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Teaching and Learning Urban Anthropology in Bosnia-Herzegovina

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Abstract
In the summer of 2019, two professors led seven students from Ball State University in Muncie, Indiana, in a high impact immersive learning course in urban anthropology in Bosnia-Herzegovina. They spent a week each in three different cities: the multiethnic, cosmopolitan capital of Sarajevo, the industrial and predominantly Muslim city of Zenica, and Mostar, an ethnically divided city that is also a tourist destination and home to the country's largest corporations. Professors wanted students to understand that there are multiple ways of experiencing and representing urban cultures. They led classes on multimodal ethnographic methods and stressed the importance of place in ethnography. Students were also encouraged to apply their personal and academic background and interests to each of the cities. In this paper, they outline the course, provide reflections, and make the case that establishing a uniform structure for teaching multimodal anthropological methods while allowing for flexibility and student interests in assignments will result in better learning outcomes. Finally, we explain how the course leaned into the practice of "teaching uncertainty" as featured in *Current Anthropology* (2017) and encouraged students to see the ways in which uncertainty shaped the lives of Bosnians but also students' own lives and cities.

Key words: field school, urban ethnography, Bosnia-Herzegovina, (post)industrial landscapes, uncertainty.

Introduction

When we arrived in Zenica, Bosnia-Herzegovina, on June 4, 2019, the city was eerily quiet and appeared to be deserted. No one walked the streets or sat in the cafés, not even in the city centre. We struggled to find a place to eat. The ghost-like city was an abrupt change from bustling Sarajevo where we had spent the previous week. The students had fallen in love with Sarajevo. They did not want to stay in Zenica, the city where Erickson had lived and worked in the late 1990s and early 2000s. "Why did we have to go to Zenica?" the students asked, "Why couldn't we just stay in Sarajevo?" "Be patient," Erickson told them, "It's Eid, which is akin to arriving on Christmas day in Muncie (where Ball State is located). Tomorrow will be livelier. Plus, there are things we can learn in Zenica that we can't learn in Sarajevo. Every city has unique characteristics that we can learn from." The next morning, as promised, people filled the streets of Zenica. Ramadan had ended and we attended a music concert commemorating the end of the holy month. Now we could explore Zenica's gritty streets in the shadow of the omnipresent steel factory. As Erickson's friend, Selvedin Avdić, a writer from Zenica, told the students, "The history of Zenica is the history of the steel factory." Unlike Sarajevo or Mostar, the other cities we studied for this class, Zenica was a planned industrial city, and according to Avdić, the plan worked well for several decades, until the war and break-up of Yugoslavia in the 1990s. For about a decade the plant sat dormant, its future uncertain. Then, in the early 2000s, the steel giant ArcelorMittal bought the plant. The privatisation of the plant brought with it new opportunities and new uncertainties, the kind of curious mix that globalisation brings.

This paper is about a three-week summer course that Erickson organized for Ball State University students in 2019. We spent a week in three different cities, plus day trips to natural and historic sites like the Vranduk fortress, Kravica waterfalls, and Tito's bunker, a Cold War-era nuclear bunker and military command center located near Konjic. We were fortunate that anthropologist Susan Hyatt from nearby IUPUI was able to accompany us on this trip and serve as a co-leader. In what follows, we describe activities and reflections from each city, while seeking to contribute to the literature and practice of teaching uncertainty (Harp-Rushing 2017) and the importance of place in teaching ethnography (Pipitone 2018). After three years of Trump, Erickson believed that taking students to Bosnia-Herzegovina could offer them a different lens on (ethno)nationalism, religion, gender, political violence, labour, globalization, and uncertainty, not to mention introduce them to

strong coffee, delicious food, storied architecture, striking natural beauty, and how to relax and take life one day at a time (*éejf*).

In February 2017, *Cultural Anthropology* began a series, "Teaching Uncertainty," in response to the election of Donald Trump. Our class engaged with uncertainty from the individual level (uncertainty about going to Zenica) to large-scale political uncertainty, for example, the kind produced by the Dayton Peace Accord, which ended the 1992-95 civil war in Bosnia-Herzegovina, but was never meant to be a permanent solution, yet nothing has been created to replace it. In what follows, we provide an outline of the course design and objectives and an overview of each city, including the structure that we provided in the course, followed by student reflections, which shows connections between teaching method and what students learned or experienced. Finally, in the conclusion we foreground students' reflections to highlight that, by the end of the course, students began to draw some of the same parallels as the instructors.

Course Design and Objectives

The course was an immersive study of Bosnian culture through the lens of urban anthropology. Erickson chose cities with which she was familiar and because they had different histories, ethnic and religious demographics, geographies, and political economic foundations. She coordinated with a local tourist agency to help with the logistics of lodging and in-country transportation. The primary course objective was to acquaint students with the personal, practical, and analytical dynamics of the research process through experiential opportunities. Most students were from Indiana. Some had had travel experience abroad: Zhou is from China and had travelled to different parts of Asia in addition to the United States; Akiti's parents are from Northern Macedonia, and he went there during summers; Ibarra had visited Mexico; and Cromer had travelled abroad on her own to Asia and other parts of Europe. They were politically progressive though some were more interested in formal politics than others. Two of the students (Mullins and Zhou) were master's students in urban planning, but Mullins had an undergraduate degree in anthropology; Keck was a master's student in anthropology, Akiti was a religious studies major and anthropology minor, and the rest (Cheng, Cromer, and Ibarra) were undergraduate anthropology students.

The course provided a general history of the region as a crossroads between East and West, the site of 20th century wars, the most recent from 1992-95, information about each city, and readings on ethnographic methods. Each morning, we met for breakfast to discuss readings and observations from the previous day, and then talked about the day's assignments. We met with guest speakers, visited organizations, went on walking tours or on field trips out of the city. We wanted our pedagogy to facilitate ways of knowing and learning together differently, for example, by drawing scenes or recording and listening to street life, rather than describing them only textually. Following Dattatreyan and Marrero-Guillamón (2019), we view multimodal anthropology as "an anthropology yet to come: multi-sensorial rather than text-based, performative rather than representational, and inventive rather than descriptive." One day, for example, we asked students to focus on the sounds of the city, such as the Muslim call to prayer or Catholic church bells; other days students were asked to sketch or map the parts of the city they explored; on other days, students focused on texture, smell, or taste. Students used their phones, sketch pads, and notebooks to record feelings, observations, and events. Sparrow Cheng's drawings in this article represent just part of this multimodality.

