Negotiating ‘neighbourliness’ in Sarajevo apartment blocks

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This chapter analyses the experiences of internally displaced Sarajevans, focusing on the destruction and reconstruction of their social networks and neighbourly ties as they have been compelled to move across borders and as borders have shifted and been redrawn around them. It emphasises that borders are shifting *places* and *moments* which variously connect and divide as territory and power are reconfigured. Borders are thus seen here as dynamic and relational, moving in both space and time (see Green 2009).

In Sarajevo, the capital of Bosnia–Herzegovina (BiH), the shifting urban frontline that united and separated the city’s neighbourhoods was an expression of the violent dispute over borders in the former Yugoslavia. During the 1992–95 war, a process of ethnic displacement meant that the frontline functioned as an ethnic threshold across which Sarajevans experienced (forced) mobility or immobility. In the aftermath of the conflict, the Inter Entity Boundary Line (IEBL), with its administrative separation of Sarajevo and Serb Sarajevo, replaced the frontline, profoundly changed the configuration of urban space and encouraged the resettlement of people across it on the basis of ethno-nationalist loyalties.

During the Bosnian war, anthropological analysis was preoccupied by inter-ethnic neighbourly relations, while after the war attention shifted to studies of inter-ethnic reconciliation (Christie and Bringa 1993; Bringa 1995; Helms 2010; Stefansson 2010; Baškar 2012). Sorabji’s (2008) critical ‘revisiting’ of the Bosnian neighbourhood challenged the mainstream interpretation of national issues that had monopolised wartime attention, while other anthropologists documented how shifting borders and border crossings had had unpredictable effects on inhabitants’ production of identity, affiliations and moral maps in ways that often unsettled identity markers like religion, ethnicity and nationality and their political connotations (Ballinger 2003; Pelkmans 2006). As Pelkmans (2006: 73) notes for neighbourhoods caught up in the reconfiguration of the Turkish–Soviet border, ‘discontent focused on more subtle differences that only became obvious in face-to-face communication, through values such as trust, hospitality, and reciprocity’.

Moreover, we should not dismiss the impact of global cultural processes on neighbourliness in a context like Sarajevo, even as we emphasise the consequences of wartime ethnic displacement. As Appadurai (1996: 189) points out, in a globalised society the cultural production of locality arises from the 'steady erosion, principally due to the force and form of electronic mediation, of the relationship between spatial and virtual neighbourhoods'.

This chapter follows such leads in moving away from a conflict or ethnic-centred analysis of neighbourhood relations. It is based on comparative ethnographic research carried out between 2006 and 2007 in two contiguous neighbourhoods, Grbavica (Sarajevo) and Lukavica (Eastern Sarajevo), which were part of the same city (Sarajevo) and municipality (Novo Sarajevo). With the outbreak of war in 1992, they fell under Serb military control but in 1996, immediately after the Dayton Peace Agreement, Grbavica was reintegrated into the predominantly Muslim-inhabited part of Sarajevo, while Lukavica remained part of the newly established city of Serb Sarajevo, which was renamed Eastern Sarajevo in 2005.¹

Although the recent history of both neighbourhoods has been officially presented as a demographic mass movement across rapidly shifting borders based on a process of 'ethnic cleansing', inhabitants themselves point out that displacement did not end up in a reassuring ethnic 'realignment'. Rather, they described how they experienced a cultural disorientation caused by the disruption of the historically specific socio-cultural (space-time) order perceived as normal before the war. This had placed residents in relation to urban space and to each other, and helped them structure daily contexts of interaction as neighbourhoods. After the war, regardless of whether they moved or stayed put, everyone I interviewed in Sarajevo felt like newcomers in their own city.

In both Grbavica and Lukavica, this feeling of 'cultural displacement' was particularly acute among people who had been living in the socially owned apartment blocks before the war. These apartment blocks had been built by the socialist government to accommodate the newly urbanised working class and had been allocated to the employees of socially owned companies (*preduzeće*) on the basis of socio-economic criteria rather than national affiliation.² As a result, these apartment blocks were characterised by informal inter-ethnic mixing that contrasted with neighbourly relations in rural areas (Bringa 1995) or in the *mahale*, old neighbourhoods built in the Ottoman period to group together inhabitants of the same religion (Sorabji 1989). In the neighbourhoods of my fieldwork many inhabitants of the socially owned buildings thus had to face what for them was an unusual process of ethnic homogenisation; a post-socialist transformation that was swiftly followed by the privatisation of ownership of the blocks in which they had once lived.³

Furthermore, displacement across the shifting IEBL in Sarajevo challenged the urban and cosmopolitan spirit of the modernisation process that underpinned neighbourly relations in socially owned housing. The post-war transformation

process of national homogenisation was perceived as a process of ruralisation by the pre-war inhabitants.

