EthnoScripts

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Those Who Left and Those Who Stayed: Diasporic
'Brothers' Seen as the New Others in the Bosnian Context

Abstract

This article explores the division between the diaspora and the homeland dwellers in the context of post-war Bosnia and Herzegovina. More specifically, the focus is on the constructed otherness of perceived co-ethnics who left because of the war (the 'leavers') in relation to those who stayed in the country (the 'stayers'). I argue that the division into stayers and leavers presents one of the most prominent non-ethnically framed Bosnian divisions. The article is based on two qualitative research projects, which I conducted between 2011 and 2016. The narratives selected to support the main argument were taken from my thirty-five interviews with people who experienced displacement. Twenty of these interviews were conducted with people resettled abroad (the diaspora) and fifteen involved people who were repatriated after living abroad for many years (the returnees). The case study thus provides the opportunity to explore the otherness that my interviewees experienced as one of the social divisions based on experiential and socio-economic differences. This type of division can – to some degree – challenge the perceived solidarities based on ethnic sameness among the people who reside in and originate from Bosnia and Herzegovina.

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Introduction: Bosnian divisions

The notorious and widespread campaigns of ethnic cleansing during the 1992-95 Bosnian War caused what was, at the time, the largest displacement of people on European territory since World War II. It is estimated that more than two million people were displaced by this war (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees 2004, Ministry for Human Rights and Refugees 2003). Out of this number, over one million people are estimated to have crossed the borders of the country, while close to one million were internally displaced (see Dahlman and Ó Tuathail 2005, Kälin 2006, Porobić 2017). The worldwide diaspora from Bosnia and Herzegovina (hereinafter BH) numbers about two million people, spread across more than 50 countries (Halilovich et al. 2018).

Popular discourses 'back home' in the sending society, as well as among the emigrants themselves, often label – in the Bosnian-Serbian-Croatian language – those people from BH who continue residing abroad as *dijaspora* (Valenta and Ramet 2011, Kovačević Bielicki 2017a). This label applies to people from Bosnia, whether they migrated before, during or after the conflicts in the region. The predominant majority of the people who reside abroad, however, had emigrated due to the war, as refugees.

Post-conflict developments in BH include the institutionalizing and cementing of ethnicity in practical terms, as dominant group identification. This is also largely the case in diasporic settings. Ethnic cleansing led to drastic transformations of the population and the social relations (see for example Tuathail and Loughlin 2009, Halilovich 2011 and Jansen 2011).[1] During the post-war period, the society witnessed a clear failure to 'reverse' the effects of ethnic cleansing by ensuring a massive and sustainable minority return. Minority return here refers to the return to those areas and pre-war residences where the returnees' perceived ethnic group was not, or no longer is, in the majority. It can certainly be agreed that the ethnic lens also continues to dominate academic discussions of the Bosnian post-war

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[1] As Cox (1999: 204-5) notes: 'It is somewhat paradoxical that on the one hand, the DPA institutionalized the ethnic division of the country by creating two entities, and on the other hand, is promoting the return of refugees and displaced persons to recreate a multi-ethnic country'.

context, as people in BH were persecuted and killed in the name of ethnic and religious differences.[2] The main dominant social and political divisions revolve around ethno-nationality (and different aspects of ethnic belonging), so the ethnic divisions are widely brought into focus in both the context of the war and the post-war developments (see for example Bringa 1995; Rose-grant 1996; Campbell 1998; Cox 1998; Bieber 2004; Esterhuizen 2006; Grün 2009; Jansen 2011; Halilovich 2011, 2013; Majstorović and Turjačanin 2013).

However, the ethnic lens is clearly not the only one through which one can observe how different groups of people feel excluded, and BH is no exception to this rule. The tendency to overemphasize ethnic divisions in research may further contribute to the perpetuation of methodological nationalism (see Wimmer and Glick Schiller 2002, 2003) and methodological groupism (see Bauböck and Faist 2010). Both of these problems are particularly prominent in research about the region and migrants from the region (Kovačević Bielicki 2017b). Many additional prominent lines of us-them divisions that are non-ethnic or intra-ethnic in character are mentioned in some of the scholarly sources, but they are usually not made the main and explicit focus of attention. Halilovich (2013) explicitly notes how displacement has not only (re)territorialized the old local and ethnic identities within Bosnia and Herzegovina, but has produced new, often antagonistic, group categories. He identifies the following divisions: stayers versus leavers, newcomers versus old settlers, defenders versus deserters, peasants versus city dwellers, internally displaced versus refugees, and diaspora versus homeland. Halilovich (2013) finds that these new group identifications have sometimes been replicated to an even greater extent in the worldwide Bosnian diaspora. Micinski and Hasić (2018) argue that the new social cleavages, created as a result of conflict, displacement, and repatriation, intersect with ethnic identities.