Hyatt and Erickson were somewhat concerned about the students' lack of the local language skills in understanding the region more broadly. Akiti was fluent in a related language, Macedonian, as well as Albanian, and could therefore communicate with local populations. Nevertheless, other students found opportunities for conversation with young Bosnians, many of whom had proficiency in English, or they relied on their powers of observation and Google Translate to develop insights on local activities. For example, because fewer young people in Zenica spoke English fluently, one evening our students communicated with Bosnians in a bar primarily using Google Translate. Erickson and Hyatt were genuinely impressed with students' creativity, engagement, interpretation, and assessments as we assessed their data, analysis, and reflections in the "city assignments" they submitted at the end of each week. The assignments allowed students to focus on what interested them most; for example, Akiti focused on religious diversity, Keck on political economy, Zhou and Mullins on the built environment, Cromer and Ibarra on gender and ethnonationalism, and Cheng on art. At the end of the course, they analysed similarities and differences across the three cities in their chosen area.

In what follows, Hyatt and Erickson provide an overview of the cities alongside students' reflections. Thus, while students received the same information, how they used that information, how they experienced the city, and how they interacted with local populations varied.

Sarajevo

Sarajevo, the capital city of Bosnia-Herzegovina, has experienced multiple empires and wars over the last centuries, from the Ottomans to the Austro-Hungarians, both world wars and the 1992-95 civil war, among others. The history is evident in the built environment, ethnic and religious identities, food, and music. Of course, Sarajevo is also a contemporary city facing similar dilemmas as other modern cities. For example, it is a site of international migration in and out of the city, and its residents deal with crime, employment challenges, pollution, educational, political, and cultural opportunities, and disagreements. To learn more about the nongovernmental sector in Bosnia, we visited the CURE Foundation, which is a feminist-activist organization that works for gender equality. To learn more about the war and political context, we met with a former President of the Party for Democratic Action (Stranka demokratske akcije or simply SDA) Banja Luka and Ambassador to the United States, Professor Muharem Krzić. We visited sites of the 1984 winter Olympics in Sarajevo, including the crumbling and graffitied bobsled track (Figure 1), which at the height of the 1992-95 war became a site for Serbian snipers, and the War Tunnel Museum, which shows the ingenuity of the people living in besieged Sarajevo during the war who managed to make a tunnel as the only connection with the outside world for two and half years. Adding to the cultural experience of the course is that we arrived in Sarajevo during Ramadan. Students observed this history and contemporary context in different ways as outlined in the following student reflections.

Figure 1: The nine of us on the bobsled track at the site of the 1984 Winter Olympics in Sarajevo. From left to right: Sparrow Cheng, Lanyang Zhou, Jennifer Erickson, Susan Hyatt, Alex Ibarra, Kiera Cromer, Kiya Mullins, Jordan Keck, and Mendim Akiti.

Keck

Often, we found ourselves engaging with groups celebrating events related to Ramadan and we could not help but notice how the city burst with activity following the time practitioners would break their fast for the day. I remember clearly how the cannons signalling the end of the fasting period would echo against the hills and walls of the city buildings. One evening, the restaurants of the city were full to the brim. Mendim and I had ventured out together to have our evening meal, but every place we stopped at was full. One man kindly pulled us to the side and informed us that we were very unlikely to find *anything* during such a busy time and explained the context of the holiday (even though Mendim, as an adherent, was aware). We turned then to an option that most adventurous Americans traveling outside of the US would likely avoid: McDonald's. Mendim and I stood in line, watched and listened. Mendim observed that a young girl was posting to social media remarking on how amusing it was to her that she was eating at McDonald's as her Iftar meal. We ate and reflected on how it tasted *different*

than how we remembered it from the US and our youths; but more importantly how this international brand and dining experience was defined by this unique cultural context.

Ibarra

In Sarajevo, I found that I had a natural ability to interact with both locals and tourists. This allowed me to collect data via interviews throughout each city. When discussing Ramadan with one interviewee, he stated, "[It] builds perceived unity within people. They all sit and wait, basically congratulating each other, even random people. Though I am not Muslim myself, it is a magical moment that I even participated in [regardless of not fasting]" (Benjamin Popov 2019).

Cromer

My experience in Sarajevo was unique in the fact that I arrived before anyone else and took it upon myself to explore the depths of the city alone. This provided a chance to soak in my first impressions without the bustle of other Americans by my side. I felt that I fit in. I did not notice any stares. I watched people walking by on their daily commutes. Everyone looked so serious, so clean. Once the other students arrived, it felt as though we always attracted the stares of others, which makes sense. Nevertheless, I grew confident in talking with the local population. Most of my inferences about Bosnian life came from the local population through interviews. I wanted to understand their life through their own words. I found that many of the students who attended university in Sarajevo spoke English well. It was during my time in Sarajevo that I found the importance of allowing my ethnography to evolve with the discussions being expressed by the locals, rather than my personal interests and desires. My original topic – what it was like to be a woman in Bosnia today – was shut down rather quickly. Many of the locals (at least, around my age who spoke English) could not understand why I wanted to discuss this topic. A great example of this is shown through Benjamin Popov when he expressed sentiments such as, "The issue with Bosnia is political instability," and he clarified that, "this instability is rooted in poor politics and ethnonationalism." And thus, my journey of ethnography began with the topic of ethnonationalism and post-war trauma.

Akiti

Sarajevo is the "Little Jerusalem" of the world because Judaism has lived side by side with Christianity and Islam. The Ottoman empire allowed for religious pluralism which can be seen throughout the city, whether it is through architecture or culture, resulting in "a city of four faiths" (Markowitz 17). There was a concern and an emphasis on the betterment of society, and we can see this legacy mostly through the building of public water fountains that are used by everyone to this day. Various religious communities still exist and function within Sarajevo, with a differing number of adherents, but nevertheless living together and practicing their religion freely. However, one must ask whether this religious tolerance is really practiced and embraced by those living in the city. Throughout my time there, the only inter-religious mingling I saw appeared to be tourists visiting either a specific religious museum or place of worship.