In Grbavica, the flight of Serbs was followed by the arrival of Muslims from different areas of BiH controlled by the Army of the Serb Republic (VRS).⁴ The neighbourhood was thus settled by people from different areas of the country with (real or supposed) rural origins, who lived side by side with the pre-war urban inhabitants.⁵ Lukavica, a peri-urban zone (*prigradska*) sparsely inhabited before the war, was marked by the arrival of a significant number of Serbs displaced from the Sarajevo urban area who had to interact with other Serbs and a few Muslims who had lived there before the conflict and who were unfamiliar with 'the culture of living in a flat' (*kultura stanovanja*).

Analysis of post-war neighbours displaced from formerly socially owned housing, living in Grbavica and Lukavica, invites us to explore asymmetries and cross-ethnic patterns of division between and within the two neighbourhoods.⁶ These emerged as a consequence of physical as well as political mobility engendered by a wider reconfiguration of geopolitical borders that involved local neighbouring interaction in complex political and cultural processes.

The chapter analyses how borders are experienced and newly configured in daily contexts of formal and informal interaction in Sarajevo neighbourhoods. It focuses on the cultural elaboration of social distance and proximity, relations of trust, collaboration, reciprocity and affect amongst neighbourhood inhabitants. Ultimately, it aims to explore how borders are shaped and reshaped by the daily interaction of displaced neighbours during the modernisation process that was central to the socialist housing project and is now reformulated in the conjuncture of post-war recovery and transition to private property and to European and/or global society.

Displaced in-the-city blocks: decoupling ethnic and urban neighbourliness

Ethnic affiliation of neighbourhoods changed several times as the frontline in Sarajevo shifted. Even before the line was stabilised, it maximised the perception of social distance between the two sides it separated. In neighbourhoods – the context of daily interaction – people were separated by ethnic origin, creating ethnically homogeneous areas in which territory, power and ethnic belonging should have been isomorphic. In wartime in-group and out-group membership was based on ethnic identity and was embedded in a new way of thinking in quantitative terms about majority/security and minority/insecurity (Jansen 2005; Appadurai 1998, 2006) aimed to convey social interaction in circumscribed and ethnic homogeneous contexts. Knowledge of a neighbour's ethnic identity became crucial to personal safety. Fieldwork carried out after the war revealed that people had detailed knowledge of the ethnic identity of their new neighbours and everyone I asked about the national structure of their neighbourhood was able to quantify in percentage terms the presence of people belonging to the national majority and minority groups.

Fieldwork also revealed how the pre-war neighbours' residential choice and positioning on the opposite side of the line was often interpreted as their lining up with the hostile warring or political side. As a result, the IEBL dividing neighbourhoods like Grbavica and Lukavica was often represented by interlocutors as a line dividing good from evil, and mobility across it highlighted incompatibility between 'us' and 'them' (Barth 1969: 39). People who lived on the other side were seen as morally to blame, in part because violence is a barbaric act (inhumanity is often associated with backwardness), but above all because they had visibly betrayed an ideal model of a civilised, ethnically mixed and secularised urban community of neighbours (Maček 2001: 218). The inhabitants were increasingly aware after the war that, despite ethnic displacement, their neighbourhood had not become ethnically homogeneous. Sarajevans I spoke with in Grbavica and Lukavica pointed to their ethnically diverse neighbourhoods as evidence of the residents' loyalty to the model of a cosmopolitan community that under socialism had symbolised 'brotherhood and unity' (*bratstvo i jedinstvo*) as well as modernity. This former ethnically mixed model of interaction left its traces so that some Serbs were still living in Grbavica and some Muslims in Lukavica. As a consequence, Sarajevans on both sides did not really present the IEBL as a moral line dividing discrete national groups but rather as a line that cut across both groups.