In this article, I adopt Halilovich's labels of 'stayers' and 'leavers' and explore them as largely overlapping with the homeland-diaspora division. I also provide examples of how those who are considered diaspora feel significantly excluded – at least occasionally and in part – from 'fully having' imagined 'real' Bosnianness. The 'real' Bosnianness in question is constructed in this case in a sedentary, nativist manner, in terms of soil rather than blood. Physically leaving the soil leads to contestedness of belonging. In all the examples I provide, othering is experienced by leavers, from stayers, regardless of the fact that all of the people who narrate it are perceived as co-ethnics in the areas of BH that they visit or have resettled to. Different aspects of the spatial and temporal alienation these people have previously experienced or continue to experience trigger the processes of exclusion and lead to the ascribed and lived otherness. This article focuses exclusively on how people who were or still are re-settled abroad due to the war narrate (non)belonging

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2   These two group identifications, religious and ethnic, are often intertwined in the case of BH.

in and to BH. I argue that diasporic 'ethnic brothers' often experience being seen as one of the new main others by the stayers, according to the leavers' own perception. The stayers and leavers in question can thus be called diasporic (br)others, to borrow a suitable term from Edin Hajdarpašić.[3] It will be shown in the text which specific ways these processes of othering may be experienced and described.

In the following sections, I present the case study by providing the relevant information about the methods used in the two research projects it is based on, and I give an overview of relevant concepts and how I employ them. After this, I present my findings, first by introducing the narratives that testify to the experienced otherness of the leavers, and then by introducing three sub-sections that help me group these narratives around the main clusters of reasons for the experienced otherness. The last section summarizes my research results and offers concluding reflections.

The study: concepts, background and method

Otherness is seen here primarily as the attributed quality of being *different from*. But, to be more precise, my approach suggests that the active process of othering – in the sense of affective or discursive labeling of persons or imagined groups as 'others' – implies something essentially evaluative, negative and, often, even hostile. It frequently entails not only an awareness that others are different, but also an assessment of some forms of being different as 'wrong', less valuable, less moral, strange, or foreign.

My insights about the experienced otherness among leavers – whether or not they attempted to return to BH at some point – in their interaction with people and the society in the perceived homeland, comes directly from two empirical research projects related to the post-conflict diaspora from the former Yugoslavia conducted between 2011 and 2016.[4] During this period, I conducted, for one of the projects, twenty interviews with people who

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3   Hajdarpašić (2015) uses South Slavic debates over Bosnian Muslim identity to propose a new figure in the history of nationalism: the '(br)other', a character signifying at the same time the potential of being both 'brother' and 'other,' containing the fantasy of both complete assimilation and insurmountable difference. While Hajdarpašić had in mind the relations between different ethno-religious groups in BH, which are, nevertheless, closely connected by culture, history and language, I here reflect mostly on intra-ethnic divisions through which ethnic brothers are constructed as non-sedentary others due to their leaving (or, as already specified, diasporic (br)others). This adds an additional dimension to Hajdarpašić's insight, by proposing a type of nesting otherness within constructed ethno-national boundaries. What is similar is that, as Hajdarpašić notes, '(br)other stands for both living antagonisms and intimacy between co-nationals, and in my case also co-ethnics' (ibid.).

4   The main results of one of these projects have been published in a monograph (Kovačević Bielicki 2017a).

remain resettled abroad, as well as fifteen separate interviews with people who repatriated to BH from the six so-called Western countries after many years of living abroad. Both sets of interviews were complemented in their research periods by participant observation and numerous additional unrecorded conversations both in BH and abroad.

The research questions of the two separate projects did not focus specifically on the feelings of otherness that the leavers experience when they visit or repatriate 'back home', when they communicate, or interact with the stayers in any way (whether face-to-face or through the use of recent social technologies). It was striking, however, already in the initial recorded conversations, that the narratives speaking about this diasporic otherness arose spontaneously. I decided to continue raising the topic with all my subsequent interlocutors, as a side-discussion. This was partly considered in the publications that came out of my two projects but was never made the explicit subject matter. Due to the gap observed in the literature focusing directly on Bosnian us-and-them divisions other than the over-researched ethnic ones, I decided to make the issue explicit here. To support my argument, I selected the relevant narratives from the existing thirty-five interviews that illustrate my point about new diasporic (br)others as one of the most prominent us-and-them divisions among the multiple non-ethnically or intra-ethnically framed ones.

When, how and why have 'diasporic brothers' been seen as 'the new others'? This question captures the rationale for the article's central point, and it will be answered through the words of the leavers themselves. The category of leavers is introduced here to refer collectively to those people from BH who continue residing abroad, as well as to those who have attempted to return after many years of living abroad. They are both considered for the purposes of the article in their relation to the stayers or the homeland dwellers.