Zhou

I observed that Sarajevo preserved its historic Ottoman character in the Old Town, and catered to tourists, but that it also served residents. The successful transformation to a modern, mixed-use space was more successful in Sarajevo than in the other two cities we visited. The function of the old town in Sarajevo is diverse. It includes shops, restaurants, mosques, cathedrals, squares, and parks that welcome citizens and visitors to the city. The bullet holes on the buildings reminded citizens of the shared memory. The unforgettable memories made the Old Town an important place for the locals to claim their identity.

Zhou also interviewed Chinese immigrants, who had established businesses in Sarajevo, though she chose to only write about the built environment.

Cheng

In my study (Figure 2), I used art as a lens to capture the unique cultural nuances of the cities. In my drawing titled 'The Gossips,' I depicted the landscape from an outdoor cafe in Sarajevo's historic Baščaršija. The image portrays treetops and minarets rising from shop rooftops and street canopies celebrating the end of Ramadan, and lastly, the mountains blanketed by thousands of houses. These houses, known locally as "the Gossips," were built off-the-grid and symbolize a close-knit community where everyone knows everyone. Through this artwork, I aimed to highlight the blend of tradition, community, and resilience inherent in Sarajevo's urban fabric.

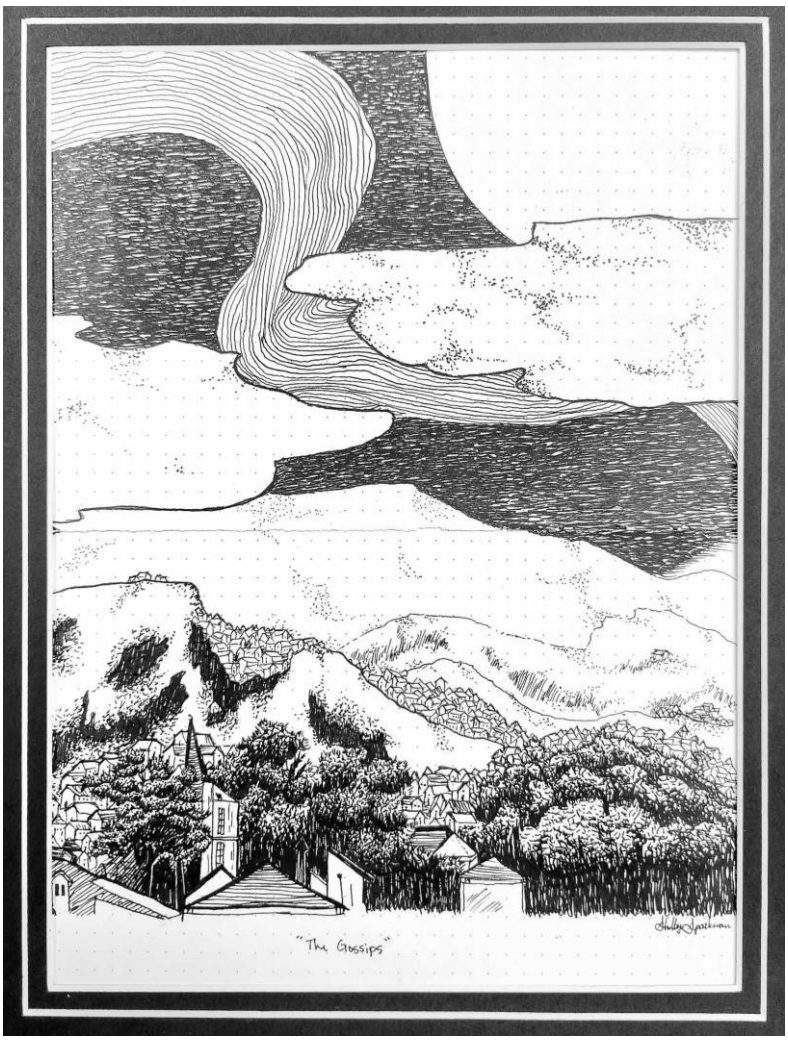

Figure 2: "The Gossips" a drawing in Sarajevo by Sparrow Cheng.

Zenica (Erickson and Hyatt)

As mentioned in the introduction, we arrived in Zenica, the fourth largest city in Bosnia, on Eid al-Fitr, making our entrance into the industrial city unusual. Over the last 25 years I had grown accustomed to Bosnians, especially those from Sarajevo, asking me, "Why go to Zenica [an industrial, decidedly not tourist city]?" The tourist agency we worked with said they could drive us to Zenica but did not view it as a city worth visiting. I called on my friend, writer Selvedin Avdić and life-long Zenica resident, for help. He began his talk by telling students that they needed to know three things about him: 1) he loved punk rock, 2) he was a communist, and 3) his father was a steel worker. He talked about his book *Moja Fabrika (My Factory*) and explained that the history of Zenica was the history of the steel factory. Zenica was a planned city designed not only as a site for the steel factory, but as a home for workers and their families, a space for culture and socializing with theatres, libraries, museums, schools, and a thriving city centre. In 2004, a Kuwaiti businessman bought the old factory for $1 from the government under the auspices that he would manage the factory as the economic and sociocultural anchor it had always been. Instead, he sold the factory to Mittal, an enterprise whose orientation was neoliberal in contrast to an earlier, more paternalistic corporate style.

Students heard stories about how life in Zenica had changed once the steel mill no longer managed multiple aspects of life in Zenica. They heard such stories from Avdić but also from young people they met in bars, as well as from professors we met at the University of Zenica. We encouraged students to think about the ways in which neoliberalism, or globalisation, and uncertainty had impacted their own cities in order to drive home the significance of Bosnia's steel town. We discovered that ArcelorMittal operates a steel mill in Burns Harbor, Indiana. In both places, residents have protested or sued the company for pollution and violating environmental regulations (Bowman 2019, Geoghegan and Ahmetasevic 2017; Jukic 2012). It did not take students long to see the stark contrasts between Sarajevo and Zenica.

