

Use, misuse and abuse of culture and arts in peacebuilding and reconciliation processes in post-conflict Bosnia- Herzegovina

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ABSTRACT

Potential of culture and arts in peacebuilding and reconciliation processes in post-conflict societies is recently receiving growing scholarly attention. Many authors consider culture and arts essential parts of post-conflict efforts because they allegedly provide acceptable space for alternative thinking and are less politically charged than some other peacebuilding and reconciliation strategies. Focusing on the case study of Bosnia-Herzegovina (BiH), this paper offers a more nuanced view on the role of cultural and artistic endeavours in peacebuilding. The authors argue that culture and arts *per se* do not necessarily aspire to transcend narrowly defined ethnic identities and boundaries, which is considered to be one of the main tasks of arts and culture in peacebuilding, but, on the contrary, often build on ethno-political narratives, frequently even reinforcing inter-ethnic divisions. The paper analyses five cases of cultural and artistic expression that attracted wide public attention in BiH precisely because of their highly charged ‘ethno-political character’, which did everything but bring peoples closer. Based on the analysis, the authors suggest the need for a more thorough understanding of the role of culture and arts in peacebuilding and reconciliation studies.

Keywords: Peacebuilding, Culture, Arts, Reconciliation, Bosnia-Herzegovina

INTRODUCTION

Many studies within the peacebuilding and reconciliation scholarship argue that culture and arts entail a high potential for the improvement of inter-ethnic relations in post-conflict societies. Hence, it does not come as a surprise that art is a field vastly financed by international donors. The international attention to innovative approaches to reconciliation and peacebuilding in which the artistic and cultural approaches could be categorized increased in recent years as the research has shown that identity-based ethno-political conflicts will be a new reality of the post-Cold War period.¹ This research strand also demonstrated that armed conflicts bring abrupt violation of societal norms and rules,² which is why the social dimensions of conflicts cannot be overlooked. In the contexts where the identity of a specific group is framed in exclusivist terms and often securitized as a root cause of a conflict, culture could stand at the centre of conflict resolution endeavours.

In this paper, art is understood as a part of cultural space, which includes different forms of human expression and creative activity (e.g. paintings, installations, theatre, sculpture, music, films, literature, architecture and dance).³ Cultural dimensions could thus on one hand be considered a part of the problem (culture and cultural identity as potential root causes of a conflict) and a part of a solution on the other (culture as a means or space where peacebuilding could be enacted).⁴ The role of art as an essential part of cultural expression has been explored from such perspectives by many scholars. Some empirical studies show that art can have a positive impact on people affected by the conflict; it can even have a healing potential.⁵ As argued by Kennard »/t/he matter of art is not just private aesthetic

¹ Fred W Riggs, "The Modernity of Ethnic Identity and Conflict," *International Political Science Review* 19, no. 3 (July 1998): 269–88, <https://doi.org/10.1177/019251298019003005>; Nicholas Sambanis and Moses Shayo, "Social Identification and Ethnic Conflict," *American Political Science Review* 107, no. 2 (2013): 294–325, doi:10.1017/S0003055413000038.

² Judy Barsalou, "Managing Memory: Looking to Transitional Justice to Address Trauma," in *Peacebuilding in Traumatized Societies*, ed. Barry Hart (Lanham: University Press of America, 2007), 349.

³ Stefanie Kappler, "Everyday Legitimacy in Post-Conflict Spaces: The Creation of Social Legitimacy in Bosnia-Herzegovina's Cultural Arenas," *Journal of Intervention and Statebuilding* 7, no. 1 (2013): 11–28, <https://doi.org/10.1080/17502977.2012.655614>.

⁴ Ann-Belinda Preis and Christina Stanca Mustea, "The Role of Culture in Peace and Reconciliation," *UNESCO High Level Discussions*, (April 2013): 1–6, <http://www.unesco.org/new/fileadmin/MULTIMEDIA/HQ/CLT/images/PeaceReconciliationENG.pdf>

⁵ Ereshnee Naidu-Silverman, "The Contribution of Art and Culture in Peace and Reconciliation Processes in Asia. A Literature Review and Case Studies from Pakistan, Nepal, Myanmar, Indonesia, Afghanistan, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh", (Brussels, 2015), https://issuu.com/cku-centerforkulturogudvikling/docs/the_contribution_of_art_and_culture; Ashima Kaul, "Art and tradition for peace in Kashmir", *Peace Insight* (blog), *Peace Direct*, 17 April 2012, <https://www.peaceinsight.org/en/articles/art-tradition-peace-kashmir/?location=india&theme=culture-media-advocacy>;

experience. It is also material matter presentable to the public, conceptual matter capable of social bond making, and a political matter.«⁶

Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) is one of the post-conflict countries where success of peacebuilding efforts is limited, because the political and many other actors are unable or unwilling to start approaching the questions of ethnic and cultural identity in an inclusive manner. This comes as no surprise given the fact that ethnicity, religion, politics and identities in BiH are so intertwined.⁷ Having this in mind, for the peacebuilding process to succeed, it should encompass all these specific aspects pertaining to conflicting identities. As the current scholarship on the role of culture and art in peacebuilding argues, art in such circumstances is perceived as an appropriate tool for creating bridges between different ethnic groups involved in 1990s bloodshed. An important argument in favour of the claim that art and culture could have peacebuilding potential is that culture and artistic work are usually not perceived as (politically) ‘dangerous’ *per se*, but rather as a critical reflection of everyday life. However, arts and culture also possess potential for (political) instrumentalization when they end up in ‘wrong hands’. Many studies exploring the role of culture and arts in peacebuilding often depict the cultural and artistic expression in an over-romanticised way by arguing that art will necessarily help overcome ethnic strife.⁸ In most of the literature, art is *a priori* seen as a calming, inclusive and positive way of expression; in other words, art supposedly has significant peacebuilding potential.⁹ Building upon the idea that art can overcome inter-group barriers and identity-based ‘particularities’, scholars are generally supportive of the inclusion of artistic activities in the peacebuilding process.¹⁰

Heather L. Stuckey and Jeremy Nobel, “The Connection between Art, Healing, and Public Health: A Review of Current Literature.” *American Journal of Public Health* 100, no. 2 (2010): 254–63, <https://doi.org/10.2105/AJPH.2008.156497>.

⁶ Susan Kennard, “What Does Art Matter?” *New Global Times*, no. 2 (2005): 1996–2005.

⁷ Rob Aitken, “Consociational Peace Processes and Ethnicity: The Implications of the Dayton and Good Friday Agreements for Ethnic Identities and Politics in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Northern Ireland,” in *The Challenges of Ethno-Nationalism*, ed. Adrian Guelke (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 232–53.

⁸ Craig Zelizer, “The Role of Artistic Processes in Peace-Building in Bosnia-Herzegovina,” *Peace and Conflict Studies* 10, no. 2 (2003): 62–75, <https://nsuworks.nova.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1039&context=pcs>; Kennard, “What Does Art Matter?” 1996–2005.