As the backdrop for the study I draw on the theoretical insights gained from my previous research with former Yugoslav refugees in Norway (see Kovačević Bielicki 2017a), showing how the multiple and overlapping categories of 'us' and 'them' cause outsiderhood and insiderhood to become highly contextual and shifting. The intersection of situational identities for each individual produces different experiences with salience in different contexts. Hence, for example, a person with a strong ethno-national attachment might 'other' some people from their own ethnic group in many contexts, based on other positionings and attitudes. I identified the dominant ways in which the boundaries between us and them are drawn in the researched settings. In the context of the Bosnian diaspora, I found that one of the most prominent boundaries is drawn in relation to people who have not experienced migration (Kovačević Bielicki 2016). This type of boundary making is thus experientially motivated; it posits people who have migrated versus those who have not. There are at least two important 'experientially' motivated

types of boundary making. One refers to how people testified to the feeling of being othered as migrants in relation to non-migrants (in terms of the majority in the host society), while the other, more relevant for the current study, was about the awareness of the division between the diaspora and the people who stayed in the 'sending society' or the 'homeland'. Such othering based on experientially framed divisions is very often to be found exactly in the boundaries that situate migrants 'in-between' and, thereby, prompt them to frequently experience being situated 'nowhere'. Belonging and non-belonging can be expressed, amongst other ways, in terms of discourses on homes and homelands, integration and assimilation, as well as the belonging 'in-between', to 'neither-nor', or to 'both' societies (see also Krzyżanowski 2010: 189).

Experientially motivated boundary-making may, in some cases, further reconfirm and reproduce nation-thinking and nation-talking – particularly the sedentary and nativist nationalisms – although they are not ethno-nationally motivated, in a normative sense, in all their forms and starting points. For example, I showed how positioning 'us' in the diaspora as opposed to 'them' back home does not usually have much to do with ethnicity and ethno-national boundaries (Kovačević Bielicki 2016); in fact, as I pointed out there, the 'us' constructed in such a way often shares ethno-national belonging and identification with 'them', constructed as the people 'back home'. Nevertheless, they can perpetuate the belief that 'not fully belonging' to a single nation-state is a challenge and an 'unnatural' position to be in, following the sedentarist logic to which Jansen and Löfving (2009) refer. While the ideas and attitudes of many individuals are the result of the power of imposed nation-thinking and the dominant belief in the reality of ethno-national groups, individual discourses end up perpetuating such beliefs.

It is important, finally, to note that the divisions in this study, into stayers and leavers, the diaspora, the returnees and the homeland dwellers, are not in any way clear cut and unquestionable. The construction of these and any other social divisions and categories happens along a continuum where the stayers and the leavers, the diaspora, the homeland dwellers and the returnees, the brothers and the others, may often overlap. People can negotiate and refuse their own or other's membership in these categories in different ways. For example, in my study of the diasporic people who remain abroad, I was told that the word *dijaspora* has a negative connotation. My interlocutors often experienced that people back home excluded them personally from this category not to offend them, while others included them in the category to 'other' them. Self-exclusion is also a common strategy. Yet, I keep operating with the label 'diaspora', since my interlocutors use it extensively. Regarding the term 'returnee', another important label used here, several people in my study of returnees did not refer to themselves as such. Also, when I discussed return and the returnees with the stayers during my fieldwork, they often

negotiated who can be called a returnee and who cannot, because labeling people as returnees seems to immediately imply that they do not really or fully belong. In this sense, they made exceptions for those people they found close or dear, 'granting' them the right to belong, even if they technically are, or used to be, leavers. For the purposes of research, I kept the label 're-turnees' or *povratnici*. The strict legal definition in national BH law includes people who officially expressed the wish to return and initiated the process, and those who did actually return.[5] People included in this study, while they did factually return in the period considered by the study, are not necessarily registered as 'returnees' as they did not return through official channels, and often not to the settlement where they resided before the war.[6]

To summarize, many of my interlocutors in both of the mentioned research projects, suggested repeatedly that, in the context of the sending society, the Bosnian/Croatian/Serbian (hereinafter BCS) word *dijaspora* has a stigmatizing and derogatory connotation. With the interlocutors who were repatriated there was discussion about what the label 'returnee' entails and how most of them reject it. I will now turn to the findings that further illustrate this otherness and stigma.

Findings: Otherness and stigma related to the diasporic (br)others

In a seminar on the position of women and youth in the Bosnian society, organized in 2012 by a Norwegian-Bosnian youth organization, there was a discussion about what 'we here' can do for the society 'there'. During the panel, I noted a comment made by a young woman from the audience who introduced herself as being 'originally' from Bosnia, but who had been living 'here' for many years:

> *Naša pomoć nije dobrodošla kod naroda tamo. A mi želimo da pomognemo. Mi jesmo dijaspora, ali smo ipak prvo Bosanci.*

> Our help is not welcome by the people there. And, we want to help. We are the diaspora, but we are nevertheless Bosnians first.

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5   As the Ministry for Human Rights and Refugees (2012, my translation) states: 'The returnee is a refugee from BH or a displaced person who has expressed their wish to return to their previous place of residence and is in the process of return, as well as a refugee from BH and displaced person who has returned to their previous place of residence'.

6   The problematic nature of this label also became clear when I was looking for interlocutors using the snowball method, as people were not always willing to self-label or label others they knew as returnees. Only after a longer discussion with me about the topic of my study would they suddenly remember that they knew several 'returnees' (according to my definition), who in fact do not at all advertise the original experience of 'leaving', or who completely under-communicate it in order to avoid othering and exclusion.

