Sen, 1989).⁵ Kant’s vision of dignity influenced the meaning of the human dignity concept used in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Habermas, 2010; Misztal, 2012) as well as in several constitutions after World War II (WWII).⁶

Despite it seldom being properly defined, the concept of dignity is also present in more recent conventions and frameworks. In UNESCO's 'Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity' from 2001 it is stated that 'The defence of cultural diversity is an ethical imperative, inseparable from respect for human dignity' (UNESCO, 2001, Article 4). Here we can note how dignity becomes linked to defending cultural diversity, which is of special concern in Mostar. Furthermore, dignity is also present in the United Nation's '2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development', where it is regarded as a fundamental right (UN, 2015). Despite the elasticity – 'dignity' does not portray an identical meaning in all times and places – there is an element of consistency to the concept. It can thus be approached as universal, considering the term and concept as we know it from the way Kant adopted it (Rosen, 2012, pp. 20–21), envisioning a secular system that is related to freedom and rationality (Lee, 2008, p. 7). The concept of human dignity emphasizes the universality of the human rights system, since it is equally applicable to all human beings, as well as a concept where a specific citizenship is not required for its applicability (Kassis, 2011, p. 90). In the text below we focus on the monument in the neighbourhood of Rudnik, in order to illustrate our theoretical framework through a concrete example.

The monument to the miners and to the mine (Rudnik), from the youth of Mostar

Despite the fact that in the popular and academic thought post-war Mostar has usually been portrayed as having only two parts, a western area populated by Bosnian Croats and an eastern area populated by Bosniaks, the city, like most cities, also consists of neighbourhoods. Rudnik is one of such neighbourhoods which, in the period of socialist Yugoslavia (1945–1991), had a very important economic and historic importance for Mostar, due to its association with the coal mine (i.e. *Rudnik mrkog uglja*)⁷ which opened in 1918⁸ in the then uninhabited part of the city. It was not until the period of socialist Yugoslavia that Rudnik started to be inhabited by a larger number of people (Karabeg, 1978). Initially, miners and their families, and later other people, earned or bought real estates in the area. During the same period, among other things, two small, and for the inhabitants significant, monuments were erected in Rudnik. One was dedicated to the miners who died during the WWII, named 'The Monument dedicated to the fallen miners in the People's Liberation War' and the other one was dedicated to the people's hero and ex-worker in the mine, Ahmet Pintul (1923–1944), who was killed during WWII at a very young age.

Both monuments were damaged but nonetheless survived the most recent war in Mostar. However, they were not fortunate enough to remain in that shape in the post-war period. The monument dedicated to the miners was completely demolished in the process of usurpation of public land a few years after the war. Namely, the individual who claimed to own the land where the monument used to stand, removed what was left of the monument and built a house and later a bet-shop on the same spot. The other monument was indeed heavily damaged in the war but was completely removed in 2016 in order to make space for another monument (Figure 1). The square where it previously stood received red and white pavement (resembling the Croat/Herzeg-Bosnian⁹ coat of arms), white square block with the cross, coat of arms of the Herzeg-Bosnia, and white doves, commemorating fallen Croatian defenders that belonged to the Second Battalion Rudnik (i.e. *II Bojna Rudnička*), a part of Croatian Defense Council (HVO).



Figure 1. The new HVO monument put on the place where previously the bust of Ahmet Pintul stood (Marko Barišić, 2018).

It was the installation of the latter object/monument that prompted a group of young activists from Rudnik, as well as other nearby neighbourhoods, to react. They regarded it as post-socialist and post-war destruction of ‘the old’ Rudnik, as local people remember and call it. As expressed by one of the initiators of the project:

We did not know how to react and what to do. We only knew that our voice had to be heard but not misused by the politicians. If we did any intervention on the cross or the square now, we knew that HDZ (*Hrvatska Demokratska Zajednica*), which claims to represent the Croatian people, would blame ‘Muslims/Bosniaks’ for it, and again, the same story about the eternal hatred would be used for someone’s personal interests. Hence, we had to be smarter than that and act in the best way we could. That was the moment when the idea for the new monument was born.

Importantly, this illustrates how the monument has served to unmake heritage as inherently ethnic and divided between communities, as a direct response to a monument deemed exclusive and nationalistic. Adding the name Rudnik to the new HVO monument implied that the neighbourhood was ‘ethnically clean’, when in fact, Rudnik was, and still is, ethnically diverse.

In order to make it successful, the group realized that they needed the support of the local community, which was ignored when the HVO monument was installed. Therefore, the group started to interview the older generations of Rudnik to assemble the history of the neighbourhood. Afterwards, the activists gathered the narratives and pictures about ‘the old’ Rudnik, went to an unkempt electric substation hidden between houses, and started painting over it. Instead of placing the monument in an open public space, the location was chosen due to its proximity to the living spaces in the neighbourhood (i.e. between houses). The electric substation was overpainted resembling a shelf popular in Yugoslav households during the 1970s and 1980s (Figures 2–4), with an old TV, crochet tablecloths and a painting which depicted how one of the two destroyed



Figure 2. The transformation of an electric substation into the monument dedicated to the miners (Marko Barišić, 2016).