⁹ Maria-Adriana Deiana, “Re-Thinking Border Politics at the Sarajevo Film Festival: Alternative Imaginaries of Conflict Transformation and Cross-Border Encounters,” *Geopolitics* 24, no. 3 (2019): 529–540; Pooja Savansukha, “Art Institutions and National Identity in a Post-Conflict Society” (Senior Theses, Trinity College, Hartford, 2015), <https://digitalrepository.trincoll.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1456&context=theses>.

¹⁰ Craig Zelizer, “The Role of Artistic Processes in Peace-Building in Bosnia-Herzegovina,” *Peace and Conflict Studies* 10, no. 2 (2003): 62–75, <https://nsuworks.nova.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1039&context=pcs>; Alex Perullo, “‘Heroes and Hooligans: Youth Identity and Hip-Hop in Dar Es Salaam, Tanzania.’” *Africa Today* 51, no. 4 (2005): 75–101; Michael Shank and Lisa Schirch, “Strategic Art-Based Peacebuilding.” *Peace & Change* 33, no. 2 (2008): 217–42.

This paper builds upon the assumption that over-romanticized depictions of arts and culture do not fully do their peacebuilding potential justice, because they are often too optimistic in claiming that arts and culture can punch above their real weight when it comes to the success in effectively overcoming of ethnic strife. Although we do not challenge the widely-accepted assumption confirmed by many studies that culture and art can play a significant role in bringing various groups previously involved in armed conflict closer, we argue that the role of culture and arts in peacebuilding must be scrutinized more thoroughly than this has been done to date in order to gain a fair assessment of the role of art in peacebuilding.

In doing so, we focus on the case study of post-war BiH and argue that several artworks build on ethno-political (exclusivist) narratives and so serve as means for deepening the already existing inter-ethnic strife between the peoples of BiH. This is the main objective of this paper. To make a distinction between ethno-political (exclusivist) cultural and artistic endeavours on one hand, and arts and culture that aspire to go beyond narrowly defined (ethnic and religious) identities on the other, we follow the conceptualization put forward by Weber and his ideal types of social phenomena.¹¹ The ideal types are, according to Weber (*ibid.*), defined as ideal, pure forms that can rarely be found in real life. Hence, ideal types primarily serve as analytical tools representing appropriate means for 'capturing' the (most) essential components of social phenomena. This article aims to shed light on the importance of understanding cultural and artistic manifestations in post-conflict societies as momentums on this Weberian continuum, where on one side, art is a universalistic and peaceful tool in striving for peacebuilding and reconciliation, and on the other, entails a clear exclusive 'inter-ethnic moment', which protracts or even deepens inter-ethnic divides. As we aim to demonstrate in this paper, cultural and artistic expressions in post-conflict societies often fall prey to political abuse, which works against the spirit of arts and culture that should supposedly aspire to transcend narrowly defined identities and contribute to supra-ethnic and universalistic understanding of people and their role in the world.

¹¹ Max Weber, A. M. Henderson, and Talcott Parsons, *The theory of social and economic organization* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1947).

In this paper, we analyse five cultural and artistic manifestations that in recent years received a lot of media attention in BiH due to the controversy they caused. To collect the data, we first conducted online research, where we analysed examples of post-war art in BiH to determine which artistic and cultural pieces or events received significant media coverage. After refining the results, we double-checked our selection of cases with the Bosnian-Herzegovinian artists and scholars to determine whether our selection of case studies really echoed widely in BiH.

The paper is structured as follows. The section following this introductory part reviews the state-of-the-art to discuss the potential of culture and art in peacebuilding, including the traps that can hinder reconciliation. Building on these theoretical insights, the third section analyses five notable cases of cultural and artistic creativity in BiH that echoed widely in the public sphere due to their highly controversial ethno-political charge. The fourth part offers a critical discussion of the five selected cases and brings them together in a synthetic way. The fifth and last section presents concluding remarks and outlines some avenues for further research.

PEACEBUILDING AND THE ROLE OF CULTURE AND ART

Peacebuilding as a concept first garnered scientific attention back in the 1960s and 1970 within the scope of peace research.¹² The idea of peacebuilding came from conceptualisation of ‘positive peace’ and ‘negative peace’ by Galtung.¹³ He claimed that peace is not just the absence of armed conflict and violence, but is also the cooperation between different groups in order to tackle the root causes of the conflict. His pioneering work, which influenced many studies of the dynamic of conflict and peace,¹⁴ offered one of the most-cited definitions of peacebuilding:

/A/ comprehensive concept that encompasses, generates, and sustains the full array of processes, approaches and stages needed to transform conflict towards more sustainable, peaceful relationship. The term thus involves a wide

¹² Vincent Chetail, *Post-Conflict Peacebuilding. A Lexicon* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

¹³ Johan Galtung, *Peace: Research, Education, Action. Essays in Peace* (Copenhagen: Christian Ejlertsen, 1975).

¹⁴ Edward Azar, *The Management of Protract Social Conflict* (Aldershot: Dartmouth Publishing Company, 1990); John Burton, *Conflict: Resolution and Prevention* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1990); Michael Lund, "Conflict Prevention: Theory in Pursuit of Policy and Practice." In *The SAGE Handbook of Conflict Resolution*, ed. Jacob Bercovitch, Victor Kremenyuk, and William I. Zartman, 285–321 (Sage Publications 2008), <https://doi.org/10.4135/9780857024701.n15>.

range of activities that both precede and follow formal peace accords. Metaphorically, peace is not seen merely as a stage in time or a condition. It is a dynamic social construct.¹⁵

With this definition, Lederach emphasised the importance of differentiation between aforementioned peacebuilding, peace-making (solving the conflict by eliminating the source of tension) and peace-keeping (preserving a balance of power and keeping the opposing parties apart).¹⁶ Even though the United Nations (UN) supported this needed distinction between different concepts and made efforts to close this scientific and practical gap, the conceptual confusion still persists in the literature.

An important step towards closing the gap was made by Schwarz¹⁷, who outlined three main components of post-conflict peacebuilding: security; welfare (political and social well-being of individuals); and representation (relationship of the state to its citizens). The importance of this holistic and comprehensive approach also lies in the modern understanding of security, where “security is linked to the quality of our relationships, how we care for each other and how we care for each others’ needs.”¹⁸ This socio-economic reality of the post-conflict societies is something that governments, international organizations and other actors should accept, addressing all three components of post-conflict peacebuilding processes to achieve a certain level of well-being and prosperity.¹⁹

In order to achieve well-being of people and a prosperous society, most of the peacebuilding practice includes the teleological idea of ‘liberal internationalism’, as termed by Paris.²⁰ In many post-conflict countries, political and economic liberalization may not be the most ‘fruitful’ way of sustaining peace. Instead, Paris promoted the inclusion of strategic liberalization in post-conflict societies. Liberal internationalism follows the idea of institutional peace, which is just one of the four main roots of liberal peace and combines democracy, free markets, development and the rule of law. Liberal peace

¹⁵ John Paul Lederach, *The Moral Imagination. The Art and Sould of Building Peace* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 20.