As her Bosnianness is contested, this woman's strategy was to reconfirm their Bosnianness by claiming to be Bosnian first, as something more important than being someone from the 'diaspora', despite the 'but' she herself puts forward.[7]

As a person who, at the time of the interview, had 'returned' or at least was spending most of his time in the sending society, one of my interlocutors spoke about similar kinds of experiences, mentioning that people 'always' employ the label 'diaspora'. *Uvek počnu sa onim, 'dijaspora'!* ('They always start with that, 'diaspora!''). This reportedly means that many people at 'home' regularly mention, criticize and complain about the 'diaspora' and label its members as different and even as problematic. However, according to the interlocutor, this attitude is usually reserved for those who visit during the holidays, while people who actually return to live 'at home' are sometimes excluded from such labeling and criticism: '*Iako, malo drugačije gledaju nas koji smo se odlučili vratiti*' ('Although, they regard us who decided to come back a bit differently'). For this person, by making an active choice to come back, one stops being 'diaspora' in the eyes of some stayers, or at least one becomes less 'diasporic' and contested than before. Another interlocutor further confirmed the stigmatizing nature of the label 'diaspora', by noting:

> *Ja tu riječ dijaspora nikad nisam volio, to je kao gramatički ispravan izraz, no kod nas ta riječ ima negativan naboj. Ja koristim izraz 'naši ljudi u inostranstvu'. Kroz posao se čuje: 'kada dođu ovi dijasporci'. Zapara mi odmah uši. Odnos je OK, uvijek će biti, 'ma šta ovi iz dijaspore, oni mogu ...'. I to je uvijek svuda isto: u Sarajevu, Mostaru, Zenici, uvijek neko o nekom ima nešto reći, kao da je ... Ima te neke podjele, gdje će vazda ljudi gledati nas povratnike drugačije ...*

> I have never liked that word diaspora; it is like a grammatically correct expression, but here in our country, the word has a negative meaning. I use the expression 'our people abroad'. Through business you often hear: 'When the diaspora people come'. It immediately bothers me to hear this. The relation is, OK, it will always be there, 'don't get me started on those people from the diaspora, they can ...'. And it is always the same everywhere: in Sarajevo, Mostar, Zenica, someone always has something to say about someone else, as if it were... There is this certain division, where people will forever look at us, the returnees, differently...

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7   At the same seminar, interestingly, to illustrate the strained relationship between the 'diaspora' and the non-migrants, a panelist mentioned seeing a coffee bar in a small Bosnian town with the sign 'Dijaspori ulaz zabranjen' ('Diaspora – No entry!').

In both the first and the second example, since the topic pertains to people who left during the war in relation to people who remained in BH, both interlocutors temporarily constructed new, more layered in-groups and out-groups inside the national group of a particular 'us'. They are themselves, then, clearly in the in-group of 'us' who left, and the even smaller sub-group of 'us who returned'.

Knowing the possible stigmatization and negative associations connected with diaspora members, several of my interlocutors often made sure to stress that '*nisu svi iz dijaspore jednaki*' ('not everyone from the diaspora is the same'). People who feel the need to argue for this tend to provide evidence and examples of how the 'Scandinavian' or 'Norwegian' diaspora is not as hated and badly behaved as, for example, the Bosnian diaspora in Germany or Austria, which are reportedly often stigmatized as '*najgori*' (the worst) by the Bosnians back home. One of the roots of this stigmatization lies in the fact that these countries have a large community of pre-war migrants from former Yugoslavia, the former guest workers (*Gastarbeiter*). On many occasions, I heard that mostly *najgori* ('the worst people') migrated abroad before the war: people with the lowest qualifications, education, background, etc., while, allegedly, everyone had to leave during the war, causing a lot of the 'best people' to migrate abroad. I regularly identified such frames of reasoning in the conversations recorded in my field notes. Such claims are often connected to evidence of how the later generation of emigrants is better integrated and more successful than the migrant laborers, although the migrant laborers have been in the host society much longer. For example, one of my interlocutors claimed that the pre-war diaspora is more poorly educated than the war migrants. According to him, in those days of the good life in the old Yugoslavia, only the lowest classes of the least privileged and savvy people wanted to leave the country. These oft-repeated classist stereotypes are also one of the many ways to stress that a certain 'we' is better than a certain 'they'; in other words, this is an attempt to further divide the constructed category of diaspora into hierarchically organized sub-divisions, in order to place oneself and one's ingroup in one of the 'better' sub-groups.

In the next three sections, I explore my findings about otherness of diasporic ethnic (br)others through the three most salient clusters of topics arising from the study's insights: 1. self-othering and contextual belonging; 2. othering as a reaction to perceived privilege and arrogance and 3. othering due to perceived blame and betrayal related to leaving.