In Sarajevo this widespread attitude recalls the 'authentic hybridity' rhetoric that Ballinger (2003: 261) argues was used in the Istrian context as a defensive strategy against newcomers. Ballinger maintains that in the former Yugoslavia, marked by transnational population movement and border crossings triggered by the ethnicisation of territory, discourses of hybridity are meant to support the rootedness of a pure 'mixed' community of autochthons and the exclusion of ethnically homogeneous newcomers (Ballinger 2003: 261). For this reason, though forced mobility was aimed at fostering spatial closeness and social interaction among co-ethnics and at naturalising monoethnic neighbourhoods, solidarity and intimate relations in the neighbourhoods did not immediately appear as ethnically oriented. On the contrary, the demographic turnover across the line and the lack of past interaction with the new neighbours of the same ethnic group transformed the post-war neighbourhood into an unfamiliar social context. In several cases, even the names and professions of new neighbours were unknown to other inhabitants. Yet when I asked my interlocutors about their pre-war neighbours who had left, they could still recall their first names and other personal details. Ethnically homogeneous neighbouring relations generated by displacement were often disapproved of because they introduced people of putative rural origin to neighbourhoods where multi-ethnicity was presented as a distinguishing feature of the local urban community.

As Stefansson (2007: 63) notes, a particularly common concern among Sarajevans was the so-called 'cultural contamination' of the urban lifestyle by rural habits that they barely tolerated even in the aftermath of the Second World War,

as well as after the recent Yugoslav war. After the Second World War, the socialist politics of modernisation, with its emphasis on urbanising peasants and their transformation into an industrial working class, was accompanied by the cultural construction of the 'rural Other' as a negative pole in neighbourly relations.

By contrast, after the Yugoslav war, the cultural construction of the 'rural Other' by the urbanised Sarajevan working class is linked to displacement and ethnic homogenisation experienced as a 'forced de-urbanisation', simultaneously perceived as a de-modernisation. De-urbanisation was consequently expressed by Sarajevans living in Grbavica and Lukavica as a broad cultural process triggered by the shifting of urban boundaries and forced mobility across them. This process was accompanied by the generalised impoverishment and downward socioeconomic mobility of most urban inhabitants, who had not only suffered armed conflict but also the collapse of the socialist project with its promise of 'endless economic growth'.

In Grbavica, de-urbanisation resulted from the humanitarian emergency during the war, when buildings and the plots on which they stood acquired a utilitarian function and, like everything else, were valued only if they contributed to people's sustenance and survival. Hence, given the scarcity of food, every available space between buildings, including flower beds and balconies, was used to grow food, giving a rural feel to urban life reminiscent of a farming lifestyle (Maček 2007). Nevertheless, Sarajevans complain about how newcomers behave in the city, because they introduce practices and smells considered inappropriate in an urban context and especially inappropriate in buildings (Stefansson 2007). In Lukavica, where displaced urban Sarajevan Serbs constitute the majority of the post-war inhabitants, the lack of 'urban-style' residential buildings and the inadequacy of urban infrastructures were given as reasons for frustration by many of my interlocutors.

They also lamented that they were forced to live in buildings where the rural practices that they used to consider backward were evident. Many Sarajevans displaced to Lukavica had no hot water at home and were forced to boil water in a pot. Others complained of a lack of facilities for socialising with neighbours, like benches and gardens, something they had been used to in Sarajevo. Instead, they found their apartment blocks located on construction sites, where footpaths were gravel tracks that were the result of ongoing urbanisation of rural areas, and which they said meant that their stairs and flats were always dirty. Their frustration at these conditions was often manifested in ethnic hatred and animosity towards pre-war neighbours living in Sarajevo who still enjoyed urban comforts. Blame was also directed towards the former Serb inhabitants of Lukavica who, regardless of the needs of the urban newcomers, still occupied the space between buildings with their agricultural tools, poultry and goats.

More concretely, in both neighbourhoods, ethnic homogenisation coincided with stigmatisation of the 'rural Other' whose presence increased Sarajevans'

self-awareness of the impoverishment and de-urbanisation of the Self. As Pelkmans (2006: 86) notes for the village of Sarpi on the Georgian–Turkish border, the movement of people across borders may disturb patterns of identification of Self and Other. In the particular case of Grbavica and Lukavica, the Other may begin to mirror a reversed image of the Self and to threaten the pre-war economic and cultural superiority of urbanites. According to Pelkmans, this condition often results in the need to reinforce social boundaries. In the Sarajevo context 'contamination' and 'authenticity' thus become the discursive tropes of a trans-boundary and trans-ethnic cultural attempt to delimit spatially and temporally the community of neighbours to urban Sarajevans.