We believe that examining an "ordinary city" (Robinson 2006) is important for students studying abroad. An "ordinary cities approach," to urban studies, according to Jennifer Robinson (2006), does not hold conventional labels like 'global' and 'world' cities as an unmarked category against which all other forms of urbanity are measured and ranked. Instead, she writes:

> All cities are best understood as 'ordinary'. Rather than categorizing and labelling cities, as for example, Western, Third World, developed, developing, world or global, I propose that we think about a world of ordinary cities, which are all dynamic and diverse, if conflicted, arenas for social and economic life…an ordinary-city approach takes the world of cities as its starting point and attends to the diversity and complexity of all cities (2006, 1).

Most cities around the world are not tourist cities and most students at Ball State do not live in tourist cities, thus "ordinary cities" provide an interesting contrast to cities such as Mostar or Sarajevo, London or Toyoko. Professors might feel a pressure in study abroad classes to showcase the "best" (read tourist) parts of a foreign country to facilitate excitement for new cultures. But providing a contrast between more and less conventionally desirable places allows to students to obtain a wider range of urban experiences and perspectives. Robinson argues that urban theorists should work against privileging some cities above others in hierarchy of "cityness" and instead draw "inspiration from a much wider range of urban contexts" (Robinson 2006, 112).

In many respects, although it is not nearly as picturesque as Sarajevo or Mostar, Zenica offered us the most opportunities to point out how the social and material landscapes produced by post-World War II industrialization, and later obliterated by subsequent processes of deindustrialization a short 40 years or so later, had their parallels in many cities around the world. Our visit to Zenica was a dramatic illustration of how, just as the loss of steel and other heavy industries in the US (including in northern Indiana) had destabilized the post-World War II accord between labour and capitalism, the privatisation of the state-owned steel mill in Zenica was part and parcel of the transformation of Bosnia from the unique self-management version of socialism that had characterized Yugoslavia before its dissolution into a particularly socially and economically devastating from of what Likić-Beborić *et al.* (2013, 34) describe as "wild capitalism … a process of degradation of values and institutions of social solidarity…" Avdić's designation of Zenica Steel as "our factory" was a poignant evocation of a time when, "As well as being the town's main provider, Zenica steel was also the main contributor to the socio-economic development of the municipality" (Likić-Brborić *et al.* 2013, 41). Once the factory was privatised, it had ceased to be "ours" in any emotive or material sense. Students could relate to this loss based on their own experiences in many of Indiana's towns and cities, characterized similarly by shuttered plants and disinvestment.

Figure 3: Downtown Zenica. Sparrow Cheng, Lanyang Zhou, Mendim Akiti, Kiera Cromer, Alejandra Ibarra, Kiya Mullins, Susan Hyatt, and Jordan Keck. Photo by Jennifer Erickson.

Zhou and Mullins

Walking around from where we lived on the day we arrived, I felt the city was boring. In contrast to Sarajevo and Mostar, Zenica did not cater to tourists at all. It was hard to find a space that was impressive, no matter if it was well-designed or poorly organized. It has every function that helps keep the city running orderly, but it was a simple design and plan. However, as we learned more about its past, which explained the design of spaces and the way people used them, the city became more interesting in the following days. Mullins added, "It seems like a place with an ugly shell but a good inside with good people. . .The future could be dark if there isn't change soon. But the same thing could be said for our university town which is trying to change its identity from a factory town to an educational town."

Cromer

The city of Zenica was crying with rain when we arrived. I remember the loud crack of thunder as it echoed off the mountains. Being in an industrial mountain town, it felt like a sad movie, and I don't like sad movies. Yet Zenica was so much deeper than its initial sombre face. Because of Eid, there were many locals in Zenica around my university age. Many of these locals came from Germany to visit their family for the holiday. Others had not yet found a way to leave. And I say "yet" because that was such a common sentiment among the younger population. That it is the dream to leave Zenica, and Bosnia altogether. Being my outgoing self, I was most excited for the opportunity to get to know more locals. At a local bar called Gato, I met a group of friends who spoke English relatively well. These folks would end up becoming what I would consider to be lifelong friends, some of which still message me happy birthday each year. They were truly some of the kindest and most caring individuals who I have ever met, and I will always be grateful for my time in Zenica. The people who were long forgotten by the steel industry are the same ones who made Zenica an unforgettable city to visit. One of my most prominent memories was one early morning. My new friend, Emir, and I, met up at 5am. From there, I blindly trusted this newfound acquaintance to lead a hike with me, where he took me to a local lookout spot. When we got there, the sun rose, exposing the smog-covered mountains. He was so proud of the beauty. I sat there in a moment of gratitude and familiarity. Americans are not immune to smog. It's a piece of home. It is beautiful. This city is home.

Keck

The day we arrived in Zenica was grey and wet. Arriving on a holiday also meant that the city was quiet, and many businesses were closed. In short, the day we arrived, Zenica was unwelcoming and had an almost *hostile* sense to it. I recall this now with some amusement, because the following week proved this initial impression false. Warnings and rainy welcomes proved to be poor indicators of how our time in Zenica would play out. I recall a sense of familiarity more than anything else. I grew up in Anderson, Indiana, another post-factory town, and the two cities are well suited for comparison. The people who live there shared a sense of "only *I* can hate my town" while being *fully* aware that the city has seen better days since being abandoned by the industries that built them up. One conversation at a Zenica bar made this very clear. A group of twenty-somethings we began talking with wanted to know why we had come to Zenica when they wanted so desperately to leave and emigrate to Germany, if they could. We told them it was much the same where we were from. That shared context was a defining lens through which I understood Zenica.