Self-othering and contextual belonging

The process of experiencing othering also includes ways in which people tend to exclude themselves due to a difference in attitudes and experiences, or as a reaction to being seen as other. For example, one of my interlocutors stat-

ed that his feelings of being foreign were triggered and heightened when he compared himself to people in Bosnia, whilst also showing how the 'diaspora' is potentially used by Bosnians in a pejorative sense:

> *...ja se osjećam, kao prvo, em, sad kad se poredim, sa Bosancima dole, znači u Bosni ljudi što žive, bez obzira koje, vjeroispovjesti, ono, Hrvati i šta znam, em, ja se osjećam više kao Norvežanin. To, iskreno rečeno, to. Znači, moj identitet, ja, kao neki [smeh], ja sam neki norveški Bosanac. Em, Bosanac koji, bo, bosanski dijasporac[8] na neki način i tako. Iako ta dijaspora ne zvuči baš pozitivno u svakom smislu [smeh].*

> I feel primarily, um, when I compare myself now, with Bosnians down there, meaning people who live in Bosnia, regardless of which religious affiliation, Croats or whatever; um I feel more like a Norwegian. To be honest. So, my identity, I am something like some kind of [laughter], I am a Norwegian Bosnian. A Bosnian who is a Bosnian diaspora man, although that, diaspora, that does not really sound all that positive in every sense [laughter].

Remembering the family's arrival to Norway and the desires and possibilities of returning home after the war, an interlocutor stated something with which many of my interlocutors and other former refugees would agree, according to many other conversations I had. She said:

> *Um, hva skal jeg si, og når vi kom til Norge det var, planen var aldri at vi skulle bli her. At vi skulle bli boende, her. Um, planen var alltid at vi skulle flytte ned, til Bosnia, og når jeg spurte foreldrene mine om, når skal vi hjem, når skal vi tilbake, de sa alltid at , vi flytter tilbake når krigen er ferdig. Og nå har det gått tjue år. Og vi flyttet aldri tilbake, fordi at, em, etter krigen så tar det, mange år, mange generasjoner før, em, på en måte bein, landet kommer på beina igjen. Og, Bosnia er et veldig spesiell tilfell for at, det handler om et etniske, em, krig, og ...ja. Så, det er veldig, politi, politikken er veldig, feil i Bosnia. Og selve systemet, ikke sant at, forskjellige etnisiteter, kaller, styr etter*

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8   This is not a usual derived noun in BCS. This interlocutor and at least one other used the term *dijasporac* during the interview, a noun that I personally have never before heard in BCS. I supposed it was either coined by the interlocutors themselves, or perhaps common only in certain social or 'diasporic' circles. Since I understood what it means (literally: 'a diasporian', a diaspora person), I did not ask the interlocutor to clarify it, in order not to offend his fluency and accuracy in using BCS. According to professor Ljiljana Šarić (personal communication), who has extensive experience in discourse analysis of BCS texts, this noun is often found on the Internet, in some casual contexts but also in newspapers.

hverandre og det er veldig lite som blir gjort, så mye pengene går på administrasjon, som er veldig synd, så….ja.

Um, what can I say, and when we came to Norway it was, the plan was never to stay here. To remain living here. Um, the plan has always been to move back, to Bosnia and, when I asked my parents about when we would go home, when we would go back, they would always say that we would move back once the war was over. And now it has been twenty years. And we never moved back, because, after war, it takes many years, many generations before, um, in a way, feet, before a land gets back on its feet. And Bosnia is a very special case because it is about ethnic um, war and … yes. So that, it is very, the politi, politics is wrong, very, in Bosnia. And the system itself, right, for different ethnic groups to attempt to run one another, and very little is being done, so much money goes on administration, which is a great shame, so that… yes.

In the quoted statement, the ethnic divisions and the political situation in the sending society are identified as the main reasons for not moving back, despite the expectations and plans that, as she recalls, her family had upon their arrival to Norway. In addition to other types of reasons, this one implicitly includes a normative assessment and an othering of the people back home as the ones perpetuating the situation preventing 'us' (the family) from coming back. 'We', in this narrow sense, is implicitly painted as the group not wishing to live in that kind of political situation, the ones who assess the circumstances as wrong and bad, and thus self-exclude from the possibility of returning. In such understanding, this narrow 'we' is positioned not only as different but also as more progressive.

In the majority of the conversations, people expressed the feeling that they did not really belong abroad where they lived, as one of the reasons for moving back to the sending society, even if they did feel integrated and socially accepted. However, many also became aware of being different and 'not really belonging' anymore in the country of origin due to various factors: being influenced by life in a different culture, feeling changed by it or, very often, due to the fact that they were assessed as 'not really Bosnian' (or not enough, or not anymore) by the people who, unlike them, remained in Bosnia and Herzegovina. One of the main factors influencing their feeling of being alienated is the fact that their belonging to the society they returned to came to be frequently contested, so that they found themselves othered and labeled

as the 'diaspora people' (another potentially loaded label) and met with generalizations, stereotyping, skepticism and criticism.[9]