The displacement which is experienced as de-urbanisation introduces a trans-ethnic element of nostalgia for a disrupted social order embodied by a shared idea of an idyllic urban neighbourhood that resembled that of the pre-war urban era. At the same time, the desire of Sarajevans to share in the technological progress and infrastructural development enjoyed by other contemporary Europeans defines the distinctive features of the urban and modern community to which they belong and to which they aspire. As a result, in both Grbavica and Lukavica ethnic differences amongst members of the pre-war community of neighbours were often downplayed compared to differences experienced in daily interaction with co-residents in the mono-ethnic post-war neighbourhoods.

Building management in displaced urban neighbourhoods

Conflict over the position of the frontline damaged residential buildings both materially and socially. In all war-damaged apartment blocks I visited, I was surprised by the destruction of the main doors and intercom systems that allowed residents to control entry to the building. As a result, the boundary between the inside and outside of the building was completely blurred and the effects of vandalism, trafficking, looting and plundering were still visible even after the war. In residential blocks in both Lukavica and Grbavica, the inhabitants complained of experiencing a sense of the unfamiliar and even danger, because of the ease with which strangers could enter. Two common concerns were the absence of lighting in the stairwells, and external doors that did not lock or close. With a continuous turnover of residents, the social bonds among neighbours were weakened and shared norms not always applied to the care of common spaces. In this situation, hallways and other common areas were perceived by some of the inhabitants as a no man's land from which they could take things for personal or family survival without regard to the collective good. During my stay in Grbavica, for example, we had no light in the stairwell for several days because someone had stolen the light bulb. This was widely criticised by the residents, who lamented the lack of protection against such actions and suspected one of their neighbours of stealing it for his own use.

Displacement across shifting (geo)political borders also affected formal

relations among neighbours in their role as tenants. This was particularly evident in the immediate aftermath of the war, when they had to cope with the urgent need to agree rules for managing common areas that would ensure the building was cleaned inside and out on a regular basis and that electricity bills were paid so that there was lighting on the stairs and in the basement.

People in Grbavica and Lukavica tried to cope with the problems by restoring a model of management similar to that which had previously applied in socially owned apartment blocks. In both neighbourhoods the need to organise life in common spaces led to the organisation of a tenants' meeting with a building manager on the basis of the socialist concept of *kućni savjet*. Tenants' meetings were more frequent in Grbavica, which had been extensively damaged during the conflict, in order to liaise with the builders responsible for the reconstruction. Here the system of outsourced building maintenance implemented during socialism was restored in many skyscrapers (*neboderi*), where the large number of floors and the presence of a lift required particular attention and expertise for maintenance and, consequently, regular intervention by a specialist company. The substantial difference compared to the socialist period was that these companies were now privately owned while during socialism they were socially owned, as were the buildings. In smaller residential buildings in Grbavica and Lukavica, however, routine maintenance was financed by small sums regularly contributed to one of the residents, usually an elderly or unemployed woman, who regularly cleaned the common spaces in buildings. More rarely, routine maintenance was on a voluntary basis.

The implementation of these systems in a post-war and post-socialist context could not guarantee effective building maintenance and in many cases it challenged harmonious relations among tenants. Most Sarajevans living in Grbavica and Lukavica expressed their dissatisfaction with the hygiene standards of their building. They blamed this situation on the turnover of tenants who had been assigned temporary occupancy rights, which made it difficult to secure regular payments towards renovations and cleaning. In Lukavica, Janko explained:

We take care of cleanliness of the main entrance and we pay a woman to do this but I live in a neighbourhood where people come from I don't know where and they are not so interested in paying someone to have the building cleaned. That's why we can't reach an agreement about the work this woman should do, and the reason is that we have to pay her! So in the end every family cleans the space near its door and we seldom clean communal spaces.

Similarly, for Grbavica, Džoko told me:

I'm only partially satisfied with the cleanliness of my building. The less you pay, the less you get. Maybe tenants who have always lived here pay, but those who came from outside ... they don't pay and say, 'I'll be here for a year and then I'll leave. Why should I pay?' So they don't pay for water, for cleaning, nothing!