Ibarra

Echoing Keck, it is true that Zenica offered a sombre introduction. A worn-down old town instilled slim expectations of excitement compared to the vitality of Sarajevo. It was difficult to tell whether the umbrella of fog we travelled under was due to the dark weather or pollution. There was this dreary feeling that loomed over my first impression. I remember feeling small, then intimidated, when meeting the older man who was the custodian at the hostel. This guise of unfriendliness made it difficult to anticipate the love I would develop for Zenica in the coming days. The charm of Zenica was hidden within the mundane. What eventually revealed itself to be my fondest takeaway during our stay here was this theme of *the commonality of humanity,* where basic experiences and aspirations serve as integral parts of life that can occur cross-culturally. This was independently showcased through separate instances I was lucky to be a part of. The first instance had to do with the hostel caretaker I was initially put off by. I had the worst case of insomnia while the group was in Zenica. When I couldn't sleep, I would visit the common spaces of the hostel, where the caretaker kept watch every night. Upon reflection, I recognized a sociological phenomenon occurring between me and him. The propinquity effect is when people develop a personal relationship after seeing each other repeatedly. Each time I entered the room, I would lock eyes with the caretaker, smile, wave, and find a spot to be in my thoughts. We would sit in silence together. When I was ready to go to bed, I would repeat smiling and waving, then leave. Without realizing it, this nightly routine we had established was creating an impression on this man, who spoke no English at all. Within

two days, he was smiling back at me and waving himself. Within four days, he was non-verbally communicating with me, pointing at his fried fish and offering to share a meal. It was a peaceful friendship that we had established, solely through sitting in each other's presence.

Since we left Zenica, I have also maintained one connection throughout these past years: my friend Adi. Zenica is Adi's hometown, and we met during one of my first evening excursions in the area. Adi spoke English extremely well and was one of my main interviewees in Zenica, introducing me to other friends and locations in efforts to expand my understanding of the local's perspective of home.

Cheng

In my piece titled "Zenica's Treasure," I illustrated a landscape on the outskirts of Zenica, a city with a post-industrial identity deeply rooted in its factories. The drawing shows a mix of abandoned and operational factories, with an overgrown factory labelled 'Treasure' in the foreground. The mountains in the distance contrast with the thick smoke rising from the smokestacks, symbolising the complex, co-dependent relationship between the city's population and its industrial roots. This piece reflects the irony and sorrow I felt about Zenica's situation.

The hostel caretaker with whom Ibarra interacted also regularly stopped to view Cheng's progress on a drawing of steel factory that they began after walking the perimeter of the factory (Figure 4). The caretaker nodded and smiled in support of each day's progress, until the last day when Cheng added the dark, billowing smoke emerging from the factory's smokestacks. On that day, he scoffed and walked away as if to say that the factory produced more than just pollution, for example, it also provided jobs and more economic security than when it lay dormant.

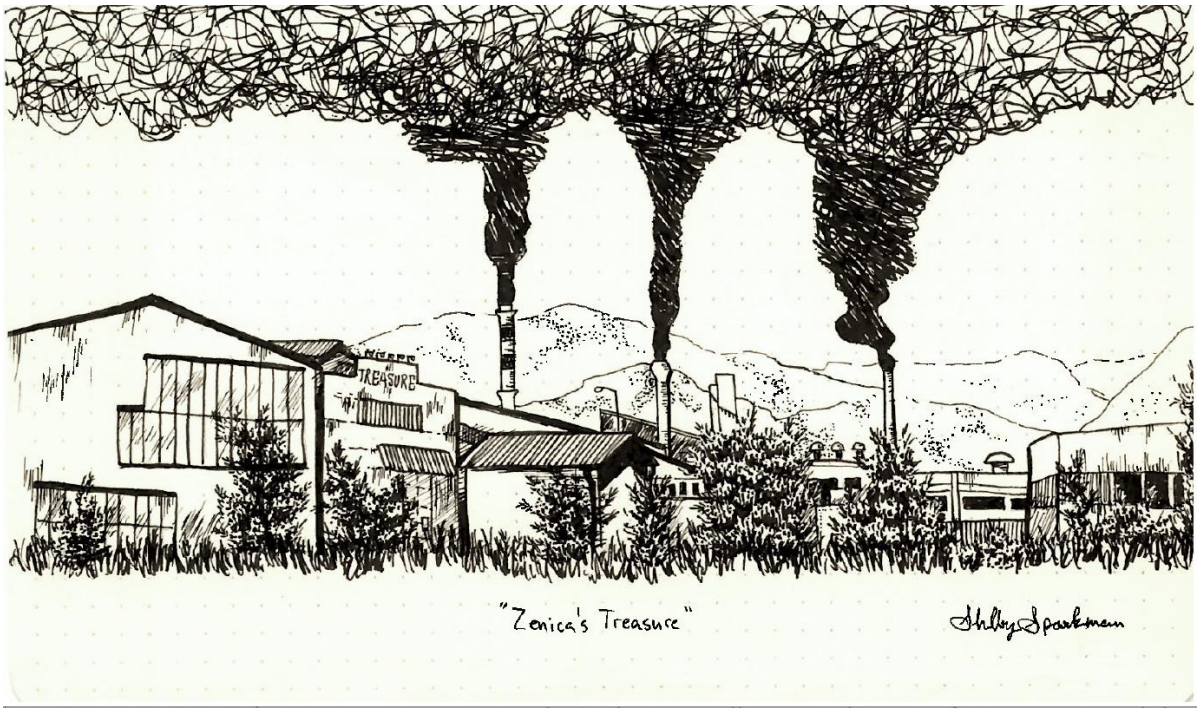

Figure 4: "Zenica's Treasure" by Sparrow Cheng

Akiti

Akiti's identity as a practicing Muslim shaped his experience in Zenica in different ways than the other students. His city assignment focused more on differences between Bosnian and Macedonian ways of celebrating Eid rather than on the city of Zenica. He writes, "On June 4th, I woke up at 5 a.m. and prepared myself for the Eid prayer. I came out of the hostel around 6:15 a.m. only to find the local mosque completely empty. I was confused because I saw people dressed nicely walking around town, sitting in cafes, and entering apartment buildings with what seemed to be gifts in plastic bags. I realised later that Muslims in Bosnia and Herzegovina pray Eid right after Fajr, the first prayer of the day. It is not done this way in Macedonia." In the evening, the whole class attended a choir concert to commemorate the end of Ramadan because it was important to all of us to see how Bosnians celebrated this holiday, and we wanted to support Akiti.