Othering as a reaction to perceived privilege and arrogance

The reasons why some people experience not feeling Bosnian when in Bosnia lie, at least partially, in the complex relationship between the diaspora as an imagined collective and the people who stayed. One interlocutor felt that part of the reason for the bad image of the diaspora lies in envy (*zavist*) towards the greater economic power of the diaspora and the disproportional financial possibilities in comparison to the people 'back home'. Irritation is caused by discrepancies in financial abilities, practices and social behavior of the two constructed 'groups'. An interlocutor confirmed that '*ima ljubomore*' ('there is jealousy') on the 'domestic' side, but also that '*ima i bahatosti*' ('there is also arrogance') on the part of the diaspora. Many interlocutors conceded that such infamous 'diaspora behavior' can often be detected when the diaspora visits the homeland, particularly during the summer holidays. The interlocutors talked about this, although they themselves are the perceived and self-perceived diaspora. Of course, they report that they personally do not condone and certainly do not assume such behavior, which makes the othering more layered. As individuals, people exclude themselves from the 'diasporic' 'we' when describing this 'bad behavior'. The most often-used noun to describe the negatively evaluated behavioral pattern displayed by the visiting diaspora is *bahatost* ('arrogance'). People also use phrases with a similar meaning, such as *osiliti se* ('to became arrogant'), *ponašaju se drsko* ('they behave impertinently'), *pretvaraju se* ('they put on airs'), and *razbacuju se* ('they toss away money'). All of these expressions, found in my interviews, were used to generalize the ways in which many members of the diaspora behave during their vacations in the home country. However, the 'I', the individual speaking, is never included in the generalized bad behavior. Likewise, those defined as 'us', such as 'us from Norway', or the 'Scandinavian diaspora', are exempted from such descriptions of bad behavior and labeled as better behaved than the 'bad', 'rude' and rightfully-criticized 'them'.

The diaspora youth mentioned being ridiculed 'back home' for not speaking the language well enough. Some of my interlocutors refered to this di-

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9   I have sought to show why this division between the 'stayers' and the 'leavers' is particularly pronounced in the Bosnian case (see Kovačević Bielicki 2016). The two main explanations for this gap offered by the people consulted for that study were: 1. the fact that the people in the 'diaspora' are generally better off financially than the people who stayed, which, according to my interlocutors, causes irritation, jealousy and misunderstandings and 2. the fact that 'getting away' during the war can, in some cases, be assessed and labeled as selfish, unpatriotic, even treasonous. For more details about this particular topic, see sections of the above-mentioned work (ibid.: 293-301).

rectly and listed the occasions when they felt self-conscious about their BCS, including the cases when it was corrected, or even mocked. One interlocutor recalled what it was like to go to high school in Bosnia after finishing elementary school abroad. She spoke about feeling discriminated, ridiculed for her accent and way of speaking, as well as publicly scorned by teachers for being 'from the West'. She mentioned how a teacher had asked her to read aloud in Bosnian on her very first day in the new school. As she had just arrived in Bosnia, after many years in Norway, she read the paragraph very slowly. The teacher reportedly pointed to the whole class: '*Evo vidite. Ne zna čitati, a svi ovi sa Zapada misle da su bolji od nas*' ('There you see. She cannot read, and all of them from the West think they are better than us').

Another interlocutor criticized both what he labeled as the diaspora and the non-migrants, positioning himself partially outside of both groups, as someone who assesses their behaviour. Among the emigrants, some 'do the worst possible jobs where they live, only so they can show off down there', while *domaći* (domestic people) who 'we' as the diaspora give so much money to, 'they' think money grows on trees for us ('*Oni misle da nama novac raste na drveću*'). Interestingly, but in no way surprising, when describing negative and stigmatized practices, interlocutors refered to the diaspora as 'they'. When describing positive characteristics, progressiveness and help, the diaspora became their 'we' and they claimed to be a part of this in-group. As one of them noted:

A ne znam, isto nekad, šta ja znam, vole dijasporu sigurno kad dođe da, al dijaspora je, za jedna trećina za bruto nacionalnog proizvoda, zar nije u Bosni? Velikih je para, mi što dajemo dole da, da, To ta, ekonomija, nekako ide, oh, u krug. Ovaj, i eto, k'o vole dijasporu kad dođu, ovo ono. Al opet, ne vjerujem da su [dijaspora] na nekom dobrom glasu. I kažu: 'Ma oni, dijaspora, on ne razumije naše patnje ovdje... njemu je lako, iz X je. Tamo, pare rastu na drv, na drvećima,[10] ono, pa može da uzme kantu i pobere malo para i vrati se, kući'.

But I don't know, also, sometimes, what do I know, they like for sure for the diaspora to keep coming, yes, but the diaspora is providing one third of the gross national income, or isn't it so, in Bosnia? It is big money that we give to them down there, yes, yes. So that the economy can somehow keep on, oh, turning, like, and there you go, they supposedly like the diaspora when they come, this and that. But, then again, I doubt that they [the diaspora] have a good reputation, and they say: 'Well them, the diaspora, they do not understand our suffering here... it is easy for him. He

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10   Correct usage would be *na drveću*.

is from X.[11] Yeah. There, the money grows, on tre, trees, like, so he can grab a bucket and pick some money and go back home.

Besides the obviously interesting and ironic comment describing people's unrealistic ideas about the easy and privileged life abroad of 'picking money from trees', this quotation shows, in a striking way, how this young man, or anyone from the diaspora, is likely to be perceived when in Bosnia-Hercegovina that 'he is from X'. From that point of view and in that context, he 'comes from' abroad, as he himself notes. The fluidity of 'coming from' once again comes to the fore. Another important dimension to be considered from this statement is that the respondent, although a man from the diaspora himself, while talking about how the diaspora is perceived in a negative sense, chooses not to use 'we' but rather 'they' to refer to the diaspora. In doing so, he avoids identifying with this somewhat stigmatized term. However, when claiming that the diaspora provides a lot of money for the homeland, he uses the term we: 'we' give 'them' money. When the group is labeled as generous and positive, the interlocutor wants to be included in it.