¹⁶ Vincent Chetail and Oliver Jütersonke, “Peacebuilding: A Review of Academic Literature.” 13. White Paper Series (October 2015), Geneva Peacebuilding Platform, https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=2684002.

¹⁷ Rolf Schwarz, “Post-Conflict Peacebuilding: The Challenges of Security, Welfare and Representation.” *Security Dialogue* 36, no. 4 (2005): 429–46, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0967010605060447>.

¹⁸ Paul van Tongeren, Hans van de Veen, and Juliette Verhoeven, “Introduction,” in *Searching for Peace in Europe and Eurasia: An Overview of Conflict Prevention and Peacebuilding Activities*, ed. Paul van Tongeren, Hans van de Veen, and Juliette Verhoeven (London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2002), XIV–XVI.

¹⁹ Heiko Nitzschke and Kaysie Studdard, “The Legacies of War Economies: Challenges and Options for Peacemaking and Peacebuilding.” *International Peacekeeping* 12, no. 2 (2005): 222–39; Paul Collier, “Post-Conflict Recovery: How Should Strategies Be Distinctive.” *Journal of African Economies* 18, no. 1 (2009): 99–131; Schwarz, “Post-Conflict Peacebuilding: The Challenges of Security, Welfare and Representation, 429–46.

²⁰ Roland Paris, “Peacebuilding and the Limits of Liberal Internationalism.” *International Security* 22, no. 2 (1997): 54–89.

also builds on the idea of civil peace, which is derived from the phenomena of direct action, citizen advocacy and mobilization.²¹ Art fits in perfectly in this paradigm, because it plays a role during all conflict stages and can offer imaginative, innovative and humane alternatives to violence and insecurity.²²

This was further elaborated by Fukushima,²³ who noted that art and cultural activities may present a temporary relief from the actual situation, serving as a way of envisioning alternate scenarios to the reality of the conflict. Furthermore, art can nurture creative curiosity that goes beyond the dualities that are highlighted during periods of conflict.²⁴ Several scholars observed that one of the most important functions of culture and art in post-conflict societies lies in their ability to restore the victims' capacity to participate in the reconciliation process, access their emotions and begin their individual healing processes.²⁵ In the end, post-conflict societies are dealing with brokenness, where society, community and individuals are broken and everybody is a victim.²⁶ In this tragic atmosphere culture and art provide space to address trauma so that survivors can construct new meanings and generate new languages to comprehend their new reality.

Several empirical studies demonstrate that certain cultural and artistic endeavours are effective for transcending trauma. In Tanzania, for example, music is a frequently used tool for considering social and political concerns. The Balkan Chamber Orchestra from Prishtina, the capital of Kosovo, worked as an inclusive orchestra, in which musicians of different ethnic backgrounds played together in hope of enhancing inter-ethnic cooperation among peoples of this divided society.²⁷ Another case is Sri Lanka, where children and adults in the war-torn region of Batticola engage in painting, theatre, yoga

²¹ Jason Franks and Oliver P. Richmond, "Coopting Liberal Peace-Building: Untying the Gordian Knot in Kosovo," *Cooperation and Conflict* 43, no. 1 (2008): 81–103, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0010836707086738>.

²² Rama Mani and G. Thomas Weiss, "Can Culture Prevent Massacres?" *Global Governance* 17, no. 4 (2011): 417–28.

²³ Akiko Fukushima, "Peace and Culture: Fostering Peace through Cultural Contributions," in *Conflict and Culture. Fostering Peace through Cultural Initiatives*, ed. Joint Research Institute for International Peace and Culture (New York: Aoyama Gakuin University, 2011), 5–14.

²⁴ Lederach, *The Moral Imagination. The Art and Sould of Building Peace*, 20.

²⁵ Cynthia Cohen, "Engaging with the Arts to Promote Coexistence," in *Imagine Coexistence: Restoring Humanity After Violent Ethnic Conflict*, ed. Martha Minow (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2003), 267–93; Erin Daly and Jeremy Sarkin, *Reconciliation in Divided Societies Finding Common Ground* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010); Shank and Schirch, *Strategic Art-Based Peacebulding*, 217–42.

²⁶ Lederach, *The Moral Imagination. The Art and Sould of Building Peace*, 160.

²⁷ Embassy of Japan in Bosnia and Herzegovina, "Balkan Chamber Orchestra in Sarajevo - Road to World Peace Concert," 2014. https://www.bosnia.emb-japan.go.jp/docs/Culture/2014_Yanagisawa, July 5/Program.pdf.

and sculpturing in the Butterfly Peace Garden as a way of recovering from and transcending trauma.²⁸ In Philippines and Indonesia, peaceful coexistence of different ethnic and religious groups is promoted through theatre and drama workshops.²⁹ These cases prove that the sociocultural explanation behind the ‘self-expressive’ nature of culture and art is crucial for post-conflict societies.

Apart from the role of culture and art as a tool for healing and therapy, there is a need to shed light on the cases where culture and art were misused for political purposes. One of the most paradigmatic examples of such misuse was the relationship between culture and Nazism, where ‘the appropriate’ culture and arts were deeply influenced by the political leadership.³⁰ In post-conflict Ruanda, for example, theatre became a tool for government propaganda, with the aim to erase any pre-colonial ethnic divisions and rewrite history.³¹ The latter case demonstrates how in the hands of political elites, culture and art can serve as appropriate means of political propaganda in post conflict societies; however, this topic remains under-explored.

Even though the peacebuilding potential of culture and art is undisputable, some cultural and artistic endeavours – as explained above – do not offer ‘the ability’ to step back, reflect and see political conflicts and dilemmas in new ways,³² as should be the role of arts. Such works rather ‘feed’ the negative propaganda and obstruct reconciliation efforts, especially if cultural and artistic endeavours are not motivated by aesthetic but rather by other, more ‘ethno-politicized’ reasons.³³

Even though culture and art play an important role in inciting individuals to form some kind of collective action,³⁴ such collective advocacy must be analysed with caution. Even cultural endeavours

²⁸ Patricia Lawrence, *The Ocean of Stories; Children’s Imagination, Creativity, and Reconciliation in Eastern Sri Lanka* (Colombo: International Centre for Ethnic Studies, 2003).

²⁹ Doreen G. Fernandez, “‘The Playbill after 1983: Philippine Theatre after Martial Law,’” *Asian Theatre Journal* 12, no. 1 (1995): 104–18; Masanori Takaguchi, “Youth Drama Workshop in Aceh, Indonesia—A Source of Strength,” *Wochi Kochi Magazine* (2010), <https://www.wochikochi.jp/english/report/2011/05/ache.php>.

³⁰ Christopher Webster, “Introduction,” in *Photography in the Third Reich*, ed. Christopher Webster (Cambridge, Uk: Open Book Publishers, 2021), 9, <https://doi.org/10.11647/obp.0202>.

³¹ Ananda Breed, “Performing the Nation: Theatre in Post-Genocide Rwanda.” *TDR - The Drama Review - A Journal of Performance Studies* 52, no. 1 (2008): 32–50, <https://doi.org/10.1162/dram.2008.52.1.32>.