Mostar (Erickson and Hyatt)

Our final city before returning to Sarajevo was Mostar, the sixth largest city in the county and largest city in the region of Herzegovina. Founded during the Ottoman Empire, Mostar was named for the bridge watchers (*mostari*) who lived in towers on opposite sides of the Neretva River. The Old Bridge (*Stari Most*) was built in 1557. Mostar has long been a tourist destination due to its subtropical climate, proximity to the Adriatic Sea, and the Old Bridge, which was destroyed in 1993 during the war and rebuilt in 2004. Though we were eager to leave the cool, rainy, industrial climate of Zenica to explore the more touristy city of Mostar, we were not prepared for stifling hot, humid weather, or the overpowering smell of garbage.

We received a walking tour of Mostar by a French anthropologist who explained that the lack of garbage service and commitment to maintaining infrastructure in the city was political. While there are plenty of trash collection companies, they could not agree on their region of responsibility (Hopkins 2021). We noticed the pronounced differences between East and West Mostar as the Bosnian Muslim [Bosniak] side preserved the Ottoman architecture and historical character whereas West Mostar, the Bosnian Croatian side, was more modern and developed. We visited OKC Abrašević, an organisation consisting of a coffee shop, youth centre, music venue, and centre for art. Vlado, the director, explained the ethnonational and political divides and characterised OKC Abrašević as a space of cooperation and reconciliation that challenged and was challenged by Bosnia's "mafia state." We also visited Bogdan Bogdanovic's Partizan Cemetery, built in 1965 as a tribute to Partisan fighters who died during World War II fighting fascism. The monument is a series of terraces cut into a hill slope with stones commemorating the fighters and which offers a stunning view of the city. It had been deteriorating since the 1992-95 war, with overgrown grass, graffiti, and smashed beer bottles, used by individuals to critique the past and promote nationalism through petty gestures (Figure 5).

Figure 5: Bogdanovic's Partizan Cemetery. Photo by Jennifer Erickson.

Another poignant site we visited was Liska Park, which was transformed into a cemetery in 1992, as the Yugoslav People's Army and other factions bombed Mostar, resulting in multiple casualties. Both Bosniak and Croatian victims were buried together in the makeshift burial ground. After the war, despite the hope that Liska Cemetery would fall into a "neutral" zone in the city, making it accessible to all communities, it ultimately fell under the auspices of the western, Croat-majority part of the city. On the holiday of Eid, in 1997, two years after the war had officially ended and when Bosniaks traditionally go to visit their dead, mourners visiting family gravesites in Liska were attacked by Croatian Special Forces, sustaining multiple injuries and one fatality. Because of its multi-ethnic character as a burial ground, an unusual occurrence in contemporary Bosnia (as well as elsewhere in the countries that once made up the former Yugoslavia), Liska Cemetery has fallen into something of a state of disrepair as no official authority has taken responsibility for its maintenance. Our visit to Liska was a

dramatic illustration of how the ethnic enmities that were inflamed and stoked by the war of the 1990s continue to shape everyday life in Mostar, despite its relative success as a seemingly peaceful and picturesque tourist destination.

Cromer

Mostar stuck out to me rather quickly as one of the most prominent symbols of ethnonationalism in the country. These lines were drawn with political funding, graffiti, and war destruction. Rows of bombed out buildings collapsing in on themselves. Across the street? A beautifully repaired (and foreign funded) "Croat" governmental building. A repeated event it seems as I walked among the city streets. Ethnonationalism can be a trickster, and its ways are not always so obvious. Take this experience we faced in Mostar as an example of covert ethnonationalism:

> It's a Sunday and you need to run to the pharmacy to get some medicine. You venture over to a coffee shop on the more "Croat" side of the city and ask for assistance finding one. You're consistently informed there are none open because it's Sunday. You continue to venture through the streets when all the sudden you locate a pharmacy open and fully stocked! Turns out, there is the "Bosniak" side. Those on one side of these spoken ethno-lines refuse to even acknowledge the existence of the other side. Other businesses who deserve the customers all the same. I often had conversations with people in Mostar who would only acknowledge themselves as "Croatian," completely denying their Bosnian ties regardless of living on Bosnian soil. It was blatant. It felt dark. The brightest and hottest city we visited, and yet it was shrouded in darkness.

Zhou

After experiencing "boring" Zenica, I was excited to be in Mostar. As the van drove near the Old Bridge, the most famous landmark of the city, I was happy to be back in a tourist area. For the first two days, I played a good role as a tourist, walking in the old town and enjoying the service, the beautiful landscape, and the goods specially provided for tourists. However, after I learned more about the city, I no longer enjoyed being a tourist. Later, we learned about the Mepas Mall, which was an ordinary mall that was designed like malls in other cities. The world-famous brands, restaurants, coffee shops, and free air conditioning provided opportunities for people to interact positively and passively. The shopping mall brought people beyond the local context, creating a consumer atmosphere that made people focus on their temporary identities as buyers and sellers and omit the bias of their different ethnic identities.

Akiti

One interesting observation I found was that most of the mosques on the Croatian side are either museums or non-functional. While I was sitting down for the afternoon prayer, I heard the call to prayer being called on the Bosnian side while the mosque I was right next to remained both empty and quiet. I was wondering how Muslims negotiated the use of mosques after the war and what kind of settlement was reached. I could also see large metal crosses on the peak of a couple of mountains overlooking the city and could be seen by many within the city, adding to the impression that Muslims might not feel entirely comfortable and welcomed within the city. I was also taken quite aback by the mention that the only two days OKC Abrašević closed was on May 1st (International Labor Day) and Christmas day. I wondered why it would not be closed on Eid. It did seek to reconcile the two sides of the city, however not including a major Muslim holiday while including a Christian one was quite odd and might point toward their preferred audience. When Erickson asked the French anthropologist what she thought about this practice, she made disparaging remarks about the nature of devotion that local Muslims had and showed that she had not studied religion.

Ibarra

After Zenica's cool dampness, Mostar's air felt like a blow dryer to the face. . . After adjusting to the climate, the next thing to observe was the foul odour that wafted through the air. More than one colleague noticed that Mostar smelled the worst of any city visited . . . A redeeming quality about this location was the amount of creative expression that was apparent throughout its streets. Mostar had more street art on its buildings than both Zenica and Sarajevo combined. This is partly because of a local youth group's revitalising effort for Mostar.