Interestingly, in all of these various cases, the generalizing discourses can be challenged, adjusted and even dropped when people are faced with concrete individuals instead of imagined groups to which they discursively refer, and about which they generalize. As one interlocutor explained, despite the fact that she repeatedly heard how *'niko ne voli dijasporu'* ('no one likes the diaspora'), she was told many times *'Ali ne ti. To se ne odnosi na tebe'* ('But not you. That does not apply to you'). As someone who grew up abroad, this exception-making is a strategy some people use to avoid direct conflict, or to make it easier on themselves. For many people who like to consider themselves objective, fair and reasonable, it is easier to stereotype an imaginary group than a person physically standing before them (in contrast to the teacher in the earlier example who seems to have found satisfaction in directly and publicly shaming a teenager). The perceived socio-economic privilege of those from abroad is often the central reason for the othering that occurs on a more general level, as exemplified here:

> *Tako da sam osjetila, bilo je dosta priče da smo svi mi koji smo se vratili donijeli pare, kupili stanove, obezbijedili sebi poslove, bilo je tih priča... za razliku od ljudi koji su ostali tokom rata u BH. Ja mislim da je dosta bilo ljudi koji su komentarisali, 'i sada je to tako, lako je vama koji ste živjeli vani'. Ili je to ljubomora ili nezadovoljstvo, da oni imaju isto tako, ne bi tako komentarisali, teško im je.*

So that I felt, there was a lot of talk how all of us who returned brought back money, bought apartments, provided jobs for ourselves, those stories were there... in contrast to the people who

11   X here stands for the country where the interlocutor has resettled.

remained during the war in BH. I think there were a lot of people who commented, 'now it is easy, it is easy for those of you who lived abroad'. That is either jealousy or dissatisfaction. If they had the same things, they would not be commenting. It is difficult for them.

In this example, despite the fact that the interlocutor labeled all the negative discourse targeting her in-group as jealousy and dissatisfaction, she also immediately provides justification and understanding for those others who target 'us', as they do not have 'our' resources and the opportunities the in-group has. In another part of the same interview, the interlocutor offers a type of explanation for why people think and talk in such a deprecating way: in this case the fact that he believes it is a universal trait in people's nature everywhere to talk about others and create divisions, so this is but one of many such otherings.

Othering due to perceived blame and betrayal related to leaving

Not only did the experiential differences and perceived differences in 'mindset'[12] cause the relation between migrants and non-migrants 'back home' to be strained. One of the most delicate aspects of this relationship is that many war refugees experience their patriotism and belonging as contested,[13] and their right to have a say in the society as delegitimized and challenged on the basis of accusations that they 'left' and 'got away' when the country 'needed to be defended'. This is a strategy that occasionally delegitimizes migrants' opinions and contests their belonging and right to participate in the home society. One interlocutor noted how people, especially grown men who left the country during the war, come to be labeled as traitors who 'saved their own asses' ('*pokupili guzice*'),[14] in the sense that they took off. A different interlocutor also reported that such animosities exist, but feels that he personally was not targeted by such accusations because of his young age when he left. No one should find it reasonable to accuse a child of cowardice for not staying and participating in the war, even if they believe that grown-ups had the moral duty to participate and 'defend' the country. Although he was very young (eleven) when he left the country during the war, he experienced feeling 'blamed' and 'scorned':

> *Ono, šta ja znam, sve zavisi na koga naletiš! Al' ono, dosta je onoga... znaš, chatovao s nekim curama iz Bosne i, šta ja znam, davno na, preko Facebook-a ili šta je ono. Ja probam da joj kažem, onda smo, znaš, iako ... iako, to će se desiti opet ko, na*

12   This was often labeled by my interlocutors as *mentalitet* ('mentality').
13   This corresponds to the divisions of stayers versus leavers and defenders versus deserters mentioned by Halilovich (2011).
14   *Pokupiti* literally translates as 'to pick up'.

svoj način, ko što smo mogli, slali pare, za humanitarno, ovo ono. I ona meni ono, 'ja, ja, ma fino ste vi, pobjegli odavde. Znaš? Kontaš? Ono… i šta tu reć'? Ono… znači, a kad je tako, ja ono prekinem razgovor, ne da mi se! Jer ono, šta ću ja pričati, pričati, kome se ja moram pravdat? Razumiješ, nikom, bilo je tako što jest: mogao je tebe zapast ko mene, ili mogao sam ja biti u Sarajevu zatvoren. Ono. Ko ne znaš šta ti je sudbina.

Like, what do I know, it all depends on who you encounter. But like, there is a lot of that… you know, I chatted with some girls from Bosnia and, dunno, a long time ago, through Facebook or whatever. I tried to tell this one girl that we, you know, as much as we could, we sent money, for humanitarian causes or whatever. And, she says to me 'yeah, yeah, it is so nice for you, how you escaped from here.' You know. Get it? Like… and what can I say to that? Like… come on, OK, if that is how it is, I just stop that conversation, I don't feel like (going into) it. Because, like, what am I going to talk about, say, who do I have to justify myself to? Get it, to no one, it was how it was: you could have ended up having my fate, or I could have stayed trapped in Sarajevo like you were'. Like. Like you can't know what your destiny will be.