Figure 3. The transformation of an electric substation into the monument dedicated to the miners (Marko Barišić, 2016).



Figure 5. The motif from the new monument dedicated to the Miners, showing how the old monument looked like (Marko Barišič, 2016).

everyone discussed what would be a suitable name for the monument and jointly came up with the following title: ‘Monument to the miners and to the Mine (Rudnik), from the youth of Mostar’ (*Spomenik rudarima i Rudniku – od mladih Mostara*).¹⁰ Thereafter, everyone inscribed their personal names below the chosen title.

Implications

There are three aspects of the monument to the miners project we wish to emphasize. Firstly, the action of initializing the project was more concerned with the process of



Figure 6. Children helping out in creating the monument (Marko Barišic, 2016).

creating an alternative monument for Rudnik rather than producing a polished outcome. During the implementation phase, everyone was welcome to join and help out. Indeed, people from different generations came together to see the project through. As stated by Ivana, a 36-year-old woman living in Rudnik:

When I heard about the idea from the initiator (of the project), I did not know what they (the collaborators on the project) were aiming to do. When I saw them working I was surprised that everybody participated; from a three-year-old child to our neighbour Marko, who is around 90 years old now. The whole action reconnected the neighbourhood and this was the occasion through which I got to know all the children here, but also elderly. The 1980s were actually like that. We were all outside all the time, old and young, hanging out while the doors of our houses were unlocked. Finally, just seeing all that action, I joined the project and helped them. I wanted to be part of it as well. (Ivana, summer 2018)

The aim of the activists behind this project was to create a monument that would look like it was created by and for the community, rather than being implemented ‘from the outside’ or ‘from the above’. Everyone was allowed to make changes to the monument. The monument is in the permanent process of becoming and people ‘add to’ it on a regular basis (as of summer 2018). In addition to making people feel that they themselves are participating in creating the monument, such a dynamic approach serves to challenge static or frozen ideas of heritage. This becomes crucial within a city burdened down by notions of a heritage associated with immobility and stagnation (see Ševčenko, 2010, 2011 for a discussion on the importance of a process-oriented approach to heritage). As mentioned in the quote by Ivana above, emotional bonds connected the people participating in the creation of the monument, which were crossing both generational as well as ethnic borders. In line with the IHD approach presented earlier (Kisić, 2016; Smith, 2006), this is an excellent example of how the values created through heritage were not retrieved from within the monument itself, but through incorporating (embodied) practices (Connerton, 1989). More specifically, the values were being produced through participating and being actively part of creating the monument together with others.

Secondly, this example shows how nostalgia can be approached as a basis for action, instead of approaching it as simply backward-oriented or passive (Smith & Campbell, 2017). In fact, the monument in Rudnik illustrates how nostalgia is a form of resistance to the presently ‘ethnically’ divided Mostar, and as a way of envisioning a different future. As expressed earlier, the monument was a direct response to an exclusive and arguably nationalistic use of heritage, as demonstrated by the recent HVO monument (Figure 1). In her influential work on nostalgia, Boym (2001, p. 61) distinguishes between two forms of nostalgia, namely restorative and reflective. While the former puts emphasis on reclaiming a lost time, often through reconstruction, reflective nostalgia ‘is more concerned with historical and individual time, with the irrevocability of the past and human finitude. Reflection suggests new flexibility, not the reestablishment of stasis’ (see also Carabelli, 2013; Kurtović & Hromadžić, 2017; Maksimović, 2017; Palmberger, 2008, 2016; Petrović, 2007; Wollentz, 2017). The monument in Rudnik represents a form of reflective nostalgia, in which nostalgia for socialist Yugoslavia was used to induce a sense of resistance and outline a movement forward.

Thirdly, we argue that a process-oriented approach to heritage and nostalgia as a future-oriented basis for action are tied to the notion of personal and collective dignity. First of all, the act of allowing for people to participate and play a role in building the monument respected the dignity of the individual in the local community, whose personal creativity, input and skills were being valued and incorporated. Therefore, people felt that they were being treated with respect, resulting in a sense of self-worthiness and self-esteem (Lee, 2008, p. 5). Secondly, interviewees argued that the monument treated the memory of the miners with dignity. As mentioned to us by Seka, a 54-year-old woman living close to the monument,

The monument is a symbol of this place we call Rudnik, a symbol of dignity of all the miners who gave their lives here. It represents the bits and pieces of dignity we should all show to a honourable work such as being a miner.

Here, dignity connects to honourable work; the dignity of the workers was seen as restored or revived by creating the monument.