The termination of temporary occupancy rights over flats and the acknowledgement of private property rights, processes almost complete by the mid-2000s, demonstrate clearly that daily tensions over the use and care of shared spaces were a consequence of the incompatibility between the different socioeconomic conditions of the tenants and their failure to agree on the principle of equal rights and duties that should govern their collective life in the building.

The privatisation of homes and the liberalisation of the property market signalled the end of the pre-war system in which employers assigned flats to their employees, a system that had ensured all tenants had a job and a standardised level of income. Furthermore, the privatisation of apartment blocks that were formerly owned collectively created differences in ownership status among tenants.⁷ The frequent arguments over shared bills or cleaning services are thus the result of the newly emerging social and material differences among tenants in the post-war, post-socialist transformation.

In post-war Grbavica, tenants in blocks constructed during socialism who are experiencing economic difficulties are likely to avoid paying for utilities like water, since this is supplied centrally, and it is not easy to cut off one tenant in the building without also cutting off the supply to all the other residents. At the same time, a household in economic difficulties is not in the position to reduce consumption of water and, consequently, its costs. In these pre-war buildings, there is a general water meter for the block so it is impossible to calculate individual household bills. Tenants pay a fixed sum that approximates their household consumption, which is calculated by dividing the building's overall consumption by area in square metres. Daily conversations among neighbours revealed that fixed costs for other communal bills are also hard to afford for many current tenants with unstable incomes. Quarrels often arose because of the collective consequences of one individual refusing to pay for stair-cleaning services, building services or for upgrading sub-standard plumbing. Such subjects were more frequently the reason for conflict than ethnic issues and tenants avoided socialising with one another in order to prevent disputes like that mentioned by one resident, Katica, who accused her neighbours of fabricating a claim to humanitarian relief in order to evade paying communal bills.

The shift from socialism to a market economy provoked the collapse of a principle of self-management and collective responsibility for public space. Restriction of private space and commitment to public/common spaces were central to the production of the modern socialist self and the socialist state (Brandtstädter 2007: 139). For instance, during the socialist period building embellishment or renovations were often carried out on a voluntary basis, referred to as *akcije* by my informants.

Although in both neighbourhoods some tenants still invested money and time in enhancing shared spaces, in the post-war, post-socialist context, most households tend to take part in building management as individual units with different needs and economic assets. This more individualistic behaviour cannot simply be

interpreted as a disregard for the common good brought about by the introduction of the private property system. The economic disadvantage that some households experienced after the war put some people (especially those who had experience of life under socialism) in the embarrassing position of having to disobey tenets under which they had previously lived. The most common response to this predicament was to accuse the 'Other' of disregarding rules as a way of justifying their own negligence. For example, Dženana, an inhabitant of Grbavica in her fifties, told me:

I care about the green spaces around the building! I pick up waste. Especially when springtime comes, I organize some *radne akcije* with children who live in this building and we clean, but it's useless ... couples who have little children throw anything out and we could clean endlessly, but as long as they behave like this these spaces will always be dirty.

Others justify their private use of resources by stressing that non-interference in someone else's property is required by the new modern post-war system. Opinions recorded in both neighbourhoods were similar to that expressed by Subuljka: 'I don't tend to flowers around the building because they're the private property of those who live on the ground floor. I don't dare touch them!'

The more individualistic utilisation of private financial resources appears to be a direct consequence of the situation of displacement across different systems and ways of conceiving of property that in many cases results in tenants opting for inactivity because they are unsure who should do what. This is evident in doubts expressed by Azra, a 50-year-old tenant of Grbavica, who hesitates to clean green spaces around her building because she is not sure if she is in charge of it and wonders if this should be a task for the tenants or for workers paid by the municipal council. Similar disorientation has been generated by an over-reliance on post-war humanitarian aid which replaced public institutions in providing financial and technical support for building reconstruction. Selma, for example, after having declared to her neighbour that she was not interested in paying for repairs to the lift because she preferred to use the stairs, told me that she and other tenants were waiting for donors to repair the lift. (In fact, following the implementation of private property, flat owners became financially responsible for all internal repairs, including the lift.)