³² Roland Bleiker, *Aesthetics and World Politics*. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009).

³³ Sanja Bahun, “Transitional Justice and the Arts: Reflections on the Field,” in *Theorizing Transitional Justice*, ed. Nir Eisikovits, Claudio Corradetti, and Jack Volpe Rotondi (Ashgate/Routledge, 2014) , 153–66; Rok Zupančič, Faris Kočan, and Janja Vuga, “Ethnic Distancing through Aesthetics in Bosnia-Herzegovina: Appraising the Limits of Art as a Peacebuilding Tool with a Socio-Psychological Experiment,” *Journal of Southeast European and Black Sea Studies* 00 (2020): 1–23. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14683857.2020.1867410>.

³⁴ Eliza Garnsey, “Rewinding and Unwinding: Art and Justice in Times of Political Transition.” *International Journal of Transitional Justice* 10, no. 3 (2016): 471–91, <https://doi.org/10.1093/ijtj/ijw010>.

that somehow promote inclusive public dialogue and bring people of different ethnicities together do not necessarily improve *the status quo* of everyday life. “There is a subtle but important distinction between using stories to build an inclusive public across difference and facilitating dialogue between different people and groups.”³⁵

ETHNO-POLITICALLY CHARGED ART AND CULTURE IN BOSNIA-HERZEGOVINA

In this chapter, we analyse five controversial cases of cultural and art events in BiH: creation of Andrićgrad, installation featuring a mass grave in the shape of *Republika Srpska* in Sarajevo, release of the movie *In the Land of Blood and Honey* (*U zemlji krvi i meda*), unveiling of Gavrilo Princip’s monument in Lukovica (Eastern Sarajevo), and re-opening of the National Museum of BiH. These cases are very different in their form of cultural and artistic expression but all contain strong (intentional or unintentional) ethno-political message or are at least interpreted as doing so by “the other ethnic group” considering these events through an ethno-political lens. The logic of the analysis of selected five cases is twofold. Firstly, the aim is to emphasize how these widely-reported cases of artistic expression contain a strong exclusive ethno-political connotation glorifying one ‘truth’ (ethnic group) at the expense of another, which hinders the reconciliatory and peacebuilding attempts, as it lacks the notions from the other (supra-ethnic, humanistic) side of our Weber’s continuum. Secondly, we want to highlight how certain cultural and artistic examples can be perceived in post-conflict societies as highly politically charged even if they do not *per se* carry an ethno-political connotation – and would perhaps be regarded benign in other countries not recently ravaged by bloodshed.

³⁵ David J Marshall, Lynn A. Staeheli, and Vanja Čelebičić, “Why Are ‘We’ Called ‘Them’?: Storytelling and the Contested Terrain of Post-Conflict Public Formation,” *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 38, no. 2 (2020): 308, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0263775819852124>.

'Disneyland' on the Drina river: the creation of Andrić town (Andrićgrad)

Andrićgrad is a new 'town within a town' located in Višegrad (Republika Srpska, the Bosnian Serb entity within BiH). Andrićgrad was created in honour of writer Ivo Andrić, the only Yugoslav ever honoured with the Nobel Prize for Literature. The location of Andrićgrad coincides with the location of the story, narrated in Andrić's most famous work, the novel 'The Bridge over the Drina' (*Na Drini ćuprija*).³⁶ Building Andrićgrad was an idea by Emir Kusturica, the well-known film director who was born in Sarajevo in a communist Muslim family but later sided with Serb nationalists and, as critics say, discovered his suppressed, real Serbian identity.³⁷ Because of Kusturica's global fame,³⁸ Andrićgrad has a lively cultural scene. It hosts different exhibitions, theatre plays, concerts and film festivals attended by popular film directors. A more precise analysis of the events shows that the performances are mainly based on the Serbian cultural paradigm; Serbian folklore dance, Serbian literature, celebration of *Vidovdan* (St. Vitus Day)³⁹ and other Serbian holidays, plays about Serbian historic suffering etc.⁴⁰

Andrićgrad is full of ethno-symbolism connecting the past with the present. The main street is called Young Bosna (*Mlada Bosna*) after a revolutionary movement established before the World War I, which promoted the Yugoslav and Pan-Serb ideologies and the need to free South Slavs from Austrian

³⁶ The novel describes the history of the town where the Muslim Ottoman Empire and Christian Europe met and where the conflict between Muslims and Serbs started. It describes the Mehmed Paša Sokolović Bridge (named after the Grand Vizier of Ottoman Empire), the place where 'savage' Turks tortured and brutally murdered Bosnian Serb population. After the breakup of Yugoslavia, the bridge was a popular site of mass murder by local Bosnian Serbs. It is estimated that in the 1992–1995 period, between 1500 and 3000 Bosniaks were killed in Višegrad. Hikmet Karčić, "Andrićgrad: The 'town within a Town' on the Drina." Opendemocracy.Net. 13 May 2014, <https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/can-europe-make-it/andricgrad-town-within-town-on-drina/>.

³⁷ In 2005, he created a town named Wooden Town (*Drvengrad*) where he filmed his movie 'Life is a miracle'. He was baptised in the same town and took the name Nemanja. Later he confirmed with library records that his family was Orthodox until a few centuries ago when they converted to Islam. Karčić, "Andrićgrad: The 'town within a Town' on the Drina."

³⁸ Kusturica won several international prizes. He was also a substitute professor for Film Directing at the Columbia University's Graduate Film Division in New York when he directed his first English-language movie 'Arizona Dream' in 1993, starring Johnny Depp, Faye Dunaway and Jerry Lewis. He directed the movie 'A Milky Way', where he starred alongside Monica Bellucci. He also has a French citizenship and was awarded the French Medal of the Order of Arts and Letters, the most important French award in the field of culture, in 1995. "Emir Kusturica", IMDB.com, https://www.imdb.com/name/nm0001437/?ref_=nmbio_bio_nm.

³⁹ *Vidovdan* is celebrated on June 28 and represents the day of Serbian suffering, from Kosovo to Gavrilo Princip. Kusturica started off building *Andrićgrad* on this day in 2011 and the grand opening also took place on *Vidovdan* in 2014. Hikmet Karčić, "Andrićgrad: Hijacking Memories and the New Serb Identity." 9. Dialogues on Historical Justice and Memory Series (17 June 2016).