People perceived as members of the diaspora sometimes counter the negative attitudes and criticisms of people in the 'homeland' with the argument that they, the ones abroad, are the ones who are in fact the better patriots. As one interlocutor said, while in this particular context explicitly calling the sending society 'their' (not 'our') country:

Ajmo reći, u, u dijaspori ima većeg patriotizma, naprimjer mi, ljudi u dijaspori, mi volimo njihovu zemlju više nego ljudi dolje.

We might say that in, in the diaspora there is greater patriotism, for example us, we people who are in the diaspora, we love their country more than the people down there do.

On this occasion, he constructs the 'we' group as 'us abroad', in contrast to 'them' back home as the 'others' in this particular context (although, for this person, the 'they' most often means 'the Norwegians'). The interlocutor thus discursively constructs a different 'other' than the usual 'designated other' identified in his statements (the 'majority population'). This strategy can be seen as a way to emphasize the in-groups' patriotism in order to counter the blame and accusations for the lack of patriotism or even betrayal.

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Conclusions

I have considered here a form of non-ethnically situated otherness or, to be more specific, I have offered a view into an experientially framed intra-ethnic otherness of a constructed diasporic minority. The constructed difference is based on these people's experiential and/or residential difference to most of the stayers 'back home', but also on the perceived privileges, arrogance and socio-economic advantages that the leavers often have. People who can be put in the categories of the diaspora and the returnees – as two sub-categories of the group labeled here as 'leavers' – report highly similar experiences and processes of othering and self-exclusion. Both diaspora and returnee are here recognized as conditional and loaded terms. As with all problematic labels, it is not always clear where the lines between groups are drawn and whether people would self-identify with one of these labels or not.

I introduce the labels and categories discussed above as admittedly contested and non-absolute. They are used here mainly because they help explain relevant social divisions: some people stayed, some left, and yet others left and returned. They provide a useful lens for research about both the new cleavages and the new solidarities in the region. I thus introduced these labels as categories of analysis, while I do not see them as bounded and set in stone. In my view, the perceived diaspora and the returnees in one sense often feel significantly excluded from 'fully' belonging to their perceived ethnic groups 'back home' due to often being viewed as foreign, changed, privileged, and so on. In another sense, their experience of migration and otherness, both home and abroad, creates a space for building new, transnational and inter-ethnic solidarities that intersect the generalized groups of migrants and non-migrants.[15]

As pointed out at the beginning, the original interviews I used here did not in any way directly focus on the diaspora-homeland division. However, a strikingly large number of respondents pointed to this division as something they experience as important to their identification and belonging when they are physically spending time in the sending society, or when they interact with people who live there in any way. This division is exemplified specifically by the selected narratives about the experienced othering and feelings of non-belonging reported by interlocutors who are perceived as current or former members of the Bosnian diaspora.

The most interesting general findings are that both people who visit or in other ways keep in touch with the so-called homeland and those who decide to return do so in order to belong more. The ideologies of blood and belonging, prominent within and beyond Europe, condition them to believe this is the case. However, these people may find that they are othered in the original homeland in ways different than in the receiving societies. The ideologies of

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15   This is my own reflection that comes directly out of this study but could not be further explored in this article due to the limitations of space and topic.

connection to the soil revolving around the patriotic ideas of one's duty to defend the so-called homeland and remain in it when the going gets rough are part of the reason why Bosnian leavers may feel othered by the stayers. Just as they are often othered, they also other themselves and exclude themselves from perceived rightful belongingness. My long-term study with the Bosnian diaspora and the returnees has repeatedly taught me how many people who remain displaced, as well as those who attempt to return from the West, feel othered and alienated despite visiting and returning to the areas where they are perceived as co-ethnics.

Despite the existence of the perceived gap between those who left and those who stayed, it is also important here to briefly add that a number of my interlocutors seemed to agree on the fact that they still feel their belonging to be less often, or less intensively, contested 'here' than abroad, where they were migrants and non-natives. The gap is partially bridged by the fact that they returned and did not stay abroad, but, more importantly, the feeling of non-belonging was not of the same intensity as it was abroad where most of them felt foreign and marked by their names, family and origin. The othering discussed here is thus occasional and situational, not constant or all-encompassing.

Nevertheless, I argue that both research and media discourses tend to overestimate, or solely focus either on the ethnic solidarity and sameness or the opposition to an ethno-national or ethno-religious 'other'. Research thus often neglects other divisions and types of othering that people experience outside of, or within these dominant groupings. While ethno-nationality certainly is an important category around which in-group constructions happen, there are many other ways in which people construct 'us' and 'them'. These positionalities are multiple and contextual, here as much as in any other societal context.[16]

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16 In the context of any former Yugoslav country, I argue, constructed division into rural and urban inhabitants, for example, is as prominent and othering as the division explored here. This is the case with many other divisions.

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