Notwithstanding this, the quarrels about building management suggest that care of shared spaces is still considered a cultural value in the post-war setting. In both neighbourhoods, residents are categorised according to a moral hierarchy that distinguishes those who are *fini ljudi*, that is, those who are respectful of social conventions and the common good and those who are not. Although no longer framed in terms of socialist values of solidarity among the tenants challenged by wartime distrust, the maintenance of shared spaces emerges as a cross-ethnic value which is the background for a decent life in apartment blocks, especially after the wartime devastation and suspension of the rules of law and social order. Everyday life in the building highlighted an ongoing cultural redefinition of a modern model

of behaviour in urban space, one embodied neither by the socialist infrastructure, nor properly represented by the formalisation of individual economic and legal responsibility for common spaces imposed by private property. In a situation characterised by a changed legal system and increasing economic difficulties and inequalities among households, contrasts and uncertainties around management issues highlight the daily cultural attempt to negotiate (between past and present systems) the boundary between individual and institutional economic competences in common spaces.

Neighbourliness in post-war globalisation

Scholars explain that before the war, being part of a network of neighbours in BiH entailed interaction in informal contexts according to a set of social norms, such as visiting neighbours' homes for funerals, births and weddings, or just for a chat and a coffee (Bringa 1995: 67; Sorabji 2008: 107). These neighbourly ties of mutual assistance and respect are sometimes referred to as *komšiluk*, a word of Ottoman origin that indicates the place of residence of neighbours linked by spatial proximity. It has also symbolised mutual and prompt help determined by living next door, as witnessed by popular expressions reported by scholars: 'a neighbour is closer than one's shirt' (*komšija bliži od košulje*) (Halpern 1958); 'Your neighbour is more important than your brother, since your neighbour lives next door while your brother may be far away' (Stefansson 2010: 69). In this context, the role of *prva komšija*, 'next-door neighbour' (literally, 'first neighbour'), acquired considerable social importance.

Under socialism, *komšiluk* was politically presented as an idyllic context of sociality among households of different nationalities united by sharing socialist citizenship (Sorabji 2008). 'Neighbourhood' in socially owned blocks ideologically embodied the concept of 'brotherhood and unity' and, ultimately, of socialist modernity. My interviewees confirmed that, by contrast to neighbours of *mahale*, solidarity among residents of socially owned buildings was established more by participation in the same workplace and its associated recreational activities than by mutual visiting of each other's homes.

Although some of my interlocutors reaffirmed their devotion to *komšiluk* values and prescriptions in the post-war period, these have been revisited as a consequence of the different ways of perceiving social proximity with neighbours after displacement. As already noted, the ethnic diversity of residents in socially owned buildings has diminished after the war but it has not been completely eliminated in either Grbavica or Lukavica.

The management of ethnic difference among neighbours has become particularly complex following the war. As other anthropologists have observed, inter-ethnic relations in the post-war period are not impossible but are lacking in spontaneity and are sometimes avoided because they could generate tensions

(Helms 2010; Stefansson 2010). As a result, only a few inhabitants continue to invite each other for religious celebrations, paying due respect to neighbours' cultural specificities in matters of food and other customs. There is always a risk that someone will forget the diversity of those present and express their antipathy and even hatred of other 'enemy' national groups. As I was able to observe, the prevailing feeling in this situation was not the fear of personal attack but the shame and embarrassment for being identified with the enemy and thus as unwelcome guests. Residents consequently avoid offering their personal opinions about the conflict and about political-religious issues, choosing instead less controversial topics such as the intolerance of ill-mannered rural neighbours.

The redefinition of the institution of *komšiluk*, namely the 'normal' way of practising informal relations with neighbours, is not only influenced by the change in inter-ethnic relations that occurred after the war. In Grbavica and even in Lukavica, where the majority of inhabitants belongs to the same national group, the tragic events of the war and the frequent turnover of residents make it difficult for the inhabitants to open the door to neighbours who are almost unknown. It is not surprising, then, that those who visited were not always residents in their post-war neighbourhood. Many of my interlocutors confessed that they did not frequent neighbours' houses as much as they did before the war. Many of them described their relations with neighbours as *Nema poverenja!* ('There's no trust!'), and claimed that neighbours are no longer willing to offer help if asked. Others described residential buildings as dangerous and as no longer able to provide material or social protection. But security concerns are not the only reason for the transformation of *komšiluk*. It is also influenced by the fact that one's neighbours are no longer necessarily one's co-workers from the same firm. Now, after the war, socialising with neighbours is limited to tenants' meetings.