⁴⁰ Nataša Kovačević, "Failures of Community: Andrić in Andrićgrad," in *Claiming the Dispossession: The Politics of Hi/Storytelling in Post-Imperial Europe*, ed. Vladimir Biti (Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2017), 177–93.

rule (Andrić was also one of the members of Mlada Bosna).⁴¹ The street ends with a mural commemorating Gavrilo Princip, Emir Kusturica, current member of the tripartite Presidency of BiH Milorad Dodik and Serbian tennis player Novak Djoković.⁴² The town has a main square built in the renaissance style with the aim to restore Višegrad's renaissance flair, which was lost under Ottoman rule as per the dominant Serbian narrative. This interpretation goes even further, saying that the Turks caused Serbs all over the Balkans to lag behind the developing world. At the end of the square there is a Serb Orthodox Church – a miniature model of the famous monastery of Visoki Dečani (in Kosovo) – dedicated to Tsar Lazar.⁴³ Andrićgrad also has Andrić Institute, which promotes Serbian alphabet and language in the town that was densely populated with Muslims before the 1990s.⁴⁴

Kusturica claims that the main aim of Andrićgrad is to teach Bosnian Serbs about their past.⁴⁵ However, the reality seems far from that. “Andrićgrad is an ideological construct”⁴⁶ that aims to erase Ottoman parts of history and the existence of Bosniak population. An important example of that is the absence of mosques in Andrićgrad, even though Muslim population was the majority until the 1990's.⁴⁷ These ‘ethno-symbols’ on the Drina river – the legendary historic dividing line between the Muslim and the Orthodox worlds – are a constant reminder that Andrićgrad as a microcosm and Višegrad as a wider area are functioning as an exclusive (Bosnian) Serb social and material environment, without any reference to the Muslim heritage and identity of this once multi-ethnic and multi-confessional city in the immediate vicinity of Serbia.

Another case of strong negation of the past and erasing history in Višegrad is the promotion of the infamous Vilina Vlas spa hotel at the outskirts of Višegrad, which was used as a rape camp during the war in BiH. The hotel is still open and even promoted alongside Andrićgrad as one of Višegrad tourist

⁴¹ In 1914, the movement organised the Sarajevo assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand of Austria. The attack was carried out by Gavrilo Princip.

⁴² Novak Djoković is also an honorary citizen of Andrićgrad alongside Serbian writer Matija Bečković, Serbian diplomat and former President of the United Nations General Assembly Vuk Jeremić and President of Republika Srpska Milorad Dodik.

⁴³ Prince Lazar Hrebeljanović, in Serbian ethnic poetry known as Tsar Lazar, was a medieval Serbian ruler who allegedly died in the Battle of Kosovo in 1389. He is glorified as a national hero by many Serbs.

⁴⁴ Jasmina Rose, “Srpski Nacionalisti Izgradili Andrićgrad,” DW.Com, 21 May 2014, <https://www.dw.com/bs/srpski-nacionalisti-izgradili-andricgrad/a-17651455>.

⁴⁵ Kovačević, “Failures of Community: Andrić in Andrićgrad”, 177–93.

⁴⁶ Hikmet Karčić, “Andricgrad: The ‘town within a Town’ on the Drina,” Opendemocracy.Net, 13 May 2014, <https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/can-europe-make-it/andricgrad-town-within-town-on-drina/>.

⁴⁷ Rose, “Srpski Nacionalisti Izgradili Andrićgrad”.

attractions.⁴⁸ Andrićgrad is a monument to distorted history of Višegrad. Even though its creators and promoters see it as an honourable place where ‘the true Serbian story’ will finally be narrated, its creation brought everything but peace and honour to Višegrad. Andrićgrad is full of contradictions; its existence deepens the societal divisions, not only between Bosnian Serbs and Bosniaks but also among members of the same ethnic groups.⁴⁹ The ethno-symbolism of Andrićgrad, otherwise advertised as ‘the synonym for culture and art’ cannot be overlooked as the whole town is a scaled-down version of a ‘pure’ Serbian town – or better to say, a town more ‘Serbian’ than any other ever built. Just as Disneyland is a symbol of American imperialism, Andrićgrad is seen (at least among Bosniaks) as the Disneyland of Serbian nationalism.⁵⁰

The installation featuring a mass grave in shape of Republika Srpska in Sarajevo

On 7 July 2016, the Anti-Dayton group (*Anti-Dejton grupa*) – an informal group of Bosniaks – wanted to pay tribute to the victims of Srebrenica genocide with an installation in the shape of Republika Srpska in Sarajevo. The installation looked like a mass grave with the remains of bones, clothing and footwear.⁵¹ The authors wanted to commemorate the date of the beginning of the Srebrenica genocide. The installation directly linked the establishment of Republika Srpska with the genocide against Bosniaks during the war (1992–1995). Above the imitation bones, clothing and shoes hinting at war cruelties, there was a board with the inscription ‘Welcome to the Republika Srpska’ aimed at those who failed to directly connect the shape of installation with the boundary line between Republika Srpska and the Federation BiH.⁵² Nihad Aličković, President of the Anti-Dayton group, said that the

⁴⁸ Ehlimana Memišević, “Promoting a Bosnian War ‘Rape Hotel’ Means Erasing History,” *Balkan Insight*, 17 August 2020, <https://balkaninsight.com/2020/08/17/promoting-a-bosnian-war-rape-hotel-means-erasing-history/>.

⁴⁹ The Imam of Višegrad Hasan Skorupan participated at the ceremony dedicated to the beginning of the construction of Andrićgrad, alongside Dodik and Kusturica. This was perceived as treason by some members of the Muslim community.

⁵⁰ Nikolaidis, Andrej Nikolaidis, “Disneyland Srpskog Nacionalizma,” *Aljazeera Balkans*, 29 June 2014. <http://balkans.aljazeera.net/vijesti/disneyland-srpskog-nacionalizma>.

⁵¹ “Masovna grobnica u centru Sarajeva: Postavljena instalacija u obliku Republike Srpske,” *Klix.ba*, 2016, <https://www.klix.ba/vijesti/bih/masovna-grobnica-u-centru-sarajeva-postavljena-instalacija-u-obliku-republike-srpske/160709026>.

⁵² They wanted to emphasize that the creation of Republika Srpska is a result of ethnic cleansing.

installation symbolised a fight against oblivion rather than against reconciliation. The group, as the authors said, brought an imitation of a mass grave to Sarajevo “to make the people see, feel and know what it looks like and how painful it is.”⁵³

The installation received a lot of media attention. One day after it was installed in the centre of Sarajevo, Milorad Dodik, the then President of Republika Srpska, said that the authors of the installation strive for the disintegration of BiH.⁵⁴ He emphasized that this provocation is unacceptable, as the process of mourning 3500 Serbs who were killed in the Podrinje region was taking place. Radio-Television of Republika Srpska claimed that the aim of this artwork is to ‘satanize’ Bosnian Serbs and Republika Srpska.⁵⁵ Here, we should also mention that Vuk Bačanović, a Bosnian Serb journalist at the Radio-Television of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, lost his job because of his Facebook post regarding the installation. He wrote that he “hates the sh*t people of Sarajevo and that Republika Srpska is more multi-ethnic than Sarajevo has ever been in all of its history.”⁵⁶ As evident, this art installation with a clear ethno-political connotation brought forward hate-speech, exclusivism and the logic of ‘us-versus-the other’ – precisely the issues that art is otherwise trying to overcome.