Figure 6: "U inat šaram" [in spite of charm]. Photo by Jennifer Erickson.

Conclusion: Plans and Place in Uncertain Futures

Erickson

Bosnia is no more politically stable than it was when I first moved there in 1998. The Dayton Peace Accord which established a post-war constitution for Bosnia-Herzegovina was never meant to be a lasting solution, but it remains the official political seam holding the country together. Additionally, authoritarianism and fascism are on the rise in Bosnia-Herzegovina and elsewhere. On March 30, 2022, US Secretary of State Blinken compared Bosnian Serb leader Milorad Dodik to Putin. Prestigious news outlets refer to Ukraine as "Europe's first ground war since World War II," neglecting the 1992-95 Bosnian war that had been widely broadcast on television screens around the world, or perhaps they decided that Bosnia-Herzegovina is not part of Europe after all (Hajdarpašić 2022). In short, Bosnians continue to face uncertain futures.

The turn to uncertain futures is not a new concept for minoritised groups in the United States, of course. Anthropologists Bonilla and Rosa (2017) argue that while many people were surprised by Trump's win, even arguing that his political strategies were a break from otherwise "postracial" democratic ideals or a harkening to a dark but distant past, in fact Trumpism was not new, but instead a variation on the United States' long and ongoing history of violence and discrimination against indigenous, racialised, and sexualised populations, a history of uncertain futures. In different ways, Bosnia-Herzegovina has much to teach the world about nationalism, authoritarianism, globalisation, and uncertainty, but also about collaboration and the ongoingness of ordinary, everyday life, despite everything (Berlant 2022). By taking students there, we pass along this knowledge in hopes of transforming uncertain futures into alternative futures through anthropology. In a film that visual anthropologist Lana Askari made in Kurdistan, another war-torn, relatively forgotten region, she says, "History made us so we can make the future. You have to look towards the future, have alternatives, so that when something goes down, you don't go down too, you escape" (Askari 2021).

In closing, we provide reflections on what students took away from the course and in so doing we highlight parallels in what we stressed through course content, for example, transitions via war from communism to capitalism, ethnonationalism and its ties to religion and gender, and what the students took away through their own personal lenses.

Akiti

Overall, my experience in Bosnia and Herzegovina was both informative and fascinating. I see a country going through different transformations, which include religion. However, what I found odd was how religion was framed. One's nationality is tied to religion [...] which was frustrating in many respects. I hope the future of the

religious community is researched and adds to a trend of interdisciplinary studies that is vital to understand the complexity of the country. We cannot be dismissive of religion's role because we might end up missing a vital piece of knowledge.

Cromer

The biggest culture shock I faced was upon my return home from Bosnia. It was as if all the ethnonationalist themes I picked up on, heard, wrote about, saw in BiH were on display right here in my home country. I could no longer view patriotism as some beautiful thing to strive toward. It is nationalism dressed up as something else, a mask to the underlying tones of fascism that was growing in the United States. It was scary. Hearing how much the local population in Bosnia was afraid of another proxy war, how much influence the older generation had on perpetuating ethno-nationalism themes, and how much the younger generation wanted out---it felt akin to the violence being spewed out of Fox News and the common sentiment among my generation to just flee the U.S. and move to Canada. Canada was our Germany in a sense. To this day I continue to make the connections between patriotism and fascism in the United States based on my knowledge, research, and experience in Bosnia. Once you see it, you cannot unsee it. And perhaps, you should not try to unsee it. Ignorance is not bliss under fascism. Ignorance is just ignorance.

Keck

I analysed my experiences through a political economic lens, noting that political and economic anxieties were framed differently depending on the individual's political memory and how they contextualised the present, but they were always framed in connection with the war. I was surprised by the belief of some that their salvation rested in capitalism, a system I saw affect the decline of American cities I was familiar with, and I do not believe capitalism will be any more promising in this context.

Mullins

It's funny how I came to the country thinking that nationalism is the problem going on in the country since it was the cause of the war of Yugoslavia but instead it's the unreliable leaders of the country that have corrupted the system to get money for themselves instead of focusing on the needs of their people. Being here has helped me understand that even the most beautiful countries can have so many issues that are causing problems for the people that live there every day. It has shown me. . . that everyone, even people like me, need to do their part to make sure that the people are not left behind in the political antics of people in power. I have really loved this experience and meeting the people of this trip; so many are passionate about their roles in their cities today and I need to remember that I [too] can make a difference if I find my passion.

Zhou

These three cities are different from each other, but one thing is the same across all three: people are leaving to make a living. People we spoke with were not optimistic about the political situation or economic future of this country. Based on what I heard, I would think people are living in a desperate situation, but based on what I saw, I would not say it felt like a terrible situation. There were always so many people in the coffee shops who seemed to be enjoying their time. These everyday interactions gave me a positive impression of the cities, but actually they are still in the process of healing a wound in their country. It does appear that there are lots of investments from other countries to help Bosnia and Herzegovina to develop. New development will create new urban spaces, which may help the country move beyond its past, but will also likely bring with it new problems.

Ibarra

Sarajevo, Zenica, and Mostar have apparent and concealed attributes and hindrances, including both cooperation and division. Sarajevo is a successful tourist destination that brings income to the capital but is not free of divisive attitudes. Zenica is on a separate level then the other cities due to its deteriorating economic stability, yet the locals still find time to catch up and reinforce their social bonds with their friends and family. The cooperation organised and executed by OKC Abrešević successfully reignited a philosophy of looking past identities, yet the town of Mostar is still affected by powerful structural forces attempts to keep things divided and therefore stagnant. I cannot say I like one city over the other, I would rather be appreciative of what exploring each city offered me. Aside from having fun while I took in all the new experiences, this was overall a life-changing opportunity to briefly get an understanding of how another part of the world processes and adjusts through historic and present post-war struggles throughout time and space.