Displacement is a further element influencing residents' perceptions of proximity and their willingness to engage in informal interaction with neighbours. Some of the older generation still feel 'closer' to their pre-war neighbours who have moved away than to those who now live beside them but whom they do not really know. In a few cases this has led them to disregard the strict ethno-national divisions and taboos, and to visit their pre-war neighbours for family celebrations or coffee on the other side of the line. By contrast, some of the younger inhabitants who experienced displacement but returned to live in their pre-war home stated that they were too young when they were forced to leave and have no memories of the families who had remained in the building. They often confessed that their post-war neighbours of the same age are 'foreign' to them. Yet they retain vivid memories of the people they met in the place of displacement and with whom they established enduring friendships, visiting them frequently in other neighbourhoods of the city. Hospitality and informal interaction at home are thus reserved for people with whom social relations were established in the past or in the present. In this sense, the experience of displacement has played a critical role in changing the cultural norms that define the

importance of housing proximity in social interaction. In post-war Sarajevo, as elsewhere, new technologies and means of communication (at least the cheaper types, such as texting and smartphone chat) are often used, especially by new-generation Sarajevans, to maintain relations with pre-war or wartime neighbours 'displaced' all over the city and sometimes even abroad. In this context, the residential proximity that characterised the next-door neighbour (*prvi komšija*) is no longer central to the perception of social proximity, which now extends to those who are spatially (in the city or abroad) and temporally (pre-war or wartime) distant.

In some cases economic hardship of post-war and post-socialist Bosnia and Herzegovina also imposes restrictions on pre-war *komšiluk* habits like the ritual practice of hospitality in domestic settings. Low family budgets and poor housing conditions are frequent reasons for avoiding domestic interactions with neighbours, especially for special occasions, when greater financial resources are needed to offer refreshment. For example, more families are now forced by economic circumstances to celebrate *tevhid* and *mevlud* in mosques rather than at home.⁸ This kind of non-traditional choice would have been highly disapproved of by the neighbourhood community in pre-war times. Before the war the hosts themselves would have perceived it as shameful because, as Bringa notes, offering hospitality to guests in Bosnia has always been correlated to the honour of the host (Bringa 1995: 69).

I should emphasise that the increasing popularity of meeting in public places has emerged as a result of a new rhythm of work and post-war transnational cultural dynamics, and this has had a disruptive effect on *komšiluk* by introducing new ways of practising neighbourliness not based on spatial proximity and not strictly regulated by the socially binding reciprocity of domestic visits and drinking coffee at home. Nonetheless, in public places economic reciprocity is also displayed in paying for a round of drinks for the friends one has invited. Meetings in public places are preferred because they shift interaction from the restrictions of domestic space into urban cosmopolitan contexts like the city centre, which conveys a sense of belonging to a more global space. Croegaert (2011), who analysed the case of Bosnian migrants to the United States, argues that changes in practices of drinking coffee and organising sociability are enacted by people who have experienced displacement. As she explains, 'Because food practices involve multisensory encounters, activities like coffee preparation and drinking offer potent resources for formulating spaces that may both challenge and co-opt models of organizing time and social well-being and belonging' (Croegaert 2011: 473).

In Sarajevo this change is visible in the curiosity shown by the inhabitants for the new cafés and fast-food venues and in the increasing consumption of Nescafé (*Nes kafa*), an *instant* coffee that in many meeting places has replaced the traditional Bosnian *slow* coffee that has historically symbolised the hospitality and conviviality associated with neighbourliness.

The shifting borders of BiH coupled with border-crossing displacement have disrupted a model of sociability centred on local communities, mutual home visits

and the ready availability of inter-ethnic mixing at work and in the neighbourhood. As participant observation in this mobile context has revealed, apartment-block residents who invest scarce resources in the neighbours who live next door are often frustrated by a lack of reciprocity and mutual hospitality.

Conclusion

Yugoslav border reconfiguration in the Bosnian capital resulted in a violent negotiation over IEBL positioning, animated by ethno-nationalist projects that required enclosure of a pure ethnic space-time and the clear-cut affiliation of persons to be achieved through enforced mobility and the stable territorialisation of identity. For displaced people living in post-war Grbavica and Lukavica, neighbourhoods which were located on opposite sides of the IEBL, the pre-war socialist order involving inter-ethnic cohabitation of members of the working class on the basis of their employment and socio-economic conditions was disrupted by a process of ethnic displacement.