Release of the movie In the Land of Blood and Honey (U zemlji krvi i meda)

‘In the Land of Blood and Honey’ is a 2011 American war film written, produced and directed by Angelina Jolie.⁵⁷ The film depicts a pre-war romance between a Muslim girl artist (Ajla) and Bosnian Serb police officer (Danijel), which becomes progressively more twisted and degraded during the Bosnian war (1992–1995). After the war breaks out, Ajla is forcibly brought to a rape camp where

⁵³ “Anti-Dejton grupa: Oblik entiteta Republika Srpska sačinjen od masovnih grobnica”, Fokus.ba, 9 July 2016, <https://www.fokus.ba/vijesti/bih/anti-dejton-grupa-oblik-entiteta-republika-srpska-sacinjen-od-masovnih-grobnica/392934/>.

⁵⁴ “Dodik o instalaciji RS-a u obliku masovne grobnice u Sarajevu: Ne protivim se raspadu BiH,” Klix.ba, 2016, <https://www.klix.ba/vijesti/bih/dodik-o-instalaciji-rs-a-u-obliku-masovne-grobnice-u-sarajevu-ne-protivim-se-raspadu-bih/160710060>.

⁵⁵ “Ko je Nihad Aličković, autor skandalozne postavke,” RTRS, 11 July 2016, <https://lat.rtrs.tv/vijesti/vijest.php?id=210819>.

⁵⁶ “Otkaz zbog mišljenja Bačanović: Sarajevo otišlo u legendu kao multietnički grad,” Blic.rs, 13 July 2016, <https://www.blic.rs/vesti/republika-srpska/otkaz-zbog-misljenja-bacanovic-sarajevo-otislo-u-legendu-kao-multietnicki-grad/9drlggd>.

⁵⁷ Jolie is an Academy Award winning actress who acted in several world-famous movies and is considered as one of the most influential and famous actresses. She is devoted to humanitarian work and was appointed a Goodwill Ambassador for the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). In 2012 she became a Special Envoy of UNHCR.

Danijel is the commanding officer. The movie was intended to remind the world of the horrors of the Bosnian war. According to Jolie, the movie intends to criticise the non-responsive international community, which did not intervene to stop the atrocities.⁵⁸

After the film was shown to victims in a special screening in Sarajevo, the crew deemed the reactions as satisfying. Murat Tahirović, the head of the Association of prisoners of war, stated that Angelina Jolie “really succeeded in telling the story of the whole war in her film.”⁵⁹ Similar reactions came from different members of the Association of former camp inmates, which were all impressed and shocked by the movie.⁶⁰ The initial information about the plot was also considered worrying by members of different war associations, among others the Association of Women Victims of the War (*Žene žrtve rata*) and Association of Mothers of Srebrenica and Žepa. They thought that the love story between an inmate and an officer will damage the reputation of the women that were raped during the war. Due to their complaint, BiH’s Minister of Culture and Sport, Gavriilo Grahovac, prohibited the movie from being shot in Sarajevo. Later, the opinion of members of the above-mentioned associations had changed and the movie was perceived as genuine, compelling and sincere (ibid.).

However, the movie was not accepted by the majority of Serbs in BiH or Serbia. Srđan Dragojević – one of the most renowned Serbian film directors and screenwriters who made couple of anti-war movies and movies that undoubtedly promote tolerance⁶¹ – said that he “finds it interesting that someone would spend around 13 million dollars for something that in the end looks like Croatian or Bosniak patriotic propaganda films from the 1990s.”⁶² Kusturica, who was mentioned earlier in this paper, agreed and claimed that Angelina Jolie got the ideological job to tarnish the Serb reputation.⁶³

The movie was not screened in some parts of Republika Srpska. Vladimir Ljevar, who runs a cinema

⁵⁸ Samir Huseinović, “U Zemlji Krvi i Meda - Zločin Istrgnut Iz Zaborava,” DW.Com, 14 February 2012, <https://www.dw.com/bs/u-zemlji-krvi-i-meda-zlocin-istrgnut-iz-zaborava/a-15740771>.

⁵⁹ “Jolie Surprises Critics,” The Express Tribune, 10 December 2011, <https://tribune.com.pk/story/304646/jolie-surprises-critics>.

⁶⁰ Marija Arnautović, “Angelina u Zemlji Krvi i Meda,” Radio Slobodna Evropa, 18 February 2012, https://www.slobodnaevropa.org/a/angelina_u_zemlji_krvi_i_meda/24488331.html.

⁶¹ Movie *The Parade (Parada)*, for example, which also won several awards at Berlin International Film Festival.

⁶² “Film Angeline Jolie Jako Je Loš,” TPortal.hr, 12 March 2012, <https://www.tportal.hr/magazin/clanak/film-angeline-jolie-jako-je-los-20120311>.

⁶³ “Kusturica Bijesan na Oskarovku: Šta Angelina Jolie, Jadna Ne Bila, Zna o Bosanskom Medu, Krvi i Ratu?!” Slobodna Bosna, 10 September 2017, https://www.slobodna-bosna.ba/vijest/59904/kusturica_bijesan_na_oskarovku_sta_angelina_jolie_jadna_ne_bila_zna_o_bosanskom_medu_krvi_i_ratu.html.

in Banja Luka, the *de facto* capital of Republika Srpska, said that “this movie won’t be screened in Banja Luka because there are simply some films that are acceptable for Sarajevo, but not for Banja Luka.”⁶⁴ In Pale, the Bosnian Serb wartime capital near Sarajevo, the movie also received a lot of negative attention, especially from young people. A group of law students openly rejected the movie and said they had no intention of seeing it. Nevertheless, the movie was screened in Serbia but generated a lot of negative attention. There premiere was attended by no more than 12 people.⁶⁵

Even though the movie received the peace award at the Berlin International Film Festival in 2012, it brought more disturbance than peace to the region. Several Serbian crew members and Angelina Jolie received death threats, had their car windows smashed in and their private email accounts and phones hacked.⁶⁶ The movie did not bring different ethnic groups together to discuss the past, as the authors intended, but rather deepened the divide between different versions of war ‘truths’. In this sense, not only was the peacebuilding and reconciliation component of the movie lost but the artistic effect was not also reached since not even a single professional film critique was published in BiH or Serbia. They were mainly concerned with the question of “who does Angelina Jolie love and protect – Bosniaks or Bosnian Serbs?”⁶⁷

Cultural commemorations of the 100th anniversary of the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand in Sarajevo

On 28 June 2014, Sarajevo hosted the official ceremony marking the 100th anniversary of the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand. Instead of attending the official, state-endorsed ceremony in Sarajevo, Republika Srpska political leaders, accompanied by prominent political figures in the Republic of Serbia who also perceive Gavrilo Princip as a hero (and not as terrorist who killed a

⁶⁴ Julian Borger, “Angelina Jolie Receives Threats over In the Land of Blood and Honey,” The Guardian, 15 February 2012, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2012/feb/15/angelina-jolie-threats-land-of-blood-and-honey>.

⁶⁵ “Film Jolie u Beogradu gledalo 12 ljudi,” Aljazeera Balkans, 24 February 2012, <http://balkans.aljazeera.net/vijesti/film-jolie-u-beogradu-gledalo-12-ljudi>.

⁶⁶ Julian Borger, “Angelina Jolie Receives Threats over In the Land of Blood and Honey,” The Guardian, 15 February 2012, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2012/feb/15/angelina-jolie-threats-land-of-blood-and-honey>.