Furthermore, the mention of ‘honourable’ work may be analysed within a larger framework, in which categories other than the ethnic ones are employed to unmake existing ethnic boundaries. In particular, the concept of being ‘normal’ or ‘ordinary’ is significant in Mostar (as well in Bosnia and Herzegovina) and it refers to the desire to distance oneself from what is perceived to be a corrupt and dishonest ‘elite’ (Hromadžić, 2013, 2018). In such a way, the monument also served to emphasize the dignity in living an honest and hardworking life, and the personal empowerment that follows such a way of being. This needs to be seen in the light of what has been called an active and deliberate silencing of the ‘workers’ voices during the post-socialist period, which is a topic previously explored by Petrović (2010, 2013). Dissatisfaction among the working community in Bosnia and Herzegovina started already during the early 1980s in Yugoslavia, primarily due to economic decline, and resulted in protests and strikes among workers. These were social movements concerned with issues of class, and were not related to ethnicity (Hromadžić, 2016, pp. 127, 138). After the war, the ideology of socialism building upon the identity of workers was being replaced by a post-industrial society, in which the workers’ identity was not being valued. This especially had an impact on the industrial workers. As evocatively expressed by Petrović (2013, p. 97):

[post-industrialism following the breakup of Yugoslavia] was characterized by murky privatizations of state-owned socialist factories and their subsequent destruction, and by severe deprivation of the citizens of post-socialist societies in general, and industrial workers as the most vulnerable social group in particular, of basic rights and of a means of proactive engagement with the present and the future of the societies in which they live.

The destruction of the monument to the miners in Rudnik is one example of such silencing of the workers' identity. The working communities are still present in society, but '[the workers] remain silent and unable to use their own heritage in a proactive way that would enable connecting the past with the present through everyday interactions and legitimizations of that heritage' (Petrović, 2013, p. 112). The monument in Rudnik thus serves as an attempt to restore a degree of agency and dignity to the silenced working community, through making their narrative visible in the public space.

Conclusions

This paper aimed at introducing a new theoretical approach to heritage, by broadening a spectrum of heritage values to also encompass the often-neglected concept of dignity. Even though previous studies on the values of heritage do not deny that a sense of personal and collective dignity may be a value produced through heritage, the process still remains poorly theorized and understood. We argue that it is worthwhile to focus on the concept of dignity since it is able to transcend ethnical boundaries and highlight other much-needed, but seldom mentioned, values in heritage. Dignity is to treat yourself as well as others with respect, resulting in a sense of self-worthiness and self-esteem. This becomes invaluable in a post-war situation during which people often have to recover from feelings of powerlessness and a lack of personal and collective agency.

The monument to the miners and to the mine served to induce a sense of dignity on two levels. Firstly, people were actively part of creating it. In such a way, people in the local community and beyond could use the monument to challenge the static image of Mostar as permanently divided also to envision a future beyond ethnic divisions. The perspectives of people were valued and actively engaged to build the monument. Importantly, a vision of Mostar from the 1970s and 1980s was used in this process emphasizing how a form of reflective nostalgia may be progressive and forward-oriented. Secondly, the monument celebrates the identity of the worker, which is an identity currently neglected and silenced in the public space, contrasting sharply with the ideals and values of socialist Yugoslavia. Thus, it made a suppressed narrative visible again through reclaiming it within the urban space. By so doing, it attempted to restore a degree of agency and dignity to the working community and people who are still living in Rudnik.

Notes

1. The Croatian Democratic Union – one of the two major Croat parties in Mostar.
2. See also Rexhepi (2018) for a study of how the European Union employs a selective process of remembering and forgetting through heritage projects in Sarajevo, especially silencing the socialist period. However, this usage of heritage is being actively contested.
3. See also Martinović & Ifko (2018) for an example of how it is possible to focus on the industrial heritage of Mostar in the purpose of urban regeneration (in this case the Žitopromet factory).

4. That which refers to universal human inclinations and needs has a market price; that which even without presupposing any need, is in accord with a certain taste, i.e. a satisfaction in the mere purposeless play of the powers of our mind, an *affective price*; but that which constitutes the condition under which alone something can be an end in itself does not have merely a relative worth, i.e. a price, but rather an inner worth, i.e. *dignity*. (Kant, 2002, p. 52–53).
5. See the influential work of Sen (1989, 1999) and especially of Nussbaum (1993, p. 2011) on recognizing ‘human capabilities’ as a path towards a dignified life.
6. For instance, the German constitution of 1949 (Habermas, 2010, p. 464).
7. The name ‘Rudnik’ means ‘mine’ in Bosnian/Croatian/Serbian/Serbo-Croatian, highlighting the significance of the mine for the city and the neighborhood.
8. When the mine opened in 1918, Bosnia and Herzegovina belonged to the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, later (1929) renamed to the Kingdom of Yugoslavia
9. The Croatian Republic of Herzeg-Bosnia (i.e. *Herceg-Bosna*) was an unrecognized entity in Bosnia and Herzegovina during the war between 1991–1994, in which displacement and atrocities of people took place in order to create an exclusively Croat Republic in Bosnia and Herzegovina.
10. For the local media presentation of the monument see <https://www.bljesak.info/kultura/flash/mostar-dobio-neobican-spomenik/161357>.

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