Yet these changes brought about by the moving of borders and enforced mobility failed to produce ethnically oriented everyday interaction. Instead, they created a sense among residents of downward socio-economic mobility and a feeling of having stepped back in time by generating unwelcome resemblances to the stigmatised rural Other. So too the introduction of private property and individual home ownership has not been accompanied by the complete disappearance of the value put on the management of common space in communal buildings, with its consequences for neighbourly relations. The forced movement of populations, the destruction of the socialist system of production and the inclusion of housing in the market economy made post-war buildings more ethnically homogeneous but more heterogeneous in the patrimonial and socio-economic status of inhabitants. New class inequalities interacting with the redefinition of duties among tenants in the private property system generated uncertainty about communal responsibilities and a concomitant categorisation of neighbours into those who care for the common good and those who do not. Notwithstanding this, neighbourhoods and hospitality seem not only to have lost centrality in daily informal interaction, but the absence of opportunities to socialise among building inhabitants caused by displacement, new housing systems and the commitment to a new concept of modernity rooted in a globalised society create changes in affective and moral maps that work in post-war buildings to decouple neighbourliness from housing proximity, and from the mutuality entailed by hospitality in domestic space.

This analysis of neighbourliness highlights trans-ethnic patterns of self-identification among Sarajevans scattered across the line. Cultural production of neighbours and the establishment of social taxonomies and cultural hierarchies have altogether outlined the centrality for displaced Sarajevans of the identification with an urban community whose values had been sometimes overstated to the det-

riment of the ethnic divide. This identification even ended in nostalgia for an idyllic pre-war urban inter-ethnic neighbourhood.

Palmberger (2008) has demonstrated that nostalgia is not simply past-oriented. Indeed, nostalgia for the urban community of neighbours is not aimed at reconstructing the inter-ethnic cohabitation of the past in the present. On the contrary, in a completely changed context of interaction, nostalgia lies at the core of a future project of modernisation.

In Sarajevo, displacement has been experienced as de-modernisation, de-urbanisation and de-Europeanisation (see also Jansen 2009) and the production of the 'modern self, driven by the need to reformulate life strategies after displacement in space and time, entails for Sarajevan neighbours the enactment of affective and embodied practices of daily interaction which convey temporal synchronisation and spatial inclusion in an urban context perceived as more European and global.

The material presented here shows that (geo)political borders reshaped by daily interaction in two Sarajevan neighbourhoods do not appear as clear-cut lines between past, present and future configuration of territory and power, values and identity affiliations. Through social practice borders are negotiated in the geographical and historical space of apartment blocks where different systems meet, linger, melt and change. The reconfiguration of borders and the relocation of people around them expressed through the changing practices of neighbourliness give rise to a ceaseless remaking of socio-cultural categories to organise increasing complexity and instability of the whole system.

Notes

- 1 Significantly, the two neighbourhoods are administratively identified as *Mjesne zajednice* Grbavica II and Lukavica centar. *Mjesne Zajednice* are administrative divisions set in the parts of Sarajevo urbanised during socialism. As already underlined by other anthropologists (Bringa 1995: 55; Sorabji 2008: 100) and as I myself observed, the extension of the neighbourhoods perceived by their inhabitants only partly overlapped with administrative divisions.
- 2 'Socially owned' was the official designation of these buildings in former Yugoslavia. It was meant to underline that properties were owned by the working people and not by the state, an ideology that was very specific to the Yugoslav 'self-management' system. Article 24 of the Law on Housing Relations (*Zakon o Stambenim odnosima*) adopted in 1984 specified that a socially owned property could be allocated to employees after taking into account his/her housing and patrimonial condition, the numbers of his/her family members and years of service.
- 3 The privatisation process involved both my interlocutors who had decided to return to their pre-war flat and those who had decided to sell their apartment and move to the other side of the IEBL. Legally one could sell one's socially owned apartment only after having acquired private ownership of it.
- 4 Vojaska Republike Srpske (Army of the Serb Republic).

- 5 Stefansson (2007: 76) points out that, despite the tendency to stereotype *Bošnjak* displaced persons as country folk, many of them came from big Bosnian cities like Banja Luka or Mostar.
- 6 Other scholars have also highlighted cross-ethnic patterns of divide in BiH (Maček 2001; Stefansson 2007). See also Henig (2012), who deals with post-socialist influence on neighbourly relations in a rural context.
- 7 For further information about housing entitlements in shifting political systems, see Lofranco 2013.
- 8 Islamic commemoration of the deceased and celebration of the Prophet Mohammed's birth.

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