Hyatt

Although we have both taken students to do coursework in community settings, the trip to Bosnia in 2019 was the first time we had worked with students outside of the United States. Much recent writing on American study abroad programs has focused on the challenges of addressing exoticisation and otherisation among students, many of whom are having their first experiences in contexts outside of the USA. One strategy to address this challenge, proposed by Pipitone (2018), is to focus on *place*. As she (2018, 59) writes, "My conceptualization of place…conceptualizes place as landscapes full of sociocultural and historical meanings, to be engaged with, not as empty spaces to be colonized." We found that the students were predisposed to engage with place in the three cities we visited in Bosnia, both with respect to their present-day incarnations but also in terms of their complex histories which were impossible for us to evade. A sign outside of a museum in Sarajevo, for example, devoted to documenting the horrific massacre of 8,000 Bosnian men and boys in 1995 in the Bosnian town of Srebrenica, reads: "The Place that Ended the 20th Century." The "ethnic cleansing" that occurred during the war in Bosnia was often commemorated as the final genocide in what had been a genocidal century.

It was in Sarajevo that students experienced both the beauty and the challenges of life in a multicultural city. We visited a mosque, a church and a synagogue in the course of our stay there. Despite the horrors of the recent war, it was in Sarajevo where the ideals of the earlier Yugoslav state, once heralded in the slogan, "bratstvo i jedinstvo" (brotherhood and unity) seemed to have best survived, albeit in a somewhat subdued way. In Zenica, we experienced a city that is overwhelmingly made up of Bosniaks (Bosnian Muslims) but in which the shadow of the steel factory looms over both the past and present. The stories of "our factory" threw into sharp relief the nature of life as it had been lived under the regimes of Yugoslav Socialist self-management, in contrast to its present-day embodiment of "wild capitalism," with its attendant uncertainties and economic precarity. And, although material evidence of the war was evident in all of the cities we visited, it was in Mostar where the divisions between Bosniaks and Croats were most harshly highlighted, both socially and in the very lay-out of the city.

In Bosnia, it was definitely *place* that engaged and informed the students about the persistence of history, in both its beauty and its horrors. We saw evidence of nostalgia for the era when Bosnia was part of a larger Yugoslavia under Tito. Little purses and t-shirts sold in many of the markets we visited read, "Josip Broz, Dobar Skroz" ("Josip Broz (Tito), completely good"). And, we also saw the persistence of nationalism, as when we visited the Serb Autonomous Region on the outskirts of Sarajevo, an administrative unit whose residents are loyal to the Republic of Serbia, rather than Bosnia, despite their geographical location.

For some of the students on the trip, Bosnia was their first encounter with life outside of the US and, as their reflections suggest, we found that they came on the trip fully open to exploring local settings. As the lead instructor, Erickson had organised the course material so that students learned not only about the specificities of the three cities we visited but also about the themes that linked these metropolises with places in Indiana, like Muncie: for example, there were parallels in seeing the costs of deindustrialisation in Zenica and of gentrification, in Sarajevo and Mostar, where we visited particular districts that were aimed at attracting tourists and affluent consumers, sometimes at the expense of local residents. This trip left us as instructors feeling that perhaps sometimes, we underestimate our students' capacities to immerse themselves in other worlds. Perhaps we are too quick to suspect them of falling prey to the easy answers of ethnocentrism and cultural superiority. And, maybe we need to acknowledge that, despite the well-founded and necessary critiques of anthropology and its links to colonialism and imperialism, at least in our discipline, with its contemporary emphasis on such values as cultural diversity and its analyses of structural inequalities, for the most part, the kids are all right.

Author biographies

Jennifer Erickson is Professor of Anthropology and Assistant Director of the Center for Middletown Studies. She is a cultural anthropologist who teaches and researches about ethnicity and race, gender, citizenship, urban anthropology, refugee resettlement, and ethnographic methods. She worked for a local women's NGO in Zenica from 1998-2000. Her first book was about Bosnian and Southern Sudanese refugees in the United States (Erickson 2017, 2020).

Susan Hyatt is Emerita Professor of Anthropology at Indiana University Purdue University Indianapolis (IUPUI). Hyatt taught urban anthropology and ethnographic methods in Indianapolis for many years and is an award-winning faculty member for excellence in civic engagement. In addition, she had lived in the former Yugoslavia for 18 months, 1976-78 and had a working knowledge of Serbo-Croatian/Bosnian and some background in the history of this region. She retired from IUPUI in December 2023.

Jordan Keck works as an Educational Technology Coordinator for Ivy Tech Community College, advising on how to utilize digital technologies to fulfill the diverse and evolving needs of students who enrol in asynchronous course modalities. He also teaches Introduction to Anthropology courses for Ball State where he continues to take the lessons learned from Bosnia forward and asks students to reflect on their own lived experiences and how they fit in and adapt to complex and ever changing local and global contexts.

After Bosnia, Kiera Cromer applied to a language program through Indiana University where she was granted the opportunity to live in Zagreb, Croatia and learn Bosnian-Serbo-Croatian. Covid-19 prevented plans to move to Bosnia so she moved to Indianapolis to fundraise for the Humane Society of the United States. She now serves as a national administrative operations manager for four large charities and also fundraises for Boston Children's Hospital. It is still her dream to return to and live in Bosnia– it left a life-long impact on her life. As they say, once you drink the water in Sarajevo, you always come back. One day she will.

Mendim Akiti is a 2023 master's graduate of Religion from Florida State University. He specializes in Islam in the Balkans, specifically Muslim intrafaith diversity in North Macedonia, Kosovo, and Albania. He is currently working as a student success coach for Ball State University.

Lanyang Zhou finished her master's degree in urban planning at Ball State. She has a strong interest in observing how people use urban space and analysing why and how cities form. Her research is especially focused on small cities.

Alejandra Ibarra graduated from Ball State in 2020 with a bachelor's degree in Anthropology, with minors in sociology and interpersonal relations, developing an enthusiasm for studying humanity through intersecting lenses. Since graduating, she has constructed her own research in the evolution of human consciousness.

Sparrow Cheng now spends their time working as a full-time artist in Indianapolis. Their practice has revolved around exploring controversial themes and social issues, seeking to spark critical conversations and prompt introspection via large-scale murals and fine arts. They are working towards the goal of obtaining a master's degree in museum curation in the near future.

Kiya Mullins completed her master's degree in urban planning from Ball State in 2022 and earned a second master's degree in forensic psychology in 2023. She is an Associate Planner for the City of Indianapolis.

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