⁶⁷ Arnautović, “Angelina u Zemlji Krvi i Meda, par. 50.

foreign head of state), unveiled the statue of Gavrilo Princip in Lukovica, the Republika Srpska part of Sarajevo. The celebratory event in this town, also known as Eastern Sarajevo (*Istočno Sarajevo*), happened on 27 June 2014, just one day before the 100th anniversary of the assassination. The two-meter bronze statue was unveiled by Ljubiša Čosić (head of the Lukovica municipality), Milorad Dodik and Nebojša Radmanović (Bosnian Serb member of the Presidency of BiH at the time). Slijepčević claims that “/t/he monument of Gavrilo Princip in East Sarajevo is built as a part of counter-monument⁶⁸ that is represented with the picture of vanished Princip’s footsteps”.⁶⁹ The Princip monument represents an example of an artwork with a clear ethno-political character that aims to consolidate the exclusivist Bosnian Serbs collective identity and memory.

A two-hour ride away, in Andrićgrad – a part of Višegrad –, a ceremony with a similar political connotation took place at the same time as the unveiling of the Princip monument. The ceremony in this town on the Drina River was attended by many high Bosnian Serb officials. There, as part of Kusturica’s idea for the big inauguration of Andrićgrad, a performance entitled ‘The Rebelled Angels’ took place. The motive of the performance was to reconstruct the Sarajevo assassination and to show ‘how the assassination really happened’ (according to the Serbian ‘truth’).

The key part of the performance was built around the event in which Franz Ferdinand was led straight to his assassins. The latter is important as some Serbian historians argue that the assassination plans were known to the political circles in Berlin and Vienna. The very title of performance ‘The Rebelled Angels’ conveys the message of the revolutionary character of the Young Bosnia’s fight to free themselves of the oppressor’s yoke. Kusturica portrayed Princip and his collaborators as romantic revolutionaries and ‘angels’ rather than young assassins. As a message sent to the official, state-led commemorations in Sarajevo, Kusturica also included Muhamed Mehmedbašić, a Muslim member of

⁶⁸ Counter-monuments are symbols of memories that the official narratives and memory politics would like to be relieved of. In this case, Princip monument in Eastern Sarajevo opposes the official memory politics endorsed by most Bosniak and Bosnian Croat politicians when it comes to Princip and is strengthening the identity building of ethnic groups by mutually excluding the other from the formation of a common identity. Maja Slijepčević, “Monuments and Counter-Monument Sights in Post-Conflict Bosnia and Herzegovina: A Case Study of Gavrilo Princip’s Monuments,” *Sociology Mind* 06, no. 3 (2016): 114–29, <https://doi.org/10.4236/sm.2016.63010>.

⁶⁹ A plaque of Princip’s footsteps was installed at the exact place where Princip stood when he attacked the Archduke Franz Ferdinand. In 1992, the BiH authorities removed the plaque. Slijepčević, “Monuments and Counter-Monument Sights in Post-Conflict Bosnia and Herzegovina: A Case Study of Gavrilo Princip’s Monuments”, 116.

the assassinator group, in his performance in order to show how ethnically inclusive and diverse the Young Bosnia movement was.⁷⁰

The re-opening of the National Museum of BiH (Zemaljski muzej)

The National Museum of BiH (*Zemaljski muzej*, literally Museum of the Land or Museum of the State) was opened in 1913.⁷¹ The museum, which houses some of the greatest cultural treasures of BiH, survived two World Wars and the siege of Sarajevo. In 2012, the museum had to close its doors due to the reluctance of BiH's politicians to deal with the legal status of state-level cultural institutions that had existed during the pre-war (Yugoslav) Republic of BiH, which resulted in lack of funding. For almost three years after closure, the museum management and staff were subjected to public accusations of mismanagement, incompetence and negligence.⁷²

While a number of campaigns highlighted the plight and importance of the museum, it was the Bosnian cultural non-governmental organization campaign entitled 'I am the Museum' (*Ja sam Muzej*) that captured the imagination of the public in 2015, transforming the perceptions of the museum among ordinary people.⁷³ Even though that campaign 'Ja sam Muzej' was effective in renewing public interest regarding the importance of the museum, it was primarily the appearance of new political actors in early 2015 that ultimately led to its reopening. A solution to the problems of the Museum began to appear closer as Adil Osmanović, the new Minister of Civil Affairs, announced a concrete proposal – Memorandum for the resolution of the status of seven⁷⁴ state-level institutions.⁷⁵

⁷⁰ Slijepčević, "Monuments and Counter-Monument Sights in Post-Conflict Bosnia and Herzegovina: A Case Study of Gavrilo Princip's Monuments", 120–126.

⁷¹ Boris Lalić "Zemaljski Muzej - Najljepša Državna Sramota," Aljazeera Balkans (blog), 21 July 2020, <http://balkans.aljazeera.net/blog/zemaljski-muzej-najljepša-državna-sramota>.

⁷² Helen Walasek, "Culture Wars in Bosnia," Apollo Magazine, 27 March 2017, <https://www.apollo-magazine.com/culture-wars-bosnia/>.

⁷³ Faruk Međedović, "Puljić i Kavazović Će Dežurati u Zemaljskom Muzeju," N1, 28 July 2015, <http://ba.n1info.com/Kultura/a53976/Akcija-Ja-sam-muzej-u-Sarajevu.html>; "Akција 'Ja Sam Muzej' Uspješna: Postoji Nada Da Će Zemaljski Muzej Biti Otvoren u Septembru," AKOS, 10 August 2015, <https://akos.ba/akcija-ja-sam-muzej-uspjesna-postoji-nada-da-ce-zemaljski-muzej-biti-otvoren-u-septembru/>.

⁷⁴ Other six institutions are National Library of BiH, National Art Gallery, Historical Museum, Museum of Literature and Performing Arts, Library for the blind and National Cinema of BiH.

⁷⁵ Walasek, "Culture Wars in Bosnia,"

The main goal of the Memorandum was to grant financial support to cultural institutions and institutions of public common interest of BiH on the systemic level. Even though that Memorandum was signed by representatives on all state (sub)levels, the problem with funding remains crucial as the Museum only received around 60% of the promised funds.⁷⁶ The politicians from Republika Srpska, led by Osmanović's own deputy Đorđe Miličević, attacked both the Memorandum and the appointment of temporary management boards for seven institutions, which they denounced as illegal. Complaints from Republika Srpska cultural institutions followed. The director of the entity's National Museum in Banja Luka expressed outrage that Osmanović is granting millions to Sarajevo, while cultural institutions in Republika Srpska receive only a pittance.⁷⁷

The case of Zemaljski muzej is a good example of how contentious cultural heritage can be and how politics of ethno-exclusivism persist, despite two decades of international efforts to reverse this trend.⁷⁸ Along with a few other previously mentioned state-level cultural institutions, Zemaljski muzej fell into a budgetary trap that ethno-nationalist politicians eagerly exploited. In different circumstances, national museums usually function as important socio-cultural actors that accumulate states' achievements, cultural expression and knowledge. It thus means that we understand 'our common legacy' as a sum of different historic, cultural, religious and ethnic influences. Such a supra-ethnic narrative that the Museum wants to convey is actually *the* main problem behind the 'story' of Zemaljski muzej. The biggest issue is that the Museum reflects on the history of BiH as it was, without a specific 'ethnic connotation' or ethnic preference; it displays artefacts of Orthodox, Catholic, Muslim, Jewish and other heritage(s) that are all part of the civilization on the territory of the present-day BiH. This in turn diminishes prospects of fitting into three exclusive paradigms that propel the 'imagination' of Bosniak, Bosnian Serb and Bosnian Croat political elites.

⁷⁶ Marija Arnautović, 2020. "Sarajevo 'štedi' Na Zemaljskom Muzeju," Radio Slobodna Evropa, 13 February 2020, <https://www.slobodnaevropa.org/a/sarajevo-zemljaski-muzej/30432132.html>.

⁷⁷ Walasek, "Culture Wars in Bosnia."

⁷⁸ Dženita Piljug, "Zemaljski Muzej Je Živ Ali Još Uvijek Ne Diše Punim Plućima," N1, 15 January 2016, <http://ba.n1info.com/Vijesti/a77719/Da-li-je-Zemaljski-muzej-ponovo-pao-u-zaborav.html>.

DISCUSSION

Even though the five analysed cases of cultural and artistic endeavours in BiH differ considerably in their representational form, they have one common denominator. Their political potential was – intentionally or unintentionally – instrumentalized for ethno-political purposes. One way or another they reproduce, reinterpret or re-establish the notion ‘us *versus* them’. This exacerbates the division along ethnic lines and hampers reconciliation efforts.

The cases of Andrićgrad and events commemorating the 100th anniversary of the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand clearly show how cultural actions and artworks can be used as tools for conveying the message of ‘pure’ (exclusivistic) ethnic space(s). These cases play with symbols that allegedly belong to one ethnic group only. Similarly, the case of the installation of a mass grave in the shape of Republika Srpska reproduces the side of the story where ‘they’ are killers, ‘génocidaires’ and everything that ‘we’ are not. In contrast, in the case of the movie *In the Land of Blood and Honey*, this ethno-political component is not that evident, yet it was instrumentalized to pursue the ‘us vs. them’ logic, especially because of the third-party involvement (in this case Angelina Jolie), where both parties somehow wanted to determine where Jolie’s sympathies reside (with ‘us’ or with ‘them’). These four cases show that cultural production and artworks do not always attempt to transcend ethnic boundaries and identities, but can quickly be instrumentalized for (exclusivist) ethno-political purposes.

The case of Zemaljski muzej demonstrates a different side of the ‘us vs. them’ question – however, it leads to the same conclusion. Even this attempt to establish a supra-ethnic cultural endeavour of a civic character could not erase the divisions among three exclusive (ethnic) paradigms. This does not come as a surprise given the fact how intertwined the divisions in everyday life are. In order to be successful, reconciliation processes must address day-to-day reality, otherwise all efforts seem somehow staged, almost ritualistic and misused.⁷⁹

⁷⁹ Sebina Sivac-Bryant, “The Omarska Memorial Project as an Example of How Transitional Justice Interventions Can Produce Hidden Harms,” *International Journal of Transitional Justice* 9, no. 1 (2015): 170–80, <https://doi.org/10.1093/ijtj/iju023>.

Another interesting common thread of these cases is their attempt to educate and tell the truth while misusing culture and art as tools for constructing the only possible ‘true’ narrative. These five cases showed that the real meaning behind the cultural or artistic work does not even matter because it is – and will always be – highly politicised. While Bosnian Serbs perceive Andrićgrad and the statue of Gavrilo Princip as an embodiment of (their) truth, Bosniaks see the mass grave in the shape of Republika Srpska and the movie *In the Land of Blood and Honey* as the real story of the war – the only story worth telling, as they believe their wartime losses, which were by far the highest, give them the primary right to tell the ‘truth’. In the end, Zemaljski muzej lies somewhere in between and aims to offer an all-encompassing story of all ethnic and religious groups in BiH by showing historical facts, which should demonstrate that BiH does not belong to any of the ethnic or social groups but rather to all peoples living in these territories. However, the Museum’s purpose is hard to achieve, as the majority of Bosnian Serbs and Bosnian Croats do not consider the museum theirs. This in turn also poses the question whether Bosnian Serbs and Bosnian Croats consider BiH ‘their’ country. In this kind of environment, culture and art can therefore succumb to the same paradigm of searching and presenting the ‘truer truth’. With that, their peacebuilding potential can be lost and the space for their misuse working against reconciliation and peace becomes even bigger.

CONCLUSION

The aim of the paper was to offer a more nuanced view of the role of art and culture in peacebuilding (studies). It claims that art can have reconciliatory potential in divided societies but also emphasizes that art *per se* does not have the potential to overcome the ethnic strife in highly ethno-politicized and unreconciled countries such as BiH. Thus, the potential of culture and art, generously funded by international donors due to their alleged potential for overcoming inter-ethnic barriers, must be scrutinized more closely.

We analysed five cases that garnered a lot of attention in BiH as they contain strong (intentional or unintentional) ethno-political narratives. All of the analysed cases, which in essence display a very

different form of artistic expression, have one common denominator – a rather pessimistic message that further consolidates the divisions along ethnic lines. Andrićgrad, installation of a mass grave in Sarajevo, the movie ‘In the Land of Blood and Honey’ and the ‘exile’ of Gavrilo Princip’s monument to Eastern Sarajevo all have a strong ethno-political charge but at the same time reflect on present versions of history, some more distorted than other. These examples of memorialization processes, where history is being reinterpreted by individuals, prove that even if culture and art can theoretically and in practice have a potential for building bridges in post-conflict societies, sharing different historic narratives can also encourage hate speech, exclusivism and divisions – all caused by one-sided or deliberately distorted historic interpretations. One would then assume that the answer to more effective peacebuilding and reconciliation in BiH is the renegotiation of different ethnic narratives in an inclusive manner. However, building a common and shared historical legacy can also be perceived as problematic and divisive as it was proved by our last case – the National Museum of BiH.

The article demonstrated that peacebuilding is never ‘a one-way street’. There are no tools that could be applied universally. This is why their involvement in peacebuilding must be prudent and reflective of the *status quo* of the post-conflict society. Even culture and art, which are mostly considered non-threatening, can cause even bigger disruptions in post-conflict societies if they are misused for ethno-political purposes. Understanding the role of culture and art as *a priori* inclusive and peaceful does not always help the peacebuilding process, but can also deepen the already existing divide where reconciliatory potential can be easily lost. To prevent that, further research about the reasons why some tools work in favour of reconciliation and peace in some circumstances and in others against it is much needed in future academic endeavours.

Acknowledgment

This project received funding from the European Union’s Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement No. 769252. The work was also partly funded by the Slovenian Research Agency (programme P5-0206).